

is then either speared or disembowelled from the side. I cannot still believe this account. But it seems to be a fact that wild elephants have disappeared from this area, even though the cover conditions have remained conducive for the species. The matter certainly deserves to be properly probed.

Elephant depredation in this region had been a common and widespread happening, even during the British period. I have myself witnessed menacing elephant problem in many localities of their region in the fifties and sixties. People had been harassed and naturally resentment was strong amongst these people. Elephant capturing was the only partial solution to curb this menace, as with capturing of elephants starting, most of the herds moved away from the vicinity of the human habitation. But since elephant capturing had been banned, people have had no respite. This might had been the chief reason, why the terrible news of slaughtering of the elephants (if true) and also

about illegal capturing did not filter out. Or is this complete apathy of the Forest Department?

However, this may be a dreaded example of how elephants can disappear from an area, even when the habitat is retained. I have been told that the number of elephants in the North Cachar areas and in the adjoining Khashi hills areas have also sharply declined during the last few years, mainly due to poaching for meat. Probably a thorough and accurate status survey is called for immediately. Unless ways and means are suggested and proper action taken in all earnestness, the elephant may be on its way out from many areas of the North East, despite Project Elephant. Lack of people's support and antipathy towards conservation of elephant will only hasten the decline.

*Address: S. Deb Roy
24/4, Type V. Lodi complex
Lodi Road, New Delhi 11003
India*

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Book Review

Souvenirs of a Forgotten Heritage. Gamini de S.G. Punchihewa, Government Press, Colombo, 1989. 480 pp. ISBN 955-9073-00-1. Price: 263.75 Sri Lankan Rupees.

This book deals largely with the Veddas (the indigenous people of Sri Lanka) and their vanishing culture. Nevertheless, the chapters on the Flora and Fauna will be a useful reference work for anyone interested in the interactions of man and wildlife in the eastern part of Sri Lanka. The chapters on the elephants provide some useful information on how villagers dealt with the problem of crop depredations by marauding elephants in the Gal Oya region before the area was developed. Mr. Punchihewa mixes facts with myths to make the text interesting to read. Elephants, from the author's personal observations, appear to be migratory, appearing in the area during the Maha and Yala seasons (October to March and April to September), attracted by the ripening paddy, sugarcane, coconut and oranges. The book also deals with some of the salient points about the biology and behaviour of the elephants. There is also a reference to the use of electric fencing to ward off the elephants and how some elephants were able to overcome this obstacle. A chapter deals with the ancient ways of capturing elephants. There are some editorial inconsistencies, particularly with species names, but this should not detract from the value of the book to anyone interested in elephants and the vanishing culture of the Veddas in Sri Lanka. (Ch. S.)