

Conservation of Ousteri Lake, Puducherry

The Ousteri Lake is the most important fresh-water lake of Puducherry region. It is also one of the most important wetlands of Asia. The lake is situated near Oussudu village and is part of both Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. As per the Government of Puducherry records, the total water spread of the lake, when full after the monsoons, is about 390 ha. The lake

is a major wintering spot for a large number of migratory birds and is a rich source of aquatic fish. The lake supports high faunal diversity ranging from protozoans to mammals. Of these, the avian fauna has attracted the most attention so far. The lake is an important wintering spot for migratory waterfowl and is considered much more suitable for diving

ducks. So far, as many as 105 species of native and migratory birds have been spotted in and around the lake.

At present there is no habitat protection in the lake. Rather, the birds are exposed to unchecked poaching. Excessive grazing of littoral vegetation by domestic animals during the summer season may also be adversely affecting bird life by destroying habitats of the native birds. The lake has been declared as a bird sanctuary and developed for bird watching and it is the first wildlife sanctuary of Puducherry.

The diversity of fish species in the lake attracts people for fishing during the winter season. This unchecked fishing activity using fishing nets has led to destruction of rare water snakes (keel back), which maintain the ecological food chain in the lake. When the snakes get entangled in the fishing nets, the fisherman simply cut the snakes to extricate the fishing nets. Since the Ousteri Lake is in the protected area, such harmful activities must be prevented. Immediate steps should be taken to conserve the biological diversity of the lake.

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Live snakes entangled in different fishing nets in Ousteri Lake.

Environmental solutions to manage floods

Kurnool, once the capital of Andhra Pradesh, is on the confluence of the river Thungabhadra (a combination of Tunga and Bhadra) that originates in Karnataka and culminates into the river Krishna. Hundri, the other river, similarly flows through Kurnool and ends in Krishna. The flood havoc and devastation it caused in October 2009 is beyond imagination. According to the Government, the loss due to devastation is about Rs 3000 crores, however non-Government agencies estimate it to be approximately Rs 12,000

crores. People suffered immensely due to water flooding of their houses and the sudden raise of water up to 30–45 ft made it impossible for them to evacuate.

It was proposed to construct a safety wall to protect the city from future floods. In Alampur taluk of Mahaboobnagar district, the river water broke the safety wall which was constructed to protect the famous temple. In this connection, we surveyed the rivers and suggest the following measures to manage flood water in Kurnool.

Deforestation is responsible for the failure of rains, untimely rains and excessive rains, resulting in either drought or floods. This should be checked by an afforestation programme. The real estate business affected the agriculture. Thousands of acres of land have become fallow, causing a direct loss to crop ecosystem. This should be compensated in the form of social forestry. The wide rivers passing through villages and towns are being encroached for agriculture, industry and construction of houses. This