

FISHING AWAY AT JETWING VIL UYANA – THE STORY OF THE ENDANGERED FISHING CAT

Chief Seattle has said that the beast, the tree and the man share the same breath – this union living in perfect harmony is readily seen at Jetwing Vil Uyana, Sigiriya. A signature property of the Jetwing family, the resort remains famous for its unique concept and design. Since its inception in 2006, its commitment to sustainability and eco-luxury offerings has been unparalleled.

The inspiration behind Jetwing Vil Uyana is the model at the Barnes Wetland, UK - in 2002 a bare land was converted into a man-made wetland enclosure with lakes, reed beds and forest to form a private nature reserve allowing dwellings to be built within a variety of habitats. This man-made layout has attracted and multiplied a considerable amount of species in comparison to the first faunal diversity assessment conducted prior to the construction of the property. The original assessment revealed 24 species of butterflies, 4 species of fish, 3 species of amphibian and reptiles, 29 species of birds and 12 species of mammals. Currently, there are 36 species of butterflies, 135 birds, and 20 species of mammals. In essence, Jetwing Vil Uyana is a haven of wildlife. The dedicated Resident Naturalist at Jetwing Vil Uyana, Chaminda Jayasekara took the initiative of establishing the famous Loris Conservation Site ever since the nocturnal creature was spotted in the grounds and travelers from around the world make this a definite visit when in Sri Lanka.

Among the many faunal varieties that were naturally attracted to the eco-system created at Jetwing Vil Uyana, the 'Fishing Cat' is another animal that was deemed endangered but was spotted within the compound. Interestingly, out of the four types of wildcats that can be found in Sri Lanka (leopard, fishing cat, rusty spotted cat, and jungle cat), all except the leopard can be found freely wandering within the property. Fishing cats are primarily associated with wetland, and are typically found in swamps and marshy areas. The private nature reserve being Jetwing Vil Uyana is an ideal procreation ground for the species. Since the finding of these rare species, many internationally renowned institutions have approached Jetwing Vil Uyana with the purpose of filming the creature in its natural habitat.

The IUCN Red List declared the fishing cat as an endangered species as its population has been threatened by destruction of wetlands over the years. Although it's primarily found in the Southeast Asia the numbers are rapidly decreasing for the reasons of the decline in wetlands. A unique creature, the fishing cat is a nocturnal animal hunting along the edges of watercourses, grabbing prey from the water, and sometimes diving into the water to catch prey, which are mostly fish. They are strongly associated with wetlands – the man-made lake at Jetwing Vil Uyana allows the animal to prey easily and use the surrounding as a breeding ground. Researchers from around the world visit Jetwing Vil Uyana to obtain information and use the grounds as a research center in order to introduce a conservation programme for the vulnerable animal. The hidden trail cameras at the property allow researchers to engage in a behavioral study depicting the success of the man-made wetland system of Jetwing Vil Uyana as a habitat for the fishing cat.

For more information or reservations please call on 011 4 709 400 or e-mail on viluyana@jetwinghotels.com or logon to www.jetwinghotels.com.

Family owned and in the tourism industry for the past 44 years, Jetwing Hotels has surpassed expectation at every aspect. Building on their foundation of being passionate, as well as the experience of true, traditional Sri Lankan hospitality, constantly pioneering discoveries captures the essence of the brand. Such a strong statement and direction have enabled Jetwing Hotels to imagine, create and manage marvels and masterpieces, where distinctive design and elegant comfort complement each other and the environment. In line with the Jetwing Hotels Sustainable Strategy, across all properties sustainable and responsible practices are given precedence with resource efficiency, community upliftment and education, and awareness being some of our key focus areas.

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Jetwing Vil Uyana

- Jetwing Vil Uyana is possibly the first hotel in the world to create a man-made wetland with a range of water-based and forested habitats on land previously used for slash and burn agriculture, thereby greatly increasing the area's biodiversity.