



Asian Waterbird Census

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Why in News

The two-day **Asian Waterbird Census-2020** has **commenced in Andhra Pradesh** under the aegis of experts from the **Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)**.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - **Every January**, thousands of volunteers across Asia and Australasia visit **wetlands** in their country and count waterbirds. This **citizen science programme** is the **Asian Waterbird Census (AWC)**.
 - The AWC is an integral **part of the global waterbird monitoring programme, the International Waterbird Census (IWC)**, coordinated by **Wetlands International**.
 - The **IWC is a monitoring programme operating in 143 countries** to collect information on the numbers of waterbirds at wetland sites.
 - **Wetlands International is a global not-for-profit organisation** dedicated to the conservation and restoration of wetlands.
 - It **runs in parallel with other regional programmes** of the International Waterbird Census in Africa, Europe, West Asia, the Neotropics and the Caribbean.

- **Scope:**

- It was **initiated in 1987 in the Indian subcontinent** and has grown rapidly to **cover major regions of Asia**, from Afghanistan eastwards to Japan, Southeast Asia and Australasia.
- The census **covers the entire East Asian - Australasian Flyway** and a large part of the **Central Asian Flyway**.
 - The **East Asia - Australasia Flyway** extends from Arctic Russia and North America to the southern limits of Australia and New Zealand. It encompasses large parts of East Asia, all of Southeast Asia and **includes eastern India and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.
 - The Central Asian Flyway (CAF) **covers a large continental area of Eurasia** between the Arctic and Indian Oceans and the associated island chains.

- **Benefits:**

- The count not only gives **an idea of the birds at the wetland** but also the **health of the wetland** - a good number of waterbirds indicates that it has adequate feeding, resting, roosting and foraging spots.
- The information collected helps to promote the designation and management of internationally important sites such as nationally protected areas, **Ramsar Sites**, East Asian - Australasian Flyway Network Sites, **Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs)**.
- It also helps in implementation of the **Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)** and the **Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD)**.

- **AWC in India:**

- The AWC is **jointly coordinated by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and Wetlands International.**

BNHS is a **pan-India wildlife research organization**, which has been promoting the cause of nature conservation since 1883.

- A reference list of internationally important AWC sites and wetland IBAs in India has been prepared.

- India has **42 Ramsar sites**, the latest one included is **Tso Kar Wetland Complex of Ladakh.**
- **BirdLife's Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) Programme** identifies, monitors and protects a global network of priority sites for the conservation of birds and other wildlife. India has **more than 450 sites.**
- The 13th Meeting of the **Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals** (CMS COP13) concluded in Gandhinagar, Gujarat in February 2020.

Ten new species were added to CMS Appendices at COP13. Seven species were added to Appendix I (provides the strictest protection) including the **Asian Elephant, Jaguar, Great Indian Bustard, Bengal Florican**, etc.
- India **submitted its Sixth National Report (NR6) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** in December 2018.

Source: TH