

Rare turtle found in Singanallur Lake

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A rare and near-extinct turtle specie was found near the Singanallur lake by a group of biodiversity researchers led by the Coimbatore City Municipal Corporation (CCMC), Centre for Urban Biodiversity Conservation and Education (CUBE) and volunteers under a corporate outreach programme.

A CUBE researcher who insisted on anonymity told The Covai Post, “We have been doing several study projects around Singanallur Lake that is linked to the Noyyal river for the past 15 years. These projects cover studying the natural biodiversity around the lake which is rare to find in the middle of a bustling industrialised city like Coimbatore.

“We have recorded around 720 species of birds and butterflies. Turtles have been spotted frequently in the past weeks, as July and August is their breeding season. CUBE head E Jagan led the team which first spotted the turtles this season.”

These Indian black turtles, scientific name *Melanochelys Trijuga*, categorised as near threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), are a rare find. They have a small carapace of 1ft, with fully webbed digits and three keels running from neck to nape. Their incubation period is around two to five months.

The turtles will not come out of the lake unless the biodiversity around is suitable for nesting. “It is not uncommon to find them in lakes but to see them in the middle of a concrete jungle is rare,” she said.

CUBE and CCMC have been working to preserve Singanallur Lake through tree-planting both by traditional and Miyawaki methods, conserving it through awareness programmes, nature walks for corporation school children and documenting the flora and fauna in it.

This programme is sponsored by Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB), which is a Central Government research institute under the Ministry of Environment. So, a herbarium of the 750 plant species of Singanallur Lake has been preserved at the National Observatory in New Delhi.

T Balakumaran, a member of the corporate outreach team said, “We have about 10-15 volunteers from our company for Singanallur nature study programme of which R Rogini, SA Barath and N Prakash are regular participants. We were surprised to spot turtles and it was a good learning experience for our group. CUBE and CCMC are doing a great job.”

Turtles, tortoises and terrapins are closely related reptiles belonging to the family testudines. Turtles and terrapins dwell both on land and in water, while tortoises live only on land. They all have a protective cartilage shell, are cold-blooded, oviparous (lay eggs) and omnivorous (eat plants and animals).

Source: <https://www.covaipost.com/coimbatore/rare-turtle-found-in-singanallur-lake/>