



A very unusual gathering at HPH - a dozen travel and tour operators

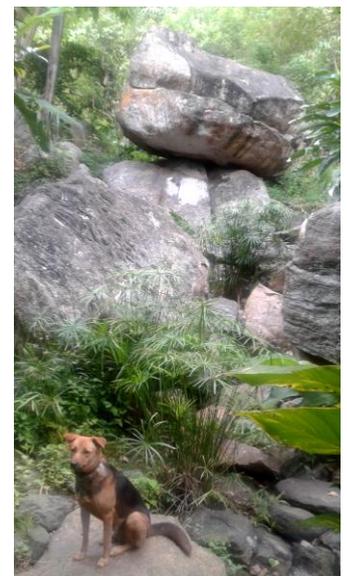
HALGOLLA PLANTATION HOME
 - ***THE*** UNIQUE SRI LANKAN EXPERIENCE -
 JUNE 2018

The picture at the top of this page shows something out of the ordinary at Halgolla Plantation Home: a dozen tour and travel agents from all over the world. On these “Walkabout and Planter’s Lunch” outings we accommodate the demands of travel agencies and individuals for a quick introduction to HPH and its unique attractions. Emil provides those on the short trek with a running commentary on the exotic vegetation, the plantation crops that used to occupy the land, the five major spice crops that are now grown, harvested and processed on the premises, in particular the most exotic of them all, vanilla, which has to have every single flower **hand-pollinated** if a bean is to result! Of course, the wrap up to the morning is a drink of *thambili* (King Coconut) water followed by one of HPH’s great Sri Lankan meals. A hot morning/afternoon followed by a glorious

repast, including buffalo curd, treacle off our *Kithul* palms and HPH-grown fruit. The picture that appears here is of the author of this Newsletter celebrating his departure from the

“Three-score and Ten Club,” something that was done with a great group of friends and family to assist, at “The house that A. J. van der Poorten built in the Mid-19th Century.” We’ve had probably the biggest mango crop of recent years. The Peter Pasand, Parrot, *Vellai Colomban* and *Karthu Colomban* trees are laden and we’ve been gathering fallen ripe mangoes and devising ways of storing them: as frozen juice and pulp and as chutney and jam. This has kept the stoves busy and, when added to the need to prepare *Nelli* (*Phyllanthus acidus*) and *Jambu* (*Syzygium samarangense*), among other preserves/dessert-dressing in order that those fruits didn’t go to waste, kept Arlene’s team busy as the traditional beavers!

Here’s an update on the birds nesting in or right up against the house: The three baby Red Vented Bulbuls have left the nest and could be heard in the first couple of days not too far from the house. The Loten’s Sunbird



Same lovely Boulder Path, different dog - *Kikki*



Arlene & Emil on May 24th 2018

chicks however seemed to have met a sad fate because, one day the nest had eggs and the next was empty. It was not likely that the usual avian predator – the Coucal or Crow Pheasant - could be held responsible this time because that is not territory on which they'd intrude – under the eaves, inside a corridor.

Before someone takes me to task for the omission, here's the monthly weather bulletin: we've had torrential, though sporadic, rain and there have been phone calls back and forth between several of us past, or **well** past, the half-century mark seeking (and receiving) confirmation that this pattern was unprecedented. Fortunately, though, we've been spared the horrendous floods and earth-slides that other parts of Sri Lanka have experienced.

The picture that appears here is indicative of our endless battle with other creatures who have been dispossessed by the massive environmental degradation in this area and find HPH a veritable oasis in the desert that they now have to survive in!



Custard Apple (*Anona squamosa*)
protected from squirrels by poly sleeves



Jaakadu Lena *Bana Maduwa*

The *Bana maduwa* at the delightful Jaakadulena rock temple, a half-hour's drive from HPH and one of our favourite places, has been restored to its classical beauty, even including the walls which have been re-built with the original cut stone. (No, those are **not** concrete blocks holding up the roof!)



The Ipomoea, the lovely flowers of which are in this photograph, is now designated an invasive species which is indicative of how things change as time goes by!

See you next month!
Arlene and Emil

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