

An attempt to reduce impacts of limestone quarries through biodiversity assessment and translocation: A case study at the Holcim Limestone Quarry Site in Puttalam, Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

A conservation project was implemented at a commercial limestone quarry site in Sri Lanka managed by Holcim Lanka (Pvt.) Ltd. The project intended to assess the biodiversity of a proposed excavation site and to translocate fauna that will be affected by quarry operations such as forest clearance and blasting. The biodiversity of the area was surveyed using a rapid assessment technique, prior to the initiation of forest clearance and blasting. A total of 41 floral species and 220 faunal species were recorded from the project site. Around 90 % of the fauna were amphibians, reptiles and butterflies. Among these species, one endemic tree, a therapsid spider and 20 endemic vertebrates. Among the vertebrates documented, 9 species are categorized as nationally threatened. A total of 141 vertebrates and 85 arthropods and mollusks including endemics threatened species were captured and translocated to Sethtavilluwa area. This project is the first ever initiative in Sri Lanka aimed at reducing impacts of quarry operation on biota through rehabilitation and rescue operations. Such projects are invaluable as they will, at least in part assist in safeguarding biota that will be vulnerable to local extinction as a result of developmental projects.

Key words: Conservation, Dry zone, Extinction, Miocene-bets, Rescue mission, Threatened