



A COMMUNITY BASED INITIATIVE IN SRI LANKA TO KEEP OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT CLEAN

Thalangama Wetland Watch

OUR ACTIVITIES

ABOUT US AND OUR WORK

About us:

Thalangama Wetland Watch is a self-funded, non-profit, community-based initiative of citizens living in lake vicinity, who are protect their natural environment and human health. We feel that all citizens have responsibility and we like to set an example for others to take the first step. We are operating in close collaboration with institutional stakeholders (CEA, Irrigation Dept., NAQI, RDA, ...) and any other community stakeholders building on our common interest in protecting our inheritance for future generations. We provide community service without any financial gain for the organizers and volunteers (see http://wetlandwatch.lk/files/how_you_can_help).

• Our core team of volunteers:

- Co-founder and operations coordinator (Dr. Pay Drechsel)
- Spokespersons (Mohan Fernando, Dr. Jody Miller)
- First assistant (Mr. Ravi)
- Logistics (Mrs. H. I. Jayathilleke)
- Account controller (Mrs. Avanthi)
- Legal advisor (Mrs. Nadeesha)
- Web manager (www.wetlandwatch.lk)
- The local Irrigation Department representative (Mr. Sarath) for activity alignment and approval.
- And a pool of community members and day labourer who help on demand.

There is a larger Thalangama lake WhatsApp group of which the Wetland Watch is part and where e.g. illegal waste dumping and other issues concerning the lake are reported and receive instant (re)actions.

Our infrastructure includes waste collection equipment and access to six boats (two inflatable and one hard body kayaks, two motor boats).

About our activities:

• Removing trash from the lake and its surrounding

In late 2016 we started with the removal of about 50m³ of waste, which had accumulated over the years. From then on, there is no new trash of any size or type, which visitors leave around the Thalangama and neighboring Avarihera tanks, and their ac beer cans or larger waste bags dumped overnight.

Home

meters of streets and water ways with the blue and yellow lines (see map) being cleaned twice every day (7.30–9.30 am; 17:00–18:30 pm). The water surface is being monitored once a week by boat for trash and water hyacinths. Within certain drains we built trash barriers while dustbins have been set up at key points along the roads. Both are cleaned daily.

The daily cleaning around the lake serves awareness creation, and to capture in particular waste like shopping bags which wind and rain will otherwise blow or wash into the lake, where they are more cumbersome to retrieve.

In collaboration with the Kaduwela Municipality, we are separating all metal, glass, PE bottles, etc. and get them weekly collected.

We also check larger waste bags for their possible owners, to report them to the authorities and/or visit them personally to get their disapproval.

- **Removal of invasive plant species**

Since we started, we are controlling the spread of water hyacinths on the Thalangama lake. Some time back water hyacinths covered about half of the water surface. With over 200 boat loads of plants removed, the spread is now under control. This floating weed can multiply rapidly and is reducing the already low level of dissolved oxygen, affecting e.g. fish life. The downside of fighting water hyacinths is that once removed other aquatic weeds like Watermoss (*Salvinia* sp.) and the submerged Coontail (*Ceratophyllum demersum*) and carnivorous bladderwort (*Utricularia* sp.) spread.

- **Stakeholder dialogue facilitation**

Given that the lake has a large number of stakeholders, it happened frequently that new initiatives are only known to some, but not all. In particular, the environmental protection status of the area which limits possible activities by law, is often forgotten. The Thalangama Wetland Watch as a community correct such omissions by facilitating the involvement of all authorities.

- **Supporting research and environmental education**

With our access to a number of boats and equipment for water quality testing, we are supporting research from local universities to serve environmental sciences and the protection of the lake area.

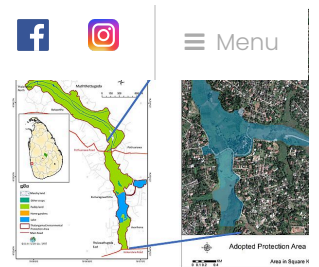
We visit schools, display posters at dumping hot spots, and explain good environmental practices. We also initiate or support environmental groups at both lakes or in neighboring communities, and offer school children supervised boat rides to help cleaning the

- **Reducing dengue and support of environmental flows**

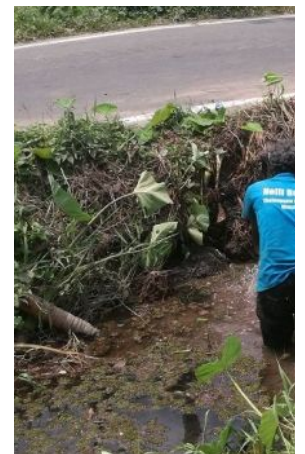
Our cleaning of cans, cubs and bottles supports also our efforts to reduce dengue in the area. Many bottles show mosquito larvae. We remove blockages in drains and streams to avoid stagnant water, and monitor the Northern sluice gates to maintain a good flow for ecosystems health when the gates are closed.

- **Flora and Fauna**

We are seeking homes for abandoned pets and take care of roadkill and other dead animals. We are also supporting young people who are forgotten once a 'tree planting day' is over, through watering and the removal of climbing weeds. For our weekly monitoring please see above.



Click to zoom, and for more information





[Financial Statement: 2023-2024](#)

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