

An Afternoon in Naulla



Naulla Reservoir, a bright avian playground during the dry season

There is so much in store for the wanderer who wishes to explore the serene landscape of the South-East Coast. The tranquil countryside beats with life, even in the blazing heat of noon.

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After an exciting exploration in Panama in search of the Panagala or Secret Point, we were heading back to the surfing town of Arugambay. The sun had ascended to its throne in the middle of the sky, and was bearing its might on the East Coast

terrain. Its golden radiance bounced off the green and brown features of the land, making the environment a spectacle of vivid colours.

Our eyes were heavy with the afternoon glare, yet, our interests were peaked by the rugged board pointing to a mysterious gravel road. The signboard spoke of a 'Radella Wewa'. Not a soul was around to answer our queries, as both man and animal had retreated to their homes. Our curiosity getting the better of us, we trudged ahead in search of this elusive reservoir. That water body did in fact elude us, as instead we took a wrong turn and ended up at the Naulla Wewa. It was definitely not a disappointing afternoon.

Because it was the dry season, the waters of the Naulla Reservoir had receded. The harvested paddy fields we passed indicated Naulla had served its purpose and was taking a deserved mid-year break. Mud curled around our toes and soles as we walked towards these pools of water; we were standing on earth that the Naulla Wewa would reclaim when the tropical monsoons returned. To our delight, we realised we were not alone, flocks of birds of many a feather were engaged in recreation at the waters. Some birds were hunting, others were perched on mud and some soared while the fledglings were learning the trade of the avians.



Lesser whistling ducklings explore the waters

Beyond, on a small rock formation amidst picturesque lotus-filled waters, cormorants were perched, almost like on guard, tasked with protecting the bird life. Lesser whistling ducklings were exploring and wading into the waters engrossed by the surroundings. Amidst the variety of avian species, we identified a petite black-winged stilt trudging in the water intent on a catch of fish. The

Brahminy kite was no-doubt the bully in this playground; in a split second, it swept in to grab a fish from a heron who had diligently worked for its reward.

Time seemed to move slowly in this serene waterside wilderness, nearly bringing one's thoughts to a stop. A herd of burly water buffaloes sauntered across our view in almost a perfect file, never breaking rank. They were leaving for home after fulfilling their hunger in the amber grazing lands.

As we turned to head back to the flurry of civilisation, a pack of gray langurs burst out from a nearby tree. Evidently, there is always a surprise discovery in store in every nook and cranny of the South Eastern Coast.

