



## Migratory Birds and Chilika Lake

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### Why in News

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Migratory birds in and around Chilika lake and Bhitarkanika National Park have started leaving earlier (in February) than other years, as temperatures in Odisha (in and around **Chilika lake**) began to soar.

The birds usually arrive in the region in November and migrate back around mid-March or early April when the temperature hovers around 39 degree Celsius.

### Key Points

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- **Migratory Species:** Every year in winter, **migratory birds** arrive at the water bodies around **Chilika Lake**, Asia's largest salt-water lagoon and **Bhitarkanika**, the second-largest mangrove forest in India (the **largest being the Sunderbans**, West Bengal).

They flew in from places as far off as **Siberia, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, the Himalayan region and central Europe.**
- **Reasons for Early Departure:**
  - **Warming of the Region:** The average temperature of Bhubaneswar (located 35 kilometers from Chilika) recorded for the month of February was 34-35 degrees Celsius between 2015 and 2019.
  - **Decreasing Water Levels:** Rising temperature coupled with the **decreasing water levels** in the lake also contributed to this early migration.

- **Chilika Lake:**
  - Chilika is Asia's largest and world's second largest lagoon.
  - It is the **largest wintering ground for migratory birds** on the Indian sub-continent and is home to a number of threatened species of plants and animals.
  - In 1981, Chilika Lake was designated the **first Indian wetland of international importance** under the **Ramsar Convention**.
  - Major attraction at Chilika is **Irrawaddy dolphins** which are often spotted off Satpada Island.
  - The **large Nalabana Island (Forest of Reeds)** covering about 16 sq km in the lagoon area was declared a bird sanctuary in 1987.
  - **Kalijai Temple** - Located on an island in the Chilika Lake.
- **Bhitarkanika National Park:**
  - Bhitarkanika National Park is **one of Odisha's finest biodiversity hotspots** and is famous for its mangroves, migratory birds, turtles, estuarine crocodiles, and countless creeks.
  - The Bhitarkanika is **represented by 3 Protected Areas**, the Bhitarkanika National Park, the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary and the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary.
  - Bhitarkanika is **located in the estuary of Brahmani, Baitarani, Dhamra, and Mahanadi river systems**.
  - It is said to **house 70% of the country's estuarine or saltwater crocodiles**, conservation of which was started way back in 1975.

### **Migratory Species in India**

- India is a temporary home to several migratory animals and birds.
- The important among these include **Amur Falcons, Bar-headed Geese, Black-necked cranes, Marine turtles, Dugongs**, Humpback Whales, etc.
- The Indian sub-continent is also part of the major bird flyway network, i.e, the **Central Asian Flyway (CAF)** that covers areas between the Arctic and Indian Oceans.
- India has also **launched the National Action Plan** for the conservation of migratory species under the Central Asian Flyway as India is a party to **Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)**.

**Source: DTE**