

Asian Elephant Walkway themed “Uda Walawe” opens in UK

Most Zoos in the world have themed their elephant exhibits to reflect Thailand, Burma, Vietnam or India but Twycross Zoo has themed their new elephant habitat after Sri Lanka. We in India are familiar with Sri Lanka and some of us have seen the largest elephant orphanage in the world at Pinnawela. Elephant, as the largest land mammal has been having a hard time of it ... its land has been large usurped by human beings who have the gall to blame the elephant for eating their crops and coming into conflict with human beings.

Twycross Zoo took advice from their zoological consultant Vasantha Nugegoda, from Design for Life, to help design this exhibit. Vasantha is known to people who visited Singapore Zoo many times.

The High Commissioner for Sri Lanka, His Excellency Justice Nihal Jayasinghe officially opened the new £1 million Asian elephant habitat and walkway “Uda Walawe” Wednesday 28th July at 2.00 pm. He unveiled a commemorative plaque, and lit the ceremonial oil lamp. He also cut the ribbon and led guests along the new walkway while a troupe of Kandyan dancers greet them and performed their ancient native dances while Kandyan drums accompanied them. Thus the new elephant enclosure is both a zoological and cultural attraction.

Designers used an the model of an authentic farmer’s tree hut to grace the entrance to Uda Walawe where information graphics on elephants distribution in Sri Lanka and Asia grace the walls. Then they step on to a forest train leading to a Sri Lankan village school which has a range of religious, cultural and elephant artefacts. Beautiful graphic boards showcase Sri Lankan wildlife and tourism and a large screen show films of



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elephant festival parades during a festival called Esala Perehera conducted annually in Kandy a beautiful hill area not far from the Pinnawela Orphanage. This is a Buddhist summer festival unique to Sri Lanka and visitors will see a life size ceremonial elephant dressed in full parade robes.

The forest trail then continues to a wooden bridge over a water lily pool where one can see five elephants up close and personal. Inside is like the Uda Walawe National Park itself, with a large lake, trees, rocks and sandbed where visitors are immersed in the exhibit. The train divides into two, with one trail for less able visitors, and the other climbs a high mountain to a ruined temple "Lord Ganesh", a statue of the famous elephant God is displayed and detailed information about him is given. The lower route also permits visitors to experience a smaller temple of Ganesh.

On the veranda of Buddhist and Hindu temples there are brass bells usually under a wooden tower and this is repeated at the exhibit. In Asia worshippers would enter the temple and ring the bell to evoke the Gods and inform them of their presence.

The trail continues over a wooden bridge and stream where visitors come upon grassland habitat, unique to Uda Walawe National Park. A childrens path starts at this point and more adventurous ones will investigate an interpretation site where there is interactive information about elephants after which is a typical Sri Lankan village hut. The hut allows visitors to see how Sri Lankan villagers live close to the wild elephants with their crops of corn and sunflowers finally leading through a wetland.

The exhibit Uda Walawe is intended to promote the conservation of the Asian elephants and showcase wildlife conservation programmes in Sri Lanka. Uda Walawe in Sri Lanka



Inside the exhibit is like the Uda Walawe National Park itself, with a large lake, trees, rocks and sandbed where visitors are immersed in the exhibit.



The High Commissioner for Sri Lanka congratulates Dr. Suzie Boardman, Director of Twycross Zoo

is a National Park set up to provide sanctuary for many wild animals. About 300 elephants live in the park along with water buffalo, water monitor lizards, sambar deer, monkeys, leopards and many bird species. Ecotourism provides income for locals in the country and also incentive to protect the wildlife there.

The Park successfully reintroduced 15 elephants to the wild and is said to be the first to do so for orphan elephants.

It is an important site for unique bird species. Sensitive and well managed eco-tourism is an important source of income for local people in Sri Lanka and provides an incentive to continue to protect the wildlife. The National Park is also the first in Sri Lanka to run a reintroduction programme for orphan elephants back to the wild, so far they have successfully reintroduced over 15 elephants.



Twycross Zoo has held an elephant collection for many years. They have used help of Artificial Insemination (A.I.) to produce an elephant calf after a twenty two month gestation period. They named it Vijay Ganesh which symbolizes the victory of have such a birth and honoring it with the name of a Hindu God. Sixth August the calf will be a year old. The zoo will celebrate by running a competition to award some lucky winning visitor a family pass to the zoo worth any number of visits to Twycross zoo and entry into ten other zoos and feeding experience with the elephants following by lunch in Himalaya for the whole family.

Suzanne Boardman, Director of Twycross Zoo, is the energy behind the exhibit and hopes that visitors will enjoy their taste of Sri Lanka, as well as learning about its cultural and historical

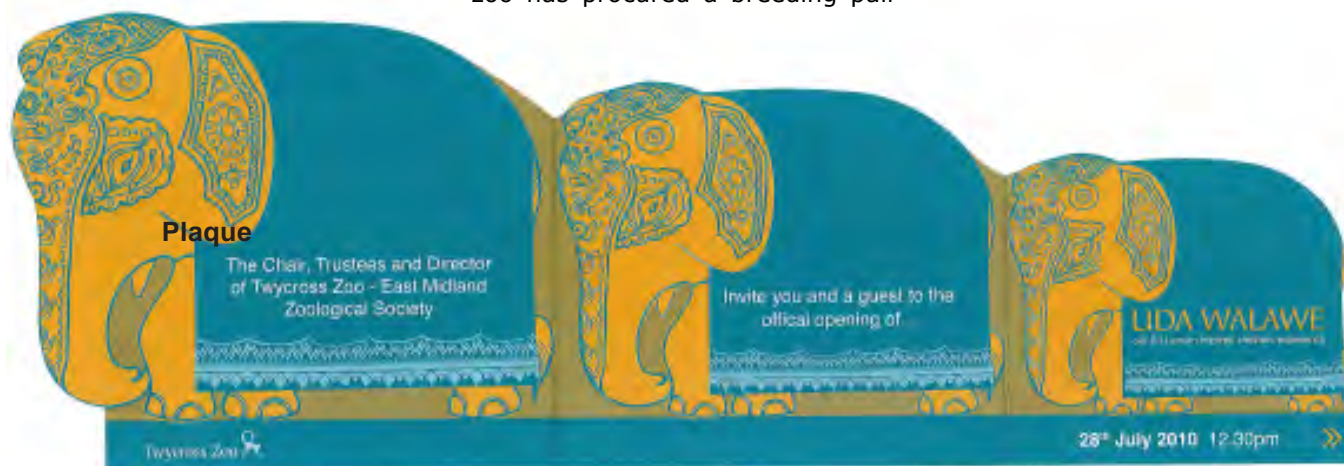
aspects. That would include the important role that domesticated elephant have played in the culture and country. The new exhibit will underline the importance of conservation of elephants and highlight their importance in Sri Lanka. Hopefully visitors will also visit Sri Lanka after their taste of Asian wildlife in the zoo.

Himalaya at Twycross Zoo

On Thursday 20th May the official opening of the Himalaya exhibit which was a signature day for the entire locality called "Midlands" in England. 'Himalaya' is a new gateway to the Twycross Zoo's world famous zoological collection. The Himalaya building includes a wading bird aviary which is one of the largest aviaries in the country and a restaurant with views of their naturalistic snow leopard exhibit. Snow leopards are a threatened species and the zoo has procured a breeding pair

hopefully to contribute to conservation. This unique 'Himalaya' exhibit provides a free community facility for the Midlands, celebrating the culture and natural patrimony of the Indian sub-continent. At the same time the exhibit links the zoo to the cultural heritage of the Asian communities in the region.

The initiative is also an important and much needed socio-economic flagship project for the locality. 'Himalaya' also features sustainable technology, with eco-friendly features such as ground source heating and a green sedum roof. A series of ponds and reed beds are next to the building and will be utilized for treatment and recycling of waste water. With these environmental benefits, the wetlands will prove to be a beautiful environment for visitors and even habitat for native plant and animal species.



Twycross Zoo East Midland Zoological Society is a registered charity and aims to "care for our world's animals and environments through conservation, communication and integrity". The zoo claims to be the world's most comprehensive collection of primate species which over 500,000 visitors annually come to see. Twycross Zoo is a member of the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA), the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) and Wildlife Information Network (WIN) organisations which represent their member collections and promote the values of good zoos and aquariums.

This feature is indebted to the Marketing Department of the Twycross Zoo who faithfully provided us with press releases and information which we have used as source material for this

feature as well as the lovely photos that can be seen on the web version of ZOOS' PRINT at www.zoosprint.org. Suzie Boardman is a friend of Zoo Outreach Organisation and Twycross Zoo has contributed funds to Zoo Outreach Organisation on various occasions, including conducting surveys to understand human/elephant conflict in four different South Asian countries.



National Conference on "Biodiversity for sustainable development: Threats, indicators, climate change, poverty alleviation and targets for safeguarding Biodiversity"

Centre for Biodiversity and Forest Studies, School of Energy, Environment and Natural Resources
Madurai Kamaraj University, August 25-27, 2010

Objectives:

To create a common platform to bring innovative ideas from academicians, scientists, and stakeholders of different parts of the country to develop strategies for mitigating biodiversity loss.

Conference structure

1. Inventorying current status of biodiversity in different ecosystems
2. Biodiversity measurement - approaches and challenges
3. Biodiversity loss - causes and consequences
4. Conservation-people's participation, role of government and non government agencies, conventional and recent approaches
5. Biodiversity rights, policies and case studies

For more information please contact:

Prof. K. Muthuchellam, Organizing Secretary
National conference on Biodiversity for Sustainable Development
Centre for Biodiversity and Forest Studies, School of Energy
Environment and Natural Resources, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai
Tamil Nadu.
Phone: 0452 2458020; Email: kmcbiodiver2010@yahoo.in