



“The Time is Now”
World Rainforest Day
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A dense, lush green rainforest with sunlight filtering through the canopy. The image shows a variety of green leaves and branches, with some areas appearing brighter due to sunlight and others in deep shadow.

World Rainforest Day

Rainforest Partnership is an environmental organization in Texas, initiated in the year 2007. In countries such as Ecuador, and Peru which have a diversity of rainforests, this organization make efforts to strengthen the economy of the locals and proceed with community-based programmes to conserve the forests by spreading awareness of the functions of the rainforests.

An aerial photograph of a dense tropical rainforest, showing a vast expanse of green trees and foliage. A central white rectangular box contains text about rainforests. The forest canopy is thick and layered, with varying shades of green and some darker patches where the canopy is denser.

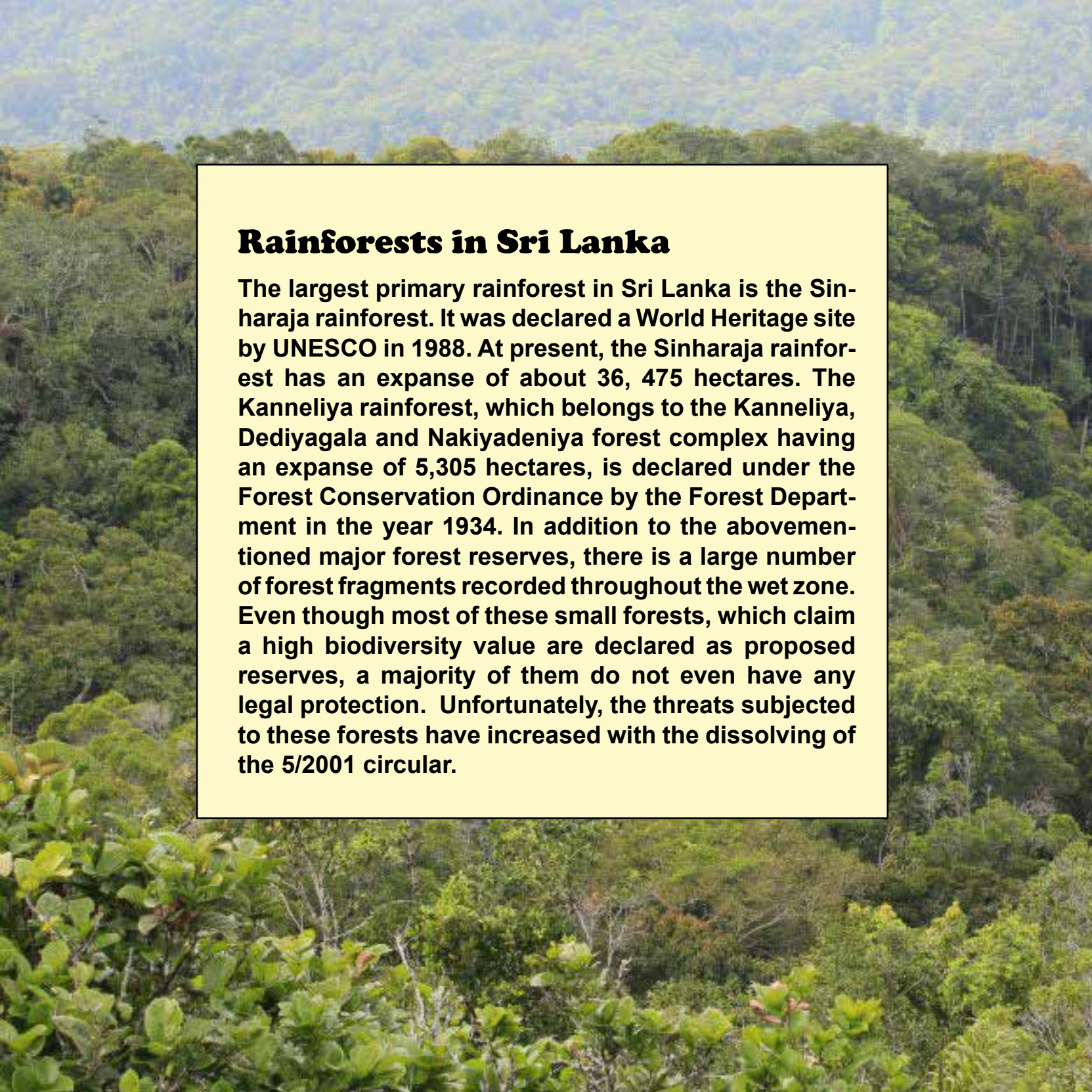
Rainforests

Tropical rainforests, which provide a massive service for the subsistence of the Earth, are currently the oldest ecosystem in the world. According to fossil records, certain rainforests are assumed to be about 70-100 million years old. At present, rainforests cover about 6% of the Earth's land surface.

Tropical rainforests which are distributed on the land surface near the Equator, are located in Asia, Africa, South America, Central America and on islands around Australia. They have an annual rainfall of more than 1500 mm and do not have a dry season. The main characteristic of rainforest plant cover is the layered complexion. The layers can be categorized into 4 layers; the Emergent layer, Canopy layer, Understory layer and Forest Floor. Each layer hosts a unique diversity of Fauna and Flora.

The largest rainforest in the world is the Amazon rainforest, located in South America which covers an area of 6.7 million km² and the second-largest rainforest is the Congo rainforest, located in the continent of Africa which covers an area of 2.8 million km². The New Guinea rainforest is the third-largest rainforest with an expanse of 28.2 million hectares. In addition, there is a vast distribution of rainforests in the continent of Asia: in South Asian countries such as Sri Lanka, India, and Myanmar; eastern countries such as Malaysia, Java, and Borneo and South-East Asian countries such as Laos, Vietnam and Brunei.





Rainforests in Sri Lanka

The largest primary rainforest in Sri Lanka is the Sinharaja rainforest. It was declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1988. At present, the Sinharaja rainforest has an expanse of about 36, 475 hectares. The Kanneliya rainforest, which belongs to the Kanneliya, Dediyaagala and Nakiyadeniya forest complex having an expanse of 5,305 hectares, is declared under the Forest Conservation Ordinance by the Forest Department in the year 1934. In addition to the abovementioned major forest reserves, there is a large number of forest fragments recorded throughout the wet zone. Even though most of these small forests, which claim a high biodiversity value are declared as proposed reserves, a majority of them do not even have any legal protection. Unfortunately, the threats subjected to these forests have increased with the dissolving of the 5/2001 circular.

Biodiversity of the rainforests of Sri Lanka

The layered complexion can also be seen in the Rainforests of Sri Lanka. The emergents include; Thiniya (*Shorea congestiflora*), Nawanda (*Shorea stipularis*), and Beraliya dun (*Shorea affinis*). Trees such as Bu hora (*Dipterocarpus hispidus*), and Hora (*Dipterocarpus zeylanicus*) occupy the canopy layer. Thapasara Bulath (*Apa-ma siliquosa*), Pinibaru (*Lijndenia capitellata*), Perathambala (*Gaertnera Vaginans*) are found in the understory and shrub layer. In addition, rattan palms (*Calamus spp.*), Veniwel (*Coscinium fenestratum*), mosses, orchids, lichens, ferns and ground orchids are also found in rainforests.

There is a high faunal diversity in the rainforests, of which the mammalian diversity ranges from the Elephant, the largest to the Asian house shrew, the smallest.



The largest carnivore in Sri Lanka is the Sri Lankan leopard; the only group of flying mammals, bats and primates such as monkeys and lorries are found in Sri Lankan rainforests.

The waterways which flow across these rainforests are an ideal habitat for the ichthyofauna. A large number of fish recorded in Sri Lanka are found in these waterways as it is clean, fresh and exposed less to the sunlight. Also, a large diversity of endemic fish is recorded in rainforest areas.

Fauna such as amphibians and reptiles, which are sensitive to environmental conditions reside in these rainforests. Taking bird diversity into consideration, rainforests also provide a home to many rare bird species.




Threats and Conservation

Timber extraction and deforestation are the major threats experienced by forests. Cutting down the plants by the residents of nearby villages, extracting rare plants for economic purposes, poaching animals, tea plantations which clear forested areas, the establishment of hydropower stations, gene theft, bushfires and the spread of invasive species are the threats experienced by the rainforests.

Public awareness is the fundamental practice to conserve these ecosystems.

Although there are laws established, without human involvement they cannot be observed properly.



An aerial photograph showing a dirt road running vertically through the center of the image. To the left of the road is a cleared area with many dead, bleached tree trunks and branches lying on the ground. To the right of the road is a dense, lush green rainforest. A yellow text box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing two paragraphs of text.

Organizations such as Rainforest Partnership mainly focus on community-based awareness programs; they guide the people residing near rainforests to sustainably interact with the ecosystem and protect the forests via the people who receive benefits from it.

In addition, declaring surrounding areas near the forests and isolated forest fragments as forest reserves, reforestation activities and conducting research can be of high importance to promote conservation.



World Rainforest Day

World Rainforest Day was first celebrated on the 22nd of June 2017 by the Rainforest Partnership, as an effort to raise awareness of the importance of rainforests. Afterwards, the 22nd of June is annually celebrated as the Word Rainforest Day by many countries around the world. This could be recognized as a collaborative effort to promote awareness and conservation strategies to protect rainforests.

The theme for this year's celebration is "The Time is Now".

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