

# The Island LeisureLAND

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## Hero Pilot to Attend Obama Inauguration

By Nicole Weisensee Egan  
Hero US Airways pilot



Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger and his family will be attending Tuesday's presidential inauguration, an official for President-elect Barack Obama has confirmed.

The invite is just the latest example of how the 57-year-old pilot has been lifted from obscurity to worldwide recognition in just a few days. Videos of his emergency landing of Flight 1549 in the middle of New York City's Hudson River on Jan. 15 are among the most popular on YouTube and a fan page started for him on Facebook has almost 400,000 fans and continues to climb.

Meanwhile, back in Sullenberger's hometown of Danville, Calif., the town's mayor says he's planning a big parade for him as soon as he returns home. "We're immensely proud of someone in our community becoming an American hometown hero," Danville Mayor Maxwell Americh told PEOPLE. "This guy embodies the true American spirit."

Sullenberger had been scheduled to appear on the Today show Monday but postponed his interview at the request of his union, which cited the ongoing National Transportation Safety Board probe of the crash.

Capt. Sullenberger and his crew issued a statement Monday morning asking the media to respect their wishes not to be interviewed until the NTSB probe, which is expected to wrap up fairly quickly, is complete.

In the statement, the crew said they "wish to offer their sincere thanks and appreciation for the overwhelming support, praise and well wishes they have received from the public around the world since the events of last Thursday."

## Vankalai Triangle now a sanctuary

The Department of Wildlife Conservation recently declared the Vankalai Triangle in the Mannar as a Sanctuary.

This follows a request made by the Ceylon Bird Club (CBC), urging former Wildlife Conservation Director, Dayananda Kariyawasam to consider urgently the declaration of the Vankalai Triangle as a conservation area under the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance.

CBC also requested that the site be proposed the status of a 'Wetland of International Importance' under the Ramsar Convention.

The Vankalai Triangle at Mannar is enclosed more or less by Vankalai, Puliyantivu Island and Tiruketiswaram.

In mid-2006, 'The Island' exclusively reported that the four species of birds that had been considered migrant to Sri Lanka were then discovered to be breeding in Sri Lanka.

Udaya Sirivardana of the CBC said during numerous annual water bird censuses, prevented from 1992 to 2001 by the security situation, and in the course of many other visits, that the CBC had found this area to be invaluable for the protection and survival of large numbers of migrant water birds.

According to Sirivardana, the number of water birds it regularly supports is well in excess of 20,000, which qualifies an area as a Ramsar Site. In the 2003 census, there was a record of 120,134 species.

The CBC was founded in 1943 by seven members, including G. M. Henry and W. W. A. Phillips, two of Sri Lanka's foremost ornithologists.

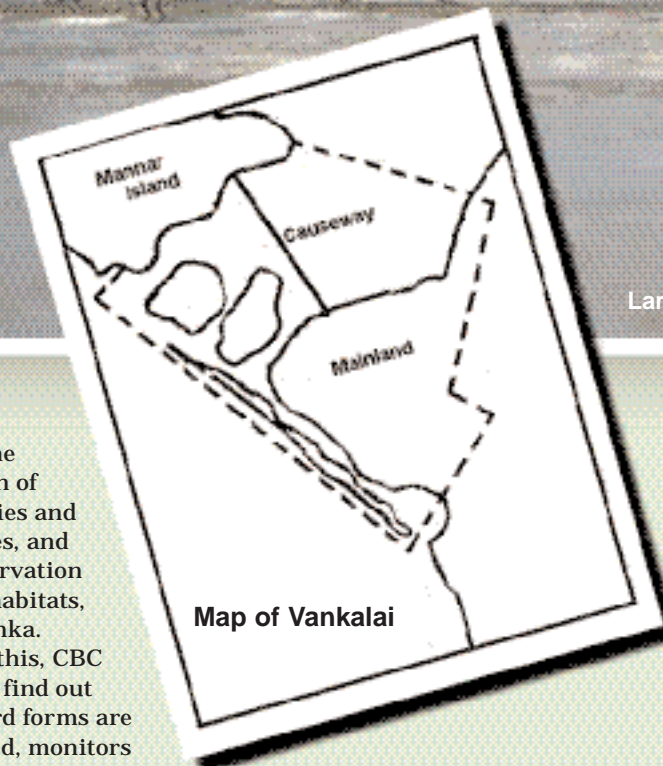
Initially, its object was to make a record of members' observations. Since then, the CBC has continuously been active in collecting, recording and providing information on the birds of Sri Lanka, their status and distribution.

The objectives of the CBC widened over the years. Today, a main aim is pro-

moting the protection of bird species and subspecies, and the conservation of their habitats, in Sri Lanka. Towards this, CBC strives to find out which bird forms are threatened, monitors their survival and habitats and conducts surveys.

CBC has made major contributions in respect of Sri Lanka to the following publications: A Directory of Asian Wetlands (1990) the World Conservation Union (IUCN); Directory of South Asian Protected Areas (1990) IUCN; Threatened Birds of Asia (2001) Birdlife International; Water Bird Population Estimates, Third Edition (2002) Wetlands International; Numbers and Distribution of Water Birds and Wetlands in the Asia-Pacific Region (2004) Wetlands International; Birds of South Asia: the Ripley Guide (2005) Rasmussen and Anderton; The 2007 Red List of Threatened Fauna and Flora of Sri Lanka (2007), IUCN and Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources.

In the 1960s, the club carried out the first bird ringing programmes in Sri Lanka. Since 1984, the club has annually conducted a countrywide census of water birds, in association with Wetlands International.

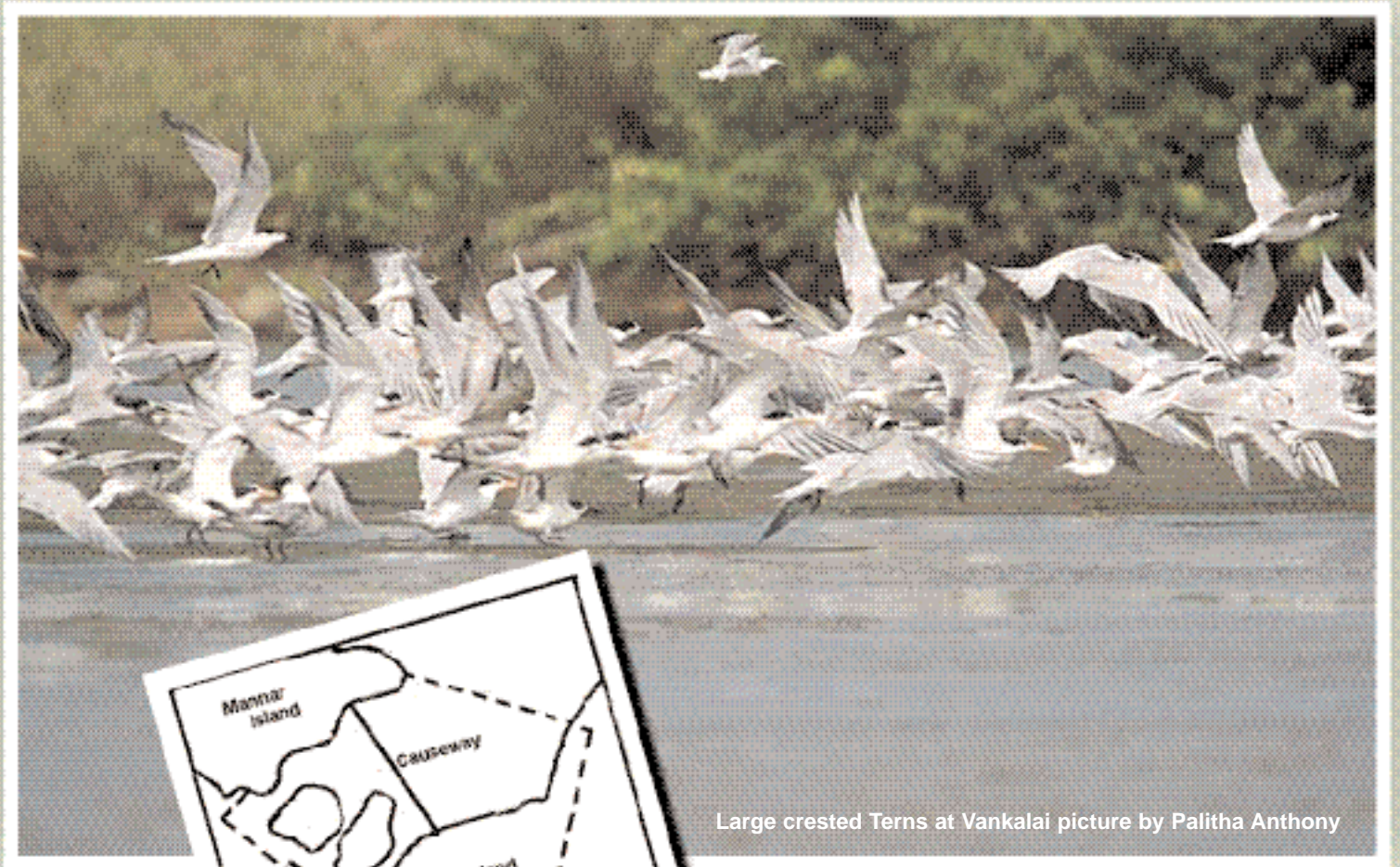


Map of Vankalai

Avocets at Vankalai picture by Kithsiri Gunawardena

Shorebirds at Vankalai picture by Kithsiri Gunawardena.

Spot billed ducks at Mannar picture by Kithsiri Gunawardena



Large crested Terns at Vankalai picture by Palitha Anthony



By Ifham Nizam

For more than 50 years, the information provided by CBC has been an integral part of nearly all work done in Sri Lankan ornithology. It is the only source for the evaluation of the distribution and abundance of Sri Lanka's bird forms.

Since its inception, CBC has been maintaining the standard list of the birds authentically recorded in Sri Lanka. The Ceylon Bird Club Rarities and Records Committee were formed in 1985 and consists of field experts for Sri Lanka and the region.

The only such body, it examines, evaluates and records reports of rare species and new migrant species of birds in the country and maintains the national list of birds.

From time to time, CBC presents lectures relating to the avifauna of Sri Lanka, usually of general interest and with attendance open and organises field trips.

In fact, it was Sri Lanka's foremost conservationist Thilo Hoffmann, former

Chairman and member of the CBC who proposed long ago that the Vankalai Triangle should be made a protected area.

CBC regularly receives queries relating to ornithology, bird watching and nature conservation in Sri Lanka and these are answered by appropriate members. From time to time, the CBC is invited by state bodies, international bodies concerned with conservation, the media, etc. to provide advice or information, present lectures or produce papers in relation to the avifauna of Sri Lanka.

The CBC was the official collaborating institution in the project to study the new species of owl discovered in Sri Lanka in 2001, by one of the leading ornithologists in the region, Deepal Warakagoda.

Deepal is the CBC's Joint Secretary, who was instrumental in 2006 for a publication by the Department of Animal Production and Health relating to avian influenza and migrant water bird species, expert advice, pictorial and text material.

Flamingos picture by Palith Anthony