

The true costs of saving India's wetlands

The struggle to save coastal wetlands is a global issue. The RSPB have been following examples in the UK as well in Kenya. Plans for a coal-fired power station in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh at Sompeta have been set aside by India's National Environment Appellate Authority. The developer had already started the land clearance before it had permission to do so. In the protests that were sparked as result of the pre-emptive action and the failure to engage local communities, 4 people were killed. It didn't have to get to this stage. The importance of the wetlands involved (the picture is of an area on the same coast) has been made very clear by the BirdLife International Partner in India - the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS). With support from the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) - field surveys and assessments of this and other wetlands along this coastal belt have established the importance of the wetlands for wildlife, which together with their importance of them to the livelihoods of local people; provide a compelling case for protection. Dr Asad Rahmani, BNHS's Director, is determined that good should come out of the tragic turn of events; ?I hope this unfortunate incident will open the eyes of government and that proper legislation will be brought for wetland protection?. The pressure to develop is relentless and energy proposals are inextricably linked to fuelling India's growth. BNHS and other environmentalists are calling for a Wetland Conservation act to avoid the inevitability of further site-based conflict and to deliver effective protection to India's vital wetlands. Meanwhile the wetlands at Sompeta with their spot-billed pelicans (visible in the foreground of the picture) are at risk if an appeal by the developer is successful. By Andre Farrar / RSPB. [Click to read more blogs by Andre.](#)