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RAMSAR SITES in INDIA

Ramsar sites are wetlands designated as internationally important under the Ramsar Convention, an environmental treaty signed in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran, to promote wetland conservation and sustainable use. These sites support biodiversity, provide habitats for species, and offer ecosystem services like water purification and flood control. Globally, there are over 2,500 Ramsar sites across 172 countries, covering more than 2.5 million square kilometers.

Ramsar Sites in India (2025)

As of June 2025, India has 91 Ramsar sites, the highest in Asia and third globally after the United Kingdom (176) and Mexico (144), covering approximately 1,359,434 hectares. Tamil Nadu leads with 20 sites, followed by Uttar Pradesh with 10.

Key Details:

- First Ramsar Sites in India: Chilika Lake (Odisha) and Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan), designated in 1981.
- Largest Ramsar Site: Sundarban Wetland (West Bengal), covering 423,000 hectares.
- Smallest Ramsar Site: Renuka Wetland (Himachal Pradesh), covering 20 hectares.

Recent Additions (2025):

February 2025: Sakkarakottai Bird Sanctuary and Therthangal Bird Sanctuary (Tamil Nadu), Khecheopalri Wetland (Sikkim), Udhwa Lake (Jharkhand).

June 2025: Khichan and Menar (Rajasthan).

Montreux Record: Tracks Ramsar sites with ecological changes due to human interference or pollution. Indian sites on the record: Keoladeo National Park and Loktak Lake.

State-Wise Highlights:

- Tamil Nadu (20 sites): Includes Nanjarayan Bird Sanctuary, Kazhuveli Sanctuary, Sakkarakottai, and Therthangal.
- Uttar Pradesh (10 sites): Includes Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary and Haiderpur Wetland.
- Other Notable States: Rajasthan, Odisha, and Kerala have significant sites like Sambhar Lake, Chilika Lake, and Vembanad-Kol Wetland.

Significance:

Ecological Role: Support migratory birds (e.g., Central Asian Flyway), conserve biodiversity, and regulate climate and floods.

Threats: Vegetation loss, salinization, pollution, invasive species, and development pressures.

Conservation Efforts: India's Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, exclude river channels and paddy fields from wetland definitions. The Centre for Wetland Conservation & Management was established in 2021.

Global Context:

- First Global Ramsar Site: Cobourg Peninsula, Australia (1974).
- Largest Global Sites: Rio Negro (Brazil), Ngiri-Tumba-Maindombe (Democratic Republic of Congo), Queen Maud Gulf (Canada).

Convention Partners: Collaborates with IUCN, Birdlife International, and Wetlands International.



	NAME	Location	Designated	Area (km ²)	Description
1	ASHTAMUDI WETLAND	Kerala	19 August 2002	614	A natural backwater in Kollam district. River Kallada and Pallichal drains into it. It forms an estuary with Sea at Neendakara which is a famous fishing harbour in Kerala. National Waterway 3 passes through it. Most tastiest backwater fish in kerala , the Karimeen of kanjiracode Kayal is from Ashtamudi Lake.
2	BHITARKANIKA MANGROVES	Orissa	19 August 2002	650	In 1975, an area of 672 km ² was declared the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary. The core area of the sanctuary, with an area of 145 km ² , was declared Bhitarkanika National Park in September 1998. Gahirmatha Marine Wildlife Sanctuary, which bounds the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary to the east, was created in September 1997, and encompasses Gahirmatha Beach and an adjacent portion of the Bay of Bengal. Bhitarkanika Mangroves were designated a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance in 2002. It is also famous for its salt water crocodiles and Olive ridley sea turtle.
3	BHOJ WETLAND	Madhya Pradesh	19 August 2002	32	The Bhoj Wetland consists of two lakes located in the city of Bhopal, the capital of the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. The two lakes are the Bhojtal and the Lower Lake, which lie to the west of the city center. It is a manmade reservoir. A total of more than 20,000 birds are observed annually. Bhoj Wetland was recognized as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention of 1971 in 2002. The Upper Lake acts as the lifeline of the city supplying 40% of its potable water. White storks, black-necked storks, bar-headed geese, spoonbills, etc., that have been rare sightings in the past, have started appearing. A recent phenomenon is the gathering of 100-120 sarus cranes in the lake. The largest bird of India, the sarus crane (<i>Grus antigone</i>) is known for its size, majestic flight and lifetime pairing.
4	CHANDRA TAAL	Himachal Pradesh	8 November 2005	.49	
5	CHILIKA LAKE	Orissa	1 October 1981	1165	Chilka Lake (Chilika Lake) is a brackish water lagoon, spread over the Puri, Khurda and Ganjam districts of Odisha state on the east coast of India, at the mouth of the Daya

					River, flowing into the Bay of Bengal, covering an area of over 1,100 km². It is the largest coastal lagoon in India and the second largest lagoon in the world. The lagoon hosts over 160 species of birds in the peak migratory season. Birds from as far as the Caspian Sea, Lake Baikal, Aral Sea and other remote parts of Russia, Kirghiz steppes of Mongolia, Central and southeast Asia, Ladakh and Himalayas come here. These birds travel great distances; migratory birds probably follow much longer routes than the straight lines, possibly up to 12,000 km, to reach Chilika Lake. In 1981, Chilika Lake was designated the first Indian wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. In November 2002, the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award was presented to the Chilika Development Authority for "outstanding achievements in the field of restoration and wise use of wetlands and effective participation of local communities in these activities. White bellied sea eagles, greylag geese, purple moorhen, jacana, flamingos, egrets, gray and purple herons, Indian roller, storks, white ibis, spoonbills, brahminy ducks, shovellers, pintails, and more. Nalbana Island is the core area of the Ramsar designated wetlands of Chilika Lake. Nalbana was notified in 1987 and declared a bird sanctuary in 1973 under the Wildlife Protection Act. The Irrawaddy dolphin (<i>Orcaella brevirostris</i>) is the flagship species of Chilika lake. Chilka is home to the only known population of Irrawaddy dolphins in India[32] and one of only two lagoons in the world that are home to this species.[30] It is classified as critically endangered, in five of the six other places it is known to live.
6	DEEPOR BEEL	Assam	19 August 2002	40	
7	EAST CALCUTTA WETLANDS	West Bengal	19 August 2002	125	
8	HARIKE WETLAND	Punjab	23 March 1990	41	A shallow water reservoir with thirteen islands, at the confluence of two rivers. Dense floating vegetation covers 70% of the lake. An important site for breeding, wintering and staging birds, supporting over 200,000 Anatidae (ducks, geese, swans, etc.) during migration. The entire lake is leased on an annual basis to commercial fishery organizations.

9	HOKERA WETLAND	Jammu and Kashmir	8 November 2005	13.75	Located in the northwest Himalayan biogeographic province of Kashmir, back of the snow-draped Pir Panchal (1,584m asl.), Hokera wetland is only 10 km from scenic paradise of Srinagar. A natural perennial wetland contiguous to the Jhelum basin, it is the only site with remaining reedbeds of Kashmir and pathway of 68 waterfowl species like Large Egret, Great Crested Grebe, Little Cormorant, Common Shelduck, Tufted Duck and endangered White-eyed Pochard, coming from Siberia, China, Central Asia, and Northern Europe. It is an important source of food, spawning ground and nursery for fishes, besides offering feeding and breeding ground to a variety of water birds. Typical marshy vegetation complexes inhabit like Typha, Phragmites, Eleocharis, Trapa, and Nymphoides species ranging from shallow water to open water aquatic flora. Sustainable exploitation of fish, fodder and fuel is significant, despite water withdrawals since 1999. Potential threats include recent housing facilities, littered garbage, and demand for increasing tourist facilities.
10	KANJLI WETLAND	Punjab	22 January 2002	1.83	A permanent stream, the Kali Bein, converted by construction of a small barrage in 1870 into a water storage area for irrigation purposes. The site fulfils Criteria 3 because of its importance in supporting a considerable diversity of aquatic, mesophytic, and terrestrial flora and fauna in the biogeographical region, and acts also as a key regulator of groundwater discharge and recharge with the seasons. By this means and by direct abstraction of water for irrigation by the local population, the site plays a crucial role in the agriculture which predominates on the surrounding fertile plain, with fewer pressures upon water supplies than elsewhere in the Punjab. The invasive water hyacinth is present and must be removed from time to time; increasing pollution levels, deforestation in the catchment area, and excessive grazing are seen as potential threats. The stream is considered to be the most significant in the state from the religious point of view, as it is associated with the first guru of the Sikhs, Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. The stream itself and surrounding marsh is under provincial ownership and surrounding areas privately owned. The site is a center for environmental tourism and picnicking.
11	KEOLADEO NATIONAL PARK	Rajasthan	1 October 1981	28.73	A complex of ten artificial, seasonal lagoons, varying in size, situated in a densely populated region. Vegetation is a mosaic of scrub and open grassland that provides habitat for breeding, wintering and staging migratory birds. Also supported are five

					species of ungulates, four species of cats, and two species of primates, as well as diverse plants, fish and reptiles. The canal provides water for agriculture and domestic consumption. Cattle and water buffalo graze on the site. A field research station exists. Placed on the Montreux Record in 1990 due to "water shortage and an unbalanced grazing regime". Additionally, the invasive growth of the grass <i>Paspalum distichum</i> has changed the ecological character of large areas of the site, reducing its suitability for certain waterbird species, notably the Siberian crane.
12	KOLLERU LAKE	Andhra Pradesh	19 August 2002	901	bird sanctuary
13	LOKTAK LAKE	Manipur	23 March 1990	266	Loktak Lake is the largest freshwater lake in the north-eastern region of the country, which is famous for the phumdis (heterogeneous mass of vegetation, soil, and organic matters at various stages of decomposition) floating over it. Keibul Lamjao the only floating national park in the world floats over it. It is located near Moirang, Bishnupur district in Manipur state, India. [1] The etymology of Loktak is Lok = "stream" and tak = "the end". [2] The Keibul Lamjao National Park, which is the last natural refuge of the endangered "Sangai" or Manipur brow-antlered deer (' <i>Cervus eldi eldi</i> '), one of three subspecies of Eld's deer, covering an area of 40 km ² (15 sq mi), is situated in the southeastern shores of this lake and is the largest of all the phumdis in the lake. [3][4] This place is a global tourist destination. 'Sendra tourist hub' (a small hillock) is located at moirang ~58kms from the heart of the city.
14	NALSAROVAR BIRD SANCTUARY	Gujarat	24 September 2012	123	A natural freshwater lake (a relict sea) that is the largest natural wetland in the Thar Desert Biogeographic Province and represents a dynamic environment with salinity and depth varying depending on rainfall. The area is home to 210 species of birds, with an average 174,128 individuals recorded there during the winter and 50,000 in the summer. It is an important stopover site within the Central Asia Flyway, with globally threatened species such as the critically endangered Sociable Lapwing (<i>Vanelus gregarius</i>) and the vulnerable Marbled Teal (<i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>) stopping over at the site during migration, while the vulnerable Sarus Crane (<i>Grus antigone</i>) takes refuge there during summer when other water bodies are dry. The wetland is also a lifeline for a satellite

					population of the endangered Indian Wild Ass (<i>Equus hemionus khur</i>) which uses this area in the dry season. Local communities heavily rely on the lake as it provides them with a source of drinking water and water for irrigation, as well as an important source of income from fishing for Catla fish (<i>Catla Catla</i>) and Rohu (<i>Labeo rohita</i>). An average of 75,000 tourists visit the wetland annually.
15	POINT CALIMERE WILDLIFE AND BIRD SANCTUARY	Tamil Nadu	19 August 2002	385	One of the last remnants of Dry Evergreen Forests. Habitat: Dry Evergreen Forests, Mangrove & Wetlands. Winter Migrants : Spoon Billed Sandpiper, Greater Flamingos. Threats: Agricultural & Shrimp farm runoff => High concentration of DDT & HCH in their tissue
16	PONG DAM LAKE	Himachal Pradesh	19 August 2002	156.62	A water storage reservoir created in 1975 on the Beas River in the low foothills of the Himalaya on the northern edge of the Indo-Gangetic plain. The RIS notes that "at a time when wetlands in northern India are getting reduced due to extensive drainage and reclamation, the avian habitats formed by the creation of the Pong Dam assume a great significance" - given the site's location on the trans-Himalayan flyway, more than 220 bird species have been identified, with 54 species of waterfowl. Hydrological values include monsoon-season flood prevention, both in the surroundings and downstream due to water regulation, groundwater recharge, silt trapping and prevention of soil erosion; electricity is generated for this and neighboring states, and irrigation water is being channeled to fertile areas of the Punjab and Rajasthan deserts. Low-yield subsistence fishing existed prior to impoundment, but since, a lucrative fishery has grown up, with 27 fish species and a yield increasing markedly each year - some 1800 fishermen now have direct employment and 1000 families benefit indirectly. A nature conservation education centre is found on the island of Ransar or Ramsar (sic). Recent management strategies have shifted away from law enforcement and use restrictions towards more participatory approaches and community awareness, and the site is well suited to "community-based ecotourism".

17	RENUKA LAKE	Himachal Pradesh	8 November 2005	.2	A natural wetland with freshwater springs and inland subterranean karst formations, fed by a small stream flowing from the lower Himalayan out to the Giri river. The lake is home to at least 443 species of fauna and 19 species of ichthyofauna representative of lacustrine ecosystems like Puntius, Labeo, Rasbora, Channa. Prominent vegetation ranges from dry deciduous like Shorea Robusta, Terminalia tomentosa, Dalbergia sissoo to hydrophytes. There are 103 species of birds of which 66 are residents, e.g. Crimson-breasted barbet, Mayna, Bulbul, Pheasants, Egrets, Herons, Mallards and Lapwing. Among ungulates Sambhar, Barking deer and Ghorals are also abundant in the area. The lake has high religious significance and is named after the mother of Hindu sage Parshuram, and is thus visited by thousands of pilgrims and tourists. Conservation measures so far include community awareness, and prevention of silt influx from eroded slopes and 50 ha. of massive plantation in the catchment. The site is managed by the Shimla Forest Department, Himachal Pradesh
18	ROPAR_WETLAND	Punjab	22 January 2002	13.65	A humanmade wetland of lake and river formed by the 1952 construction of a barrage for diversion of water from the Sutlej River for drinking and irrigation supplies. The site is an important breeding place for the nationally protected Smooth Indian Otter, Hog Deer, Sambar, and several reptiles, and the endangered Indian Pangolin (Manis crassicaudata) is thought to be present. Some 35 species of fish play an important role in the food chain, and about 150 species of local and migratory birds are supported. Local fisheries are economically significant, and wheat, rice, sugar cane, and sorghum are cultivated in the surrounding area. Deforested local hills leading to siltation, and increasing industrialization causing an inflow of pollutants, are potential threats, and invasive weeds are a further cause for concern. Nature lovers, birdwatchers, swimmers and boaters visit the site in considerable numbers.
19	RUDRASAGAR LAKE	Tripura	8 November 2005	2.4	
20	SAMBHAR LAKE	Rajasthan	23 March 1990	240	The Sambhar Salt Lake, India's largest inland salt lake. Sambhar has been designated as a Ramsar site (recognized wetland of international importance) because the wetland is a



					key wintering area for tens of thousands of flamingos and other birds that migrate from northern Asia. The specialized algae and bacteria growing in the lake provide striking water colours and support the lake ecology that, in turn, sustains the migrating waterfowl. There is other wildlife in the nearby forests, where Nilgai move freely along with deer and foxes.
21	SASTHAMKOTTA LAKE	Kerala	19 August 2002	3.73	It is the largest freshwater lake in Kerala, situated in Kollam district. River Kallada had a unique replenishing system through a bar of paddy field which has now disappeared due to indiscriminate sand and clay mining. The lake is now depleting due to destruction of replenishing mechanism.
22	SURINSAR-MANSAR LAKES	Jammu and Kashmir	8 November 2005	3.5	
23	TSOMORIRI	Jammu and Kashmir	19 August 2002	120	A freshwater to brackish lake lying at 4,595m above sea level, with wet meadows and borax-laden wetlands along the shores. The site is said to represent the only breeding ground outside of China for one of the most endangered cranes, the Black-necked crane (<i>Grus nigricollis</i>), and the only breeding ground for Bar-headed geese in India. The Great Tibetan Sheep or Argali (<i>Ovis ammon hodgsoni</i>) and Tibetan Wild Ass (<i>Equus kiang</i>) are endemic to the Tibetan plateau, of which the Changthang is the westernmost part. The barley fields at Korzok have been described as the highest cultivated land in the world. With no outflow, evaporation in the arid steppe conditions causes varying levels of salinity. Ancient trade routes and now major trekking routes pass the site. The 400-year-old Korzok monastery attracts many tourists, and the wetland is considered sacred by local Buddhist communities and the water is not used by them. The local community dedicated Tsomoriri as a WWF Sacred Gift for the Living Planet in recognition of WWF-India's project work there. The rapidly growing attraction of the recently opened area to western tourists (currently 2500 per summer) as an "unspoilt destination" with pristine high desert landscapes and lively cultural traditions brings great promise but also potential threats to the ecosystem.

24	UPPER GANGA RIVER (BRIJGHAT TO NARORA STRETCH)	Uttar Pradesh	8 November 2005	265.9	A shallow river stretch of the great Ganges with intermittent small stretches of deep-water pools and reservoirs upstream from barrages. The river provides habitat for IUCN Red listed Ganges River Dolphin, Gharial, Crocodile, 6 species of turtles, otters, 82 species of fish and more than hundred species of birds. Major plant species, some of which have high medicinal values, include Dalbergia sissoo, Saraca indica, Eucalyptus globulus, Ficus bengalensis, Dendrocalamus strictus, Tectona grandis, Azadirachta indica and aquatic Eichhorina. This river stretch has high Hindu religious importance for thousands of pilgrims and is used for cremation and holy baths for spiritual purification. Major threats are sewage discharge, agricultural runoff, and intensive fishing. Conservation activities carried out are plantation to prevent bank erosion, training on organic farming, and lobbying to ban commercial fishing.
25	VEMBANAD-KOL WETLAND	Kerala	19 August 2002	1512.5	Largest lake of Kerala, spanning across Alappuzha , Kottayam , and Ernakulam districts. Famous tourist locations like Alappuzha and Kumarakom, known for house boats falls here. River mouths of Pamba-Achenkovil rivers in Vembanad forms one of the unique wetland topography of Kerala, the Kuttanad. It is below sea level and is famous for exotic fish varieties and Paddy fields that are below sea level.
26	WULAR LAKE	Jammu and Kashmir	23 March 1990	189	The largest freshwater lake in India with extensive marshes of emergent and floating vegetation, particularly water chestnut, that provide an important source of revenue for the State Government and fodder for domestic livestock. The lake supports an important fishing industry and is a valuable source of water for irrigation and domestic use. The area is important for wintering, staging and breeding birds. Human activities include rice cultivation and tree farming.

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