

Sri Lankan Jackal



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Other books of the author

Collecting Feathers as a hobby, Fairey wren and Possum, Australian Aboriginal culture

Mahamaya Girls College, Kandy, Sri Lanka

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To
My Father
Dr. Danushka S. Weerasekera,

Without whose devoted encouragement and assistance,
this book would never have been completed.

Foreword



In an increasingly complex global future, the "Hemamala Upahara" book project, led by Mahamaya Girls' College, stands as a turning point in girls' education. Over a decade, it has successfully nurtured thousands of children to become young authors.

This year, by collaborating with other schools, we aimed to provide students with a wealth of new experiences. The goal was to develop multi-faceted skills, including communication, values, and creative growth. As a result, children have written books that pay tribute to Princess Hemamala, who brought the Sacred Tooth Relic—the supreme symbol of the Buddhist world—to the Hill Country (Kandy).

I extend my gratitude to everyone involved, including the students who contributed their creativity and the teachers who guided them.

Shashikala Senadhira

Principal

Mahamaya Girls' College

Congratulatory Message

It is a great honor for me, as the Governor of the Central Province, to send a congratulatory message for the launch of the books created through the Hemamala Tribute Book Creation Project initiated by Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy.

Education is the fundamental foundation for the progress of society, and it is further strengthened through books and literary creations. It is clearly commendable that students' talents, creativity, and intellectual abilities are emerging through projects such as this.

I believe that this book creation project will provide valuable knowledge and a precious literary contribution not only to the students but to the entire society. Furthermore, I hope that through such efforts, future writers who will bring pride to Sri Lanka will emerge.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation and blessings to the Principal, the academic staff, the students, and everyone involved who dedicated themselves to this successful endeavor. I wish this project and the book launch ceremony great success.

Sarath B.S. Abeykoon

Governor, Central Province

Emeritus Professor, University of Peradeniya

2026-05-10

Congratulatory Message

I highly appreciate the noble and outstanding effort of the Principal and the academic staff of Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy, the student daughters, the students of other participating schools, and everyone who dedicated themselves to plan and implement this book publication project. The project was organized under the leadership of Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy, with the participation of other schools in the Kandy Zone, with the aim of encouraging children toward book creation within the current school system, as a tribute to Hemamala Kumariya who brought the Sacred Tooth Relic to Sri Lanka.

For several decades, Sri Lanka has been committed to providing free, compulsory, quality, and equitable education to all children, thereby producing a future generation of intelligent and skilled citizens. In such a context, this book creation program for school children helps develop creative ability, critical thinking, and other positive qualities for a balanced and well-rounded personality, and contributes to building a future knowledge-based society.

May all activities of the Hemamala Tribute Book Creation Project be successful through the blessings of the Sacred Tooth Relic.

Pradeep Nilanga Dela

Diyawadana Nilame,

Sri Dalada Maligawa.

2026.05.10.

Introduction

The Sri Lankan jackal is a subspecies of the golden jackal found throughout Sri Lanka. It is one of the most adaptable carnivores in the country and plays an important role in maintaining ecological balance.

Jackals are commonly found in dry zone forests, grasslands, scrublands, and even near human settlements. Despite their wide distribution, their behavior and ecology are not fully understood in Sri Lanka, making them an important species for biological study.

Classification

The Sri Lankan jackal is an animal. Scientists put animals into groups so it is easier to learn about them.

The jackal belongs to the animal group. It has a backbone, so it is in a group called chordates. It is also a mammal because it has fur and drinks milk from its mother when it is a baby.

Jackals eat meat, so they are in a group called carnivores. They are also in the dog family. This means they are like dogs.

The scientific name of the Sri Lankan jackal is *Canis aureus naria*.

Jackals are very similar to wolves, dogs, and foxes. They are all from the same family.

Physical Characteristics

Sri Lankan jackals are medium-sized carnivores.

Key features:

- Body length: 70–85 cm
- Tail length: 20–25 cm
- Weight: 6–10 kg
- Fur: Yellowish-brown with black and white mixed hairs
- Tail: Bushy with a black tip
- Ears: Pointed and upright

Their coloration helps them blend into dry environments, providing camouflage from predators and prey.



Distribution in Sri Lanka

Jackals are widely distributed across Sri Lanka, especially in:

- Dry zone forests
- Grasslands
- Coastal areas
- Agricultural lands

They are commonly found in areas such as:

- Yala National Park
- Wilpattu National Park
- Bundala National Park

They avoid dense wet zone forests.



Habitat Preferences

Sri Lankan jackals prefer open habitats with:

- Low vegetation
- Access to water
- Availability of prey

They are highly adaptable and can survive near villages and towns. This adaptability has helped them survive despite habitat loss.



Feeding Ecology

Jackals are carnivorous scavengers.

Their diet includes:

- Small mammals (rats, hares)
- Birds and eggs
- Reptiles
- Insects
- Fruits
- Carrion (dead animals)

They play an important role in cleaning the environment by consuming carcasses.



Hunting Behavior

Jackals use different hunting strategies:

- Hunting alone for small prey
- Hunting in pairs for larger prey
- Opportunistic feeding

They rely on:

- Sharp hearing
- Strong sense of smell
- Quick movements

They are mostly active during dawn and dusk (crepuscular behavior).



Social Structure

Jackals usually live in:

- Monogamous pairs
- Small family groups

A typical group includes:

- A breeding pair
- Their offspring

They defend their territory from other jackals.



Communication

Jackals communicate using:

- Vocalizations (howls, yelps)
- Body language
- Scent marking

Their howling is often heard at night and is used to:

- Maintain territory
- Communicate with group members



Reproduction

Breeding usually occurs once a year.

Reproductive details:

- Gestation period: ~60–63 days
- Litter size: 2–6 pups
- Birth place: Dens or burrows

Both parents help in raising the young.

Growth and Development

Pups are:

- Born blind
- Dependent on parents

Development stages:

- Eyes open after ~10 days
- Begin eating solid food after 3–4 weeks
- Start hunting with parents after a few months

Role in the Ecosystem

Jackals are important for:

- Controlling rodent populations
- Cleaning carrion
- Maintaining ecological balance

They act as both predators and scavengers, making them key components of food webs.



Conclusion

The Sri Lankan jackal is a highly adaptable and ecologically important species. Despite being common, it faces increasing threats due to human activities.

Understanding its biology, ecology, and behavior is essential for effective conservation. Protecting jackals also helps maintain the balance of ecosystems in Sri Lanka.

Afterword

With the approval of the Ministry of Education, this research-based project has empowered thousands of student authors for over ten years. Educationists recognize it as a program that significantly enhances the quality of school education.

In alignment with modern educational reforms, encouraging students to author a research work is a milestone in this journey. In this digital age of "Smart" technology, the modern school must demonstrate through research that books and technology should be used together. This is because the unique joy a child receives from a book cannot be replaced by anything else.

To prevent children from drifting away from books—which remain our primary educational tool and storehouse of human knowledge—Mahamaya Girls' College has spearheaded the "Hemamala Upahara" project for many years. Its primary objectives are to foster academic discipline, promote values, and pay tribute to Princess Hemamala, who fulfilled a historic mission to empower women.

We express our gratitude to the Principal, teachers, parents, alumni of Mahamaya Girls' College, representatives of other schools, the Diyawadana Nilame, and the staff of the Sri Dalada Maligawa (Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic) for their support.

Seneviratne Mahalekam

(Project Creator)



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