



**Report  
on  
Observance of  
World Wetlands Day, 2020**



*Organized by*

**ENVIS Resource Partner**

**on**

**Forest Genetic Resources and Tree Improvement**

**Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding**

**(Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education)**

**Coimbatore**

**ENVIS Resource Partner on  
Forest Genetic Resources and Tree Improvement  
IFGTB  
Observance of World Wetlands Day**

The ENVIS Resource Partner on Forest Genetic Resources and Tree Improvement at IFGTB observed the World Wetlands Day, 2020 on 3<sup>rd</sup> February. Dr S Murugesan, Director, IFGTB inaugurated the function and spoke on the role of wetlands which are important carbon sinks, in mitigating climate change. Dr Kannan CS Warriar, Scientist F and ENVIS Coordinator detailed on the significance of 37 Ramsar Sites in India and how they serve as abode of many threatened species of flora and fauna including 213 species of fish and 74 amphibians. Sundarbans, the world's largest halophytic block harbours two globally threatened species of mangroves. Though wetlands are rich with biodiversity, they are disappearing three times faster than forests, he added. An inter house Quiz programme on environment and wetlands in particular was organized for IFGTB staff members. Dr S. Vigneswaran, Programme Officer, ENVIS conducted the quiz and created awareness among the participants and audience on various issues related to environment. Prizes were awarded to the winners by the Director and certificate of participation was awarded to all. An awareness poster highlighting the current year's theme identified by the UN "Wetlands and Biodiversity" was released during this occasion. Copies of the poster and handouts were distributed to the school children in and around Coimbatore. An awareness short film on the significance of conservation of wetlands released by the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change was also screened.













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## WETLANDS AND BIODIVERSITY

India is endowed with a rich diversity of wetlands that support diverse and unique habitats. India currently has 37 sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites). Wetlands provide numerous ecological goods and services but are under tremendous stress due to rapid urbanization, industrialization and agricultural intensification, manifested by the shrinkage in their areal extent, and decline in the hydrological, economic and ecological functions they perform.



### FACTS ABOUT INDIAN WETLANDS

- India has about 757.06 thousand wetlands with a total wetland area of 15.3 m ha, nearly 4.7% of the total geographical area of the country (69% inland wetlands, 27% coastal wetlands, and 4% other wetlands).
- Indian wetlands harbour a number of globally threatened species requiring urgent conservation action. The 646 threatened faunal species include 213 fishes and 74 amphibians.
- 21 of the 28 species of freshwater turtles found in the country's wetlands are assessed as being globally threatened.
- 49 Indian wetlands water bird species are classed in threatened category (4 as critically endangered, 7 endangered, 16 vulnerable and 22 near threatened) Chilika lake in Odisha is one of the only two lagoons in the world inhabited by Irrawaddy Dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*). It also maintains a healthy population of the species.
- Keibul Lamjao, a floating National Park on the south of Loktak lake in Manipur is the only known among the 5 natural habitats of globally endangered swamp deer commonly known as Brow-antlered deer (*Rucervus eldii*).
- The largest population of critically endangered Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*) is found in riverine wetlands of rivers Son, Girwa and Chambal of Central India.
- The spectacular wetlands of Ladakh in Jammu & Kashmir are the only known breeding grounds of globally vulnerable Blacknecked Crane (*Grus nigricollis*).
- Sundarbans, the world's largest block of halophytic mangroves harbours two globally threatened mangrove species, *Sonneratia griffithii* and *Heritiera fomes*.
- The coralline diversity in the country, constituted by 478 species of 89 genera, forms 60% of the global hermatypic genera.

### WHY TO CONSERVE WETLANDS?

- The high altitude Himalayan wetlands capture the glacial melt and form the source of the eight largest rivers of Asia.
- The floodplains of Ganga and Brahmaputra account for over 40% of the total cultivated area in the country.
- Wetlands in East Kolkata are an important component of the wastewater treatment infrastructure of the city. These wetlands help to treat nearly 600 million litres of sewage daily.
- Wetlands are globally important carbon sinks, storing vast amounts of carbon and thereby helping to mitigate climate change.
- Wetlands act as a sink for contaminants in many agricultural and urban landscapes.