



# CURRENT AFFAIRS



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## RAMSAR SITES

### WHY IN THE NEWS?

The addition of four more wetlands to the Ramsar Convention list is a significant milestone for environmental conservation in India. This brings the total number of Ramsar sites in the country to 89, showcasing India's growing commitment to preserving its rich natural heritage. These wetlands are now officially recognized for their ecological importance and will be protected under international frameworks aimed at conservation and sustainable development. The announcement, made ahead of World Wetlands Day on February 2, further emphasizes the importance of wetland ecosystems and their role in biodiversity, climate regulation, and supporting local communities.

### DESCRIPTION OF RECENTLY ADDED WETLAND:

Wetland Name	State	River	Features	Flora	Fauna
<b>Sakkarakottai Bird Sanctuary</b>	<b>Tamil Nadu</b>	Not specified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Established for avifauna and wetland ecosystems conservation.</li><li>– Spreads over 230.490 hectares.</li></ul>	Neem, Palmyra Palm, Gloriosa superba	Lion-tailed Macaque, Giant Squirrel, Migratory Birds
<b>Therthangal Bird Sanctuary</b>	<b>Tamil Nadu</b>	Not specified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Established to conserve avian species and wetland habitats.</li><li>– Covers 29.29 hectares.</li><li>– Popular during the migratory season (Oct-Mar).</li></ul>	Aponogeton nutans, Hydrilla verticillata, Tamarindus indica	Various Migratory Birds
<b>Khecheopalri Wetland</b>	<b>Sikkim</b>	Not specified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Sacred lake for Buddhists and Hindus, believed to</li></ul>	Not specified	House Swifts, Fishing Eagles, Brahminy

Wetland Name	State	River	Features	Flora	Fauna
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fulfil wishes.</li> <li>– Part of the Demazong valley and Buddhist pilgrimage.</li> <li>– Birds prevent leaves from floating on the lake.</li> </ul>		Kites
<b>Udhw Lake</b>	<b>Jharkhand</b>	Ganga River Stream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Comprises two water bodies: Pataura Jheel (155 ha) and Brahma Jamalpur Jheel (410 ha).</li> <li>– Rich in avian biodiversity, attracting migratory birds.</li> </ul>	Not specified	Migratory Birds, Resident Birds, Nesting and Roosting Birds



### WHAT IS RAMSAR CONVENTION?

The Ramsar Convention is an international treaty aimed at the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands worldwide. It was adopted in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran. Hence its name, and it came into force in 1975. The

Convention recognizes wetlands as vital ecosystems that provide essential services to both the environment and human societies, such as water purification, flood control, carbon sequestration, and habitat for wildlife.

#### KEY FEATURES OF RAMSAR SITE:

- 1. International Importance:** Ramsar sites are wetlands designated for their global ecological, botanical, zoological, or hydrological importance.
- 2. Conservation Commitment:** Countries must protect and conserve these wetlands under the Ramsar Convention, ensuring sustainable management and preservation of biodiversity.
- 3. Biodiversity:** Ramsar sites are critical for supporting diverse wildlife, including rare, endangered, or migratory species of birds, fish, and other animals.
- 4. Ecosystem Services:** Wetlands provide essential services like water purification, flood control, carbon storage, and soil fertility.
- 5. Sustainable Use:** The Ramsar Convention promotes the “wise use” of wetlands, meaning they should be used in a way that ensures their ecological functions are maintained for the benefit of current and future generations.
- 6. Special Designation Criteria:** Wetlands are designated as Ramsar sites based on specific criteria, such as their importance for biodiversity, waterfowl populations, or hydrological functions.
- 7. National and International Cooperation:** The Convention encourages collaboration between countries, particularly for transboundary wetlands and migratory species.
- 8. Protection of Waterfowl:** Ramsar sites are often vital for migratory birds and waterfowl, offering breeding, feeding, and resting grounds along migratory routes.
- 9. Global Network:** Ramsar sites form a global network of protected wetlands, with over 2,500 sites in more than 170 countries.
- 10. Monitoring and Reporting:** Countries are required to report on the condition of their Ramsar sites and take necessary action to address threats to these ecosystems.

#### INDIA'S ENGAGEMENT WITH THE RAMSAR CONVENTIONS:

- 1. Accession:** India became a party to the Ramsar Convention on February 1, 1982.
- 2. Number of Ramsar Sites:** India has 89 Ramsar sites, ranking high in Asia.
- 3. Important Sites:** Key sites include Chilika Lake and Keoladeo National Park.
- 4. Conservation Efforts:** Active management plans ensure the ecological integrity of Ramsar sites.
- 5. Recent Developments:** India continues to add new sites, demonstrating its commitment to wetland conservation.
- 6. Regional and Global Role:** India cooperates on transboundary wetlands and migratory species protection.
- 7. Ecotourism and Livelihoods:** Ramsar sites support ecotourism and provide sustainable livelihoods to local communities.
- 8. Awareness and Education:** India promotes wetland awareness through national campaigns and community outreach.

#### MONTREUX RECORD AND THE RAMSAR ADVISORY MISSION:

Aspect	Details
Montreux Record	A register of Ramsar sites where ecological character changes have occurred or are likely due to human interference, pollution, or technological developments.
Established	1990 through Recommendation 4.8 of the Ramsar Conference.

Aspect	Details
<b>Purpose</b>	To identify sites needing priority conservation attention due to ecological changes and to facilitate national and international efforts for restoration.
<b>Inclusion Criteria</b>	Sites can be included if national commitment, international attention, or resources are needed to address the ecological issues.
<b>Addition/Removal of Sites</b>	Sites are added or removed with the approval of the Contracting Parties (countries where the sites are located).
<b>Current Number of Sites</b>	As of September 2007, 59 sites were listed; 23 sites were removed after successful conservation efforts.
<b>Ramsar Advisory Mission (RAM)</b>	A technical assistance mechanism to help countries manage Ramsar sites facing ecological threats.
<b>Purpose of RAM</b>	To provide expert advice and support to countries on addressing threats to wetlands, especially those on the Montreux Record.
<b>Process</b>	A team of experts visits the site to assess the situation and propose measures for ecological restoration. Recommendations are made to guide conservation efforts.
<b>Post-Mission</b>	The team's report is published, and successful interventions may lead to the removal of a site from the Montreux Record.
<b>Collaboration</b>	Missions often involve collaboration with organizations like the World Heritage Convention, IUCN, and others.
<b>Number of Missions</b>	Between 1988-2007, 58 sites received Ramsar Advisory Missions, with the growing involvement of multi-disciplinary teams.

#### CONCLUSION:

The addition of four new wetlands to the Ramsar Convention list marks a significant step in India's commitment to wetland conservation, bringing the total to 89 sites. This international recognition ensures these ecosystems will be protected and sustainably managed. India's engagement with the Ramsar Convention, through initiatives like the Montreux Record and Ramsar Advisory Missions, helps address ecological threats and improve conservation efforts. These efforts highlight India's role in balancing development and ecological preservation, contributing to global environmental health, biodiversity, and the well-being of local communities.

#### PRELIMS QUESTIONS:

Q. Consider the following Pairs:

S.NO	Ramsar site	State
1	Sakkarakottai Bird Sanctuary	Tamil Nadu

S.NO	Ramsar site	State
2	Khecheopalri Wetland	Jharkhand
3	Udhwa Lake	Sikkim

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

Answer: A

**MAINS QUESTIONS:**

Q. Discuss the significance of India's recent addition of four wetlands to the Ramsar Convention List. How do these efforts reflect India's commitment to environmental conservation? (250 words, 15 marks)

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