

Ramsar Sites in India

Why in News?

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, **Karavetti Bird Sanctuary** and **Longwood Shola Reserve Forest** are in **Tamilnadu**.
- **Tamil Nadu** continues to have the maximum number of **Ramsar Sites** (16 sites) followed by **Uttar Pradesh** (10 sites).

What is the Ramsar Convention?

- It is an intergovernmental treaty, adopted on **2nd February 1971**, in the **Iranian city of Ramsar**, on the southern shore of the **Caspian Sea**.
 - In India, it came into force on **1st February 1982**, under which **wetlands of international importance** are declared as **Ramsar sites**.
- **World Wetlands Day (WWD):**
 - It is celebrated across the globe to commemorate the adoption of this international agreement on wetlands on **2nd February 1971**.
 - The theme of **World Wetland Day, 2024** is ‘**Wetlands and Human Wellbeing**’ which underscores the critical role wetlands play in enhancing our lives.
 - It highlights how wetlands contribute to **flood protection, clean water, biodiversity** and **recreational opportunities**, all of which are essential for human health and prosperity.

What are the Characteristics of the Newly Designated Ramsar Sites?

- **Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve (Karnataka):**
 - It is a **human-made village irrigation tank** built centuries back and is spread over an area of **244.04 acres** adjoining the **Ankasamudra village**.
- **Aghanashini Estuary (Karnataka):**
 - It is spread over an area of **4801 ha**, and is formed at the confluence of the Aghanashini River with the Arabian Sea.
 - The **brackish water** of the estuary provides diverse ecosystem services including **flood** and **erosion risk mitigation, biodiversity conservation** and **livelihood support**.
 - The wetland also provides livelihoods by supporting **fishing, agriculture, collection of edible bivalves** and crabs, **shrimp aquaculture, traditional fish farming** in the **estuarine rice fields (locally known as Gazni rice fields)** and salt production.
 - The **mangroves** bordering the estuary help to protect the shores against **storms** and **cyclones**.

- **Magadi Kere Conservation Reserve (Karnataka):**
 - It is a human-made **wetland** with an area of nearly **50 hectares** which was constructed to **store rainwater** for irrigation purposes.
 - The wetland harbors two vulnerable species, namely **Common pochard** (*Aythya ferina*) and **River tern** (*Sterna aurantia*) and **four near-threatened species** namely **Oriental Darter** (*Anhinga melanogaster*), **Black-headed Ibis** (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*), **Woolly-necked Stork** (*Ciconia episcopus*) and **Painted Stork** (*Mycteria leucocephala*).
 - It is also one of the largest wintering grounds for the **Bar-headed goose** (*Anser indicus*) in Southern India. It has been declared globally as an **Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA)**.
- **Karaivetti Bird Sanctuary (Tamil Nadu):**
 - Water from the wetland is utilized by the villagers for cultivating agricultural crops such as **paddy, sugar cane, cotton, corn**, and **split red gram**.
 - About 198 species of birds have been recorded here; some of the important visitors being the **Bar headed Goose, Pin-tailed duck, Garganey, Northern Shoveler, Common Pochard, Eurasian Wigeon, Common teal and Cotton teal**.
- **Longwood Shola Reserve Forest (Tamil Nadu):**
 - It derives its name from the Tamil word, "Solai", which means a **tropical rainforest**.
 - The 'Sholas' are found in the upper reaches of the **Nilgiris, Anamalais, Palni hills, Kalakadu, Mundanthurai and Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu**.
 - These forested wetlands serve as habitats for the globally endangered **Black-chinned Nilgiri Laughing thrush** (*Strophocincla cachinnans*), **Nilgiri Blue Robin** (*Myiomela major*), and **vulnerable Nilgiri Wood-pigeon** (*Columba elphinstonii*).

What are the Other Initiative Taken for Conservation of Wetland?

- **Global Level:**

Montreux Record

World Wetlands Day

National Level:

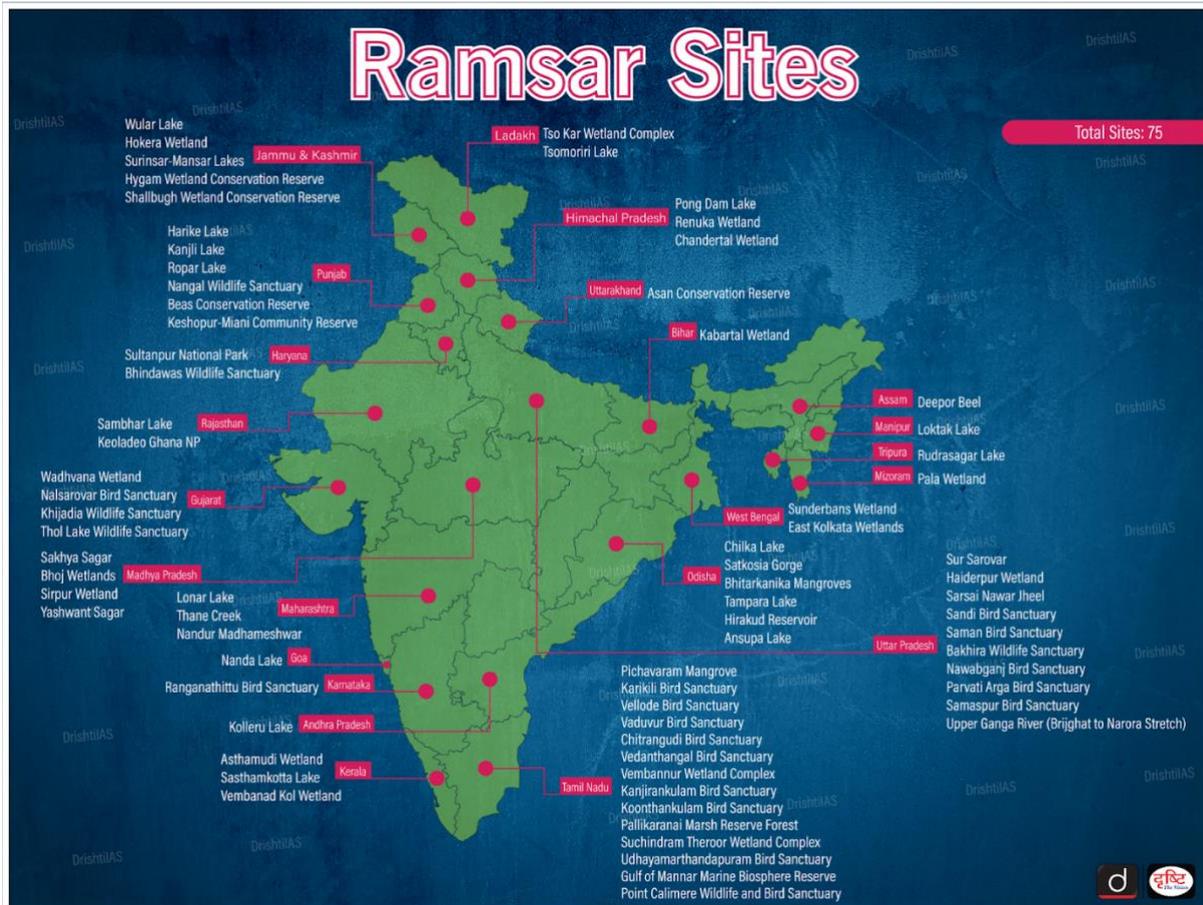
Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017.

National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA)

Amrit Dharohar Capacity Building Scheme

National Wetland Conservation Programme (NWCP):

It was launched in 1985, to tackle threats to vulnerable wetland ecosystems and enhance their conservation.



Q. If a wetland of international importance is brought under the ‘Montreux Record’, what does it imply? (2014)

(a) Changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring or are likely to occur in the wetland as a result of human interference.

(b) The country in which the wetland is located should enact a law to prohibit any human activity within five kilometers from the edge of the wetland.

(c) The survival of the wetland depends on the cultural practices and traditions of certain communities living in its vicinity and therefore the cultural diversity therein should not be destroyed.

(d) It is given the status of ‘World Heritage Site.’

Ans: (a)

Exp:

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 interferences. It is maintained as part of the Ramsar List.

The Convention on Wetlands, called the Ramsar Convention, is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. The Convention was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and came into force in 1975.