

World Wetland Day 2013

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In Tamil Nadu State alone 40,000 minor and major irrigation tanks are found. In addition to this there are innumerable smaller ponds in each and every village. The “World Wetland Day 2013” was observed by involving students numbering 110 studying VI, VII and VIII standard in a Government Elementary School located in Kundiyamallur village. This village is located on the downstream of one the notable wetlands the Perumal Lake.

Perumal Lake is situated in Kurinjipadi taluk of Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu State. It is located 250 km away from the State capital Chennai in southward direction. It is spread over an area of 1300 ha with an ayacut area of 2632 ha. The lake is located in between the geographical coordinates, latitude of 11°10'- 11°76' and longitude of 79°37'- 79°42'. The source of water for the lake is from the Gadilam river and Walaja irrigation tank located upstream. It also gets water from aquifers of Neyveli Lignite mines. The area is drained by Gadilam and Pennaiyar rivers in the north, Vellar and Coleroon rivers in the south. All these rivers are ephemeral and carry floods during monsoon period. The area is benefited by the influence of south-west monsoon stretching from June to September and northeast monsoon from October to December. The winter and summer seasons prevail from January to May. The long term average annual rainfall of the district is 1162.35mm.

On the occasion of World Wetland Day, the students were taught at the classroom the reason behind observing World Wetland Day and also the importance of all types of wetlands to flora, fauna and also to human beings. The students were taken to nearby the Perumal lake by procession through many streets of the village by shouting slogans on importance of wetland conservation with the aim of inculcating awareness among people of the wetland conservation. Further, during procession many people were met and spoke on the need for conserving “Perumal lake”. After reaching the Perumal lake, the

students were taught on the importance of the lake to different species of living beings including human beings.

Bird Density

In the bird census conducted some 15 years ago by Perennou and Santhanam (1990) the density of birds registered was 8.46 birds / ha. However, in the study carried out by Sampath (2007) the bird species diversity was 30 with a density of 4.30 bird / ha. In the study carried out from November 2011 to February 2012 by Sampath (2012) 32 species of birds were recorded and the density being 5.88 bird / ha.

Bird Groups

The 32 bird species registered in the present study area were categorised into 10 groups. They were Grebe (1 species), Cormorant (2 species), Egrets & Herons (8 species), Storks (2 species), Ibises & Spoonbill (3 species), Ducks (5 species), Rails & Coot (4 species), Jacana (1 species), Shorebirds (4 species) and Gull & Tern (2 species).

Among the 10 groups of aquatic birds recorded, the percentage compositions of the groups “Ducks” and “Rails & Coot” were the highest. The percentage composition of the former group was 26.80 and latter group being 26.03. Followed by these, the percentage composition of other group of birds was as follows: herons & egrets (21.09), cormorants (9.08), shorebirds (6.89), jacana (4.12), grebe (3.04), storks (2.10), ibises & spoonbill (0.49) and gull and tern (0.33).

The lake has been facing threats like siltation, encroachment, infestation by weeds, over growth of submerged vegetation, agricultural run-off, overfishing, tourism, increasing vehicular traffic, over-grazing, duck-rearing and indiscriminate hunting and trapping of birds. Apart from these, the pumped up water from the mines of Neyveli Lignite Corporation though helps augmenting the depleting water level of the lake during the onset of summer, the higher content of soot in the water seemed to have paved way for accelerated siltation and eutrophication. A large part of water-spread area that was said to have been open in the past has now been covered to an extent of over half of the entire water-spread area with the proliferous growth of weed species like *Typha* sp., *Nymphaea* sp. and *Ipomoea carnea* among many other species. With a view to sensitise people of the area on the need to protect the lake from deterioration, awareness programmes are being conducted by involving teachers, teacher trainees and students

around the lake. An extensive and indepth research ought to be taken up to restore the lake from deterioration and protect its flora and fauna from decimation.

Caption for photos

- 1) Dr. K. Sampath discusses about World Wetland Day and Importance of wetlands among school students.
- 2) Dr. K. Sampath discusses about World Wetland Day and Importance of wetlands among school students.
- 3) Students procession in front of the school.
- 4) Procession going through one of the streets of Kundiyamallur village.
- 5) Dr. K. Sampath raising slogans in the procession.
- 6) Students and teachers at the Perumal lake.
- 7) Students and teachers at the Perumal lake.

Photos are below.





