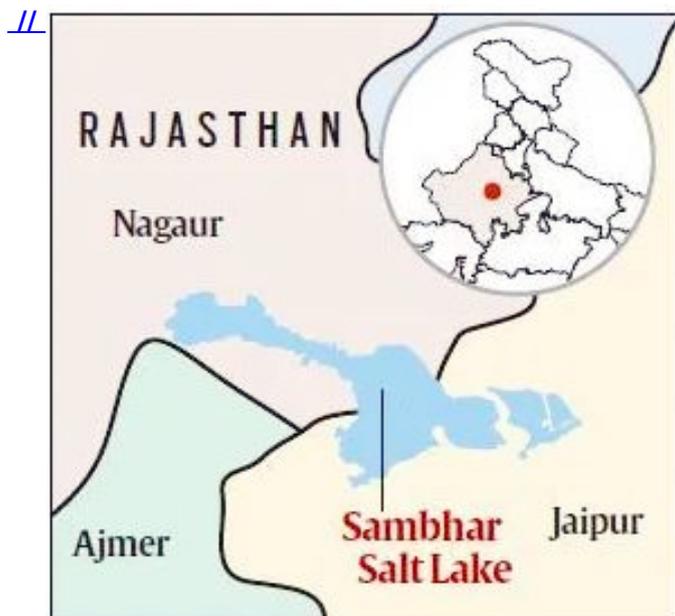




Shrinking of Sambhar Lake: Rajasthan

Why in News

According to a recent study, Sambhar Salt Lake in Rajasthan is **constantly shrinking with the degradation of soil and water quality** and **a decline in the population of [migratory birds](#)**.



Key Points

- **Location:**
 - **80 km south-west of Jaipur** in **east-central Rajasthan**, it is the **country's largest inland saline water body**.
 - Represents the **depression of the [Aravalli Range](#)**.
- **Famous For:**
 - Production of **brine/salt**, houses one of the largest salt manufacturing units in the country.
 - Thousands of **migratory birds every year**.
- **Ramsar Site:**
 - A **wetland of 'international importance'** under the **[Ramsar Convention](#)**, declared in 1990.
- **Rivers:**
 - Receives water from six rivers, namely **Samaod, Khari, Mantha, Khandela, Medtha, and Roopangarh**.
- **Vegetation in Catchment Area:**

- Mostly **xerophytic type** (Xerophyte is a plant adapted for growth under dry conditions).
- **Fauna:**
 - [Flamingoes](#), **pelicans and the waterfowls** are commonly sighted.
- **Other Nearby Places:**
 - Shakambari Devi temple, Sambhar Wildlife Sanctuary.
- **Major Concerns:**
 - **Loss of Area:**
 - Almost **30% of the Sambhar Lake's area** had been **lost to mining and** other activities, including the **illegal salt pan encroachments**.
 - **Livelihoods of Local People:**
 - The loss in the area has also threatened the livelihoods of local people who have always **lived in harmony with the lake and its ecology**.
 - The **Aravalli hills have decreased by 0.1%** (as compared to in 1971). The hill has been a natural barrier limiting the salt from spreading into other fertile areas.
 - If this natural wall continues to fall it will force the people to migrate.
 - **Regarding Migratory Birds:**
 - The **wetland has decreased** whereas vegetation cover has increased, **leading to the shortage of red algae** which forms the **main source of food for the migratory birds**.
 - The **death of more than 20,000 birds belonging to about 10 species** which migrate annually to the lake due to [avian botulism](#) in 2019.
- **Steps to Address the Issue:**
 - **New Tourist Points:**
 - The **State Government of Rajasthan** has recently decided to identify **new tourist points at Sambhar Salt Lake**.
 - The Lake forms **part of the desert circuit in the Centre's [Swadesh Darshan Scheme](#)**.
 - New destinations around the lake, including a **salt museum, caravan park, bicycle track and gardens**, will be finalised.
 - **Salt Train:**
 - **A "salt train"**, which transported salt from the pans to a nearby refinery, will also be restarted.
 - **Saving the Area:**
 - The **illegal salt production in the lake will be stopped** through action against unauthorised borewells and pipelines laid in the region, while **encroachments on the land will be removed** with the help of police.
 - **For Migratory Birds:**
 - In 2020, the Rajasthan government decided to build **[temporary shelters for migratory birds](#)** near the Lake.

Way Forward

Sambhar Lake Development Authority should be formed by taking experts from multiple agencies. Also, **coordination should be developed** among the administration of three districts - Jaipur, Ajmer and Nagaur.

Source: TH

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