

National Conference on
Wetland Conservation for Sustainable Development
Saving Wetlands for People and Wildlife

17th -18th FEBRUARY, 2012

Importance of wetlands in view of their service to fishery, socio-economics, biodiversity and many other benefits are now fully recognized. Occupying about 6% of the global area their contribution to rural economy in drylands like Kachchh is enormous. They serve as sources of food and water, carbon sink, flood control, a sink for pollutants and a buffer for climate change. In addition, wetlands provide valuable ecosystems for various species of terrestrial and aquatic organisms in Kachchh.

In spite of being arid, Kachchh district covers maximum area under wetlands. Out of the total area under wetland in Gujarat, Kachchh region accounts for 21.77 lakh ha which is 80.12% of the state's wetlands. The unique wetland of Great and Little Ranns of Kachchh occupy maximum area under this category. In view of the importance of wetland in Kachchh context, a two day national conference was conducted by GUDIE during 17 - 18 February, 2012. KSKV Kachchh University was the venue of the conference. Inaugurated by the Former Director-General of Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Dr. A.K. Ghosh, the conference discussed several pressing wetland related issues. Scholars and participants from different parts of the country took part in this conference. Seven invited lectures from eminent wetland scientists, twelve presentations by young researchers were made under the following themes.

- Status of wetlands: National and International Scenario
- Status of Gujarat Wetlands
- Conservation, Restoration and Management of Wetlands

Besides the scheduled deliveries, the conference also brought together other researchers and professionals to discuss developments and exchange experiences in the field of wetland systems who highlighted the present status and future strategies for the conservation of wetlands for people and wildlife of Gujarat in general and Kachchh in particular. The conference was marked by reviewing case studies, sharing personal experiences, brain storming sessions, deliberations and interactions. In the process, lacunae in terms of policy decisions, research and stakeholder contributions was identified. In its concluding session the conference brought out a set of recommendations to further fine tune the present conservation and management efforts by various government agencies and resource managers. Role of stakeholders and their contribution towards conservation and management has also been a focal point of discussion. It was decided to conduct such conferences periodically in Kachchh for better exchange of views and advancing wetland research on different aspects.