

Tso Kar wetland complex

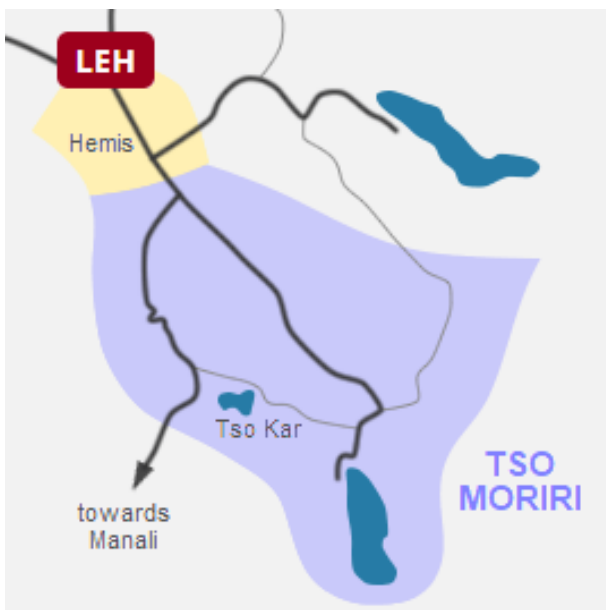
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In news

India has added Tso Kar Wetland Complex in Ladakh as its **42nd Ramsar site**, the second one in the Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh

About Tso Kar Wetland Complex

- India has designated Tso Kar Wetland Complex as its 42nd Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site).
- The wetland is found at more than 4,500 metres above sea level in the Changthang region of Ladakh.
- The complex includes **two connected lakes, the freshwater Startsapuk Tso(438 hectares) and the larger hypersaline Tso Kar(1800 hectares)**; it presents a notable example of two such lakes existing in close proximity.
- The **name Tso Kar refers to the white salt efflorescence on the margins** of the lake caused by the evaporation of the saline waters.



- **Climate:** The local climate is arid, and glacial meltwater is the primary water source for the lakes.

- Biodiversity: The lakes and in particular the presence of fresh water attract biodiversity in a biologically sparse region. **Inhabiting the Site are** numerous threatened species including
 - the **endangered saker falcon** (*Falco cherrug*) and
 - **Asiatic wild dog or dhole** (*Cuon alpinus laniger*), and
 - the vulnerable **snow leopard** (*Panthera uncia*).
- **Stopover ground for migratory birds:** The Site also acts as an important stopover ground for migratory birds along the Central Asian Flyway and is one of the most important breeding areas in India for the **black-necked crane** (*Grus nigricollis*).

Important Bird Area

- The Tso Kar Basin is an A1 Category Important Bird Area (IBA) as per Bird Life International and a key staging site in the Central Asian Flyway.
- The site is also one of the most important breeding areas of the Black-necked Crane (*Grus nigricollis*) in India.

About Ramsar Convention

- Ramsar Convention is an intergovernmental environmental treaty established by UNESCO and came into force in 1975.
- A Ramsar Site is a wetland site designated to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.
- The aim of the Ramsar list is **“to develop and maintain an international network of wetlands which are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits”**.
- The Convention uses a broad definition of wetlands. It includes all lakes and rivers, underground aquifers, swamps and marshes, wet grasslands, peatlands, oases,

estuaries, deltas and tidal flats, mangroves and other coastal areas, coral reefs, and all human-made sites such as fish ponds, rice paddies, reservoirs and salt pans.

- Under the “three pillars” of the Convention, the Contracting Parties commit to:
 1. work towards the wise use of all their wetlands
 2. designate suitable wetlands for the list of Wetlands of International Importance (the “Ramsar List”) and ensure their effective management
 3. cooperate internationally on transboundary wetlands, shared wetland systems and shared species.