

Environmental Impact Assessment of Wetland Ecosystem in India

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ABSTRACT. The World Wetlands Day is celebrated on February 2 every year. It marks the date of the signing of the convention on wetlands in 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea. This day was celebrated for the first time in 1997 and made an encouraging beginning. Subsequent World Wetlands Days have been organized around such suggested themes such as the importance of water to life and of wetlands to the supply of water and, in 1999, on "people and Wetlands: the Vital Link". Each year, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and groups of citizens at all levels of the community have taken advantage of this opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits in general and the Ramsar Convention in particular.

The suggested theme for World Wetlands Day 2002 was 'Wetlands: Water, Life, and Culture'. Wetlands are a storehouse of cultural heritage which takes many forms, from human-made physical structures and artifacts, paleontological records in sediments and peat, and mythological significance and the intangible 'sense of place' felt by many for these wild and often mysterious sites and their wildlife (SACON, 2002).

Wetlands as defined by the Ramsar Convention (1971) are areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt including areas of marine waters, the depth of which does not exceed six meters at low tide. Other equally relevant definitions of wetlands are as follows:

Wetlands must therefore have one or more of the following attributes:

- At least periodically the land predominantly supports hydrophytes
- The substrate is predominantly undrained hydric soil
- The/substrate is non-soil and saturated with water or covered by shallow water at some time during the growing season of each year.

The present study will look in to the following objectives.

1. To map the full extent of the wetland, the available habitat, water Zonation/depth, and identify a manageable unit for conservation as core Zone.
2. To List out the plants and animals that are present in the marsh and prioritise for conservation evaluation (example: details of threat status, rarity and endemism).

Key words: Wetlands, Biodiversity, Habitat.

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