

Diyasaru Park, Thalawathugoda

Extending across 60 acres, *Diyasaru Park*, is a dreamy opportunity for the visitors in Sri Lanka who need to get more close to the nature forgetting about the heavy traffic jam, busy noises and sweltering heat in the busy city around them. *Diyasaru Park* is an urban wetland park which located in highly urbanized area of Sri Jayawardenepura, the administrative capital of Sri Lanka with close proximity to the parliament. The park showcases a range of wetland habitats such as marshes, flooded woodlands, lakes and ponds including wonders of urban wildlife in Colombo.

Diyasru Park is a model which demonstrates how urban ecosystems can be wisely used to integrate ecosystem services with the urban development to enhance the city livability through enriching human well-being and economic prosperity. Earlier this land was just a neglected marshy land vigorously invaded by invasive species. But through the development of this wetland park, it was able transform the land into a hotspot of urban biodiversity in Colombo that provides nature based amusement, relaxation and education for city dwellers that supports for urban ecotourism. The park carries the vision of **“Releasing the Stress of Urbanization”**.

Diyasaru Park is an ideal place that shows the beauty and uniqueness of urban wildlife in Colombo. More than 230 animal species have been recorded from the park including many rare and migrant birds, butterflies, dragonflies, mammals, many types of fishes including endemics, amphibians, and reptiles. Visitors can spot the miracle of urban wildlife in here including fishing cat, Eurasian otter, estuarine crocodile and Purple-faced leaf monkey which is endemic to Sri Lanka. So far five fishing cats have been recorded who residents in the park.

Park offers many features and activities for visitors to have unique wetland experience in the middle of the city. These features include bird watching tower, bird hide, butterfly garden, organic agriculture area, open study area, buildings which are adaptive to the nature, board walks to enjoy the beauty of the wilderness while walking through the wetland, plant nursery, ecology laboratory, ample parking and rest room facilities.

One of the prime objectives of the park is to give opportunity to learn about nature while enjoying and experiencing it. To cater that, park organizes many kinds of programs for different types of groups ranging from kids to elderly people. Park conducts guided nature walks, special education programs, weekly and monthly kids programs and wetland workshops for public. A small but well equipped ecology laboratory has set up to encourage kids and students to conduct nature based practical and field sessions. Park also facilitates to conduct projects and research in multidisciplinary areas. *Diyasaru* is the only place in Colombo which gives opportunity to boating in the canals through the lush vegetation while enjoying the urban wildlife. Not only education, but also park provides venue to conduct meetings, gatherings, photo shoots and other occasions for the ones who love to celebrate important events with the nature theme.







