

Flamingos at Rajasthan's Sambhar Lake

Why in News?

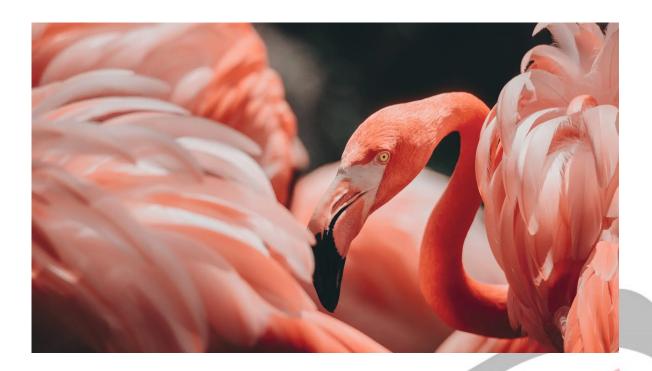
<u>Flamingos</u> traditionally migrate to <u>Sambhar Lake</u> between **November and March**, but in 2025, they stayed significantly longer owing to **abundant food supply and changing climate conditions** that created a more favorable habitat.

Key Points

- Significant Rise in Bird Population:
 - A census conducted in January 2025 recorded over 1.04 lakh migratory birds at Sambhar Lake, including large numbers of Lesser and Greater Flamingos—a substantial increase from 7,147 birds in 2024.
 - This reflects **better environmental conditions**, which have enhanced the lake's role as a **crucial resting and feeding ground** for migratory species.
 - India hosts over 250 migratory bird species annually, with hotspots including <u>Chilika</u>
 <u>Lake</u>, <u>Khichan</u>, and <u>Bharatpur</u>.
- Ecological Importance of Sambhar Lake:
 - Sambhar Lake is a critical stopover along the <u>Central Asian Flyway</u>, one of the world's major bird migration routes.
 - It is a saline wetland, located in the Nagaur and Jaipur districts of Rajasthan, bordered by the <u>Aravalli hills</u>.
 - It is the source of most of Rajasthan's salt production.
 - It was designated a Ramsar site in 1990 due to its ecological significance.



Flamingos



- About: It belongs to the family *Phoenicopteridae*.
 - There are six species of flamingo namely the <u>Greater flamingo</u> (state bird of Gujarat), Chilean flamingo, Lesser flamingo, Caribbean flamingo, Andean flamingo, and Puna flamingo that inhabit lakes, mudflats, and shallow lagoons in the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Europe.
- **Distinctive Appearance:** Known for their **vibrant pink feathers**, flamingos have long legs and necks, webbed feet, and a distinctive downward-curving bill adapted for filter-feeding.
 - Flamingos' habitats and food sources change by location and season, causing their colors to range from dark or bright pink to orange, red, or pure white.
- Adaptations: Flamingos have adapted to extreme environments with high salinity and temperatures, where their predators are limited.
- **Ecological Role:** They play a crucial ecological role by maintaining the health of their habitats through their feeding activities, which affect **nutrient cycling** and **algae** populations.
- Conservation Status:
 - IUCN Red List:
 - Vulnerable: Andean flamingo (Pink Flamingo)
 - Near Threatened: Lesser flamingo, Puna flamingo, and Chilean flamingo
 - **CITES:** Appendix II
 - Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Schedule II

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