

Beyond the campus environmental promotion activities

EAST KOLKATA WETLANDS: PAST AND PRESENT

A perception survey was conducted at the East Kolkata Wetlands by the students with the objectives of studying

- The socio-economic condition of the residents
- Their awareness of the ecological significance of the wetlands and need for conservation

Introduction

A sustainable use of natural resources involves conservation of ecologically sensitive areas. The East Kolkata Wetlands declared as a Ramsar (World Heritage) site is a prime example of how wetlands can be used in a sustainable way. These wetlands extend over an extensive area to the east of the city and consist of agricultural fields, salt marshes, and pools of sewage water. They act as a natural drainage /sewage outlet for Kolkata and are known for the sewage water based pisciculture that is practised there.

A visit to the wetlands would give our students firsthand knowledge of how the waste water is utilised for fishing as well as an insight into the methods of fishing and the perception of the local people regarding the wetlands.

The visit to the wetlands was arranged on February 14, 2019 and a team of 39 students and 7 teachers participated in the programme. A questionnaire was prepared before the visit and the students were oriented on the ecological significance of the wetlands.

Methodology

Primary data collection through

- Field visit,
- Direct observation and
- Interviews with a structured questionnaire.

The team visited two of the fisheries (Sardar Bheri and Boro Gopeswar Bheri) and were shown the different stages of water treatment and method of fish culture. Interviews of the owners, workers and other people were conducted with the questionnaires to assess their socio-economic conditions as well as perception regarding the role of the government and private realtors. The team also tried to assess the awareness of local residents about the ecological significance of the wetlands and need for their conservation

Findings

The students gained firsthand knowledge of a unique sewage water based pisciculture and also an experience of the way to conduct primary survey with a questionnaire. The information gathered has been summarized in Data tables 1 and 2. Table 1 presents information regarding socio-economic condition of the fishermen interviewed. Table 2 provides details of the two fisheries visited.

Interviews revealed that local people were totally unaware of the fact that the wetlands have been declared a Ramsar site and were unhappy about role of private realtors in the conversion of wetlands into built up area. They were also determined to carry on with their traditional occupation against all odds.

Table 1: Socio-economic information

Sl No	Name of respondent	Name of the fishery	Gender	Age in years	Social Category	Length of stay at fishery	Mode of payment	Income (Rs)	Vastu land owned	Number of family members engaged in fishing
1	Gautam Mani	Sardar bheri	Male	43	SC	1 year	monthly	8,500	yes	1
2	Kalicharan Munda	Sardar bheri	Male	48	ST	34 years	daily	250	yes	1
3	Tapas Mandal	Sardar bheri	Male	35	SC	1 year	monthly	8500	yes	1
4	Robin Mondal	Sardar bheri	Male	55	SC	30 years	daily	250	no	1
5	Gautam Pramanik	Sardar bheri	Male	48	SC	28 years	monthly	8500	yes	1
6	Swapan Mondal	Sardar bheri	Male	56	SC	25 years	monthly	15000	no	1
7	Arghya Mondal	Sardar bheri	Male	45	SC	25 years	monthly	8500	yes	1
8	samiran Munda	Sardar bheri	Male	46	ST	30 years	NA	NA	no	1
9	Saikat Mondal	Sardar bheri	Male	56	SC	1 year	monthly	9000	yes	1
10	Sonali Sardar	Boro Gopes war Bheri	Female	40	SC	6 years	daily	200	yes	3
11	Raju Tiwari	Boro Gopes war Bheri	Male	25	Gen	Since birth	daily	200	yes	2
12	Jogmaya Das	Boro Gopes war Bheri	Female	35	SC	less than 1 year	daily	150	nil	1

Table 2: Details of fisheries surveyed

Name of Fishery	Location	Area	Number of fishermen employed	Mode of operation	Per day catch	Catch timing	Lean season	Food on which fish is fed	Market where catch is sold
Sardar bheri	Khasmahal Sardarpara, Dhapa manpur Mouza	450 Bigha	150	elected co-operatives	500 to 600 kg	4 am to 5 am	winter	sewage water	Chingrighata, Belegghata, Keshtopur Wholesale markets
Boro Gopeswar Bheri	Khasmahal Ghoshpara Dhapa manpur Mouza	300 Bigha	72	elected co-operatives	300 to 500 kg	4 am to 5 am	winter	sewage water	Chingrighata, Bantala, Keshtopur Wholesale markets