

Vembanad fish count records 85 species

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THE HINDU BUREAU



Volunteers taking part in the 17th Vembanad fish count. | Photo Credit: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The 17th edition of the Vembanad fish count recorded 85 species. As part of the annual count, a survey was conducted in the southern parts of Thanneermukkom bund under the aegis of the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment-Community Environment Resource Centre (ATREE-CERC) recently.

The survey recorded 74 species of finfish and 11 species of shellfish species. Last year, the survey recorded 50 species including 41 finfish and nine shellfish species. Around 100 volunteers, including academics, researchers and fishermen from across the region,

participated in this year's count, which was conducted with the financial support of the State Wetland Authority Kerala.

In a statement issued here, Maneeja Murali, senior programme officer, ATREE- CERC said that though the fish species diversity was greater than in previous years, the overall fish stock was low. The decline in the average weight of adult Attu Konju (*Macrobrachium rosenbergii*, giant freshwater prawn) from 500–600 grams to below 300 grams is a cause for concern among inland fishers. More research is needed to identify the reasons for this decline, she said.

The survey revealed that fish diversity is higher in parts of the lake where fresh water is more abundant. However, in the area from the Alappuzha Finishing Point to Vattakayal — known for houseboat operations — fish diversity was absent.

The valedictory function held at Thanneermukkom was inaugurated by Priyadarsanan Dharma Rajan, a senior fellow at ATREE.

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