



## Two New Ramsar Sites

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### Why in News

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Recently, **Kabartal Wetland (Bihar)** and **Asan Conservation Reserve (Uttarakhand)** have been designated as **Ramsar sites**, making them ‘**Wetlands of International Importance**’.

- Earlier in 2020, India **designated 10 more wetlands as a Ramsar site**, taking the total number from 27 to 37.
- With 2 more inclusions, the **total number of Ramsar sites in India is 39**, the **highest in South Asia**.

### Key Points

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- **Kabartal Wetland:**
  - Also known as **Kanwar Jheel**, it covers 2,620 hectares of the Indo-Gangetic plains in the Begusarai district of Bihar.
  - It acts as a **vital flood buffer** for the region besides providing livelihood opportunities to local communities.
  - **Significant biodiversity** is present, with 165 plant species and 394 animal species recorded, including 221 bird species. It is also a **valuable site for fish biodiversity** with over 50 species documented.
  - It is an **important stopover along the Central Asian Flyway**, with 58 migratory waterbirds using it to rest and refuel.
  - **Five critically endangered species** inhabit the site, including **three vultures** – the **red-headed vulture** (*Sarcogyps calvus*), **white-rumped vulture** (*Gyps bengalensis*) and **Indian vulture** (*Gyps indicus*) – and two waterbirds, the **sociable lapwing** (*Vanellus gregarius*) and **Baer’s pochard** (*Aythya baeri*).
  - **Major threats** to the Site include water management activities such as drainage, water abstraction, damming and canalization.

- **Asan Conservation Reserve:**

- ACR is a **444-hectare stretch of the Asan River** running down to its confluence with the **Yamuna River** in Dehradun district of Uttarakhand. It is **Uttarakhand's first Ramsar Site.**

The damming of the River by the **Asan Barrage in 1967** resulted in siltation above the dam wall, which helped to create some of the Site's bird-friendly habitats.

- These habitats **support 330 species of birds** including the **critically endangered red-headed vulture** (*Sarcogyps calvus*), **white-rumped vulture** (*Gyps bengalensis*) and **Baer's pochard** (*Aythya baeri*).
- Other non-avian species present include **49 fish species**, one of these being the **endangered Putitora mahseer** (*Tor putitora*). Fish use the site for feeding, migration and spawning.

## Ramsar Site

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- **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** is an **intergovernmental treaty** adopted in **1971** in the Iranian city of Ramsar, on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea.
- It **came into force for India on 1<sup>st</sup> February, 1982**. Those **wetlands which are of international importance** are declared as **Ramsar sites**.
- The **Convention's mission** is "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world".
- 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 interference. It is **maintained as part of the Ramsar List**.
  - At present, **two wetlands** of India are in Montreux Record: **Keoladeo National Park** (Rajasthan) and **Loktak Lake** (Manipur).
  - **Chilika Lake** (Odisha) was placed in the record but **later removed** from it.

**Source: HT**