

## **Fish and Wildlife Research Group**

The Fish and Wildlife Research Group at the Postgraduate Institute of Science (PGIS), University of Peradeniya, is an interdisciplinary team dedicated to advancing knowledge in aquatic and terrestrial ecology, wildlife conservation, applied biodiversity science and diseases. Our group combines field-based ecology, laboratory research, and modern analytical approaches to address critical conservation and management challenges in Sri Lanka and the wider region.

### **Our Focus**

Our research spans freshwater fish biology, wildlife population ecology, conservation genetics, human-wildlife interactions, and ecosystem-based management. We emphasize evidence-based conservation, capacity building, and translating scientific findings into practical solutions that support sustainable natural resource management and policy development.



#### **Emeritus Professor K. B. Ranawana – Lead Scientist**

Emeritus Professor, Department of Zoology, Faculty of Science, University of Peradeniya.

[kitsr@sci.pdn.ac.lk](mailto:kitsr@sci.pdn.ac.lk)

A senior zoologist and conservation biologist with over three decades of experience, Professor Ranawana holds a PhD and MPhil in Zoology from the University of Peradeniya and an MS in Environmental Science and Forestry from the State University of New York, USA. His research covers ecology, fish and wildlife habitat and population management, biodiversity conservation, and restoration ecology, making significant contributions to wildlife and environmental science in Sri Lanka.



#### **Dr. Chaminda Wijesundara – Scientist**

Senior Lecturer (Grade I) in Zoology, and Head of the Department of Environmental and Industrial Sciences, Faculty of Science, University of Peradeniya

[chamindaw@sci.pdn.ac.lk](mailto:chamindaw@sci.pdn.ac.lk)

Completed his B.Sc. Special Degree in Zoology with First Class Honors and undertook his MSc and PhD research in avian ecology. His current research focuses on bird ecology and conservation, and he teaches courses in avian and mammalian biology, wildlife management, and ecology at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.



#### **Dr. Danushka S. Weerasekera- Postdoctoral Scientist**

Postgraduate Institute of Science, University of Peradeniya.

[danushka@pgis.lk](mailto:danushka@pgis.lk)

Experience across South Asia and Australia. His research focuses on the ecology and biology of jackals, combining field ecology, GPS and camera-trap tracking, GIS-based spatial analysis, and molecular ecology (eDNA). He brings extensive expertise in applied wildlife management, ecosystem monitoring, and conservation strategies, supported by a strong record of publications, interdisciplinary collaboration, and science communication.



**Dr. Jayampathi Herath- Collaborator**

Senior Lecturer, Postgraduate Institute of Science, University of Peradeniya.

[jayampathi@pgis.lk](mailto:jayampathi@pgis.lk)

His research interests cover disease ecology, virology, parasitology, molecular phylogenetics and wildlife conservation. He completed his PhD with an extensive focus on ranavirus infection in South China, examining their prevalence, genetic diversity and climatic drivers across ectothermic vertebrates. His research integrates disease ecology, evolutionary biology, and climate-based modeling to understand emerging pathogens in Asia. He is keen on working on viral and parasitic infections of fish and wildlife, with a particular interest in zoonotic diseases and the One Health approach with Fish and Wildlife Research Group of PGIS.



**Dr. Lauren Hennelly**

Visiting and International Collaborator, Department of BioSciences, Rice University, Houston, Texas, USA.

As an Assistant Professor at Rice University, Dr. Hennelly studies how wildlife species evolve, adapt, and respond to environmental and anthropogenic changes. Her research integrates genomics, phenotypes, and field ecology to understand the evolutionary history, genetic diversity, and local adaptation of animals to inform conservation management and policy. She has held positions as an NSF Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Copenhagen and Research Associate at the Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute. She is a member of the IUCN Canid Specialist Group and serves as the Red List Authority Coordinator and on the Taxonomic Review Taskforce

**Our Vision**

Through collaborative research, student training, and international partnerships, the Fish and Wildlife Research Group aims to make meaningful contributions to biodiversity conservation, ecological sustainability, and the development of future scientists and conservation practitioners in Sri Lanka and beyond.