

**ROLE OF SRI LANKA NAVY IN EXPLORATION AND PROTECTION OF MARINE  
MAMMALS OF SRI LANKA**

**ABSTRACT**

Sri Lanka is an island surrounded by the Indian Ocean and its behaviour always affects to the country in many ways. Marine mammals are one of the major resources freely available to an island nation whereas that is not available to all islands in the world. Whale watching is now one of the fastest growing tourist activities in the world, involving over 70 different countries. It is estimated that 13 million people went whale watching globally and generated \$2.1 billion per annum. Sri Lanka is rewarded with good havens for marine mammals which covers more than two third of the coastal line on the country. The interesting part is that not like in other countries in the world, those havens are situated very closer to mainland of Sri Lanka. Unfortunately, due to various reasons exploration, protection and research on marine mammals are not that developed in Sri Lanka compared to developed countries.

With the increased number of tourists in the country there is a huge demand created for whale watching causing competition among the commercial whale watchers and their activities are causing serious damages to mammals. There were lack of regulations to protect mammals and with that loophole whale watchers disregards whatever the limited laws in force.

Exploration of marine mammals is not an easy task to carryout due to various reasons. Individuals are not in position to conduct research individually mainly because of limitations and governmental and nongovernmental organisations are showing less interest to research on marine mammals because of hardness and the lack of skilled personnel.

Sri Lanka Navy has entered in to the field by the way of conducting whale watching cruises for general public and give them a chance to witness these wonderful mammals. However Navy's involvement in the field is not satisfactory and Navy have to play more active role with regards to exploration, study and protection of the marine mammals. Success of the Navy's effort will be totally depend on the way the Navy function the system and to achieve better results, need to have a proper management system which will run the system smoothly.