



Little Cormorant



Long-billed Sun Bird



Great Egret



Stork-billed Kingfisher



Asian Koel



Black-crowned Night Heron

## Ganga Pradeepa

In Daily News Travel we have written many articles about board riding, wild life, turtle hatchery, sea trailers, Castles, ancient places, lagoons, architecture, climbing and famous gardens. But for the first time we have decided to write on a bird sanctuary.

Annaiwilundawa Wetland is located on the west coast of Sri Lanka. It is a complex wetland that consists of a group of ancient cascading tanks that vary in size between 12-50 ha, totalling an area of approximately 200 ha and less than 4m deep and located just above sea level. These tanks feed the traditional paddy fields and are sustaining about 412 of them. The tank system that constitutes the heart of the wetland also contains historical significance, being built around 1140 AD by King Parakramabahu the Great.

This man-made wetland was declared a Sanctuary in 1997. The tank system receives water from the Deduru Oya.

The wetland has a biodiversity from fish to mammals and birds. There are about 20,000 inland birds that depend on this wetland for survival.

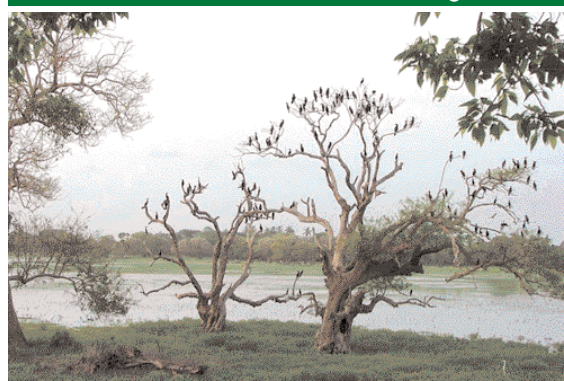
There are also many species of fish including brackish water forms and the traditional fishery has been associated with the wetland. Rich in terms of amphibians and reptiles, 10 species of amphibians and 30 species of reptiles have been documented.

The Annaiwilundawa wetland in Puttalam district is approx. 100 km north of Colombo along the Puttalam road. One has to turn at Nalladarakattawa and proceed past Annaiwilundawa railway station.

The sign boards to Annaiwilundawa are posted along the way. After a few seconds we reached a dried tank with huge trees, a large area. This was Annaiwilundawa.

# Annaiwilundawa

## Man-made wetland with a historical significance



Unbelievably the earth was dried and environment was warm because of inadequate rain to Negombo in the past few months.

The tanks comprise a cluster of small, shallow, ancient reservoirs built to serve the irrigation requirements of the area.

The areas surrounding these tanks with jungle, are noted for their natural scenic beauty. The tanks are surrounded by a mixed pattern of forestland, scrubland, marshes, homesteads, coconut plantations and aquaculture farms.

It was a bright day and the sky was blue. By the time we arrived in the Annaiwilundawa Wetland, we already knew the common wetland birds such as Asian



Black-winged Stilt

koel, Black-winged Stilt, Black-crowned Night Heron, Black-headed Ibis and Brahminy Kite. Naturalist Senaka Pathmakumara accompanying me explained. After a few steps, I could discern the yellow spots on upper parts and

white spots on under parts while under wing with dark trailing edge bird. It was Crested Serpent Eagle.

Annaiwilundawa was the second site in Sri Lanka to be declared a RAMSAR wetland and is now under the jurisdiction of the

Department of Wildlife Conservation.

At present, there are no restrictions for entry. Visitors can enter the complex of lakes on public roads which run along the embankments of the lakes. The scrub and paddy fields have a few private houses dotted around them.

I saw many butterflies flutter by specially one of my favourites the Crimson Rose. At a distance I could see the dull blue and brown plumage when perched; bright and pale blue plumage appears in flight. It was the Indian Roller.

We walked nearly three hours and saw 26 varieties of birds. But there are almost 60 varieties of birds one can see in this place

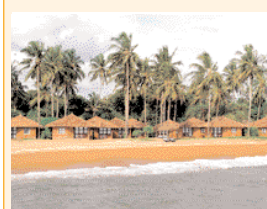
Senaka said. We reached Annaiwilundawa at 9 o'clock. Unfortunately we couldn't see other birds because some of them didn't come out when the sun was out.

I saw Great egrets, Common kingfishers, Stock billed kingfishers, Little cormorants, Little egrets, Long billed sun birds and purple herons etc. But if you can reach there early in the morning you can see many endemic, common, and migrant birds around I didn't see. Remember to wear comfortable clothes and hats which are not brightly coloured. Earthy colours are more advisable, such as green or brown. Suitable footwear especially deck shoes is recommended. If you have a field guide book, it would be most useful. If you do not have one you could still do bird watching you can take a small note book to make notes of field observations which is essential. A pair of binoculars will be of help. (The recommended magnifications for bird watching are 7x50 or 8x40).

Field trips with small groups are always advisable. Small groups allow better coordination and communication among participants. A good way to see birds is to find an isolated place where one can sit and hide among the scrub. Wait for a while, then a lot of birds start showing themselves in front; this needs a lot of patience. The common way to do bird-watching is to slowly walk through paths searching for birds. Stop on the road when a bird is seen. In addition, one can enjoy the beauty of nature.

Please do not leave behind polythene or plastic which you bring. We must protect this natural beauty of our motherland for others too to enjoy.

## Ranveli Holiday Village 'Bird-Friendly' Eco Resort



Ranveli Holiday Village is an Eco-friendly resort committed to protecting the environment, situated 50 km from Colombo in a small peninsula between two rivers, a lagoon and the sea. The hotel is a recreation based Eco tourism oriented facility with a tranquil and relaxing atmosphere that fosters a harmonious relationship with nature.

The journey to Ranveli began when I boarded the private ferry of the Holiday Village. Once setting foot on Ranveli Holiday Resort it was a delight to hear only music of classical Sinhala songs via the sound system in all areas of the resort.

This resort is amidst an expanse of land over 22 acres surrounded by the sea, river and the lagoon. The resort environment has a rich mangrove community and is home to over 130 birds, over fifty butterflies, squirrels, lizards, water monitors, over ninety plants and shrubs and flowers. It is a delightful experience to watch birds around you when sitting in the open snack pavilion by the sea.

The resort is a pioneering venture in Eco tourism in Sri Lanka and has received numerous international and national awards and accolades for ecologically friendly tourism. The World Tourism Organisation (WTO) also has recognised Ranveli Holiday Village as one of the top 55 "good Practices" enterprises in Eco tourism around the world.

Their vision to be a trail blazer in Eco tourism and mission is to create an up-market Eco tourism products as their contribution to sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka. "This hotel was started in 1976. We have 84 chalets, 1 cottage an Ayurveda centre which has qualified doctors. Guests can do birding, go butterfly watching, nature walks and boating. Our conference hall is suitably geared for 30 pax" said Wimal Dassanayake, General Manager of Ranveli Holiday Village.

The Fine Dining Restaurant is the place which I liked most in this resort. This was covered by various kinds of mangroves. A bridge made of wood leads to this place. It was faced towards the river and has no disturbances except sound of birds and the waves of the river. This place appeared to me more suitable for diners and for honeymooners.

Every place opened out to the extensive garden and a small fruit stall called Palathuru Messe, located next to the lobby, offers freshly prepared fruits, juices and herbal drinks of medicinal value. Pots, brass lamps, and hand made local fabric can be seen everywhere in this resort. The architecture blends with the unique and rich natural environment.

The path that leads to the reception is covered by huge trees and mangroves. The reception area faces a pond. The mangrove area consisting of over 17 true mangroves and associates have a special significance, as their Ecosystem supports a variety of plants and animals.

Living with nature is the specialty of the Ranveli Holiday Village.

Answer of October 3 Quiz: Geoffrey Bawa

Winner: K.D.Nandana Nishantha, 265, Vidyalyaya Road, Molligoda, Wadduwa



Little Egret



Purple Heron



Indian Roller



Brahminy Kite



Common Kingfisher



Black-headed Ibis

What's on here...

Ceylon Continental Hotel

Jazz Night every Wednesday from 7pm to 11 pm at the Heist and Kothu daily from 5 pm to 10 pm with takeaway at the Pastry Shop

## Phone-in Competition winner

Answer of October 3 phone-in Competition : Kudawella Winner : Chamaka Perera, 2, Jayasinghe Road, Kirulapane, Colombo 6.

**TRAVEL QUIZ**

Question: How many chalets does Ranveli Holiday Village has?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact No: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please send this coupon duly filled on a postcard to "Travel Quiz, Daily News, 35 D R Nishanthen Mahipala, Colombo 10, to reach us by next Thursday. Any number of entries may be sent but they must be on the coupon published in the Daily News. Photocopies will not be accepted.)

The lucky winner will receive a One night's accommodation (Double) at Ranveli Holiday Village on full board basis.