MINNERIYA HOME TO THE GREAT AND SMALL

Posted on



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With the afternoon sun shining bright in the sky, our journey began as we set off through the gates of Minneriya National Park. An 8990-hectare sanctuary to various

wildlife, is centered around the Minneriya reservoir built by King Mahasen. Our first encounter was with a herd of spotted deer, grazing in the shrubbery. Their curious gazes amused us. The rumble of the safari jeep engine did not discourage the herd from nibbling on the tender leaves

Satisfied with our observation, we set forth in excitement to explore what other species called Minneriya ‘home’.

A Green Bee-eater flittered passed us. Its beautiful green-blue feathers blended well with the foliage, thus making it a bit challenging to spot at first sight. The little bird seemed to be busy looking for its next meal. With the gravel road unfolding before us and the trees sheltering us from the heat, there was much beauty to admire around.

Colorful butterflies sipped on sweet nectar while diverse bird calls echoed through the jungle. The sun reflecting on the waters of a nearby lake drew our attention towards a painted stork. The bird, offered us glimpses of its pink feathers contrasting against it’s white and black tones.

We waited in anticipation for the painted stork to take flight so that we could witness its wing span to its full extent. Nearby, a grey-headed fish eagle perched on top of a withered tree attentively peered at the waters for its next catch.

We discovered the harmony of nature is its truest form. Within a clearing, a gathering of wildlife had emerged. A majestic peacock danced before us, its tail feathers on full display. Above our jeep, the endemic Sri Lankan grey hornbill skipped along the branches of a tree, gaining more altitude, possibly to find rest. Not too far away, a toque macaque sat quietly on a dry branch, scanning his surroundings. A giant squirrel, known as Dandu lena in Sinhala appeared on the opposite branches of the monkey. Neither creature seemed disturbed by each other’s presence. After a while, the toque macaque leaped away, reminding us that there was still much to discover. We journeyed on, wobbling along the uneven pathway, towards the Minneriya reservoir with hope to witness the gentle giants.

The vast expanse of the reservoir is picturesque. With the wind blowing away the heat, we decided to climb the look out point to gain a vantage view of the rippling waters. In the distance, we saw the dam built across the Minneriya river to create this great source of water body for wildlife. Each year a large elephant

gathering occurs in May till August. Visitors can witness an assembly of over 300 elephants at the banks of the waters quenching their thirst. However, as the reservoir was full, we could not witness the gentle giants occupying the waters. Still determined to catch a glimpse of these majestic beasts we continued deeper into the park. Movement in the undergrowth caught our attention. Patiently we waited as a herd of elephants emerged from the greenery. It was exciting to see a baby elephant walk hurriedly beside the elders. As the light began to fade, the herd retreated into the jungle for the night.

On our way back, we discovered more wildlife settling in for a night's rest. A serpent eagle sat composed on a branch, attentively observing as our jeep drove by. A jackal ran along a pathway, occasionally stopping to see if he was being followed.

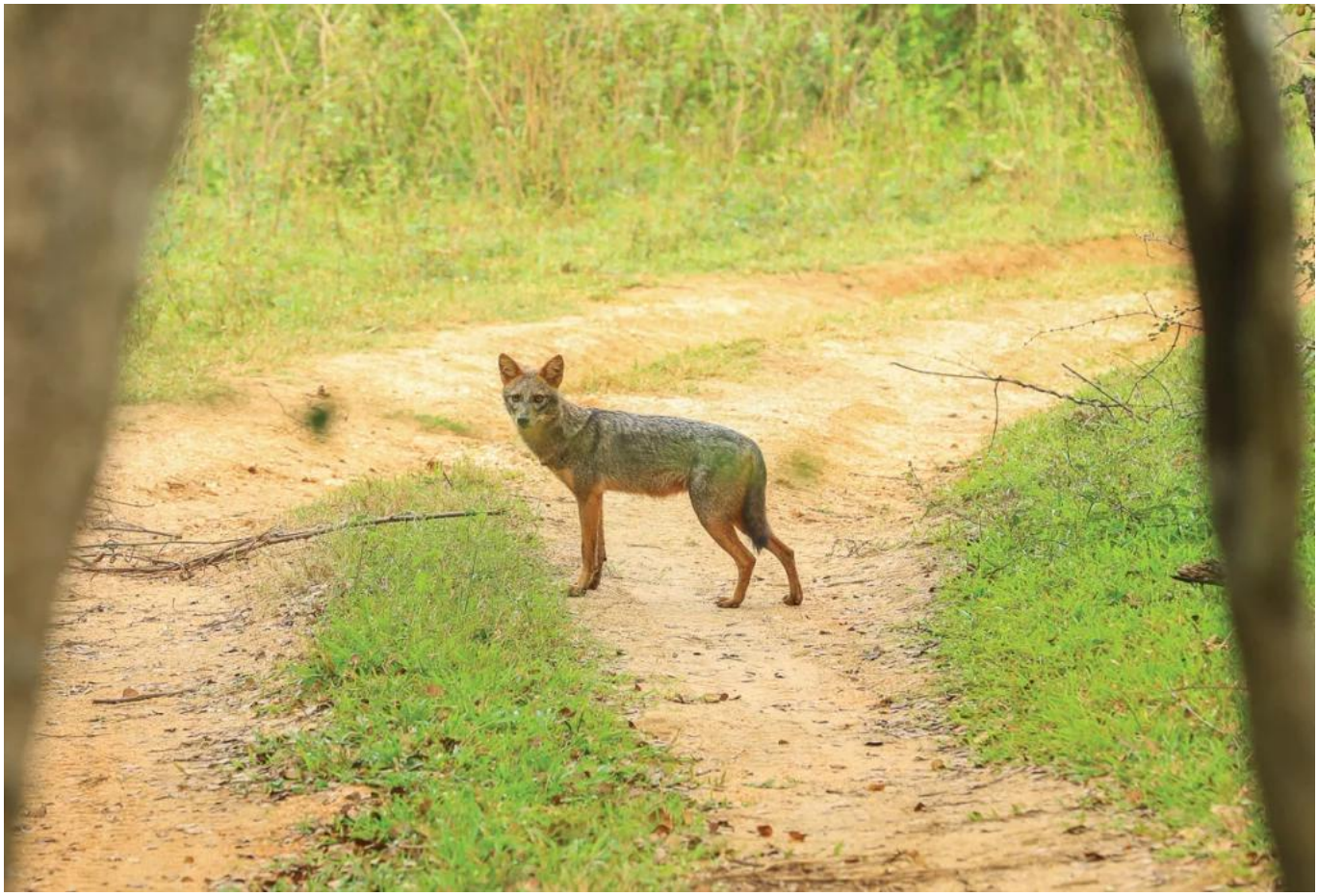
The adventure to Minneriya was exhilarating. It is amazing to see wildlife in their natural habitat and undisturbed by the outside world. We bid adieu to our tracker, content with the day's experience.



Serpent eagle.



A herd of wild buffalo grazing on the green fields.



A jackal attentively observes its onlookers.



The expansive Minneriya reservoir sustains the biodiveristy of the park.



Spotted deer nibbling leafy greens.



Sri Lankan grey hornbill perched on a branch.



A majestic peacock displays his beautiful feathers.



A watchful giant squirrel (Dandu lena).



Grey-headed fish eagle.



A vibrant butterfly feeds on nectar.



Green Bee-eater.