

Conservation Challenges of Wetlands Biodiversity in Northeast Region of Bangladesh

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Abstract : Bangladesh is the largest delta in the world predominantly comprising large network of rives and wetlands. Wetlands in Bangladesh are represented by inland freshwater, estuarine brakishwater and tidal salt-water coastal wetlands. Bangladesh possesses enormous area of wetlands including rivers and streams, freshwater lakes and marshes, haors, baors, beels, water storage reservoirs, fish ponds, flooded cultivated fields and estuarine systems with extensive mangrove swamps. The past, present, and future of Bangladesh, and its people's livelihoods are intimately connected to its relationship with water and wetlands. More than 90% of the country's total area consists of alluvial plains, crisscrossed by a complex network of rivers and their tributaries. Floodplains, beels (low-lying depressions in the floodplain), haors (deep depression) and baors (oxbow lakes) represent the inland freshwater wetlands. Over a third of Bangladesh could be termed as wetlands, considering rivers, estuaries, mangroves, floodplains, beels, baors and haors. The country's wetland ecosystems also offer critical habitats for globally significant biological diversity. Of these the deeply flooded basins of north-east Bangladesh, known as haors, are a habitat of wide range of wild flora and fauna unique to Bangladesh. The haor basin lies within the districts of Sylhet, Sunamgonj, Netrokona, Kishoregonj, Habigonj, Moulvibazar, and Brahmanbaria in the Northeast region of Bangladesh comprises the floodplains of the Meghna tributaries and is characterized by the presence of numerous large, deeply flooded depressions, known as haors. It covers about around 8,568 km² area of Bangladesh. The topography of the region is steep at around foothills in the north and slopes becoming mild and milder gradually at downstream towards south. Haor is a great reservoir of aquatic biological resources and acts as the ecological safety net to the nature as well as to the dwellers of the haor. But in reality, these areas are considered as wastelands and to make these wastelands into a productive one, a one sided plan has been implementing since long. The programme is popularly known as Flood Control, Drainage and Irrigation (FCDI) which is mainly devoted to increase the monoculture rice production. However, haor ecosystem is a multiple-resource base which demands an integrated sustainable development approach. The ongoing management approach is biased to only rice production through FCDI. Thus this primitive mode of action is diminishing other resources having more economic potential ever thought.

Keywords : freshwater wetlands, biological diversity, biological resources, conservation and sustainable development

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