By the waters of Handapanagala

Posted on
An impressive span of natural beauty

Beyond the quiet pulse of the town and stretches of rural roads, a man-made reservoir marks an enigmatic presence as it extends across a panoramic landscape. Handapanagala Wewa, aside from its natural setting and picturesque offerings not only feeds the lush fields that nourish the region but also fosters a welcome habitat for the wild inhabitants seeking refuge beside its cool waters.

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Journeying a short distance from the Wellawaya town, leads to the Handapanagala junction and to Handapanagala where the reservoir can be found in a remote setting. At the time of our visit, this resourceful tank was being excavated along its bund and surroundings. We traversed farther along to find a route to reach the waters. Leaving behind the signs of human activity, we drove along the rugged terrain to find a path to reach the waters of the reservoir. A little byroad gave way to a glimpse of the reservoir and we soon found ourselves on the path to the reservoir bed.

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Fed by the Kirindi Oya, the reservoir is no doubt one of the important sources of irrigation for the region, however the waters had receded with the dry seasons leaving stretches of parched earth and prickly shrubs that sprung from it. It did little to dampen its scenic beauty. The wide open expanse with breezes buffeting across, the ranges of mountains silhouetted in the distance, a lone eagle circling high in the air and the gentle rippling waters were the makings of a spellbinding charm.As we explored the water’s edge, a great many varieties of birds came within our sights.

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We had aroused the alarm of a Red Wattled Lapwing that rose into the air with its loud and incessant cry of indignation. It didn’t relent until we were a good distance away from what might have been its nesting ground. Bemused by its unsettling cries we wandered farther away. In the distance were flocks of many wading birds, busily scouring the marshland. We spotted Painted Stork huddled far away just within our sights, and they appeared still in their vigil over the water. Closest to where we walked were varieties of stilt birds that seemed to glide the surface of the water, their lithe legs hoisting them effortlessly as they hurried about. In the farthest distance mixed flocks of more wading birds came into view in a white flurry as they rose in unison from the grassland only to settle down and out of our sight. Tiny birds whizzed past us chasing each other across the plains. Watching these birds and their many antics could easily steal the hours away and we were tempted to remain in the sublime comfort of our surroundings.

Despite arriving at the reservoir during the sultry mid-day, our fatigue melted away and the breezes mellowed the effect of the searing sun. It was easy to lose track of time and become immersed in the rustic enchantment of the surroundings. Reluctantly we traced our way back, stealing from Handapangala Wewa only the memories that we would cherish.

