

# Ramsar sites in India

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**Source:** *The Hindu*

**Manifest pedagogy:** In recent times, environmental geography questions have been increasing at prelims stage. The questions related to Wetlands and related national and international agreements/conservation measures would be an important area of preparation.

**In news:** 10 more wetlands in India have been declared as Ramsar sites

**Placing it in syllabus:** Wetlands

**Static dimensions:**

- Ramsar convention
- Montreaux accord
- Existing Ramsar sites in India

**Current dimensions:** Newly added Ramsar sites

**Content:** The wetlands are land areas covered by water, either temporarily\seasonally or permanently. They play a key role in flood control, water supply and providing food, fibre and raw materials. Such land areas also support migratory birds from colder regions of the world in summers, apart from mangroves that protect coastlines and filter pollutants.

**Ramsar convention:**

- The Ramsar Convention is the **only global treaty that focuses specifically on wetlands.**
- It was **signed in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran.**
- It has **170 nations as signatories.**
- The convention **entered into force in India on 1 February 1982.**

- A contracting party agrees to nominate at least one wetland in its territory to the List of Wetlands of International Importance based on enumerated criteria.
- The contracting parties agree to manage all their wetlands based on the **concept of “wise use.”**
- Wise use **means the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland and allowance of sustainable use for the benefit of people and the environment.**
- The Ramsar Convention works closely with six other organisations known as **International Organization Partners (IOPs)**. These are:

*Birdlife International*

*International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)*

International Water Management Institute (IWMI)

Wetlands International

WWF International

Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT)

- The **2nd of February each year is World Wetlands Day**, marking the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971. **“Wetlands and Biodiversity”** is the theme for 2020.

#### **Montreux accord:**

- The Montreux Record is a **register of wetland sites on the “List of Wetlands of International Importance”**, where **changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring or are likely to occur** as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference.
- It is the principle tool under the Ramsar convention for highlighting wetlands sites in need of priority conservation status.

- It was established in the 4th meeting of Conference of Contracting Parties to Ramsar Convention at Montreux, Switzerland in **1990**.
- **Keoladeo National Park-Rajasthan, Loktak Lake – Manipur** are two wetland sites of India included in Montreux Record.

### ***Benefits of inclusion in Montreux Record:***

- It would assist Contracting Parties in their domestic commitment to resolve the adverse changes;
- Highlighting particularly serious cases would be beneficial at national and/or international level;
- Inclusion on the Record would provide guidance in the allocation of resources available under financial mechanisms.

### **Existing Ramsar sites in India:**

According to India State of Forest Report, 2019, the country has 62,466 wetlands covering 3.83 per cent of its recorded forest area.



A total of **37 sites** in India have been recognised under the convention.



### **Newly added Ramsar sites:**

The new Ramsar sites of India are in three states – Uttar Pradesh (Nawabganj, Parvati Agra, Saman, Samaspur, Sandi and Sarsai Nawar), Maharashtra (Nandur Madhameshwar) and Punjab (Keshopur-Miani, Beas Conservation Reserve and Nangal).

### **In Maharashtra:**

**Nandur Madhmeshwar Bird Sanctuary** is located at Niphad Tehsil

of Nashik District, known as the Bharatpur of Maharashtra. It's **Maharashtra's first Ramsar site**. It lies on the **bank of river Godavari**.

### **In Punjab:**

#### **Keshopur-Miani Community Reserve:**

- The Reserve is a mosaic of natural marshes, aquaculture ponds and agricultural wetlands maintained by the annual rainfall runoff.
- The site is an **example of wise use of a community-managed wetland**, which provides food for people and supports local biodiversity.
- Threatened species present include the **vulnerable Common pochard and the endangered spotted Pond turtle**.

#### **Beas conservation reserve:**

- The Beas Conservation Reserve is a 185-kilometre stretch of the Beas River located primarily in the north-west of the State of Punjab.
- The Reserve **hosts the only known population in India of the endangered Indus river dolphin (Platanista gangetica minor)**.
- Further threatened species include the **endangered Masheer and Hog deer as well as the vulnerable smooth-coated otter**.
- In 2017, a programme was initiated to **re-introduce the critically endangered gharial** with 47 individuals released into the river 30 years after their disappearance.

#### **Nangal wetland:**

- The Nangal wetland draws sustenance from the **Sutlej River** (like Harike and Ropar).
- It is home to resident as well as migratory birds including the red jungle fowl, large Indian parakeet,

Indian cuckoo, wood shrike, yellow-eyed babbler and crested bunting.

- The **migratory bird, Sarus crane has also been sighted** here.
- The wetland also houses threatened species like the **Indian pangolin** and an important habitat for the **smooth Indian otter, the hog deer and the sambar.**

### **Uttar Pradesh:**

#### **Nawabganj:**

- Nawabganj Bird Sanctuary, **renamed in 2015 as Shahid Chandra Shekhar Azad Bird Sanctuary**, is a bird sanctuary located in Unnao district of UP.
- The sanctuary provides protection for 250 **species of migratory birds mostly from CIS (or formerly USSR).**

#### **Parvati Arga:**

- Parvati Arga Bird Sanctuary is situated in the Gonda District.
- It sustains resident birds throughout the year and migratory birds during winter season.
- It **was a part of the Saryu River.**
- As the river changed its flow path these lakes were left as its remains.
- Thus the sanctuary consists of **two lakes, Parvati and Arga**, situated about 1.5 km apart and both are **oxbow lakes.**

#### **Saman:**

- Saman Bird Sanctuary is in the Mainpuri district.
- The sanctuary is **best suited for Bird safari.**

#### **Sandi:**

- Sandi Bird sanctuary is situated in Hardoi district and the **Garra river formerly known as Garun Ganga**, passes

near the sanctuary.

- This sanctuary has been **listed as an “important bird area” by the Bombay Natural History Society.**
- It is **also called “Deher Jheel”** in common parlance.
- In the past, the **rare Siberian white crane *Grus leucogeranus* has been spotted here.**

### **Sarsai Nawar:**

- Sarsai Nawar Wetland is a bird sanctuary in Etawah district.
- It is the **roosting area of the largest flock of Sarus Crane (*Grus antigone*)** in the region.
- The name of the lake is derived from the Sarus (Sarsai from Sarus, and Nawar meaning shallow wetland).
- **Three resident species of storks**, namely the **Painted *Mycteria leucocephala*, Woolly-necked** or White-necked *Ciconia episcopus* and **Black-necked** *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* feed in the lake throughout the year.
- The wetland is unusual in that the **principal vegetation is *Cyperus rotundus* and there is no emergent vegetation.**