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India adds 10 more wetlands designated as Ramsar sites to make total 64 sites

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What's in News?

India adds 10 more wetlands designated as Ramsar sites to make **total 64 sites** covering an area of 12,50,361 ha in the country. The 10 new sites include: Six (6) sites in Tamil Nadu and One (1) each in Goa, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha.

Wetlands:

The Ramsar Convention definition for wetlands includes marshes, floodplains, rivers and lakes, mangroves, coral reefs and other marine areas no deeper than 6 metres at low tide, as well as human-made wetlands such as waste-water treatment ponds and reservoirs.

Termed '**kidneys of landscape**', wetlands contribute to water purification, water regulation, biodiversity, aesthetics and recreation, according to the United Nations.

Wetlands in India:

A total of 757,060 wetlands have been mapped in the country.

The total wetland area estimated is 15.26 million hectares, which is around 4.63% of the geographical area of the country (National Wetlands Atlas - ISRO)

The 2011 edition of the National Wetlands Atlas of India classified India's wetlands into 19 categories.

Common ones include river, stream, reservoir, barrage, intertidal, mud-flat and natural lake; the more unique among them are lagoon, mangrove, coral, riverine and high-altitude lake

Wetlands are regulated under the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017

India has maximum wetlands in South Asia - 7.7 lakh - covering the country's 4.6 per cent geographical area, according to a report of NGO Wetland International.

Ramsar Convention:

The Ramsar Convention is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable utilization of wetlands, recognizing the fundamental ecological functions of wetlands and their economic, cultural, scientific, and recreational value

This convention was adopted on **February 2, 1971** in Ramsar, Iran and came into force in 1975.

Since then, almost 90% of UN member states, from all the world's geographic regions, have acceded to the treaty to become "Contracting Parties".

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February 2 is observed as **World Wetlands Day** every year.

Ramsar Site designation is for “Wetlands of International Importance”.

Wetlands can be designated to the Ramsar List under any (one or more) of the nine criteria that ranges from uniqueness of the site to those based on species and ecological communities supported.

Globally, there are over 2,300 Ramsar sites around the world, covering over 2.1 million sq km.

Importance of Wetlands:

Providers of all water-related ecosystem services:

They regulate water quantity, groundwater recharge, and can contribute to regulating floods and the impacts of storms.

Wetlands also help in erosion control and sediment transport, thereby contributing to land formation and increasing resilience to storms.

All these ecosystem services improve water security, including security from natural hazards and climate change adaptation.

Productive areas for plant life, animals and wetland agriculture:

Compared to many other ecosystems, wetlands are one of the most productive habitats in the world.

With greater species diversity nutrient recycling and niche specialization than most other ecosystems.

Major habitat:

Wetlands are major habitat for most of the world’s waterbirds and key habitat for migratory species.

Almost all of the world’s waterbirds use wetlands as feeding and breeding grounds.

Migratory waterbirds use wetlands throughout their range which can sometimes literally be from pole to pole.

The feeding, breeding and stop-over areas across and between continents that migratory birds depend on requires coordinated wetlands conservation efforts among many nations.

Important source of food:

Well-managed rice paddy systems, for example, produce not only rice but also co-benefits from rice-associated biodiversity, such as highly nutritious food in the form of fish, molluscs and crustaceans.

Wetlands also support the multitude of biota that helps sustain rice productivity through supporting nutrient cycling and pest and disease regulation.

The entire production of inland capture fisheries and most coastal fisheries is derived from wetlands, as is most aquaculture production.

High Value:

Values of coastal and inland wetlands ecosystem services are typically higher than for other ecosystem types.

Wetland ecosystems can have some of the highest ecosystem service values compared to other ecosystems.

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This is due to the importance of clean water provision, natural hazards mitigation, for example mangrove forests and floodplains, and carbon storage, for example in peatlands, mangroves and tidal marshes.

A large proportion of the values reported for most types of wetlands come from their waterrelated services.

High recreational, historical, scientific, and cultural values:

Wetlands have played an important part in human development and are of significant religious, historical or archeological value to many cultures around the world.

They are also often inviting places for popular recreational activities including hiking, fishing, bird watching, photography and hunting.

Ramsar Sites in India: (The newly added sites are indicated in Blue in the picture below)

Sl. No.	Name of Site
1	Kolleru Lake
2	Deepor Beel
3	Kabartal Wetland
4	Nanda Lake
5	Khijadia Wildlife Sanctuary
6	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary