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Rs 4 crore project to restore Pallikarani as bird sanctuary

CHENNAI: The city may soon get a mini Vedanthangal, with the Tamil Nadu forest department planning a restoration project for the [Pallikaranai marsh](#) which attracts flocks of migratory birds.

The Rs 4-crore project supported by the [Emergency Tsunami Reconstruction Project](#) (ETRP) aims at conserving 317 hectares of reserve land in Pallikaralai and developing it as a bird sanctuary. Pallikaralai attracts migratory birds like painted storks, cormorants, pelicans and herons, but in the absence of a proper pathway around the marsh, they are not visible to the bird-watcher.

Bunds would be built all around the marsh to protect the ecosystem from encroachers and dumping of waste. The walkway will come on the bund. "This would provide an opportunity for bird watchers and nature enthusiasts to have a better view of the migratory birds which come here for breeding," Nihar Ranjan, district forest officer, [Kancheepuram](#) said.

For better maintenance and surveillance of the marsh, the department also plans to construct a staff quarters in the area. "We are trying to get a corporation land nearby to construct staff quarters. Construction activities are allowed inside the reserved land area only for forestry purposes," he said.

The project also aims to provide alternative employment to those who live near the marsh land and people affected by the tsunami of 2004. "The project will be completed in two years," the official added.

Meanwhile, moves are afoot to remove encroachments on the marsh and declare the marsh, now a reserved land, as reserved forest.

"Declaration of an area as reserved forest is done in two phases. In the first phase, the area is declared as a reserved land under Section 4 of Tamil Nadu Forest Act. After this, forest officials survey the area and evict all encroachments in the area. Once the area is clear of illegal structures, it is declared a reserved forest under Section 14 of Tamil Nadu Forest Act. The 317 hectares land in Pallikarani was declared reserved land in 2007 and the process is now on to declare it as a reserved forest," [Nihar Ranjan](#) said.