

# Environmental Audit Report on International RAMSAR Wetlands



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**National Audit Office**  
**Environmental Audit Division**



## **Executive summary**

Wetlands are unique and biodiversity ecosystems that form the background of human civilization in the world. Due to the uniqueness of ecosystems the international RAMSAR Wetland Convention was established in 1971 as an instrument for the protection and management of wetlands universally. As of 2018 there were 2,331 RAMSAR wetlands identified worldwide and Sri Lanka has claimed 06 Zones.

With the growth of population and urbanization, limited use of land was increased and also, it was observed that threats to the sustainability of wetlands have been increased. Those ecological important areas are facing a serious challenge due to human activities and lack of adequate attention by the institutions, which have the authorities concerned the wetlands are in danger of being destroyed. The purpose of this audit was to examine whether their duties have been accomplished by relevant institutions and to discuss regarding the related issues. Reclamation of marshlands, removal of forest cover, excessive availability of wetland resources and the rapid spread of invasive species and the biomass species are some of the problems. Bundala, Wilpattu, Kumana, Anavilundava, Vankalei, and Madu Ganga have been designated as national parks and sanctuaries of international importance as the main RAMSAR Wetlands in Sri Lanka. Although Sri Lanka is included as a member country under the International RAMSAR Wetlands Convention, no separate legal systems has been established in Sri Lanka for the implementation of the convention. It was observed that the RAMSAR Wetlands are regulated under the provisions of the Ordinance of Fauna and Flora protection. Since the declaration of the RAMSAR Wetlands, there has been insufficient research on the sustainability of biodiversity in these wetlands. It was also observed that, although the number of strategic and national plans have been prepared for the conservation of biodiversity, no specific plan has been prepared and implemented for performance evaluation and the effectiveness regarding the zones of RAMSAR Wetlands.

Although the boundaries relating to areas identified as RAMSAR Wetlands have been published in the Gazette at the date of audit, attention has not been adequately addressed to mark the boundaries and the streamlining of the ownership of some lands pertaining to the RAMSAR Wetlands. It was observed several illegal activities which are not environmental

friendly, such as unauthorized building construction inside the RAMSAR wetland and reclamation of land in the inductive zone and also observed that, a great obstacle for the biodiversity in the conservative areas and system of lakes due to the spread of invasive species. It has been observed that the staffing and the basic facilities are not adequately provided for the conservation of RAMSAR Wetlands. And also, it was observed that a great attention should be paid for conserving of these wetlands which are of universal importance. Furthermore it is observed that further intervention of the government should be required to conserve these wetlands which are of higher value of biodiversity, historically and archaeologically important and provide many ecological services such as flood controlling, an area of water source which is a paradise for many endangered species of fauna and flora and many migratory birds species.