



# **Wetland, New, Monitor**

**March - April 2017**

## **TRENDING TOPICS IN THIS ISSUE:**

- 1. Information on Olive Riddley Turtles**
- 2. Brief News on Fishing in Palk Bay**
- 3. Information on New Guidelines for Inland Fisheries**
- 4. News on Rejuvenation of Water bodies**
- 5. Report on Wetland Pollution**

*News brief on Olive Riddly Turtles, Palk Bay, Inland fisheries, Pollution*

## Information on Olive Ridley Turtles

Tamil Nadu Forest Department take utmost care in conserving the eggs of Olive Ridley turtles that helped to increase the collection and preservation and also release of hatchlings into the Bay of Bengal in the coastal villages of the district. The district accounts for a 50-km coastal belt and the Forest Department had set up three hatcheries at Vanagiri, Koolaiyar and Kottaigaimedu. Each hatchery has been well protected and is covered by net all around including the ceiling, so that crows, dogs or cats cannot enter it.

The hatchery is located at a distance of 20 metres from the shore so that the eggs are kept under the same humidity and temperature of the site where the eggs were laid. V. Gopinath, Forest Range Officer, Sirkali, who has been ensuring the safe handling and conservation of eggs reported that the Forest Department has registered a record collection of 12,631 eggs this season which are being preserved at these hatcheries where the temperature of the hatchery was maintained to ensure that its environment is not excessively hot.



Well-maintained hatchery at Vanagiri near Sirkali in Nagapattinam district has helped to increase the conservation of Olive Ridley eggs

Source: The Hindu Dt.: March 28, 2017



Olive Ridley turtles lay the eggs and bury them up to a depth of two feet. Forest officials immediately shift the eggs from the shores to the hatchery where the eggs are buried, again, up to the same depth. Each hatchery accounts for at least 20 to 25 pits and in front of each pit, details of the date of collection of eggs and the number of eggs buried in it have been displayed. Wildlife Warden S. Vidhya stated that the hatcheries have been set up under the Tamil Nadu Biodiversity and Greening Project. Forest personnel have been adequately trained in handling the eggs and letting off the hatchlings in the sea.

**Source:**

- <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/protected-hatcheries-ensure-conservation-of-olive-ridley-eggs/article17693179.ece>

## **Brief News on Fishing in Palk Bay**

The former High Commissioner of India to Pakistan G. Parthasarathy reported that equipping fishermen for deep sea fishing would go a long way in preventing boundary transgression from Tamil Nadu side in Palk Bay. Speaking at a lecture on “Indian foreign policy and security challenges: past and present” at the Pondicherry University, Mr. Parthasarathy said one of the options to avoid frequent dispute over fishing in Palk Bay was to encourage fishermen from Tamil Nadu to go for deep sea fishing.

The former High Commissioner said all stakeholders, including the government of Northern Province, Sri Lanka, should sit together to arrive at a consensus and if it worked out, agencies such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency and Asian Development Bank would be ready to provide financial assistance. He said during his visits to Jaffna, he had heard about stories of how Sri Lankan Tamils were deprived of their marine wealth by big industrialists who sent fishermen from Tamil Nadu. He added that it is their only livelihood means and they bitterly complaint about fishing activity using big trawlers deep inside their water.



He mooted a Buddhism tourism circuit connecting India with Southeast Asian countries which would help strengthen relations with Sri Lanka. The diplomat delved on the growing irrelevance of South Asian Association for Regional Corporation (SAARC) because of strained India-Pakistan relations and the problems in Afghanistan. In the context of relations with Pakistan not making much progress, he said India should try to build its relations with eastern neighbours by deepening economic activity. Mr. Parthasarathy stressed on the need for a strong economy to strengthen country's geopolitical influence.

**Source:**

- <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/promote-deep-sea-fishing-in-palk-bay/article17694048.ece>

## **Information on New Guidelines for Inland Fisheries**

Encroachment and pollution of waterbodies to be punishable offence in proposed Bill. The Union government has issued guidelines for the States on framing a Bill on inland fisheries and aquaculture, amid mounting concern over the pollution and encroachment of waterbodies in Kerala and the long-standing demand to protect the traditional rights and livelihood security of inland fishers. The guidelines were issued by the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries (DADF) under the Union Ministry of Agriculture to address the inadequacies in the existing regulations by States.

According to the guidelines, encroachment or reclamation of rivers, lakes and wetlands and pollution of water sources is to be treated as a punishable offence. Dumping of solid waste in lakes, wetlands and lagoons has also been recommended for punishment.

The guidelines propose regulations on the use of fishing craft and gear to protect commercially important fish species from exploitation. States have been asked to notify protected areas and fishing holidays in waterbodies during the fish breeding season and ensure safe passage for migration of fish brooders to wetlands. The Centre has also instructed States to consider aquaculture on a par with agriculture and ensure uniform incentives, tax benefits and



concessional tariffs for both sectors. Certification of fish seed and fish feed, disease monitoring and control and curbs on exotic species and destructive fishing practices are other provisions recommended for inclusion in the Bill.

A participatory approach with the involvement of NGOs and self help groups has been mooted to ensure sustainability of inland fisheries. Sources in the sector point out that though the number of inland fishers in Kerala is larger than those in the marine sector, they are scattered and poorly organised, unlike their counterparts in Odisha and West Bengal. T. Peter, General Secretary, National Fishworkers Forum stated that the pollution and encroachment of waterbodies are two major issues that threaten sustainable inland fisheries in Kerala.

Inland fishermen in the State have also been clamouring for protection of their traditional rights for fishing activities in pokkali fields where farmers rotate paddy cultivation and fish farming. They feel that they have been sidelined by farmers who reap more profits from shrimp farming than paddy. The NFF is organising a consultative meeting at Kolkata to discuss the Centre's guidelines. Mr. Peter said the response would be submitted to the government.

**Source:**

- <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Thiruvananthapuram/new-guidelines-for-inland-fisheries/article18198347.ece>

## **News on Rejuvenation of Water bodies**

Water bodies (tanks/ponds/ooranies) are an inherent part of the society in Indian culture and serve a variety of purposes. They have traditionally played an important role in recharging ground water, drinking water supply, irrigation, tourism/ culture etc. In Chennai metropolitan region there are around 280 water bodies. For Centuries, these water bodies played a vital role in ensuring water security to Chennai and surrounding areas. Due to rapid urbanization and expansion, many of these water bodies have been degraded in many ways. There is an urgent need to revive these water bodies and rejuvenate their ecosystem thereby ensuring sustainable water security.



Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami inaugurated a project to desilt the Manimangalam Lake in Kancheepuram district under the State government's Kudimaramathu scheme. He shovelled the first mound of sand from the lake. During the inauguration Mr. Palaniswami said that the scheme will be carried out by the State government in partnership with citizens, self-help groups and farmers associations. He added that a total of 1,519 projects in 30 districts involving an expenditure of Rs. 100 crore would be taken up under the scheme. Apart from cleaning the waterbodies, the scheme will focus on strengthening of the lake bunds and weeding out the plants, including hyacinths. This scheme would ensure more storage in waterbodies and help farmers as well as improve the water quality in the neighbourhood. He also said that the North-East and South-West monsoons had failed, but the government would ensure that the people, especially the farmers, do not suffer without water.

Referring to Kancheepuram as 'Erigal Maavattam' (Lake District), which has 961 lakes, Mr. Palaniswami said, that the AIADMK government has implemented various schemes which were announced by former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa and would continue to work for the welfare of the people especially farmers. Apart from Kancheepuram, the desilting work would be undertaken in various districts across the State in the presence of Ministers, MPs, MLAs and District Collectors. Chief Secretary Girija Vaidyanathan, Minister for Agriculture R. Doraikannu, Minister for Rural Industries P. Benjamin, PWD Principal Secretary S.K. Prabakar, WRD Principal Secretary S. Dinakaran, and Kancheepuram District Collector P. Ponniah participated in the inauguration function.

The Lake Development Authority appointed two-man expert committee comprising engineers C.N. Babu and Ramprasad to investigate the status of Kukkarahalli Lake in the Mysuru (Mysore) city and to submit the final report by the end of March. The committee visited the lake and held an elaborate interaction with environmentalists and officials before eliciting public opinion. Dr. Ramprasad, a retired professor from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), said that the first priority was to ensure that there was sufficient fresh water inflow into the lake. He added that the committee will take into account all aspects, including the hydrological condition and the ecological imperatives in its final report. The constitution of the committee and the public hearing was necessitated following widespread opposition to the 'development' of the lake which entailed massive dredging exercises besides other cosmetic beautification procedures

at a cost of nearly Rs. 3 crore. More than 50 people from different walks of life took part in the hearing to present their views. A majority of the speakers opined that lake development should not be merely human-centric but ought to take into account ecological aspects and integrate the requirements of local flora and fauna.

The lack of transparency in the entire development process was highlighted by conservation biologist and researcher D. Madhusudhan of Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF), Mysuru, who rued the lack of information about the project in the public domain. He called for a scientific assessment of the consequences of implementing such plans and the need for mitigatory measures. He stressed that lake development should not be construed as a mere civil engineering work but must have environmental consideration as well. Similar views were expressed by Pavithra who rued the absence of a blueprint for the lake development plans and opposed the dredging process. Maj. Gen. (retd) Sudhir Vombatkere, an activist, said what was taking place at Kukkarahalli was excavation and not dredging and flayed the University of Mysore for being an irresponsible custodian of the water body. This drew sharp reactions from a section of the university's engineering staff who opposed his statements. Those supporting the dredging process said that it would augment the water-holding capacity of the lake.



The expert committee visiting Kukkarahalli Lake in Mysuru

Source: The Hindu Dt.: March 15, 2017



A drive to clear the invasive tree species *Prosopis juliflora* (seemai karuvelam) that invaded Selvampathy Lake near Thondamuthur, Coimbatore was uprooted by 50 police personnel attached to the city traffic police. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic) S. Saravanan inaugurated the clearing of the trees at 7 a.m. The drive continued up to noon. Assistant Commissioner of Police (Traffic) K. Magudapthay, and inspectors C. Ayyasamy and K.V. Sathasivem organised the drive in association with Nature Conservation Society. Society president N.I. Jalaluddin said that *P. juliflora* trees were uprooted after obtaining permission from District Forest Officer and Coimbatore Corporation.

**Source:**

- <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/throwing-a-lifeline-to-waterbodies/article17459470.ece>
- <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-karnataka/expert-committee-visits-kukkarahalli-lake/article17465113.ece>
- <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/seemai-karuvelam-removed-from-lake/article17669674.ece>

## Report on Wetland Pollution

Three dyeing units found polluting water bodies through indiscriminate discharge of effluents. The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) officials have caught those three dyeing units, all of which have been member units of Common Effluent Treatment Plants (CETPs) during the inspection. The TNPCB has instructed the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation to disconnect the power supply to the units as a punishment for the violations.\

Board District Environment Engineer K. Elankumaran said that of the three units caught for violation, two were linked to the Murugampalayam CETP and the third one was attached to the Rayapuram CETP. The checks on the basis of complaints revealed that the units were discharging the untreated effluents during the night hours. The dyeing unit attached to Rayapuram CETP was discharging effluent directly into the River Noyyal, while the other two





units were discharging the effluents into one of the tributaries of River Noyyal. Reacting to the detection of clandestine effluent discharge during dark hours, the farmers' community pointed out that the attempts of dyeing fraternity to create the 'green image' claiming that they were sticking completely to zero liquid discharge norms in effluent treatment process have been busted yet again.

Wetlands are incredibly bio-diverse ecosystems with a much greater resilience than water bodies to absorb and deal with nutrients, a richer bio-diversity spot and with great benefits to a city. Five hundred to 600 million litres of water from the Cauvery and groundwater is consumed, converted to waste-water and sent into Bellandur Lake daily. The Dakshina Pinakini River, to which the Bellandur chain of tanks belongs, now flows with Cauvery water. Solid waste is dumped in the valleys, building debris of the vast dynamic construction happening in the catchment zone is also dumped into the tanks and valleys. This solid waste and liquid waste is rich in nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphate and potash. These nutrients, when they enter water, result in an explosion of algae and plants.

The Bellandur Lake - the National Green Tribunal, is the largest lake in Bengaluru city, caught fire on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2017 by accumulating froth inexplicably after two years. Bengaluru's governing bodies ordered the shutdown of industries nearby and to de-weed and de-silt and to ensure the stoppage of nearly 500 million litres of sewage that flow daily into the 700-acre lake. Plans that were on paper for several years have suddenly galvanised into action: 13 of 97 industries in the vicinity have been closed, 159 apartments are under the scanner.

The severely-polluted lake, where froth at its outlets often overflows into neighbouring roads, had spurred local NGOs to approach the green tribunal against what they termed "government inaction" to stem the decline of the lake. The green tribunal's order is the latest in a series of strictures handed down over the years to protect the city's lakes. In 2015, it fined two builders Rs. 150 crore for constructing on the wetlands of the Bellandur Lake. In 2016, it ruled that the buffer zone around all lakes should be 75 metres from the 30 metres currently. Similarly, a no-build zone of 50 metres was set around storm water drains to protect the flow of rainwater into tanks. With over 40 sq. km. of lakes in the city and 800 km of primary and secondary drains, the NGT had sent the real estate sector into a tailspin.

While a debate rages whether these orders are practical, environmentalists admit that the NGT had to step in to break through official apathy. Knee-jerk reactions of erecting meshes to stop the overflow of froth or sprinklers to suppress foam were no longer enough. The NGT stated that an action plan to revive the lake was needed. Though the Bellandur Lake has been seen frothing, due to the churning of detergents in flowing sewage, sporadically for over two decades, it was in May 2015 that Bellandur and the 400-acre Varthur Lake downstream were catapulted to national and international media attention. On one Saturday morning, white froth that had accumulated at its weir burst into flames. While froth has now become a near-permanent feature for those living around the lakes, on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2017, thick smoke spewed from the middle of the lake. Pollution in Bellandur is a symbol of all that is wrong in Bengaluru's urbanisation drive.



Froth accumulated in the Bellandur Lake

Source: The Hindu Dt.: April 29, 2017

While Bellandur Lake may get a fresh lease of life as the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has upped its pressure on rejuvenation, mounds of debris and mud are seeming testimony to the

tightening noose around the nearby Varthur Lake. The residents of Thubarahalli at the edge of the 445.5-acre lake stood on their balconies and counted the numerous trucks that made way through the dusty tracks to the lake. At least 10 unique trucks were spotted, and during each of their multiple trips, a mound of mud was unloaded on the periphery of the severely polluted lake. Residents estimate at least 100 such mounds were dumped.

When *The Hindu* visited the spot, two earthmovers were levelling the piled mud. The level was visibly 15 feet higher than the wild growth of grass and water hyacinth that mark the wetlands of Varthur Lake. A healthy green field is now a dusty stage. Workers at the site said the mud was got from excavations at Marathahalli and Kundalahalli and that their mandate was to level it as much as they could. As the earthmovers pushed the mud over the edge, there was little to mark the boundary of the adjacent land. Though the “encroachment” has been happening for 10 days, the pace has picked up drastically.



Shrinking prospects: Earth movers level mud around Varthur Lake

Source: The Hindu Dt.: April 23, 2017



A report on the encroachment by Whitefield Rising, a citizen's group, which uses satellite imagery overlaid with an image of the land-use maps of the areas, shows that the encroachment was happening from four survey numbers in two areas: Thubarahalli and Bellandur Amani Kere. This has resulted in the encroachment and diversion of the primary rajakaluve as well as a secondary drain. By conservative estimates, imagery shows the area levelled to be 6 acres, reducing the wide wetland from Bellandur lake into a narrow outlet. The report states that the NGT-mandated buffer zone of 75 m from Varthur lake has not been maintained.

**Source:**

- <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/three-dyeing-units-found-polluting-water-bodies/article17669670.ece>
- <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/foreign-firms-propose-to-rejuvenate-bellandur-lake/articleshow/57834406.cms>
- <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/in-bengaluru-steps-to-save-a-poisoned-lake/article18319954.ece>
- <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp-propertyplus/saving-a-lake-and-city/article18289144.ece>
- <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/bangalore/a-noose-of-debris-tightens-around-varthur-lake/article18195923.ece>