Wetlands News Monitor

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News brief on Wetland Birds, Newly Discovered Himalayan Bird, Corral fossil, Whales, Wetland restoration, Activities, Environmental Website and App

WNM Compiled by: Dr. B. Hemambika, Ms. A. Julffia Begam and Dr. Goldin Quadros
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Reports on Wetland Birds

Many bird species rely on wetlands for all or part of their life cycle. Waterbirds can use a range of different wetland habitats including swamps, lagoons, mudflats, estuaries, embayments and open beaches, freshwater and salt lakes, rivers, floodplain wetlands and dams. The most important plan for monitoring the populations of waterbirds indicates the status of waterbird populations and the health of wetlands.

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) planned to monitor the status of water birds and wetlands by conducting Asian Water bird Count in association with Wetlands International from January 9-24. The objective of the annual census, which will be conducted all over India, is to obtain information about the water bird population in wetlands during non-breeding season as it forms a basis for evaluation of sites and monitoring of populations. The census is also expected to monitor the status and condition of wetlands and promote greater interest about conservation of water birds and wetlands. Director of BNHS Deepak Apte stated that with changing times and increasing anthropogenic pressure, monitoring of wetlands is essential. Initiatives like these encourage mass participation and hence result in better data generation.

Migratory birds seen near a water body in eastern India

Source: The Times of India Dt.: January 12, 2016

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As per the bird census during January 2016, over 8.58 lakh migratory birds have thronged Odisha's Chilika Lake this winter. The principal chief conservator of forest (wildlife) Mr. S.S. Srivatsav ascribed that in the year 2015 around 172 bird species were sighted and in this present year 2016 only 161 species have arrived in the lake which was due to climatic changes including deficient rainfall and high temperatures. The census report stated that a total of 106, 356 birds have thronged Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary in Kendrapada district in this year 2016. However, it was less against last year (2015), when 113,226 migratory birds were spotted. Also, the Rajnagar forest division official reported that a total of 87 species have visited to Bhitarkanika while it was 109 last year.

Delhi zoo has achieved a record breeding programme this year, with the local migratory 'painted stork' birds laid between 1,500 and 1,800 eggs. The zoo curator stated that they recorded the best breeding figure this year with our local guests the 'painted storks' laying 1,500-1,800 eggs at the zoo. Last year, the figure stood at 1,290. The birds migrate to the zoo from Himachal Pradesh every August and fly back to their native place in March. The National Zoological Park receives a batch of 800-1,000 painted storks every year. The birds were supplied with 2 by 4 inch fish. Explaining the peculiar nature of the wading birds, the curator said that the parent painted storks fly back to their native place leaving behind the eggs. The young ones that take 16 weeks to mature go back to their parents with the help of a "strong smelling power". The official added that the adult storks can be identified by their 'yellow' beaks while the younger ones have 'grey' beaks. The beak colour can turn into a dim shade due to the pollution level of the area they migrate to.

Endangered Lesser Adjutant Stork found in Chhattisgarh during survey done by an NGO Conservation Core Society (CCS) for Wildlife and Bilaspur University, depicts that Chhattisgarh's atmosphere is very favourable for endangered species and migratory birds. It was sighted at Marwahi forest division of Bilaspur district. University has also sent proposal to state government for initiating the process of conservation of over 400 species of birds out of 1300 found in Chhattisgarh. According to Dr. Gauridutt Sharma, vice-chancellor, Bilaspur University, presence of Lesser Adjutant indicates that climate in the state is favourable for habitation and breeding of birds and they easily get adaptive to it. The survey clearly shows that the state was a better habitat centre for resident and migratory birds which is why it has become a favourite spot

for 400 species of birds already. However, there were many other new species of birds and endangered ones discovered during the survey that includes great crested grebe, chestnut bittern, tufted poachard and plaintive cuckoo. This was the first such survey done by a University mainly focussed on resident and migratory birds at various forest regions of state along with CCS while the study continues. Dr. Sharma added that their main aim is to make an authentic database of all species of birds found in Chhattisgarh and identify their preferred area of habitation, so that people could be made aware about their presence and birds could be conserved with their co-operation.

According to Meetu Gupta of Conservation Core Society, Bilaspur, the survey has brought forth not only different species of birds found in state, but also the endangered ones. Now, initiatives would be taken for proper breeding of endangered species and conservation of other birds. She added that few nests of red-necked Ibis species at a little crowded place which is contradictory to its nature and the team also observed rare moth blue tiger near water stream in the fringes of moderately dense forest. It is also one of the few diurnal moths as most moths that fly are nocturnal. Various common names of this moth are Blue Tiger Moth, Four O'clock Moth, Peacock Jewel Moth. Lesser Adjutant (*Leptoptilos javanicus*) has undergone rapid decline as a result of variety of threats including hunting pressure, loss of nesting trees, conversion and degradation of wetlands and agricultural changes and intensification. While it is a rare sight, this very large stork has long legs, neck and beak, and an upright posture. It is dark grey to black on the wings and back, and white on the underside. The head and neck are naked and yellow, but red in breeding males.

Big Bird Day was celebrated in Coimbatore. As a part of Big Bird Day, Bird watchers have sighted more than 140 bird species in Coimbatore. Three teams of bird watchers were involved in the exercise. Mansur Ahamed, one of the members of a team, with his team visited Siruvani, Ukkadam Big Tank, Kalapatti and a few other areas to record birds they had sighted. A second team led by bird watcher Jishnu covered Marudhamalai, Kallar and areas in their neighbourhood. A third team led by Keerthana and a few students covered Singanallur and Sulur tanks and areas nearby. A few days prior to the exercise, the teams had earmarked their areas of operation to avoid repetition and ensure every land type was covered. Mr. Ahamed reported that the bird watchers noted down details of the birds and location and also entered the data in an app.

The team record had overlapping details in that they had noted down same species but that had been discounted to arrive at the 140-plus mark. This was part of the nation-wide exercise where bird watchers had panned out to forests, rural, semi-urban and urban areas to sight and record birds. Though it was the first time in Coimbatore, such an exercise has been going on in The Nilgiris district for the past four years. The team sighted Malabar Trogan, a rare bird to sight given its shy nature. In The Nilgiris, bird watchers have recorded 60 species in Ooty and 40 in Kundah.

Atapaka Bird Sanctuary, located in Kolleru Lake on the borders of Krishna and West Godavari districts, has been identified as the largest spot-billed pelican home in the world. Environments and bird watchers who visited the sanctuary said Atapaka has the highest number of spot-billed pelicans (also known as grey headed pelicans). According to the Forest Department, about 5,200 spot-billed pelicans were counted at Atapaka, about 1,000 similar species of birds were spotted at Madhavapuram sanctuary, located in West Godavari district. They stated that in addition, there are about 1000 pelicans nest in the island villages in Kolleru and the surrounding habitations. Divisional Forest Officer (DFO-Wildlife) P. Shivashankar Reddy reported that every year about 2000 to 3000 spot-billed pelicans in the pond (also known as birds' paradise) were seen and for the first time, this year the number of the winged visitors has crossed 5000. In addition to the adult birds, many young ones were seen in the nests.

Conservation Biologist in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Scientist Santhi Selvam stated that as per the Asian Water Bird Census, about 22,000 grey headed pelicans are spread across the globe, of which about 35 to 40 per cent were roosting at Atakapa Bird Sanctuary. Dr. Selvam reported that spot-billed pelicans were seen at Uppalapadu in Guntur, Cilemeelapuram village in Srikakulam, Nelapattu and Pulikat Lake in Nellore district. But, the highest number of grey headed pelicans was seen only at Atapaka Bird Sanctuary. Though there were many water bodies in the country, thousands of pelicans are breeding at Atapaka, which can also be called as the biggest breeding centre. Kaikalur Sub-Division ACF K. Vinod Kumar stated that artificial mounds have been created and about 150 iron stands have been erected in the 320-acre pond in Kolleru for the nesting birds. Mr. Vinod added that Atapaka sanctuary is a natural habitat for birds in Andhra Pradesh and the Forest Department is

planning to develop the sanctuary into a tourist hub. Tourists from far off places are visiting the place to have a glimpse of the grey headed pelicans.

A day-long census of birds that arrived at Otteri Lake in Vandalur was carried out by the Forest Department. 31 species of birds spotted at Otteri Lake. The officials stated that the census is an annual feature and focuses on the arrival of new birds and the increase in their numbers compared to the previous years. A group of department staff and animal keepers at Arignar Anna Zoological Park conducted the survey. The Lake has a water-spread area of 16 acres and is protected with a 635-metre-long bund. The water storage capacity of the lake is about 8.5 crore litres. Due to the rain in November and December last year, the lake was brimming with water and as many as 31 species of 7,256 birds were recorded by the surveyors. The species spotted include Open-bill stork, grey heron, white ibis, little egret, great egret, cattle egret, Indian cormorant, little cormorant, night heron, pond heron, darter, glossy ibis, common moorhen, white-breasted water hen, dabchick or little grebe, spoonbill, spot-bill duck, and common coot. The zoo officials added that Indian cormorant accounted for 3,259 of the birds counted, followed by the little cormorant at 1756.

Source:

- *http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/flora-fauna/BNHS-to-monitor-asian-waterbird-count/articleshow/50472736.cms*
- *http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/flora-fauna/Over-8-58-lakh-migratory-birds-throng-Chilika-this-year/articleshow/50543805.cms*
- *http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/flora-fauna/Delhi-zoo-sets-record-as-painted-storks-lay-over-1500-eggs/articleshow/50703764.cms*
- *http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/flora-fauna/Endangered-Lesser-Adjutant-Stork-found-in-Chhattisgarh-during-survey/articleshow/50759677.cms*
- *http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/140plus-bird-species-sighted-on-big-bird-day/article8207696.ece*
- *http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-andhrapradesh/atapaka-largest-home-of-spotbilled-pelican/article8256100.ece*
- *http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/31-species-of-birds-spotted-at-otteri-lake/article8266443.ece*

Newly Discovered Himalayan Bird

Newly discovered Himalayan bird named after Dr. Salim Ali. A bird species, locally common in eastern Himalaya and overlooked till now, has been identified as a new species. A team of scientists from India, Sweden, China, US and Russia have described this species from northeastern India and adjacent parts of China as Himalayan Forest Thrush. This is the first Indian bird (*Zoothera salimalii*), which has been named after Late Dr. Salim Ali, who was closely associated with BNHS-India, as a researcher, honorary secretary and finally as its president. The bird has been named after him in recognition of his huge contributions to the development of modern Indian ornithology and wildlife conservation.

Himalayan Forest Thrush Dulongjiang

Source: The Times of India Dt.: January 22, 2016

New bird species are rarely discovered to science nowadays, when most natural habitats are shrinking. Since 2000, an average of five new species has been discovered globally every year, mostly from South America. Himalayan Forest Thrush is only the fourth new bird species described from India by modern ornithologist since independence. Commenting on the development, Dr. Asad Rahmani, Senior Scientific Adviser and former Director, BNHS stated that it is a remarkable discovery and shows how much more have to do in the field of ornithology in India. It also proves that northeastern India is a treasure trove of biodiversity that needs

protection from the mega projects that are planned in Arunachal Pradesh without giving any attention to biodiversity conservation.

Source:

- *http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/flora-fauna/Newly-discovered-Himalayan-bird-named-after-Dr-Salim-Ali/articleshow/50687710.cms*

News brief on Corral Fossil

Rare 9cr-year-old coral fossil found in Narmada valley. In a rare discovery, palaeontologists have stumbled upon a nine crore-year-old rare coral fossil similar to that of brain coral in Bagh beds of Narmada valley region. This suggests the presence of marine life and sea in Central India during evolution. Discovery of coral fossil is also likely to help experts get a peep into the environment of that era. Paleontologist Vishal Verma recently discovered the fossil from Man River basin in Dhar district of the state reported that it is one of the oldest evidences of sea incursion in Narmada valley. Verma has been working in Bagh beds for almost 20 years to gather evidences about marine life in the region. He has also been fighting to get a fossil park developed for preservation purposes.

Palaeontologists have stumbled upon a nine crore-year-old rare coral fossil

Source: The Times of India Dt.: February 29, 2016

According to the research and the fossil discovery, it is being considered that sea and marine life existed in this part of the earth for around 30 lakh years. Verma has been finding

fossils of different marine life, including shark and oysters from the valley during his involvement in the field work for proposed national dinosaur Fossil Park in Dhar district. Palaeontologists have confirmed coral presence in Mesozoic era - Age of reptiles. The era is subdivided into three major periods: the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous. The era began in the wake of the Permian-Triassic extinction event, the largest well-documented mass extinction in Earth's history. The era ended with the Cretaceous-Paleogene extinction event, another mass extinction, which is known for having killed off non-avian dinosaurs, as well as other plant and animal species. The Mesozoic was a time of significant tectonic, climate and evolutionary activities. The era witnessed the gradual rifting of the supercontinent Pangaea into separate landmasses that would eventually move into their current positions. A faculty member at department of geology, Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology, West Bengal, Tapas Gangopadhya said that Narmada valley is quite rich in fossils and coral presence suggests the area was under the sea. Corals were found in Mesozoic era. They were considered earliest species of life. Only a few corals have been reported in the country.

Source:

- *http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/flora-fauna/Rare-9cr-year-old-coral-fossil-found-in-Narmada-valley/articleshow/51185890.cms*

Brief News on Whales

In Tiruchendur, Tamil Nadu over 100 whales washed ashore and among them 45 was dead. More than 100 whales were found on the 16km stretch from Alanthalai to Kallamozhi coastal hamlets. Thirty six of them have been rescued by fishermen. Rajan, a fisherman in Manapad reported that the whales started reaching the shore in groups around 5pm which was very strange. Tuticorin district collector M. Ravikumar inspected the coast and stated that officials were investigating the reason for such a huge number of whales reaching the shore. A team from the Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park in Ramanathapuram has rushed to the spot. Former director of Zoological Survey of India K. Venkataraman stated that cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) are social marine mammals, they live in groups and if the leader of the group is disturbed due to changes in underwater, they get disoriented immediately and start drifting from

their normal path and head towards the shoreline, leading to their deaths. Moderate earthquakes, geo-magnetic deviations, sonic waves and tidal currents could disorient cetaceans.

Of the over 100 whales that washed ashore on Tamil Nadu coast 45 dead

Source: The Times of India Dt.: January 12, 2016

On January 11th, an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.5 on the Richter scale and another one measuring 6.9 on the Richter scale were in the Philippines and Indonesia, respectively. These could have disoriented the whales. Venkataraman added that in India, the first ever report of mass stranding of this whale species was reported in Salt Lake in Kolkata in 1852. The maximum number of whale stranding on Indian coastline happened in 1973 during which time 147 whales got stranded. Annually world over 2,000 whales get stranded. More than 1,500 whales have been stranded along the Indian coastline since 1800 till 2015. Researchers lament as so far no study on this issue has been taken up in the country and one of the reasons is that not many funding agencies are ready to finance the study. Study on population dynamics of cetaceans, their breeding ecology, habitat degradation and other related issues needed to be taken up by the government. Only such an effort would help in protecting these endangered marine mammals.

Source:

- *http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/flora-fauna/Of-the-over-100-whales-that-washed-ashore-on-Tamil-Nadu-coast-45-dead/articleshow/50542387.cms*

Report on Wetland Events

A National Workshop on Conservation of Native Freshwater Fishes held at the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS) has urged the State government to set up small scale hatcheries in inland regions to popularize the aquaculture practices of the species that have been listed under the endangered category. The two-day workshop was organized by Prof. Alikunhi Chair at KUFOS. Experts pointed out that the native freshwater species such as snakeheads and cat fishes have higher commercial value compared to the usual farming varieties like Catla and Rohu. The fisheries experts stated that in order to promote the farming practices of these species, small scale regional hatcheries should be set up in inland areas. The workshop recommended that the farming community could utilize the breeding technology of the fresh water fishes and actively involved in the farming activities towards conserving the species. Boosting of farming practices of the local fish varieties would help to conserve the species. Experts also suggested that Kudumabasree units could develop small scale entrepreneurship by effectively utilizing the farming technologies of the species. They added that the indigenous traditional knowledge regarding the breeding techniques of the local fishes should be preserved.

Interpretation and education centre to come up at Singanallur Lake. Till date, the image of Singanallur Lake is that of a defunct boat jetty and a tank full of sewage and water hyacinth. The Coimbatore Corporation, Green Global Trust, Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON) and Animal Rescuers are coming together to put the Singanallur Lake to some constructive use by opening an Urban Nature Interpretation and Education Centre. Inauguration of the centre also marks the World Wetland Day celebrations. On the occasion, a book on 'Bio-diversity of Singanallur Lake' is also being released and the authors of the book are Vinny R. Peter, L. Joseph Reginald, P. Pramod, R. Mohanraj and M. Murugesan. The event started at 7 a.m. and the official inauguration of the centre started at 10 a.m. by Mayor P. Rajkumar.

During the inaugural function, there will be guided tours on birds, plants, butterflies, dragonflies and Damselflies, demonstration of bird songs and studies, workshop on nature photography, nature painting, photo exhibition on amazing birds of Coimbatore besides planting of saplings and free distribution of educational materials on birds. On the choice of Singanallur

lake, organisers said that it was ecologically, culturally and economically an important eco system in Coimbatore urban area. Monitoring of the water body over the last ten years indicated the presence of 700 species of flora and fauna and avian species and was found to be a fit choice for connecting people with nature. The lake is found to be a host for 675 species including 155 species of birds (28 of them migratory birds), 369 plants (including 165 species of medicinal plants), 60 butterflies, 22 mammals, 21 reptiles, two Amphibians, 10 varieties of fish, 21 varieties of dragonflies and Damselfies and 15 other common life forms. Of the bird species, 9 are from the Red List of threatened bird species as per International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The species are Black Bellied Tern (endangered), Lesser Adjutant-Stork (vulnerable) and the near threatened varieties included; Spot-billed Pelican, Darter, Painted Stork, Oriental White Ibis, Pallid Harrier, Black Tailed Godwit and River Tern.

Source:

- *http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/promote-aquaculture-of-endangered-fishes/article8216642.ece*
- *http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/interpretation-and-education-centre-to-come-up-at-singanallur-lake/article8263153.ece*

Wetland Restoration

Under the Chief Minister Water Security Mission, Environmentalist Foundation of India (EFI) has started cleaning the Adambakkam and Sithalapakkam water bodies in Tamil Nadu. Further, the cleanups at Thiruneermalai Lake, Thalambur Lake in Ottiyambakkam and Thiruverkadu Lake will start. EFI will work alongside the government departments concerned in reviving these lakes. Arun Krishnamurthy, the Founder of EFI reported that the clean-ups are community and volunteer based activities. He pointed out the cleanup process that includes removing trash and invasive botanical species which include thorny bushes and water hyacinths, after availing proper permission from the State government. The next process involves adopting scientific methods including a futuristic approach towards the protection of water bodies. This exercise will be carried out for the next 16 to 18 months, after receiving permission from the Public Works Department and other departments concerned.

A scientific restoration of water bodies is essential to ensure future protection against flooding and stabilizing the groundwater table in the neighborhood. Steps will also be taken to clear the encroachments that occupy the catchment area, plugging sewage inflow valves. Mr. E. Selvamani, an EFI volunteer stated that awareness among residents and their participation in conservation of water bodies is also essential. Also, people should stop dumping trash and discharging sewage into the water bodies. The State government should encourage civil society participation and take steps to protect the water bodies. Under the first phase of the mission, the NGO has cleaned up Mambakkam, Keezhkattalai, Mudichur and Perumbakkam water bodies.

Experts suggest steps to protect Kolleru Lake. A boundary at the five-feet contour of Kolleru Lake is the best way to ensure optimum holding capacity and minimize the flood impact of India's biggest fresh water lake, located between the Krishna and Godavari deltas. This was the opinion expressed by experts and scientists during the three-day international conference on geospatial technologies and wetland management, organized by Andhra University's Centre for Studies on Bay of Bengal. Some other suggestions made were ensuring inflows into the Lake, which have balanced the reservoir's character, identifying sources of pollution and treat them at entry level, sluice gates to be constructed across the two outlets to monitor and control sea water inflow during tidal fluctuations and expected rainfall events, etc.

The Lake, which has an original area of 1000 square kilometres, shrunk to around 270 square km mostly after aquaculture was taken up on a large scale a few decades ago. The number of migratory birds from Siberia came down drastically. While chief technical coordinator of the Kolleru project and former AU Rector P. Rajendra Prasad conducted a panel discussion, former Vice-Chancellor of Krishna University M.K. Durga Prasad, Prof. U.B. Reddy, professors from foreign universities — Christophe Cudennec (France), Hendrik Pieter Ritzema (the Netherlands), and Kengo Kurata (Japan), Director of AP State Groundwater Department K. Venugopal, former Principal of Science College A.V. Raman, and other experts and students participated.

Source:

- *http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp-downtown/efi-to-take-up-scientificrestoration-of-lakes/article8290455.ece*
- *http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-andhrapradesh/experts-suggest-steps-to-protect-kolleru-lake/article8291889.ece*

News on Wetland Pollution

Scientists reported that some white storks have taken to spending the winter in rubbish dumps eating garbage rather than making the usual, exhausting journey south across the Sahara. They added that the lure of landfills is a new sign of how human influences, ranging from climate change to pollution, disrupt migratory routes for animals from turtles to elephants. Tracking juvenile white storks in countries from Spain to Uzbekistan, they found that some from Germany, for instance, spent the winter at landfills in Morocco rather than completing the traditional migratory route to sub-Saharan Africa.

White storks standing in a field in Soultz, France

Source: The Times of India Dt.: January 25, 2016

Some adult birds spent the winter in Spain or as far north as Nordic nations. The findings by the author Andrea Flack, of the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology published in the journal Science Advances states that the storks use less energy and it seems they are benefiting by abandoning migration. They tracked juvenile birds, born in countries including Armenia, Greece, Poland, Russia, Spain, Germany and Tunisia and Uzbekistan, by fitting them with satellite tracking devices. The majority flew all the way to Africa in winter. Many other migratory species face problems from man-made factors including dams, roads, forest clearances and wind turbines that can kill birds that fly into their blades.

School children along with local volunteers have cleaned about 4km-long beach from Gokharakuda to Podampeta, near river Rushikulya mouth off Ganjam coast in Berhampur, Odisha which is the famous mass nesting site for the endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles. Over 100 students of six high schools of the nearby villages together with the forest personnel and wildlife activists picked up around three tonnes of debris from the beach in around three hours, to facilitate the mass nesting of the sea turtles, likely to take place in the last week of February.

Shankara Narayan Bej coordinator, district eco-club reported that most of the students, who have taken part in the clean drive, organised by the Odisha Marine Resources Conservation Consortium (OMRCC), were the members of the eco-clubs of their respective schools. The drive was flagged off by the assistant conservator of forest, Berhampur Trinath Patnaik. Several school teachers, Michael Peter of World Wildlife Fund (WWF), activists of the Rushikuya sea turtle protection committee and local fishermen also took part in the drive. Different competitions in conservation of Olive Ridley turtle were also held among the students.

An Olive Ridley turtle digs in the sand to lay its eggs on a Odisha beach

Source: The Times of India Dt.: February 15, 2016

Source:

- *http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/flora-fauna/Storks-spend-winter-eating-rubbish-in-landfills-not-flying-to-Africa/articleshow/50719779.cms*
- *http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/flora-fauna/Students-clean-Odisha-beach-to-facilitate-mass-nesting-of-turtles/articleshow/50998945.cms?*

News on Environment Website and App

In a bid to assist decision-making and policy formation on environment-related issues, the Environment Information System Centre (ENVIS) launched a website and mobile application for integrating its existing 69 ENVIS centres across the country. The Environment Information System (ENVIS) is an environment ministry initiative for integrating country-wide efforts in environment-related information collection, collation, storage and dissemination. The ENVIS portal will run parallel with Digital India Objective and aid the efforts for improving digital literacy in the environment sector. It will deliver services digitally all over the country.

Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar launched the website and mobile app and said that a plan for upgrading ENVIS centres should be prepared. It is a medium of reaching out to people by making them partners in progress and sustainable development. It should be made a people-centric movement. He added that the digitization of valuable data covering the broad spectrum of subjects on environment will serve as an asset for generating a rich repository of information. By bringing all ENVIS centres under one roof, it will also facilitate convergence in data dissemination. The ENVIS network presently consists of 69 centres, of which 29 are hosted by environment departments of various state governments while 40 are operated by environment-related government and non-governmental organizations. Major users of ENVIS, which has been functional since 1982, include the Centre and state governments, institutes, scientists, researchers and agencies carrying out environment-impact assessment for various projects.Javadekar also inaugurated a two-day workshop on national interaction-cum-evaluation of all ENVIS systems. The workshop assesses the functioning of all the 69 centres to provide them with the guidance and training they require. The workshop is being organized in the backdrop of the constant demand by civil society groups for putting up all environment-related information in public domain for better scrutiny by all stakeholders. This is the first time that the national workshop has been organised in the capital.

Source:

- *http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/tech/tech-news/Website-app-launched-for-easy-access-to-environment-info/articleshow/51033108.cms*

General Wetland News

Environmentalists and naturalists decry a key-hole view of conserving wetlands. Protection of any major wetland is possible only if the health of buffer wetlands around it is taken into consideration. Similarly, the pollution levels in the whole region and threat from encroachments have to be factored in. Jayashree Vencatesan, founder of Care Earth Trust reported that there is no point in calling a place like Pallikaranai a wetland if no cognizance is taken of the pollution the whole area is subjected to. Instead of simply focusing on the wetland alone, the buffer wetlands around it, which are 32 in number, need to be treated as ecological extensions with equal importance. The Trust, which had worked on an adaptive management plan for the conservation of the marsh, stressed on the need for people to be a major part of the process. Even though the northern side of the wetland has becoming a dumping spot for garbage, the southern side, which has fresh water flowing into it, has been a home for many rare migratory birds.

The tranquil Pulicat Lake, which is the second largest brackish water lake in the country, has long been attracting people as well as winged visitors. Many birds roost and nest in the surrounding wetlands and come to the lake for feeding. Many of these places are being earmarked for real estate and other development. In a similar context, environmentalists pointed out that agricultural lands surrounding Vedanthangal, which are also considered wetlands, were being fast taken over for other purposes, robbing migratory birds of their food source, including insects and reptiles.

Source:

- *http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/needed-a-comprehensive-view-of-conservation-of-wetlands/article8186666.ece*