

## **Wetlands Take Care of our Water!** **Celebration of World Wetlands Day at Gujarat Science City**



It's really a celebrating time in Gujarat as the state has got its first international recognition in the form of a Ramsar site for Nal Sarovar, spread over an area of 12,000 hectares and home to 210 different species of birds.

The International recognition of Nal Sarovar has not only excited the feathered visitors to the place, but also added lots of interest and excitement among students, teachers and the community members who are interested to bring the science of wetlands to their classroom curriculum.

In order to observe the science of wetlands as an integral part of societal development, the Gujarat Science City and Gujarat Council on Science & Technology (GUJCOST) have organized a series of educational programme and outreach activities to celebrate the World Wetlands Day on the Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2013 across the state on the theme 'Wetlands Take Care of Water'.

The World Wetlands Day is being celebrated since 1997 every year on 2<sup>nd</sup> February worldwide to mark the anniversary of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention) in Ramsar, Iran, on 2 February 1971. The Ramsar Convention provides a framework for international cooperation in the conservation and sustainable management of wetlands.

A day long workshop on the theme has been organized to provide a hands-on training and activity based modules to aware and educate the science teachers as well as the DNA Club members of the state. In addition, there is an illustrative poster exhibition, screening of video films and slide shows on wetlands and its environmental significance have been organized for the students and visitors.

The programme will be inaugurated by Shri S. D. Vora, Chief Conservator of Forests, Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam, Government of Gujarat at 10.30 hrs in the Auditorium I in Science City. Prof. N. K. Jain, Head, Environmental Science Division of Gujarat University and Prof. P. C. Mankodi, Head, Department of Zoology, M. S. University will be the Guest Faculties to interact with students and teachers on the theme.

School students (5 – 16 years age group) are encouraged to participate in the poster painting and quiz competition on the wetlands theme to be held on this day between (11.00 hrs to 16.00 hrs). There is no registration fee, meritorious students will be rewarded with prizes and certificates. The celebration aims to raise public awareness of wetlands value, benefits and promote the conservation and judicious use of wetlands for sustainable development. In the line of because UN declaration of 2013 as the International Year for Water Cooperation.

Gujarat Science City is taking a bold step in designing exciting hands-on activities and minds-on exposure in environment education integrating with awareness generation, knowledge validation, and building of skills related to understanding our natural world.

The activities are found to be an ideal way to integrate classroom curricula, stimulate the academic and social growth of young people, and promote the conservation of the natural environment and aims to provide opportunities to be actively involved in restoring, preserving, and protecting the environment.

Healthy wetlands are good for delivering quality ecosystem services for the benefit of people, while at the same time meeting the demands for water for growing crops, supplying energy and responding to the needs of industry. What is important is to value correctly the ecosystem services that intact, healthy wetlands supply when decisions on the human uses of available water are made.

Similar programmes and activities are also being coordinated and organised by the Community Science Centres, Science Club and DNA Club students in each districts in the state.

Gujarat is blessed with more than 1,000 wetlands of which nearly 440 are coastal and around 390 are inland, including several small and big reservoirs. The state has remarkable bio-diversity and therefore provides a rich habitat for a fascinating variety of birds. There are seven wetlands in Gujarat including the recently six declared, accorded the status of 'Wetlands of National Importance' bringing them at par with reserves like Chilka lake in Orissa. These includes: Nalsarovar (Ahmedabad), Little Rann, Greater Rann, Pariyej (Anand), Wadhvana (Vadodara), Thol (Mehsana) and Khijadia (Jamnagar). Now the Nalsarovar's recognition has added feathers to the state as well as its winged visitors.

Wetlands are among the least protected ecosystems in developing countries, and India is particularly vulnerable to their degradation and loss. There are thousands of lakes, ponds, marshes, lagoons, estuaries, backwaters and mangrove swamps that are vital to the country's water needs, food production and biodiversity, but environmental policy has largely failed to acknowledge their contribution.

On the eve of World Wetlands Day, we invite one and all to work together to spread the awareness to make our wetlands healthy and wealthy for the sustainable development.

Happy Wetlands Day!

**GUJARARAT SCIENCE CITY**  
Capturing New Heights in Science Literacy!