



Department of Zoology Faculty of Science / University of Peradeniya



Dr. Rajnish Vandercone

B.Sc (Perad), PhD (WUSTL, USA)

Senior Lecturer

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About Me

I am a wildlife ecologist attached to the Department of Zoology of the University of Peradeniya and also a co-director of the Kaludiyapokuna Primate Conservation and Research Center (www.kpcrc.org). My research primarily focuses on species interaction, with special emphasis on identifying behavioral and physiological traits that make certain species more vulnerable to anthropogenic habitat change than others. In addition, I am interested in human-wildlife interaction, which has major ramifications for the conservation of wildlife.

Higher Education Qualifications

🎓 **PhD**

Washington University in St Louis,
Missouri
USA
(2011)

🎓 **MSc**

Washington University in St Louis,
Missouri
USA
(2006)

🎓 **BSc**

University of Peradeniya
Sri Lanka
(2003)

Awards, Scholarships, Memberships & Fellowships



National Research Council Award for Scientific Publication-2013



National Research Council Merit Award for Scientific Publication-2012



Presidential Award for Research (certificate of Recognition) for publishing research in International Scientific Journals cited in the Science Citation Index-2010



Dean's Dissertation Fellowship-2010



Charles R. Jenkins Award. Certificate of Distinguished Achievement awarded by Lambda Alpha, National Collegiate Honor Society for Anthropology by reason of noteworthy contribution in the advancement of the study of Anthropology-2007



Midwest Primate Interest Group (MPIG)



Primatological Society of Sri Lanka

Positions Held



Senior Lecturer Grade I, Department of Zoology, University of Peradeniya- (2013)



Senior Lecturer Grade II, Department of Biological Sciences, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka- (2012-2023)



Affiliate Faculty, Department of Environmental Science and Policy, George Mason University, Virginia, USA- (2021)



Honorary Research Associate, Department of Anthropology Washington University in St Louis, Missouri, USA 63130- (2012-2019)



Head, Department of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Applied Sciences, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka- (2017-2020)

My Teachings



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Research Interests (Research Fields/ Projects)

- Processes that structure primate and ecological communities
- Ecology and conservation of colobine monkeys
- Spatial memory and search behavior
- Human-wildlife interaction

Ongoing Research and Projects



Traits of resilience: Behavioral and gut microbial differences between two sympatric langur species in Sri Lanka (Co-directed with Lu A, Salmi R).

Globally, anthropogenic habitat degradation and loss pose the most significant threat to the persistence of biodiversity. However, species differ in their abilities to respond to rapid habitat change, with some quickly adapting to modified environments and others faring poorly in the face of such challenges. The study involves examining behavioral and physiological traits in two species of leaf monkeys that experience desperate outcomes in the face of anthropogenic habitat change. *Semnopithecus priam* thrives in human dominated landscapes while, *S. vetulus* fares poorly in face of habitat change. The project is conducted through the Kaludiyapokuna Primate Conservation and Research Center (www.kpcrc.org), which I co-direct with Drs. Roberta Salmi and Amy Lu .



Behavioral ecology of the Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*) in and around Minneriya National Park (Co-directed with LaDue C, and Oklahoma City Zoo and Botanical Gardens)

Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) are endangered with declining populations fragmented by human activity. Sri Lanka has the second largest elephant population (estimated between 5,000 and 7,000 elephants) and highest elephant density anywhere in Asia. Predictably, human– elephant conflict (HEC) is common and intense on the island and hence, animal-centered management strategies are warranted to address the needs of stakeholders, while also upholding elephant welfare. Unfortunately, our limited understanding of Asian elephant socioecology has precluded the development of animal-centered approaches. Recent studies on the Asian elephant behavior have shown various factors in the social and physical environment to influence changes in behavior, emphasizing the importance of studying elephants in various contexts across changing landscapes. This project focuses on characterizing elephant socioecology, gut microbiome and physiological stress responses around areas of high human activity in the North Central dry zone of Sri Lanka. The project is co-directed with Dr. Chase LaDue and Oklahoma City Zoo and Botanical Gardens.

Key Publications



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Conferences



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My Publications

Please goto the website.

<https://sci.pdn.ac.lk/zoology/staff/Rajnish-Vandercone>