

Perceived Potentials to Promote Bird Watching in Mannar District, Sri Lanka

S.K. Dolfina, W.G.S.R. Wijesundara and T.M.P.S.I. Thennakoon

Department of Public Administration, Uva Wellassa University, Badulla, Sri Lanka

The Gulf of Mannar has biodiversity-rich ecosystem to attract nature loving tourists to Sri Lanka. Bird watching is one of the favorite activities in the tour packages of nature loving tourists even though, bird-watching in Sri Lanka is an untapped niche tourism. Sri Lanka has a great potential for bird watching tourism. Mannar is one of the bird watching tourism markets. Recently, close attention has been taken by bird watching tourism as an environmental friendly way of generating income for the local Community. By identifying the empirical gap, this study focused to identify the tourists' profile while observing the prevailing nature of bird watching and to identifying the potentials to promote bird watching in Mannar district. The data was collected through a questionnaire with a sample of 100 tourists visited Mannar district employing convenience sampling method and semi structured interviews were conducted with 20 government bodies, service providers and residence of bird watching area. The mixed method was employed to analyse the data. The findings of the study shows that, the most of the bird watchers who were male are educated and high income earners. The majority of them are around 40 - 49 age group, travelling with the purpose of bird watching than the other purposes. Further, Mannar having a rich potentiality for promoting bird watching because of the availability of variety of birds and bird watching areas, knowledgeable guides, accessibility and infrastructure, good weather condition and bird watching information source etc. Moreover, government and other responsible bodies should focus on bird watching in tourism planning and development in the destinations.

Keywords: Bird watching, Nature loving, Potentials, Promotion