

Celebration of World Wetland Day 2006 on 2nd February 2006 & World Wetland Week in Chilika Lagoon, a Ramsar site in India

The World Wetland Day 2006 was celebrated with active participation of the local communities, NGOs, CBOs and schoolchildren in Chilika lagoon. This year with the great initiatives from the local communities it was a weeklong celebration and was termed as World Wetland Week by the local communities. The stakeholders from different sectors of Chilika with great jubilation celebrated it from 2nd –9th February 2006 and coined the term World Wetland Week. To begin with, on 2nd February 2006, Chilika Development Authority in collaboration with Pallishree and Wild Orissa, local NGOs and Mahavir Pakshi Surksha Samiti, a local CBO and the local communities celebrated World Wetland Day in Village Mangalajodi, situated along the western shoreline of Chilika. With the initiative of Wild Orissa, a local NGO the local villagers who had adopted bird poaching as their sole means of livelihood, have taken a vow to refrain from bird poaching. More than 0.3 million migratory birds congregate along the marshy areas near village Mangalajodi. The villagers with the initiatives from the local youths have been protecting these migratory birds. To encourage this noble effort by the villagers, CDA facilitated a community based eco-tourism in this village as a means of alternate source of livelihood. To accomplish this Chilika Development Authority facilitated a nature guide-training programme for the unemployed youth. Other infrastructures developed by CDA to facilitate ecotourism at village Mangalajodi are construction of a watchtower, tourist reception centre, nature trail, and small boat-landing center. The unemployed youth of this village who were dreaded poachers earlier with a number of wildlife offence cases pending against them changed their mind and constituted Mahavir Pakshi Suraskha Samiti (MPSS), Mangalajodi. The members of MPSS took the lead for celebration of WWD2006 in village Mangalajodi. The celebration commenced with a boat rally organized by members of the Mahavir Pakhi Surksha Samiti at 0900hrs. The unique feature of the boat rally was that 35 poachers turned nature guides took part in the boat rally.



WWD2006 boat rally at Managaljodi



Watchtower and Boat landing Center developed by CDA for promoting community based ecotourism at Managaljodi

A meeting in the village at 1100hrs followed the boat rally. The villagers as well as the schoolchildren from nearby villages participated in the meeting. Prior to this debate, essay and quiz competition was organised in six schools located in and around the village Mangalajodi with the theme “Wetland is the livelihood provider”. Nine students were felicitated for their outstanding performance in the above competitions.



WWD2006 meeting at village Mangalajodi



Prize for best performance in debate competition

The President of the village committee, the fishermen from the village, the President of MPSS spoke on the need for conservation of Chilika lake and the wetland as a whole. At the end of the meeting as a cultural programme, (a street play) based on the wetland conservation (Daskathia) was presented by the local artists.



Trophy in recognition of outstanding services by MPSS, Mangalajodi for conservation of migratory birds

In the afternoon, World Wetland Day 2006 was celebrated in the village Sipakuda located along the eastern shore of the Chilika lake by Chilika Development Authority in collaboration with Baba Chaubar Dev Motor Boat Association, Sipakuda, PREPARE a NGO, students from village Sipakuda and Banamalipur and the local fishermen. The local fishermen have adopted community-based ecotourism as an alternate source of livelihood. To facilitate this CDA have constructed a boat-landing center at village Sipakuda.



Village Parikrama by School Children



WWD2006 rally at village Sipakuda

The celebration commenced with village **parikrama** (rally around the village) by the schoolchildren with chanting slogans for conservation of Chilika Lake and its biodiversity. They carried a number of placards with message on conservation of the wetland. A programme of mangrove plantation followed this. The villagers have raised mangrove plantation in the mud flats adjoining to their village over an area of 10 ha in collaboration with PREPARE.



Participatory Mangrove Plantation



Ceremonial Mangrove Plantation

A meeting at 1800hrs attended by more than 1000 local fishers, village youths, and schoolchildren followed this. The natural leaders from the village spoke on the need for conservation of the lake resources for sustainable livelihood. Experts on mangrove from PREPARE, a national NGO spoke on the values and function of mangroves. The Chief Executive, CDA spoke on the significance of the World Wetland Day, Ramsar Convention and the significance of wetland for sustaining the livelihood of local community. The students who had outperformed in the debate, essay and painting competition were felicitated. Both the electronic and print media covered the event.



Prize for excellence in all round performance



WWD2006 Celebration at Sipakuda

On 5th February 2006 CCCL (Campaign for Conservation of Chilika lagoon) a federation of NGOs observed the World Wetland Week at village Karimpur located in the Northwestern part of Chilika. More than 150 natural leaders from 8 villages participated and they deliberated on the value and functions of the wetlands. The members of CCCL facilitated the discussion and explained to the participants about the importance of World Wetland Day, Ramsar Convention and role of stakeholders for wise-use of the natural resources of wetland. This was followed by a group discussion on few vital issues like sustainable fishery, protection of migratory birds and protection of Irrawaddy dolphins . One of the significant of the outcome of this meeting was the constitution of a stake holder forum and they resolved that they would adopt responsible fishery practices and protect the migratory birds.

On 8th February 2006 the World Wetland Week was celebrated in the premises of Kalupada High School located in the Central Sector of the Chilika lagoon. 1053 students, 36 schoolteachers from 4 schools participated in the event. The schoolteacher organised essay, debate and painting competition amongst the school children prior to the event.



Celebration of World Wetland Week 2006 on 8th February 2006 at Kalupadaghat



Students at Kalupadaghat WW2006 celebration

The theme of the competition was “conservation and wise use of wetland resources of Chilika lagoon.” The meeting was presided over by Mr. Raghu Rai, a senior citizen and an ex legislator of the locality. With his vast experience he portrayed the cultural values of Chilika and explained to the students about their relevance for conservation and wise use of Chilika lagoon. It was a great learning for the students. The students also spoke about their impression and the need for the conservation of the natural resources of the lagoon, which was well appreciated by all.



Mr. Rai the veteran leader of the locality addressing the students

A thematic cultural programme of high standard was presented by the local school children, on conservation of the Chilika lagoon. 24 students were commended for their outstanding performance in the essay, debate and painting competitions, and prizes were awarded to them.



Cultural programme by the students during the celebration of WWW2006

The valedictory function of World Wetland Week was on 9th February 2006 at Chandraput located at the southern sector of Chilika. 800 students, 32 teachers from 5 local schools along with the local communities participated in the event. This was preceded by a debate, essay and painting competition amongst the school children from the nearby schools. The theme of the competition was “Wetland for livelihood”.



Valedictory Function of WWW2006



Students studying the specimens in WRTC

The scientists of Wetland Research Center explained the students about the, bio-resources of Chilika, water quality monitoring and about the hydrological setup of Chilika. At the beginning the students were divided into small groups and they visited the different sections of Wetland Research and Training Center (WRTC) of Chilika Development Authority located at Chandraput.

This was followed by an interactive session in which the school children as well as the teachers participated. This was followed by a plenary in which a series of speakers including the elderly persons from the nearby village highlighted various aspects of importance of wetland and its role in sustaining livelihoods of local communities.



Plenary session



Distribution of Prize to the winners

Mr. D.P.Dash, of Pallishree, a local NGO, spoke on the importance of environmental education and awareness for conservation of wetland and the role of schoolchildren. Mr. Bijaya Kumar Tripathy, Head Master, Chilika high school, Barakul, highlighted the role of Ramsar Convention for conservation of wetlands world over. Mr. Debendranath Sarangi, head master, Barakul primary center school, aptly explained how cited the old literature and praised the authors for visualizing many relevant issues and through their outstanding talent they could bring it to the imagination of the local communities.



Daskathia (Street play) by local artists

Ms. Satyabhama Dei, head mistress of Chandraput Prakashin U.P.school, addressed the students as the future citizens and the fore runners to shoulder the responsibility of conservation of the natural resources of the lagoon. She encouraged the girls students to take proactive role for conservation of Chilika lagoon. Mr. Bijaya Kumar Rana, head master, Chilika nodal U.P.school, Injanpur, spoke on the amazing bio-diversity of Chilika lagoon. Mr. S.K. Pant, IFS, Additional Chief Executive of Chilika Development Authority deliberated on the role and responsibilities of stakeholders particularly children for conservation and wise use of lagoon resources. At the end of the function 30 meritorious students were honored with prizes. At the end, *Daskathia* (street play) on conservation of chilika lagoon was performed by the local artists.

With this, the weeklong celebration of World Wetland Week 2006 in Chilika came to an end.
