

Turtle Conservation

KOSGODA: The Turtle conservation programme was badly affected by the Tsunami in 2004 but it has recovered partly under the supervision of the Wild Life Conservation Department of Sri Lanka with help from various other environmental groups.

Sri Lanka's rich biodiversity acts as the key element in attracting both foreign and local visitors. If elephants are considered as the major attraction, birds and turtles come next. Local and foreign tourism and Marine turtle conservation has importance together.

The global expansion of industrialised fishing practices, destruction caused to the coral reef, the dumping of garbage on the beach have become major causes for environmental pollution apart from causing many challenges to seasonal migration for the laying of eggs and the nesting grounds of these pre-historic reptiles.

The Government recognised the threat to the survival of these species from the loss of their nesting habitat in the early 80's. The government is implementing laws to declare them as protected by the Fauna & Flora Protection Ordinance. It is an offence to trap, kill or devour any of these species or even parts thereof. Thus even the eggs of these reptiles are protected and a lucrative cottage industry that prevailed in this country, from using turtle shells, (particularly of the Leatherback) has ground to a halt.

The Government should take another step forward by including wild life conservation education and ecotourism as part of the school syllabus.

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