

Ramsar Award for Wetland Conservation

Jayashree Vencatesan Becomes First Indian to Receive Ramsar Award for Wetland Conservation

Jayashree Vencatesan, co-founder of Chennai-based Care Earth Trust, has made history as the first Indian to receive the Ramsar Award for 'Wetland Wise Use.' This prestigious international recognition celebrates her exceptional contributions to the sustainable management of wetlands.

On the eve of International Women's Day, the Ramsar Secretariat in Geneva announced a list of 12 remarkable women changemakers in wetland conservation worldwide. Jayashree was honored under the 'Wise Use of Wetlands' category.

Who is Jayashree Vencatesan?

- Co-founder of Care Earth Trust, a Chennai-based organization dedicated to biodiversity conservation.
- Has spent decades working to protect and restore India's wetlands, particularly Pallikaranai Marsh in Chennai.
- Led an all-women research team to document biodiversity and safeguard wetland ecosystems.
- Advocates for women's leadership in environmental conservation.

Jayashree's Journey in Wetland Conservation

- Started her conservation efforts with just \$350 and a commitment to protecting India's wetlands.
- Conducted pioneering research on Pallikaranai Marsh, emphasizing its role in flood mitigation and biodiversity preservation.
- Led an all-women research team that has contributed to significant conservation efforts.
- Overcame bureaucratic and legal hurdles to push for wetland restoration.

Major Challenges in Wetland Conservation

- Complex legal issues, including outdated land titles and ownership disputes, create obstacles for conservation projects.
- Lack of awareness leads to wetlands being viewed as wastelands rather than valuable ecosystems.
- Resistance from certain landowners and donors can result in mismanagement and neglect of critical wetland species.

Jayashree's Perspective on Conservation

Jayashree believes that conservation is not about quick wins but about persistence, often measured in decades, to ensure a lasting impact.

She has dedicated the Ramsar Award to her late father, Mayur Narasimhan, who inspired her lifelong commitment to nature and conservation.

The Global Recognition: Ramsar Award

- Awarded under the 'Wise Use of Wetlands' category, which acknowledges sustainable wetland management.
- The Ramsar Convention is an international treaty focused on wetland conservation and responsible use.
- Jayashree's work highlights the importance of long-term commitment and policy-level interventions.

Tamil Nadu's Role in Wetland Conservation

- Tamil Nadu is home to 18 Ramsar sites, making it a significant region for wetland preservation in India.
- Jayashree's contributions have helped raise awareness about the ecological importance of wetlands in urban landscapes.

Other Women Recognized for Wetland Conservation

- Celeste Saulo, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization.
- Jennifer George, CEO of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership Secretariat.
- Tatiana Minayeva, Consultant for Care for Ecosystems.

FAQs on Jayashree Vencatesan and Wetland Conservation

What is the Ramsar Award for Wetland Wise Use?

The Ramsar Award recognizes individuals and organizations for their contributions to wetland conservation and sustainable management. Jayashree Vencatesan won it under the 'Wise Use of Wetlands' category.

Why are wetlands important?

Wetlands play a crucial role in flood control, water purification, biodiversity conservation, and climate regulation. They support various species and sustain local livelihoods.

What is Pallikaranai Marsh, and why is it significant?

Pallikaranai Marsh, located in Chennai, is one of the last remaining natural wetlands in the city. It serves as a flood buffer, carbon sink, and habitat for over 337 species of flora and fauna.

What challenges does wetland conservation face?

- Outdated land titles and legal issues prevent restoration efforts.
- Encroachments and pollution from urban expansion threaten wetland ecosystems.
- Limited public awareness about the importance of wetlands hinders conservation initiatives.

How can individuals contribute to wetland conservation?

- Raise awareness about the importance of wetland ecosystems.
- Participate in conservation programs and clean-up drives.
- Support policies that protect wetlands from urban encroachment and degradation.

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