

Sacred Light, Wild Soul Vesak Encounters in Arugambay, Buttala, and Beyond

Posted on



Words Claire Tomlinson. **Photography** Dinesh Fernando.

As Vesak 2025 dawned, the sacred full moon cast a gentle glow over the southeastern wilds of Sri Lanka. This spiritual season, usually marked by lanterns and temple rituals, revealed a different kind of devotion in the wilderness around Arugambay and Buttala.



An awe-inspiring beauty of a majestic leopard unfolds through a captivating series of moments.



The journey began on the Buttala Road, under the cover of night, where a magical sight awaited—a herd of spotted deer crossing quietly in the moonlight. Their

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presence set the tone for a journey that would unfold like a meditative walk through nature's temple.

Deeper into the eastern lowlands, Kumana National Park unveiled its Vesak spectacle. The forest was alive with movement and color. A proud peacock greeted the morning, while wild water buffalo lazed in the wetlands. Along a still lagoon's edge, a spotted deer with its young one grazed undisturbed, the scene mirrored in the calm waters.

Above, the skies and trees were shared by winged residents: a painted stork in brilliant contrast, a solitary grey heron, and the silent sentinel—a crocodile basking in the sun.



Painted Stork.



Brown Fish Owl.



A stunning display.



Grey Heron.



Colorful Painted Storks are perched by the water.

But perhaps the most stirring moment came with the appearance of the leopard, elusive and graceful, moving through the underbrush with calm certainty. Not far behind, the true spiritual giants of Sri Lanka—the elephants—emerged in their slow,

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noble procession.

Floating through lily-covered waters, visitors encountered yet another visual hymn. The white water lilies, blooming in radiant purity, reflected the spirit of Vesak itself—peaceful, grounded, and luminous.

As the expedition left Kumana behind, there was one final blessing—the quiet, regal presence of a brown fish owl. Watching from its perch, it marked the end of a sacred passage through the wild. And on the return along the Buttala Road, the wilderness offered its final revelation: elephants, again, under moonlight—calm and unhurried. These gentle giants reminded us that in silence and presence, one can find the truest form of connection.



A herd of spotted Deer captured at night.



A spotted Deer with its young one.

Photographer Dinesh Fernando, who spent Vesak capturing this rare confluence of wilderness and spirituality, said, “In Arugambay and Buttala, Vesak isn’t celebrated with lanterns. It’s celebrated in silence, in watching, in witnessing the forest breathe.”

In the land between Arugambay and Buttala, Vesak was not only seen and heard—it was deeply felt, in every shadow, ripple, and glance.



Wild water Buffalo.



Traveling together.



A lone stander.



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Spotting the marvelous gentle giants is always an exhilarating experience!



Captured during a night travel.



A Crocodile sprawled out under the warm sun.



Blooming white Lilies.