

CHILIKA LAKE POSSESSES 20% OF INDIA'S SEAGRASS

Relevant for: Geography | Topic: Indian River System including HEPs

Seaweed being cultivated in Chilika Lake. File photo

Chilika Lake is claimed to have 20% of India's seagrass distribution, which plays a vital role in oxygen production and absorption of carbon dioxide and acts as a purifier in aquatic ecology.

According to the Chilika Development Authority, the apex body for the Lake's management, seagrass species such as *Holodule uninervis*, *Holodule pinifolia*, *Halophila ovalis*, *Halophila ovata* and *Halophila beccarii* were recorded during annual monitoring of the Chilika Lake held on Thursday.

"Seagrass distribution has been estimated over an area of 152 sq. km, an increase from 135 sq km in the last year. Increase in seagrass has been reported against its declining trend throughout the world and now Chilika has 20% of India's seagrass," said CDA Chief Executive Susanta Nanda.

"Seagrass plays a vital role in oxygen production and absorption of carbon dioxide. It acts as a purifier in aquatic ecology. The seagrass area increases only when the water is clean. Seagrass will rejuvenate fishing ground by providing nursery habitat to important fish species," Mr. Nanda said.

Another heartening outcome of the annual monitoring was reappearance of sponges. "Due to disturbance in habitat, the sponges were not observed in the lake after 1985. But after the recent eviction of large area of prawn gherry in the southern sector of the lake, the sponges are observed abundantly in Patanasi and Kumarpur area," he said.

Some of the indicators that emerged during the monitoring established the lake's resilient ecosystem. The annual survey of endangered Irrawaddy dolphins conducted on Thursday finds population of aquatic mammals in the range of 130-150.

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