

Compiled by Damayanthi Hewamanna



The two Bengal tigers



A Rhinoceros that was given as a gift to the zoo

MADHUBHASHINI RATHNAYAKA.

Two rhinoceroses are fighting each other. The female rhinoceros is running away and the male is chasing after it and trying to butt. But the female is also not ready to give up. It stops after for a while she turns and shakes her head with a threatening sign.

You may think this is happening somewhere Africa. You are incorrect. But this pair is in a place in Sri Lanka where, John Hagenberg, who bought five acres in Colombo to hold the animals before exporting them to Europe, might not have imagined, that it would become the outstanding zoological institution in Sri Lanka for conservation, research and education.

The beginning

In 1936, this centre was taken over by the Government and it is under the Department of National Zoological gardens which includes the Elephant orphanage at Pinnawala and a farm at Gonapola which provides fruits and vegetables for the animals in the zoo.

Today, the zoo consists of about 350 species of animal approximately 3500 in number. This number can be varied according to the living colony of birds and

breeding fish. The number of animals can be approximately listed as below. Today, this collection centre spreads out about 25 acres and it is mainly divided into the birds paradise, the aquarium, the butterfly garden, reptilium and is set apart to the mammals which can be mainly categorized as hoofed mammals, cats, bears, nocturnal animals and primates.

There are interesting stories of these nocturnal animals and primates, which are the nocturnal, were the first mammals to appear on Earth and the primates consist of humans, apes, lemurs and lorises that have a large brain which helps them to adapt and learn things around them.

Birds of paradise

In the birds paradise we are able to see birds like parrots in varieties, indigenous birds, aquatic birds and birds of prey or raptors. The aquarium and the but-



Gulu, the hybrid Orangutan

Anula who are in the Colombo zoo have been brought from two zoos in Japan on June 30, 2007. These two were exchanged with two elephants whose names were also *Kosala*

terfly garden are colourful sites where a lot of people are attracted. In the reptilium the snakes, crocodiles and tortoises are exhibited. The rhinoceroses whose names are *Kosala* and

| Categories | Species | Number (Approximately) |
|---------------------------|---------|------------------------|
| Mammals | 100 | 450 |
| Birds | 110 | 1000-1500 |
| Reptiles | 35 | 250 |
| Fish | 65 | 1000 |
| Amphibian | 03 | 20 |
| Invertebrates-Butterflies | 30 | 100 |
| Marine invertebrates | 10 | 25 |



Two bears in a friendly fight. Pictures by Iresha Waduge

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STRICTLY FOR ANIMAL LOVERS

Puppies puppies, everywhere puppies

DEMI HEWAMANNA

It is quite amazing how hard, cruel and selfish people can be towards things that are known to be a close part and parcel of a person's life. Each time I read, write or hear a story of this something being abandoned, thrown away or basically ignored on purpose, I ask myself, "Why did you ever agree to take care, if in the end you were going to keep that 'thing' on looks and gender?"

The 'thing' I'm talking about, is none other than our four legged friend, the dog. It is said to be man's best friend, but is it really the fact? With what I hear now and then I don't think it's anymore a man's best friend.

A lady called me a few days ago, and told me that she had rescued some puppies that had been abandoned on the streets near her place. How did she know they were puppies, well she was about to go out and saw this plastic bag rolling about here and there. She went to check it out and what does she get hold of, she gets hold of 6 puppies just wrapped in a plastic bag and thrown on to the streets.

When she had taken them to the Vet, he had told that they were just two days old which means they haven't even had opened their eyes yet. TWO DAYS old, what in God's name were they with those poor



How can anyone do any harm to this little one?

ple who did such an unthinkable thing to these creatures who have come into this world, with no sense in their minds as to what is happening around them.

It's very rare to see a person like Asha, who's a great animal lover, a teacher and living in a flat, very keen to help these homeless creatures.

The puppies she rescued now need a great amount of love, attention and space to just roam around and be free. Asha would have given all of them those requirements, if she did

have a big space for all that, unfortunately she can't, simply for the reason she lives in a flat!

At the moment the puppies are all at her mother's place, running around, playing with each other,



Asha and her sister with the rescued puppies. Pictures by Roman de Silva



Asha with two little devils who were mischievous from the time they were rescued

biting, pulling at everyone's clothes, shoe-laces and anything they can grab been the usual puppy character!

Asha, getting kissed by all the little darlings, tells us that she wants to give these puppies to families who REALLY will take care of them and not give them away. If they suddenly decide to move out, go abroad or just throw them on the street just because they are growing old and no use to them! She wants to keep in constant touch with them, so that she knows they are doing well, and if they are not been looked after properly she will take them back immediately. So, if there is anyone, who is willing to take these angels in disguise who are full of mischief, but very obedient when you train them, please do a good deed and help these puppies become your best and true friend.

So if there is anyone out there, who is like Asha, who goes beyond her time and energy to help these puppies please call on 2523069, 2540685 and 0777-878365.

The season of Rambutan

It's red, it has thorn like features and right now it's at every pavement corner you can find in Sri Lanka and making so many mouths watery and taste-buds tingling every bud in your tongue when you see it. Yes, you guessed its, its *rambutan* and it's very much the season for it.

The *Nephelium lappaceum* is a medium-sized tropical tree in the family Sapindaceae, and the fruit of this tree. It is native to Indonesia and Southeast Asia, although its precise natural distribution is unknown. It is closely related to several other edible tropical fruits including the Lychee, Longan, and Mamoncillo.

It is believed to be native to the Malay Archipelago. *Rambutan* in Indonesian, Filipino and Malay literally means hairy caused by the 'hair' that covers this fruit. In Panama, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua, it is known as man'o chino. There is a second species regularly for sale at Malay markets which is known as "wild" rambutan. It is a little smaller than the usual red variety and is colored yellow.

Rambutan trees are either male (producing only staminate flowers and, hence, produce no fruit), female (producing flowers that are only functionally female), or hermaphroditic (producing flowers that are female with a small percentage of male flowers).

The fruit is a round to ovate, 2.5-6 cm, with a 8 cm) tall and 3-4 cm broad, borne in a loose pendant cluster of 10-20 together. The leathery skin is reddish (rarely orange or yellow), and covered with fleshy pliable spines, hence the name *rambutan*, derived from the Malay word *rambut* which means hairs. The fruit flesh is translucent, whitish or very pale pink, with a sweet, mildly acidic flavour.

The single seed is glossy brown, 2.5 cm, with a white basal scar. The seed is soft and crunchy. They are mildly poisonous when



The *Nephelium lappaceum* better known as *Rambutan*

raw, but may be cooked and eaten.

It is one of the best known fruits of southeast Asia and is also widely cultivated in other tropics including Africa, Cambodia, the Caribbean islands, Central America, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and of course Sri Lanka.

The best quality rambutan is generally that which is harvested still attached to the branch. This rambutan is less susceptible to rot, damage, and pests, and remains fresh for a much longer time than rambutan that has been picked from the branch

Thailand is the largest producer from Surat Thani Province Thailand.

Rambutan production is increasing in Australia and, in 1997, was one of the top three tropical fruits produced in Hawaii. It is also produced in Ecuador where it is known as *achochilla*. *Rambutan* cultivation in Sri Lanka mainly composed with small home gar-

den and *Anula* and now the names remain with these two.

It is said that there are about 3000 rhinoceroses in the forests and about 30 are in the zoological gardens all over the world. They are mainly endangered as a result of de-forestation and the demand for their horn for artistic carving, medicine and aphrodisiac.

The violent behaviour of the rhinoceroses which is described in the beginning could be seen in their mating season. When a female is in oestrus, fighting may occur among males, the victor conducts an elaborate courtship that includes marking territory with urine and faeces, chasing, fighting between the male and female and copulation. As here there are only two rhinoceroses that even not are accustomed to each other because they are from different zoological gardens, it is said they were very violent at that particular period.

Veterinary surgeon Dr. Jagath Jayasekara, who experiences the behaviour patterns of rhinoceroses, says that the zookeepers were around the

rhinoceroses with high pressure water pumps, heat guns and anaesthetic in their copulation to prevent any harm which will happen as a result of their violence. *Anula* shows some signs of pregnancy, but still cannot confirm until blood tests are done.

Orangutan

The pair of Orangutan who really are 'jokers' in the zoo were looking at us curiously. They, *Ulo* and *Aki* were brought from Indonesia in 2002 and were the last pair of Orangutan exported to another country from an Indonesian zoo. There was one lonely Orangutan, *Gulu* who is a hybrid. It is said that these type of hybrid animals are not continued in the zoological gardens as the original species will be threatened and also this new generation is not much fertile.

Dwarf crocodiles, pigmy hippopotamuses, ring tail caracaras and Bengal tigers were brought here in 2009 and Dolchotis Patagonum and zebras were brought in 2008.

The extinction of animals takes place faster than evolution. We, the humans mainly are the ones who have created such a plight. Thus we should have to repay. It cannot be only done by the act of conservation done in a zoological garden.

is sensitive to temperatures below 10oC, and is grown commercially within 15o of the equator.

The trees do best on deep soils that are high in organic matter and thrive on hilly terrain as they require good drainage.

Rambutan is propagated by grafting, air-layering, and budding; the latter is most common as trees grown from seed often produce sour fruit.

Budded trees may fruit after 2-5 years with optimum production occurring after 8-10 years. Trees grown from seed bear after 5-6 years.

Up to 100 flowers in each female panicle may be open each day during peak bloom. Initial fruit set may approach 25 percent but a high level of abortion contributes to a much lower level of production at harvest (one to three percent). The fruit matures 15-18 weeks after flowering.

Both male and female flowers are faintly sweet scented and have functional nectaries at the ovary base.

Female flowers produce 2-3 times more nectar than male flowers. Nectar sugar concentration ranges between 18-47 percent and is similar between the flower types. *Rambutan* is an important nectar source for bees in Malaysia.

