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Locals, GEC convert stinking Lavarpur pond into bird watcher's paradise

Joint efforts ensure that the sewage is first treated before being directed to the pond

Smitha R@smithaR12

Ahmedabad: The combined efforts of villagers of Lavarpur in Gandhinagar and the Gujarat Ecological Commission (GEC) has helped turn what was once a stinking pond into a bird watcher's paradise. A pond in the village that attracted nearly 20 to 25 species of birds, was a hit among bird watchers, but thanks to its unbearable stink it was not a very coveted place. This was the situation until GEC undertook the initiative to set up a sewage treatment plant near the pond.

"Earlier, the sewage of the village was being dumped in the pond. This made the water so nutritious that it became home to various organisms and plants. The pond's biological oxygen demand went up and the actual level of oxygen came down," said AC Sampat, director, GEC. "The project was part of the state govern-

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ment's efforts of managing wetland with the help of local bodies," he said.

"We discussed cleaning up of the pond and setting up a sewage treatment plant. We provided the technical guidance but everything else was done by the villagers," said Sampat.

Those in the know of things said initially GEC found resistance from the villagers as building a sewage treatment plant would mean people have to stop dumping sewage in the pond. But, thanks to the efforts of the sarpanch, water was drained out from the pond and sewage dumping was stopped for more than four months while the wetland was being rebuilt.

Kiran Patel, husband of Manjulaben, who is the sarpanch of the village, said initially the villagers opposed the move. "But we managed to convince everyone. Now the sewage from the village gets treated first and then it is dumped in the pond. As a result, it does not stink anymore.