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News: Assam's Deepor Beel soars above garbage mounds; survey shows more birds in wetlands

- Deepor Beel, Assam's only Ramsar site, which is troubled by development projects and urban waste, has 30 more waterfowl species than the total counted in 2022, a bird survey conducted on January 4 has found.
- Altogether 26,747 birds belonging to 96 species were recorded during the count at the wetland on the southwestern edge of Guwahati.
- The recent exercise was conducted by the Guwahati Wildlife Division of the Assam Forest Department.

Dipor Bil

- Dipor Bil, also spelt Deepor Beel (Bil means "lake" in the local Assamese language), is located to the south-west of Guwahati city, in Kamrup Metropolitan district of **Assam, India**.
- It is a permanent freshwater lake, in **a former channel of the Brahmaputra River**, to the south of the main river.

- It is of great biological importance and also essential as the **only major storm water storage basin for the city of Guwahati** and is the **only Ramsar site in Assam and an Important Bird Area (IBA)**.
- The **beel is a staging site on migratory flyways** and some of **the largest concentrations of aquatic birds in Assam** can be seen, especially in winter.
- Some **globally threatened birds are supported**, including the spot-billed pelican, lesser and greater adjutant stork, and Baer's pochard.
- The 50 fish species present provide livelihoods for a number of surrounding villages, and *Nymphaea* nuts and flowers, as well as ornamental fish, medicinal plants, and seeds of the giant water lily *Euryale ferox* provide major revenue sources in local markets; orchids of commercial value are found in the neighboring forest.
- Potential threats include over fishing and hunting pressure upon waterbirds, pollution from pesticides and fertilizers, and infestation by water hyacinth.
- A **proposal to create a sewage canal from the city directly to the beel is considered to be disastrous** in its potential effects.
- The Dipor Bil is reported to provide, directly or indirectly, its natural resources for the livelihood of fourteen indigenous villages (1,200 families) located in its precincts.

- Recently, the Kamrup (Metropolitan) district administration has prohibited community fishing at Deepor Beel.
- Recently, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change notified the eco sensitive zone of Deepor Beel Wildlife Sanctuary.

Eco – Sensitive Zone

- These are protected areas that act as “shock absorbers”. They also act as transition zones.
- They are governed by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- There are no acts to govern the zone as land is a state subject.
- Instead, they are regulated by guidelines framed by MoEFCC.