



**World  
Wetlands Day**  
2 February 2018

Wetlands for a sustainable urban future



**Wetlands for Kochi's Sustainable Future  
REPORT**

Submitted to  
Directorate of Environment and Climate Change,  
Govt of Kerala

Submitted by,  
Community Environmental Resource Centre  
Amman Kovil Street, Mullackal Muthariyamman Kovil Rd,  
Mullakkal, Alappuzha, Kerala 688001  
-[www.vembanad.org](http://www.vembanad.org)-

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## Introduction

Wetlands are known for their biological diversity and considered to be one of the most productive but complex ecosystems of the world. They are multifunctional and their linkages to adjacent ecosystems make them highly productive and economically valuable to society. Many diverse forms of ecological services and functions sustain economic and social activities. However, extensive reclamation of wetlands leads to disaster especially in urban settings in terms of regulating floods, providing drinking water, ground water recharge, etc. The pressure from the development sector ignores the services provided wetlands and most often it is the vulnerable communities that are affected by wetland reclamation. In order to manage and sustain wetlands, we require policy and judicial interventions.

Wetlands are a life to Kochi, Mangalavam is known as the lungs of Kochi. Over the past few decades hectares of wetland is reclaimed into land for residential and industrial purposes. Studies have reported that the peak reclamation took place from 2001 to 2011 and still many swamps across Kochi is getting encroached and reclaimed despite with CRZ rules and Paddy and Wetland Conservation Act. This wetlands day, Community Environmental Resource Center (CERC) of Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) organized a policy level panel discussion focusing on Ramsar Convention's theme, 'Wetlands for Sustainable Urban Future'. The panel discussion focused on conservation and sustainable management of Cochin wetlands under the theme of '**Wetlands for Kochi's Sustainable Future**', to understand the services provided by the wetlands to urban lives and strengthening the existing policies. The panel discussion and poster and photo exhibition was held at Mangalavam, Kochi on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2018 from 10:00 am to 2:00pm.

ATREE in its effort to address the threats being faced by Vembanad wetlands has initiated a Community Environmental Resource Centre (CERC) at Alappuzha, Kerala to involve local communities and institutions for wetland conservation and governance. The core principles of CERC is to develop a multi stakeholder platform through active participation and dialogical process, for conservation and sustainable management of natural resources to ensure

livelihood security to the dependent communities . It acts as a catalyst to bridge the gap between theory (conventional and scientific) and practice. It is envisaged to play a vital role in seeking scientific and democratic solutions for pertinent issues and to fill the gap between needs and resources. CERC facilitates a two way learning process involving conservation practitioners and local communities. Conservation efforts can learn from the community and community can benefit from the conservation. Policy gaps in practical applications can be identified to give feed back to the policy makers and administrators. CERC creates convergent platforms for action plans, involving all stakeholders.

### **Panel Discussion on ‘Wetlands for Kochi’s Sustainable Future’**

The ecosystem services provided by the wetlands are crucial for human existence which is often neglected by the state and legal system. In this scenario, ATREE-CERC organised panel discussion on ‘Wetlands for Kochi’s Sustainable Future’ in association with Indian Association of Lawyers, Cochin Natural History Society (CNHS), Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT), and Sacred Heart’s College, Thevara. The Panel Discussion was inaugurated by Sr. Adv. Renjith Thampan, Additional Advocate General of the High Court of Kerala. He stressed on how workshops and panel discussion environment especially on wetlands are crucial for legal and state system. NGO’s have a critical role in providing awareness to these two systems especially the judiciary system. The Wildlife Protection Act 1972 came into play because of the Stockholm Convention 1972. So the legal and state systems needs constant discussions and workshops on wetlands and environment with more participation from policy makers said, Sr. Adv. Renjith Thampan. The Paddy and Wetland Conservation Act 2008 is the most crucial wetland conservation bill in Kerala and policy makers and judiciary system needs more awareness on different provisions of the Act.

Jojo T.D, Project Co-ordinator, ATREE-CERC, welcomed the participants and panelist by pointing out the importance of wetland ecosystem services. The **panel discussion was moderated by Dr. Priyadarsanan Dharma Rajan, Senior Fellow, ATREE**. Dr. Priyadarsanan introduced the entire panelist and pointed out Kochi’s wetland are crucial for its existence and reclamation of rivers and wetlands are hampering Kochi’s growth towards a sustainable future.

**Dr. K.S Shylaraj, Director, Rice Research Station, Kerala Agriculture University** was the first panelist. Dr. Shylaraj spoke about 'Pokkali' rice cultivation, an unique rice cultivation system and world's only saline tolerant rice. The fast reclamation of wetlands for the development projects is leading towards uncertainty in terms of food and water. Pokkali rice cultivation has reduced drastically for the last few years from 26400 to 10000 hectares. Now only 10 – 15% of area is under pokkali cultivation, 50% is under mono culture (prawns). And rest of the area is under remains fallow. Pokkali rice is the only natural organic rice product. Interventions by policy makers are required as many of the Pokkali wetlands are slowly reclaimed for developments, if Pokkali rice is cultivated we can make these wetlands can stay intact and provide a sustainable future.

**Dr Priyanka Jamwal, Fellow, ATREE** works on urban wetlands in Bangalore. Her talk focused on waste water and its direct discharge into lakes. Waste water has increased over the last twenty years, however the waste water treatment plants has not increased. Waste water discharge can be another word for lake reclamation. Wetlands are natural cleanser, for example, wetlands in East Kolkata filter about 700 million liters of sewage water, so wetlands are essential for urban cities existence. Kochi needs to learn from Bangalore's mistake and ensure waste water is treated before it is discharged into Vembanad Lake. Regular monitoring of wetlands are essential to manage and assess the health as it provides critical ecosystem services to human's as well as other biological organisms.

**Harish Vasudevan Sreedevi, Lawyer in Kerala High Court** is also an environmental activist. Harish focused on National Wetland Rules. The National Wetland Rules 2010 was one major intervention by the Central Government to control and conserve wetlands in the country. As India is a signatory of Ramsar Convention, this was a key intervention. However, there has many changes made to this rule in 2017 despite several appeals from activists and academia. In 2017 amendment, the definition of wetland as removed as well identification of wetlands. In this amendment, wetlands can be reclaimed for public interest and development. In this rule, Panchayat has a critical role to play. Every Panchayat in country has a wetland committee consisting of President, Secretary, Agriculture officer, Farmers and Public to identify wetlands

and report it to the state government. The State Government then needs to report this to the Central Government, however the lack of knowledge is creating a gap and wetlands are slowly getting reclaimed. Intensive training is required to identify wetlands, importance of wetlands, understand its economic value and why wetlands should be conserved. There should be allocation of budget towards identification of wetlands and training.

The panel discussion concluded with vote of thanks by Harish Vasudevan Sreedevi.

## **Wetland Photo and Poster Exhibition**

The photos and posters were exhibited at Mangalavanam Bird Sanctuary, Kochi. More than 100+ individuals had visited the exhibition. The exhibition was a tribute to the people who depend on the wetlands for their existence. Many of them commented on the need to have a permanent exhibit where people could learn more about the Lake and livelihood.



**Inaugural address by Sr. Adv. Renjith Thampan, Additional Advocate General, High Court of Kerala**



**Glimpse from the World Wetlands Day Celebration 2018**

Report prepared by

**Ashish Mathew George and Jojo T.D.**

# Meet lays stress on public awareness to conserve wetlands



STAFF REPORTER

KOCHI, FEBRUARY 03, 2018 01:50 IST

## World Wetlands Day celebrated

Public awareness to realise the need to conserve [wetlands](#) is crucial, Renjith Thampan, Additional Advocate General of the High Court of Kerala, has said. He was inaugurating a panel discussion on ‘Wetlands for Kochi’s sustainable future’ to mark World Wetlands Day at the Mangalavanam Bird Sanctuary in the city on Thursday.

Scientists, conservationists, lawyers, and students participated in the half-day event organised by the Community Environment Resource Centre of the Asoka Trust for Ecology and Environment (ATREE) and the Indian Association of Lawyers. The programme focused on the need for better water quality in wetlands and streamlining of wetland policies to conserve ecosystems.

With the new Wetland (Conservation and Management) Rules, introduced last year, the Centre has washed its hands off its responsibility for wetlands and their conservation by

putting the onus on State wetland authorities, said moderator Priyadarsanan Dharma Rajan (senior fellow, ATREE). Apart from changing the definition of what a wetland is, the new rules have also changed the way wetlands should be identified, said panelist Harish Vasudevan Sreedevi, an advocate practicing at the Kerala High Court.

“Studies show that one hectare of wetland produces at least ₹ 20 lakh worth ecosystem services. We need more such scientific supporting documents that show the value of wetlands in terms of money, because that is the only language people now understand,” he added.

Panelist Shylaraj K.S., director of Kochi’s Rice Research Institute, touched on the importance of conserving the completely-organic Pokkali system of rice farming to save wetlands, for, along with the indigenous Pokkali rice variety and fish / prawn farms, the system supports mangroves (which qualify as coastal wetlands) along its edge.

The event, organised in association with Sacred Heart College, Thevara; Cochin Natural History Society, and Cochin University of Science and Technology, was supported by the Directorate of Environment and Climate Change.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/meet-lays-stress-on-public-awareness-to-protect-wetlands/article22639180.ece>

Certificate for World Wetlands Day Celebration 2018



**World  
Wetlands Day**  
2 February 2018

Wetlands for a sustainable urban future



# CERTIFICATE

*This is to certify that.....  
from ..... college has participated  
in the World Wetland Day Celebration 2018 held  
at Mangalavanam Bird Sanctuary on 2nd February  
2018.*

**Jojo T.D.**  
**Project Coordinator, ATREE-CERC**

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## List of Participants

SI No	Name	Institution
1	Rajendran K. N	S V K S S
2	K M Poovu	S V K S S
3	V P Manoharan	S V K S S
4	Radhika	CUSAT
5	Alsha Bahulayan	S H College, Thevara
6	Adithya	S H College, Thevara
7	Mariya Saju	S H College, Thevara
8	Anjali Saji	S H College, Thevara
9	Claudia Mathew	S H College, Thevara
10	John Joseph Thomas	S H College, Thevara
11	Sreelakshmi Satheeshan	S H College, Thevara
12	Amega k s	S H College, Thevara
13	Anjaleena James	S H College, Thevara
14	Lintu Shaji	S H College, Thevara
15	Krishnaja M	S H College, Thevara
16	Navya S	S H College, Thevara
17	Abhijith	S H College, Thevara
18	Aswathy M P	S H College, Thevara
19	Jaycy A J	S H College, Thevara
20	Thameema N M	S H College, Thevara
21	Arya Anil	S H College, Thevara
22	Praveena Suresh	S H College, Thevara
23	Sreelakshmi Sobhakumar	S H College, Thevara
24	Prof Rajagopal	Retired
25	Ann Maria George	S H College, Thevara
26	Arya Vijayan	S H College, Thevara
27	Linet Treesa Mathew	S H College, Thevara
28	Kesia Mathew	S H College, Thevara
29	Amal K A	S H College, Thevara
30	Athul Mathew	S H College, Thevara
31	Mathew Angelo Davis	S H College, Thevara
32	Abel Thomas	S H College, Thevara
33	Lesly Augustin	S H College, Thevara
34	S. Uma Venkadeshnan	S H College, Thevara
35	Vidya Raju	Navy
36	Sudhakaran K K	C N H S
37	Dr. Giby Kuriakos	S H College, Thevara
38	Adv Latha Prabhakaran	High Court, Ernakulam
39	Mukundan K	C N H S
40	Mahima George	S H College, Thevara
41	Gayathri P R	S H College, Thevara
42	Atheenia Prince	S H College, Thevara
43	Noufiya N	CUSAT

44	Shoukathali. A	C N H S
45	Hitha P V	S H College, Thevara
46	Haneedha T H	S H College, Thevara
47	Naseelabanu K P	S H College, Thevara
48	Dinu Dasan K	CUSAT
49	Jeslin I J	CUSAT
50	Ann Mary V B	CUSAT
51	Athira Raveendran	CUSAT
52	Rojin Joseph	CUSAT
53	Anulakshmi P	CUSAT
54	Namitha Prathap	CUSAT
55	Muhammed Musthafa S	CUSAT
56	Sreerag A	CUAST
57	Abhilash K V	CUSAT
58	Adv Jamaludheen K M	High Court, Kerala
59	Vishnu A V	CUSAT
60	Pro Muhammed Hatha	CUSAT
61	Surya Babu S	CUSAT
62	Asha Majeed	MG University
63	Aishwarya C B	CUSAT
64	Arun Kumar P R	GEC, Thrissur
65	Anto Ittop	CUSAT
66	T P Sandeep	EY
67	Harish Vasudevan	High Court, Kerala
68	Vishnu Kartha	CNHS
69	Giby Kurakose	SH College, Thevara
70	Priyanka	ATREE
71	Priyadarsanan Dharma Rajan	ATREE
72	Staff reporter	The Hindu