

**IMPACT OF COMMUNITY AWARENESS PROGRAMME IN THE
CONSERVATION OF WETLANDS: A CASE STUDY OF VAAGAIKULAM
LAKE**

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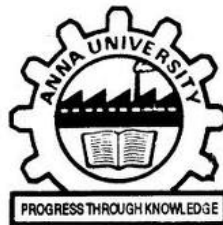
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ABSTRACT

Several global conservation organizations, including 'RAMSAR' convention, have identified the aquatic biodiversity to be the most threatened of all biodiversities. There is, therefore, an urgent and felt need to conserve the aquatic biodiversity including the ecosystem processes. This study is an attempt to evaluate one such conservation programme which aims at conserving one of the largest heronry in Tirunelveli district, Tamilnadu, namely Vaagaikulaam Lake; which is the habitat of over thousands of birds- both local birds and foreign migrants. The conservation programme is largely community based and educative which focuses on connecting people to their neighbourhood environment and thereby improving their attitude towards it. Out of four villages that have equal stake over the wetland, two were chosen- one which has been exposed to the programme while the other has no such exposure. This was a natural set up for evaluating the impact of the programme. A Contingent Valuation technique has been adopted for evaluation. The results show that there is a significant difference in the Willingness to Pay and the Conservation attitude among the two villages which indicates the success of the programme.