

World Wetlands Day- 2nd February, 2011

Organised by

East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority

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West Bengal, India



World Wetlands Day, 2011, 2nd February

On the event of World Wetlands Day, East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority (EKWMA) organized a gathering at the Jhagrashisha Fisheries, a bheri within the East Kolkata Wetlands to celebrate this day. The location has been chosen within a wetland area so that awareness could be spread among the local people who are actually involved in the protection of these wetlands.

The programme started with a procession of the students and members of EKWMA who were carrying placards with different messages on the Conservation and preservation of Wetlands. Also caps with the title 'World Wetlands Day' were distributed to everyone who was present there. Sit and draw competition on



Wetlands and Environment was also held among the students in the Kheyadaha High



School. Trees were also planted to mark the need for Afforestation.

On behalf of the EKWMA, inaugural address was given by Dr. Mausumi Pal, Scientist in Charge. She highlighted the importance of the day and also the need for celebration of the Wetlands Day, and further mentioned the need for implementation of certain actions.

number of canals construction work is going on. Afforestation programmes are undertaken at regular intervals and public awareness programmes are also being done to aware people of the values and functions of East Kolkata Wetlands.

While presiding over the occasion, Prof. Mohit Bhattacharya said that, on the Wetlands day, the place, Jhagrasisha Fishery got connected with the whole world in their effort to manage the problems of Wetlands. The Ramsar Convention that took place in Iran marked an important landmark. At different times, different countries got integrated with this convention. East Kolkata Wetlands is one of these Ramsar sites. These wetlands are the centre of our life. In this way, we are integrated to the world in dealing with the problems the wetlands are facing. He



He further said that the World Wetlands Day is celebrated each year with a different theme, this year along with wetlands an emphasis has been given on the Forests. The slogan of the Ramsar Organization is “**Forest for water and wetlands**”. Hence, it is important to protect both the forests and wetlands at the same time. He added that the forests are important not only for wetlands but also for human and other living beings.



The programme was also addressed by Arijit Banerjee, Director Institute of Environmental Studies and Wetland Management (IESWM), who mentioned the problems of the wetlands. He emphasized on encroachment as a major problem of the wetlands. Ramsar has taken up different issues of flood control, water conservation and other agenda's. These are the main reasons to protect the wetland.

Report on the World Wetlands Day Celebration, 2nd February, 2011

However, he particularly stressed that without the help of local people it will be difficult to conserve the wetlands. East Kolkata Wetlands is the pride of Calcutta, pride of West Bengal. These wetlands are of utmost importance. The condition of the wetlands will determine the health of the city as it maintains the sewage condition of the city and East Kolkata Wetlands is one of the largest assemblages of sewage fed fish ponds.

Representatives from various committees of the local stakeholders said that if the wetlands are saved and protected then the people will be saved too. Depth of these wetlands should be increased as this is the main source of livelihoods of the fishermen. Sewage water is released and this water is utilized by the fishermen of East Kolkata Wetlands for Fish cultivation. Hence, everyone should co-operate and efforts must be given to conserve the wetlands. Also Governmental support is necessary for the wise use of these wetlands. It is necessary to channelize the sewage water in these wetlands and to identify desiltation of the canals as a prime function. These wetlands are termed as the 'Kidney of the City of Kolkata'. Some local committee members emphasized that picnic spots, animal rearing and other such activities should be encouraged so that they provide economic development of these people.

The seminar was also addressed by Amitava Ray of Centre for Environmental Management and Participatory Development (CEMPD) who said that the problems of wetlands is not their only who belong to those wetlands but it is a common problem for all. Those who are living here they should protect the wetlands. So everyone should try to preserve it and co-operate with each other.

It was decided that mere celebration of this day is not enough but it requires implementation of the different suggestions raised during the programmes. Awareness programme will have to be carried out regularly among the people so that they can contribute towards the protection of these wetlands.



Since pisciculture is an important activity of the local people and these wetlands form the strength of food security of Kolkata City, attention must be devoted towards canals as they transport sewage from the city to the area. Canals distribute this sewage for using it in the fish farms and subsequently for agriculture and horticulture. Hence, desiltation of the canal must be taken up as an important function for the conservation of the wetlands. Programmes directed towards this end will be taken up as soon as possible.