



सत्यमेव जयते



# **Wetland, New, Monitor**

## **January - February 2017**

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*News brief on World Wetlands Day, Climate Change, Wetlands Notification, Wetland Birds, Avian Diversity, Oil Spill Pollution*

## World Wetlands Day 2017 Celebration in India

### Theme of World Wetlands Day for 2017 - 'Wetlands for disaster risk reduction'

World Wetlands Day is celebrated on February 2 each year to mark the Day the Convention on Wetlands was adopted in the Iranian City of Ramsar in 1971. India is a party to the Convention since 1982 and committed to the Ramsar approach of wise use of wetlands. The theme of World Wetlands Day for 2017 is 'Wetlands for Disaster Risk Reduction'. This theme has been selected to raise awareness on the vital roles of healthy wetlands in reducing the impacts of extreme events on communities and in helping to build resilience.

### World Wetlands Day Celebration at Bhoj Wetlands

World Wetlands Day 2017 was celebrated in collaboration with the Government of Madhya Pradesh at Bhoj Wetlands, Bhopal, which is one of the 26 Ramsar sites that India has designated under the Ramsar Convention.



Wetlands are guardians of human well-being

Source: [www.top-10-india.com](http://www.top-10-india.com) Dt.: February 02, 2017

Continued functioning of wetlands has acquired a new meaning in the age of increasing water and food security. Wetlands are the life support for a range of plant and animal life and as wetlands degrade, the existence of these life forms would be under stress. At the same time, it is for the security of human well-being, that wetland conservation acquires prominence. Wetlands support human well-being in a number of ways. As ‘kidneys of landscape’, wetlands receive flows of water and waste from upstream sources. They help stabilise water supplies, cleanse polluted waters, protect shorelines and recharge groundwater aquifers. The extensive food chain and biological diversity in wetlands make them ‘biological supermarkets’. Wetlands have special attributes as cultural heritage of humanity, and have deep connections with our beliefs and practices. They are an important part of our natural wealth and “liquid assets”. Despite their tremendous value, wetlands are also one of the most rapidly degrading ecosystems.



Need to raise awareness on healthy wetlands

Source: [www.top-10-india.com](http://www.top-10-india.com) Dt.: February 02, 2017

The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), Chennai, under the Ministry, has planned two events to spread public awareness about conservation of Wetlands. The first was a radio-outreach and awareness generation campaign. In partnership with a prominent radio station with a multi-city presence, NBA ran information snippets on wetlands, their role in disaster management, and ways and means to protect them, over the period of two weeks spread over a month (February 1 – March 2, 2017) in five cities across the country - Chennai, New Delhi, Kolkata, Ahmedabad

and Thiruvananthapuram. NBA has also planned a school outreach and awareness raising exercise. An announcement of the Photo Competition for youth being organised by the Ramsar Convention Secretariat will also run concurrently. NBAs radio campaign is supported by the Centre for Biodiversity Policy and Law (CEBPOL) project, a bilateral corporation project between India and Norway, under the thematic area "Interface with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements and Organisations."



### Integration of wetlands with disaster risk reduction

Source: [www.top-10-india.com](http://www.top-10-india.com) Dt.: February 02, 2017

Wetlands are our natural buffers against increasing risk of floods, droughts and tropical cyclones. Wetlands can act as sponges, storing peak rainfall and releasing water gradually during lean season. The floods in Kashmir Valley in September, 2014 and Chennai city in December, 2015 are reminders of the ways wetland destruction can make lives vulnerable. Evidences from Super Cyclone Kalinga of 1999, Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004 and Phailin of 2013 underline the role coastal wetlands as estuaries and mangroves can play in buffering communities from impacts of these cyclones and wave surges. Integration of wetlands within disaster risk reduction planning can be achieved by a series of collaborative actions between wetlands managers and those responsible for implementation disaster risk reduction actions. Assessment of wetland ecosystem health should be made as a part of District level disaster planning processes.



Wetland authorities as nodal agencies for integrated policy

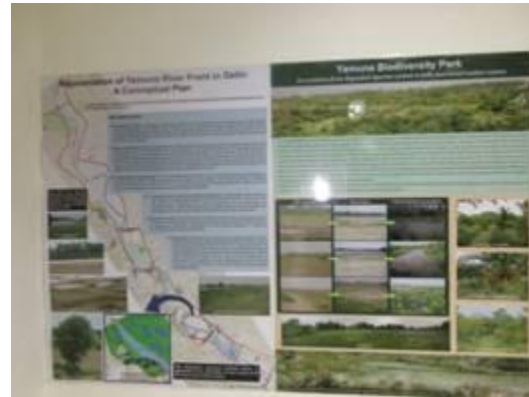
Source: [www.top-10-india.com](http://www.top-10-india.com) Dt.: February 02, 2017

Wetland management plans should have an in-built component of disaster risk reduction to address the likely impacts of disasters on ecosystem health. Wetlands conservation and restoration should be included within the suite of actions proposed for reducing disaster risk, particularly those related to water, food and climate security. States need to constitute Wetland Authorities as nodal agencies for integrated policy, planning and regulation of wetlands. Representation of Disaster Management Authorities should be ensured within the State Wetland Authorities. Mass awareness campaigns need to be undertaken to educate stakeholders from all walks of society, particularly local communities on the value of wetland ecosystems.

The Ministry accords high priority to wetlands conservation, and has a dedicated scheme of 'National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems' (NPCA) to support State Governments in integrated management of these ecosystems. Till date, over 170 wetlands have been covered under the programme. The ministry has also introduced Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2010 as the regulatory framework for conserving wetlands of the country.



A poster exhibition has been organised at the Ministry to celebrate the occasion. Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Ajay Narayan Jha inaugurated the exhibition.



Seventy five students from Kalindi College and Bharati College of Delhi University visited the exhibition.

Source: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=157912> Dt.: February 02, 2017

## **World Wetlands Day Celebration at Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad**

A slew of awareness programmes and competition for school-going children were held at the Nehru Zoological Park (NZP), Hyderabad on world wetlands day celebrations. The programmes



and competitions focused on promoting the importance of wetlands and the need to preserve them. Around 120 students from five city schools participated in the drawing and essay writing competitions. Speaking about the event, Shivani Dogra, curator, NZP, who distributed prizes to winners of the competitions stressed on the importance of holding more awareness programmes involving children. The Nehru Zoological Park has been at the forefront of preserving wetlands through various awareness programmes.



Source: The Times of India Dt.: February 03, 2017

## **World Wetlands Day Celebration at Sukhna Lake Chandigarh (UT)**

Youth Innovative Society (Regd), a city-based environmental NGO, in collaboration with the department of environment and forest and wildlife departments, Chandigarh administration, celebrated World Wetlands Day, 2017 at Nature Interpretation Center Regulatory End of Sukhna Lake Chandigarh (UT). Two hundred-fifty children from various government and private schools of the city, deputy conservator of forests Arpana, range forest officer Karan Singh, administrative officials and other staff of the environment and forest and wildlife departments participated at a function that was organised at Sukhna lake.

Delivering the inaugural address, chief guest, deputy conservator of forests Arpana said the day marks the signing of the Convention of Wetlands at Ramsar. She also expressed keen desire to involve the number city children to nurture and enjoy nature in its abundance at this site. She

called for a collective effort to safeguard wetlands and urged the students to take the lead in conserving natural resources.

Sachin Sharma, chairman of the Youth Innovative Society (Regd), said wetlands supports a number of plant and animal species including birds, butterflies, dragonflies and reptiles. Thousands of migratory birds flock to wetlands in the city during winter migration. He said the day was observed to strengthen the movement of conservation of bio-diversity and fight climate change. The biggest challenge in today's time is to live in harmony with nature.



Source: The Times of India Dt.: February 03, 2017

On the occasion a painting competition was organised. Over 250 entrants participated in the competition. The theme for the painting competition was Wetlands - A natural safeguard against disasters. Chief guest Arpana, while distributing prizes to the winners of the painting competition also stressed need to protect and conserve the valuable ecosystem. She also administered a pledge to students for the conservation of nature and natural resources like wetlands by adopting a sustainable way of life.

## **World Wetlands Day Celebration at Mini Seashore, Navimumbai**

The civic body along with an environmental group organised a programme on account of World Wetlands Day at Vashi's Mini Seashore, Navimumbai. Ladybird Environmental Consultancy has roped in around 75 volunteers to carry out a number of events. Dr V Shubhalakshmi, the group's



founder said that they have chartered out a number of events. Using iTrees, a mobile app, they will prepare an inventory of trees planted along the road and inside the park. They will also develop tree tags from waste material like cardboard sheets and corrugated cartons and these will be hung from trees with ropes made from plastic bag strips. The nature trail cleaned up and visitors were advised to keep the place clean.



Wetlands in Vashi

Source: The Times of India Dt.: February 08, 2017

## **World Wetlands Day Celebration at Guwahati, Assam**

On the occasion of World Wetlands Day, conservationists gathered at Cotton College and sought better protection of wetlands in the state. The theme of the event, which was organized by the college, World Wildlife Fund, India, and Kaziranga Wildlife Society, was 'Wetlands for Disaster Risk Reduction.' Principal Nirada Devi inaugurated the event and said it would help students to know more about the importance of wetland conservation. Associate professor of Geography Pradip Sharma said that wetlands recharge groundwater, reduce floods and support many species.



Source: The Times of India Dt.: February 03, 2017

## **World Wetlands Day Celebration at Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)**

On World Wetlands Day, the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has proposed that the Thane Creek be declared as a Ramsar site. The creek was recently declared as a Flamingo Sanctuary and hosts nearly 40,000 flamingos for nearly six months every year, including the Greater and Lesser Flamingos. Besides flamingos, the creek is the wintering refuge for many species of migratory birds including large number of Pied Avocets, Black-tailed Godwits, Common Redshanks, stints and sand plovers.



Source: The Times of India Dt.: February 02, 2017



BNHS has also recommended Hatnur dam in Jalgaon district as a Ramsar site as it is known to host 20,000 to 32,000 birds during winter, including hundreds of threatened Painted Storks, Black-headed Ibis and other waterbirds. While there are 26 Ramsar sites in India, there is not a single site in Maharashtra. In 2013, the Maharashtra forest department had identified and proposed Jaikwadi Bird Sanctuary (Aurangabad), Ujni Reservoir (Pune), Sewri Creek or Mahul-Sewri Mudflats (Mumbai), Nandur Madhmeshwar Bird Sanctuary (Nashik), and Lonar Lake Sanctuary (Buldhana).

## **World Wetlands Day Celebration at Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu**

More than 100 students from Chandra Matriculation School and PSGR Krishnammal Higher Secondary School had a day out in the Ukkadam Lake and Forest College to have a hands-on experience and knowledge on wetland systems and forest ecology to mark the World Wetlands Day on February 2. The event was organised by Nature Conservation Society (NCS) and Environment Conservation Group (ECG) in association with the Forest Department. This day is observed to raise awareness on the importance of healthy wetlands and their role in reducing the impact of extreme weather conditions such as floods and droughts.

S. Ramasubramanian, District Forest Officer, spoke to the students on the importance and the need to conserve the wetlands. He also urged the students to carry the message of conservation to their friends and relatives. Mr. Ramasubramanian insisted the need to have a watch tower and interpretation centre at the lake so that more students could observe and study about birds present in the lake. N.I. Jalaluddin, president of NCS, and Mohammed Saleem of ECG, spoke to the students on how green NGOs and the public were very active in Coimbatore and contribute towards conserving the wetlands. They said that the wetlands of Coimbatore were the feeding ground for birds from as far as Tundra, Russia, central Asia and Europe during this season. They added that some rare birds such as Gull, Osprey, Bar-headed goose and Red knot visit the wetlands. The students were able to spot more than 40 species of birds in the lake and were able to name more than 30 species.

Students were informed and educated about the importance of wetlands, and the need to conserve them at a programme conducted by the Ooty Town Public Awareness Organisation. Students from the CSI Gell Memorial Girls Higher Secondary School were told about how

wetlands play a vital role to the local ecosystem, and of their importance to birds and animals. The students made a pledge to protect and conserve local wetlands. G Janardhanan, president of the Ooty Town Public Awareness Trust, said that the last decade had seen whatever remnants of wetlands left in Udthagamandalam destroyed by unbridled development. And he added that only a fraction of the original wetlands in the Nilgiris still remains which need to be protected, and the government should ensure that they are left intact.



Students get to know of the significance of wetlands and their impact on weather condition.

Source: The Hindu Dt.: February 03, 2017

## **World Wetlands Day Celebration at Mookaneri Lake, Salem, Tamil Nadu**

Nature walk and special lecture session marked the World Wetlands Day celebrations brought up by the Salem district unit of the Tamil Nadu Science Forum (TNSF) on the banks of Mookaneri Lake in the city. Ecological experts explained the importance of wetlands in maintaining the environment and the need to protect the same. The students of Government Arts College and Government Arts College for Women, Hasthampatti, participated in the event.

World Wetlands Day is observed on February 2 with an aim to raise public awareness on wetland values and benefits and promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands. The international theme for World Wetlands Day 2017 is ‘wetlands for disaster risk reduction’. The

programme commenced with an eco-walk by the students and the members of the TNSF on the banks of the lake and also on its dry bed.



Source: The Hindu Dt.: February 06, 2017

Dinakaran of Zoology Department, Madura College, Madurai, was the resource person. He said that wetlands played an important role in helping to provide communities with resilience to natural hazards such as flooding caused by storms, cyclones, storm surges and tsunamis. Wetlands were often viewed as wastelands. But in reality, they were useful to society in many ways. He explained the types of wetlands and how they were ecologically useful to human beings. Yercaud Elango, president of the TNSF, Sahasranamam, state general council member, R. K. Lal, joint secretary of the Salem district unit of the TNSF, and Alaguraj, coordinator of the United Salem for Bird Life, participated in the event.

The Kannantheri Panchayat Union Middle School in Magudanchavadi union set a worthy example by celebrating the Wetlands Day on the school premises. The members of the Eco Club of the school planted saplings on the school premises. Later, they took oath of protecting the mangrove forest zones and the trees found in abundance in these forests. R. Jayakumar, staff coordinator of the Eco Club, explained the salient features of the wetlands, their importance and the need for protecting them.



## Source:

- [http://www.top-10-india.com/news-top-10/world-wetlands-day-celebrated-at-bhoj-wetlands\\_20220.html](http://www.top-10-india.com/news-top-10/world-wetlands-day-celebrated-at-bhoj-wetlands_20220.html)
- <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=157912>
- <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/zoo-hosts-campaign-on-wetlands-day/articleshow/56947553.cms>
- <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chandigarh/world-wetlands-day-2017-observed/articleshow/56956711.cms>
- <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/navi-mumbai/world-wetlands-day-to-be-celebrated-at-mini-seashore/articleshow/57026747.cms>
- <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/green-experts-seek-shield-for-wetlands-in-assam/articleshow/56949647.cms>
- <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/world-wetlands-day-declare-flamingo-sanctuary-as-ramsar-site/articleshow/56939322.cms>
- <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/Students-have-a-day-out-at-Ukkadam-lake-on-World-Wetlands-Day/article17156118.ece>
- <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/Creating-awareness-on-importance-conservation-of-wetlands/article17200137.ece>

## Report on Climate Change

Wetland managers face a new set of challenges when addressing the impacts from global climate change. Wetlands are at risk of rapidly declining in quantity and quality due to impacts associated with climate change. However, wetlands also provide an effective strategy for mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change. Sea level rise, carbon sequestration, and invasive species are among the many topics in recent discussions about wetlands and climate change.

Researchers from the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom and Banaras Hindu University in Uttar Pradesh worked in northwest India between 2007 and 2014 reported that the Indus Valley Civilisation underwent a period of climate change about 4,000 years ago and suggested that the ancient population in India used a variety of subsistence practices to cope with



diverse environments.

They studied the dynamics of adaptation and resilience in the face of a diverse and varied environmental context, using the case study of the Indus Civilisation (3000 BC – 1300 BC). They looked at how Indus populations in north-west India interacted with their environment, and considered how that environment changed during periods of climate change.

Cameron Petrie, lead author of Cambridge stated that for most ancient complex societies, water was a critical factor, and the availability of water and the way that it was managed and used provide critical insight into human adaptation and the resilience of subsistence practices. Most early complex societies developed in regions where the climatic parameters faced by ancient subsistence farmers were varied, but not especially diverse. Researchers showed that this region was subject to climate change during the period when the Indus Civilisation was at its height (2500 BC – 1900 BC). The civilisation provides a unique opportunity to study how an ancient society coped with diverse and varied ecologies and change in environmental parameters.

The Indus Civilisation was situated close to a deep lake Kotla Dahar, which would have been primarily monsoonal. The lake showed evidence for two dramatic decreases in monsoon rainfall and a progressive lowering of the lake level. The second of these shows Kotla Dahar becoming ephemeral during 2200-2000 BC as a result of an abrupt weakening of the monsoon, which is visible in speleothem records in Oman and northeast India.

### **Climate and De-urbanisation**

The proximity of the Kotla Dahar record to the area occupied by Indus populations shows that climate must be formally considered as a contributing parameter in the process of Indus de-urbanisation, at least in the context of the plains of northwest India. It has long been hypothesised that there was variation in the subsistence practices used by Indus populations and this fits with the theme of coping with diverse environments. Mr. Petrie reported that rather than being forced to intensify or diversify subsistence practices in response to climatic change, they have evidence for the use of millet, rice, and tropical pulses in the pre-urban and urban phases of the Indus Civilisation. This evidence suggested that local Indus populations were already well adapted to living in varied and variable environmental conditions before the development of urban centres. The study was published in the journal *Current Anthropology*.



The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has launched climate change programme under which the first study funded by Oracle and facilitated by CAF-India, will assess the status, distribution and conservation of pheasants and finches in the Central Himalayas. The Himalayas hold a rich natural heritage with diverse flora and fauna enhancing the beauty of the region. The study focused on their conservation in the context of climate change with the help of community participation. The Indian subcontinent is home to nearly 50 species of pheasants and 62 species of finches, with several species listed in 'Globally Threatened' category by IUCN. Both these groups are spread across the Himalayas. Shrinking habitats combined with several biotic factors, along with trapping and poaching pressures in many areas have pushed several of them to near extinction.

Bilwada Kale, official spokesperson of BNHS stated that climate change can highly influence vertical and horizontal distribution of these groups making boundaries of protected areas fuzzy. The species that can adapt will survive but habitat specialist and species sensitive to temperature will suffer. The major aim of this project is to assess the status of phasinidae and fringillidae, particularly globally threatened species found in Himalayan region and evaluate their distribution. This long-term monitoring project also aims to assess the socio-economic activities of local communities and involve them in conservation efforts and sensitize the local forest department staff.

Girish Jathar, Senior Scientist (ornithology), BNHS that this project is part of a long-term programme of BNHS which intends to understand the impact of climate change on biodiversity of the Himalayan region. In order to conserve biodiversity, the local communities play a crucial role and hence their involvement is important for the success of this project. The project will contribute in making an inventory of pheasants and finches, documentation of local specific conservation issues, and designing local as well as species specific conservation action plan with the community participation. The conservation action plan of these sites is a first step towards the protection of the ecosystem which benefits both biodiversity as well as the people in the system.

A class on climate change and disaster mitigation was organised for panchayat presidents and vice-presidents at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. The Chief Secretary S M Vijayanand said that the studies on climate change should be written in common man's language. It's the common





people who bear the brunt of harmful effects of climate change. All people should combat climate change jointly since it results in far reaching consequences, worse than any other phenomenon. He added that local bodies should give thrust on wetland conservation and they have to show more vigil in terms of conserving ponds, wells and restoring canals. The concept of green building shall be promoted while undertaking construction activities. V S Senthil, Additional Chief Secretary, Department of Environment, Sekhar Kuriakose, Member Secretary, state disaster management authority was also present on the occasion.

#### **Source:**

- <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/How-Indus-Valley-Civilisation-coped-with-climate-change/article17116673.ece>
- <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/flora-fauna/bombay-natural-history-society-launches-climate-change-programme-in-central-himalayas/articleshow/56856160.cms>
- <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/global-warming/prepare-studies-on-climate-change-in-common-mans-language-kerala-chief-secretary/articleshow/56415561.cms>

## **News on Wetlands Notifications**

Two notifications on wetlands issued by the Union environment ministry on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016 have puzzled legal activists who have been campaigning for protection of wetlands. One of these notifications is to announce the constitution of Central Wetlands Regulatory Authority (CWRA) – the nodal agency for identification, conservation and protection of wetlands - for a term of just two months. The other notification omits two clauses in the Wetland Rules 2010 on the constitution and term of the CWRA. This notification states that the authority will be constituted under the Environment Protection Act instead of under the Wetland Rules. Under the 2010 rules, the term of CWRA was for 3 years. These developments are significant because the National Green Tribunal (NGT) is hearing an application seeking directions to the government to identify all wetlands in the country as specified in the Wetlands Rules (Conservation and Management) 2010.



Environmentalists had filed two separate applications in NGT following a draft notification issued by the Union environment ministry in March 2016 on Wetlands Rules 2016 – a much watered down version of Wetland Rules 2010. In July 2016, NGT, while hearing the environmentalists' plea, had directed that the CWRA hold meetings with all states and UTs every month to identify and notify all wetlands in the country. Before this order, CWRA had met only thrice since 2010. Again, on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016, NGT ordered that CWRA hold a meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2016 with representatives of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Mizoram, Nagaland, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Daman & Diu, Lakshadweep, Chhattisgarh and Arunachal Pradesh to discuss delineation of wetlands.

**Source:**

- <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/the-good-earth/notifications-on-wetlands-baffle-green-activists/articleshow/56585957.cms>

## News on Wetland Birds

The Pong Dam wetlands, one of the largest in the foothills of the Himalayas, are located about 250 km from the State Capital Shimla. Wildlife department officials reported that two pairs of greater flamingos were sighted on the Pong Dam reservoir in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh which was never spotted in this area earlier. The birds, with their unique curved beaks, are 4 to 5 feet tall and have a pinkish white plumage. Flamingos are common to Rann of Kutch in Gujarat and rarely come to the marshy lowlands in Himachal, said wildlife officials who counted more than 1.25 lakh water birds in the area during a three-day census. Out of around 93 different species, the bar-headed Geese were the maximum with numbers exceeding 80,000. The presence of greater flamingos in the hill state has surprised wildlife officials as it is a common migratory bird in the coastal areas.

Varied species of migratory water birds come to the Pong Dam, spread over about 300 sq kms, from as far as Central Asia, Siberia, Nepal, China and Tibet during the winter season and feed on its freshwater fishes. The other noticeable species recorded are bar-headed geese, common pochard, common coot, northern pintail, northern shovellers, common teal, cormorants,

shellduck, greater crested grebe, graylag goose, red crested pochard, common merganser, eurasian spoonbill, Richard's pipit, Blyth's pipit and many other species of larks.



Source: The Hindu Dt.: February 03, 2017

**Source:**

- <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-newdelhi/Rare-sighting-of-greater-flamingos-in-Himachal-dam-reservoir/article17158009.ece>

## Brief News on Avian Diversity

The avian species diversity of Kerala got a boost in the last days of 2016 with BirdLife International dividing a species in two. BirdLife International, an organisation which assesses the conservation status of birds globally, has split the group of montane laughingthrushes, which are endemic to the Western Ghats, and recognised them as two new species. As a result, Kerala now has four mountain laughingthrushes in place of two.

The newly accepted species are Banasura laughingthrush (*Trochalopteron jerdoni*), which has a very restricted distribution in Wayanad district and Travancore



laughingthrush (*Trochaloxyron merdionale*) found in Thiruvananthapuram district. While the conservation status of the Banasura species was assessed as endangered, the Travancore variety was considered vulnerable, considering the risk the species were facing.

The two original species of the family were Nilgiri laughingthrush and Palani laughingthrush. The Nilgiri species, assessed as an endangered one, is found in Silent Valley National Park and Siruvani hills of Kerala. The near-threatened Palani laughingthrush is found mainly in Munnar hills and the mountains of Periyar Tiger Reserve apart from Grass Hills and Palani hills in Tamil Nadu.

Dr. P.O. Nameer, Head, Wildlife Division of the Kerala Agriculture University, and J. Praveen, the coordinator of Bird Count India, which organises the national bird counting exercise, had been arguing for treating the Banasura and Travancore species as separate ones, considering how different they were from the other two. They had published a paper in 2012 making a strong case for splitting the species. According to Dr. Nameer, colonial ornithologists had suggested way back in 1800s that all four laughingthrushes be treated as independent species. However, in the early 1900s, the concept of sub-species gained currency and two of them were wrongly treated as sub-species. It was in 2012 that a scientific assessment was carried out to establish the existence of four different species.

The identification of the two new species was carried out by following the internationally accepted scoring system. The morphological differences, the distribution of each species, its habitat and altitude preference were identified through field trips. The scores obtained were sufficient to separately classify the species. The conservation status of the birds was also revisited after their reclassification. BirdLife International recognised the findings and reclassified the birds in the latest Red List.

Laughingthrushes are found only in the peaks of Western Ghats, popularly known as Sky Islands. These mountain peaks are separated from the others so well that the birds from one Sky Island find difficult to move to the next sky island. This has resulted in the creation of four closely related species, each of them occupying a series of mountain tops across the entire range of southern Western Ghats.



The newly accepted banasura laughingthrush has a restricted distribution in Wayanad district.

Source: The Hindu Dt.: January 08, 2017

**Source:**

- <http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/Kerala%E2%80%99s-avian-diversity-gets-richer/article17004904.ece>

## News on Oil Spill Pollution

Oil spill accident took place on January 2017 along the coast of Bay of Bengal at Tamil Nadu. Even as dark oil streaks were slathered seen on the sands of beaches, volunteers working with the conservation of Olive Ridley turtles worried a lot. Every year, from January to April, Olive Ridley Turtles make a beeline for the sandy shores of beaches in Chennai and Kancheepuram, where they nest. The Forest Department, as well as other organisations which are engaged in the conservation of the species, are usually involved in patrolling the beaches to look for nests and take the eggs to hatcheries.

Shravan Krishnan, a volunteer with the Students Sea Turtle Conservation Network reported that for turtles which are nesting, they will find it tough to come on to the sand since oil sediments are there till the high tide line in a few spots. While volunteers who patrol the beaches from Neelankarai to Besant Nagar near the broken bridge usually spot a lot of crabs during the patrolling in the night, but they were hardly able to spot a few ones after the oil spill and even

those were seen with oil on them. Volunteers also said that there would be several micro-organisms along the shore which they believe would be affected by the oil spill.



A carcass of a turtle washed ashore on Thiruvanmiyur beach

Source: The Hindu Dt.: February 01, 2017

Chennai gets the bulk of its seafood supply from the coastline along neighbouring States. However, fears about the oil spill polluting Chennai's coastline affecting the quality of marine life sent sales of fish plummeting. According to wholesalers in Chintadripet, the fish catch from Kasimedu contributes to only 5-10 % of the city's consumption. However, customers are hesitant to buy fish following the news of oil spill polluting the coastline and the fish sale has dropped by nearly 50%. G.R. Apparaj, a fish wholesaler said it is difficult to find fish near the coast as they have gone deeper into sea after the oil spill and Chennai's fish market gets its main supply from Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and even Odisha. Environmentalists too note that the fishes would have gone deeper into sea in search of dissolved oxygen to survive. A. Navaneetha Gopalakrishnan, former director, Centre for Environmental Studies, Anna University, said the oil spill close to the coast would have a severe impact on dissolved oxygen levels and marine life cannot survive.

**Source:**

- <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/Activists-worried-over-effect-of-spill-on-turtles/article17126155.ece>
- <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/Fish-sales-take-a-hit-after-spill/article17126147.ece>