

International Bird Centre (IBC) Marakkanam

Overview of the Project:

During the March 2023 budget, an announcement was made in the Legislative Assembly in Tamil Nadu that an International Bird Centre (IBC) will be established at the Kazhuveli Birds Sanctuary, near Marakkanam, in Villupuram district, for 25 Crore INR. The International Bird Centre is envisioned to have facilities for field study and research on ecology and bird migration, a basic veterinary facility, along with ecotourism facilities and modern indoor interpretation facilities (AR and VR), as well as outdoor interpretation facilities. Project Definition the International Bird Centre at Kazhuveli Bird Sanctuary, Marakkanam is a facility that will primarily focus on creating awareness on birds and bird-related ecosystems through exhibits and educational/ training programmes, that are aimed at showcasing the diversity and importance of birds and their habitats and increasing the knowledge and appreciation among the general public and other stakeholders.

Project Vision:

1. To create awareness about Kazhuveli and its birds
2. To aspire to become a center of Excellence for Ornithology
3. To act as an anchor to sustainably steward Kazhuveli
4. To act as a gateway for coastal wetland awareness centers.

Project Mission:

EXPERIENTIAL: Develop the facility into an ecotourism destination that educates visitors on bird conservation, providing both indoor and outdoor experiences, including at Kazhuveli Lake

RESEARCH: Develop a field research and training facility focusing on bird conservation & monitoring

RESOURCE: Create a comprehensive resource Centre for all birds in the State • **EDUCATION:** Serve as a conservation and education centre, integrating scientific, cultural, and conservation aspects of avifauna.

In addition, it will also have different features, such as:

1. A laboratory for basic Ecological and Environmental Assessment
2. A small clinic to provide medical care for injured birds
3. Accommodation and associated facilities for workshop participants and researchers;
4. It will be part of networks and partnerships with allied organisations, agencies, and communities that share the same vision and mission of protecting and enhancing the well-being of birds and their habitats.

Background information:

The proposed International Bird Centre (IBC) is planned near Marakkanam in Villupuram district, along the East Coast Road. It will be positioned with the Bay of Bengal to the east, Marakkanam town to the north, and the Kazhuveli water channel to the west. As part of the International Bird Centre, activities are proposed at two locations approximately 7.3 km apart.

These locations are listed below and represented as follows:

1. Site 1 – Agaram Reserved Forest:

Agaram Reserved Forest will host the proposed Visitors Awareness/ Conservation Centre and research facility of the International Bird Centre. The site is located off the East Coast Road (ECR) and is 7.3 km away from Kazhuveli Bird Sanctuary. Agaram RF (Area – 600 acres as per G.O 473 / 6.7.1988) is a significantly altered ecosystem dominated by plantations of Australian Acacia, Eucalyptus, and Casuarina. It primarily serves as a research plot for the Tamil Nadu Forest Department, currently leased to the Tamil Nadu Forest Plantation Corporation Limited (TAFCON), with potential for restoration and development of research and awareness facilities. TAFCON leased 235.87 hectares in Agaram RF from 1974. The proposed sites for the IBC in Agaram RF will cover a total area of 47.46 acres. Of these, only 46.26 acres under the Eucalyptus plantation will be used for the Conservation Centre, including parking, the Kazhuveli wetland mimic area. The existing facility and open space inside the forested area covering 1.25 acres shall be used for a research and training facility.

2. Site 2 – Kazhuveli Lake

The bird-watching facility is to be located at Kazhuveli Lake, near Vandipalayam Village and the Vandipalayam Bridge. This site consists of altered forest land that was previously encroached upon for farm fishing. Recently, the site has been designated as a bird sanctuary and a Ramsar site, signifying its importance as a wetland of international significance. The presence of old, evicted shrimp farm bunds and trees on the site provides a unique habitat for various bird species, making it an ideal location for bird-watching activities. The bunds, or embankments, and the mature trees offer suitable perches and nesting sites for birds, contributing to the ecological richness of the area. Kazhuveli Lake is notable as the second-largest brackish water lake in South India, hosting over 30,000 wild ducks in the winter, 20,000-40,000 shorebirds, and 20,000-50,000 terns during migration periods. Ecologically significant due to its diverse flora, fauna, and geomorphology, it is an ideal location for bird-watching facilities.

Significance:

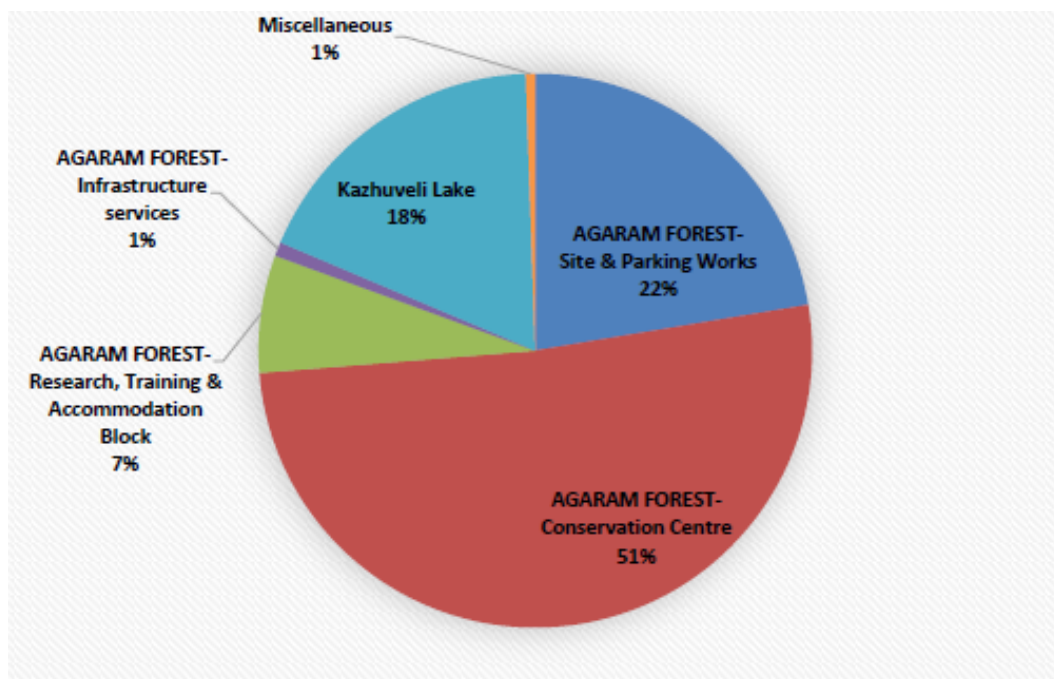
1. The centre can help promote bird conservation and biodiversity by educating the public about the importance of birds and their habitats.
2. The project will effectively raise awareness about environmental systems, wildlife, and the conservation of natural resources.

3. Field research facilities at the IBC can help scientists study bird behaviour, migration patterns, and habitat requirements, which can lead to better conservation strategies and management practices.
4. The centre can provide opportunities for birdwatchers to observe different species and behaviour.
5. Additionally, the Bird Centre can attract tourists, boosting the local economy. Birdwatching is one of the fastest-growing nature-based tourism sectors globally, providing economic benefits to remote communities and supporting biodiversity conservation in significant bird habitats.

Objectives:

- 1) To aspire to become a field station for the Conservation of Avifauna, their Habitat management, Education, Research and Training, and to act as a centre for creating awareness and conservation education.
- 2) To serve as a conservation and education centre, integrating scientific, cultural, and conservation aspects of avifauna.
- 3) To develop as a resource and information centre for all birds of Tamil Nadu, including threatened and endemic species from every habitat of the State.
- 4) In addition to indoor centres, develop several outdoor experiences for visitors, including on-site at Kazhuveli lake, as well as other key habitats in the vicinity.
- 5) To establish the region's identity, particularly concerning bird protection and interpretation.
- 6) To develop the facility as an ecotourism destination, which exposes the visiting public to information about birds and their conservation, while at the same time providing livelihood opportunities to local communities.
- 7) To benefit the locals by teaching them conservation methods and creating livelihood through associated events.
- 8) To secure and protect the region's rare birds and raise awareness about former bird species.
- 9) To ensure judicious use of environmental resources to meet the needs and aspirations of the current and future generations.
- 10) To facilitate the conservation of natural resources for our future generations.
- 11) To ensure the protection of biodiversity.
- 12) To educate children and students about nature and the environment, emphasising the impact of their actions.
- 13) To provide children with opportunities for hands-on activities, experiments, projects, and field trips that enhance environmental literacy and problem-solving abilities.
- 14) To encourage children to learn from and appreciate nature's beauty and diversity.
- 15) To foster their sense of responsibility and solidarity towards the environment and other living beings.

Pie Chart -Break-up of Abstract Estimate of Project



Deliverables/ Revenue/ Footfall/ Outcome

The International Bird Centre is located along the East Coast Road at Marakkanam, between Chennai and Pondicherry. Given the series of tourist attractions along the Chennai–Pondicherry (East Coast Road), the International Bird Centre is expected to attract most of its visitors from Chennai. Travellers along this route have the flexibility to choose from multiple destinations based on their time availability.

Pondicherry is a 3-hour drive from Chennai, making it a popular weekend getaway. Visitors typically plan either a day trip or a 2-day visit with an overnight stay, often in and around Pondicherry. The number of weekend visitors has increased in recent years, evidenced by the growing number of eateries, rest stops, and amenities along this stretch between Chennai and Pondicherry.

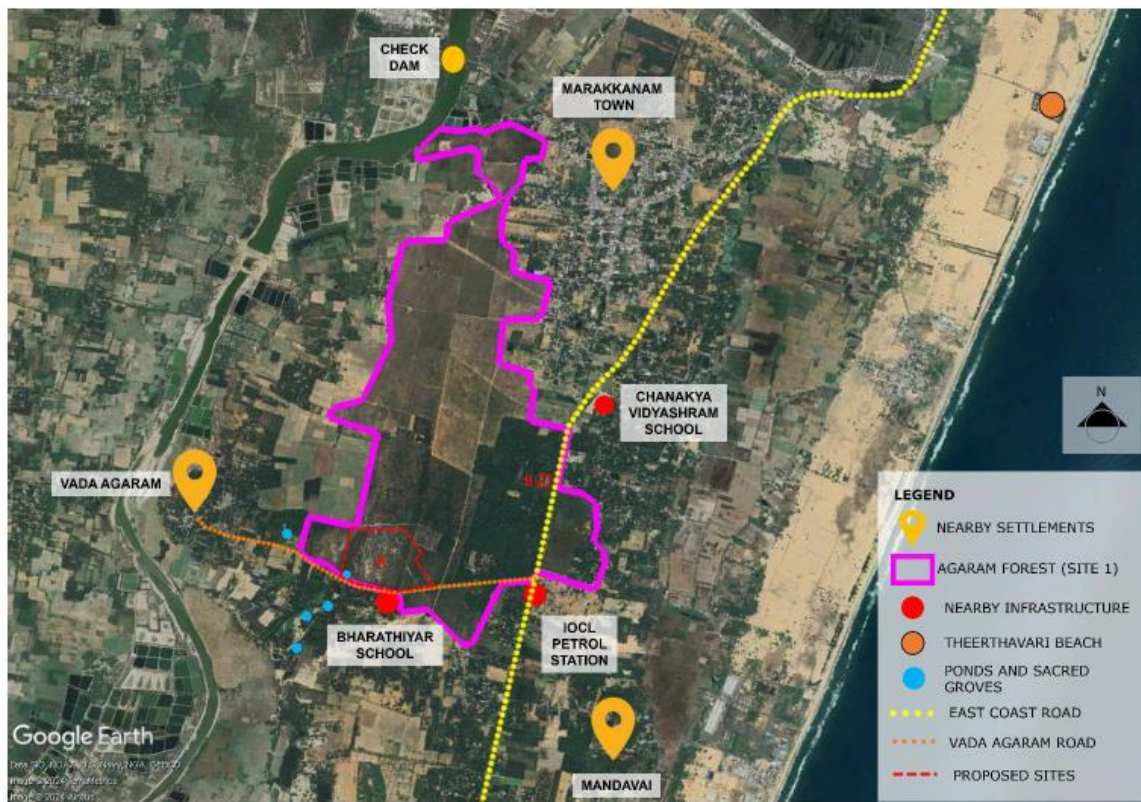
Drawing a comparison with the footfall at Madras Crocodile Park and the Auroville Visitors centre, it is estimated that the International Bird Centre (IBC) could attract between 4,000 to 5,000 visitors on peak travel days. The estimated maximum annual visitor footfall is **5.81 lakh people**.

Income Estimate:

The various possible sources of revenue generation are listed below. The revenue share is calculated based on the number of people expected during different seasons.

S. No	Activities	Season	No of Days/ Year	Qty (per Day)	Qty (per Year)	Units in No.	Amount (in INR) per unit	Sub Total Amount (in INR)	Total Amount (in INR)
1	Car Parking Tickets	Weekend	106.00	203	21,518	Cars	100	21,51,800	58,47,800
		Peak Season	64.00	400	25,600	Cars	100	25,60,000	
		Week Days	142.00	80	11,360	Cars	100	11,36,000	
2	Bike Parking Tickets	Weekend	106.00	75	7,950	Bikes	30	2,38,500	6,54,300
		Peak Season	64.00	150	9,600	Bikes	30	2,88,000	
		Week Days	142.00	30	4,260	Bikes	30	1,27,800	
3	Entrance Fees	Weekend	106.00	2,000	2,12,000	People	100	2,12,00,000	5,81,60,000
		Peak Season	64.00	4,000	2,56,000	People	100	2,56,00,000	
		Week Days	142.00	800	1,13,600	People	100	1,13,60,000	
4	Rental Spaces								
4.1	Public Amenities				1	Unit	2,00,000	24,00,000	
4.2	Shops				2	Unit	25,000	6,00,000	30,00,000
5	Advertisements						3,00,000	36,00,000	36,00,000
8	Bird Watching Point	Weekend	70.00	1000	70,000	People	250	1,75,00,000	4,60,00,000
		Peak Season	64.00	1000	64,000	People	250	1,60,00,000	
		Week Days	100.00	500	50,000	People	250	1,25,00,000	
9	Workshop & Activities								
9.1	Nature Walk / Birding	-	160.00	30	4,800	People	1,000	48,00,000	
9.2	Workshops (2-3 days)	-	80.00	25	2,000	People	5,000	1,00,00,000	
9.3	Ornithology Workshop (1 Week)	-	26.00	40	1,040	People	10,000	1,04,00,000	2,52,00,000
TOTAL								14,24,62,100	

Photographs and Map:



Proposed IBC Site in Agaram Reserved Forest - Location, Connectivity and Neighbourhood

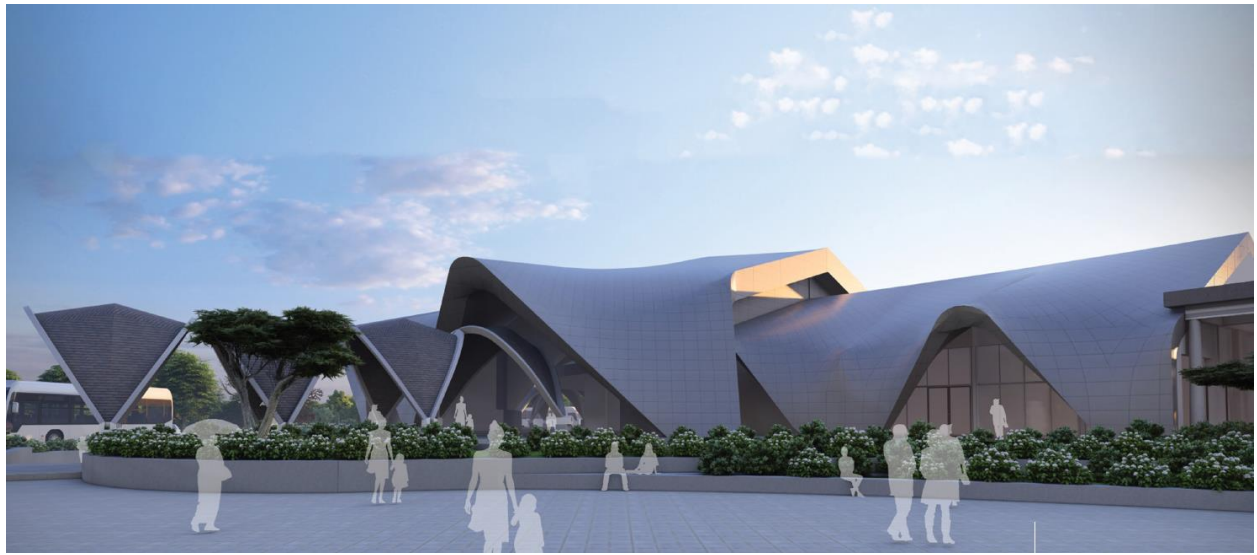


Kazhuvelli Lake (Site 2) – Proposed Bird Watching Site – Location Overview



SITE 1 - AGARAM RESERVED FOREST





SITE 2 - KAZHUVELI LAKE





Conclusion:

The International Bird Centre, located in the Chennai–Pondicherry tourist corridor where more than 1.7 million people visit annually, has the opportunity to appeal to a wide array of visitors. These include individuals from nearby towns, neighbouring states, and even tourists from abroad, representing diverse age groups and backgrounds.

The following user groups are expected to be attracted to the proposed centre:

1. **Domestic Tourists:** a. Youth: Young individuals visiting the centre out of curiosity or interest. b. Families with kids and elders: Families including children and older family members exploring the centre together. c. Couples: Couples enjoying a day excursion.

2. **School and College Students:** Students visiting as part of their educational curriculum or driven by personal interest in birds.

3. **Bird Enthusiasts:** Individuals deeply passionate about avian life, keen on learning and observation.

4. **Forest Department Staff:** Professionals from the forest department visiting for research, training, or conservation purposes.

5. **Researchers:** Scientists, ornithologists, and academics studying birds and their habitats.

6. **International Tourists:** Visitors exploring destinations like Chennai, Pondicherry, or Mahabalipuram, who are attracted to the bird centre during their travels.