

Wildlife Policy

Vision and Mission

The mission statement of the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWLC) is, "To conserve wildlife and nature by the sustainable utilization of men, material and land through participatory management, research, education and law enforcement and ensure the maintenance of biodiversity and forest cover as exist today".

Wildlife Policy - Overview

The first National Policy on Wildlife Conservation was approved by cabinet in June 1990. The present National Wildlife Policy addresses many of the same issues in updated form, while also adding some points that respond to the evolving needs of Sri Lankan society and the additional mandates of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which Sri Lanka ratified in 1994. The convention is important because it provides a new context for managing wildlife resources, by emphasizing the three themes of conservation, sustainable use and benefits sharing, and by recognizing that these must be balanced and linked if sustainable development is to be achieved.

The department redesigned the wildlife policy to suit the modern conservation concepts and practices and the redesigned policy was approved by the cabinet of ministers (Cabinet Paper 00/1034/34/019). The cabinet memorandum was submitted for approval on 9th June 2000 by the Hon. Minister of Public Administration and Home Affairs, Ranthnasiri Wikramanayake. The policy was designed by a multidisciplinary task force which comprised of experts in the areas of biodiversity as well as economics and sociology. Renowned private sector persons also contributed to this task.

NATIONAL WILDLIFE POLICY FOR SRI LANKA

PREAMBLE

The idea conservation has evolved over time to its present-day meaning of managing the Earth's living resources for the benefit of people and others alive today, without threatening the interests of those who will be alive tomorrow. This is linked to the idea of sustainable development, which can be described as seeking happiness and prosperity for all in ways that show we intend to stay on Earth, rather than to loot it and move on. Thus, the key to conservation is to have compassion for people living in the future or far away, and for the other forms of life that share our world, while also showing an enlightened self-interest towards ourselves and our immediate society.

Conservation is important because the Earth's living resources are valuable. Natural ecosystems, for example, help maintain supplies of fresh water, and protect people from floods, land-slides, soil erosion, siltation and the effects of climate change. Wild species depend on such ecosystems and can be used as important sources of foods, medicines and other subsistence and trade goods, while providing opportunities for recreation, tourism, science and education. Genetic resources are contained within wild species and can be used to improve crop plants and livestock breeds, for instance by making them resistant to pests and diseases. For these reasons, a comprehensive and effective approach to the sustainable management of protected areas and wildlife resources is needed.

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The National Wildlife Policy the commitment of Government to conserve wildlife resources for the benefit of present and future and research in a transparent and equitable manner. It does so by linking together the activities, interests and perspectives of the people who use and benefit from wildlife resources with those of professional wildlife managers and scientists. It is the intention of Government to define a strategy to implement this policy as soon as possible through a Biodiversity Conservation Action Plan, supported by such legislative measures as may be necessary to achieve harmony and success among all those who seek to promote conservation and sustainable development in Sri Lanka.

NATIONAL WILDLIFE POLICY IN DETAIL

1. Objectives of the National Wildlife Policy

The Objectives of this National Policy are:

1. To conserve wildlife resources, through protection, research, education, sustainable use and benefit sharing, for the benefit of present and future generation.
2. To maintain ecological processes and life-sustaining systems, with particular regard to primary production, hydrological balance, nutrient cycles, and prevention of erosion, siltation, drought and flood.
3. To manage all components of genetic diversity, as resources to improve crop plant and farm animal, and to develop in a fair and equitable manner new product and processes through bio-prospecting.
4. To ensure sustainable use and equitable sharing of benefits, arising from the direct and indirect use of wildlife resources and ecosystems.
5. To conserve native and endemic species and their habitats, so as to maintain the overall species richness and ecological integrity of the country.
6. To encourage the development of biological repositories, for the purposes of conservation education and science.
7. To encourage the private sector and communities to join as a full partners in all aspects of the wildlife-conservation process.

2. Policy on Protected Area Management and wildlife Conservation

National Policy in this area is:

1. To develop national strategies, plans and programmes for wildlife conservation, in line with appropriate national and international standards.
2. To protect viable and representative samples of all ecosystems, including sites of special scientific interest, and wherever necessary to enlarge and connect protected areas to create viable conservation units.
3. To take urgent steps to conserve all remaining natural wet zone forests, which are under-represented in the national systems of protected areas.
4. To identify, classify manage and monitor all protected areas, on the basis of appropriate scientific studies and agreed criteria.
5. To manage all protected areas according to approved management plans, which will be reviewed and revised regularly, and implemented by staff at the field level who will be afforded such authority and resources as they need to do so effectively.
6. To ensure that protected areas are internally zoned according to accepted criteria, to reflect the different resources within each zone and the most appropriate sustainable use of resources.
7. To manage all protected areas the context of their surrounding landscapes, taking into account the ecological, social and economics links between natural and human systems.
8. To promote active, ecosystem-based management of all protected areas, including the eradication wherever possible of alien and invasive species, subject to though consideration of the environmental impacts of these interventions.
9. To regulate the importation of alien organisms, including genetically-modified organisms, so as to minimize risks to the integrity of Sri Lanka's biodiversity.

10. To prepare and implement species recovery plan for all endangered species, using objective criteria for their identification developed by a national task force or other expert consultative mechanism.
11. To encourage and enable the sustainable the development of communities living around protected areas, by ensuring that local people are consulted in the process of decision making, actively participate in implementation, and receive direct benefits from the management of protected areas.
12. To facilitate eco-tourism in protected areas, to the extent that it provides benefits to local people and does not damage the ecosystem concerned.

3 Policy on institutional Support for Wildlife Conservation

National policy in this area is:

1. To provide adequate support to wildlife resource managers, and to reorient, strengthen and decentralize their institutions as necessary to enable them to accomplish their task effectively.
2. To amend or revise legislation as necessary to support the implementation of this policy.
3. To promote research and education as valuable contributors to the national effort on wildlife conservation.
4. To value the traditional knowledge of sustainable ecosystem use possessed by the people of Sri Lanka, and incorporate this as appropriate within wildlife-management systems.
5. To encourage ex-situ conservation measures, where they can be shown to contribute to wildlife conservation, environmental education and the scientific understanding of how to use biodiversity sustainably.

4 Policy on Inter-sectoral linkages

National Policy in this area is:

1. To monitor events and take action needed to maintain consistency between the national wildlife policy and other sectoral and inter-sectoral policies.
2. To promote co-operation among stakeholders through participatory decision making at all levels.

DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

Biological diversity:

The total variety of living things at the genetic, species and ecosystem level.

Biological repository:

A collection of organisms or other living material, such as a botanical or zoological garden, an aquarium, butterfly farm , insect house, bird park, aviary, or a germ-plasm collection, or a collection of preserved specimens established for scientific research, such as a museum.

Bioprospecting:

The search for commercial products and processes using biodiversity as a source of information and as a stimulant for new ideas.

Ecosystem:

All the organisms in a particular place and time, including all the relationship amongst them, together with all the physical features of light, heat moisture, wind and chemistry that affect them.

Eco tourism :

Nature based tourism that is sustainable, includes environmental education and supports conservation.

Endemic :

An organism that occurs naturally only in a named place.

Environment :

Everything that surrounds an organism and effects it.

Protected area :

An area set aside primarily to preserve natural ecosystems, to maintain ecological processes and to manage populations of native wildlife.

Species :

A group of organisms capable of interbreeding freely with each other but not with members of other species, usually identified using distinguishing physical characteristic.

Stakeholder :

Someone with an interest in what happens to a resource, usually because there is something to be gained or lost in a dispute over it.

Sustainable development :

A process by which the needs of current or local people are met in ways that preserve or enhance the ability of future or distant people to do the same.

Wildlife :

Plants and animals that owe their existence to natural phenomena or to processes that occur autonomously