



## ***THE EFFECT OF REPLACING RUBBER CULTIVATION WITH OIL PALM ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF SOUTHERN AND WESTERN PURPLE FACED - LEAF LANGUR IN SRI LANKA.***

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Southern purple- faced leaf langur (*Trachypithecus vetulu svetulus*) and western purple- faced leaf langur (*Trachypithecus svetulus nestor*) are endemic to Sri Lanka and primarily distributed in wet zone. The western purple-faced langur is already named as critically endangered due to habitat lost. Rubber lands, introduced during British Era in the wet zone are favorite habitats for leaf langurs that has somewhat a closer resemblance to natural forests. Therefore, the introduction of rubber had no adverse effect to the distribution of southern and western purple- faced leaf langurs. The main objective of this research is to identify the effect of gradual decrease of habitat of western and Southern purple- faced leaf langur by replacing rubber cultivation with oil palm cultivation in wet zone. The following study sites Galle, Matara, Kalutara, Colombo, Kegalla, Gampaha, and Ratnapura district were selected as leaf langurs are also distributed in the same area. Annual reports of The Ministry of Plantation Industries (MoPI) were used to get information on the distribution of rubber and oil palm cultivations. Personal observations, questionnaires and publications about distribution of primates were used to identify the distribution of western and Southern purple-faced leaf langur in the wet zone. Oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*) cultivation initiated in an area of about 20 hectares in Nakiyadeniya estate in Galle in 1969 and had been expanded to 1,200 hectares by 1974. In 2014 the oil palm cultivation has expanded approximately to 7,953 hectares. Unlike rubber, oil palm leaves cannot be eaten by leaf langurs because of its thorny nature and they cannot stay on trees as well. Therefore, the replacement of rubber lands with oil palm has an adverse effect on the habitat of leaf langurs. MoPI in 2014 has targeted to expand the oil palm cultivation in Sri Lanka up to 25,000 hectares within the next 10 years by replacing rubber lands. As a result, 25,000 hectares of habitat of leaf langur will be lost in next 10 years. Therefore, the relevant authorities should take immediate action to safeguard the langur populations and their habitats.

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