

## Sankey Lake, Bellandur Wetlands Dying

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Which has become home to three algae species | Jithendra M



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BELLANDUR: The situation of wetlands at Bellandur has worsened since 2013, a study group has found.

Dr T V Ramachandra, Vinay S and Bharath Aithal of the Energy and Wetlands Research Group, Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, say a private housing project has destroyed the wetlands further in the last two years.

A 2013 report by Dr Ramachandra and his team had warned that the wetlands were being swallowed up by a multi-crore project spread over 80 acres, sanctioned by the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB).

Besides the destruction of the wetlands, the study had said a lake bed and a 'raja kaluve' (storm-water drain) had been filled with construction debris, and a second raja kaluve was seeing "gradual encroachment".

The location of the project violates the Master Plan of 2015 as well as environmental guidelines, according to the researchers.

Ramachandra told the Express, "Bellandur is a primary valley, which makes it a sensitive zone as defined by the BBMP in 2008. The Bellandur wetlands cannot be turned into an industrial area, if you go by the Karnataka Lake Conservation and Lake Development Authority Act of 2014."

He said the development also violated Karnataka Act No 10 of 2015 as well as the 2010 rules of the Central government's Ministry of Environment and Forests.

The KIADB ignored the law and made no efforts to save the wetlands, he alleged.

"Instead, since 2013, the rajakaluve has thinned further and a portion of the lake has been filled up. There is a further encroachment of about 10 acres," he said, blaming the KIADB for allowing such blatant illegalities.

"The role of wetlands is important in preventing floods, recharging ground water and even cleaning partially treated sewage, as is being done in the Jakkur lake," Ramachandra said.

The experts suggest mapping of all water bodies in the city, stopping sewage flow, barring constructions on lake beds, and demarcating flood plains and buffer zones as some main steps to save our water bodies and surrounding wetlands.

Sewage flow

Malleswaram: Experts at the IISc also say Sankey lake is an example of a lake ecosystem being ruined by government apathy. It stinks because sewage is allowed into it.

Ramachandra and a team comprising Asulabha K S, Sincy V, Vinay S, Sudarshan P Bhat and Bharath H Aithal have studied the lake extensively.

They have monitored its physico-chemical parameters since December, 2012, and analysed its water quality parameters.

Algae play an important role in aquatic ecosystems and aid as indicators of water pollution. The distribution and diversity of algae in a water body are dependent on the its physical and chemical factors.

“The entry of sewage into Sankey lake had raised its nutrient levels and the water shows a dense population of three algal species,” says a paper by the team.

Ramachandra says, “In order to avoid this profuse algal growth and ensure a healthy aquatic ecosystem, effective and appropriate control measures have to be taken. Taste and odour problems and fish death can be tackled only with efficient removal of cyanobacteria.”

Sewage flows in from seven points connected to storm water drains, and sewage pipes from the toilet in the adjoining park. These contaminants degrade the quality of water and in turn affect the aquatic life.

### **Sankey lake named after Brit colonel**

Sankey Lake (also called Sankey Tank) is an artificial lake built by Col Richard Hieram Sankey of the Madras Sappers Regiment in 1882 to meet the water supply demands of the city.

It is located near Vyalikaval, Malleswaram and Sadashivanagar.

The lake covers about 42.76 acres, with a catchment area of 1.254 km (0.8 mile) with one island on its premises.

It was earlier known as Gandhadhakoti Kere since the Government Sandalwood Depot is located close to the lake.

Adjoining the lake now are a park and a swimming pool, a Forest Department nursery and an exclusive tank for idol immersion after the Ganesh Chaturthi festival.

The lake has great fish potential, supports human needs and contributes to climatic stability. It harbours a rich biodiversity that includes aquatic plants, birds, fishes, and microbes.

It is a stagnant water body with a complex and fragile ecosystem and lacks the self-cleaning ability of a running system.