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Ranganatittu sanctuary expansion on cards

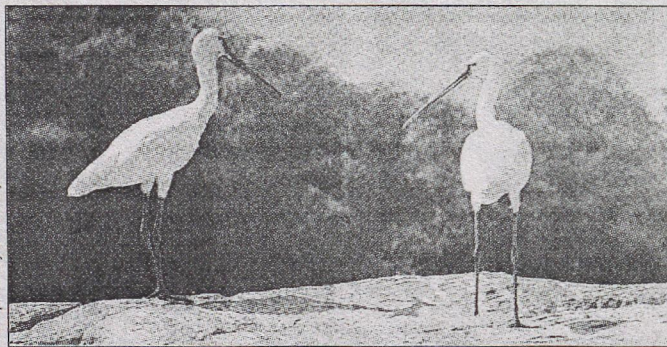
From Shankar Bennur
DH News Service

MYSORE, Dec 19

Here is good news for bird watchers and tourists. Forest department sources hint that the Ranganatittu bird sanctuary will be expanded under the Eco-Tourism Development Project (EDP) to extend more services to bird watchers and tourists. A proposal in this respect has been sent to the Centre.

"Once the department gets the Centre's nod, the expansion work will commence," the sources said, adding that the department had conducted a survey with respect to the requirements of tourists and bird watchers.

Already, three acres of revenue land near the sanctuary have been identified by the department for enhancing the infrastructure for tourists. The Mandya deputy commissioner has been requested to initiate the process of land acquisition after the land is denotified by the government. A parking lot, a paddock, a children's park and several watch towers are among the things planned for the sanctuary to



DH photo by M R Manjunath

Spoonbills at the Ranganatittu bird sanctuary near Mysore

boost tourism, the sources said, adding that drinking water taps and toilets are also planned.

The Ranganatittu sanctuary is located downstream of the Krishnaraja Sagar reservoir in the Cauvery river basin. It has five islands and a large number of migratory birds visit the sanctuary during different seasons. They primarily come to the sanctuary for breeding. Of the five islands, tourists can reach only one at the moment. There are plans to construct suspension bridges to link all the is-

lands. A forest official said there has been an increase in the number of birds visiting the sanctuary. Over 6,110 migratory birds visited the sanctuary in 1994-95, 6,360 birds in 1995-96, 6,995 birds in 1996-97, 7,369 birds in 1997-98, 7,627 birds in 1998-99 and 8,308 birds in 1999-2000.

Birds from the Antarctica, North America, Siberia, Nigeria and Sri Lanka migrate to the sanctuary during winter. Birds of Indian origin are also found in the sanctuary.

Among the birds frequently seen at the sanctuary are spoonbill, painted stork, white ibis, snake bird, little egret, cormorant, pelican, river tern, open bill stork, white-necked stork, cattle egret, grey heron, pond heron, night heron and Indian-whiskered tern.

It has been observed in the past that a large number of spoonbills and painted storks visit the sanctuary in December. However, this December, the number of these birds at the sanctuary is surprisingly low. Forest department sources say the harsh winter may have delayed the arrival of many birds.

Deccan Herald 2012201

AMC
24/6/02

Hum panchi kayi dal ke!

PA 14.21 ✓



This bird sanctuary may not match the vastness or the sheer variety one finds in Kaleodeo National Park, the famed bird sanctuary near Bharatpur, Rajasthan. Nestling behind the dam cross the river Cauvery near Srirangapattana, en route to Mysore, Karnataka, Ranganthittu Bird Sanctuary attracts birds from faraway places such as Siberia and Australia. There is a beehive of activity during April and May, when birds lay their eggs and raise their young ones amidst scenic beauty.

When the Krishnaraja Sagar dam starts filling up during the monsoon months from June, the waters are released and at the height of the discharge, some of the trees are inundated. That is the time for birds to find safer places. However, a few resident birds stay nearby, safe from the floodwaters. Thus, the bird sanctuary is easily accessible around the year, though only during the rainy months there is frenetic activity of birds building nests, ferrying food to their young ones and keeping a close watch on their young ones.

The Ranganthittu Bird Sanctuary is managed by the Karnataka State Government's Forest Department, Wildlife section. Established in 1956, the bird sanctuary hosts a large variety of birds — night heron, spoon bill, grey heron, little egret, river tern, darter or snake bird, white ibis, painted stork from Siberia and spoon bill from Australia, just to name a few of the species, which find plenty of fish and other prey to sustain themselves and their young ones.

It is delightful watching the birds fly in formation. Suddenly, one of them swoops down to the water level and dexterously catches a fish and flies away. A painted stork preens its feathers. It looks as though some artists has dabbed a red paint on the white feathers causing that distinct red.

There are many varieties of fish and marine life including crocodiles, which cause anxious moments

D.B.N. Murthy
visits the
Ranganthittu bird
sanctuary in
Karnataka, where
birds of different
feathers flock
together during the
monsoon season.

to those watching these giant, but sluggish, creatures sunning themselves on the rocks or lying motionless in shallow water. Though there are so many varieties of birds in the sanctuary, there appears to be harmony among them.

The short 20-minute boat ride in the river, making a short circuit of the trees and the islands, is filled with interesting moments seeing at close quarters many species of birds perched on tree tops, standing in the river waiting for fish or engaged in nest-building activities. Trees grow in the small islands in the river that are the haven for the birds that find these ideal to

raise a family. There is plenty of food, relatively free from predators and the visitors are generally disciplined enough not to cause any harm to these birds.

Visitors are requested not to talk loudly or play transistor radios or tape-recorders. A short trip to the bird sanctuary, especially when the river is full in the rainy months, is a thrilling experience. ■

Fact file

How to get there: It is about 15 km from Mysore and 5 km from Srirangapattana. Buses ply to the sanctuary from both the places. Taxis can also be hired from Mysore.

Where to stay: There are many hotels and lodges in Mysore to suit any budget. In Srirangapattana, rooms will be available at the KSTC's Tourist Hotel or private lodges.

When to go: Throughout the year. The best time to visit is during the monsoon months of June to September.

Other information: An entrance fee of Rs 10 for adults and Rs 5 for children is charged. A still camera is charged Re 1. Foreigners are charged more. Boat ride costs Rs 10 per person.

Ranganatittu to become a tourist paradise

17/2/03
From Shankar Bannur
DH News Service

MYSORE, Feb 16

If everything goes well, the Ranganatittu bird sanctuary, one of the important bird sanctuaries of south India near here, will have facilities that the tourists were looking for since many years.

Thanks to a project conceived by the Forest Department under the Protection Area Development Fund, tourist facilities like restaurant, clean drinking water supply and toilets, parking lots etc will soon become a reality, with the works getting under way.

The Ranganatittu sanctuary is located downstream of the Krishnaraja Sagar reservoir in the Cauvery river basin. It has five islands and a large number of migratory birds visit the sanctuary during different seasons primarily for breeding. Of the five islands, tourists can reach only one at the moment and there are plans to construct suspension bridges to link all the islands.

Chief Conservator of Forests M N Jayakumar disclosed to

Deccan Herald that the works to provide tourist facilities were coming up on a 3.5-acre land at the sanctuary. Works to construct a reading room, a restaurant, a children's park, and "pay and use" toilets had begun already. Books and magazines on wildlife would be provided at the reading room to enable wildlife enthusiasts to know more about their favourite birds and animals, he said.

A fish-shaped pond would be developed next to the island. There were also plans to let swans of different species into the pond after beautifying it with colourful lotus flowers.

Mr Jayakumar said parking lots and toilets were needed urgently to cater to the needs of tourists, especially during holidays. "A large number of tourists visit the place during holidays and weekends. To ensure that

DH PHOTO/ M R MANJUNATH



Painted storks at the Ranganatittu bird sanctuary.

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they do not feel any inconvenience in parking their vehicles and using the old toilets, the parking lots and toilet blocks were thought of," he pointed out.

He also said that infrastructure development works were being taken up under the Protection Area Development Funds.

Last year the Union Government had made it compulsory for all wildlife sanctuaries and national parks to part with some money from the revenue earned every year for taking up development works in the sanctuaries and parks.

Meanwhile, the number of migratory birds visiting the sanctuary is increasing day by day. Birds of Indian origin like spoonbill, painted stork, white ibis, snake bird, little egret, cormorant, pelican, river tern, open bill stork, white necked-stork, cattle egret, grey heron, pond heron, night heron and Indian whiskered tern are seen in the sanctuary.

Mr Jayakumar said while some of the birds stay till June depending on their breeding patterns, some start arriving from next month.

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Global warming holds up winged visitors

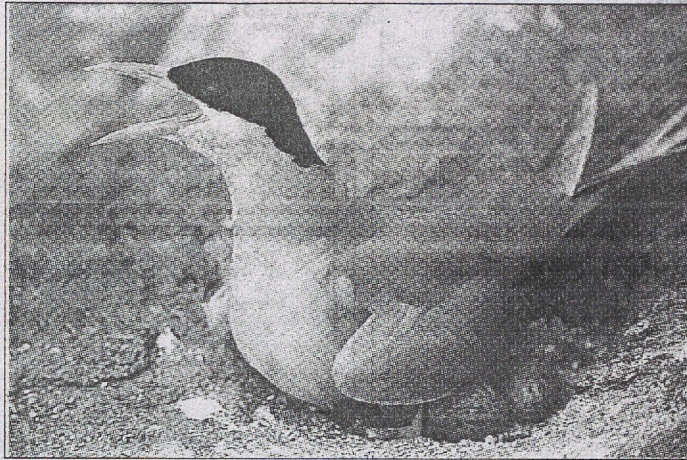
From Shankar Bennur
DH News Service

MYSORE, Jan 9

It is migration time in Ranganatittu Bird Sanctuary near here and the winged beauties from all over the globe would flock together here gladdening the hearts of avid birdwatchers and tourists. But this time the migration had been delayed by three weeks. Global warming and "intemperate condition" in Afghanistan after the US airstrikes has delayed the migration of birds to the bird sanctuary near here, feel experts and birdwatchers.

Despite the delayed arrival of birds, forest sources believe that the number of winged beauties visiting the sanctuary would go up in the coming days. Furthermore, the bird watchers are also studying whether there is any fall in the number of birds at the sanctuary which were normally seen in big numbers in this season.

As observed in the past, thousands of birds such as spoonbills, painted storks and pelicans



DH photo by M R Manjunath

A river tern guarding her eggs at the Ranganatittu Bird Sanctuary near Mysore.

were flocking to the sanctuary during December. Nevertheless, the descent in the number of some exotic birds visiting the sanctuary has become a worrying factor for bird enthusiasts and tourists. The season commenced one and half months ago. Nearly 1,500 birds, including spoonbills, painted storks, lit-

tle egrets, cattle egrets, night herons, purple herons, small and large cormorants, open bill storks, have been sighted at the sanctuary, which will be their "conditional" home till the end of June.

These migratory birds from Siberian zones migrate to the sanctuary to escape the intemperate weather there, and also to enlarge their families.

Shashi, a bird watcher from Kodagu district, says, "some of the birds might have arrived confronting inclement atmosphere in war-ravaged Afghanistan. The journey of a few rare birds from North America and Nigeria is through Afghanistan."

"The migratory flocks usually cross Afghanistan to reach the sanctuary as the path is the most preferred to bypass the Himalayas," points out Shashi, who has done several studies on birds at the sanctuary. Some of the rare birds are also from Sri Lanka, Myanmar.

Forest sources say that January-February is the prime time for migration although the birds start flying from November.

Deccan Herald 10-1-2002

Penguins In Peril

21-1-2002
Statesman

A MYSTERY disease appears to be wiping out some of Antarctica's penguins. Biologists who examined two colonies of Adelie penguins were confronted by the sight of at least 100 dead birds, and many sick ones. The true death toll could be much higher, since penguins tend to swim out to sea to die. The deaths happened at the worst possible time, during the laying season. The colonies lie near the Mawson Station, run by Australian scientists. One theory, the journal *Science* reports, is that the penguins have succumbed to an alien pathogen brought in by human visitors. Visits to the penguin colonies have been restricted and new sanitisation procedures intro-

duced. In the meantime, blood and tissue samples from the dead birds have been shipped to Tasmania for analysis. It has not been a good year for the Adelie penguins. Several colonies elsewhere in Antarctica have been cut off from breeding grounds by increased amounts of sea ice and have failed to raise any chicks. Other colonies have been hemmed in by icebergs that have broken off from the Ross Ice Shelf, making it difficult for them to reach open water to feed. However, the Adelie population should survive — about 15 million birds pepper the shoreline of the continent and surrounding islands.

— Anjana Ahuja

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✓ 1421

From: Navbharat Enterprises <navbarat@blr.vsnl.net.in>
Subject: illegal Quarrying Operations in the Vicinity of Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary
Date: Saturday, February 02, 2002 4:15 PM

Please find herein below a copy of the letter from our president to the conservator of forests mysore circle, requesting him to stop the illegal quarrying operations in the vicinity of Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary. for INCERT S. Sridhar

Dated 29th January 2002

From:
A.N. Yellappa Reddy, President, INCERT, No. 10, Sirur Park 'B' Street, Seshadripuram
Bangalore - 560 020, Tel: 3364142, 3364682(O), Res: 5721680, Email: navbarat@blr.vsnl.net.in

Dear Sir,

Sub: Illegal Quarrying Operations in the Vicinity of Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary.

This has reference to the newspaper report with photographs in "Vijaya Karnataka" of even date, wherein it is mentioned that quarrying and blasting activities are being carried out in Doddegowdana Koppal, adjacent to the Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary. If this report is true it is very unfortunate indeed.

Ecological and Ethological Issues:

Such quarrying operations will not only devastate the fragile ecosystem of the Sanctuary, but also lead to the homogenous deterioration of the birdlife therein.

The blasting activities will result in disruption of the normal behaviour and correspondingly lead to stress, inhibition, displacement, aggression, de-motivation and nest abandonment among the nesting and courting birds.

Because of their higher metabolic activity, birds require a higher quality of air which is ambient and pollution free compared to human beings. Quarrying and blasting activities alter the air-chemistry by constantly spewing and scattering fine powdery substances containing minute particulate matter in the air. These pollutants seriously affect the respiratory and metabolic activities of the nesting birds and their offsprings, and will eventually result in higher chick mortality.

The pneumaticity of the bones are unique among birds and ingestion of even minute particles of fluorides into the system will result in serious bone deformities in the juveniles and offsprings.

Legal Issues:

The newspaper report mentions that this quarry is operating illegally and has not obtained permission from any quarter. Our own telephonic enquires with the office of the Senior Geologist, Mandya have revealed that permission has not been accorded to this quarry. Are there any political pressures to keep it going?

There are many legal provisions for stopping this illegal activity. Firstly, the provisions of the Karnataka Minor Minerals (Concession) rules, 1994 have been violated. It is also apparent that the provisions of the following laws have been violated:

- 1) The water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1974
- 2) The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1981
- 3) The Environment (Protection) Act 1980
- 4) The Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972
- 5) The Explosives Act 1872

The copies of the newspaper report and the Notification are enclosed for your ready reference and needful action to stop the quarrying activities in the vicinity of the Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary, which has been declared as a Sanctuary vide Notification No AF 19/FT. 243 -39-4 under the Mysore Game and Fish Preservation Act (II of 1901) on July 1, 1940 and Final Notification issued as a Sanctuary under The Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, by the Asst. Commissioner, Pandavapura during 1991-92.

In the above circumstances, we request you to kindly declare the quarrying operations in the Doddegowdana Koppal as illegal and stop the operations forthwith, which is detrimental to the very existence of our country's unmatched bird sanctuary.

Thanking you in advance for your prompt action to stop this illegal activity,

Yours Faithfully,
for INCERT (A.N. Yellappa Reddy)
President

Copy of the letter from the Senior Geologist

Office of the Senior Geologist
Dept. of Mines and Geology
Mineral Wing
MANDYA

No. DMG/QLS/MDY/2001-02/5913

Date : 15.02.2002

To:
The President
Institute for Natural Resources,
Conversation, Education, Research & Training (INCERT)
No. 10, Sirur Park, "B" Street
Seshadripuram, Bangalore - 560 020

Respected Sir,

Sub: Illegal Quarry operations in the vicinity of Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary

This has a reference to your letter dt. 01.02.2002, the site was inspected along with revenue authorities of Srirangapatna on 08.02.2002. The quarrying has been stopped since a month back by the Thasildar. One Mr. Gangegowda of Doddegowdana Koppal, a farmer with an intension to construct a bund to avoid river encroachment to his field has done some quarrying activities adjacent to his field, which is now stopped. He expressed his ignorance about the consequences and promised that he will not do such a thing in future. Doddegowdana Koppal is 1.5 km away from bid sanctuary towards north. Frequent visit will be made to the area to avoid illegal quarrying activities in future.

Thanking you,
Yours faithfully,

Sd/-

Senior Geologist
Dept. of Mines and Geology
Mineral Wing
MANDYA

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h/v ✓
①
19.2.1

From: Navbharat Enterprises [mailto:navbharat@blr.vsnl.net.in]
Sent: 20 February 2002 17:57
Subject: Thasildar stops Illegal Quarrying in the vicinity of Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary

Dear Fellow Birdwatchers,

We thank you very much for your response to our request to write letters to the authorities on the subject matter. We are happy to inform you that, we have just received a letter from Shri Nayak, Senior Geologist, Dept. of Mines and Geology, Mineral Wing, Mandya, informing us that the illegal quarrying operations in the vicinity of Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary has been stopped. His letter is reproduced below for your kind perusal. We request you to write to him and the Thasildar, thanking them for the timely steps taken by them to stop the illegal quarrying. Thanking you once again for your profound concern and involvement in all issues relating to bird conservation.

Yours faithfully,
for INCERT

and Wildlife Sanctuaries. The distinction between these and management implications need to be made clear at the very beginning. There are also other categories of PAs functioning under different international and national schemes. Some of

Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary flooded

29/8/20
Madar

By Our Staff Correspondent

MYSORE, AUG. 28. The increased outflow from the KRS Reservoir during the past couple of days has flooded the Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary near Srirangapatna and the authorities have suspended the boating facility for tourists till further notice.

Nearly 35,000 cusecs of water was discharged last night and the water level in the sanctuary rose considerably and the place where the boats used to take on people was submerged.

The bamboo groves, a favourite roosting place for the birds, were partially submerged and water had entered the corridors con-

structed to enable visitors to walk up to the other end of the sanctuary. Mr. Shaik Madar, the forester at the sanctuary told *The Hindu* that the water level had begun to rise since Sunday and boating was suspended from 2 p.m. as a precautionary measure.

Even if the discharge of water decreased today, it would take another week for the water level to recede to the normal level. "However, there were already signs of the water level receding this afternoon and much depends on rain in the catchment area of the river. The floods are not of the magnitude of the floods in 1991 or 1994 when even the ticket counter was fully submerged and the sanctu-

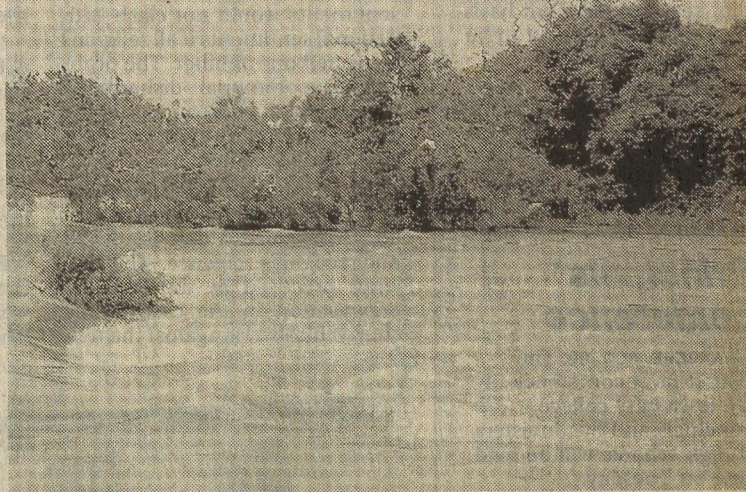
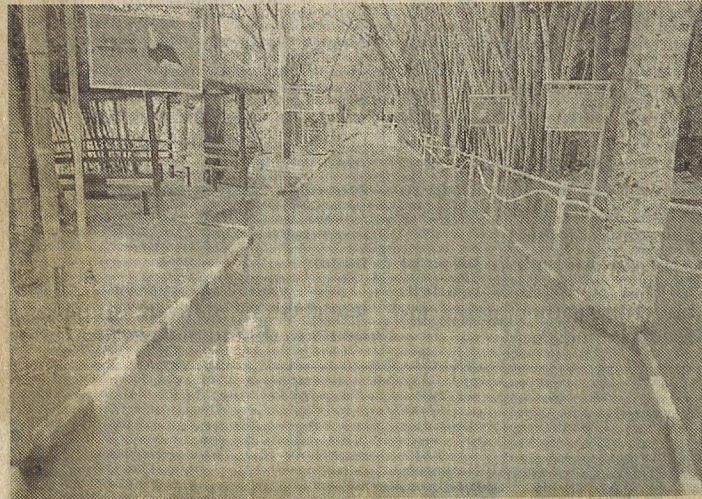
ary resembled an ocean," he said.

The unprecedented and sudden release of over 1.45 lakh cusecs of water in one day had submerged the entire bird sanctuary in July 1991 washing away birds, nests, eggs and newly hatched chicks making it one of the worst floods to ravage the sanctuary.

However, there was no danger to birds roosting here at this time of the season since most of the chicks had attained the capability to fly and the nests were at a much higher level than that of the water. There were nearly 17,000 birds in the sanctuary at present which were now preparing to migrate with the changing season.

The birds came to roost at Ranganathittu during February-March and most of the chicks fly off in five to six months, authorities said.

Mr. Nataraj, the range officer, said the efforts of the Forest Department to improve the habitats of the birds would enable them to withstand the flooding. The authorities have taken steps to improve the group of six islets which form the Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary. The plan involves lining the islands with rocks and filling the intermediate gaps with mud, planting of saplings, etc. This would minimise soil erosion while the vegetation would provide the birds a suitable habitat.



Scenes at the Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary near Srirangapatna which was flooded on Monday following increased outflow from the KRS Reservoir.