

**23– 07 – 2024**

**News: Ramsar Sites**

- Recently, the **Nagi and Nakti Bird Sanctuaries in Bihar** have been recognised as **wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.**

**Nagi and Nakti Bird Sanctuaries**

- Nagi and Nakti Bird Sanctuaries, **situated in Bihar, are built on human-made wetlands primarily developed for irrigation through the construction of the Nakti Dam.**
- Both sanctuaries were **designated as Bird Sanctuaries in 1984 due to their importance as wintering habitats for migratory species.**
- The catchment area **features dry deciduous forests surrounded by hills.**

**Flora and Fauna**

- These **wetlands provide habitats for over 150 species of birds, mammals, fish, aquatic plants, reptiles, and amphibians.**
- They host **globally threatened species such as the endangered Indian elephant and the vulnerable native catfish.**

- According to the Asiatic Waterbird Census 2023, the **Nakti Bird Sanctuary** reported 7,844 birds, the highest in the survey, followed by the **Nagi Bird Sanctuary** with 6,938 birds.

## **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 **2<sup>nd</sup> February 1971** and came into force in 1975 (1<sup>st</sup> February 1982, in India).
- As per the resolution adopted on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2021, from 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 82 entries** (as per July 2024).
- 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 – Tso – Kar in Ladakh, 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 **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.