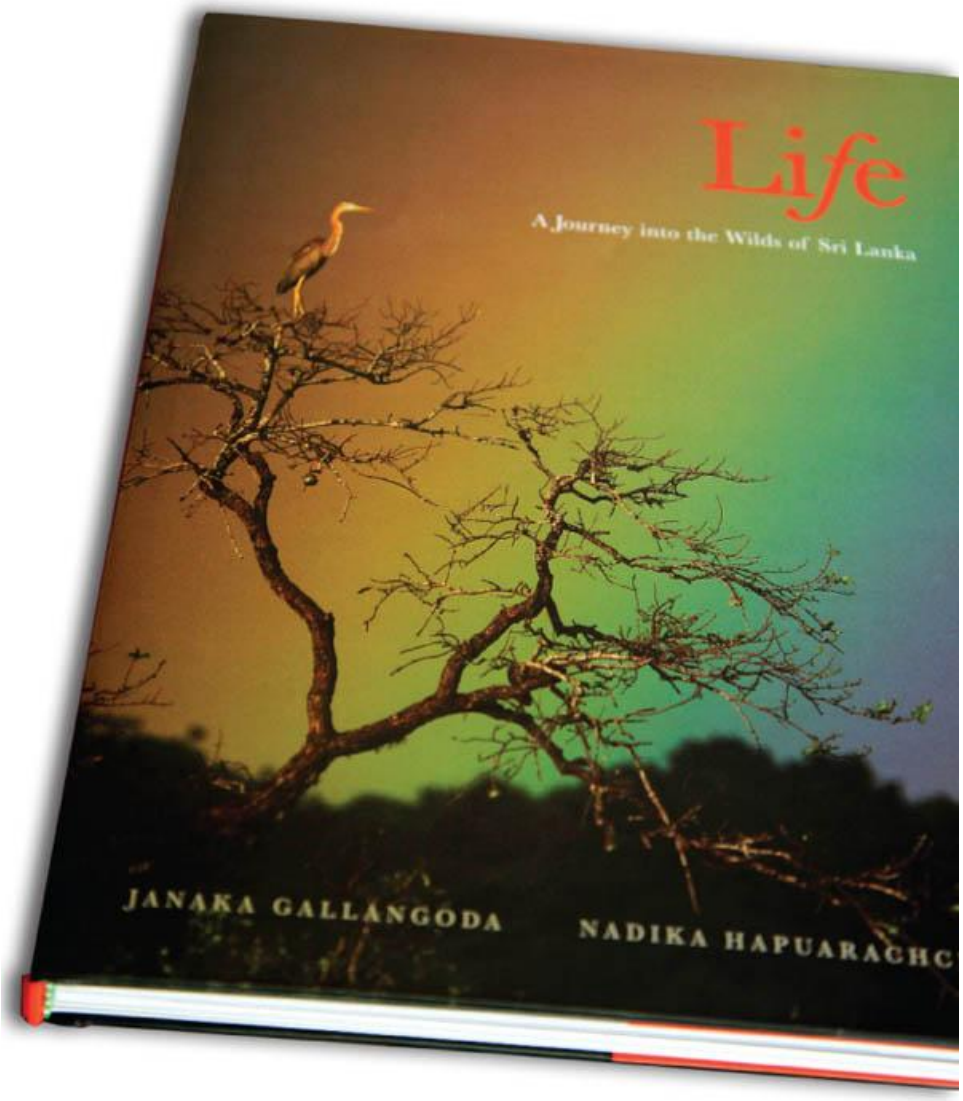
Life: A Journey into the Wilds of Sri Lanka

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The wilderness of Sri Lanka reveals some of its compelling secrets in Life: A Journey into the Wilds of Sri Lanka compiled by Dr Janaka Gallangoda and Nadika Hapuarachchi. Their unique encounters and fascinating vistas

witnessed are chronicled in the book utilising beautiful images that captivate your mind.

Words Krishani Peiris **Photographs** Indika de Silva

Stunned, I was not able to avert my gaze from the beautiful pictures that adorned the pages as perfect technique, setting and colour blended together to reveal the intriguing tales of Mother Nature. Leafing through each of the 159 photographs, spread across pages upon pages and unmarred by words, it is clear that the dedication and commitment to capture these precious moments had been immense.

Dr Janaka Gallangoda, a medical officer and Nadika Hapuarachchi, employed in the IT field, captured the photographs in the book while Nishanthi Perera and Dinindu Siriwardena also contributed to the books' success. Though both, Dr Gallangoda and Nadika Hapuarachchi, are employed in demanding professions, their fixation on nature have pushed them to spend much time in the wild, admirably juggling their careers with their passion for wildlife photography.

"The book showcases the diversity of Sri Lanka from Point Pedro to Down South," said Dr Janaka Gallangoda. "It's not only the big game, such as the leopard, elephant and bear, that we tried to focus on. We tried to focus more on the minor things, which most of us tend to miss."

True to his words, while the book includes pictures of the 'big game', it is filled with distinctive moments of other animals and also includes some plants as the authors strived to explore unique facets of nature. Focusing mainly on rainforests due to their rich biodiversity, the photographs try to showcase hitherto unseen junctures or different points of view that have been seen before, with regard to flora and fauna of Sri Lanka.

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Life: A Journey into the Wilds of Sri Lanka is divided into three parts, with the majority of the pages being dedicated to displaying breathtaking imagery. The other parts include anecdotes promoting conservation and the story lines of the

images shown in the book. The anecdotes are divided into six topics that relate heartfelt stories of animal suffering, while stressing the importance of conservation. “We especially wanted to give the message of conservation of wild life and natural habitats to people,” revealed Dr Gallangoda. “We did not plan on publishing a book at first, but since we had a presentable collection of photos, we wanted to share them with others. Taking this as an opportunity, we also wanted to relay a message about conservation of wildlife in Sri Lanka.”

The book is a pictorial guide with thumbnails at the back containing descriptions of each picture. Showcasing the wonders of nature, pictures of birds, insects, mammals and plants exhibiting various characteristics, reach out through the pages enrapturing the reader. The silent stare of a leopard, birds in the midst of flight or mesmerising dances, close-ups of creepy crawlies inching forward, snakes and lizards coiled in mid-air or frozen in step respectively, beautiful snapshots of natural habitats and many more pictures decorate the pages holding any reader captive in the books’ grasp.

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With 20 years of experience in photographing wildlife, Dr Gallangoda first started to pursue this path while he was in university while Nadika Hapuarachchi has been in this field since he was a young boy. “We never had a proper learning of photography. It was all about trial and error,” reflected Dr Gallangoda. “However, learning from others’ experience was a major learning curve.”

‘Life’ encompasses pictures that have been taken over a period of nearly six years and the journey to its publication had been a long and arduous one. Yet the outcome has been rewarding as the stunning photographs coupled with the important message will be passed on to the current and future generations, and also will be preserved for many years to come. While Dr Gallangoda is an enthusiast of photographing birds and Nadika Hapuarachchi shows partiality towards lizards and snakes, both take the opportunity to snap any rare event that unfolds before them during their voyages into the wilds of Sri Lanka.

“The book comprises of animals endemic to Sri Lanka as well as animals which we share with India and the subcontinent,” said Nadika Hapuarachchi relaying his sentiments on ‘Life’. “We have focused on many different aspects of nature and tried to look at the beauty of each small thing and not just at the bigger picture.”

Dr Gallangoda disclosed, “for us to photograph these moments, past generations have protected these natural habitats. This is a web of life; if one thread is broken then we are in trouble. So we have to focus on conservation for our future generations.”

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