

CONSERVATION OF WETLANDS: CASE KEOLADEO NATIONAL PARK, BHARATPUR

Abstract

Wetlands are among the most important ecosystems on the Earth as they are a vital link between land and water. They are the areas which are saturated with water either permanently or temporarily. Wetlands are highly productive ecosystems and are essential for preserving biodiversity and ecological security of people. They are highly dependent on water, and so changes in the same highly influence the nature and function of wetlands, including the type of plant and animal species within them.

But over a period of time, wetlands have been disappearing at an alarming rate all over the world without their value been understood. They are one of the most threatened habitats of the world and are increasingly facing several anthropogenic pressures. The rapidly expanding human population, large-scale changes in land covers, growing development projects and improper use of watersheds, all these have caused a substantial decline of wetland resources of the country.

Similar is the case of Keoladeo National Park, 2873 hectares in area and situated near the City of Bharatpur in the State of Rajasthan. It was once famous as a wintering site for a subgroup of the western population of the Siberian crane but this species is now locally extinct. However, Keoladeo is still internationally an important wetland site for massive congregation of water fowls making it an important wintering ground on the Central Asian Flyway from the Palearctic region. Keoladeo is unique as it is a rich man-made biodiversity zone in a predominantly arid and highly populated rural landscape.

In the case of Keoladeo National Park, the entire basin of three converging rivers that used to feed the wetland of Keoladeo National Park has undergone geological and anthropogenic changes. This has considerably altered the availability of water for the Keoladeo National Park wetland. Subsequently, this has led to alteration in wetland ecology and has been particularly detrimental for attracting several migratory birds. There is also a considerable reduction in the number of heronries (breeding colonies) of various birds. Moreover, the duration of these endangered birds to stay in the park has also decreased due to change in habitat conditions.

Thus, ecology of the entire area is slowly degrading which is becoming a major threat for the entire region. There is an urgent need to have new water management methods to encourage return of migratory birds and restoration of wetland ecology. Therefore, such possible approaches towards conservation and preservation of the environment.

Keywords: Water, wetland, species, migratory, birds, conservation, threat, biodiversity