

Project Update: October 2014

It was raining heavily during this month's field work and the muddy roads in the villages made travelling very difficult. A road was blocked in Pokunuthanna village by a fallen tree which was done by elephants (plate 1).



Plate 1: A broken Teak tree on the road at Pokunuthanna

The road had been cleared in the following morning by the villagers by cutting the tree with axes. We noticed that the elephants have been raiding in the wet season as in the dry season. In fact, crop raiders have uprooted some well grown, old trees such as mango and coconut, taking the advantage of the rainfall (Plate 2).





Plate 2: Uprooted Coconut and Mango trees and some destroyed Banana trees in two home gardens



Plate 3: The Guard room at the Dahaiyagala corridor and two guards in the night

On a more positive note, all the conservation efforts during the past few months, such as the awareness campaign for the villagers and the stakeholders, the petition signed by the villagers, the numerous reports and letters submitted by me to the relevant authorities and the meetings with major stakeholders were successful at a certain level. As a result of all the efforts, department of the civil defence have been assigned the duty of guarding the entrance and the exit of the Dahaiyagala elephant corridor at night (plate 3).

However, the guard rooms and the surrounding premises were still in complete darkness making it hard to carry on their duty properly. Therefore, basic facilities such as electricity, torches and fire crackers should be supplied to them to chase the elephants away from the entrance and the exit of the corridor when the crop raiding elephants are trying to enter the villages.

It would be hard to chase the crop raiding elephants back to the park at least without those minimal facilities. In the meantime, the crop raiding elephants - such as [m155] - entered Dahaiyagala village (plate 4), charging even at the guards who were on duty in the dark guard rooms.



Plate 4: [M155] was going to the Dahaiyagala village while charging at the guards.

Sometimes guards did shout at the elephants and tried to chase them back to the forest but were unsuccessful as there were not even a single fire cracker to frighten the elephants.

Therefore, we are still trying to cooperate with the relevant authorities to attract their attention to the problem.