

# DECCAN Chronicle

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## Our dying lakes need a saviour, and soon

When city founder Kempe Gowda decided to build this city, the first thought that came to his mind was to provide water for this new town that had no perennial rivers. Thus began the legacy of building lakes in Bengaluru; the city's first lake was Dharmabhudi Lake built in the early 15th century, and which was the main source of water for city inhabitants. But where has the city's first lake gone? Today the lake has been replaced by a bus terminus in Majestic, named after King Kempe Gowda. If you thought this was the only lake that has disappeared, you'd be wrong. There is a long list of lakes in Bengaluru that today have been transformed into bus stands, bus depots, sports stadiums, apartment complexes, and hospitals et al. Sample this: According to a report on the wetlands of Bengaluru, prepared by the Wetland and Energy Research Group of IISc, there were 159 waterbodies spread over an area of 2,003 hectares in 1973, that reduced to 147 (1,582 ha) in 1992, which further declined to 107 (1,083 ha) in 2002 and finally to a mere 93 waterbodies with an area of 918 ha in the Greater Bengaluru region. "Wetlands are an essential part of human civilization meeting many crucial needs for life on earth such as drinking water, protein production, energy, fodder, biodiversity, flood storage, transport, recreation, climate stabilisers and also they aid in improving water quality by filtering sediments and nutrients from surface water. Wetlands are the most productive and biologically diverse, but fragile ecosystems. They are vulnerable to even small changes in biotic and abiotic factors. In recent years, there has been concern over the continuous degradation of wetlands due to unplanned development," explains a researcher from the Energy and Wetland Research Group. According to researchers the lakes in city are either shrinking in size or they are getting extinct due to manifold reasons, including anthropogenic and natural processes. "The burgeoning population, intensified human activity, unplanned development, absence of management structure, lack of proper legislation and lack of awareness about the vital role played by these ecosystems are important factors in the slow death of waterbodies," the researcher adds. According to Prabhakar Manjunath, a wildlife photographer who has been documenting the avian fauna that visits Bengaluru lakes for the last two decades, the ducks that often visit city lakes have reduced in numbers, drastically. "The water quality of the lake has gone down as the population of Bengaluru started increasing. As sewage started entering the lakes the fish volume reduced and the water hyacinths burgeoned on the surface. This kept the number of birds away from the lake. Examples of this can be seen at Nagawara and Hebbal lakes where the number of migratory ducks has reduced," Mr Manjunath says. "Given the current change in the geography of Bengaluru and the loss of its greenery, it is imperative that we merge our efforts to save lakes with developing green woodlands using lake water," adds biodiversity expert, M.B. Krishna. **Wake-up call** \*2000 trees a minute are cut down in the Amazon alone. That is 7 football fields a minute! \*75% of global fisheries have been fished beyond capacity. \*99% of all those things we buy are not in use after six months. \*80% of world's forests are gone. \*100,000 synthetic chemicals are used in production today. \*Bromated Flame Retardants (BFR) neurotoxins (toxins to brain) are in computers, mattresses, pillows. \*Food with highest level of contaminants is mother's milk. \*Average person consumes twice as much as 50 years ago.

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