

05 – 02 – 2022

News: New Ramsar Sites

- **Khijadiya wildlife sanctuary in Gujarat and Bakhira wildlife sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh** are the latest entrants to the list of Wetlands of International Importance or simply Ramsar Sites.
- With this addition, India now has 49 such sites. The overall area covered by these wetlands accounts for 10, 93,636 hectares, most in South Asia.
- These new sites were announced at the event of World Wetlands Day, celebrated on the commemoration of signing of Ramsar Convention.

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

- Ramsar Convention is an intergovernmental treaty that **provides the framework for national action** and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.
- It is the only global environmental treaty that deals with a particular ecosystem.
- The Treaty was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in **2nd February 1971** and came into force in 1975 (1st February 1982, in India).

- Firstly, it is a requirement for each country, when depositing its instrument of ratification or accession, to designate at least one wetland in its territory for the List of Wetlands of International Importance.
- RAMSAR Secretariat is the headquarters of the IUCN located in Gland, Switzerland.
- World Wetlands Day is celebrated on February second for the commemoration of signing of Ramsar Convention.
- Conference of the contracting parties (COP) is held once in every 3 years.
- India is the country with most Ramsar sites in South Asia with 49 entries (as per February 2022).
- The total area covered by all these sites accounts to 10, 93,636 hectares.
- COP 13: Dubai, United Arab Emirates in 2018 with the theme “Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future”.
- The wetlands in the four extremes of our country are: Northernmost – Wular Lake, Southernmost – Ashtamudi lake, Easternmost – Loktak Lake and Westernmost – Nalsarovar Lake.
- Karnataka is the only South Indian state to not have a Ramsar Site.
- Only 3 states in the Northeast have a Ramsar Site: Assam (Deepor Beel), Tripura (Rudrasagar Lake) and Manipur (Loktak Lake).

Criteria for Selecting a RAMSAR site

- There are 9 criteria to be selected as a RAMSAR Site. Fulfilling any of the criteria will entitle the status of RAMSAR site.
- Criterion 1: If the site is representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic region.
- Criterion 2: if it supports vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species or threatened ecological communities.
- Criterion 3: if it supports populations of plant and/or animal species important for maintaining the biological diversity of a particular biogeographic region.
- Criterion 4: if it supports plant and/or animal species at a critical stage in their life cycles, or provides refuge during adverse conditions.
- Criterion 5: if it regularly supports 20,000 or more water-birds.
- Criterion 6: if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of water-bird.
- Criterion 7: if it supports a significant proportion of indigenous fish subspecies, species or families, life-history stages, species interactions and/or populations that are representative of wetland benefits and/or values and thereby contributes to global biological diversity.

- Criterion 8: if it is an important source of food for fishes, spawning ground, nursery and/or migration path on which fish stocks, either within the wetland or elsewhere, depend.
- Criterion 9: if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of wetland-dependent non-avian animal species.

Latest Ramsar Sites from India

- **Thoi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary and Wadhvana Wetland from Gujarat** (These are the second and third sites from Gujarat after Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary listed in 2012).
- Sultanpur National Park and Bhindhwas Wildlife Sanctuary from Haryana. (These two are the first Ramsar Sites from the state of Haryana).
- Haiderpur Wetland from Uttar Pradesh.
- Khijadiya wildlife sanctuary in Gujarat and Bakhira wildlife sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh in February 2022.

Montreux Record

- 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 maintained as **part of the Ramsar List**.
- Currently **Keoladeo National Park in Rajasthan and Loktak Lake in Manipur** are in the Montreux List.
- **Chilika Lake in Odisha was formerly placed** in the record, but was later removed from it.
- It is a voluntary mechanism to highlight specific wetlands of international importance that are facing immediate challenges.

World Wetlands Day

- World Wetlands day is celebrated on **2nd February of each year by the Ramsar Secretariat** in commemoration of the **adoption of Convention of Wetlands (Ramsar convention)** on 2nd February 1971.
- Each year, the celebrations would be based on a theme. Theme for the year 2022 is “**Wetlands Action for People and Nature**”.

News: Villagers resist sanctuary tag for langur habitat

- Neighbours of **Kakoijana Reserve Forest**, a golden langur habitat in western Assam's Bongaigaon district have opposed a move by the State government to upgrade it to a wildlife sanctuary.
- The **Assam Forest Department** had in January issued a preliminary notification for converting the 19.85 sq. km. patch of forest into the **Kajoijana Bamuni Hill Wildlife Sanctuary**.
- In a memorandum, the villagers opined that, “conventional idea of wildlife sanctuary” be dropped and the reserve forest converted into a community forest resource “using Forest Rights Act, 2006, to ensure community co-managed system of participation for sustainable conservation”.

Golden Langur

- The golden langur, which only became known to science in 1953, is **endemic to western Assam, India, and southern Bhutan**.
- They occupy **moist evergreen and tropical deciduous forests** as well as some riverine areas and savannas.
- IUCN Status: **Endangered**
- CITES Status: **Appendix I**
- Wildlife Protection Act: **Schedule I**

- Chakrashila (Assam) is India's first wildlife sanctuary with Golden Langur as the primary species. It is also found in Manas and Raimona National Parks in Assam.
- Recently, Golden Langurs became extinct in Guwahati's Umananda Island.
- A study found that they practice infanticide and abortion.
- Golden Langur Conservation Breeding Programme has been implemented in Assam. It was begun in 1998 as an extension of the Indo – US Primate project to address the plight of golden langur and its habitat in western Assam.