

11– 02 – 2024

News: Ramsar sites

- Recently, the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** announced that on the eve of World Wetlands Day, 2024, India has increased its tally of Ramsar sites to 80 from the existing 75 by designating five more wetlands as Ramsar sites.
- Three of these sites, **Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve, Aghanashini Estuary and Magadi Kere Conservation Reserve** are located in Karnataka whereas two, **Karaivetti Bird Sanctuary and Longwood Shola Reserve Forest** are in Tamil Nadu.
- **Tamil Nadu continues to have the maximum number of Ramsar Sites (16 sites) followed by Uttar Pradesh (10 sites).**

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).
- As per the resolution adopted on 30th August 2021, from 2nd February 2022, the Wetlands day is considered as United Nations International Day.
- 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 80 entries** (as per February 2023).
- The **total area covered** by all these sites accounts to **11,000 hectares** or 10 of total wetland area in the country — across 18 States.
- The countries with the most Ramsar Sites are the **United Kingdom (175) and Mexico (142)**, as per the Ramsar List. **Bolivia has the largest area** with 148,000 sq km under the Convention protection.

- The wetlands in the four extremes of our country are: **Northernmost – Wular Lake**, **Southernmost – Vembannur Wetland Complex**, **Easternmost – Loktak Lake** and **Westernmost – Nalsarovar Lake**.
- **Largest** Ramsar site in India is **Sunderbans** in West Bengal and **Smallest** is **Vembannur Wetland Complex** in Tamil Nadu.
- Only 4 states in the Northeast have a Ramsar Site: **Assam** (Deepor Beel), **Tripura** (Rudrasagar Lake), **Manipur** (Loktak Lake) and Mizoram (Pala Wetlands).
- States with **most number of such protected wetlands** are and Tamil Nadu with **16 sites** followed by Uttar Pradesh, with a number of 10 Ramsar Sites.

Wetlands

- Wetlands are **ecosystems saturated with water, either seasonally or permanently**. They include **mangroves, marshes, rivers, lakes, deltas, floodplains and flooded forests, rice-fields, coral reefs, marine areas no deeper than 6 meters at low tide**, as well as **human-made wetlands** such as waste-water treatment ponds and reservoirs.

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.