

**Higher Certificate Course in**

**Ecotourism and Nature Interpretation**

Offered by the

***Center for Sustainability***

Department of Forestry and Environmental Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

**Course Outline and Syllabus**

**Synopsis**: The Certificate Course in Nature Interpretation and Ecotourism offered by the Center for Sustainability, Department of Forestry and Environmental Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura in collaboration with the Department of Wildlife Conservation, Sri Lanka is designed to train naturalists, eco-interpreters, eco-guides to deliver authentic, environmentally responsible, and professional ecotourism experience to their clients.

**Targeted Groups:**

* Naturalists/Environmentalists currently employed in tourism sector, and seeking professional training
* Individuals seeking a carrier as Naturalists/ Nature guides
* State-sector officers (such as Department of Wildlife Conservation and Forest Department) in charge of ecotourism/nature-based tourism development
* Park officers/wardens conducting education/outreach programs and nature guiding
* Garden Supervisors / Curators (Zoological and Botanical)
* Educators conducting field excursions to natural areas and conservation educationists
* Tour guides who wish to undertake nature-based tourism
* Students, nature lovers and enthusiasts, volunteers

**Method of teaching:** The course is designed to have a good blend of classroom facilitation sessions and field sessions conducted in Protected Areas (Nature Reserves and National Parks)

**Minimum admission requirements:**

Completed GCE A/L in Biology and having a minimum 5 years relevant working experience or

A relevant degree (biology, archeology, social sciences) or

Any other combination of special qualifications and experience deemed acceptable by the course administrators

**Medium of instruction:** English (explanations may be provided in Sinhala medium)

**Intake:** 35 students maximum

**Course Contents**

**Module 1: An Introduction to Ecotourism**

This module introduces students to the key concepts, principles, ethics, planning, and management of ecotourism activities which promote cultural and environmental awareness and local economic benefits.

**Module 1: Biodiversity of Sri Lanka**

The aim of this module is to introduce key concepts of biodiversity with special reference to biodiversity of Sri Lanka. Topics covered will be Sri Lanka as a biodiversity hotspot, Protected Area Network of Sri Lanka, Legislations related to wildlife conservation, Concepts of Endemic, Indigenous, Endangered and Threatened species; IUCN Red List of threatened species; Threats to biodiversity and biodiversity conservation, The role of tourism in biodiversity conservation.

**Module 2: Tropical Forest Ecology and Floral Diversity of Sri Lanka**

The aim of this module is to familiarize learners with flora of Sri Lanka and their distribution. The topics covered will include: Fundamental concepts of forest ecology, Distribution of flora with reference to agro-ecological zones, Major ecosystems, Ecosystem Services, Forest and vegetation types of Sri Lanka, Tree identification and classification.

**Module 3: Faunal Diversity of Sri Lanka**

The aim of this module is to familiarize learners with fauna of Sri Lanka and their distribution and identification. This will consist of several sub-modules.

***3A. Avifaunal diversity:*** the module is designed to provide an introduction to the taxonomy, identification, ecology, behaviour and conservation of birds of importance in Sri Lanka with special emphasis on endemic species.

***3B. Mammalian diversity:*** the module is designed to provide an introduction to the taxonomy, identification, ecology, behaviour and conservation of mammals of significance in Sri Lanka with special emphasis on endemic species.

***3C. Reptilian Diversity:*** the module is designed to provide an introduction to the taxonomy, identification, ecology, behaviour and conservation of reptiles of major significance in Sri Lanka with special emphasis on endemic species.

***3D. Diversity of Fish:*** the module is designed to provide an introduction to the taxonomy, identification, ecology, behaviour and conservation of fresh-water and marine fish species of major significance in Sri Lanka with special emphasis on endemic species.

***3E. Diversity of Amphibians:*** the module is designed to provide an introduction to the taxonomy, identification, ecology and conservation of amphibians of significance in Sri Lanka with special emphasis on endemic species.

**Module 4: Animal Behavior**

This module aims at providing a basic knowledge on animal behavior. Special emphasis will be on human recreational disturbances and behavioral responses of wild animals.

**Module 4: Nature Interpretation**

The module aims to train and qualify a nature guide in developing a nature tour commentary and designing other means of interpretation. Topics covered will include; Principles of heritage interpretation, selecting and organizing appropriate information to meet the needs of specific visits, operational contexts and timing restrictions, developing appropriate key conservation message as a basis for interpretation, use and design of props, visual aids and exhibits.

**Module 5: Skill Enhancement and Effective Communication**

The aim of this module is to enhance leadership and inter-personal skills of participants, which is a key aspect in managing a tours and nature interpretation. Areas of emphasis include organizing, coordinate and conduct an eco-tour, leadership skills, effective communication techniques, delivering presentation, improving language skills and improving body language and interaction with tourists/clients.

**Module 6: First Aid and Risk Management**

The aim of this module is to provide participants with basic skills and training in managing emergency situations and performing first aid. The topics covered will include: Following emergency action principles, Demonstrating first aid for breathing emergencies, CPR and AED skills first aid for unconscious casualty, first aid for bites and stings, techniques for controlling bleeding and first aid for wounds, first aid for fractures and soft tissue injuries, first aid for burns and scalds, first aid for poisonings and basic wilderness survival techniques.

**Module 8: Basics in Nature Photography**

This module is designed to provide an understanding on basic concepts in nature photography including use of equipment and special techniques to following in a wilderness setting. Special emphasis will be paid on ethical considerations in wildlife photography and minimizing disturbances to wildlife.

**Field Classes and Practical Training**

The practical/field component includes two 3-day residential field workshops where students will receive a hands-on experience in identification of flora and fauna in different ecosystems. In addition, the field workshops are uniquely designed to emphasize leadership skills, teamwork, organizing skills, interpersonal skills, and demonstration of interpretive skills.

Field workshop 1: National Park/Forest in Wet Zone

Field workshop 2: National Park/Forest in Dry Zone

Field workshop 3: Wilderness Survival Techniques, Field-craft

**Method of Assessment**

* Continuous assignments 10%
* Individual Guided Project 10%
* In-class Writing Examination 50%
* Field workshops 20%
* Attendance 10%