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Restoring Chennai's Wetlands

Wetlands - lakes, ponds, marshlands and swamps - are one of the most productive ecosystems on the planet. They provide freshwater, food, natural habitats, biodiversity, livelihood, beauty and much more.

Wetlands are among the most important freshwater sources for life on Earth. They have been an integral part of human civilization. Historically, people settled around them to ensure a reliable and constant source of water. It is no coincidence that, even today, many Indian cities have several lakes and wetlands within their boundaries. Sadly, they are also among the most undervalued ecosystems and are vanishing at an astonishingly fast rate. Over the last century, India has lost more than 50% of its wetlands, and a majority of the remaining ones are degraded and heavily polluted. Their restoration is critical to ensure long term water security for people and the planet.

Chennai's Disappearing Wetlands

Chennai, the largest city in Tamil Nadu, was once home to more than 474 wetland complexes that served as the lifeline for its people, nature and wildlife. Over the last three decades, the city has degraded more than 85% of these water bodies due to rapid and unplanned development. This is impacting the quality of life for its citizens, as well as its unique and endemic biodiversity. It has compromised the city's resilience to storms, floods and droughts, as its wetlands can no longer absorb excess water during floods, nor provide adequate surface and groundwater during droughts.

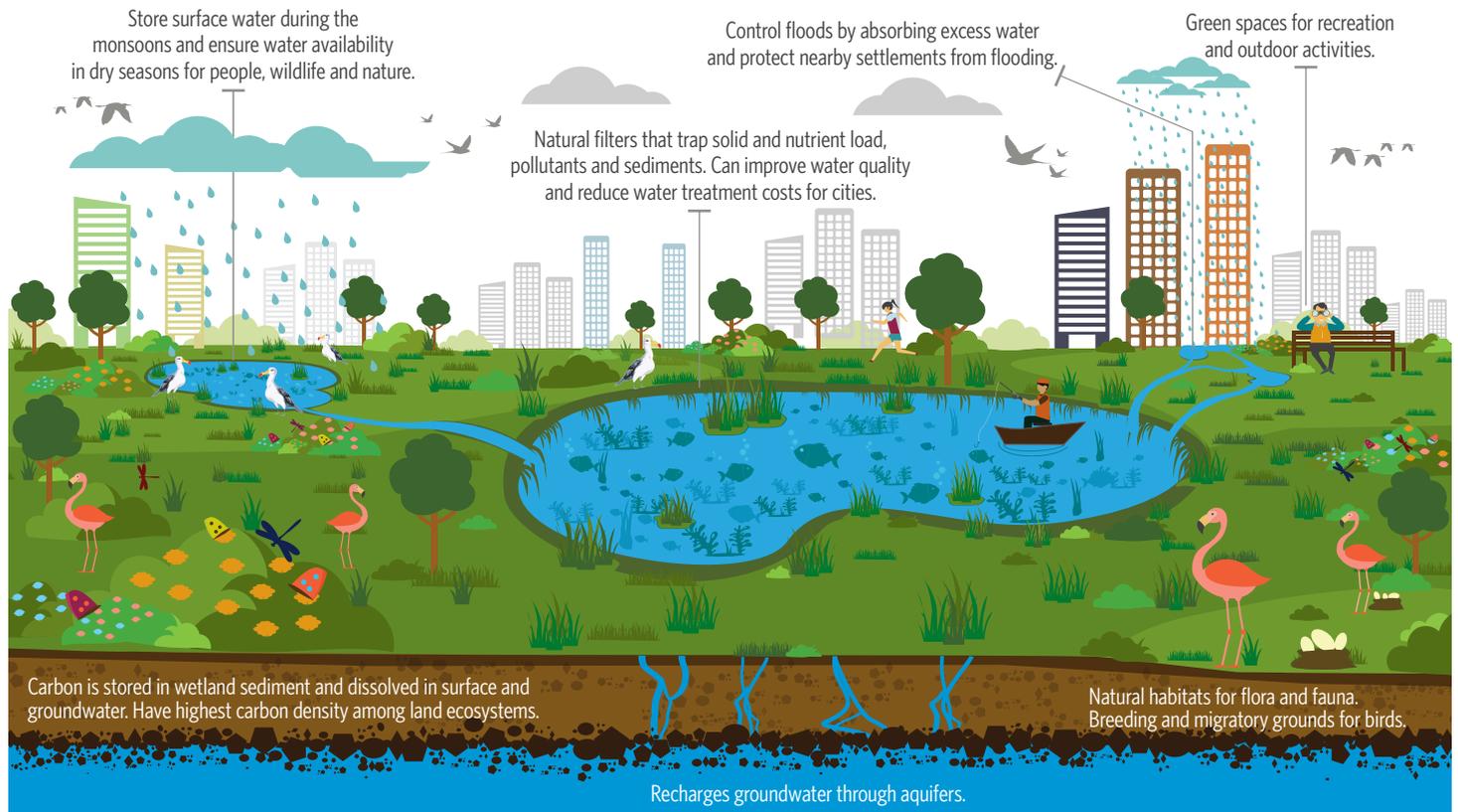
But Chennai's water story can change, one wetland at a time. The Chennai Municipal Corporation has prioritized the restoration of 200 wetlands as part of their Smart Cities Initiative and disaster mitigation efforts - a significant step towards the sustainable development of the city. The Nature Conservancy, alongside partners - Care Earth Trust and Indian Institute of Technology, Madras - are supporting this effort by demonstrating science-based solutions for wetland restoration and bringing stakeholders together to achieve impact at scale.

Our Vision

Chennai's wetlands are restored and maintained through science-based conservation solutions so that they provide ecosystem services for people and nature and help build a healthy and vibrant city.

The Wonder Of Wetlands

A wetland is any land area that has the ability to hold surface water and support aquatic flora and fauna. In urban spaces, wetlands occur in the form of lakes, ponds, marshlands and swamps.



Our Approach

It is only through collaboration and collective action that Chennai will be transformed into a city of thriving lakes. We are working with diverse stakeholders across the city government, research institutions, corporates and citizens to develop a pathway for large scale wetland restoration that will spread across the city.

Restoring Sembakkam Lake

This is one of the 54 lakes that cascade into the famous Pallikaranai marshland, one of the last remaining natural marshlands in south India and the wintering grounds of many migratory birds, including flamingos. Science-based conservation interventions on Sembakkam Lake will contribute to improving the health of the Pallikaranai marshland i.e. its water quality and quantity, surrounding natural habitat and biodiversity, and overall water security of the region. We are engaging with local communities living around Sembakkam Lake to participate in its restoration and maintenance, thereby ensuring long-term sustainability.

Sharing Knowledge And Experiences

We are engaging with key stakeholders to gather their experience and knowledge on wetland restoration and create best practice guidelines that will inform wetland restoration efforts. This will result in building the much-needed momentum to mainstream wetland restoration efforts across the city.

Catalysing Impact At Scale

We will provide a tried and tested science-based wetland restoration plan that can be integrated into the efforts of the Chennai Government to improve the health of wetlands across Chennai. We are regularly engaging with the Public Works Department; Revenue Administration, Disaster Management and Mitigation Department; Chennai Smart Cities Ltd.; Greater Chennai Corporation; Municipal Administration and Water Supply; and Chennai Metro Water Supply and Sewage Board.

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

We are the largest conservation non-profit in the world that works to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. The Nature Conservancy's India program works closely with the Indian Government, NGOs, research institutions and citizens to create science-based solutions that support India's efforts to develop while conserving the lands and rivers on which people depend.

TNC-INDIA VISION

A VIBRANT AND HEALTHY INDIA THAT IS GUIDED BY SOUND SCIENCE TO MANAGE ITS NATURAL RESOURCES.

TNC-The Nature Conservancy Centre is a not-for-profit entity registered in India under the Company's Act with 80G certification.

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