

Sri Lankan Leopard Panthera pardus kotiya



The Sri Lankan leopard is one of Sri Lanka's top predators. It has a tawny or rusty yellow coat, with dark spots. Sri Lankan leopards are the top predators of Sri Lanka. Yala and Wilpattu National Parks are good places to see leopards. They are solitary hunters. Males and females live in overlapping territories. Male territories usually overlap into the smaller territories of females, as well as the ranges of neighbouring males. They prefer to hunt at night, but are also active during dawn, dusk and the day. They eat various small mammals, birds, reptiles, deer, wild boar and monkeys. They have even been known to tackle almost fully grown buffalos. They silently stalk their prey until in striking distance, unleashing a burst of speed to quickly chase and then pounce on its victim, usually killing it with a bite to the throat.

Sri Lankan leopards are considered Endangered. They are threatened because of poaching, persecution and habitat loss. However, they are still fairly adaptable and able to live close to minor human settlements. In Sinhalese this animal is really known as 'kotiya'. However, many people wrongly call it 'diviya', thinking that kotiya means tiger. Diviya actually refers to various small wildcats, such as the fishing and rusty-spotted cats. Nowadays, most people still call leopards diviya.

Read more about these and more of our native animals in my new book, *Wildlife of Wilpattu at Lens' Range* (which is in press)), plus some information on my birding trips at shyalbatrossyoungbirder.blogspot.com

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