



YALA NATIONAL PARK  
SRI LANKA

# MAP

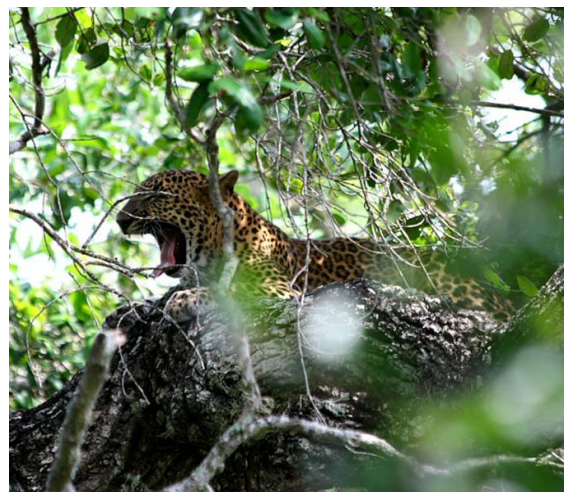
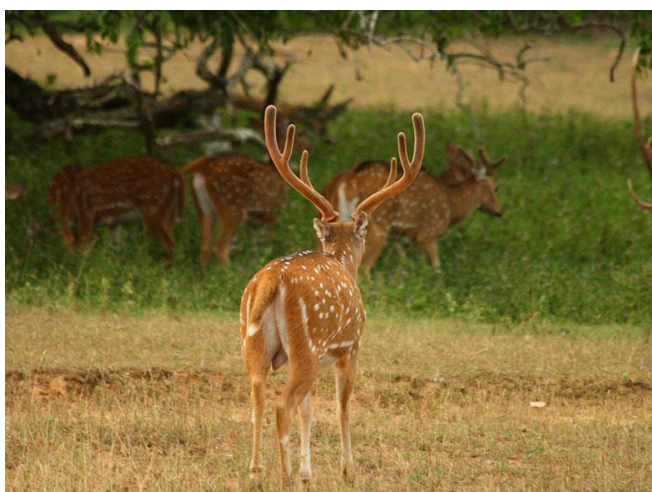


# HISTORY

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In 1560 Spanish cartographer Cipriano Sanchez noted Yala in his map "is abandoned for 300 years due to insalubrious conditions." Chief Justice Sir Alexander Johnston wrote a detailed account on Yala in 1806 after travelling from Trincomalee to Hambantota. On March 23, 1900 the government proclaimed Yala and Wilpattu reserves under the Forest Ordinance. Initially the extent of the reserve was 389 square kilometres (150 sq mi) between the Menik and Kumbukkan Rivers. At that time the reserve did not bear the name Yala. The Game Protection Society (now the Wildlife and Nature Protection Society) was instrumental in establishing the reserve. The forest area between Palatupana and Yala was declared a hunting site reserved only for the resident sportsmen. Henry Engelbrecht was appointed as the first park warden.

On 1 March 1938, Yala became a national park when the Flora and Fauna Protection Ordinance was passed into law by D. S. Senanayake, the minister of agriculture. The park consists of five blocks. Subsequently four other blocks were incorporated to the park. There are six national parks and three wildlife sanctuaries in the vicinity of Yala. Kumana National Park, Yala Strict Nature Reserve and Kataragama, Katagamuwa, and Nimalawa sanctuaries are continuous with the park.



# ANIMALS

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Yala National Park is the most visited and second largest national park in Sri Lanka. The park consists of five blocks, two of which are now open to the public, and also adjoining parks. The blocks have individual names such as, Ruhuna National Park (block 1) and Kumana National Park or 'Yala East' for the adjoining area. It is situated in the southeast region of the country, and lies in Southern Province and Uva Province. The park covers 979 square kilometres (378 sq mi) and is located about 300 kilometres (190 mi) from Colombo. Yala was designated as a wildlife sanctuary in 1900, and, along with Wilpattu was one of the first two national parks in Sri Lanka, having been designated in 1938. The park is best known for its variety of wild animals. It is important for the conservation of Sri Lankan elephants, Sri Lankan leopards and aquatic birds. There are six national parks and three wildlife sanctuaries in the vicinity of Yala. Among the largest is Lunugamvehera National Park. The park is situated in the dry semi-arid climatic region and rain is received mainly during the northeast monsoon. Yala hosts a variety of ecosystems ranging from moist monsoon forests to freshwater and marine wetlands. It is one of the 70 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Sri Lanka. Yala harbours 215 bird species including six endemic species of Sri Lanka. The number of mammals that has been recorded from the park is 44, and it has one of the highest leopard densities in the world. The area around Yala has hosted several ancient civilisations. Two important pilgrim sites, Sithulpahuwa and Magul Vihara, are situated within the park. The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami caused severe damage on the Yala National Park and 250 people died in its vicinity. The number of visitors has been on the rise since 2009 after the security situation in the park improved.





# BIO DIVERSITY

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