

World Wetlands Day Celebration in Hyderabad, India on 2nd February 2008

The Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology & Natural History (SACON), Deccan Regional Station, Hyderabad, as a part of its Environmental Information System (ENVIS) activities, celebrated World Wetlands Day on 2nd February 2008 at the famous Hussain Sagar Lake of Hyderabad. More than 150 school children and several academicians, scientists, policy makers from a number of organizations took part in the event. This event was celebrated in collaboration with several organizations, **Budhha Purnima Project Authority (BPPA) of the Hyderabad Urban Development Authority (HUDA), Centre for Environment Education, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) India, Hyderabad chapter, and Geological Survey of India (GSI).**

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.

The morning started with the bird watching programmes with school children at Sanjivaiah Park which lies within the Hussain Sagar Lake limit. More than 150 school children from six schools (UH Campus school; St. Paul's High School; Oxford Grammar school; Army school; Nasr school; Bharatiya Vidya Bhavans school) were present at the event. Batches of 25 students each were guided by WWF staff and volunteers on this nature trail within the park where they observed not only different aquatic and woodland birds, plants, but also learnt about food habits and migration in birds but also water pollution, and the methodology for lake restoration.

In the second session, the children were re-grouped and given training on usefulness of Open Source softwares in biodiversity conservation. The basic training on Geographical Information System (GIS) software – **OpenJump** and Global Positioning System (GPS) were given. The motto behind the awareness of free and open source software is to educate and activate the students of mapping and monitoring the wetlands of their own surroundings using GIS facilities. SACON and GSI people showed a demonstration programme to the school children. Later, it was followed by a painting competition for the school children on theme "*Healthy Wetlands – Healthy People*" organized by Andhra Pradesh Biodiversity Board (APBB).

The children's programme was followed by an official function commemorating World Wetlands Day. Mr. D. Sudhir Reddy, Chairman, HUDA, Dr. S. N. Prasad, Head, SACON, Ms. Farida Tampal, State Director, APSO, Mr. V. B. Ramanamurthy, member-secretary, APBB were also presented for this programme. All delivered their talk about the importance of wetlands and the role wetlands can play to mitigate several problems. Representatives from other NGOs including **Centre for Environment Education (CEE), National Green Corps (NGC), Society for Awareness and Vision on**

Environment (SAVE), and Birdwatcher Society of Andhra Pradesh (BSAP) were also present on the occasion. The programme culminated with a pledge to protect wetlands taken by all guests, officers and students present on the occasion.

“Let’s work together to spread the awareness to make our wetlands healthy and wealthy for the betterment of our environment and society”

About SACON’s initiatives to conserve the wetlands

SACON is one of the centres of excellence of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), Government of India. SACON's mission is **"To help conserve India's biodiversity and its sustainable use through research, education and peoples' participation with birds at the centre stage"**. The scientific staffs are organized into the division of Avian Ecology, Wetland Ecology, Terrestrial Ecology, Ecotoxicology, Environmental Impact Assessment, and Conservation Biology. The **Environmental Information system (ENVIS)** Centre on wetland ecosystems has been established at the SACON, Coimbatore supported by the MoEF, Government of India to facilitate generation and dissemination of information on various facets of wetland ecosystems.

The Centre will work towards fulfillment of the following objectives: -

- Database creation on Wetland Ecosystems to be added on website with regional language interface.
- To establish and operate a distributed clearinghouse to answer and channel queries related to the allocated subject.
- To establish linkages with information users, carriers and providers from government, academic, business and Non-Governmental Organizations including that with ENVIS.
- Identification of information/data gaps in the specified subject areas and action taken to fill these gaps.
- Publication of ENVIS newsletters for dissemination of wetland Information.

For further information on wetlands of India, please visit our site (<http://www.wetlandsofindia.org/>)

Some of the photographs of celebration and customized WWD poster are given below.

Prepared by

Chiranjibi Pattanaik

Senior Program Officer

SACON, Deccan Regional Station

Hyderabad

Andhra Pradesh, India

Email: chiranjibipattanaik@gmail.com

2 FEBRUARY World Wetlands Day

**Healthy Wetlands,
Healthy People**

<i>Mental well-being</i> 	<i>Clean water</i> 	<i>Water availability</i> 
<i>Wetland food</i> 	<i>Water-related diseases</i> 	<i>Wetland medicines</i> 
<i>Floods</i> 	<i>Water Pollution</i> 	<i>Burning peatlands</i> 

Healthy Wetlands, Healthy People: good wetland and water management will maximize the positives we see in the pictures above and minimize the negatives



CEE



Dukes Biscuits

Photo courtesy: <http://www.earthphoto.com>
 Designed by: www.earthphoto.com

CUSTOMIZED POSTER OF WWD 2008



Wetlands Day Celebration at Hussain Sagar Lake, Hyderabad



School Children attending the WWD function



Explanation of wise use of wetlands by wetland experts



Open Source software training for school teachers