



**Press Release of Global Nature Fund**

## **Sri Lankan Lakes under Pressure**

**Global Nature Fund nominates Lake Bolgoda and Lake Madampe as “Threatened Lakes of the Year 2018” on the occasion of the World Wetlands Day**

*Deforestation of mangroves, habitat destruction for constructions and water pollution are endangering the livelihoods of the local population and many endangered species in the Bolgoda and Madampe Lake regions in the southwest of Sri Lanka. The unique mangrove forests in Sri Lanka with a spectacular biodiversity are threatened by increasing human activities and stress deriving from climate change.*

Radolfzell/Colombo, February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2018: Thousands of people are affected by the consequences of degradation and pollution of the two unique ecosystems at the Lakes Bolgoda and Madampe in Sri Lanka. The destruction of the mangrove forests, e.g. for the construction of hotel complexes and bungalows, puts the livelihoods of the people in the region at risk. Moreover, improperly treated effluents from agriculture and industries worsen the water quality dramatically. This is not only affecting the environment but also large numbers of fishermen and other local people, whose livelihoods and food resources depend on the lakes.

### **Mangroves - an exceptional ecosystem**

Mangroves provide the basis for many coastal fisheries, work as natural shields against storms and Tsunamis and form major carbon sinks. Together with coral reefs and tropical forests, mangroves are among the most productive and at the same time most threatened ecosystems on earth. Prawns, crabs and fish use the open area between the roots for shelter, spawning, and as a food source. Therefore, mangroves play an important role as nursery habitats for many commercially important species, such as shrimp and multiple fish species. Mangroves vanish at an alarming rate: since 1980 worldwide more than 20%, equalling 3.6 million hectares, of mangrove forests have been destroyed (UNEP, 2014).

### **Lake Bolgoda**

Bolgoda is the largest natural freshwater lake in Sri Lanka. Approximately 166,000 people live in the region around the wetlands. It forms a very species-rich ecosystem with a large variety of mangrove species and other terrestrial, semi-aquatic and aquatic species. Due to its natural beauty, the tourism potential of the area bordering the capital of Colombo is very high. Today the lake is severely threatened by encroachments, rubbish dumping and industrial pollutants discharged into the lake. Furthermore, mangrove habitats have been converted into rice paddy fields or used for the construction of tourism infrastructure.

### **Lake Madampe**

Madampe is one of the last intact mangrove forests in Sri Lanka with an exceptionally high biodiversity. It plays a very important role for inland fishing and as a spawning area for marine fish. The area is under high pressure from expanding agriculture such as cinnamon cultivation, infrastructure projects, land reclamation, urbanisation and logging. The local rural communities live mainly from fishing, subsistence agriculture and rice cultivation and depend heavily on the natural ecosystem services provided by an intact lake and its surrounding wetlands.

### **Solutions – the look ahead**

Global Nature Fund together with its Sri Lankan partner organisations EMACE Foundation of Sri Lanka at Lake Bolgoda and Nagenahiru Foundation at Lake Madampe support the restoration of



those unique mangrove forests. Adequate management and environmental awareness programmes need to be developed, to train more farmers and fishermen in sustainable use of the environment. The installation of buffer zones, the provision of alternative livelihoods and alternative sources to firewood as well as the development of small scale, low cost water treatment plants for hotels, industries and communities would help to prevent further ecosystem destruction.

First steps have already been made in the framework of joint projects. Since the Tsunami in December 2004, approximately 100.000 mangrove saplings have been planted in the two lake regions and subsequently 40 hectares of this important habitat have been restored.

#### Background:

Since 2004, on the **Worlds Wetlands Day** (2<sup>nd</sup> February) the GNF nominates the “Threatened Lake of the Year” to call attention to an endangered lake area and help solving environmental problems on site.

#### **Global Nature Fund and the Living Lakes Network**

Global Nature Fund (GNF) is a non-profit, private, independent foundation for the protection of environment and nature. GNF was founded in 1998 and has offices in Radolfzell, Bonn and Berlin, Germany. One of GNF's core initiatives is the Living Lakes Network – a global network of organisations that champion the protection of lakes and wetlands. The network currently comprises 108 members all over the world. Lake Bolgoda and Lake Madampe are members of the international Living Lakes Network ([www.globalnature.org/livinglakes](http://www.globalnature.org/livinglakes)).

#### **EMACE Foundation of Sri Lanka**

EMACE is a local NGO with over 30 years of experience working in the Bolgoda Lake region in the areas of biodiversity restoration and biodiversity protection. EMACE implements renewable energy schemes, bio-cultivation, climate change mitigation programmes, social enterprises and runs environmental education programmes for the community while advocating through civil society for better environmental legislations. <http://www.emace.org/>

#### **Nagenahiru Foundation - Center for Conservation of Lakes and Wetlands, Sri Lanka**

The Nagenahiru Foundation was established in 1991 and is involved in a variety of activities including community level environmental education, nature conservation, advocacy programmes as well as poverty mitigation and community empowerment programmes. The foundation is conducting various mangrove restoration and conservation programmes. [www.nagenahiru.org](http://www.nagenahiru.org)

**For more information, interviews and photos please visit:**

[www.globalnature.org/ThreatenedLake2018](http://www.globalnature.org/ThreatenedLake2018)

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