

Thalangama: Wetland at our doorstep

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A shrill call of a bird shatters the morning calm. A White breasted Kingfisher comes to rest on a fence post bobbing its head. Just below it, a purple heron is already on the move, stopping and waiting motionless as if wanting to pose for my camera. Beyond in the paddy fields, a Black headed Ibis pokes its head in the freshly tilled soil. A couple of whistling teals fly overhead uttering their unmistakable call. The first of the cormorants glides in to the water like a float plane. Two Little Grebes appear, diving and surfacing at regular intervals. In the middle of the tank, a Pied Kingfisher hovers.

The sun was breaking through, and the entire tankside environment was coming alive. I was near the Thalangama Tank on an early morning birding run, observing and enjoying this wetland environment. Living nearby has helped me, and making frequent visits to this wetland has been a fulfilling option to fill the vacuum between birding tours. It is one of the most accessible birding areas for anyone living in Colombo and its suburbs. However it is also a place overlooked by many who prefer the 'big

name' parks for their birding.

Thalangama Tank, built by King ParakramabahuVI (1551 - 1557 AD), is situated in the Kaduwela Division of the Colombo District.

Each visit to Thalangama can be a new experience with the canvas changing from day to day. Many of these visits have also given me pleasant surprises. One day it was a Whistling Teal paddling in a pool in the early morning light on another the surprise appearance of a Lesser Yellow-naped Woodpecker. Then again it could be a Common Coot or Snipe. Thalangama is also a good place to observe Dragonflies and Damselflies.

Land development is fast threatening the once pristine environment around the tank. A boat service has begun, disturbing the tranquility that once prevailed. Lights and park benches have been fixed inviting Lovers. Palatial houses have come up all around the Tank. Banners put up by real estate dealers indicate that worse is to come.

Do not put off that visit to Thalangama, tomorrow may be too late.





Halcyon smyrnensis

White-throated Kingfisher



Phalacrocorax niger

Little Cormorant



Pelecanus philippensis

Spot-billed Pelican



Butorides striata

Striated Heron



Tachybaptus ruficollis

Little Grebe



Ceryle rudis

Pied Kingfisher



Hydrophasianus chirurgus

Pheasant-tailed Jacana



Phalacrocorax niger

Little Cormorant (Juvenile)



Dendrocygna javanica Lesser Whistling-duck



Haliastur indus

Brahminy Kite



Ardea purpurea

Purple Heron