TOWARDS A RATIONAL FOREST CONSERVATION STRATEGY FOR SRI LANKA

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Botanical and zoological surveys in the past as well as more recent phyto- and zoo-sociological studies have shown that the distribution of biological richness in Sri Lanka is further localised within each bioclimatic and major vegetation zone. This is particularly true for the southwestern perhumid and humid bioclimatic zones (Fernando, 1984 : Gunatilleke et. al., 1987). However, most of the protected areas of Sri Lanka include only a few representatives of the richest biological areas, notably in the lowland wet zone, while the biologically poor areas are relatively better represented.

Distribution of floristic richness examined indicated that 25% of the woody endemics enumerated are restricted to any one of the nine lowland rain forest sites sampled. Most of these endemics are already in the threatened categories of the IUCN Red Data Book. Therefore, a meaingful forest conservation strategy should take into account the genetic, bio - logical and ecosystem diversity of natural forests in addition to their role of protection of the environment.

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