

**EMERGING ECO-TOURISM SPACES IN SRI LANKA:  
A CASE STUDY AT KNUCKLES**

M.A. SHANTHA JAYAKUMARA

*Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya*

Parallel to the emergence of the neo-fordist economic style in developed countries and the expansion of capitalistic characteristics in developing countries, the numbers of tourists and leisure activities have expanded in an unprecedented manner. In this context, Sri Lanka attempts to attract such tourists and develop leisure activities with the aim of earning much-needed foreign exchange. Reasonable numbers of tourists also have shifted their interests from mass tourism practices to alternative types of tourism, such as eco-tourism, which requires challenging nature-based tourism spaces. Today eco-tourism is being established in several places, such as the Knuckles forest, the Sinharaja forest, and the Muthurajawela wetland in Sri Lanka. This study focuses on the under-studied, Riversten region in the Knuckles and explores its potential and viability for eco-tourism. Primary and secondary data were analyzed using simple statistical methods under the broad geographical milieu to examine both supply and demand sides of eco-tourism.

On the supply side there are fascinating natural adventurous sites and some emerging guest houses at the peripheral areas of Riversten. However, there are no facilities for tourists to actively participate in eco-tourism at the site. Besides, other facilities for food, snacks, shade cover under rainy conditions and toilets etc are lacking. On the demand side a small number of foreign tourists, and a large number of pleasure youth- tourists originating from different places in Sri Lanka also visit the area. Instead of staying for longer periods, they just pass the site, which slacken the demand for local tourist products. Therefore, local people do not receive many benefits as expected. Therefore, the Ceylon Tourist Board with the help of the forest Department should plan the space so as to enhance tourists' requirements and income opportunities for local people.