

**B-108 : SEASONAL CHANGES IN POPULATION STRUCTURE,  
ACTIVITY PATTERN AND MOVEMENTS OF ELEPHANTS IN THE  
RUHUNA NATIONAL PARK**

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The purpose of this study was to assess the status of elephants in the Ruhuna National Park. This survey was carried out in four periods from June 1991 to March 1992. The study routes were selected to cover as much area of the Park as possible distinguishing diverse habitats. When elephants were sighted their numbers, sex, age category and behaviour were noted.

In the month of June there was abundant food and water in the park. Animals tend to aggregate in larger groups during this period. They are more frequently observed along the coastal zone, where open plains are rich in pastures. As the drought proceeds most of the water holes in the coastal zone dry up, and the elephants move towards the central and northern regions of Block 1 of the Park.

The activity pattern refers to the time spent on feeding. In the wet season when water is not a limiting factor animal activity disperses throughout the day time. As the drought proceeds their activity begins late in the afternoon and increases steadily afterwards.

Despite the skewed sex ratio observed in favour of the females in Block 1 of the Park (1 male : 9 females), the reproductive performances of animals appears good from the proportion of calves in all study sessions. In 1980 the average was 1 male : 4 females. The change probably indicates a higher death rate of males than females.