

Forest dept identifies 31 wetlands for conservation

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Visakhapatnam: The forest department, in association with World Wildlife Fund, has started the process of identifying and assessing all wetland areas AP. The exercise assumes significance considering that it is the golden jubilee year of Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

Rahul Pandey, chief conservator of forests and wildlife, said around 14.47 lakh hectre area are under wetlands in the state. “We have been assessing the wetlands and have identified 31 such areas so far in collaboration with WWF-Hyderabad. Some are protected wetlands while others are community-managed,” he said.

Pandey further said the department has also started mangrove afforestation in Krishna estuarine area. “Over the years, wetlands have been shrinking due to anthropogenic pressure like over-exploitation of flora and fauna, excessive fishing, agricultural activities, road construction through the areas, fragmentation of the lakes and pollution,” he said.

There are five well-recognised wetlands in the state, including protected sanctuaries such as Koringa, Kolleru, Krishna, Pulikat and Nelapattu bird sanctuaries. Home to the endangered Olive Ridley turtles and fishing cats, one can also sight several species of birds, including migratory ones, in these areas.

Apart from these, some wetlands are managed by the community such as Telineelapuram and Telikunji in Srikakulam and Kondakarla Ava lake in Visakhapatnam district.