

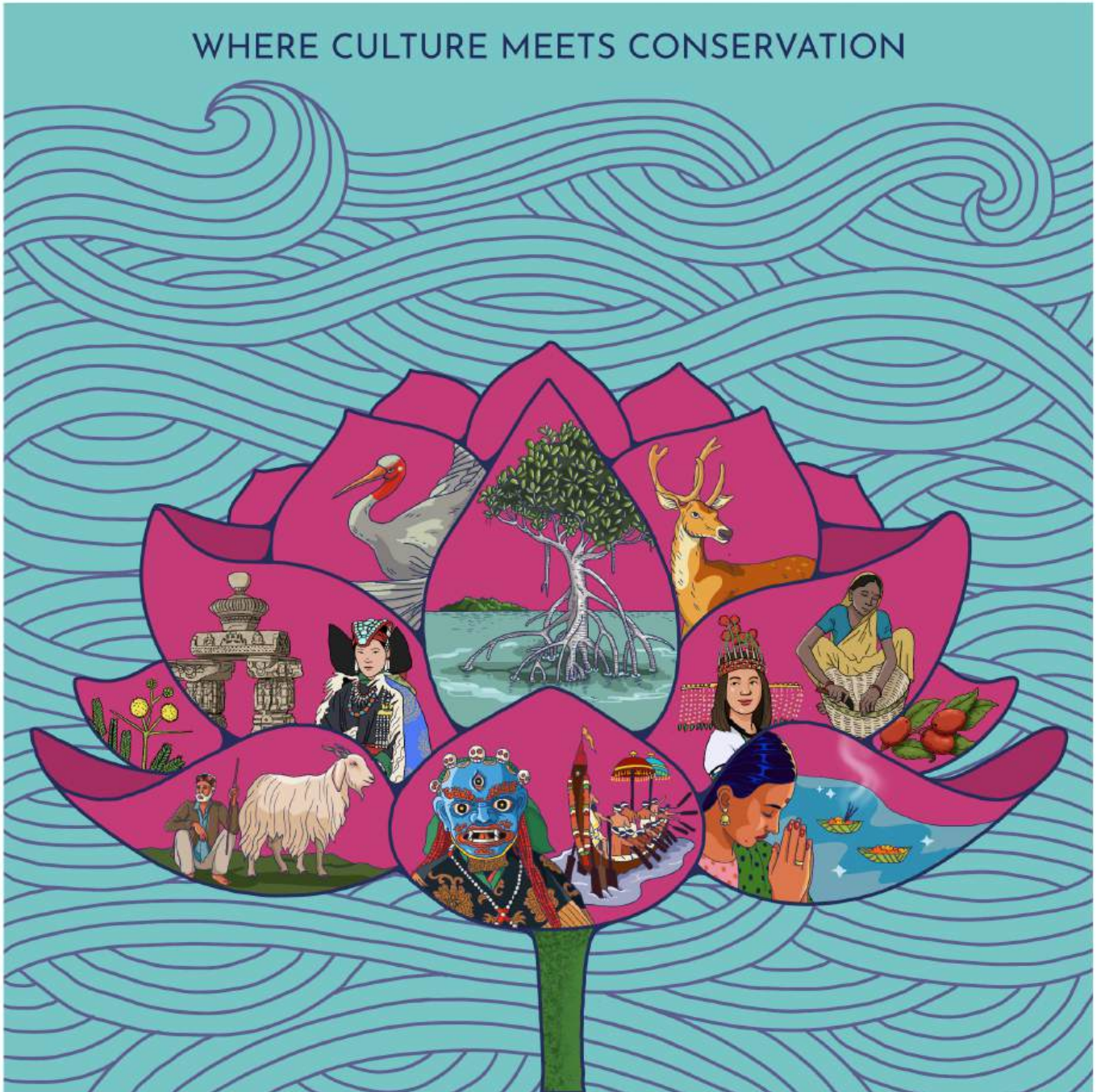


LIFE
Lifestyle for
Environment



CULTURAL WONDERS OF RAMSAR SITES

WHERE CULTURE MEETS CONSERVATION



MoEFCC (2026). Cultural Wonders of Ramsar Sites — Where Culture Meets Conservation.
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India.

Published by

Wetlands Division

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India

Indira Paryawaran Bhawan, Jor Bagh, New Delhi- 110003

Email: wetlands-mefcc@gov.in

Book layout and design by

Ms Shruti Pillai

Email: shruti.pillai202@gmail.com

Photo Credits

As specified against the images

About this publication

The document is prepared under the Global Environment Facility-MoEFCC-UN Environment Programme funded Integrated Management of Wetlands Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Project.

We acknowledge with thanks the support from the Ramsar Site Managers and the knowledge partners of the Wetlands Division of MoEF&CC.



Indian spot-billed duck in Sandi Bird Sanctuary/ Government of Uttar Pradesh



मंत्री
पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन
भारत सरकार



सत्यमेव जयते

भूपेन्द्र यादव
BHUPENDER YADAV



MINISTER
ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



MESSAGE

India's environmental consciousness is a timeless ethos, deeply embedded in our civilisational history. This profound reverence for nature is powerfully evident in our worship of nature in its glorious manifestations including rivers, the meticulous safeguarding of sacred groves, and the veneration accorded to wetlands.

Wetlands are amongst our planet's most vital ecosystems. Globally, these crucial habitats are vanishing at an alarming rate, yet they hold the very key to our collective resilience against the crisis of climate change. India has demonstrated exemplary leadership, not only through the significant expansion of its Ramsar network but also by strategically emphasizing the profound role of culture as the very bedrock of conservation. Today, India proudly stands at 1st in Asia and 3rd in the world w.r.t the number of Ramsar Sites.

This publication illuminates the spiritual, artistic, and mythological tapestries that communities across India have meticulously woven with wetlands over centuries. It narrates the compelling stories of the strong bond that exists between the local community and the wetlands - people including *Wetland Mitras* who have not only coexisted with these unique ecosystems but have also intricately integrated them into the very fabric of their identities, manifested through ancient rituals, distinctive architecture, rich oral traditions, and vibrant seasonal festivals.

We must remember that genuine conservation extends far beyond mere preservation; it is fundamentally about forging a deep and lasting connection. When individuals feel a profound connection to their environment, their intrinsic desire to care intensifies. And when they care, they are compelled to take meaningful action. By embracing and celebrating the profound cultural value of wetlands, we strengthen this vital connection, thereby unlocking the doors to inclusive, participatory, and sustainable long-term conservation endeavors.

The publication is aligned with Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision and emphasis on organic link between wetlands and age old traditions of our country. I congratulate the Wetlands Division and Wetlands International South Asia on compiling this valuable document that will significantly contribute to advancing our collective efforts in wetlands conservation.

(Bhupender Yadav)

पर्यावरण भवन, जोर बाग रोड़, नई दिल्ली-110003, फोन : 011-20819190, 011-20819187, फैक्स : 011-20819299
Paryavaran Bhawan, Jor Bagh Road, New Delhi-110003, Tel.: 011-20819190, 011-20819187, Fax : 011-20819299

ईमेल / E-mail : mefcc@gov.in



राज्य मंत्री
पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन
विदेश मंत्रालय
भारत सरकार
MINISTER OF STATE
ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

कीर्तवर्धन सिंह
KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH



MESSAGE

Wetlands are far more than mere aquatic ecosystems; they are living archives, echoing with the age-old rhythms of fishing communities, the sacred rituals of devotees, and the enduring legacy of generations past.

India's quantum of Ramsar Sites clearly show our strong commitment to both protecting nature and celebrating our diverse cultures. Each of these vital wetlands tells a unique story, some echoing with ancient traditions, others unfolding in the vibrant present. Consider the iconic Loktak Lake, whose floating phumdis cradle the spiritual and daily life of the Meitei community, serving as a maternal figure or reflect on Ashtamudi Lake, where the exhilarating boat races and revered backwater communities intertwine their livelihoods with a profound reverence for the waters themselves. These are not isolated examples; they powerfully underscore the intrinsic connection between nature and culture that is deeply embedded in India's heritage.

This book is more than just a compendium of cultural expressions; it is a heartfelt tribute to the living traditions that have nurtured these wetlands, just as these wetlands have sustained their communities. The symbiotic relationship between conservation and culture is not a novel concept in India; it is profoundly woven into our philosophies, enshrined in our scriptures, and reflected in our daily lives.

We invite all to explore India's Ramsar Sites through a renewed lens, not simply as remote ecological zones but as dynamic and vibrant cultural landscapes. I hope this publication serve as a catalyst, inspiring not only crucial conservation initiatives but also fostering active engagement from all stakeholders to safeguard these invaluable treasures for generations to come.

(KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

कार्यालय : 5वां तल, आकाश विंग, इंदिरा पर्यावरण भवन, जोर बाग रोड, नई दिल्ली-110003, दूरभाष: 011-20819418, 011-20819421, फ़ैक्स: 011-20819207, ई-मेल : mos.kvs@gov.in

Office : 5th Floor, Aakash Wing, Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, Jor Bagh Road, New Delhi-110003, Tel.: 011-20819418, 011-20819421, Fax : 011-20819207, E-mail : mos.kvs@gov.in

कार्यालय: कमरा नं.141, साउथ ब्लॉक, नई दिल्ली-110001, दूरभाष: 011-23011141, 23014070, 23794337, फ़ैक्स : 011-23011425, ई-मेल : mos.kvs@gov.in

Office : Room No. 141, South Block, New Delhi-110001, Tel. : 011-23011141, 23014070, 23794337, Fax : 011-23011425, E-mail : mos.kvs@gov.in

निवास: 23, बी.आर. मेहता लेन, नई दिल्ली-110001, दूरभाष: 011-23782979

Residence : 23, B.R. Mehta Lane, New Delhi-110001, Tel.: 011-23782979



तन्मय कुमार
TANMAY KUMAR



सत्यमेव जयते



सचिव
भारत सरकार
पर्यावरण, वन और जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय
SECRETARY
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST
AND CLIMATE CHANGE



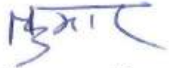
MESSAGE

Wetlands are dynamic, interconnected, and vibrant ecosystems that serve as living classrooms, imparting invaluable lessons on adaptation, coexistence, and ecological balance. Wetlands are not simply ecological sites; they are profound repositories of civilizational heritage and invaluable community wisdom. The trajectory of wetland conservation in India has evolved, moving beyond mere ecological protection to embrace and celebrate their immense cultural significance.

India's ever increasing Ramsar Sites stand as powerful testament to our nation's unwavering commitment to both environmental conservation and cultural diversity. India's wetlands are far more than just geographic features; they are revered places of pilgrimage, profound prayer, evocative poetry, and enduring tradition. For countless generations, communities have intricately woven their customs, sacred ceremonies, and compelling stories into the very fabric of these life-giving water bodies which act as nature's valuable gift in our collective efforts towards combating climate change. This publication represents a valuable and timely effort to document and showcase these rich narratives. It serves as a powerful reminder that conservation is not solely a scientific or regulatory endeavour. Indeed, traditional festivals, rich oral histories, sacred beliefs, and indigenous taboos have all played vital roles in the historical preservation of wetland ecosystems.

This compilation highlights a lesser-known but immensely valuable dimension of our Ramsar Sites: their indispensable role as custodians of intangible cultural heritage. It presents compelling stories that illuminate how communities including "*Wetland Mitras*" have historically co-existed with and diligently protected these vital ecosystems through profound cultural reverence and time-honoured traditional practices. As we look towards the future, the integration of cultural understanding into policy-making holds immense potential to elevate conservation efforts, making them more participatory, inclusive, and inherently resilient.

I commend the Wetlands Division and all those involved in this publication including the Wetlands International South Asia for coming out with this important publication which so effectively links the ecological and cultural facets of India's wetlands and provides valuable guidance in our conservation efforts. Hope, this inspires one and all in embracing the true values of Mission LIFE towards an environment friendly lifestyle and in adding more and more wetlands to the list of Ramasar sites which is so vital for preservation and protection of our ecosystem, both for present as well as future generations.


(Tanmay Kumar)

Place: New Delhi
Dated: January 30, 2026



आशुतोष अग्निहोत्री, आई.ए.एस
ASHUTOSH AGNIHOTRI, IAS



सत्यमेव जयते



अपर सचिव

भारत सरकार

पर्यावरण, वन और जलवायु परिवर्तन

ADDITIONAL SECRETARY

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST

& CLIMATE CHANGE



MESSAGE

Wetlands, as unique and highly productive ecosystems, have been associated with the cultural values of Indian communities since ancient times. These landscapes embody long-standing traditions and locally rooted knowledge systems that have evolved over generations. In the Indian context, conservation efforts have progressively broadened in scope, moving towards an integrated approach that recognises the social and cultural dimensions of wetland stewardship alongside environmental objectives.

India's Ramsar sites reflect a strong and lasting commitment to protecting both natural heritage and cultural diversity. This publication brings this journey into focus, presenting wetlands not just as physical landscapes but as places of spiritual value, artistic expression, and long-standing traditions. Over generations, communities have shaped their identities, belief systems, and cultural practices around these life-sustaining wetlands. By documenting these live connections, the publication shows that conservation goes beyond technical measures/legal frameworks. Cultural practices, oral traditions, belief systems, and indigenous customs have long played an important role in safeguarding wetlands.

As we move forward, weaving cultural understanding into policy decisions can greatly enrich conservation efforts, making them more inclusive, participatory and resilient. I appreciate the efforts of the Wetlands Division and Wetlands International South Asia in bringing out this timely and meaningful publication, which thoughtfully connects the ecological values of wetlands with the cultural relationships that communities across India share with them.


(Ashutosh Agnihotri)

New Delhi

Dated :- 30/01/2026

पृथ्वी विंग, पाँचवां तल, कमरा नं. 505, इंदिरा पर्यावरण भवन, जोर बाग रोड,
नई दिल्ली-110003, दूरभाष : 011 - 20819247, ईमेल : asaa-moefcc@gov.in



वेद प्रकाश मिश्रा, आई.आर.एस
संयुक्त सचिव
Ved Prakash Mishra, IRS
JOINT SECRETARY



सत्यमेव जयते



भारत सरकार
पर्यावरण, वन और जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST
& CLIMATE CHANGE

Foreword

Wetlands are globally recognised as crucial ecosystems. They play a vital role in regulating global climate patterns, recharging essential groundwater supplies, and serving as natural buffers against increasing threats of floods and droughts. Beyond these ecological benefits, wetlands in India are vibrant, living ecosystems where nature and culture are inextricably linked. India has reached a significant milestone in its ongoing efforts to conserve wetlands.

Across the length and breadth of our nation, wetlands serve as dynamic hubs of culture, vibrant centres of ancient rituals, sacred homes to enduring legends, and perennial sources of inspiration for countless folk songs, exquisite artworks, and deeply held spiritual beliefs. From the pristine, sacred lakes nestled amidst the majestic Himalayas to the sprawling river floodplains steeped in rich folklore, our wetlands are living embodiments of India's multifaceted heritage. They are places where ritual meets rhythm, where ancient tradition harmonises with the tide, and where profound belief flows seamlessly with breathtaking biodiversity.

This comprehensive compilation aims to be a powerful catalyst, for inspiring policymakers, dedicated conservationists, passionate educators, and the broader public alike to recognize the holistic importance of wetlands, not solely as ecological marvels but equally as invaluable cultural sanctuaries.

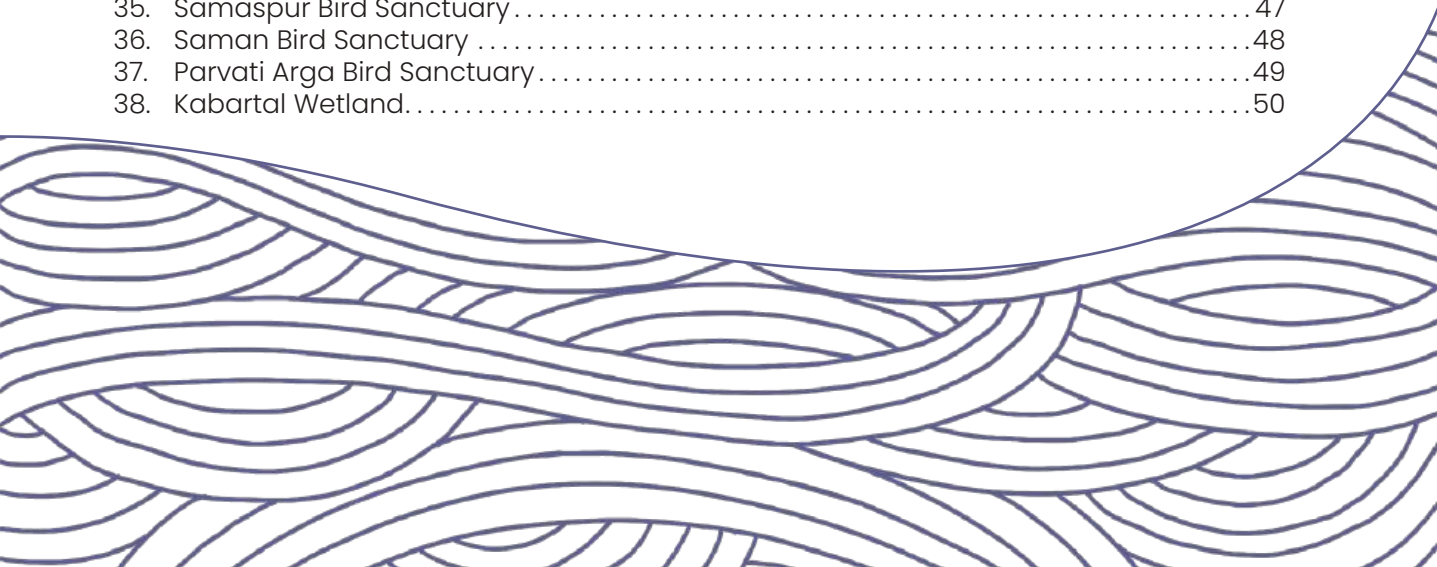
(Ved Prakash Mishra)
Joint Secretary, MoEFCC

कमरा नं.232, द्वितीय तल, अग्नि ब्लॉक, इंदिरा पर्यावरण भवन, जोर बाग रोड़, नई दिल्ली-110003
दूरभाष : 011-20819359, ईमेल : mishra.vp@gov.in

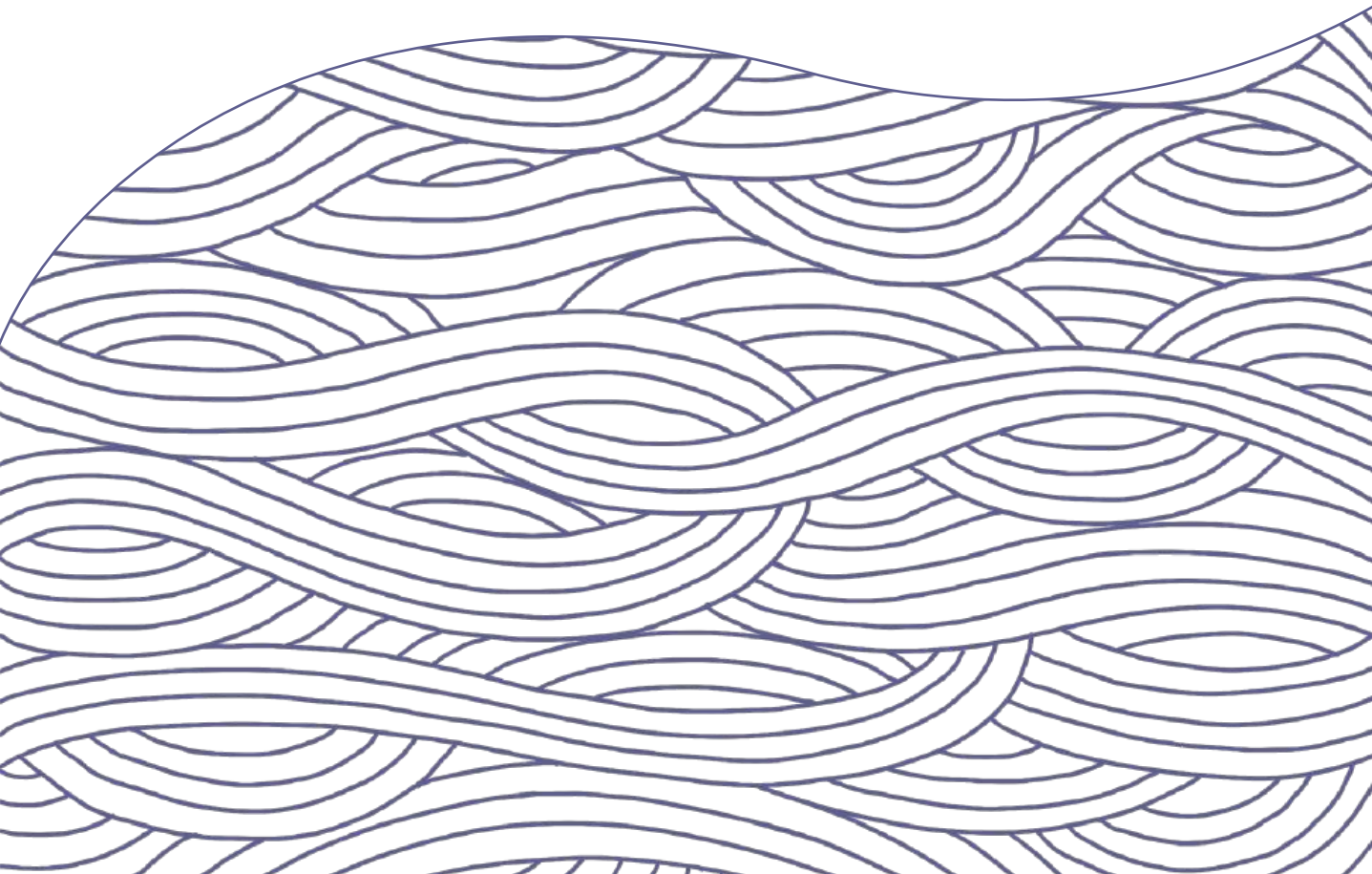
Room No. 232, 2nd Floor, Agni Block, Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, Jor Bagh Road, New Delhi-110003
Tel.: 011-20819359, E-mail : mishra.vp@gov.in

TABLE OF CONTENTS

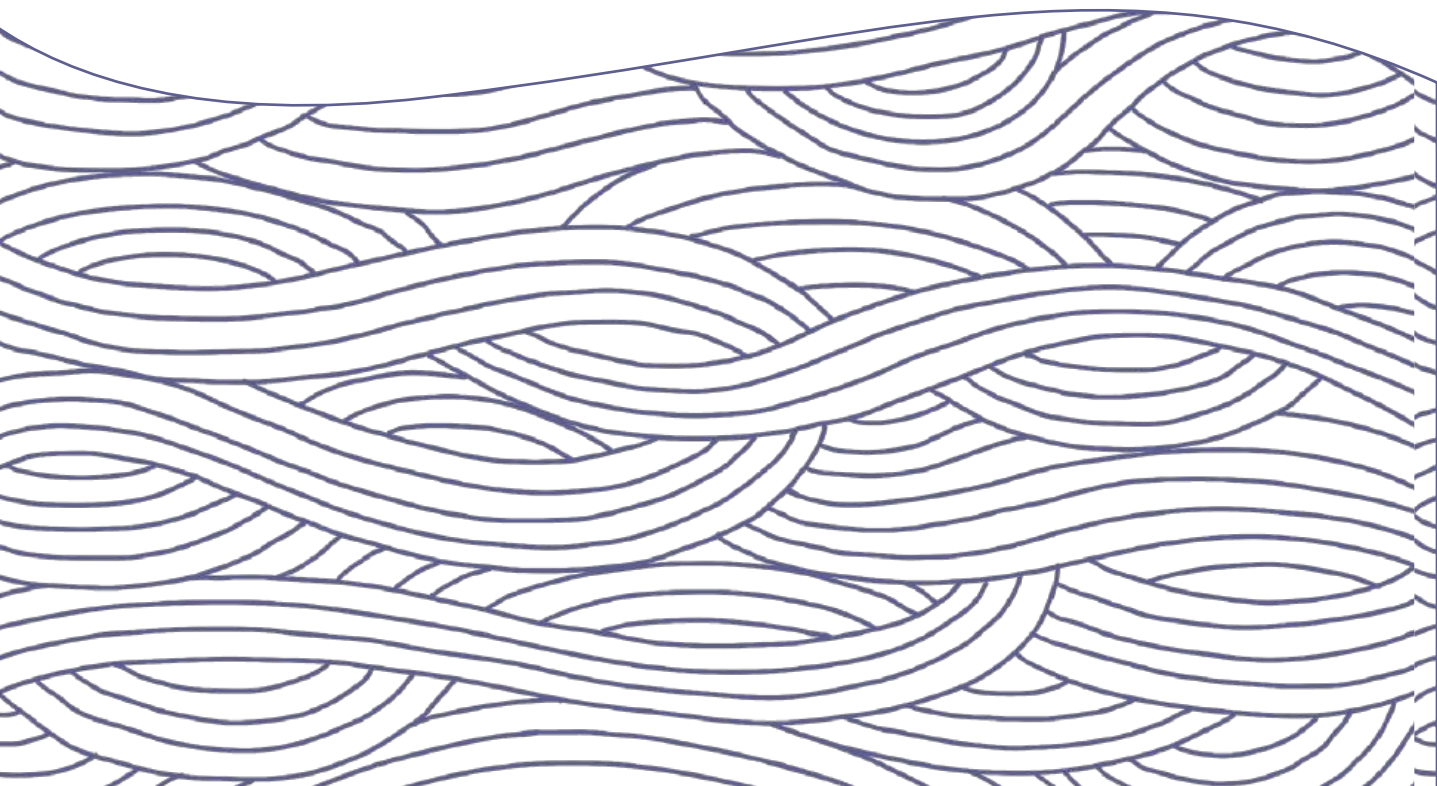
● Wetlands Conservation in India: An Overview and Policy Imperatives	1
● Cultural Wonders of Ramsar Sites	6
1. Chilika Lake	8
2. Keoladeo National Park	9
3. Loktak Lake	10
4. Wular Lake	12
5. Harike Lake	13
6. Sambhar Lake	14
7. Kanjli	15
8. Ropar	16
9. Point Calimere Wildlife and Bird Sanctuary	17
10. Pong Dam Lake	18
11. Ashtamudi Wetland	19
12. Bhitarkanika Mangroves	21
13. Bhoj Wetland	22
14. Deepor Beel	23
15. East Kolkata Wetlands	25
16. Kolleru Lake	26
17. Sasthamkotta Lake	27
18. Tsomoriri	28
19. Vembanad-Kol wetland	29
20. Rudrasagar Lake	31
21. Chandertal Wetland	32
22. Hokera Wetland	33
23. Renuka Wetland	34
24. Surinsar-Mansar Lakes	35
25. Upper Ganga River	36
26. Nalsarovar	37
27. Sundarban Wetland	38
28. Nandur Madhameshwar	40
29. Sarsai Nawar Jheel	41
30. Nawabganj Bird Sanctuary	42
31. Sandi Bird Sanctuary	43
32. Beas Conservation Reserve	44
33. Keshopur-Miani Community Reserve	45
34. Nangal Wildlife Sanctuary	46
35. Samaspur Bird Sanctuary	47
36. Saman Bird Sanctuary	48
37. Parvati Arga Bird Sanctuary	49
38. Kabartal Wetland	50



39.	Asan Conservation Reserve	51
40.	Lonar Lake	52
41.	Sur Sarovar	54
42.	Tso Kar Wetland Complex	55
43.	Thol Lake Wildlife Sanctuary	56
44.	Wadhvana Wetland	57
45.	Khijadia Wildlife Sanctuary	58
46.	Haiderpur Wetland	59
47.	Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary	60
48.	Sultanpur National Park	61
49.	Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary	62
50.	Pala Wetland	63
51.	Satkosia Gorge	64
52.	Ansupa Lake	65
53.	Hirakud Reservoir	66
54.	Tampara Lake	67
55.	Koonthankulam Bird Sanctuary	68
56.	Chitrangudi Bird Sanctuary	69
57.	Sakhya Sagar	70
58.	Sirpur Wetland	71
59.	Yashwant Sagar	72
60.	Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary	73
61.	Gulf of Mannar Marine Biosphere Reserve	74
62.	Vellode Bird Sanctuary	75
63.	Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary	76
64.	Karikili Bird Sanctuary	77
65.	Kanjirankulam Bird Sanctuary	78
66.	Pallikaranai Marsh Reserve Forest	79
67.	Pichavaram Mangrove	80
68.	Vaduvur Bird Sanctuary	82



69. Udhayamarthandapuram Bird Sanctuary.....	83
70. Suchindram Theroor Wetland Complex	84
71. Vembannur Wetland Complex.....	85
72. Thane Creek.....	86
73. Nanda Lake.....	87
74. Hygam Wetland Conservation Reserve.....	88
75. Shallbugh Wetland Conservation Reserve.....	89
76. Magadi Kere Conservation Reserve.....	90
77. Aghanashini Estuary.....	91
78. Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve	92
79. Karaivetti Bird Sanctuary.....	93
80. Longwood Shola Reserve Forest	94
81. Nagi Bird Sanctuary	96
82. Nakti Bird Sanctuary.....	97
83. Udhwa Lake Bird Sanctuary	98
84. Tawa Reservoir	99
85. Kazhaveli Bird Sanctuary	100
86. Nanjarayan Bird Sanctuary	101
87. Sakkarakottai Bird Sanctuary	102
88. Khachoedpalri Wetland	103
89. Therthangal Bird Sanctuary.....	105
90. Menar Wetland Complex.....	106
91. Khichan Wetland	107
92. Gokul Jalashay	108
93. Udaipur Jheel.....	109
94. Gogabil Lake.....	110
95. Siliserh Lake.....	111
96. Kopra Jalashay	112
97. Chhari-Dhand.....	113
98. Patna Bird Sanctuary.....	114
● Did You Know?	116
● Bibliography.....	117



WETLANDS CONSERVATION IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW AND POLICY IMPERATIVES

Wetlands as Critical Natural Capital

Wetlands are ecosystems at the interface of water and land. These ecosystems are vital for our water and food security. As 'kidneys of the landscape', wetlands receive flows of water and waste from upstream sources. They help stabilise water supplies, cleanse polluted waters, protect shorelines, and recharge groundwater aquifers. The extensive food chain and biological diversity in wetlands make them 'biological supermarkets'. Wetlands are valuable as sources, sinks, and transformers of a multitude of biological, chemical, and genetic materials. In addition, wetlands have special attributes as cultural heritage of humanity, and have deep connections with our beliefs and practices. They are indeed an important part of our natural wealth and 'liquid assets' for development.

India hosts a vast and diverse array of wetlands distributed across climatic and physiographic regions. Wetlands in India range from high altitude lakes of the Himalayas, floodplains and marshes of the Gangetic–Brahmaputra alluvial plains, saline flats of the Great Indian Desert, to extensive mangroves and coral reefs areas bordering the country's eastern and western coastline. According to the Space Applications Centre (SAC) Atlas 2024, Wetlands cover an area of about 16.89 Mha, which is approximately 5.12 per cent of the country's total geographic area.

For several cities, wetlands were the primary source of water, and continue to be so, as reflected in the moniker 'city of lakes' given to Bhopal, Bangalore, Udaipur and many others. For example, East Kolkata Wetlands treats nearly 65% of Kolkata's wastewater, saving nearly Rs. 4,600 million annually in avoided treatment costs. In the hard rock Deccan Plains and arid regions of the country, there has been an age-old tradition of constructing tanks to store rainwater for use in irrigation and domestic water supply.

The high-altitude Himalayan wetlands capture glacial meltwater and serve as the source of the eight largest rivers of Asia, basins that support nearly one-fifth of the global population. The floodplains of Ganga and Brahmaputra account for over 40 per cent of the total cultivated area in the country, and are a major source of the country's rice and fish production. Wetlands also act as buffers against extreme events. A significant proportion of the summer flows of the River Jhelum, draining the picturesque Kashmir Valley, are absorbed by Wular Lake. Similarly, the City of Guwahati is cushioned from devastating floods of the River Brahmaputra by Deepor Beel and associated wetlands. The role of mangrove marshes in mitigating the impacts of tropical storms and cyclones has been extensively documented in recent years. Wetlands have deep connections with Indian culture and traditions. The sacred Loktak Lake in Manipur is viewed as Ima (Mother) by the Meitei people, while Khacheodpalri is sacred to both Buddhists and Hindus and is believed to be a wish-fulfilling

lake; the Sundarbans are steeped in local mythology and religious practices and Kanjli Wetland is considered sacred for its association with the first Guru of Sikhism.

The North Indian festival of Chhath is one of the most unique expressions of the association of people, culture, water and wetlands. Dal Lake (Kashmir), Khajjiar Lake (Himachal Pradesh), Nainital Lake (Uttarakhand), and Kodaikanal (Tamil Nadu) are popular tourist destinations in the country, contributing significantly to local economies.

Wetlands serve as habitats for numerous plant and animal species, including several of high conservation value. Ecologically dependent on wetlands, migratory waterbirds connect continents, hemispheres, cultures and societies through their seasonal movements. The Central Asian Flyway (CAF) is one of the nine global waterbird flyways, comprising migratory routes from the northernmost breeding grounds in Siberia to the southernmost non-breeding grounds in West and South Asia, the Maldives, and the British Indian Ocean Territory. India is located at the heart of CAF. Nearly 71% of the migratory waterbirds of the CAF use India as a stopover site.

Wetlands Programming and Governance Architecture

Wetland conservation draws strength from India's rich legacy of environmental conservation enshrined in various policies, legislations and regulatory regimes. The Indian Constitution encapsulates this spirit, notably in its Article 51–A (g), stating that “it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures.” The National Environment Policy of 2006 lays down specific policy elements for wetlands. Wetlands have been identified as components of ‘freshwater resources’, and the recommended policy actions for wetlands conservation include integration into development planning, management based on prudent-use strategies, promotion of ecotourism, and implementation of a regulatory framework.

Wetland conservation and sustainable management are placed within the mandate of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC). The National Wetlands Programme was launched in 1986 to assist state governments in implementing management plans for prioritised wetlands. Subsequently, separate programmes for urban wetlands, mangroves, and coral reefs were carved out of the national programme to focus on issues of urban pollution and the increasing vulnerability of coastal wetlands. The national wetlands programme, currently known as the National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA), has subsumed the programme on urban wetlands. The NPCA aims to mainstream the full range of wetland biodiversity and ecosystem services within developmental plans and programmes at various levels. The reach and ambit of the national programme has been continuously enriched by the incorporation of tools and frameworks related to integrated management planning, wetland wise use, management effectiveness assessment, satellite-based wetland monitoring, climate risk assessments, and multi-level capacity development efforts.

Furthermore, wetlands have been incorporated into plans and programmes across various sectors. Wetlands have a specific reference in India's updated National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2030 under Target 1 (Biodiversity inclusive integrated land/sea planning), Target 2 (Ecosystem restoration) and Target 3 (Conserve biodiversity in land, water and sea). In 2018, the MoEFCC adopted a National Action Plan for con-

serving Migratory Waterbirds and their Habitats along the Central Asian Flyway. The Plan's long-term goal is to arrest population decline and secure habitats of migratory bird species. In the short term, the action plan seeks to halt the downward trends in declining meta-populations and maintain stable or increasing trends for healthy populations by 2027. Under climate actions, wetlands are recognised as vital for ecosystem-based adaptation in our National and State Action Plans. In water governance, the 'National Water Policy' and related schemes promote wetland rejuvenation for recharge and flood control. Urban planning missions and schemes thereunder prioritise wetland restoration to combat heat stress and urban flooding.

Wetlands receive protection from a number of central enacted rules and regulations. Provisions of the Indian Forest Act, 1927, the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 define the regulatory framework for wetlands located within forests and designated protected areas. In 2017, the Ministry notified the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 (EP Act). As per the provisions of these Rules, State and Union Territory level Wetlands Authorities have been constituted as the main policy and regulatory bodies within states.

Wetlands jurisprudence in India has continued to evolve through the enactment of various environmental laws and their interpretation by the courts. Notable amongst these have been the judgments on wetland-related issues by the Indian Supreme Court and the National Green Tribunal (hereinafter NGT, established in 2010 to deal with cases related to the environment). In December 2024, the Supreme Court of India directed the States and Union Territories to complete ground-truthing and demarcation of the wetland boundaries of wetlands with an area of more than 2.25 ha identified in the Space Application Centre Atlas. Till now, we have achieved ground truthing of more than 199,000 wetlands and boundary demarcation of around 110,000 wetlands, which will serve as a basis for scientific interventions to conserve wetlands.

Wetlands Conservation- A Whole of Society Approach

As a step towards participatory conservation and the wise use of wetlands, the Government of India launched Mission Sahbhagita (which means cooperation) in May 2022. Through its 'whole of society' approach, the Mission aims to enable inclusive and community-driven efforts for the conservation and sustainable management of the country's wetlands. 'Save Wetlands Campaign' was also launched as part of this Mission. Continuous efforts under the Mission have helped us in creating mass awareness, capacity building, and enlisting the voluntary participation of more than 2 million people in pursuit of conservation. Simultaneously, different stakeholders, the government, scientific institutions, research and academia, and civil society, have also joined hands towards this cause.

In recent years, there has been a transformative shift from viewing wetlands as vulnerable spaces to recognising them as critical ecosystems that underpin water security, biodiversity, climate resilience, and livelihoods. On World Environment Day, 2024, the Hon'ble Prime Minister launched the global campaign 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam', urging citizens to plant trees as an expression of respect for their mothers and commitment to Mother Earth. The campaign highlights the parallel between a mother's nurturing role and nature's life-supporting functions. It calls for collective responsibility toward environmental protection, aiming to halt and reverse land degradation, enhance drought resilience, prevent desertification, and expand the country's green cover through voluntary tree planting. The plantation campaign emphasised planting indigenous species to strengthen ecosystem resilience and encouraged public participation in the care and maintenance of planted saplings. To date, over 20,000 saplings have been planted around wetlands as part of this initiative.

Commitment to Ramsar Convention

India became a Contracting Party to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands on February 1, 1982, by designating Chilika Lake (Odisha) and Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan) as the first two Ramsar Sites. Till 2016, the Ramsar Sites network included 26 sites spanning 0.63 mha. Since 2016, Ramsar Site designation has received a significant policy push from the Government of India, and 72 wetlands have been added to the list (as of January 2026). The network of Indian Ramsar Sites currently covers 1.36 mha, approximately 8.5% of the country's known wetland extent. The designation of wetlands as Ramsar Sites embodies the Contracting Parties' commitment to take the necessary steps to ensure their ecological character is maintained. The recognition of Udaipur (Rajasthan) and Indore (Madhya Pradesh) as Wetland Cities under the Ramsar Convention stands as testimony to the embedding of wetlands in urban development plans and programmes.

In 2023, the Government of India launched the Amrit Dharohar initiative to promote the unique conservation values of Ramsar Sites in the country while also generating employment opportunities and supporting local livelihoods. This initiative focuses on four major components: Species and Habitat Conservation, Nature Tourism, Wetland Livelihoods, and Wetland Carbon.

Global Leadership and Cultural Dimensions of Wetland Conservation

India also champions the belief that transformative change depends on responsible human behaviour. Under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi, India introduced Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) at COP26 in Glasgow, promoting "mindful and deliberate utilisation instead of mindless and wasteful consumption". Mission LiFE encourages citizens, communities, and institutions to adopt sustainable habits, such as conserving water, reducing waste, and protecting ecosystems. Though often framed within climate action, LiFE is profoundly relevant to wetlands: every 'pro-planet choice' made by individuals directly strengthens wetland resilience. LiFE has thus emerged as a cultural and behavioural pillar of wetland stewardship in India.

India's leadership in promoting sustainable lifestyles (ways of living, social behaviours and choices that minimise environmental degradation while supporting equitable socio-economic development and a better quality of life for all) has received significant global recognition. On March 1, 2024, the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) adopted a landmark resolution, UNEA resolution [6/8], on Sustainable Lifestyles, co-sponsored by India, Sri Lanka, and Bolivia, which emphasises the critical role of behavioural change and local action in achieving sustainable development. In 2025, at the Ramsar COP15 in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, India introduced and secured the adoption of the resolution on 'Promoting Sustainable Lifestyles for the Wise Use of Wetlands', marking a global endorsement of LiFE as a tool for wetland governance.

This global endorsement underscores a more profound realisation that sustainable wetland management is inseparable from the cultural relationships that communities have nurtured with these ecosystems for centuries. The intimate links of societies to wetlands have given rise to important cultural values relevant to wetland conservation and wise use, which have been recognised in the diverse cosmologies of different civilisations and cultures throughout history.

For many communities, especially those that have lived in close association with these ecosystems for generations, wetlands serve as sacred spaces, centres of spiritual practices, and hubs of traditional knowledge. Furthermore, wetlands are central to cultural rituals, folklore, and festivals, often symbolising the interconnectedness of life. Wetlands serve as anchors of identity, tradition, and sustainability, passed down through generations. Conserving these wetlands, therefore, is not just crucial for enhancing ecological and economic resilience but a cultural imperative.

Scope and Purpose of the Publication

This publication is a compilation of the rich cultural tapestry associated with India's Ramsar Sites, documenting cultural practices, community traditions, festivals, folklore, art, legends, historical significance, and mythological narratives. This publication examines India's Ramsar Sites not merely as protected locations on a map, but as vibrant landscapes that represent the interconnections among people, wildlife, and water. By exploring their cultural significance, we seek to emphasise that conserving these wetlands is not just a national concern, but a global necessity. This journey into India's Ramsar Sites will reveal the hidden marvels of our wetlands and highlight their growing importance today. The information used in the document is sourced from the Ramsar Site Information Sheets, research articles, and popular articles, and is corroborated by site managers and knowledge partners. While efforts have been made to capture the essence of the rich cultural heritage of the Ramsar Sites, the sheer richness and vastness of the information may have inadvertently excluded some.

CULTURAL WONDERS OF RAMSAR SITES





Ramsar Sites of India



Ladakh

1. Tsomoriri Lake, 19 August 2002
2. Tso Kar Wetland Complex, 17 November 2020

Jammu & Kashmir

3. Hygam Wetland Conservation Reserve, 08 June 2022
4. Wular Lake, 23 March 1990
5. Shallbugh Wetland Conservation Reserve, 08 June 2022
6. Hokera Wetland, 08 November 2005
7. Surinsar-Mansar Lakes, 08 November 2005

Himachal Pradesh

8. Chandertal Wetland, 08 November 2005
9. Pong Dam Lake, 19 August 2002
10. Renuka Wetland, 08 November 2005

Punjab

11. Harike Lake, 23 March 1990
12. Nangal Wildlife Sanctuary, 26 September 2019
13. Kanjli, 22 January 2002
14. Ropar, 22 January 2002
15. Beas Conservation Reserve, 26 September 2019
16. Heshpur - Miani Community Reserve, 26 September 2019

Uttarakhand

17. Asan Conservation Reserve, 21 July 2020

Haryana

18. Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary, 25 May 2021
19. Sultanpur National Park, 25 May 2021

Rajasthan

20. Keoladeo National Park, 01 October 1981
21. Sambhar Lake, 23 March 1990
22. Khichan Wetland, 19 February 2025
23. Menar Wetland Complex, 19 February 2025
24. Siliserh Lake, 7 July 2025

Uttar Pradesh

25. Saman Bird Sanctuary, 02 December 2019
26. Samaspur Bird Sanctuary, 03 October 2019
27. Nawabganj Bird Sanctuary, 19 September 2019
28. Parvati Arga Bird Sanctuary, 02 December 2019
29. Upper Ganga River, 08 November 2005
30. Sandi Bird Sanctuary, 26 September 2019
31. Sarsai NawarJheel, 19 September 2019
32. Sur Sarovar, 21 August 2020
33. Haiderpur Wetland, 13 April 2021
34. Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary, 29 June 2021
35. Patna Bird Sanctuary, 04 December 2025

Chhattisgarh

98. Kopra Jalashay, 8 August 2025

Bihar

36. Kabartal Wetland, 21 July 2020
37. Nagi Bird Sanctuary, 11 October 2023
38. Nakti Bird Sanctuary, 11 October 2023
39. Gokul Jalashay, 13 May 2025
40. Udaipur Jheel, 13 May 2025
41. Gogabil Lake, 13 May 2025

Sikkim

42. Khachodpalri wetland, 15 July 2024

West Bengal

43. Sunderban Wetland, 30 January 2019
44. East Calcutta Wetlands, 19 August 2002

Assam

45. Deepor Beel, 19 August 2002

Manipur

46. Loktak Lake, 23 March 1990

Tripura

47. Rudrasagar Lake, 08 November 2005

Mizoram

48. Pala Wetland, 31 August 2021

Jharkhand

49. Udhwa Lake Bird Sanctuary, 08 January 2024

Madhya Pradesh

50. Bhoj Wetland, 19 August 2002
51. Sirpur Wetland, 07 January 2022
52. Sakhya Sagar, 07 January 2022
53. Yashwant Sagar, 07 January 2022
54. Tawa Reservoir, 08 January 2024

Gujarat

55. Nalsarovar, 24 September 2012
56. Wadhvana Wetland, 05 April 2021
57. Thol Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, 05 April 2021
58. Khijadia Wildlife Sanctuary, 13 April 2021
59. Chhari-Dhand, 16 June 2025

Maharashtra

60. Nandur Madhameshwar, 21 June 2019
61. Lonar Lake, 22 July 2020
62. Thane Creek, 13 April 2022

Odisha

63. Bhitarkanika Mangroves, 19 August 2002
64. Chilka Lake, 01 October 1981
65. Ansupa Lake, 12 October 2021
66. Hirakud Reservoir, 12 October 2021
67. Tampara Lake, 12 October 2021
68. Satkosia Gorge, 12 October 2021

Andhra Pradesh

69. Kolleru Lake, 19 August 2002

Goa

70. Nanda Lake, 08 June 2022

Karnataka

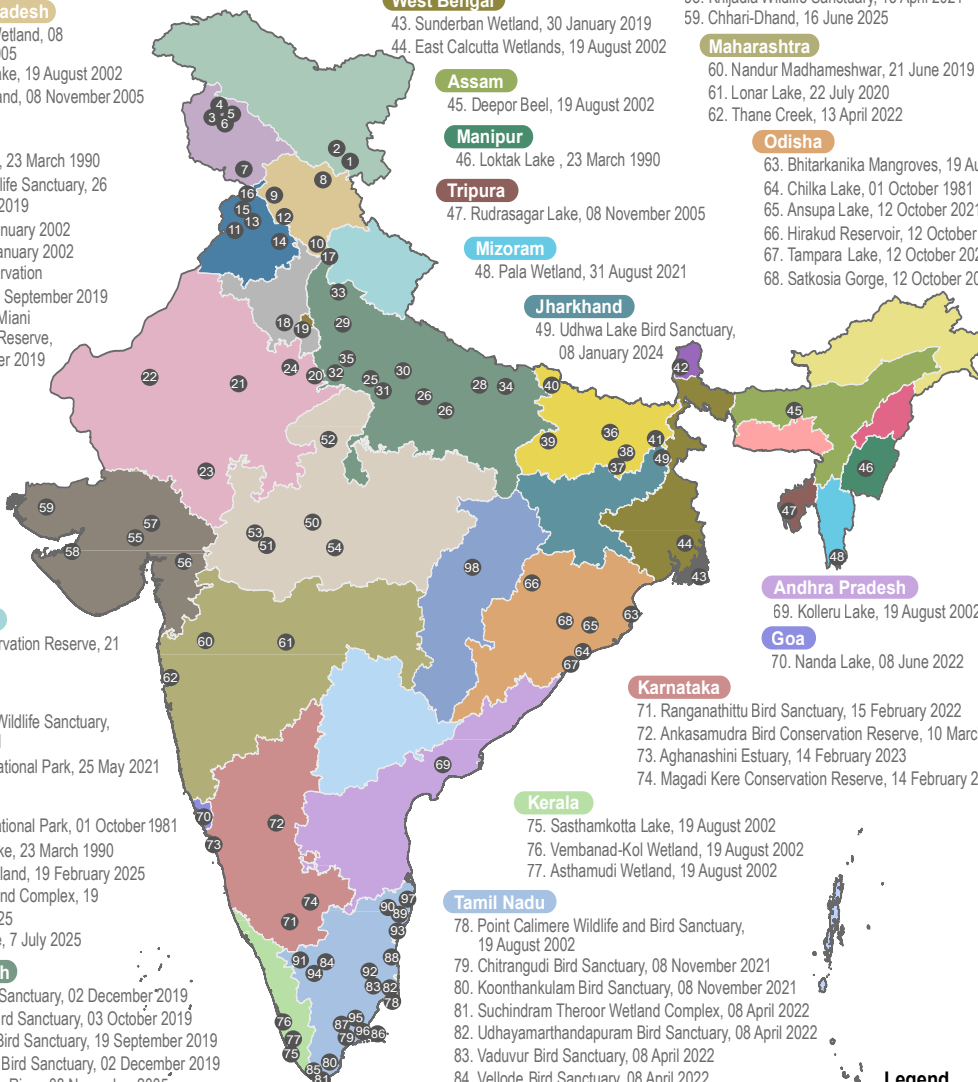
71. Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary, 15 February 2022
72. Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve, 10 March 2023
73. Aghanashini Estuary, 14 February 2023
74. Magadi Kere Conservation Reserve, 14 February 2023

Kerala

75. Sasthankotta Lake, 19 August 2002
76. Vembanad-Kol Wetland, 19 August 2002
77. Asthamudi Wetland, 19 August 2002

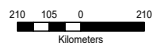
Tamil Nadu

78. Point Calimere Wildlife and Bird Sanctuary, 19 August 2002
79. Chitrangudi Bird Sanctuary, 08 November 2021
80. Koonthankulam Bird Sanctuary, 08 November 2021
81. Suchindram Theroor Wetland Complex, 08 April 2022
82. Udhayamarthandapuram Bird Sanctuary, 08 April 2022
83. Vaduvur Bird Sanctuary, 08 April 2022
84. Vellore Bird Sanctuary, 08 April 2022
85. Vembanur Wetland Complex, 08 April 2022
86. Gulf of Mannar Marine Biosphere Reserve, 08 April 2022
87. Kanjirankulam Bird Sanctuary, 08 April 2022
88. Pichavaram Mangrove, 08 April 2022
89. Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary, 08 April 2022
90. Karikili Bird Sanctuary, 08 April 2022
91. Longwood Shola Reserve Forest, 24 May 2023
92. Karaiveti Bird Sanctuary, 24 May 2023
93. Kazhuveli Bird Sanctuary, 16 January 2024



Legend

● Ramsar Sites of India





CHILIKA LAKE

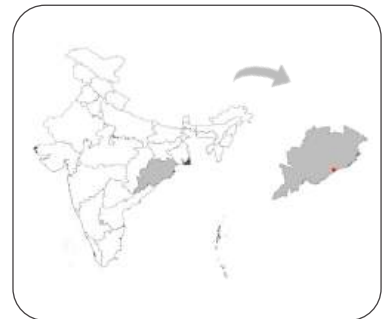
Odisha | DATE OF DESIGNATION : October 1, 1981

Chilika means 'soil inundated by water'. According to mythology, the pirate King Raktabahu went with a large fleet to plunder Puri. He moored his ships out of sight to avoid being seen. However, the sea carried ship wreckage ashore, alerting the occupants, who quickly fled with their belongings. The city was deserted when Raktabahu arrived. He became furious and ordered his soldiers to attack the river, believing it had fooled them. The sea answered by retiring to the depths and resurfacing, swallowing his forces and forming the present-day Chilika. Historical texts describe the southern section of Chilika as a key harbour for marine trade during the reign of the King of Kalinga, known as the Lord of the Sea. Today, this rich maritime heritage is celebrated during *Kartik Purnima* (Hindu, Sikh, and Jain cultural festival that is celebrated on purnima (full moon day), the 15th day of the lunar month Kartika) with the festival of '*biota bandana*', where people sail colourful, decorated

paper boats to honour the region's naval history.

The Kalijai Temple, located on an island in Chilika, is dedicated to the goddess Kalijai and is particularly vibrant during the *Makar Sankranti* festival (Hindu observance and a mid-winter harvest festival in India and Nepal) in January. According to legend, Kalijai drowned in the lake during a storm, and the temple marks the spot where her boat sank. The temple draws tourists who come to pray for safe travels. The annual '*Chilika Mahotsav*' further celebrates the region's culture, crafts, and cuisine, attracting visitors from across the nation and preserving local traditions.

The Ramsar Site is also mentioned in a poem by the saint-poet Purshottam Das, which tells the story of Lord Krishna dancing with a milkmaid named Maniki in the Chilika Lagoon. Golden Grass and Nalia crafts stand out as prime examples of wetland resources be-



ing intricately woven into the cultural traditions of the region.



Goddess Kalijai/ Krupasindhu Muduli



Kalijai Temple/ Wetlands International South Asia



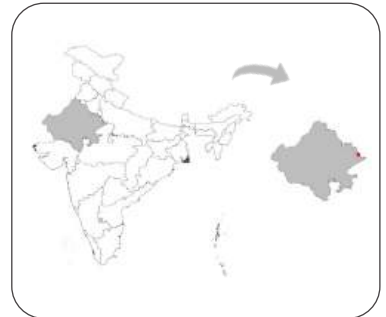
KEOLADEO NATIONAL PARK

Rajasthan | DATE OF DESIGNATION : October 1, 1981

Keoladeo National Park, established in the 1850s, was a royal hunting reserve for the *Maharajas* and the British. The Ramsar Site features several ancient structures, such as watchtowers and hunting lodges, symbolising the *Maharajas'* enduring legacy and the harmonious blend of human and natural history. Commonly referred to by its former name, Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary, this area was founded by the local king, Suraj Mal (who founded the fortified city of Bharatpur in Rajasthan in 1733).

Numerous local legends surround the park's name; some believe

Bharatpur is named after Bharat, the brother of the Hindu deity Rama. The park's official name, Keoladeo National Park, is derived from the temple dedicated to the god Shiva, known as Keoladeo, which means '*Keval Ek Dev – Mahadev*' (only one God, i.e. Lord Shiva), located within its boundaries. According to local legend, a cow regularly visited the park and poured its milk near some trees. The locals, intrigued by this occurrence, dug beneath the tree and unearthed the *Shiva Linga* that had been buried underground. In honour of this discovery, the temple was built.



Additionally, the park is locally known as '*Ghana*', which refers to its dense canopy.

*Revered Shiva temple in Keoladeo/
Environment and Climate Change
Department, Rajasthan*





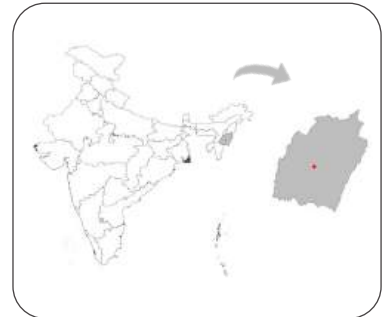
LOKTAK LAKE

Manipur | DATE OF DESIGNATION : March 23, 1990

Loktak is often celebrated in religious practices and folk art as the 'mirror of Manipuri civilisation'. The wetland is revered as Loktak Ima, or Mother Loktak, and holds a sacred status among the Meitei people. The sacred groves, or Umang-lai, around the wetland are places of profound spiritual importance.

According to legend, Loktak Lake was born from the deep longing of the goddesses when Ima Leimarel, the Supreme Goddess, transformed herself into the lake to become part of creation after being excluded from the divine

assembly of gods. In the traditional worldview, Loktak embodies the womb of the land, the origin of fertility, while its unique Isha Mapan (nine water bodies) and sacred streams reflect natural harmony. Over the ages, the lake witnessed and nurtured the rise of the Moirang civilisation, where folklore thrived and stories grew into epics. The most celebrated among them is the love story of Khamba and Thoibi, who pledged eternal love along its shores, casting their hopes into the sacred waters at Nungpak Thabi. This story remains a powerful symbol of love and loyalty in Manipuri culture.



Even today, the rock called Nungpak Thabi stands as a testimony, where Princess Thoibi once cast her fishing net.

Loktak's floating islands, or phumdis, offered shelter and a stage for



Traditional boat race ceremony performed during the festival of Lai Haraoba/ Awangba Mangang

legendary lovers like Haoba and Konu, whose romance blossomed amid reeds and whispering waters. On the island of Nurathel, the Goddess of Death, Khamnung Yaiding Konu, once descended to taste mortal life, planting the pure white Kombirei flower as a symbol of love and sorrow, its blossom forever turned purple by heartbreak.

The floating islands, or phumdis, which drift across the lake, have long been both sanctuary and stage for dramatic tales, like the young Haoba hiding in the reeds from a vengeful king, only to be discovered by Konu, sparking yet another legendary love. In the floating realm of Keibul Lamjao, the rare Sangai deer roams, tied forever to the tragic tale of Kadeng Thangjahanba, who released it in grief after losing his beloved.

The lake also bore witness to noble wildlife conservation from the sixth century onwards under King Thiyang Meechouba and the poignant tale of Kajeng Thangjahanba, who released a gravid Sangai deer in mourning for his lost beloved, giving birth to the now-legendary floating sanctuary of Keibul Lamjao, the sole habitat of Sangai deer.

The Moirang and Khuman kingdoms engaged in battles over its waters, often using the lake's wide surface for surprise assaults. Legends such as Adon Khamba taming a mythical bull highlight the lake's deep ties to nearby waters like Ikop and Kharung. Ancient boat races, possibly the earliest recorded in history, were held on the lake. One race involved two gods racing from Houbi Hill to secure the island of Thanga. Ad-

ditionally, the lake served as a site for peace, exemplified by a second-century boat race symbolising friendship between Moirang and Khuman.

Loktak inspired poetry, rituals, and art. During times of drought, people prayed by its shores. Their songs spoke of birds taking flight, ants clinging to reeds, and the Sangai deer looking out with wary eyes, subtle yet profound messages of nature's spirit. Even the kings respected the sanctity of Loktak. Ceremonial boat races were forbidden, as they were believed to offend Lord Thangjing, the guardian deity of the lake. Rituals during the festival Ibudhou Thangjing Haraoba began only after collecting holy earth from Tera and water from Moirang Kom, all within Loktak's sacred sphere.



Wild feral bull by Khuman Khamba in the epic 'Khamba Thoibi' / Ningthoujam Bhadra Singh



WULAR LAKE

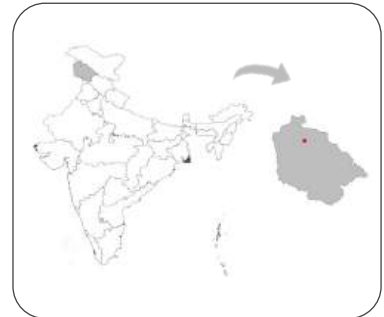
Jammu & Kashmir | DATE OF DESIGNATION : March 23, 1990

'Wular' is derived from the Sanskrit word 'volla', meaning 'turbulent', reflecting the lake's often choppy waters. Wular Lake is home to the captivating floating island of Zainul Lank. According to the legends, Zainul Lank was formed through the divine intervention of the 15th-century Sufi saint Zainul Abdeen. According to a myth, a saint's prayers for a peaceful meditation spot were answered when Zainul Lank emerged from the lake. Today, it is a sacred site featuring a small mosque and the grave of a disciple, which attracts many pilgrims, especially during the summer months. During the 2014 floods, it provided refuge to those stranded, and local fishers see it as a protective haven during storms.

The shrine of Baba Shakur-ud-din is located on the shores of Wular. According to legend, Baba Shakur-ud-din dug a grave in 870 Hijri and walked into it, after which the grave closed automatically. Known as '*Toop Andaaz-i-Kashmir*', the shrine is said to echo the sound of tanks nearby. It attracts thousands of devotees annually from various sects who visit to seek fulfilment of their wishes, whether for health, children, or success in legal matters.

Local folklore claims that the Ramsar Site is under the divine protection of 'Wular Raz,' its presiding deity, and features numerous springs, including the notable 'Neel Nag'. A legend tells of a powerful sage with *tantric* powers who attempted to capture 'Wular Raz'. He used a shikara and performed rituals with an oil lamp while diving into the lake. Upon resurfacing, he claimed to have brought 'Wular Raz' aboard, but while he dived again, the boatman was tempted by the deity to extinguish the lamp in exchange for wealth. Succumbing to greed, the boatman did so, causing the sage to lose his powers and sink. Wular Raz returned to the lake's depths, and instead of riches, the boatman found a pile of charcoal, which later turned to gold when used for fuel.

Another tale connected with the lake recounts a bridegroom whose boat became stranded near the 'Neel Nag' section. The bridegroom pleaded with 'Wular Raz' to allow the boat to pass, promising to offer his bride as tribute. However, the bridegroom failed to keep his word upon returning from the ceremony, and the boat became stuck. Realising his mistake, he offered his bride to the



lake, and she emerged adorned in celestial garments. According to legend, Wular Lake was once the thriving city of Sandimat Nagar. The residents, consumed by material ambitions, ignored a sage's warning about impending disaster. Only a humble potter listened and welcomed the sage, who, in gratitude, turned his clay wheel into gold. The sage advised the potter to flee and not look back. When he did, he saw the entire city submerged, transformed into Wular Lake. Because he looked back, half of his golden wheel reverted to clay. The place where he found refuge is now known as Watlab Sanger.



Zainul Lank/ Sheikh Basharat



Baba Shakur-ud-din/ Khursheed Dar



HARIKE LAKE

Punjab | DATE OF DESIGNATION : March 23, 1990

Harike, also known as *Hari-ke-Pattan*, is notable as the birthplace of Guru Angad Dev Ji, the second Sikh Guru. He played a crucial role in standardising the Punjabi script, Gurmukhi, which was employed to compose much of the *Adi Granth*, the revered text of the Sikhs. Gurudwara Nanaksar Sahib in Harike, Punjab, is a significant Sikh shrine. The gurudwara is known for the spiritual teachings of Baba Nand Singh Ji and is part of the Nanaksar tradition, which

emphasises naam simran (meditation on God's name).

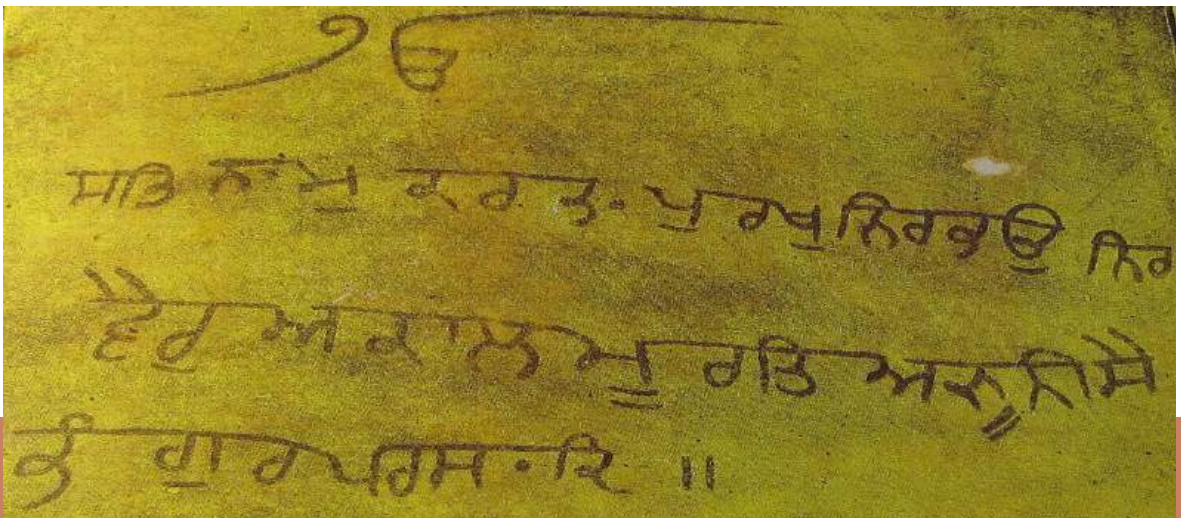
Harike is situated at the junction of the Beas and Sutlej rivers, close to the Ferozepur and Amritsar borders. The name 'Amritsar', which means 'pool of nectar', derives from the *Amrit Sarovar*, a holy reservoir surrounding the majestic Golden Temple, which is around 65 km away from the wetland. The Golden Temple, also known as Harmandir Sahib or *Darbar Sahib*,



is regarded as the spiritual centre of Sikhism.



Guru Sri Angad Dev Ji/ Wikimedia Commons



Signature (nisan) of Guru Arjan by scribing the Mul Mantar/ Jasleen Kaur



SAMBHAR LAKE

Rajasthan | DATE OF DESIGNATION : March 23, 1990

Sambhar Lake is culturally and spiritually significant for Rajasthan, with temples dedicated to Hindu deities lining its shores. During major festivals like *Kartik Purnima*, thousands of pilgrims visit to pray and take a sacred bath, seeking blessings and cleansing their sins.

The Ramsar Site holds significance in ancient Indian mythology, as mentioned in the *Mahabharata*, where it is described as the dwelling of the sage Sukracharya and part of King Brishparva's kingdom. It is also where King Yayati married Sukracharya's daughter, Devyani. A serene temple dedicated to Devyani, located near the lake, adds spiritual charm to the area.

One prominent site is the ancient temple dedicated to Goddess Shakambhari, located in Sirthu-

la, ~15 km from Sambhar. Over 2,500 years old, this temple is one of the *Shakti Peethas* (sacred shrines dedicated to the Hindu goddess Shakti). The name 'Sambhar' is believed to derive from 'Shakambhari,' revered by the Chauhan Rajputs. Legend has it that King Prithviraj Chauhan received a blessing from the goddess, causing the land to turn to silver wherever his horse trod. Concerned about the repercussions, his mother prompted him to seek the goddess's help to reverse the wish. Unable to undo the boon, Goddess Shakambhari transformed the silver into salt, leading to the formation of Sambhar Lake. As a result, the surrounding villages thrive on salt production.

The temple hosts a grand fair during the *Bhado Sudi Ashtami* in August and September. Legend



has it that the goddess performed her austerity in a rainless region for hundreds of years, consuming *shakak*, a vegetable, only once a month. The name Shakambhari comes from '*shakak*', with 'Sambhar' being a variation. Every year, during *Radha Ashtami*, a grand festival is celebrated at the temple, attracting pilgrims and devotees from nearby areas to commemorate the birth of Radha, an incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi.



Shakambhari Mata temple/ Devendra Singh Jadav

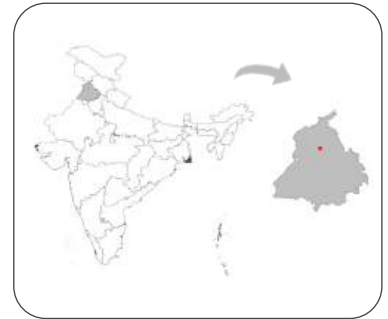


KANJLI

Punjab | DATE OF DESIGNATION : January 22, 2002

Kanjli Wetland is fed by the River Kali Bein, sacred for its association with Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the first Guru of Sikhism. According to a legend, Guru Nanak once bathed in Kali Bein and mysteriously vanished for three days. Upon his return, he underwent a profound spiritual transformation and began his preaching mission, marking the formative period of Sikhism.

Gurudwara Sri Ber Sahib, located around 30 km from Kanjli, is the largest Gurudwara in Sultanpur Lodhi. The gurudwara stands beside an ancient Ber (*Ziziphus jujuba*) tree, which is believed to be the tree under which Guru Nanak meditated. He performed his morning baths in the Bein and meditated under this tree daily for almost 14 years. During one such bath, Guru Nanak Ji is



said to have had a divine vision, as recounted in the *janam sakhis* (popular biographical narratives of Guru Nanak Dev Ji).



Search-and-rescue mission launched to recover Guru Nanak from the Kali Bein/ Wikimedia Commons



Gurudwara Sri Ber Sahib/ Jiwanjot



ROPAR

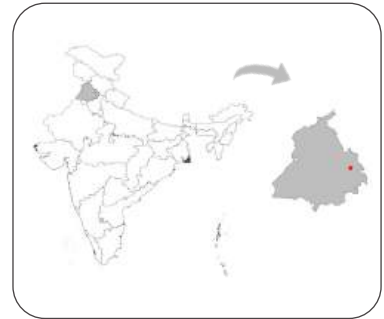
Punjab | DATE OF DESIGNATION : January 22, 2002

Ropar is historically associated with the Treaty of 1831, an agreement between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Lord William Bentinck that formalised Anglo-Sikh relations and established territorial boundaries. This crucial agreement was signed under an ancient Ficus tree along the River Sutlej. The primary goals of this treaty were to settle territorial disputes between the Maharaja and the British and demonstrate their amicability to the outside world. The historic spot where the meeting occurred is known as the Rendezvous or *Shahi Mulakat*.

Ropar is surrounded by significant historical and spiritual sites. Gurudwara Patalpuri Sahib, about 30 km away, is where Sikhs immerse ashes. Anandpur Sahib, around 40 km from the Ramsar Site, was founded in 1723 by the ninth Sikh Guru, Shri Guru Teg Bahadur Ji. Initially called Chakk Nanaki in

honour of the Guru's mother, it was later renamed Anandpur Sahib. Guru Gobind Singh built five forts around Anandpur to protect it from external threats. It was here that he baptised the first five Sikhs, known as the Panch Pyaras, forming the core of the '*Khalsa*'. Gurudwara Keshgarh Sahib, located at the birthplace of the *Khalsa*, is one of the five holiest Takhts in Sikhism. Additionally, Kashmiri Pandits sought refuge here from Mughal tyranny, and Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji travelled to Delhi to make the ultimate sacrifice.

Anandpur Sahib is also where Guru Gobind Singh Ji spent his early years. On Baisakhi Day in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh Ji established the *Khalsa*, marking a pivotal moment in Sikh history and laying the foundation for Sikh sovereignty in Punjab. Gurudwara Keshgarh Sahib continues to commemorate this historic event.



Rendezvous or Shahi Mulakaat Sthan/Rudhrah Gourav



Maharaja Ranjeet Singh and his Cavalcade of Sikhs Encamped under a Banyan Tree on the River Sutlej/ G. Presbury (Fisher and Son, London), after William Harvey, sketched by G. F. White



POINT CALIMERE WILDLIFE AND BIRD SANCTUARY

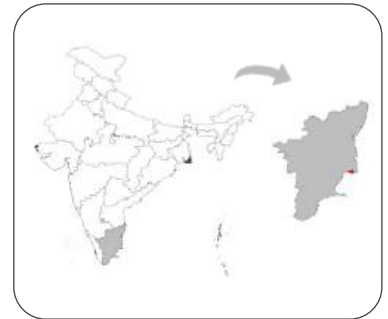
Tamil Nadu | DATE OF DESIGNATION : August 19, 2002

The term 'Point Calimere' dates back to the early 16th century, when the Portuguese traders first began commerce with the adjacent town of Nagapattinam and later built a commercial hub there in 1554. In Portuguese, 'mar' means sea, and 'calido' means warm.

At the highest point within the sanctuary lies *Ramar Padam*, a small shrine housing the stone footprints of Lord Rama. This site becomes a focal point each April during the *Ram Navami* Festival, attracting a large number of devotees. The Kuzhagar Temple (also known as Kodi Kuzhagar Temple) in Kodikkarai is another notable site dedicated to Shiva. Initially constructed by the Cholas, it is mentioned in the 7th-century Tamil text *Tevaram* and features

several Chola inscriptions. South of Kodiakkarai village, the Navakodi Sittar Aalayam temple holds historical significance due to its association with the wedding of Lord Shiva and Parvati, and it attracts devotees during its annual festivals. Modi Mandapam is a shrine situated near Ramarpadam. According to Hindu legend, Lord Vedaraneswarer is said to spend a night here with his consort between January and February. A significant festival occurs at this site in the first week of March.

The Sanyasin Muniaswar Kovil, a shrine between Muniappan Lake and Kodaikarai Roa, is visited by devotees on auspicious occasions, with special pujas held on March 20. The Mattumunian Kovil, a small temple in the southern part of the sanctuary, is notable



for its year-round prayers and a significant festival celebrated on the third Friday of September.

The Avulaiganni Dargah, a Muslim saint's grave near *Ramar Padam*, is commemorated annually at the end of November. In the sanctuary's northern forests, devotees from the town of Arcothurai celebrate the Shevrayan Kovil shrine, dedicated to Shevrayan and Soni, in June/July.



Ramar Padam/ Marcus



Kuzhagar Temple/ Pa. Jambulingam



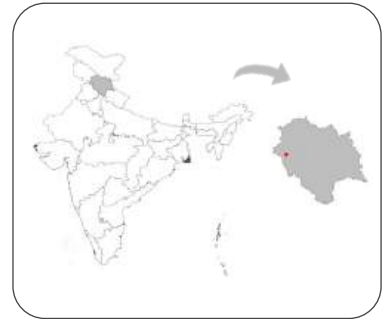
PONG DAM LAKE

Himachal Pradesh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : August 19, 2002

Pong Dam Lake, also known as Maharana Pratap Sagar, is home to the Bathu Temples, locally referred to as *Bathu ki Ladi*, a cluster of ancient temples. The Bathu temples are constructed in the Nagara style of architecture, which is prevalent in the state of Himachal Pradesh. Many stories about the origin of the temples are famous in folklore.

According to a local folklore associated with *Mahabharata*, the Pandavas tried constructing a staircase to Heaven at the monolithic

Masrur Rock Temples across the wetland. However, their efforts were thwarted by Indra (the Hindu God of rain and thunder). They then successfully built the 'Stairway to Heaven' at the '*Bathu ki Ladi*' temples, where the staircase still exists today, allowing visitors to climb to its highest point. These ancient temples are primarily dedicated to Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva. The temples were submerged under the reservoir's waters when the Pong Dam was completed in the early 1970s. The



submerged *Bathu ki Ladi* temples become accessible only when the water levels recede.



Bathu Temple/ Mywik2023



ASHTAMUDI WETLAND

Kerala | DATE OF DESIGNATION : August 19, 2002

The name 'Ashtamudi' means 'Eight coned' in Malayalam, reflecting the estuary's intricate network of waterways. The historic port city of Kollam is located on the eastern banks of Ashtamudi Estuary and was recognised as a vital trade gateway to the West and China in the 14th Century. The famous medieval traveller Ibn Battuta is known to have described Kollam (then Quilon) as a trading hub for Chinese goods. Historical connections with Persia in the 9th century, a visit from a Chinese Mandarin in 1275 AD, and subsequent influences from the Portuguese in 1502 AD, as

well as the Dutch and British by 1795 AD, have shaped the diverse cultural and religious landscape of Kollam, predominantly featuring Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam.

Bush park fishing, also known as padal fishing, is an indigenous fishing method commonly used in the Ashtamudi Estuary. This technique involves creating artificial reefs using twigs and leaves from trees, which are placed in the shallow areas of the estuary. The purpose of these structures is to provide shelter for fish, encouraging feeding and breeding.



The Kottamkulangara Temple, around 10 km from the wetland, is famous for its ritual where men don women's attire. The Ashramam Sree Krishnaswamy Temple, located around 17 km away,



Kollam (then Quilon)/ Wikimedia Commons

is historically linked to Thevally Palace, the former residence of the Travancore *Maharaja*. The ancient Oachira Temple, around 24 km distant, hosts vibrant festivals, including the *Oachira Vrischikam* with martial arts and the *Kettukazhcha* car festival during *Irupathattam* Onam. The Sreemahadeva Temple, located around 70 km to the west, incorporates the wetland into its rituals, while the Anchal Agasthyakode Mahadeva Temple, around 56 km away, is inclusive for all during the *Sivarathri* festival. The Asramam Sree Krishna Swamy Temple is located on the eastern banks of Ashtamudi Estuary and is associated with the old Thevally palace, which is also built on the banks of the estuary. On the western banks

of the estuary lies the renowned Sree Mahadeva Temple, which includes the use of the wetland for performing various rituals. The significance of Ashtamudi Estuary are dated back to the Phoenicians and the Romans.

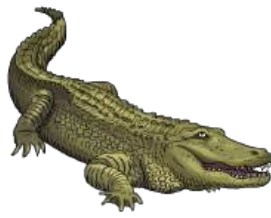
Snake boat racing, or *Vallam kali*, is vital to Kerala's backwater culture. Locally, it is referred to as *Chundan Vallam* due to the boat's prow resembling a bird's beak. Originating in the 14th century during a war involving the Chembakasseri kingdom, King Devanarayan devised these impressive canoes after consulting the ancient Sthapathya Veda texts.

Ashtamudi Wetland hosts the prestigious President's Trophy Boat Race. This is the most popular of

the races to be held in November on Ashtamudi Estuary in Kollam. The race starts from the water column near Thevally Palace and the finishing point is at the houseboat terminal. The track for the race is the 1250 m stretch of wetland between these two points. The Boat Race transforms the tranquil waters into a lively racecourse where snake boats, elegantly slicing through the water, compete for the coveted trophy. The event draws thousands of spectators who cheer on the rowers, creating a vibrant and festive atmosphere.



President's Trophy Boat Race/ Kerala Tourism



BHITARKANNIKA MANGROVES

Odisha | DATE OF DESIGNATION : August 19, 2002

Bhitarkanika derives its name from the Odia words 'Bhitar,' which means 'interior,' and 'Kanika,' meaning 'extraordinarily beautiful.' This area, formerly known as 'Kanika,' served as the private residence and hunting ground of the ancient kings of the erstwhile Kingdom of Kanika in Odisha. The kings and their ancestors used the surrounding park as their hunting grounds, where they hunted big cats, crocodiles, and occasionally deer. Over time, the term evolved into 'Rajkanika,' which refers to a secluded area once maintained under royal patronage.

The palace now houses a museum featuring one of the largest crocodile skull listed in the Guinness Book of World Records. Legend states that a colossal saltwater crocodile known as 'Kalia' (due to its black colour) wreaked havoc in the waterways of Bhitarkanika for nearly a century, claiming the

lives of several people, primarily women. Estimated to be between 23 and 24 feet long (7.01 to 7.32 meters), Kalia ruled over a 10-mile stretch of the Dhamra River. After evading hunters for 50 years, Kalia was eventually shot in 1926 by a ship captain travelling from Chandbali to Kolkata. Injured, Kalia sought refuge on the riverbank, but local villagers set fire to the reeds, leading to Kalia's demise. Kalia's remains highlight the region's extraordinary biodiversity. During its dissection, numerous gold anklets and armllets belonging to its victims were discovered.

Bhitarkanika is home to medieval Hindu temples, including a Shiva Temple known for its architectural style typical of Odisha, featuring an Amalaka on top and a Nandi statue outside. Nearby, a small, dilapidated temple dedicated to Van Durga houses many *Murtis*. The ancient Lingaraja Temple



complex, dedicated to Lord Shiva, dates back to the 7th century, with recorded history dating back to the 11th century. The Righagarh Baladev Jew Temple, built 350 to 400 years ago by the king of Kanika, is still maintained by the royal family.

Additionally, Bhitarkanika supports local craftsmanship, particularly in Nalia grass crafts, contributing to Odisha's rich heritage of wetland-based crafts.



Rajkanika Palace/ MKar



Shiva temple, Bhitarkanika/ Anil Fartiyal



BHOJ WETLAND

Madhya Pradesh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : August 19, 2002

Bhoj Wetland is named after King Bhoja of the Parmar dynasty, who founded the city of Bhojpal between two artificial lakes. He constructed the Upper Lake in the early 11th century by building an earthen dam across the Kolans River. Later, in the late 18th century, Nawab Chhote Khan added another lake downstream to enhance the city's charm.

These lakes are crucial to Bhopal and are often referred to as the 'lifelines of the city' due to their significant socio-economic and cultural roles. On Takia Island in the Upper Lake lies the grave of Shah Ali Shah Rahamatullah Alla, a revered 18th-century Sufi saint,

making the site significant both religiously and archaeologically.

Taj-ul-Masajid, located around 13 km from the wetland, is the largest mosque in India and one of the largest in Asia. Initiated by Shah Jahan Begum in 1887, its name means 'Crown of the Mosques'. The mosque was designed to be a significant centre for Islamic education and awareness worldwide.

The Bhojpur Temple, often called the Somnath of the East, is located on the banks of the Betwa River in the Raisen district, around 36 kilometres from the Bhoj Wetland. It is named after King Bhoj and is dedicated to Lord Shiva. The Shivling



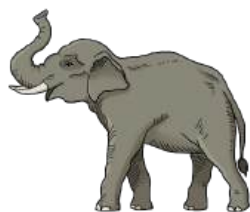
and the temple were commissioned by Raja Bhoj between 1010 and 1053 AD. However, the temple was never completed, and today, the Archaeological Survey of India oversees its maintenance and ongoing restoration efforts.



Taj-ul-Masjid, Bhopal/ Pranshu Dubey



Raja Bhoj Statue,
Bhoj Wetland/ Ritesh Kumar



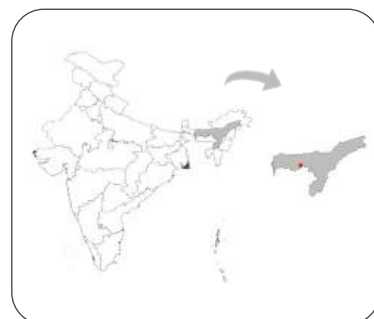
DEEPOOR BEEL

Assam | DATE OF DESIGNATION : August 19, 2002

Historically, Deepor Beel was a harmonious habitat for various tribes, including the Bodo, Karbi, Garo, Rabha, Khasi, and Assamese-speaking communities, who coexisted in harmony, engaging in activities such as fishing. The name 'Deep-or' is believed to have originated from a blend of these dialects, with 'Beel' signifying lake in both Assamese and Bodo, and 'Deep-or' possibly derived from the term for elephants in one of the indigenous languages. It is assumed that the wetland acquired its name due to its longstanding association with

elephants from the surrounding forests, which contributes to its significance. The wetland's connection to elephants is underscored by its shape, which once resembled an elephant's footprint. Despite urban development, large groups of elephants continue to visit the wetland, particularly during winter when water sources in the nearby hill forests dry up.

Deepor Beel is intricately connected to the local communities, especially during the Bihu Festival in January, when nearby villages engage in traditional community



fishing. The Karbi village has long practised self-sustainability by cultivating rice in the fringe areas of the wetlands. This village boasts a rich culture featuring distinctive



Husori (Bihu Dance)/ Donvikro

rice-growing techniques, weaving traditions, and a unique dialect.

For generations, the Koibortra fishing community has depended on the wetland for livelihood and animal fodder. In the past, residents gathered abundant lotus blossoms from the wetland to sell during Durga Puja, providing offerings for local temples. Many practices and ceremonies, including Johong puja and other musical traditions, help people recall the value and beauty of the environment, particularly the wetland.

According to *Shiva Purana* (one of the eighteen major texts of the *Purana* genre of Sanskrit texts in Hinduism), at the Bheemashankar Jyothirlinga temple, located at a distance of around 6 km from Deepor Beel, Lord Shiva manifested as a divine light on Dakini Parvat to protect his devoted follower, King Kamarupeswar, from the demon King Bheemasura. Following this event, Dakini Parvat was renamed Kshobak Parvat, as Lord Bhima Shankar was filled with rage (*Kshob*) while vanquishing Bheemasura. Today,

the Bheemashankar Jyothirlinga is worshipped at Panchya Kanya Dham on Kshobak Parvat. This area is considered the sacred *tapobhumi* (penance site) of revered sages such as Basistha, Viswamitra, Brighu, Markandeya, and Gautama Muni, among many others. It is also the site of three incarnations of Lord Vishnu, Bamana, Baraha, and Narasimha, and two avatars of Lord Shiva, Sharabha and Bheemashankar, making it a significant spiritual locale in Assam.



Entrance to Bheemashankar Jyothirlinga temple/ Ishanjyotibora



EAST KOLKATA WETLANDS

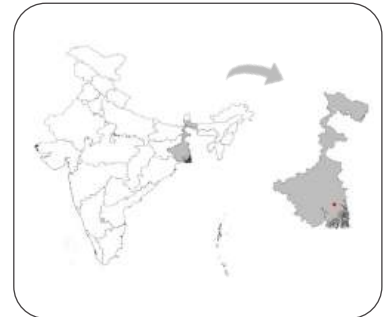
West Bengal | DATE OF DESIGNATION : August 19, 2002

The East Kolkata Wetlands (EKW), formerly known as East Calcutta Wetlands, sustain one of the world's largest integrated resource recovery systems based on a combination of aquaculture, agriculture, and horticulture. Sewage-fed fisheries are a vital part of the EKW, with over 250 fishponds, or 'bheri', using sewage for fish farming. This method, which started in the 1940s, treats Kolkata's wastewater by filtering out nutrients and heavy metals.

EKW host several tribal families, including the Mundas, Santhals, Sardars, and Oraons. A key element of Munda culture is animism, which posits that all aspects of nature, including plants, animals, rocks, and thunder, possess spirits that can influence human experiences. This belief has been widespread across the tribe through Sarnaism. The Mundas view a 'Nature-Man-Spirit Complex' where the interactions among nature, humanity, and spirits are profound. Consequently,

the Munda community's culture is profoundly shaped by their environment, including the wetlands. Their beliefs in animism and Sarnaism emphasise the strong ties between nature, humans, and spirits, with the Sal tree serving as a pivotal symbol.

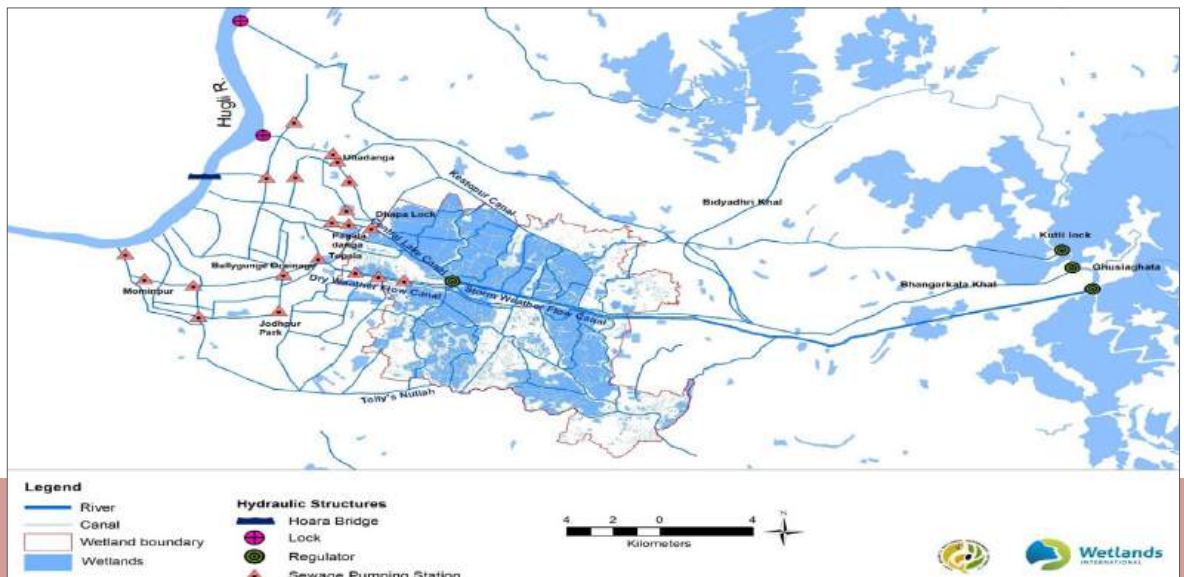
The Karam festival is a significant celebration for the Mundas, involving worshipping a branch from the Karam tree (*Nauclea parvifolia*). This branch is collected from the forest, planted at the *Akhra* (the village assembly point), or carried to a pandal. It is raised at the centre of the gathering amidst the sounds of conch shells and *ulu dhwani* (a Bengali custom of ululating, or making a high-pitched, trilling sound, to celebrate and ward off evil spirits). These religious rituals are popular in festivals and functions of the Bengali community. Women then decorate the branch and lead the celebrations with songs and dances, honouring nature and praying for a bountiful harvest. In addition



to Karam, Munda culture celebrates various other festivals, including Sarhul, Phagun, Roghara, Bisu Sikor, Mage Parab, Ba Parab, and Batauli.



Karam Puja/ Pankaj



Hydraulic structures in EKW Basin/ Wetlands International South Asia



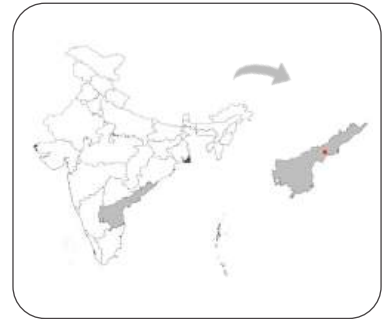
KOLLERU LAKE

Andhra Pradesh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : August 19, 2002

The historical significance of Kolleru can be traced back to Langulya Gajapathi Raju, an Orissa ruler, as indicated by two ancient Pallava copper plates found in the lake. The Gajapathi fort was located in Kolleti Kota on Kolleru Lake's eastern islands. Meanwhile, the enemy general, known as 'Muhammadan', camped at 'Chiguru Kota' along the coast. The lake protected the Odissi soldiers, but to conquer the Gajapati fort, their rivals dug a channel, now known as Upputeru, to drain the lake. To honour the gods and ensure victo-

ry over Muhammadan, the Odissi leader sacrificed his daughter, renaming the channel Perantala Kanama in her memory.

The annual Kolleru Lake Festival celebrates the area's cultural heritage, featuring local artists, folk music, traditional dance, and art exhibitions. At the heart of the Ramsar Site, Kolletikota features a boat-accessible temple dedicated to a local deity, which attracts thousands during the annual Jatara festival. Additionally, the Peddintamma Temple, a sig-



nificant Hindu pilgrimage site, is located 16 km away and was built in the 13th century by a general of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty.



Peddintamma Temple/ Adnan Abubakr



SASTHAMKOTTA LAKE

Kerala | DATE OF DESIGNATION : August 19, 2002

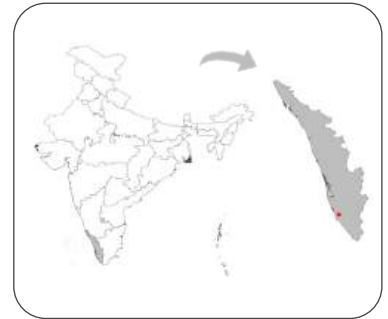
Sasthamkotta, known as the “Queen of Lakes”, is named after the local deity, Lord Sastha, whose prominent temple is situated by the wetland. This significant cultural site attracts locals, especially on new moon days, which are considered auspicious.

Nearby are temples dedicated to Lord Ganesha and Lord Ayyappa (a revered Hindu deity famous in Southern India, believed to be the son of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu, born to defeat the demoness Mahishi), the latter known for defeating the demoness Mahishi. Annual *poojas* are conducted in their honour. The annual holy dip of the deity, known as ‘*Araattu*’, held at the conclusion of the temple festival, takes place in the wetland waters near the temple. A micro-watershed with three ponds and surrounding groves is situated near the wetland which helps maintain local wells, ensur-

ing they remain functional even during dry seasons.

The Thalayinnakkavu Shiva Parvathi Temple (~5 km), the Poruvazhy Peruviruthi Malanada Duryodhana Temple (~10 km), the Anayadi Narasimha Swamy Temple (~ 10 km), and the Ammankovil Devi or Bhadrakali Temple in Sasthamkotta Mannakkara (~30 km), all add to the Ramsar Site’s cultural and spiritual significance. Mount Horeb Ashramam, a Malankara Orthodox Church monastic community, was also established just on the banks of the wetland in 1991.

Jatayupara, a massive rock sculpture at Chadayamangalam, is located around 45 km from the wetland. The name Jatayupara is believed to come from the mythical bird Jatayu in the epic Ramayana, who is believed to have collapsed on the rock after failing



in his attempts to thwart Ravana’s kidnapping of Sita, wife of Lord Ram.



Jatayupara/ Suchita Awasthi



Entrance to Sastha Temple/ Wetlands International South Asia



TSOMORIRI

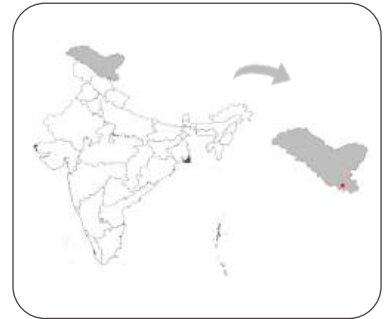
Ladakh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : August 19, 2002

Tso Moriri, meaning 'Turquoise Lake' in Tibetan, is renowned for its striking blue waters. According to a local legend, the lake is named after Tsomo, a young girl from Karzok (or Korzok) Village. Tsomo was responsible for her family's herd, which included yaks and goats. One winter, her father's favourite yak escaped and ran across the frozen lake. Despite her fear, Tsomo chased the yak, calling out to it with the Ladakhi word for cattle, "Ri... Ri... Ri...". Tragically, the ice gave way, and Tsomo and the yak fell into the lake, never to be seen again. In her memory, the lake was named Tso Moriri.

The high-altitude pastures of Changthang are inhabited by the nomadic Changpa tribe, who

graze livestock there. These pastures are renowned for their Pashmina wool, produced by Changra goats, which is essential to the local economy. The soft, silky undercoat of these goats is used to make high-quality shawls, while the region also produces sheep wool for clothing and carpets.

Korzok Monastery, founded by Kunga Lodro Ningpo around 400 years ago, overlooks Tso Moriri at 15,000 feet. Located in Korzok village, one of the highest settlements globally, the name 'Korzok' means 'acquired by unfair means,' referencing the monks' historical exploitation of local herdsmen. Sacred to the local Buddhist community, the monks refrain from using the lake's water. The monastery is part of the Druk-



pa lineage and features a statue of Shakyamuni Buddha. It hosts the annual Gustor festival in July/August, where the 'Storma,' a sacrificial cake, is cut by the Black Hat dancers to symbolise the triumph over evil. The monastery is deeply connected to the local community and its traditions.



Korzok Gustor Festival/ Ministry of Tourism



Changpa Tribe of Changthang



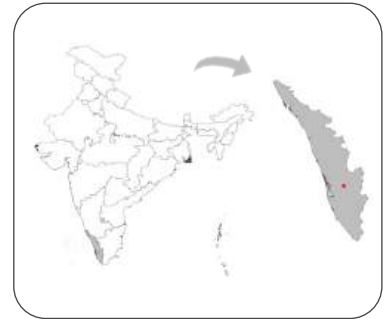
VEMBANAD-KOL WETLAND

Kerala | DATE OF DESIGNATION : August 19, 2002

Vembanad-Kol is known for Pokkali rice cultivation. The wetland has been used for integrated rice cultivation and fish farming since the 18th century. Rice cultivation in these wetlands starts with de-watering low-lying fields using pumps to channel around the farm embankments. Water regimes for multiple uses are ensured by coordinated lowering of water levels done in coordination by farming cooperatives using a traditional practice known as *Kootaima reeti*. Some cooperative societies follow a crop rotation in which fields are used for aquaculture when water levels are high (June to October) and later for rice cultivation. Fish and prawns are cultivated after the paddy harvest when the fields are inundated. The productivity of agriculture is maintained by

the recycling of crop residues. In 2008, Pokkali rice was awarded Geographical Indication status. Additionally, live clam collection is a significant occupation for women and children in the region. Kuttanad, a floodplain delta where upstream rivers meet the wetlands, harbours this unique rice cultivation that takes place below mean sea level. This area was awarded the prestigious GIAHS (Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems) status by the FAO in 2013. Another similar paddy farming region is located in Thrissur District and is called the Kol paddy fields. In Malayalam, the word 'Kol' means bumper crop.

Public ferry slips in Thycattussery Panchayat are Ulaveyppu Kadavu,



Koppayi Kadavu, Vallyara Kadavu, Chudukattupuram Kadavu, Chirakkal Kadavu, Chalu Kadavu, Pukalukuthum Kadavu, Kuttianjalikkal Kadau, Varekkad Temple Kadavu, Kariyil Kadavu, Poochakkal market Kadavu, Makke Kadavu ferry, fishermen colony, Manappuram ferry, Channikkadavu, Polekkadavu and Thycattussery ferry. Temple rituals are observed



Pokkali Rice Cultivation/ Wetlands International South Asia

at some of these ferry slips, as well as in the Puthanangadi Pulikkechira and Kannankara jetty areas of Thannermukkom North Village and certain locations in Kothamangalam Village. The Onam festival is famous for its vibrant snake boat races, where large teams of oarsmen row in harmony on serene wetlands. The Kumarakom boat race features about fifty types of boats, including veppu, ody, churulan, and snake boats, along the Kavanar and Kottathodu rivers. The Nehru Trophy Boat Race or *Vallam Kali*, the premier event

held on the second Saturday of August, attracts around two lakh spectators, including many tourists. The highlight is the *chundan vallams*, or snake boats, which are over a hundred feet long and the race course with 1.5 km long in Punnamada *Kayal* (wetland), which is part of the Vembanad wetland. These boats, named for their resemblance to traditional Norwegian craft, became popular after the inaugural 1952 race honouring Pandit Nehru's visit, with the winner, Nadubhagam Chundan, receiving a silver tro-

phy inscribed with the signature of Pandit Nehru that established the annual race.

The estuarine waterspread of Vembanad wetland and polders of Kuttanad form a significant and popular tourist attraction in Kerala. Nearly 0.2 million tourists visit the backwaters annually, supporting the livelihoods of owners and operators of more than 800 traditional houseboats/Shikkara boats.



Nehru Trophy Boat Race/ Alamy Stock Photo



RUDRASAGAR LAKE

Tripura | DATE OF DESIGNATION : November 8, 2005

Rudrasagar is renowned for the Neermahal Palace, built as a summer retreat between 1930 and 1938 by Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya, the king of Tripura State. The palace combines Hindu and Muslim architectural styles and was envisioned by the Maharaja in 1921. It was constructed over nine years by the British firm Martin and Burns. As a member of the Manikya Dynasty, one of the world's oldest continuous dynasties, Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Bahadur's palace reflects his refined taste and inno-

vative vision of blending diverse architectural traditions. Neermahal is divided into two sections: the western part, known as Andar Mahal, was reserved for the royal family, while the eastern part served as an open-air theatre for cultural events. The palace features two stairways leading into Rudrasagar, and the Maharajas would arrive by hand-powered boat from Rajghat (on the bank of Rudrasagar).

The yearly Neermahal Festival draws visitors from all over India.



Activities feature swimming contests, boat races, and a fair in celebration of the significant *Vijaya Dashami* festival.



Neermahal Palace/ Department of Tourism, Government of Tripura



CHANDERTAL WETLAND

Himachal Pradesh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : November 8, 2005

Chandertal is famous for its unique crescent-moon shape, which is reflected in its name, meaning Lake of the Moon. This lake holds significant cultural importance in local legends and traditions, particularly among the communities of Lahaul and Spiti. Its sacred status is mainly celebrated during festivals like Bees Bhado, when locals come together to honour their deities at the site.

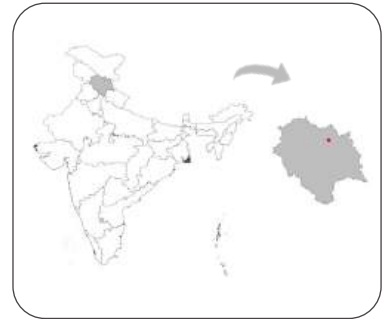
The famous mystery tale of Chandertal involves Chandra, the daughter of the Moon God, and Bhaga, the son of the Sun God. Despite their parents' disapproval, they decided to elope from Baralacha La, where they first met. Unable to find each other, they united by the Chandrabhaga River, creating the lakes Suraj Tal and Chandertal, which continue to echo their love story.

The locals believe fairies visit the wetland every night. A shepherd fell in love with one but, despite being married, kept it a secret. When he accidentally revealed his marriage, the fairy never re-

turned. He waited by the lake until his death, and it's said his soul still roams the banks, calling for his lost love.

According to another local legend related to the *Mahabharata*, Lord Indra, the God of storms, heaven, and rain, transported Yudhishthira, the eldest Pandava, to heaven from Chandertal Lake. Kunzum Pass, which connects the Spiti Valley with the Lahaul Valley, serves as the gateway to Chandertal. At the summit of the pass stands the Kunzum Devi Temple, dedicated to Goddess Kunzum, believed to protect travellers from harm. Additionally, the shores of Chandertal are adorned with Buddhist stone stacks and colourful prayer flags, further reflecting the region's spiritual heritage.

For the Gaddi herders, this high-altitude landscape is considered the realm of gods, goddesses, and various spirits, both benevolent and malevolent. They adhere to traditional practices to ensure sustainable grazing and to show respect for the local deities.



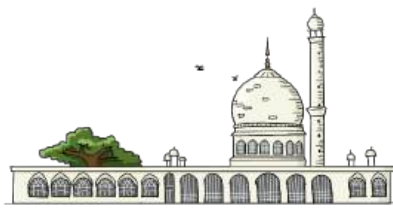
The Gaddi community also has a local deity and has constructed a stone temple downstream of the wetland.



Signage at Chandertal explaining the local beliefs associated with the wetland/ Wetlands International South Asia



Kunzum Devi Temple/ John Hill



HOKERA WETLAND

Jammu & Kashmir | DATE OF DESIGNATION : November 8, 2005

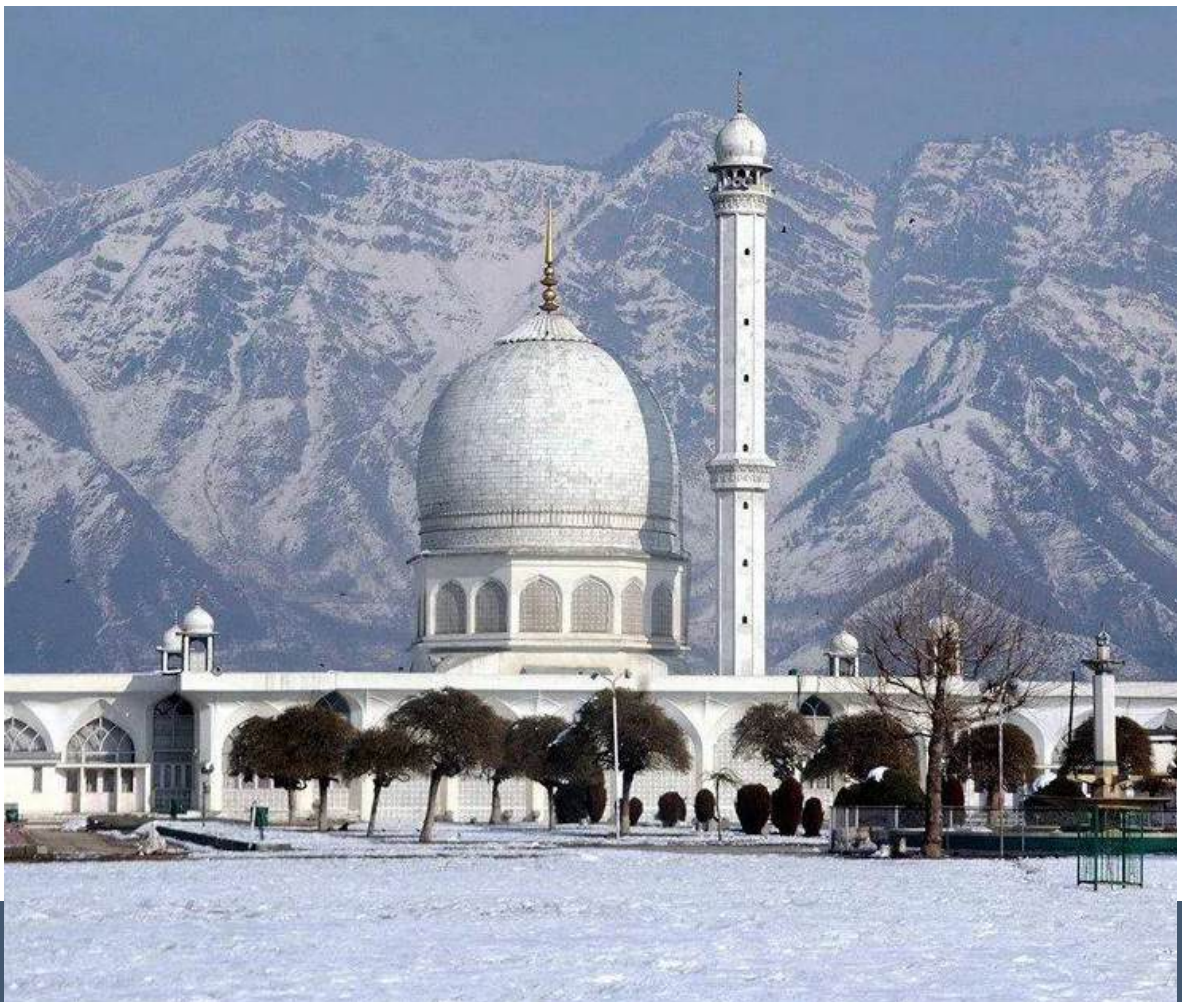
Hokera Wetland, commonly known as Hokersar or the 'Queen Wetland of Kashmir', is significant for its ecological value, and cultural and religious importance. The renowned Hazratbal Shrine, one of Kashmir's most revered sites, is located just a few kilometres from Hokera, and many devotees visit the wetland as a part of their pilgrimage to the shrine.

The Ramsar Site boasts a history spanning over a century and was once a shooting retreat for Maharaja Hari Singh of Jammu & Kash-

mir. The wetland's administration had evolved through various departments over the years, initially managed by the Department of Twaza (Hospitality and Protocol) and the Game and Fisheries Department, until 1947, when it was officially designated as a state *Rakh* (Game reserve). Later, the administration of Hokera came under the Department of Game after the Fisheries wing was separated, and it remained with this department until 1973. The wetland was subsequently returned to the Game and Fisheries De-



partment until 1979. Since 1979, it has been under the jurisdiction of the Department of Wildlife Protection.



Hazratbal Shrine/ Adeel Yousuf



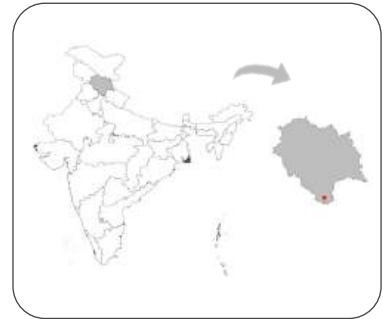
RENUKA WETLAND

Himachal Pradesh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : November 8, 2005

Renuka Wetland is named after Renukaji, the wife of Sage Jama-dagni and mother of Lord Parshu-ram, the sixth avatar of Vishnu. According to legend, Renukaji leapt into the wetland to perform jal samadhi after King Sahasarjuna killed the sage and attempted to abduct her. This devotion inspired Parshuram to defeat Sahasarjuna and eradicate the Kshatriya caste. Renukaji vowed to appear annu-

ally on *Devprabodhini Ekadashi* to reunite with her son. This annual reunion is celebrated with a grand procession carrying Lord Parshuram's palanquin from an ancient temple to the lake, symbolising Lord Parshuram's eternal devotion to his mother.

Renuka is considered sacred by locals. It hosts four major cultural and religious events: the Renuka



International Fair in November, *Maghi Sankranti* in January, *Bisho Sankranti* in April, and *Haryali* in August. The International Fair, organised by the Renuka Vikas Board, attracts 2-3 lakh pilgrims annually. Additionally, feeding the fish in the wetland is a significant cultural practice.

*Renuka International Fair/
Ministry of Tourism*



Renukaji Temple/ Harsh Ganapathi



SURINSAR-MANSAR LAKES

Jammu & Kashmir | DATE OF DESIGNATION : November 8, 2005

Surinsar and Mansar Lakes are two interconnected parts of a unified wetland system. The wetlands hold deep social and cultural significance, tracing their origins to the *Mahabharata* period. According to Hindu mythology, these wetlands are associated with Arjuna, a great warrior from the *Mahabharata*. It is believed that Arjuna shot an arrow into the ground at Mansar, causing a spring of water to gush forth and form the Mansar wetland. The water from the arrow's exit then created the Surinsar wetland. Furthermore, some legends associate these wetlands with Babru Vahana, the son of Arjuna and Ulpi, who is said to have ruled the region during the *Mahabharata* period. It is believed that after a great battle, Arjuna performed the *Ashwamedh Yajna*, releasing a symbolic horse that Babru Vahana captured near Khoon. In a tragic turn, Babru Vahana unknowingly killed his father, Arjuna. Babru Vahana then embarked on a quest to retrieve a sacred gem, *Mani*, from the six-headed serpent king, *Sheshnag*, to restore his life. Using his bow and arrow, Babru Vahana carved a tunnel through Surinsar

(then Surangsar), fought and defeated *Sheshnag*, and emerged at present-day Mansar (formerly Manisar) with the *Mani*. With this divine gem, Babru Vahana succeeded in reviving Arjuna.

According to another local legend, Mansar Lake is revered as the dwelling place of *Sheshnag*, believed to reside within its waters. The shrine dedicated to *Sheshnag*, located on the eastern bank of the lake, is revered by many communities who regard the serpent god as their family deity. The shrine has been transformed into a grand site featuring a prominent statue of the six-headed serpent god. As a sacred site for Hindus, Mansar attracts numerous devotees who visit during religious festivals, especially on the *Sankranti* day of each month, believing that bathing in the lake during these times can cleanse them of past misdeeds. The lakes are considered to contain nectar, symbolising purity, and are thought to have healing and purifying powers. Mansar is also surrounded by ancient temples dedicated to *Mahadeva*, Goddess *Durga*, and *Narsimha*, adding to its spiritual significance.



Newlywed couples often circumambulate the lake to seek the blessings of the deity.



A representative image of the creation of Surinsar-Mansar Lake



Sheshnag Temple/ Kashmir Hills



UPPER GANGA RIVER

Uttar Pradesh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : November 8, 2005

The Upper Ganga from Brijghat to Narora is a revered symbol of faith and purity in India. It holds significant religious value for thousands of pilgrims who bathe and perform cremations for spiritual purification. Major festivals, such as the *Kumbh Mela*, attract millions of people seeking purification. Key bathing ghats in this stretch include Brijghat, Anoopshahr Ghat, and Rajghat.

People's deep devotion has elevated the river to the status of the most sacred, revered as Goddess Ganga. Haridwar, located along the Upper Ganga, is one of the four principal sites for the *Kumbh Mela*, a grand event known as one of the largest religious gath-

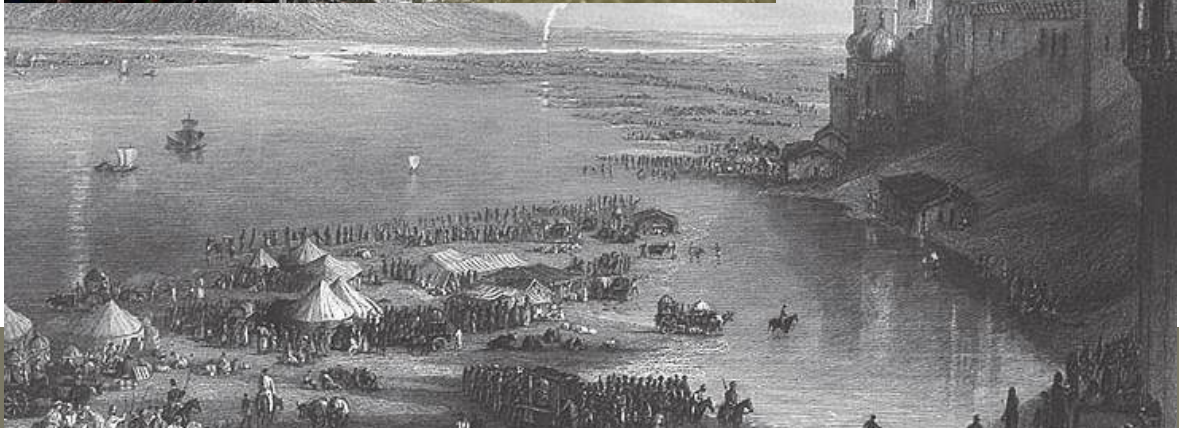
erings in the world. The origins of the *Kumbh Mela* trace back to the time when the Kalasha, or pot of nectar of immortality, was retrieved from the Samudramanathan, the churning of the primordial ocean. This event sparked a fierce conflict between the *Devas* (gods) and *Asuras* (demons). As the *Devas* attempted to protect the pot, nectar spilt at four locations, one of which was Haridwar. It is said that bathing during the *Kumbh Mela* cleanses a person of all sins and misfortunes, granting them salvation. Additionally, festivals like *Makar Sankranti* and *Kartik Purnima* celebrate the river's cultural significance through various rituals, including *Deep Daan*, involving the offering of lamps.



The river is frequently described as 'the lifeline of India'. Historically, the Ganges has been the cradle of Indian civilisation, witnessing the rise of great kingdoms such as Magadha and the Guptas and playing a vital role in developing Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism.



Haridwar, an important religious town on the banks of River Ganga/ Rahul Pandey



Kumbh Mela in Haridwar in 1850, J. M. W. Turner/ Wikimedia Commons

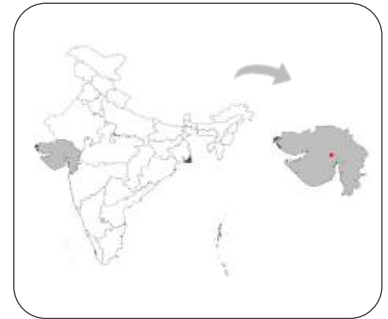


NALSAROVAR

Gujarat | DATE OF DESIGNATION : September 24, 2012

The locals connect Nalsarovar's name with 'Nal', a king renowned for his honesty and integrity. Another meaning of the word 'Nal' (Naal) indicates the presence of a sea creek. Several temples dedicated to local deities are on the wetland's islands, where they are revered as sacred sites. The Padhar community, classified as one of the primitive tribes, resides on the outskirts of Nalsarovar. In the 6th and 7th centuries, a female leader named Hinglaj established settlements for her followers in this area. Today, around 40,000 Padhars continue to live in similar conditions. The history of Nalsarovar dates back to the 16th century during the reign of Mughal Emperor Jahangir, who enjoyed hunting in the region. Once a royal hunting ground, Nalsarovar has now been designated as a protected area for various bird species.

Lothal, an archaeological site in the Bhal region of Dholka, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, is around 42 km from Nalsarovar. It is recognised as one of the prominent cities of the ancient Indus Valley civilisation. Lothal is derived from two Gujarati words: 'Loth,' meaning 'dead,' and 'thal,' meaning 'mound,' translating to 'the mound of the dead'. The city was inhabited around 3700 BCE and was a prosperous trading port. Archaeologists believe that Lothal was part of a significant river system along the ancient trade route connecting Sindh to Saurashtra in Gujarat. These excavations have yielded the most substantial number of artefacts in the context of modern Indian archaeology.



An ancient well, and the city drainage canals from Lothal/ Bernard Gagnon



Padhar Dance by the Padhar Community/ Sapara Gemar



SUNDARBAN WETLAND

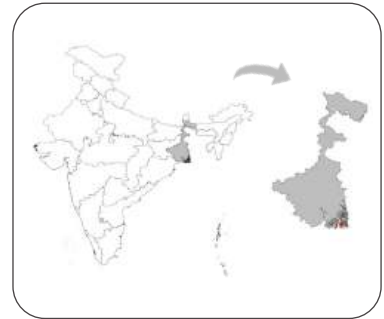
West Bengal | DATE OF DESIGNATION : January 30, 2019

The name 'Sundarbans' translates to 'beautiful woodland', derived from the mangrove tree species known as Sundari (*Heritiera fo-mes*). Located on the southern edge of the state of West Bengal, this wetland is rich in history and culture.

Tales of Bandurga, Banabibi (or Bonbibi), and Bandevi can be found in manuscripts such as 'Banabibir Keramati' and 'Banabibir Jahuranama', written by Munshi Mohammad Khater and Bayanuddin. Banabibi, the protective spirit of the Sundarbans, is revered by both Hindus and Muslims. She is the central figure in the Banabibi Palagan, a unique musical drama performed in the

Sundarbans. This myth creates harmony among people, nature, and individuals of different religions, castes, and creeds.

Banabibi is depicted as a motherly or sisterly figure who protects commoners, such as fishermen, honey gatherers, and farmers, from tigers and other dangers. The narrative portrays her as the protector of the people of Aatharo Bhathir Desh, meaning the 'land of 18 tides' or the Sundarbans, against Dakshinrai, the tiger-headed god. Alongside her brother Shah Jongoli, Banabibi defeats Dakshinrai, showing mercy by designating half the land as a wildlife sanctuary and the other half for human habitation. The



Banabibi Palagan tells the story of the struggles of the people and their coexistence with nature.

A key story features Dukhi, a village boy whose uncle Dhona lures him into a honey-collecting trip. Despite his mother's warning to call on Banabibi if neces-



Bonbibi in Sunderbans/ Pinakpani

sary, their greed leads them deep into Dakshinrai's territory. There, Dakshinrai strikes a sinister deal with Dhona: immense wealth in exchange for Dukhi. Dhona abandons the boy, but as Dakshinrai prepares to devour him, Dukhi cries out for Banabibi. True to her promise, she saves him, while her brother Shah Jongoli punishes the demon. With the intervention of the saint Ghazi, Dakshinrai is

spared, and Banabibi restores balance. Dukhi returns home with a bounty of honey and wax, having learned never to enter the forest with selfish intentions.

For centuries, the inhabitants of Sundarbans have worshipped Banabibi, the goddess, seeking her protection from the dangers lurking in the jungle. Honey collectors and woodcutters invoke

her name before entering the forest, bringing offerings of sweets to gain her favor and protection from tigers and other threats.

In addition to Banabibi, other deities such as Barakhan Gaji, Kalu Thakur, Mansa, Narayani, Makal Thakur, Bisalakshmi, and Shitala are also worshipped in the Sundarbans.



Pir Gazi and his tiger in the Sundarbans (drawn around 1800 CE), British Museum/ Wikimedia Commons



NANDUR MADHAMESHWAR

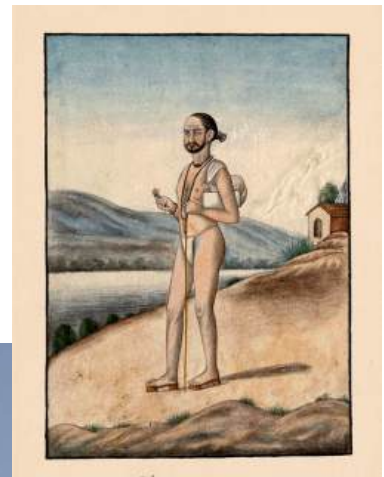
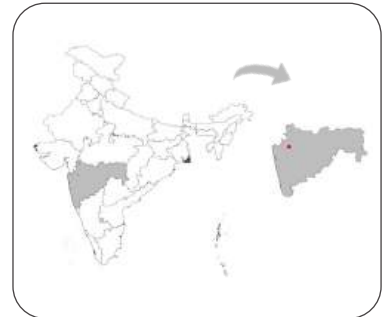
Maharashtra | DATE OF DESIGNATION : June 21, 2019

Nandur Madhmeshwar, situated near Niphad in Nashik district, is a reservoir created by a dam at the confluence of the Rivers Godavari and Kadva. Constructed between 1907 and 1913 as a pick-up weir on the River Godavari, it was primarily designed for irrigation by the British. Due to its significant biodiversity and numerous migratory birds, the area was designated as a sanctuary in 1958 and officially recognised as a wildlife sanctuary in 2010. Nandur Madhmeshwar is often referred to as the 'Bharatpur of Maharashtra', in homage to the renowned Keoladeo National Park in Bharatpur, Rajasthan.

Madhyameshwar Maharaj Temple is situated at a distance of about

9 kilometres from the sanctuary. This temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, is a significant religious site for locals, attracting devotees year-round. The site is also thought to be where the mythical Maharishi Gautama meditated.

The area around Nandur Madhmeshwar Reservoir is home to several other vital temples, such as Siddeshwar Temple at Karanjgaon, Sangameshwar and Nawsya Ganpati Temples at Khangaon Thadi, and Mrugwadeshwar Temple. Each year, these temples attract numerous pilgrims and tourists.



*Maharishi Gautama/
Raja Ravi Verma*



Madhyameshwar Maharaj Temple/ Rohan Gadekar



SARSAI NAWAR JHEEL

Uttar Pradesh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : September 19, 2019

Sarsai Nawar Jheel derives its name from the sarus crane (*Grus antigone*) and is considered to be the roosting area of the largest flock of sarus cranes in the region. The Ramsar Site is situated near the Hajari Mahadev Temple, a prominent religious site that draws millions of pilgrims annually. The temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva, one of the principal deities in Hinduism. The temple is renowned for celebrating *Shivaratri*,

a major Hindu festival dedicated to God Shiva. During this festival, which takes place in the first week of March, the temple draws thousands of devotees who participate in rituals, prayers, and festivities. The convergence of religious devotion and the natural beauty of the wetland creates a deeply spiritual atmosphere. The wetland and the temple share a sacred connection in local religious beliefs. The Sarus Crane is considered



auspicious and is revered in local folklore.



Hajari Mahadev Temple/ Wikimedia Commons



NAWABGANJ BIRD SANCTUARY

Uttar Pradesh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : September 19, 2019

Nawabganj Bird Sanctuary is a testament to the harmonious blend of nature and human heritage. The origin of the sanctuary can be traced back to the era when it was established as a hunting ground by the Nawabs of Awadh (annexed as Oudh by the British). Over time, evolving views on wildlife conservation led to its designation as a protected bird sanctuary in 1984. Amidst its lush greenery and shimmering waters, remnants from the Nawabi era still adorn the landscape, add-

ing a touch of historical grandeur. The calm waters of Nawabganj Lake reflect the tales of a bygone era. According to a local legend, Lord Lakshmana (from the epic *Ramayana*) stopped for a day's rest during his journey back from exile with Lord Rama and Sita.

Additionally, the Maa Durga Kushhari Temple is situated about 2 km from the sanctuary. The Durga temple is believed to have been established by Parashuram Ji, while the Kushahari Mata tem-



ple was founded by Kush, the elder son of Lord Rama, thus serving as an important religious site.



Maa Durga Kushhari Temple/ Yash Saxena



The Nawabs and Kings of Oudh/ Wikimedia Commons



SANDI BIRD SANCTUARY

Uttar Pradesh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : September 26, 2019

Sandi Bird Sanctuary was established in 1991 to protect the vital natural habitats and aquatic vegetation essential for local communities and migratory birds. The sanctuary is commonly known as

'Deher Jheel'. River Garra, historically referred to as 'Garunganga', flows in close proximity to the Sanctuary. It is said that migratory birds stop here for a while before continuing to the sanctuary, which



is a foot-mark-shaped jheel. These birds are typically seen arriving at the sanctuary in November, signalling the onset of winter.

Ducks sailing in River Garrah/ Pranavspn



Indian spot-billed duck in Sandi Bird Sanctuary/ Government of Uttar Pradesh



BEAS CONSERVATION RESERVE

Punjab | DATE OF DESIGNATION : September 26, 2019

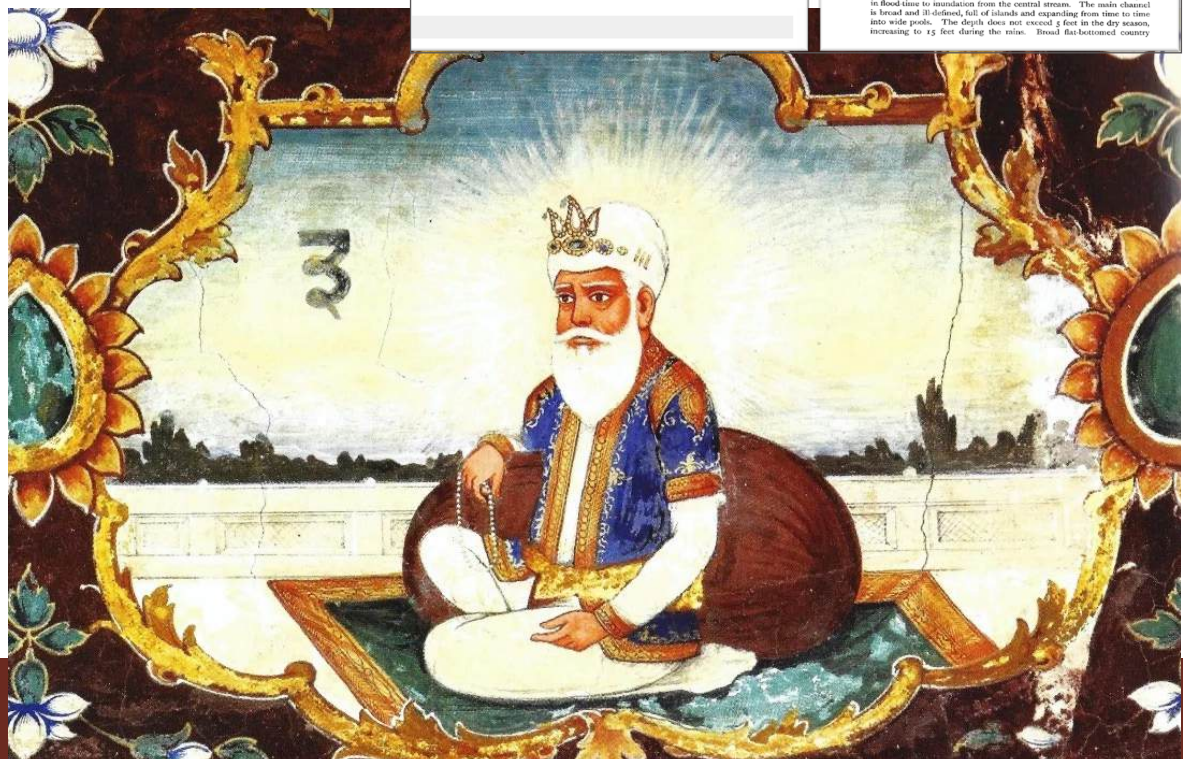
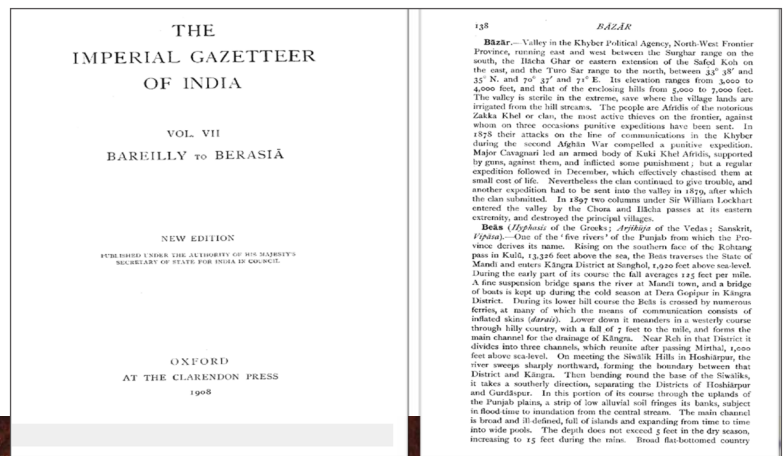
The River Beas, an ancient river mentioned in the Vedas, has been known by many names. In the Rigveda, it was called *Vipas* ('unfettered'), later becoming *Vipasa* in Sanskrit texts. It's also believed to be named after the sage Vyasa, author of the *Mahabharata*. Historically, it has been referred to as Arjikiya, Darya-e-Siyah, Biah, and Bipasa, among others. The name 'Beas' appeared in the Imperial Gazetteer of India in 1908.

ant religious locations like Sultanpur Lodhi, the Golden Temple in Amritsar, and Shri Hargobindpur Sahib, as well as the Ramsar Sites of Keshopur and Pong Dam.



River Beas mentioned in the Imperial Gazetteer of India in 1908/ The Digital South Asia Library

Temples and shrines along the Beas Conservation Reserve highlight the river's spiritual significance, with ongoing pilgrimages and religious rituals. The town of Goindwal Sahib, a vital centre for Sikhs since the 16th century under the guidance of Sri Guru Amar Das Ji, is situated on the River Beas. This site is also near other import-



Guru Amar Das in Boali Sahib, Goindwal/ Wikimedia Commons

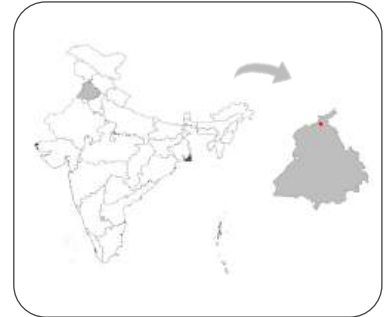


KESHOPUR-MIANI COMMUNITY RESERVE

Punjab | DATE OF DESIGNATION : September 26, 2019

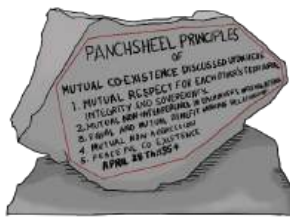
Keshopur-Miani Community Reserve, situated in the Gurdaspur district of North Punjab, holds the distinction of being India's first community reserve, representing a significant advancement in participatory conservation efforts. Keshopur-Miani Community Reserve stands as a beacon of hope, forged through a successful partnership between the forest department and local residents in 2007. Through various interventions, campaigns, and reassurances, the locals were convinced to support the initiative to designate the Keshopur-Miani wetlands as a community reserve. This transformative initiative was facilitated by the 2002 amendment to the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972, which introduced the concept of 'community reserves'. This amendment empowered lo-

cal communities to retain legal rights over their traditional landscapes while collaborating with the forest department to protect biodiversity. Farmers, like *Mah-sif*, harvest chestnuts and lotuses, while on the other hand, clear water ponds are used for fishing. The wetland ecosystem plays a crucial role in maintaining the water table in these areas.



*Lotus root extraction by locals/
Dhritiman Mukherjee*





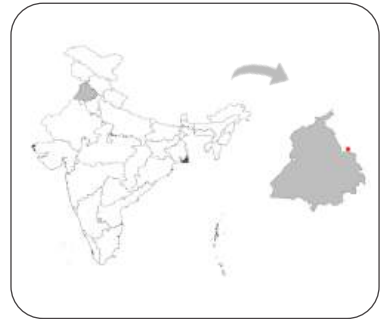
NANGAL WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Punjab | DATE OF DESIGNATION : September 26, 2019

The Nangal Wildlife Sanctuary is a popular destination, renowned for its diverse wildlife and historical significance. It was at the Nangal Dam in 1954 that Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Chinese Prime Minister Chou En Lai formalised the 'Panchsheel' or Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. These principles, which include mutual respect for territorial integrity, non-aggression,

non-interference, equality, and peaceful coexistence, were initially outlined in the 1954 Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between Tibet and India.

The sanctuary's proximity to significant temples, such as Naina Devi and Chintapurni, further enhances its religious and cultural appeal.



Panchsheel Principles at Nangal/ Claude Arpi



SAMASPUR BIRD SANCTUARY

Uttar Pradesh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : October 3, 2019

Samaspur Bird Sanctuary was established in 1987 to protect and conserve wetland ecosystems, with a primary focus on conserving local and migratory birds. A large population of the Indian Sarus crane (*Grus antigone*), an endangered bird species venerated in Hindu mythology, inhabits the area. The Sarus crane is revered as an eternal symbol of unconditional love, devotion, and good fortune in Indian culture. The name 'Sarus' is derived from the Sanskrit term 'sarasa', which means 'bird

of the lake'. In various cultures, people have admired the Sarus with both charm and respect.

The Samapur Bird Sanctuary and its surrounding areas are inhabited by local communities that have historically coexisted harmoniously with nature. The wetlands and birds from the sanctuary are celebrated in local songs and proverbs. Additionally, oral storytelling traditions portray birds as messengers or spiritual guides.

The presence of medicinal plants



in this wetland has also led to the establishment of traditional healers in the region.



Hunter got cursed by Valmiki for killing a Sarus crane/ Gita Press Gorakhpur



SAMAN BIRD SANCTUARY

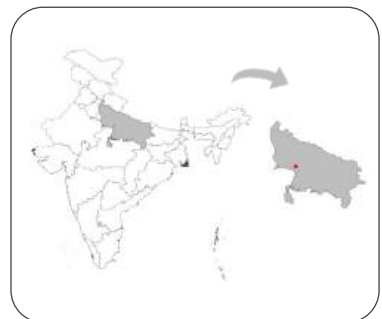
Uttar Pradesh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : December 2, 2019

The Saman Bird Sanctuary is adjacent to Hindupur village, home to the Bahelia community, which is traditionally known for bird hunting. However, such practices have nearly ceased following the sanctuary's establishment. Nearby religious sites, such as the Sheetla Devi Temple, contribute to the Ramsar Site's cultural landscape.

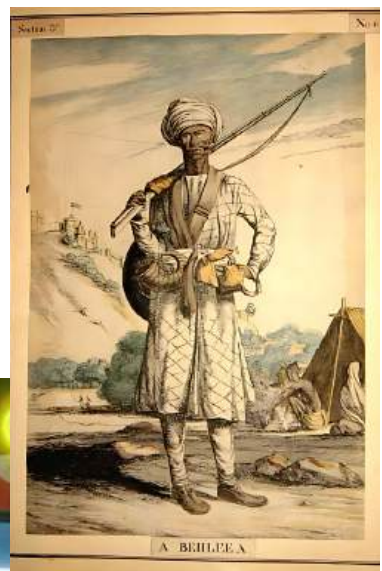
The sanctuary possesses a rich historical background in the Mainpuri district, which has been ruled by the Mughals, Marathas, Afghans, and Nawabs. Saman Bird Sanctuary is located around 35 km from Mainpuri city. The city is renowned for its arts and crafts, including wooden sculptures, glassware, silk sarees, pottery, carpets, and chikan embroidery, often showcasing Mughal designs.

Traditional music, including Hindustani, ghazal, and qawwali, as well as folk songs like rasiya, and classical dances such as Kathak, are integral to its cultural heritage.

Mainpuri's fairs, including the Devji fair in Uddetpur, the bathing fair in Bidhuna, and the *Kans ka mela*, reflect the city's vibrant cultural and religious life, with the annual 20-day exhibition-cum-trade fair at Sheetla Devi temple highlighting its rich tradition and commercial viability spirit.



*Bahelia Soldier (Behleea)/
Francois Balthasar*



Shree Devi Mela/ District Mainpuri Official



PARVATI ARGHA BIRD SANCTUARY

Uttar Pradesh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : December 2, 2019

Parvati Argha is derived from Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva's Argha (the bed of Shiva Linga). The Parvati Argha Bird Sanctuary holds significant religious importance for local communities. According to local legend, Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva rested in this region on their return journey after visiting the child form of Lord Rama in Ayodhya, the ancient Indian city revered as the birthplace of Lord Rama.

The sanctuary features two horse-shoe-shaped oxbow lakes and functions both as a vital wetland ecosystem and a revered sacred site, symbolising the divine presence of Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva for the local communities. Goddess Parvati's ancient temple

is situated in Parvati village, located on the eastern rim of the wetlands. Shiva and Parvati temples, situated on the banks of the wetland, are significant religious sites and tourist destinations. Every year in the month of *Sawan* (one of the holiest months for Hindus, dedicated to Lord Shiva and is also the onset of the monsoon season in India, usually beginning in late July and lasting till early-mid August), the temple hosts a fair that attracts thousands of believers.

The Gonda district is not only relying on its natural assets; it also has historical and spiritual significance. It is the birthplace of Bhagwan Ghanshyam, the founder of the Swami Narayan sect, located in Chapia village. This site attracts



thousands of devotees each year, particularly from the state of Gujarat. The site is located in close proximity to Ayodhya, the setting of the epic *Ramayana*. Once the capital of the ancient Kosala Kingdom, Ayodhya (Awadhपुरi) is considered one of the seven most important pilgrimage sites (*Mokshdayini Sapt Puris*) for Hindus.



Swaminarayan Temple, Chapia (birthplace of Bhagwan Ghanshyam)/ District Gonda Official



KABARTAL WETLAND

Bihar | DATE OF DESIGNATION : July 21, 2020

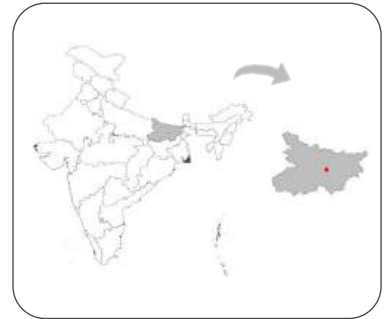
Kabartal is a site of historical and religious importance, with its origins dating back to the post-Sunga period (185–73 BC). The island of Jaimanglagarh, situated on Kabartal's southern edge, holds profound religious and cultural significance, as evidenced by archaeological findings dating back to the 4th to 5th centuries AD. Several excavations from the region have been dated to the pre-historic and Mughal periods.

The island is home to the Jaimanglagarh temple and fort, situated along the banks of Kabartal. The Jaimanglagarh temple, dedicated to the goddess *Jaimangal* or *Chandi Mangla Devi* (also known

as *Durga* or *Bhavani*), is situated within the fort walls and is highly revered by the local community.

The temple attracts a large number of people annually, particularly during festivals such as *Dussehra*, underscoring its enduring spiritual and cultural significance. It's also believed that Buddhist scholars visited the site during the time of Gautam Buddha. The temple serves as a hub for local culture, hosting numerous yearly festivals and celebrations. The area is notable for its large monkey population.

Kabartal is central to religious festivals, especially during the mon-



soon season, when devotees flock to the lake for rituals and blessings. The annual *Kanwar Mela*, a prominent religious fair, attracts thousands of visitors to its shores each year.



Jaimanglagarh Temple/ Satish Kumar



ASAN CONSERVATION RESERVE

Uttarakhand | DATE OF DESIGNATION : July 21, 2020

The Asan Conservation Reserve in Dehradun boasts a rich history that dates back to its construction in 1967 by the Uttar Pradesh Irrigation Department. This structure was built to regulate the water flow of the River Asan (a tributary of the River Yamuna) and manage the eastern Yamuna Canal, ensuring irrigation for the surrounding farmlands.

Located at a distance of around 6 km from the Asan Conservation Reserve is the distinguished Gurudwara Paonta Sahib in Sirmour district, Himachal Pradesh. This revered Sikh shrine is dedicated to Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth Sikh guru, who notably composed the *Dasam Granth*, a compendium of his sacred writings, at this

very location. Consequently, the site holds profound historical and religious significance for the global Sikh community.

The Ashoka Rock Edicts in Kalsi, located around 23 km from the Ramsar Site, are a powerful testament to Emperor Ashoka's compassionate rule and dedication to the moral and spiritual well-being of his subjects. These fourteen edicts, highlighted by the Archaeological Survey of India, embody his commitment to non-violence and the cessation of warfare. In the 3rd century BC, Kalsi was a pivotal centre for dhamma, where various initiatives under Ashoka's guidance actively promoted the spread of Buddhism. Historian M.P. Joshi, in his 'Journal of Hi-



malayan Studies,' notes that Kalsi is the sole site in the entire Himalayan range where Ashoka chose to inscribe these fourteen edicts. Kalsi's thriving trade, especially with the Tibetan plateau, made it an ideal location for disseminating spiritual teachings, likely playing a significant role in introducing Buddhist beliefs to the Tibetan region.



Gurudwara Paonta Sahib/ Aarti Jadli



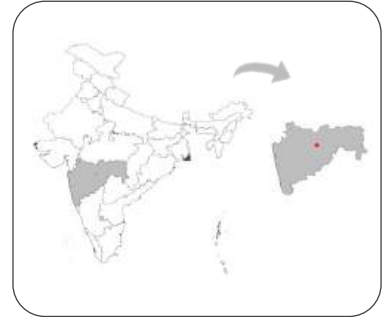
LONAR LAKE

Maharashtra | DATE OF DESIGNATION : July 22, 2020

Lonar's origins are deeply rooted in Hindu mythology, with its antiquity traced to the *Kritayuga*, a golden age around 2.16 million years ago. The *Skanda Purana* (a genre of eighteen Hindu religious texts) mentions Daityasudana, a form of Vishnu, in connection with Lonar. Complementing this, the *Padma Purana* describes a sa-

cred tank at Vishnu Gaya, where ritual bathing is believed to confer liberation from earthly attachments.

The Lonar Mahatmya, a local mythological text likely composed in the late 18th or early 19th century, details Lonar's transformation into a pilgrimage



Daitya Sudan Temple/ Ashwini Yogesh

centre. It recounts the tale of Lavanasura, a demon granted invincibility by Lord Shiva, who terrorised local villagers. Forewarned of his demise by a toddler, Lavanasura sought refuge in a crater in the Sahyadri Mountains. Vishnu, disguised as the toddler Daityasudana, confronted and defeated Lavanasura. In atonement, Lavanasura requested that Vishnu reside at Lonar, which he did, transforming it into Vishnu Gaya. The current Lonar crater is believed to mark the spot where Vishnu cast the demon into *Narak* (the netherworld), with the immense force of the act forming the crater itself. This myth suggests the lake's murky waters are the remnants of Lavanasura's spilt blood. The name 'Lonar' is derived from 'Lavana' (salt), reflecting the legend that Lavanasura's decomposing body created the saltwater lake. The 13th-century Daityasudana temple houses sculptures depicting this myth, including a prominent panel of Daityasudana vanquishing Lavanasura.

The site also attracts followers of various faiths, including the Mahanubhav sect, which gained prominence in the 13th century and considers all locations associated with its preceptor, Chakradhara Svami, sacred. The crater further houses a Muslim Sufi dargah, enriching its spiritual appeal across diverse communities. Temples in Lonar are examples of material culture that date to the tenth century and beyond. These temples are arranged in three strategic groups. The freshwater spring that cascades down the crater rim and into the first group is located precisely there. The sec-

ond group of temples is situated beneath the saltwater lake, while the third group is within a populated area near the crater's edge.

The Dharatirtha temple, named so because of the permanent water spring that originates here, is among the most visited temples.



*Killing of Lavanasura/
Aavindraa*



SUR SAROVAR

Uttar Pradesh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : August 21, 2020

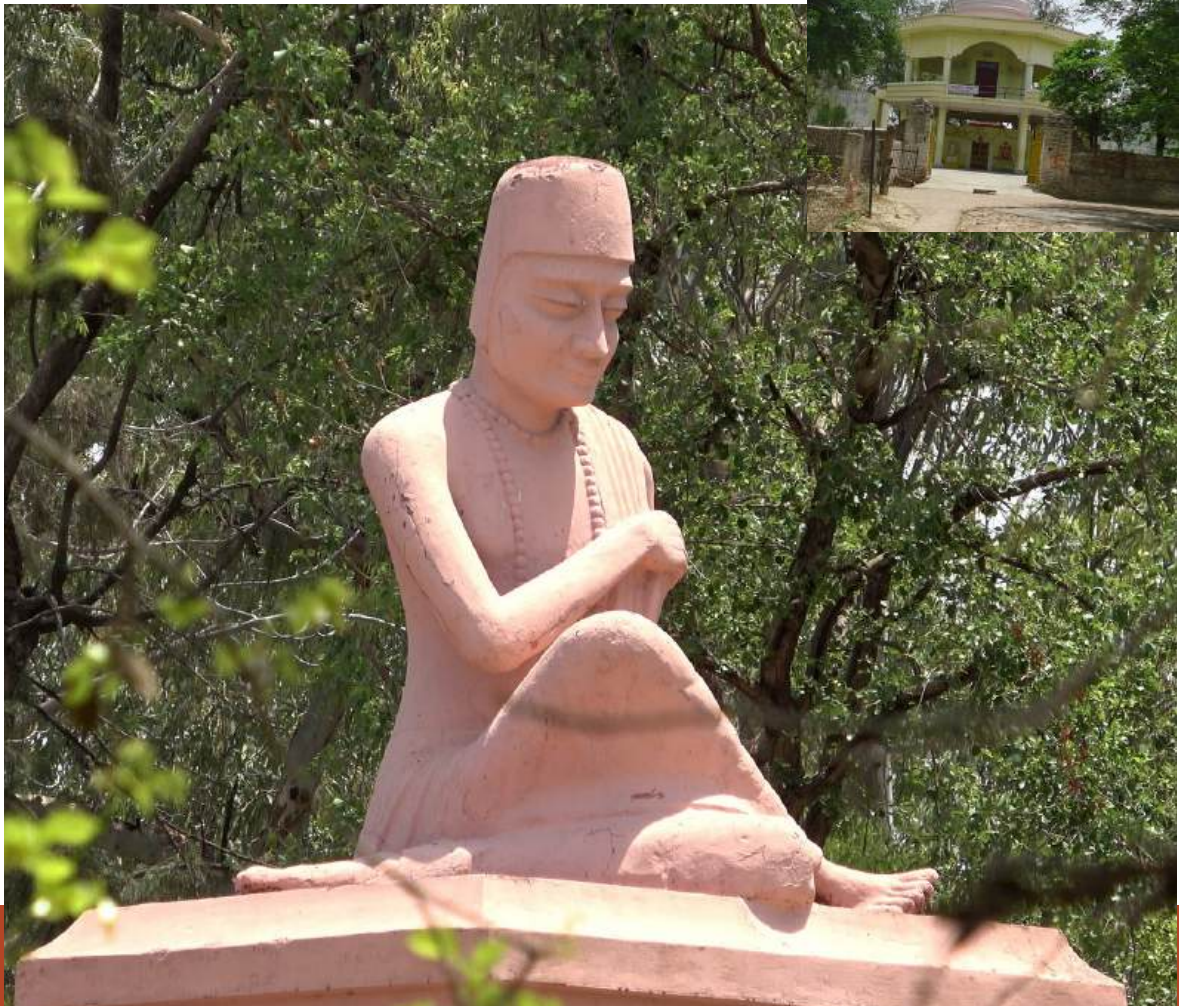
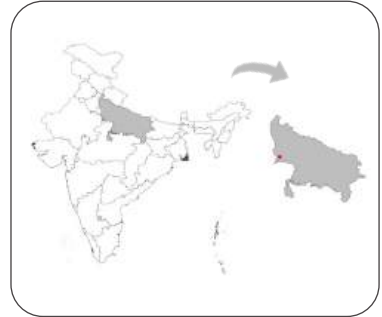
Sur Sarovar, commonly known as Keetham Lake, holds historical significance due to its connection with Surdas, the renowned 16th-century devotional poet who was visually impaired. According to local lore, Surdas was born within the sanctuary's boundaries.

Another legend states that this serene location inspired him to compose his famous devotional poetry, known as '*Bhakti Kavya*,' which focuses on Lord Krishna. A dedicated temple at this site commemorates his substantial contri-

butions to devotional poetry and spirituality.

Sur Sarovar is approximately 19 km from Agra, the birthplace of *Dīn-i Ilāhī*, a religion that flourished during Akbar's reign, and the Radhaswami Faith, which has around two million followers worldwide. Additionally, the city has historical ties to Shauripur in Jainism and Runukta in Hinduism, dating back to around 1000 BC.

*Surkuti (the birthplace of Surdas)/
Kamal Dalakoti*



Statue of Surdas at Surkuti/ <https://brajasik.org/>



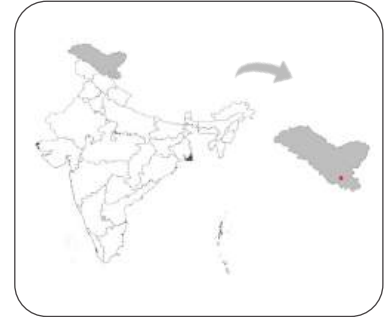
TSO KAR WETLAND COMPLEX

Ladakh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : November 17, 2020

Tso Kar derives its name from the Tibetan words for 'white' and 'salt', which reflect its salinity and the white salt deposits that line its shores. This wetland is a crucial resource for local nomadic tribes, who traditionally gather salt from its waters. Folklore from Thukje Village near Tso Kar Lake tells of Yamraj, who supposedly drank the lake dry as a prank. However, as he was getting playful, he couldn't control his laughter, and some of the water fell back into the lake, which is what we now see as Tso Kar. The Changpa nomadic pastoralists graze their livestock along the lake shores, following seasonal patterns, particularly

in May and December-January. Their rotational grazing practices support pasture regeneration and preserve the wetland's vegetation. The Changpa community holds these wetlands sacred, with cultural stories about the wetland's divine origins. As a result, they have established rules to protect the water and biotic resources of the wetlands.

Located near Tso Kar Lake, Thukje Village is a small, traditional Ladakhi village that offers visitors a glimpse into the local culture and lifestyle. Above Thukje Village sits the Thukje Gomba (Monastery), which is home to two lamas who



live there year-round. A small group of stone houses accommodates elderly residents who prefer a more sedentary lifestyle. The Thukje Gomba operates under the guidance of the Rinpoche of Korzok.



Thukje Gomba/ Suchita Awasthi



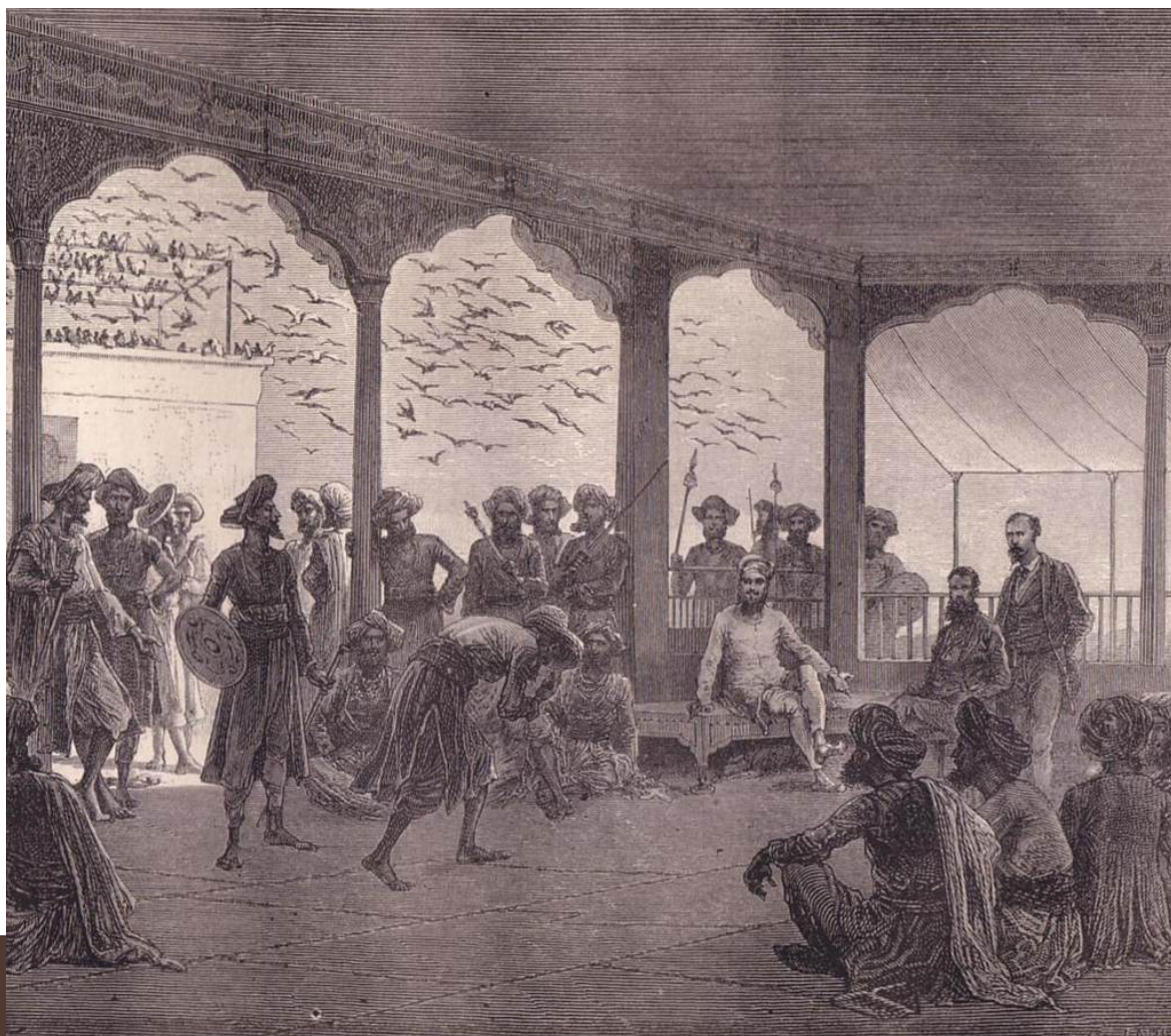
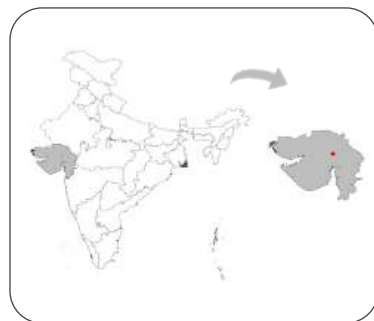
THOL LAKE WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Gujarat | DATE OF DESIGNATION : April 5, 2021

Thol Lake was constructed in 1912 by the Gaekwad rulers of the Baroda State for irrigation purposes. It was designed to prevent soil erosion and flooding while storing rainwater for agricultural use. Initially, the area was designated as a 'Game Reserve' by the Forest and Environment Department. Over the years, Thol Lake evolved into a haven of life and biodiversity, attracting the interest of nature en-

thusiasts and ornithologists alike.

Recognising its value, the region was designated as a sanctuary under the Indian Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. This marked the start of organised tourism in Thol. Tourists from far and wide ventured to witness the seasonal migrations, rare sightings of endemic species, and the tranquil beauty that Thol offered throughout the year.



Gaekwad rulers/ Wikimedia Commons

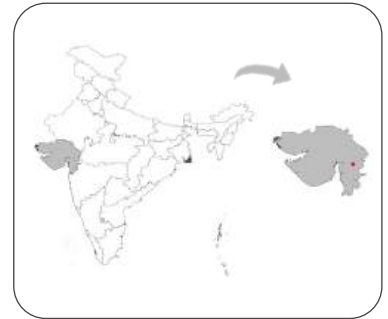


WADHVANA WETLAND

Gujarat | DATE OF DESIGNATION : April 5, 2021

Wadhvana Wetland, a human-made wetland, was constructed in 1909-10 by Shrimant Maharaja Sir Sayajirao Gaekwad III, the then-ruler of Baroda State (now Gujarat, India). The wetland holds international significance due to its historical value, being created during the pre-independence era, and its rich avifauna. It is a global example of how a wet-

land initially designed for irrigation by a princely state can evolve into a premier waterbird habitat and a valuable site for ecotourism and nature education. In addition to its use for irrigation and fishing, Wadhvana serves local communities with various essential needs, including drawing drinking water, washing clothes, and providing drinking water for livestock.



Shrimant Maharaja Sir Sayajirao Gaekwad III/ Wikimedia Commons



KHIJADI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Gujarat | DATE OF DESIGNATION : April 13, 2021

Khijadia Wildlife Sanctuary was created by constructing an artificial bund along the southern coast of the Gulf of Kachchh to prevent freshwater from flowing into the sea and manage saline incursions from the sea. Initiated by the Princely State of Nawanganar in 1920 and continued by the State Government in 1956, the bund runs from Jodiya to Salaya and forms two freshwater wetlands near the sanctuary. The wetland was a saline marsh until the 1930s, when an earthen dam was constructed between Jamnagar and Navlakhi to reclaim portions of the marsh for use as a freshwater storage area.

Lakhota Lake, located about 13 km from the sanctuary, is a scenic spot in Jamnagar. Built in the mid-19th century by Jan Ranmal II, it features Lakhota Fort and houses

an archaeology museum with artefacts from the 9th to 18th centuries. Nearby, the Bala Hanuman Temple, dedicated to Lord Hanuman, is known for its continuous chanting of 'Ram dhun' since 1964, recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records. The temple is believed to protect from troubles and natural disasters.



Lakhota Palace/ Aakash Shah



Bala Hanuman Temple/ Santosh Upadhyay



HAIDERPUR WETLAND

Uttar Pradesh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : April 13, 2021

Haiderpur Wetland, a UNESCO World Heritage site, was established in 1984 following the completion of the Madhya Ganga Barrage. The region's connection to the River Ganga dates back to the *Mahabharata*. Mahatma Vidur, a notable figure in the epic, was believed to have been exiled from Hastinapur due to his disapproval of Duryodhana's actions, particularly the disrobing of Draupadi. After his exile, he founded his ashram near the riverbank, which is why Bijnor is also known as Vidurnagri.

The Vidur Kuti Temple, located on the outskirts of the city, is said to have once been an ashram where Vidur's footprints were carved in marble. In Bijnor, Haiderpur, and

the surrounding villages, local community members, especially women, are being trained to become Ganga Praharis, or guardians of the river. These volunteers aim to conserve aquatic life by ensuring the river's *Aviral* (continuous flow) and *Nirmal Dhara* (unpolluted flow). The women are being taught to create crafts such as candle-making, *agarbattis* (incense sticks), and *tokris* (baskets) using locally sourced materials, including grass and flowers that grow along the banks of the River Ganga. This initiative helps strengthen the bond between the people and the river.



*Bairaj Ghat in Bijnor/
Wetlands International South Asia*





BHINDAWAS WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Haryana | DATE OF DESIGNATION : May 25, 2021

Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary was constructed primarily to store excess water from the Jawaharlal Nehru (JLN) Canal in case of power failures in the Lift Canal system. Due to the increasing diversity and population of both migratory and resident birds, the area was eventually transformed into a sanctuary. Today, it acts as a vital habitat and a popular destination for ecotourism.

The nearest town, Jhajjar, is located approximately 18 km away and is renowned for its rich cultural and historical heritage, including notable sites such as the Mahamaya Temple and Jhajjar Fort, which attract both pilgrims and tourists. Bua Wala Talab is also a historic landmark in Jhajjar, named after a tragic love story. Mustafa Kalol, a

high-ranking government official, had a brave and beautiful daughter named Bua. When she was nearly mauled by a tiger, a poor woodcutter named Hasan saved her life, and Bua fell in love with him. Her father reluctantly agreed to their marriage, but their happiness was short-lived. Hasan was summoned to battle by his father-in-law and lost his life, leaving Bua heartbroken. In her grief, she buried him by the pond where they had met and built a tomb in his memory. Soon after, Bua also passed away and was buried beside Hasan. The pond has since been known as Bua Wala Talab.

Nearby, the village of Chhuchhakwas, around 20 km from the sanctuary, is renowned for its natural hot springs, which locals believe



possess medicinal and therapeutic properties. Another notable destination is Sohna, located around 35 km from Bhindawas. This scenic town is popular for its ancient temples, including the Shri Aadya Katyayani Shaktipeeth Temple, and its hot sulphur springs, which are revered for their healing qualities.



Ruined mosque, group of Bua Hasan monuments, Jhajjar/ Sneha K



SULTANPUR NATIONAL PARK

Haryana | DATE OF DESIGNATION : May 25, 2021

Sultanpur is a village founded by the Chauhan King, Sultan Singh Chauhan, who was descended from the illustrious Prithvi Raj Chauhan and served as an Indian civil servant during the British *Raj*. Sultan Singh Chauhan, through his acts of bravery, managed to acquire numerous villages. This settlement was founded in 1417–1418 following his victory over the Silar Muslims, who were the distant ancestors of Mahmud Ghazni. This land became one of the largest and most significant trading hubs, particularly known for salt production during the colonial era. The United Province, now Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi were the primary users of the salt produced here.

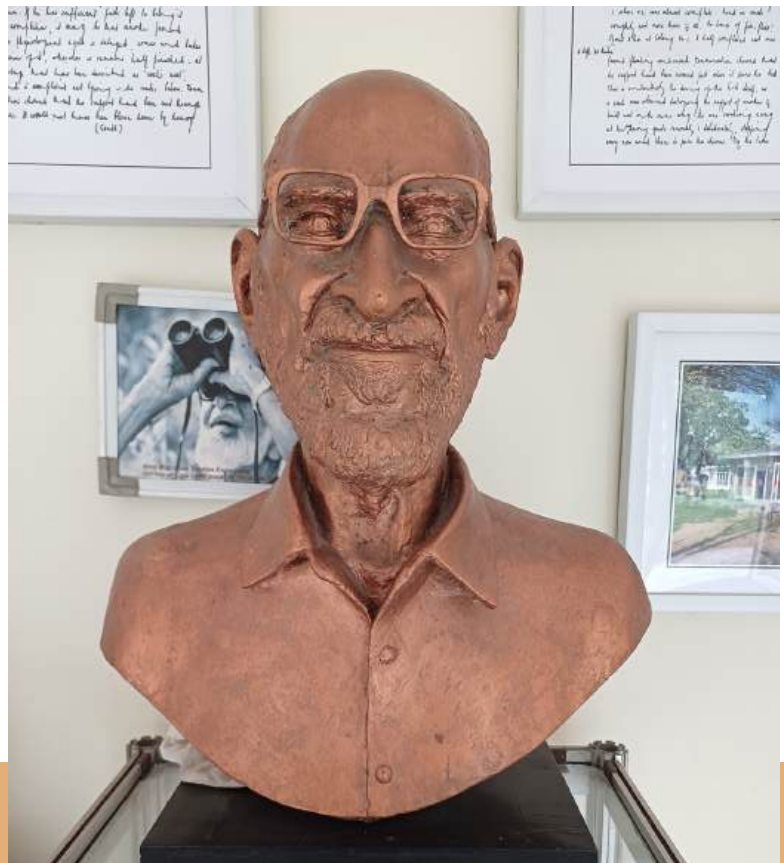
However, beyond its political history, Sultanpur first gained recognition as a sanctuary thanks to ornithologist Mr Peter Michel Jackson, who served as the Honorary Secretary of the Delhi Bird Watching Society. In the late 1960s, Mr Peter Michel Jackson and Dr Salim Ali frequently conducted birding excursions at Sultanpur, where they recognised the area's exceptional ecological value, especially for migratory and wetland birds. Their continued advocacy, amplified through public outreach, led to a formal proposal to the then Hon'ble Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, requesting protective status for the area. Fol-

lowing this, the site has seen progressive conservation milestones, as it was declared as Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary under the Punjab Wildlife Preservation Act of 1959 in 1971, and later in 1991, it was upgraded to Sultanpur National Park under Section 35 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Sultanpur National Park has always borne the name of its native village, Sultanpur. Although it has never been officially notified or renamed as 'Dr Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary', the park is often affectionately referred to by this name among birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts. This honorary association is a tribute to Dr Salim Ali's pioneering role in champi-



oning its conservation. His legacy is commemorated through a bust and information displays within the park premises. These installations pay tribute to his work and ensure that his contribution to Indian ornithology and conservation continues to inspire future generations.



Bust of Salim Ali at Sultanpur National Park/ DesiBoy101



BAKHIRA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Uttar Pradesh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : June 29, 2021

Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary is named after the lakeside town of Bakhira. The present-day district of Sant Kabir Nagar was historically known as Kosala (Koshala), a significant part of the Mahajanapadas, which were ruled by the Ikshvaku dynasty, also known as the Suryavanshis. Its glory peaked during Ramachandra's reign with the establishment of Ram Rajya. However, it eventually fell to Magadha, the most powerful Mahajanapada.

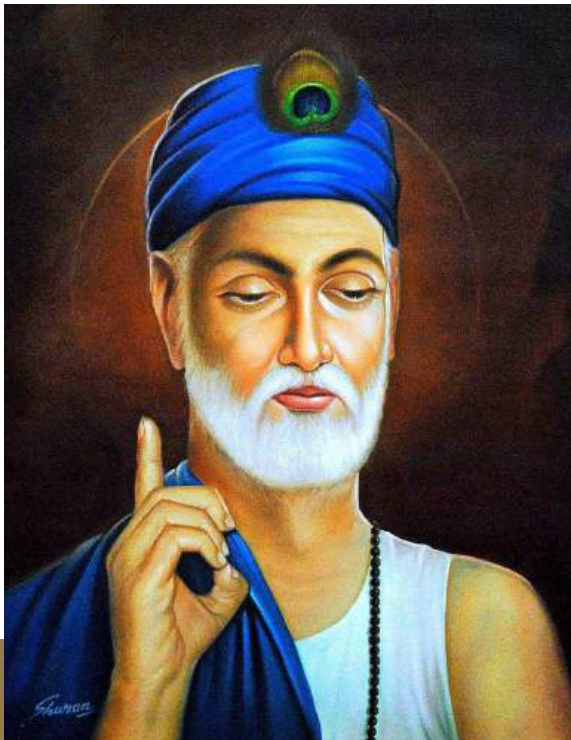
Mahatma Kabir Das, a poet and philosopher, lived in Maghar during this period, promoting *Bhakti* and Hindu-Muslim unity. Maghar presents a poignant example of syncretic harmony, where both a *samadhi* (Hindu

memorial) and a *mazar* (Muslim tomb) of Sant Kabir Nagar coexist, symbolising interfaith unity. This unique coexistence reflects Kabir's philosophy of universal brotherhood, attracting devotees from all religions. The region also played a vital role in India's struggle for independence, notably during the 1857 revolt and the Non-Cooperation Movement, becoming politically active, especially in connection with the Chauri Chaura incident in Gorakhpur.

The Sanctuary is also close to the Gorakhnath Temple, located around 45 km away. The temple is a major centre of spirituality and devotion. Its name is derived from the medieval saint Gorakhnath, a yogi who travelled extensive-



ly across India and established the Nath Sampradaya, one of the most ancient yoga traditions. During the *Khichdi Mela*, celebrated on *Makar Sankranti*, thousands of devotees gather at the temple to offer khichdi to Gorakh Nath Baba.



Sant Kabir Das/ Shubham Say



Medieval era Indian art depicting King Ikshvaku (Rishabhanatha) imparting the skill of pottery to his people/ Helenhgj



PALA WETLAND

Mizoram | DATE OF DESIGNATION : August 31, 2021

The Pala wetland, also known as Palak Dil, is believed to have originated between 800 and 1200 CE, coinciding with the westward migration of the Mara people from Burma. The first settlements of the Mara tribe, who migrated from Myanmar (formerly known as Burma), were established around this wetland.

According to the *Mara* oral tradition, the area was once home to the *Hnychao* community. At the centre of their village lay a cave beneath a giant rock, believed to house a giant serpent. Over time, villagers noticed children and livestock disappearing mysteriously. To stop the serpent, the hunters baited it and tried to pull it out. In one version of the tale, they killed the serpent, and a widow, while cooking its head, saw

its eyes move. Terrified, she threw the pot away, and water began to rise, submerging the village. In another version, they only managed to sever the serpent in half, but its lower body roared back into the cave, causing a flood that drowned the village. The resulting lake was named *Pala Tipo*, meaning 'swallowing lake', as a reminder of the lost village and the serpent that caused its end.

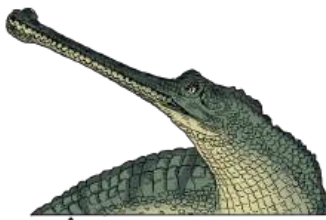
In 2007, the Maraland commemorated its Gospel Centenary, honouring Saikao village, which holds a significant place in the hearts of the Mara community and all of Mizoram. Saikao is where the Lakher Pioneer Missionaries established their mission in 1907 to share the Gospel with the Maras. By 1914, these missionaries had built a bungalow in Saikao, which



has been preserved in its original state. This bungalow contains numerous important documents pertaining to the mission. The Mission home, situated in Saikao Village near Pala Wetland, serves as a vital location for the Mara people, as it was both a settlement and the operational base for the pioneer Missionaries.



Mara people wearing Mara traditional dress/ LaithluChozah



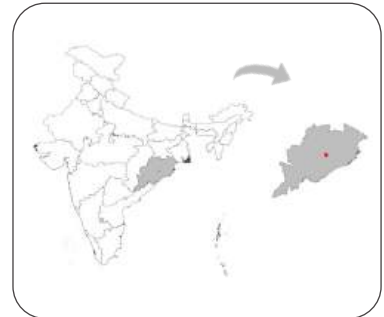
SATKOSIA GORGE

Odisha | DATE OF DESIGNATION : October 12, 2021

The name Satkosia originates from two words: 'sat', meaning seven and 'kos', meaning two miles, indicating that the gorge is 14 miles or 22.4 km long. The region was designated as a sanctuary primarily to protect the Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*) and Mugger Crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*). The Kandha (also known as Khonds or Kondha), Kolha, Santal, and Sabar communities are the primary inhabitants of the regions surrounding the Satkosia. These groups traditionally follow a nomadic lifestyle and communicate in both Odia and their respective tribal languages. They engage in the collection of gum, traditional medicines, and honey to sustain their livelihoods, which they market for income generation. The cultural practices and social customs of these communities are deeply entrenched, encompassing all phases of life from birth to death. These communities possess a rich tapestry of folklore and traditional knowledge relating to the utilisation of various animals for medicinal purposes, underscoring their deep connection to their environment and cultural heritage.

Spiritual and cultural connections with local deities such as *Bini-kei*, *Kankei*, *Baigani Parbata*, and *Bhimdhara* lend significant cultural and inspirational value to the area. The Temple of Goddess *Bini-kei*, located 8 kilometres upstream from Tikarpada in the Satkosia Division, and the *Konkei* Temple on the opposite bank in the Mahanadi Division are prominent pilgrimage sites. The primary idol of the

Bini-kei Temple is Goddess *Bini-kei*, and it serves as the gateway to the Satkosia Gorge along the Mahanadi River. The *Bini-kei Jatra* is observed on the 10th day following *Dolapurnima/Dasa Dola* festival in March and spans three days, featuring a variety of functions and ceremonies. Each year, a significant number of devotees visit to participate in the *Jatra*.



Temple of Goddess *Bini-kei*/ *Aditya Mahar*



A representation of the Kond tribe of Satkosia



ANSUPA LAKE

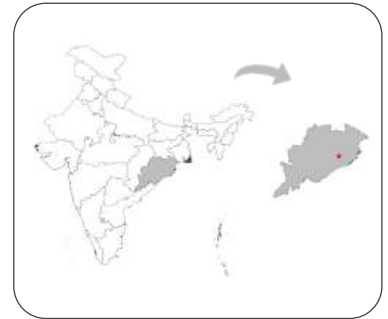
Odisha | DATE OF DESIGNATION : October 12, 2021

Ansupa Lake, named for its horse-shoe shape, is nestled among the Eastern Ghats with Saranda Hill to the west and Bishnupur Hill to the east. Rich in archaeological finds, Saranda Hill is believed to have been the home of kings and *zamindars*.

According to an ancient tradition, during the reign of the Eastern Gangas, King Subranakeshari was so enchanted by Ansupa's natural beauty that he built a fort and a town at the foot of Saranda. The village of Subranapur is named after him. It is said that Saranda Gada, the summit of Saranda Hill, was established by a brother of

the Dhala Dynasty of Banki. The king also built a bronze doorway at the base of the hill that produced a loud cracking sound when opened and closed, with local legends claiming it could be heard from as far as 20 km away. The area also hosts the remains of two stone wells called *Bhai Bohu Kuan*, along with another well believed to hold the remnants of the king's treasure.

The surrounding hills contain caves inhabited by prehistoric tribes with faded graffiti, echoing the single-chambered caves of Khandagiri and Udayagiri. These caves were used by Hindu monks



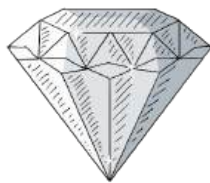
as recently as the 18th and 19th centuries for meditation and spiritual practice. The Pandava Bakahra caves feature red-ochre murals of Hindu deities and tantric tales in Odia script.



Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves/ Yogabrata Chakraborty



View of the Ansupa Lake from atop Saranda Hill/ Aditya Nag



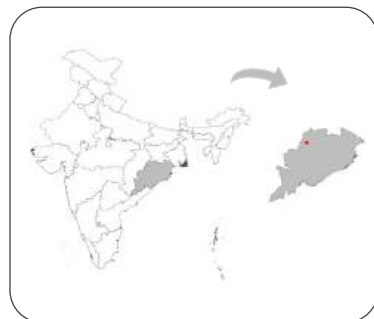
HIRAKUD RESERVOIR

Odisha | DATE OF DESIGNATION : October 12, 2021

The name 'Hirakud', which translates to 'Diamond (*Hira*) Island (*Kud*)', reflects its historical significance as Sambalpur's traditional site for extracting Odisha diamonds from the sands of the River Mahanadi, which were highly valued by the ancient Romans. The surrounding 32 villages are inhabited by the Jhara community, who have traditionally sought these precious stones in the area.

Sambalpur (~16 km from the reservoir) is renowned for its sambalpuri sarees and has a rich history filled with events, including its role in the Indian freedom struggle, representing various sections of society. Sambalpur is referenced in Ptolemy's writings as Sambalaka, located on the banks of the Manada River. The area surrounding the reservoir is rich in spiritual sites, including a temple dedicated to the Goddess Ghantlei, also known as Ghanteswari, who is highly revered by local fishers. This temple is renowned for its

distinctive collection of bells in diverse shapes and sizes. The Huma Temple, constructed in the 17th century by the Chouhan rulers, is notable for its distinctive tilt of approximately 75 degrees to the west. Each year, during *Shivratri*, a week-long fair is held in honour of Lord Bimaleshwar, one of Shiva's avatars. Two other nearby religious sites include the Koilighugar Waterfall in Lakhanpur (around 30 km) and the Chandi Mandir in Brajrajnagar (around 40 km), situated on the banks of the River Ib (tributary of River Maha-



nadi). The Koilighugar Waterfall features a Shiva lingam known as 'Maheshwarnath,' which is visible only during the day when sunlight reflects off it.



Ghanteswari Temple/ Aditya Mahar



The Leaning Temple of Huma/ Wetlands International South Asia



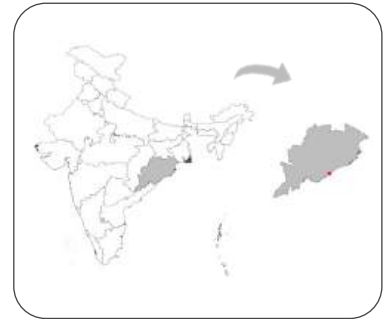
TAMPARA LAKE

Odisha | DATE OF DESIGNATION : October 12, 2021

The historical significance of Tampara dates back to 1766 when the English East India Company took control of the Ganjam district from the French. During this period, explosives were used near the River Rushikulya, leading to the creation of a depression in the ground. This depression gradually filled the catchment area with rainwater, initially called 'Tamp' by the British. Locals later adopted the name 'Tampara'. A narrow channel was dredged to connect

the Rushikulya River with Tampara Lake to facilitate transportation and enhance water flow. This channel allowed floodwater from the Rushikulya River to flow into the wetland, further integrating it into the local hydrological system.

Budhi Thakurani Temple, around 30 km from Tampara Lake, is one of the most significant religious sites in Berhampur. Every alternate year, a grand festival dedicated to Maa Budhi Thakurani is held



for an entire month, drawing both locals and tourists.



Tampara Lake/ Dayadra Mandal



KOONTHANKULAM BIRD SANCTUARY

Tamil Nadu | DATE OF DESIGNATION : November 8, 2021

Koonthankulam Bird Sanctuary, established in 1994, is the most significant breeding ground for waterbirds in South India. The local villagers have strong social ties and work together to protect the birds, which nest on rooftops and nearby trees each year. They believe the birds bring good fortune and provide practical benefits, such as guano, which enhances soil fertility and increases crop yields. The sanctuary is carefully protected by the villagers, who opposed the removal of *Acacia nilotica* trees, crucial for nesting. A prolonged stay of birds in the

village is considered a sign of a favourable cropping season. The excess water from the tank is used for irrigation, and the water, enriched with 'guano,' along with the silt from the dried tank bed, serves as fertiliser.

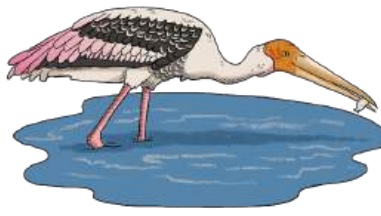
Surrounding the sanctuary are small temples and churches where residents worship and celebrate festivals. Along the eastern boundary of the sanctuary, just to the left of the entrance, stands a temple dedicated to Lord Santhanakrishnan. Inside the sanctuary is another small temple devoted to a local



deity, which villagers can access with prior permission from the local field staff. The wetland also features the Koonthan pothi and the nearby Sastha Temple.



Painted Storks at Koonthakulam village/ Tamil Nadu Forest Department



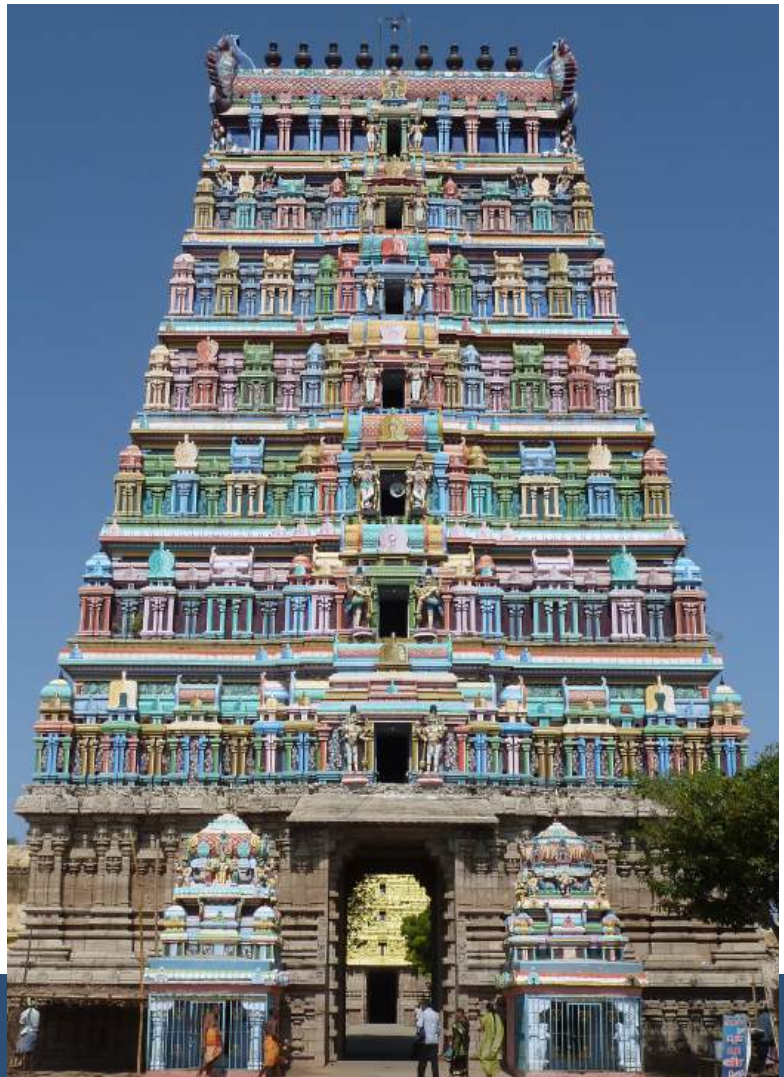
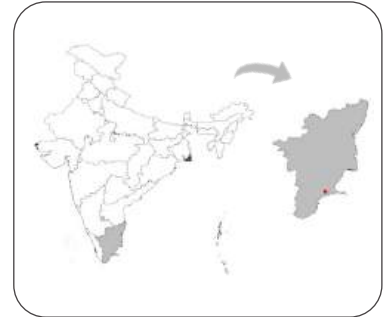
CHITRANGUDI BIRD SANCTUARY

Tamil Nadu | DATE OF DESIGNATION : November 8, 2021

The villagers of Chitrangudi have long been dedicated to protecting birds, understanding the value of bird droppings for agriculture and the local economy. They have implemented several measures to ensure a safe habitat for birds, such as refraining from bursting firecrackers during Diwali to avoid disturbing nesting birds and leasing additional tanks for fishing to maintain the birds' food supply. Although the villagers would like to cultivate a second crop in February, they often forgo irrigation to conserve water for the birds. Their commitment was highlighted when strangers attempted to steal birds from the tank one night. The disturbance caused the birds to fly to the village, alerting the residents. The villagers, armed to defend the sanctuary, confronted the intruders. This conservation effort unites the community across class and caste divisions, with support from the village committee. Adjacent to the sanctuary is an old Vishnu temple revered highly by the local communities.

The Uthirakosamangai Temple, also known as the Mangalanth Swamy Temple, located at a distance of approximately 36 km from the sanctuary, is one of the oldest Shiva temples in the world. With a history spanning over 3,000 years, this sacred temple holds a significant place in Tamil mythology, particularly for its

unique connection to Lord Shiva. It is believed that Lord Shiva revealed divine secrets of Vedas to Goddess Parvati at this site, which is why it is called 'Uthirakosamangai', meaning the 'secret place of the goddess'. This temple is believed to be the first Shiva temple in the world and features the oldest *Sahasralinga*.



Uthirakosamangai temple/
Balajijagadesh



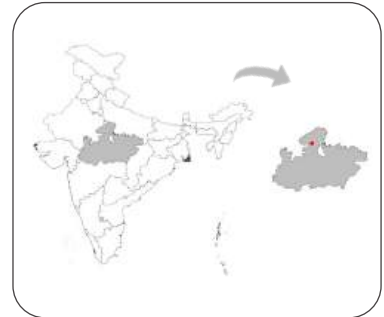
SAKHYA SAGAR

Madhya Pradesh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : January 7, 2022

Sakhya Sagar was once part of the Royal Shooting Reserve for the Maharajas of Gwalior, who had their summer capital in Shivpuri. At the beginning of the 20th century, Maharaja Madhav Rao Scindia, a visionary leader, transformed the area into a thriving wildlife habitat. In 1918, he constructed three dams across the River Manihar to create a series of lakes, namely, Jadhav Sagar, Sakhya Sagar, and Madhav Lake. The latter two are now located

within the boundaries of Madhav National Park.

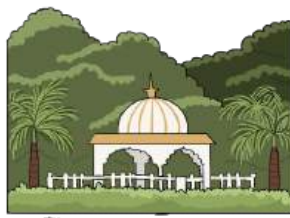
Sakhya Sagar and Madhav Sagar, both situated on the River Manihar, hold significant religious and ecological value. They are renowned for their tranquil beauty and the temples that line their shores. There are approximately thirteen small and large temples situated within the national park. Additionally, Survaya Ki Garhi, an ancient site featuring temples and



stepwells, offers insight into the region's historical religious practices.



Maharaja Madhav Rao Scindia/ Internet Archive Book Images

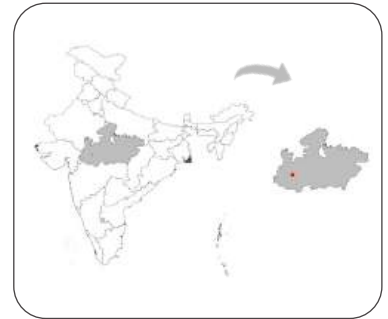


SIRPUR WETLAND

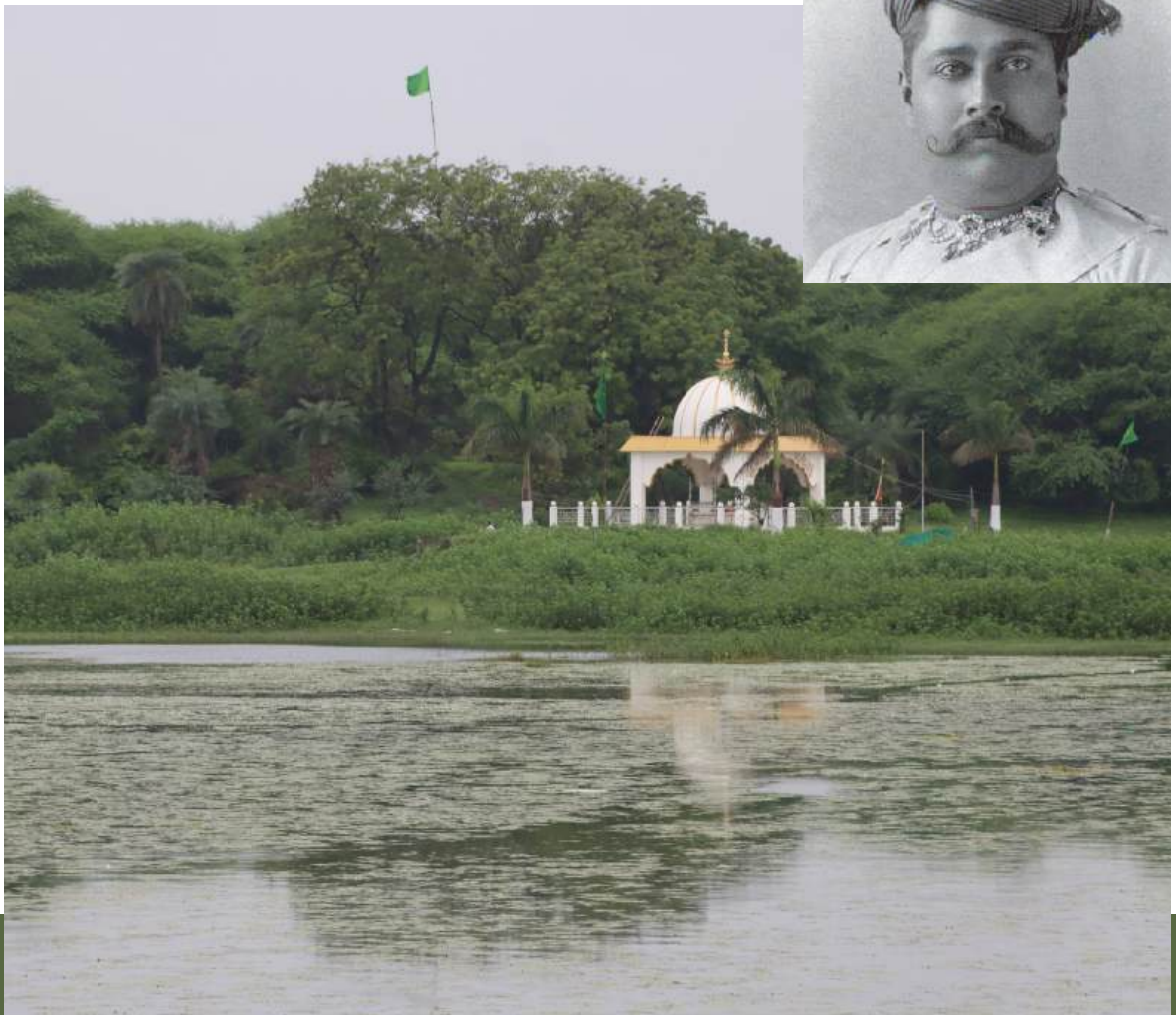
Madhya Pradesh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : January 7, 2022

Sirpur, also known as *Pakshi Vihar*, is a human-made wetland believed to be over 130 years old. This wetland holds both historical and religious significance, serving as a venue for recreation and environmental education for local communities. It was created by Maharaja Shivajirao Holkar to provide water for the city of Indore. The Indore City Gazette from 1908 contains multiple references to Sirpur Lake being used for both water supply and recreational purposes.

For the local community, the ancient temple and Hazrat Dawal Shah Wali Mazar (a Muslim shrine or enshrined tomb) located near the edge of Sirpur Wetland are important places of worship. During the festival season, the temple and Mazar attract both pilgrims and locals who frequently visit these sites in and around the wetland.



*Maharaja Shivajirao Holkar/
Unknown photographer*



Hazrat Dawal Shah Wali Mazar/ Suchita Awasthi

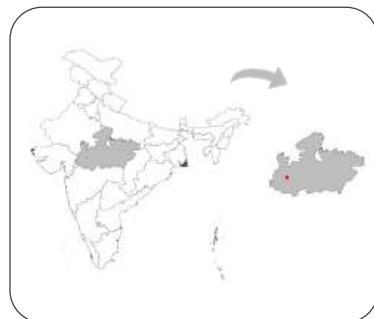


YASHWANT SAGAR

Madhya Pradesh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : January 7, 2022

Yashwant Sagar wetland holds immense historical and cultural significance, particularly for the residents of Indore. It was constructed by Yashwant Rao Holkar, the former ruler of the Holkar State. In 1939, the monarch of the former state of Indore constructed the Yashwant Sagar reservoir by building a dam on the River

Gambhir to accommodate the increasing demands of the city. The reservoir's water is mainly utilised for drinking and irrigation, and it also helps Indore meet its water needs, which are shared by the River Narmada. The wetland provides a winter and summer refuge for many birds because of its extensive shallow reedbeds.



Yashwant Rao Holkar/ DEVARE & CO

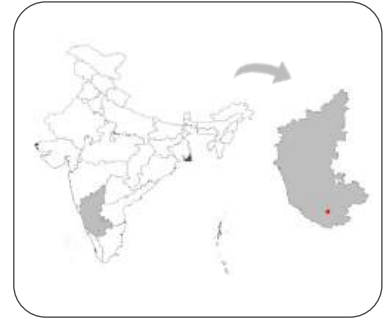


RANGANATHITTU BIRD SANCTUARY

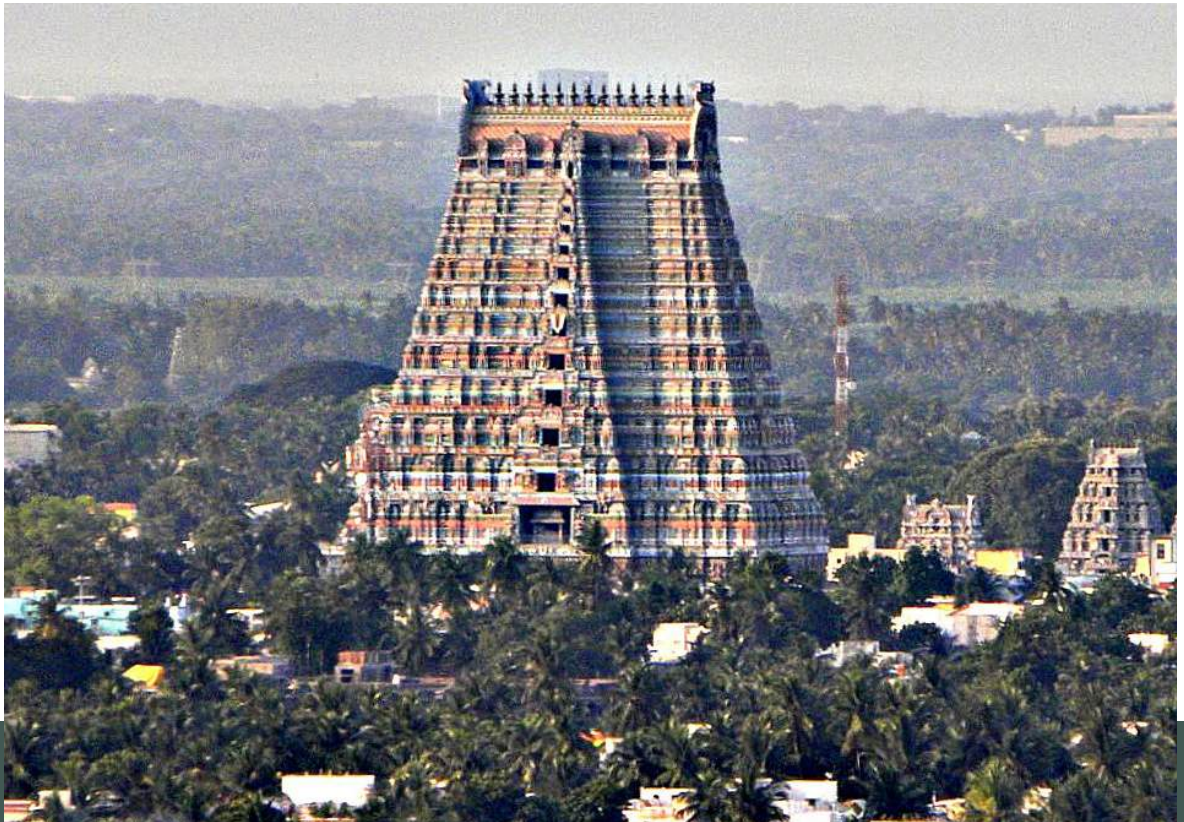
Karnataka | DATE OF DESIGNATION : February 15, 2022

Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary is named after Sri Ranganatha Swamy, an incarnation of the Hindu God Vishnu. Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, also referred to as Thiruvavangala Tirupati, is located at a distance of around 5 km from the bird sanctuary. It is one of the most prominent Vaishnava temples in India, focusing on the veneration of Lord Vishnu, whose cosmic role is seen as the protector and preserver of the Universe. This vibrant temple serves as a major pilgrimage site and is regarded as the foremost among the 108 *Divya Desams*, which are the 108 Vishnu temples mentioned in the works of the Tamil saints.

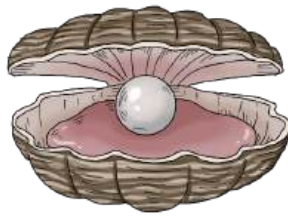
The riverine wetland, regulated by a weir on the River Cauvery, was established between 1645 and 1648 during the reign of Kantirava Narasaraja Wodeyar of Mysore. This area has yielded significant prehistoric artefacts, including stone tools, beads, pottery fragments, and microliths, indicating early human settlement along the river. Its history began in 1940 when the prominent naturalist Dr Salim Ali proposed the establishment of a sanctuary to the then-Maharaja of Mysore, His Highness Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV, while conducting a bird census in the area. Recognising the biological significance of the location,



the Maharaja approved Dr Ali's proposal, leading to the official formation of the Bird Sanctuary. On 1 September 1998, the Government of Karnataka officially notified it as 'Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary' under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972.



Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple/ BOMBMAN



GULF OF MANNAR MARINE BIOSPHERE RESERVE

Tamil Nadu | DATE OF DESIGNATION : April 8, 2022

The Gulf of Mannar was declared a Marine National Park in 1986 by the Government of Tamil Nadu and was later designated as the first Marine Biosphere Reserve of India in 1989 by the Government of India. The name 'Gulf of Mannar' translates to 'Gulf of Lord Krishna', reflecting its mythical and religious significance. The Gulf of Mannar region has been significant since the 2nd century AD, known for its productive pearl banks and religious importance. Historical documentation, including records from the Roman Empire, ancient Greek literature, and local chronicles, elucidates the centrality of the pearl trade within the historical narrative of this region. The demography is predominantly comprised of the Marakeyar community, which primarily engages in fishing activities.

Rameswaram, a prominent pilgrimage site mentioned in the

Ramayana, attracts around 1.4 million visitors annually. Thiruchendur and Kanniyakumari are also notable pilgrimage centres for Hindus. The coast around the Biosphere Reserve is also home to several significant churches and mosques. Among the most visited in the region are Panimaya Matha Church, Dhanushkodi Heritage Church, Ovari Church, and mosques located in Kilakarai, Ervadi, and Thondi. A series of limestone and sand islands between India and Sri Lanka, known as Adam's Bridge in English and *Rama Sethu* in Malayalam, connects Pamban Island to Mannar Island. The designation Adam's Bridge was conferred by a British cartographer, referencing a narrative wherein Adam, the first man from both Christian and Islamic traditions, allegedly traversed this formation from India to Sri Lanka to reach Adam's Peak, located in central Sri Lanka. The Indian designation, *Rama Sethu*,



originates from the *Ramayana*, which indicates the bridge was built by Prince Rama to rescue his wife, Sita, from Ravana, the king of Sri Lanka.

Additionally, Kudiremalai and the Pukkulama area are believed to be the landing sites of Prince Vijaya from India around 500 BC. The Pomparippu area served as a pearl fishery port during his time. Local legends also speak of Queen Allirasani, whose palace was reportedly sunk by a tsunami, forming the Kalpitiya Lagoon.



Rameswaram Temple/ Vinayaraj



VELLODE BIRD SANCTUARY

Tamil Nadu | DATE OF DESIGNATION : April 8, 2022

Vellode Birds Sanctuary came from the words 'Vellai oodai', which means white stream. The name is attributed to a stream that is said to have existed in Vellode, with alluvial sediment making it white. Vellode Bird Sanctuary was established in 1996 on an area of 80 hectares and is surrounded by eight settlements, home to around 750 families. Ever since, the locals have chosen not to set off firecrackers for fear of frightening away the hundreds of birds that come to the refuge between September and December.

The area surrounding the wetland features an ancient Karupparayan temple (Arulmigu Yeri Karuppanna Samy-Kannimar Temple), which is highly revered by local communities. They host annual festivals at the temple, driven by the belief that these ceremonies will bring a favourable monsoon, filling the

surrounding wetlands essential for farming. The birds' droppings are believed to enrich the irrigation water, thereby enhancing crop production. Residents of Erode and surrounding areas frequently visit the renowned Chennimalai Temple, located at a distance of around 20 km from the bird sanctuary dedicated to Lord Muruga. As the Sanctuary lies on the route to Chennimalai, many pilgrims stop at V. Mettupalayam, a small village near Vellode. It is located near the Kodumanal archaeological site, which is 20 Km away.

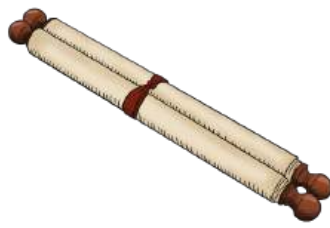
The Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology, in collaboration with the Tamil University, Thanjavur, conducted excavations at Kodumanal, situated in Perundurai taluk in Erode District, which brought to light two cultural periods: the megalithic period and the early historic period. The



Erode Archaeological Government Museum is located 12 km away. The Sivan Malai Temple is 30 km away, situated on the way to Kangayam town. The Bhavani Kuduthurai Temple is also 30 km away, marking the junction point of the Cauvery and Bhavani rivers. Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve is another protected wildlife conservation area, 65 km from the Sanctuary.



Archaeological Excavation, Kodumanal/ Government of Tamil Nadu (GODL-India)



VEDANTHANGAL BIRD SANCTUARY

Tamil Nadu | DATE OF DESIGNATION : April 8, 2022

Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary is a community-protected tank renowned for its large bird population. For nearly three centuries, the residents of the Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary have protected and guarded the birds that visit the area. Vedanthangal means 'hamlet of the hunter' in Tamil. In 1796, a group of soldiers went bird hunting, which upset the local villagers of Vedanthangal. To protect the nesting colony in their tank from further harm, the villagers obtained a 'Covle' from the first Collector of Chengalpet, establishing their right to safeguard the birds from hunters. Recognising the area's ornithological significance, the British Government's

Collector took measures in 1798 to develop the area into a bird sanctuary, making it the oldest of its kind in the country. The sanctuary was formally established in 1858 by the directive of the Collector of Chengalpattu (earlier known as Chengalpet). The story of Vedanthangal illustrates the symbiotic relationship between humans and birds.

For over 250 years, the residents of the Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary have carefully protected and guarded the birds that visit the area. The birds' guano in the lake water acts as a fertiliser, and in return, the birds receive a plentiful food supply and a secure location



to build their nests. Next to the sanctuary is an old Amman temple that attracts numerous devotees. The temple's festivals are observed on a rotating schedule among different caste groups.



Signage at Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary/ Sudharsun Jayaraj



KARIKILI BIRD SANCTUARY

Tamil Nadu | DATE OF DESIGNATION : April 8, 2022

The Karikili Bird Sanctuary has long been supported by local community efforts to protect the birds. These initiatives provide fertile, guano-rich water to the agricultural lands surrounding Karikili. Nearby, a historic Kamakshi Amman temple attracts many devotees, hosting festivals that rotate among various community groups. The temple, dedicated to the goddess Parvati, is believed to have been initially

constructed by the Pallava kings before the 7th century and later rebuilt by the Cholas in the 14th century. Located in the centre of Kanchipuram, this temple is renowned as one of the three major *Shakti* worship sites. Additionally, it houses a shrine for Sankaracharya, a revered Hindu saint known for founding the Kamakoti Monastery and for his influential role in Hindu philosophy. Sankaracharya is also recognised for having built



a golden tower, which enhances his remarkable legacy.



Sankaracharya/ Raja Ravi Varma



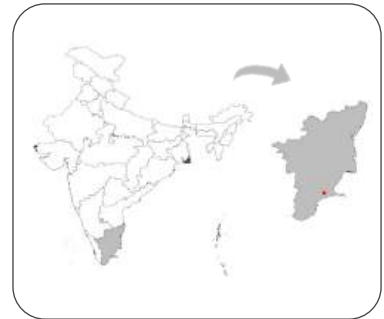
KANJIRANKULAM BIRD SANCTUARY

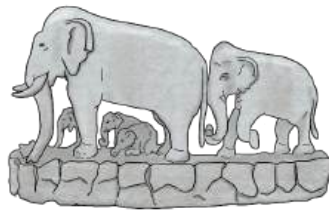
Tamil Nadu | DATE OF DESIGNATION : April 8, 2022

Kanjirankulam Bird Sanctuary and the adjacent village share a mutually beneficial relationship, promoting a harmonious coexistence between people and birdlife. Historically, the villagers of Kanjirankulam have protected birds because they recognise the essential benefits of bird droppings (guano) as a more effective natural fertiliser for their agriculture compared to chemical pesticides. This dedication to bird conservation cuts

across class and caste divisions in the village.

In the immediate vicinity of the sanctuary, there is an old Kali Amman temple where villagers come to worship. Additionally, a small temple dedicated to a human deity is located nearby. There is also a Karuppasamy temple in the area, dedicated to Lord Karuppasamy, the guardian deity of justice, protection, and truth.





PALLIKARANAI MARSH RESERVE FOREST

Tamil Nadu | DATE OF DESIGNATION : April 8, 2022

Pallikaranai Marsh Reserve Forest is locally known by the generic Tamil name 'kazhuveli', which translates to a floodplain or water-logged area. Historically, much of South Chennai was a floodplain covering around 50 km², which included the Pallikaranai marsh, several smaller satellite wetlands, and extensive pasturelands. These wetlands were crucial for irrigation and supported thriving paddy cultivation. The discovery of sub-fossils of marine crustaceans and molluscs locally supports the idea that the sea once influenced the marsh.

Additionally, a freshwater aquifer parallel to the coast has significantly influenced the expansion

of the city's southern boundaries, highlighting the importance of the South Chennai floodplain. Mahabalipuram, also known as Mamallapuram, is a renowned Pallava port city located on the Coromandel Coast in southeast India, situated around 40 Km from the Pallikaranai Marsh Land. The collection of monuments there includes the excavated remnants of temples, rock-cut cave temples, monolithic temples, bas-relief sculptures, and structural temples. These magnificent structures were built by the Pallava dynasty, which ruled this region from the 6th to the 9th centuries CE. In the history of classical Indian architecture, the group of monuments in Ma-



habalipuram hold a special place. These imposing structures attest to the excellent craftsmanship in the area in the sixth century CE. These buildings were carved out of the surrounding nature, demonstrating the Pallava craftsmen's skill to a broader audience.



Mahabalipuram/ Vyacheslav Argenberg



PICHAVARAM MANGROVE

Tamil Nadu | DATE OF DESIGNATION : April 8, 2022

Pichavaram is deeply entwined with ancient lore, particularly as the birthplace of one of the Dancing Lords, Nataraja, patron of the Chola dynasty. A notable legend tells of a dance contest between Shiva and Kali, where Shiva's final pose, the *Urdhva Tandava*, resulted in his victory, symbolising his dominance and Kali's enduring

presence. Another tale involves Shiva and Vishnu, who descended to earth disguised as a beggar and a captivating maiden to confront a sage's arrogance. They faced fierce creatures conjured by the sages, which Shiva subdued, leading to his performance of the Ananda Tandavam, a dance representing the cosmic cycle of life and death.



Chidambaram Temple Festival/ Flickr user Melanie Molitor

According to the *Sthala Purana*, the sacred plant of the Chidambaram Lord Nataraja Temple is the mangrove *Excoecaria agallocha*, or Tilai, revered since the 18th century. The area was once called 'Tilai Vanam,' reflecting local reverence for the mangroves. The temple is linked to a lotus pond featuring a Svayambhu Linga, representing Lord Shiva. Legend states the temple was initially built by King Shveta Varman, who was cured of leprosy by bathing in the holy pond and witnessed the Cosmic Dance. The Dutch renovated the temple in the mid-18th century, and it now hosts the annual 'Natyanjali' dance festival.

Another local tale states that a wandering ascetic sought the harshest environment for his penance and found this forest near modern-day Chidambaram. Delighted by its severity, he settled there, growing tiger-like claws to pluck flowers from the treetops, earning him the name Vyagrapadar or Tiger Foot. Vyagrapadar was later joined by an exiled prince from Bengal who, impressed by the site, invited three thousand scholars to worship there. A small hut for worship was built, which evolved into the grand Chidambaram Nataraja temple. The original hut is now known as the *Cit Sabha* or Citrambalam, housing the central deity, Nataraja.



Nataraja/ Ms Sarah Welch



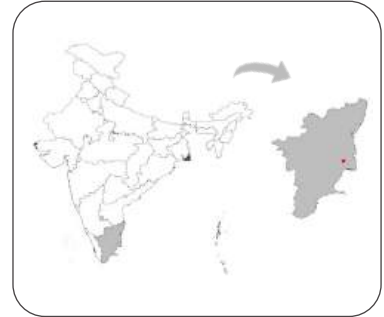
VADUVUR BIRD SANCTUARY

Tamil Nadu | DATE OF DESIGNATION : April 8, 2022

Vaduvur Bird Sanctuary is closely tied to traditional farming practices, with local communities fostering a symbiotic relationship that emphasises conservation and sustainable resource management. A key cultural landmark nearby is the Sri Kothandaramaswamy temple (Perumal Kovil), located around 500 meters from the sanctuary. This important Vaishnavite shrine in Vaduvuragraham village attracts many devotees who come to worship Lord Rama, particularly during the primary festival months from June to August.

Adjacent to the sanctuary is the temple tank called Sarayu Pushkarni. The Iyyanar Temple, located within the Bird Walk area, serves over 100 villages and regularly hosts annual rituals.

Around 15 kilometres away lies the historic Mannargudi Rajagopalaswamy Temple, built in the tenth century and expanded by Chola and Nayak kings. As one of India's major Vaishnava shrines, it hosts various events throughout the year, including the prominent ten-day *Brahmotsavam* festival in the Tamil month of *Chittirai*



(April–May). The temple also has a significant collection of ancient texts, manuscripts, and artefacts that contribute to the region's cultural heritage.



Rajagopalaswamy Temple/ Ssriram mt



UDHAYAMARTHANDAPURAM BIRD SANCTUARY

Tamil Nadu | DATE OF DESIGNATION : April 8, 2022

Udhayamarthandapuram Bird Sanctuary features a diverse habitat, including large and deep reservoirs with several inlets, as well as surrounding irrigated agricultural fields. The bird excreta, known as 'guano', enriches the water, leading to high crop yields when used to irrigate the agricultural areas near the sanctuary. Udayamarthandapuram Birds Sanctuary is a revered site for pilgrims from Thiruvavur and Thanjavur Districts. Shri Rajagopala

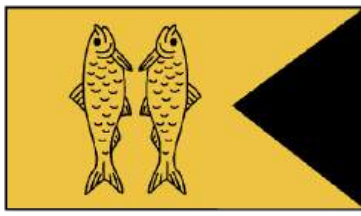
Swamy Temple, located about 30 km from the sanctuary, is a major pilgrimage centre, especially for Hindus, and attracts visitors from across the country throughout the year. Other notable sites in the area include Manokara (~25 km), Ramar Kovil (~6 km), and the ancient Muthupettai Thargha, which draws a large number of visitors. Additionally, Anjineyar Temple, a renowned temple in Thiruthiraiipoondi, is a popular spot for tourists and local residents. Cul-



tural activities are organised at the temple near the sanctuary during specific festival periods.



Udhayamarthandapuram Bird Sanctuary/ Tamil Nadu Forest Department



SUCHINDRAM THEROOR WETLAND COMPLEX

Tamil Nadu | DATE OF DESIGNATION : April 8, 2022

The Suchindram Theroor Wetland complex has a rich history shaped by royal contributions to its irrigation systems. 9th-century copper plate inscriptions mention wetlands such as Pasumkulam and Venchikulam, many of which were constructed by the Pandyan ruler Veeranarayana, who established the Therrakal Canal to divert water from the River Pazhayar to several tanks.

The Suchindram Tank, built nearly a millennium ago, is fed by the Kumari Dam, which, along with

the Sabari Dam, may be over a thousand years old. The area and the Suchindram temple, once part of the Travancore empire, is known for its two Gopurams, with the eastern tower rising 44 meters high. The temple uniquely venerates the holy trinity of Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu, and Lord Brahma, making it a significant site for Hindus. The wetland features five temples and one church, hosting various cultural events during festivals, and it also serves as a graveyard for the nearby community.



*Suchindram temple Chariot festival/
Ganesan*





VEBANNUR WETLAND COMPLEX

Tamil Nadu | DATE OF DESIGNATION : April 8, 2022

The history of the Vembannur Wetland Complex is rich and significant, with references dating back to 9th-century copper plate inscriptions that mention several tanks, including Pasumkulam, Venchikulam, Nedumarthukulam, Perumkulam, Elemchikulam, and Konadunkulam. Constructed by the Pandyan King, Veeranarayana, the Vembannur Wetland serves as a vital irrigation source for nearby

communities, channelling water from the River Pazhayar.

The area surrounding the wetland is culturally vibrant, featuring four temples and three mosques. Cultural events are regularly held at the temple near the wetlands, emphasising its importance in the local cultural landscape. The wetland also attracts nature enthusiasts and tourists, enhancing its contemporary significance.



Vembannur Wetland Complex as an irrigation source for the adjacent paddy fields/ Kanniyakumari Nature Foundation



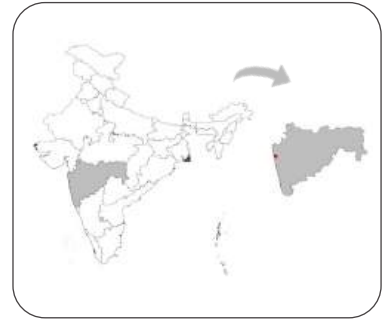
THANE CREEK

Maharashtra | DATE OF DESIGNATION : April 13, 2022

Thane Creek is named after the city of Thane to its north, where it connects with the River Ulhas, one of Maharashtra's west-flowing rivers that flows into the Arabian Sea. This connection also links to the Mumbai harbour, about 26 km south.

During the spawning season, local communities stop fishing to promote sustainable fish growth, resuming only after *Narali Poonima*, a Hindu festival marking the start of the new fishing season. This practice helps protect the

waters and juvenile fish populations. The Koli community, along with subgroups like the Aagri Koli and Sonkoli, is significant in the Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary area. Fishing has traditionally been their primary livelihood, and they deeply value mangroves for their role in marine breeding. Before fishing, Kolis offer prayers to various deities, including stone idols and photographs of Christ, often placed under mangroves near jetty sites. They do not strictly separate different religions; for



instance, Christian Kolis may pray to Hindu gods and celebrate Hindu festivals alongside their own observances.



Kolis of Bandra during Republic day parade performing Koli Dance/ Wikimedia Commons



NANDA LAKE

Goa | DATE OF DESIGNATION : June 8, 2022

Nanda Lake, located in the village of Cacoda of Quepem Taluka, holds the distinction of being Goa's first Ramsar site. The area preserves ancient traditions of sacred groves and trees, reflecting its rich ecological and cultural heritage. Lord Shiva, revered as *Mahadev* by local communities, is the presiding deity of Cacoda. A stone inscription from the 10th century A.D., attributed to the Goa-Kadamba rulers, can be found at the temple grounds.

According to local mythology, the Pandavas from the epic *Mahabharata* are said to have visited Cacoda during their exile, where

they engaged in agricultural activities. A significant boulder, which is visible during the dry season, is associated with the Pandavas and is referred to as Pandava Talop. This location has attained cultural and religious significance, being regarded as sacred, with protective markings that have been preserved across generations. The local populace maintains a deep spiritual connection with the Ramsar site, regularly offering prayers to deities.



Stone inscription from the 10th century A.D./ The Hindu



Nanda Lake/ Dr Shaiesh Morajkar



HYGAM WETLAND CONSERVATION RESERVE

Jammu & Kashmir | DATE OF DESIGNATION : June 8, 2022

The Hygam wetland was originally a vast grassland that attracted migratory birds from Wular Lake. Maharaja Hari Singh transformed it into a permanent waterbody by constructing a bund. He also established surrounding villages to house labourers.

These areas were initially managed by the Twaza (Hospitality and Protocol) Directorate, which utilised the wetland as a recreational venue for sports and entertainment, catering to its own personnel and their distinguished guests. This management ensured ample coverage for land and water game birds and animals, with strict enforcement of regulations. After 1947, the Fisheries Directorate took over the management of these reserves in the Kashmir region until 1954, when Dachigam, Cheshmashahi, and Rajparian (Daksum) Rakhs were upgraded to game sanctuaries. The administration then shifted through several departments: the Forest Department (1954-1960), the Twaza Directorate (1960-1964),

and back to the Fisheries Directorate (1972-1977), during which some areas were transferred to the Forest Department for future management. In 1978, the Directorate of Game Preservation of the Forest Department took over, eventually becoming the independent Department of Wildlife Protection in 1982.



*Maharaja Hari Singh/
Georges Devred*



SHALLBUGH WETLAND CONSERVATION RESERVE

Jammu & Kashmir | DATE OF DESIGNATION : June 8, 2022

Shallbugh Wetland Conservation Reserve is named after the Kashmiri words 'Shaal,' meaning golden jackal, and 'Rakh,' meaning plantation. Historically, the area was home to many golden jackals that preyed on waterfowl and domestic chickens, leading to its name. Some locals also believe the name comes from a water chestnut vendor whose brown hair resembled the coats of jackals.

The Shallbugh wetland has existed for centuries, predating the

Kashmiri Maharajas. Residents historically divided the wetland into sections to harvest grasses for animal feed, collecting fodder in large quantities when the swamp was 1 to 2 meters deep. Before 1990, hunting birds for consumption was common among the locals. By 1990, guns had become prevalent in the area, and by 2000, during the wetland's most challenging period, nearly everyone owned a gun. Shallbugh is renowned for its wicker willow craftsmanship, with around 300 households relying on this indus-



try. Recently, many have shifted to cultivating poplar trees in the wetland area due to higher profitability.



Willow basketry/ Zaid Ali



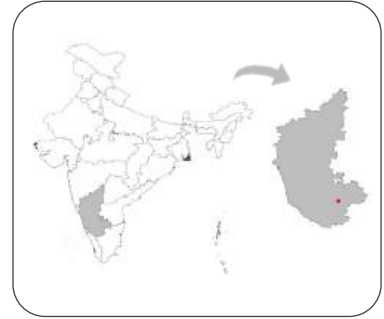
MAGADI KERE CONSERVATION RESERVE

Karnataka | DATE OF DESIGNATION : February 14, 2023

The Magadi Kere Conservation Reserve is a human-made wetland in the Gadag district, designed to store monsoon rainwater for irrigation. Magadi's historical significance stems from Nadaprabhu Hiriya Kempe Gowda, a 16th-century chieftain of the Vijayanagara Empire. Originally from Kempapura, Kempe Gowda fortified Bangalore and built the Bengaluru Fort. After being defeated by the Sultan of Bijapur, he established Magadi as his capital.

A key attraction in Magadi is the Shri Ranganatha Swamy Temple, a 1,200-year-old site initially built by the Chola rulers and later restored. The temple features a Gopuram attributed to Shri Krishnadevaraya and King Jayachamaraja Wodeyar. The temple houses a revered standing figure of Lord Vishnu known as Shri Ranganatha, which was installed by the sages Mandavya and Vasishtha. The temple's splendid Kalyani, or sacred tank, is vital to essential rites and contributes to the complex's architecture. Magadi is a vibrant cultural hub, hosting events like the *Shri Ranganathaswamy Rathotsava Jatre* each April, which draws thousands of devotees and features communal kitchens serving meals. The annual livestock fair and weekly *Santhe* (markets) every Friday further enhance its commercial activity. Nearby, the Magadi Kere Conservation Re-

serve offers rich cultural experiences, with Hampi, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, showcasing the history of the Vijayanagara Empire through significant temples like Virupaksha and Vijaya Vittala. Other notable spots include Dambal, known for its Sri Basaveshwara and Sri Someshwara Temples, and Lakkundi, famous for Kasivisvesvara and Mallikarjuna Temples, all reflecting the region's rich heritage. The Galaganatha



Temple in Gadag is also notable for its architectural beauty.



Ranganatha Swamy temple, Magadi/
Dineshkannambadi



AGHANASHINI ESTUARY

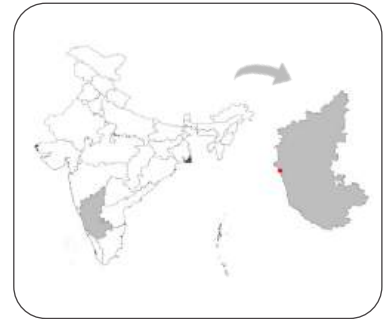
Karnataka | DATE OF DESIGNATION : February 14, 2023

Aghanashini, meaning 'Remover of Sins', is one of the few free-flowing rivers in the world, located between the temple towns of Gokarna and Kumta. This region, once a major rice-exporting area, is historically known as a rice bowl, with rice transported via watercraft. Key landmarks include Mirjan Fort, built by the Bijapur Sultans, and the remains of Aghanashini Fort overlooking the river mouth. These forts illustrate the area's cultural significance, where spices from the Western Ghats were traded during various historical periods.

The Aghanashini estuary supports a low-maintenance rice farming system, cultivating salt-tolerant 'Kagga rice' in the salty Ghaz-

ini area. This local favourite is known for its long panicles and reddish-brown grains, offering numerous health benefits. Harvesting occurs in November, with sluice gates opening to allow tidal waters to flow into fields through channels called Kodis, which are also used for fishing. Gazni rice fields are cooperatively managed by groups of farmers.

Nestled in the Aghanashini estuary is an uninhabited island home to 'Babrudevaru', the guardian deity worshipped by local villagers. The Babrulingeshwar Temple on Masurkurve Island features a unique sacred grove of mangroves, playing a vital role in local religious life. A specific area, known as Upatti, consists of ancient Avi-



cennia officinalis trees and is so sacred that footwear is prohibited. This 'kan forest' is rich in diverse birdlife and reflects the community's deep cultural connection to the river, honoured as a goddess. The estuary has been crucial to their heritage for centuries.



Mirjan Fort/ Gandharva S

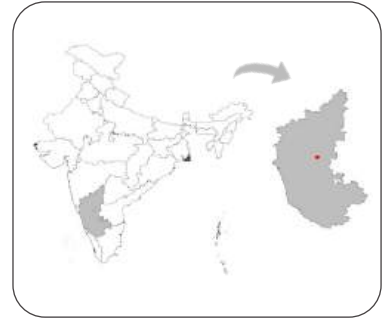


ANKASAMUDRA BIRD CONSERVATION RESERVE

Karnataka | DATE OF DESIGNATION : March 10, 2023

Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve is a human-made wetland built by the local communities to store monsoon run-off from the Tungabhadra River and provide irrigation for surrounding drought-prone areas. As a prime example of the human-made inland wetlands typical of the Deccan Plateau, it reflects a traditional system of water harvesting and storage that is crucial for human settlement and agricultural expansion in the region. The wetland has historically supplied essential services, including water for domestic use and irrigation, while also offering a range of valuable ecosystem benefits.

The Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve is located ~45 km from the UNESCO Site of Hampi in the Hospet Taluk of Karnataka. The austere site of Hampi primarily showcases the remnants of the capital city of the Vijayanagara Empire, which flourished from the 14th to the 16th centuries CE, marking the last significant Hindu kingdom in India. Hampi is renowned for its stunning landscape, which features the Tungabhadra River, rugged hills, and vast plains embellished with numerous archaeological remnants. The complexity of its urban, royal, and sacred systems is evident in the more than 1,600 surviving



structures, including forts, riverside elements, royal and sacred complexes, temples, shrines, pillared halls, mandapas, memorials, gateways, defence posts, stables, and waterworks.



Elephant Stable for royal elephants of the Vijayanagara Empire, Hampi/ Vyacheslav Argenberg



KARAIVETTI BIRD SANCTUARY

Tamil Nadu | DATE OF DESIGNATION : May 24, 2023

Karaivetti Bird Sanctuary holds profound cultural and spiritual significance for the local communities residing in its vicinity. In several villages surrounding the sanctuary, bar-headed goose is revered and regarded as the nominated deity of the wetland.

Each village boasts small temples where annual festivals are celebrated, fostering a strong sense of community and tradition. Karaivetti is one of the important tourist sites in Ariyalur district. The district boasts many famous temples, such as the Kaliyuga Varadharaja Perumal Temple, Thirumalapadi Sivan Temple, and Gangaikonda Cholapuram. Additionally, the

Thanjavur Brahadeswarar Temple and the renowned pilgrimage centre Thiruvaiyaru are located very close to the sanctuary. The sanctuary thus attracts visitors to these temples. The temple dedicated to the goddess, known as Thanthondri Amman, situated in Erakudi village, is highly regarded in this area. Various activities involving dance and song during festivals promote cultural appreciation and highlight the region's heritage. Elakurichi, a serene village in Tamil Nadu's Ariyalur district, is located 22 km from the Karaivetti Bird Sanctuary. Known for its historic church, built by the Catholic missionary and Tamil scholar Fr. Constantine Joseph Beschi, also



known as Veeramamunivar, Elakurichi serves as both a pilgrimage site and a symbol of cultural integration. The church reflects a time when religious devotion and literary excellence shaped the community's identity.



Adaikalamadha church, Elakurichi/ catholicshrinebasilica.com



LONGWOOD SHOLA RESERVE FOREST

Tamil Nadu | DATE OF DESIGNATION : May 24, 2023

The Shola forests of South India derive their name from the Tamil word 'Solai', meaning 'tropical rainforest'. In the local Badaga language, Longwood Shola is called 'Dhodda Solae', translating to 'Big Forest'. Covering 116 hectares, this relatively small yet pristine area of shola forest is a significant remnant of the Nilgiris' ecological heritage.

In the early 19th century, Longwood Shola underwent substantial changes with the arrival of the British East India Company. In 1819, John Sullivan, the Collector

of Coimbatore, established the first European settlement in Kotagiri, drawn by the area's pleasant climate and fertile land. However, this period also marked the expansion of tea and coffee plantations, leading to considerable deforestation. Despite this, regions like Longwood Shola were preserved due to their remoteness and the British interest in conserving vital forested areas. A memorial dedicated to John Sullivan is located at an approximate distance of 2 kilometres from the Longwood Shola Reserve Forest.



Following India's independence in 1947, conservation efforts for the Longwood Shola Reserve Forest gained significant momentum. It was officially designated



St Luke's Church- a remnant of the colonial rule/ Ronnie Mosley

as a reserve forest and received protection under section 16 of the Tamil Nadu Forest Act, 1882. Collaborations among the government, local communities, and conservationists resulted in various initiatives aimed at preserving the shola's unique flora and fauna. A notable milestone in conservation was the establishment of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve in 1986, which includes Longwood Shola. This designation, backed by international recognition, marked a shift towards integrated conservation and sustainable development, providing a framework for protecting the unique ecosystems of the Nilgiris. Efforts to preserve the Longwood Shola forest began in the early 1980s with Michel Danino, a French re-

searcher, who campaigned for its protection due to its importance as a water source. Despite initial, unsustainable help from the forest department, local villagers gradually joined the cause in the 1990s, forming a regular patrol to prevent illegal logging and encroachment.

By 1997, this informal group of nearly 40 individuals gained recognition for their consistent efforts. Recognising their dedication, the forest department, under DFO Doraiswamy, helped establish the Longwood Shola Watchdog Committee (LSWC) in May 1998. The primary role of LSWC involves patrolling, reporting offences to the forest department (which handles prosecutions and fines), and raising awareness. They've

also advocated for alternative fuel sources to reduce pressure on the shola. The committee conducts regular awareness camps in villages, seminars for educators, and eco-awareness programs at an interpretation center. They also lead nature camps for children, involving them in cleaning efforts. In 1998, the LSWC distributed 4000 pamphlets and conducted door-to-door campaigns to educate around 700 households about the shola's vital role in water supply, significantly increasing local awareness. Today, the Longwood Shola Reserve Forest stands as a testament to effective conservation efforts and is an essential part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. They've



Memorial of John Sullivan in Kotagiri/ SivakumarPP



NAGI BIRD SANCTUARY

Bihar | DATE OF DESIGNATION : October 11, 2023

The Nagi Bird Sanctuary is situated within the Jhajha forest range of the Jamui Forest Division in Bihar. The sanctuary was established due to the reservoirs created by the Nagi dams, which were constructed by the Irrigation Department.

Within the sanctuary's boundaries, a Durga temple attracts many local visitors. During *Nawami Puja (Durga Puja)*, a fair is held at the temple, drawing in villagers from surrounding areas.

The sanctuary is surrounded by eight villages, with a population comprising roughly 10% Muslims and a Hindu majority. The communities coexist peacefully, sharing a common cultural heritage and actively engaging together in all village activities.

The local community coexists harmoniously with both resident and migratory birds, taking measures to ensure that the birds and their habitats are not harmed.



Nagi Bird Sanctuary/ Harsh Ganapathi



NAKTI BIRD SANCTUARY

Bihar | DATE OF DESIGNATION : October 11, 2023

Nakti Bird Sanctuary is situated within the Jhajha forest range of the Jamui Forest Division in Bihar. Nakti Bird Sanctuary is a human-made wetland created mainly for irrigation purposes through the construction of Nakti Dam.

The Sanctuary is surrounded by seven villages predominantly inhabited by Hindu communities,

with approximately 10% of the population being Muslim.

The residents share a common cultural fabric and actively participate together in all village activities. The local community coexists harmoniously with both resident and migratory birds, taking measures to ensure that the birds and their habitats are not harmed.



Nakti Bird Sanctuary/ Pradip Paswan



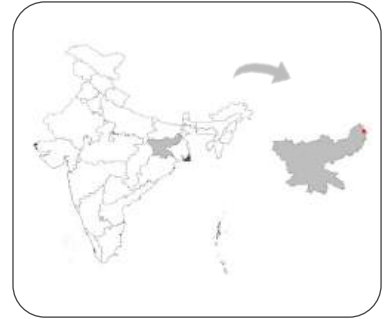
UDHWA LAKE BIRD SANCTUARY

Jharkhand | DATE OF DESIGNATION : January 8, 2024

Udhwa Lake Bird Sanctuary is named after Saint Uddhava, a character from the *Mahabharata* who was a friend of Lord Krishna and a philosopher of *Sankhya Yoga* (also known as *Samkhya*). It is believed that Udhwa is the site where the saint once resided. *Uddhav Muni's Ashram*, situated near this wetland, is a popular destination for cultural tourism today.

This area holds historical significance as the site of the decisive Battle of Udhwa Nala, fought in 1763 between Mir Kasim, the Nawab of Bengal, and his rivals. This historic event contributes to the distinct identity of the Udhwa landscape. Even today, Udhwa Nala remains the principal water channel for the wetland, bringing seasonal floodwaters from the Ganga along with aquatic life, thereby enriching its biodiversity and supporting its ecological balance.

Over time, the region has supported agriculture along the wetland's banks and sustained local livelihoods through fishing. The local community has long coexisted in harmony with birds and other wildlife, utilising natural resources responsibly for their survival. This sustained relationship has played a vital role in preserving the wetland's ecological integrity.



Painting depicting Uddhava, Krishna's messenger. Picture taken at the British Museum, London, UK/
Wikimedia Commons



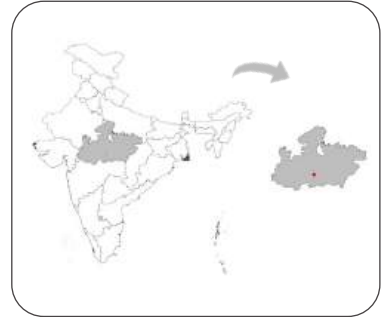
TAWA RESERVOIR

Madhya Pradesh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : January 8, 2024

The Tawa Reservoir was created in 1958 with the construction of the Tawa Dam at the confluence of the Tawa and Denwa Rivers, tributaries of the Narmada River. This reservoir supplies water for irrigation and drinking in the surrounding areas. Historically, Tawa was part of the Gondwana Kingdom, governed by the Gond tribe, and later ruled by the Marathas and the British. The region is home to Madhya Pradesh's state fish, the *Tor Mahseer*, which has long been revered as 'God's fish' throughout

its biogeographic range, particularly among isolated tribal societies.

The nearby Bhimbetka Caves, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, feature ancient rock paintings over 30,000 years old, reflecting the culture of the twenty-one surrounding villages. An ancient temple near Ranipur village, built in the 18th century, and the ruins of a stepwell and palace also reflect Tawa's historical significance.



*Bhimbetka Caves Paintings/
Suyash Dwivedi*





KAZHUVELI BIRD SANCTUARY

Tamil Nadu | DATE OF DESIGNATION : January 16, 2024

Kazhuvveli relates to the word *kalimukam*, which refers to backwaters or estuaries. The name of the wetland also derives from *kali*, meaning 'to drain' and *veli*, meaning fence or space (*veli*), thus referring to an estuary.

Remarkably, the local community has demonstrated a strong commitment to conserving this sanctuary, coexisting harmoniously with the birds in a symbiotic relationship. The Ramsar Site is surrounded by several religious places, revered by the locals. Sivan Kovil serves as a vital worship place for fishers and locals, embodying their rich cultural heritage. The Throubathiamman Temple in Kazhupumpakkam hosts a major May festival, with villagers ensuring birds remain undisturbed. The Shri Manjaneeswarar Ayyanar Temple in Keezhpathupattu (around 10 km from the Ramsar Site) is dedicated to Lord Ayyanar. According to local belief, the divine essences of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu, who transformed into Mohini, the Hindu goddess of enchantment, merged to form a deity resembling a cloud. Onlookers dubbed this manifestation 'Manjani', which eventually evolved into the name Ayyanar. He is said to have settled in a forest in Keezhpathupattu, near Pondicherry, earning the title Manjaneeswarar Ayyanarappan. Devotees believe that Ayyanar remains in Pudupattu only until sunset, after which he rides across the world on his white horse to protect all, returning by dawn the next day. Legend has it that a

king from Pandala, while hunting in this forest, discovered a child named Manikandan, whom he later adopted. This child was eventually consecrated as Ayyappan at Sabarimala in Kerala. As a result, numerous Ayyappa devotees undertaking the annual pilgrimage to Sabarimala also visit this temple, believing their pilgrimage is incomplete without a stop at Keezhpathupattu. Furthermore, the Keelputhupatty Aiyannar sacred groves, situated to the south of the wetland, impose restrictions



against tree felling, hunting, and firewood collection to safeguard the environment.



Throubathiamman Temple/
Muthu Kumaran



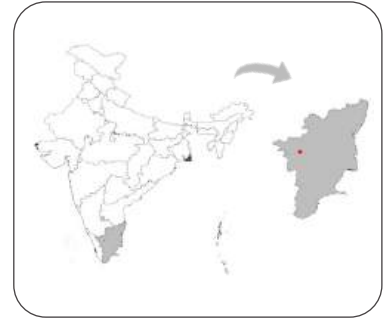
NANJARAYAN BIRD SANCTUARY

Tamil Nadu | DATE OF DESIGNATION : January 16, 2024

The Nanjarayan Bird Sanctuary, also known as Nanjarayan Tank, is named after King Nanjarayan, who restored it 400 years ago for agricultural purposes. Situated beside the River Nallaru, a tributary of the River Noyyal, its water was used for agriculture until the late 20th century.

The tank is also associated with the Sukreeshwara Temple, dedi-

cated to Lord Sukreeshwara (an incarnation of Lord Shiva). Built by Ahom King Pramatta Singha in 1744, this temple is believed to be where Sage Sukra lived and worshipped Lord Shiva. Popular belief holds that performing post-death rituals here grants *moksha* (peace) for the deceased.



Sukreeswarar temple/ Gunasekar Viswanathan



SAKKARAKOTTAI BIRD SANCTUARY

Tamil Nadu | DATE OF DESIGNATION : July 15, 2024

The Sakkarakottai tank was built in 1321 A.D. through *Kudimaramattu*, a traditional community-led water management practice in Tamil Nadu, under the leadership of Thiru Sakkarethavan, after whom it is named. In 1412 A.D., Thiru Suryathevan constructed its feeder channel, now known as the Suryathevan Channel, near Periyakanmoi. Its boundaries were first surveyed in 1622 A.D. by Koothan Sethupathy, the King of Ramana-thapuram, who also cleared adjacent lands for agriculture in 1635 A.D. In 1674 A.D., Kilavan

Sethupathy added sluice gates for irrigation. Finally, in 1711 A.D., Vijayareghunatha Sethupathy of Ramnad deepened the tank, maximising its water capacity.

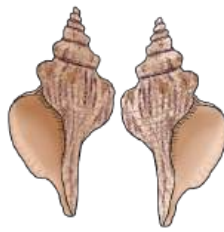
The villagers of Sakkarakottai have long recognised the vital role their wetland and its diverse bird population (migratory and resident) play in the sanctuary's ecosystem. A key benefit is the nutrient-rich water from bird droppings, which the villagers have successfully incorporated into their farming. This ongoing interaction and the com-



munity's dedication have been crucial to the wetland's conservation.



A representative image of Kudimaramattu



KHACHOEDPALRI WETLAND

Sikkim | DATE OF DESIGNATION : July 15, 2024

'Khachoe' means 'in the middle', and 'palri' means 'lotus', so Khachoe palri translates to 'in the middle of the lotus'. The lotus is one of the eight auspicious symbols in Buddhism and represents the enlightened mind, which rises pure and untainted from the muck of egotism and ignorance. Before Vajrayana Buddhism, the

Lepcha people revered the lake for its spiritual power linked to nature. Around 300 years ago, the Khachoe palri Gumpa was established, transforming the site into a sacred Buddhist location that blended animism and Buddhism, as reflected in the beliefs of local Bhutia-Lepcha villagers and monks.



Khachoe palri lake/ Dibyendu Ash

Numerous myths surround the Ramsar Site, which is believed to possess healing and wish-granting powers. Once a grazing ground for cattle filled with stinging nettles, the Lepcha people used the plant fibres for various crafts. Legend states that a Lepcha couple, while peeling the bark of the nettles, heard a strange sound from the sky, leading to the appearance of two conch shells. One shell landed nearby, causing the ground to shake and an immense spring of water to emerge, forming the lake. Tragically, the couple lost their lives due to the shock. Traditionally, one conch shell originated from Yuksam, known as 'Lhatsun Lahtsho' or Soul Lake, which dried up due to pollution. The other came from Tshokam near Lingdam, which met a similar fate. Eventually, Buddhist saints consecrated the lake, naming it "Khachhoedpalri", the abode of 'Tsho-sMan Pemachen', the protective nymph of Buddhism. Goddess Tara is said to grace the hilltop above, and from above, the lake resembles her footprint. Guru Padmasambhava consecrated the site during his travels, furthering its significance. Historically, high lamas would use the lake's colour to predict events for the upcoming year

Several religious festivals are associated with the wetland, including *Chho-Tsho* in October and *Bhum-*

chu in February or March, which is celebrated on the 14th day of Losar, the Tibetan New Year. *Chho-Tsho* is a gratitude festival after the cardamom harvest, where villagers perform rituals at the lake

and share a feast. The *Bhumchu* Festival honours the lake goddess to ensure peace for the coming year, featuring colourful flour and butter idols, lit lamps, and offerings.



*Bhumchu Festival/ Department of
Tourism and Civil Aviation,
Government of Sikkim*



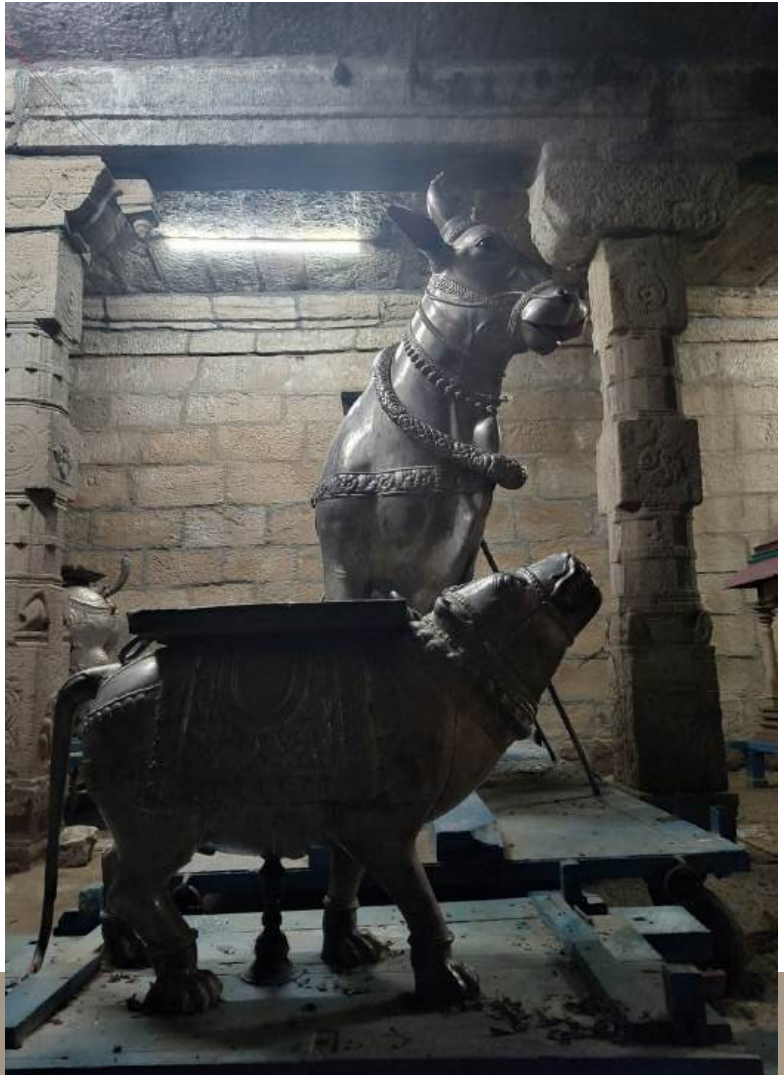
THERTHANGAL BIRD SANCTUARY

Tamil Nadu | DATE OF DESIGNATION : July 15, 2024

The Therthangal Bird Sanctuary is situated in Therthangal Village of the Ramanathapuram District in Tamil Nadu. Historically, during the Nainar Kovil festival at the Naganathar Temple, a temple chariot from Ramanathapuram was drawn to Nainar Kovil village with the assistance of elephants. However, the elephant pulling the chariot became ensnared in the muddy clay soil near Therthangal village. Consequently, the chariot had to remain there for several days, and since that time, the village has been known as 'Therthangal,' which translates to 'a place where the chariot stayed'.

The villagers of Therthangal have long understood the ecological importance of the wetland and its avian visitors. They've effectively integrated the nutrient-rich bird droppings, which enhance

water quality, into their farming practices. The community, across all social strata, traditionally protects the birds, recognising their value to both agriculture and the local economy. An ancient Amman temple and a smaller shrine dedicated to a human deity, both revered by locals, are also located near the sanctuary.



Carrier of the idol used during festival processions of Nainarkovil/ AshokaParamatamil



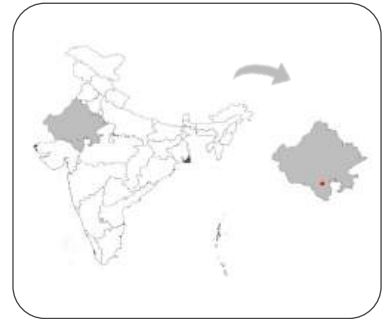
MENAR WETLAND COMPLEX

Rajasthan | DATE OF DESIGNATION : February 19, 2025

The Menar Wetland Complex stands as a prime example of community-led environmental stewardship, particularly by the Menaria Brahmin community. Their commitment to preserving this ecological treasure stems from a deep respect for the wetland, which once served their agricultural and livestock needs. Over time, residents have fostered a strong appreciation for local birds, treating them as vital community members. Through a practice called social fencing, they have successfully prohibited poaching and fishing, safeguarding the area's ecological balance. This protection is maintained not

by laws, but by mutual respect and a shared commitment to avoiding hunting, fishing, and pollution, making violations socially and legally consequential in this tight-knit rural community.

Menar, also known as Menar Bird Village, features bird depictions on temple walls and homes, with local children, farmers, and shopkeepers familiar with the names of birds. Evening discussions often highlight recent sightings, including storks and rare falcons. A revered Shiva temple by the wetland acts as a spiritual centre, reminding villagers of their duty to protect nature. Each year, the



community celebrates Jamrabij, a festival that strengthens their cultural and spiritual ties to the environment while promoting environmental responsibility.



Menar Wetland Complex/ Incredible India Digital Portal



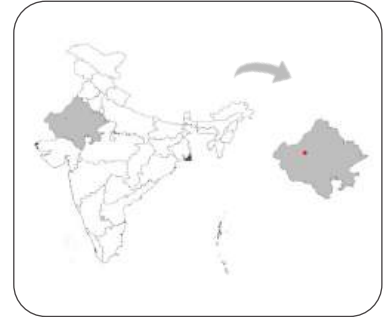
KHICHAN WETLAND

Rajasthan | DATE OF DESIGNATION : February 19, 2025

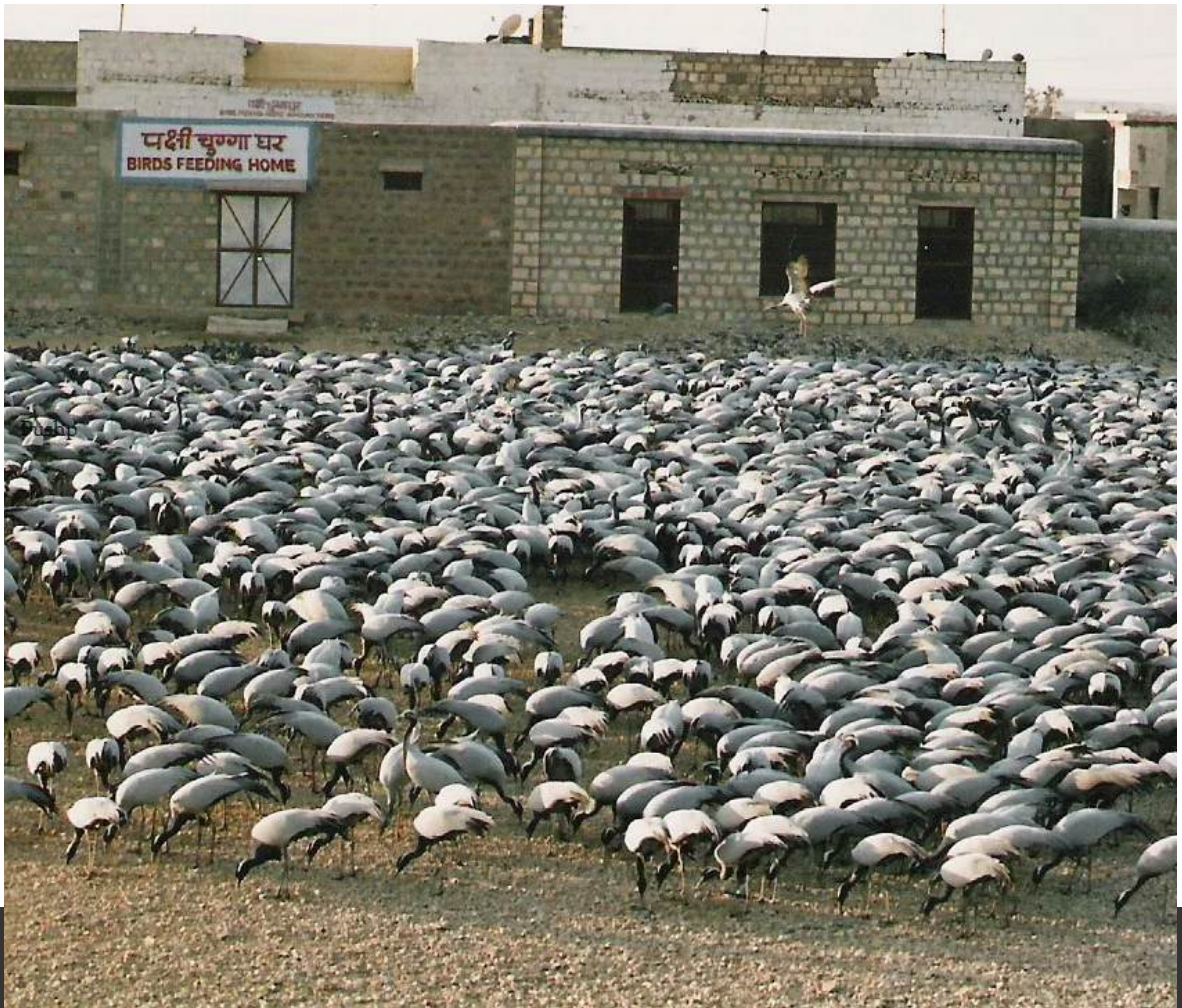
The story of the Khichan wetland dates back to the 1970s, when Mr Ratanlal Maloo, known as the 'Bird Man of Khichan', began feeding birds, following family traditions. His efforts began with a few pigeons and later attracted a flock of migratory Demoiselle Cranes (*Grus virgo*). Mr. Maloo noticed their numbers peaked from September to January. In 2009, he received the Salim Ali Nature Conservation Award for his dedication. By 2014, the community welcomed over 25,000 cranes each year, celebrating their

arrival from late August to early September.

The cranes, known as '*kurja*' by locals, are vital to the villagers, who care for them diligently. A 200-square-metre feeding ground, called *chugga ghar*, serves as their meal spot. The cranes are often seen on rooftops, near waterholes, and along sand dunes. To protect the cranes, villagers have taken measures to reduce mortality from power line collisions, stray dog attacks, and injuries from Chinese *manja*, a kite-flying thread. With



the help of local administration, chain-link fencing has been installed, leading to a gradual decrease in bird fatalities.



Demoiselle cranes feeding at the Chugga ghar/ Pushp Kumar Jain

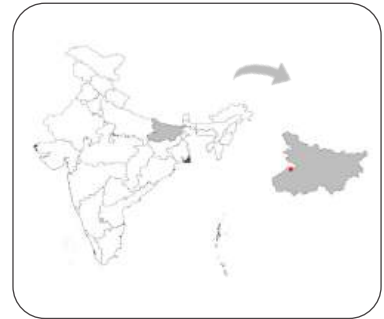


GOKUL JALASHAY

Bihar | DATE OF DESIGNATION : May 13, 2025

Gokul Jalashay is located along the southern fringe of the River Ganges and is hydrologically connected to it through the River Dharmavati near Gayaghat. During 1952–53, a significant shift in the Ganges' course, approximately 8–10 km northward and 3–4 km towards Uttar Pradesh, led to the formation of this oxbow lake, now known as Gokul Jalashay.

The local communities play an active role in maintaining the ecological health of the wetland. Through regular weed removal and catchment cleaning, they contribute significantly to conserving its natural character and sustaining the ecosystem services it provides.



Culturally, the wetland holds deep significance. The surrounding villages celebrate a week-long *Chhath Puja* festival along its banks, reinforcing the site's spiritual and traditional importance. The historical association of Gokul Jalashay with the Ganges enhances its sanctity, as various rituals such as cremations, tonsuring (*mundan*), *matkor puja* (a pre-wedding ritual prevalent in Bihar involving the symbolic digging of soil from a wetland or ancestral land), and other religious ceremonies are performed along its shores. The nearby Lord Rama Temple in Udhaura village further enriches the area's cultural landscape, drawing thousands of devotees from across the country.



Lord Rama Temple in Udhaura village/ Sumit Shaw



Gokul Jalashay/ Wetlands International South Asia



UDAIPUR JHEEL

Bihar | DATE OF DESIGNATION : May 13, 2025

Udaipur Jheel, locally known as Sairayaman Lake, lies within the Udaipur Wildlife Sanctuary in the West Champaran district of Bihar. This oxbow lake, formed in the floodplains of the River Gandak, represents a vital aquatic ecosystem within the sanctuary, holding immense ecological significance.

A distinctive feature of Udaipur Jheel is the dense fringe of *Jamun* or Java plum trees (*Syzygium cumini*) encircling its waters. The locals believe that the ripe fruits often fall into the water, naturally

enriching it with medicinal properties. Scientifically, these fruits act as natural adsorbents, helping purify water by removing organic pollutants, heavy metals, toxins, and dyes. The surrounding communities traditionally used this water for drinking, associating it with health benefits, an enduring reflection of the close link between local culture, traditional knowledge, and wetland ecology. Approximately 3,000 members of local village communities from nearby areas derive direct benefits



from the ecosystem services provided by the wetland, including water, food, and livelihood.



Jamun trees encircling Udaipur Jheel/ Government of Bihar



GOGABIL LAKE

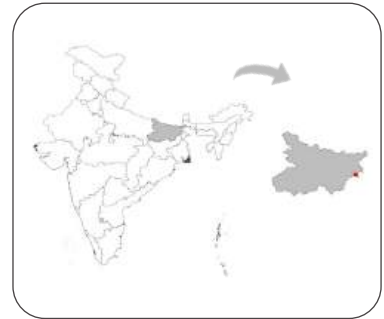
Bihar | DATE OF DESIGNATION : May 13, 2025

Gogabil Lake, an oxbow-type wetland situated within the trans-Gangetic plains, is the first Community Reserve of Bihar. It was initially notified as a 'Closed Area' by the State Government of Bihar in 1990 for five years, with the status extended until 2000. However, following the 2002 amendment to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, the provision for 'Closed Areas' was dropped, leaving Gogabil without formal protection for some time. After years of advocacy by conservationists and local NGOs (such as Janlakshya, Goga Vikas Samiti, Mandar Nature Club), and cooperation from villagers who even offered land, Gogabil was formally notified as Bihar's first Commu-

nity Reserve (and also as a Conservation Reserve) by the State Board for Wildlife. This landmark decision marked a significant step forward in strengthening community-based wetland conservation in the state of Bihar.

Traditional fishing practices continue to be followed here, highlighting the community's sustainable relationship with the wetland. Cultural festivals such as *Sirva*, *Adra*, and *Chhath* are celebrated along its banks, during which residents clean and maintain both the wetland and the surrounding areas.

A sacred site known as *Matta*, located on the northeastern side of the lake, is revered by local fish-



ers, who believe it safeguards the ecological balance of the wetland by protecting juvenile fish. This harmonious blend of environmental stewardship and cultural reverence reflects the deep-rooted community connection that sustains Gogabil Lake.



Gadwall in Gogabil Lake/ Ramsar Information Sheet



SILISERH LAKE

Rajasthan | DATE OF DESIGNATION : July 7, 2025

Siliserh Lake is a human-made wetland built by Maharaja Vinay Singh, the tenth ruler of Alwar, in the year 1845 AD, through the construction of a bund across a tributary of the River Ruparel. Siliserh Lake was initially created to provide drinking water to the city of Alwar and to meet the irrigation needs of surrounding communities. The wetland continues to serve as a vital resource, supporting local livelihoods through fish culture.

Overlooking the lake lies the historic Siliserh Palace, built by Maharaja Vinay Singh in honour of his beloved queen, Shila Devi, a princess of Bharatpur. The palace initially served as a royal hunting lodge and has since been transformed into a heritage hotel managed by the Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation (RTDC). The harmonious integration of the lake, palace, and natural landscape around it exemplifies Rajasthan's rich royal heritage



and reflects the coexistence of cultural legacy and ecological conservation.



Siliserh Lake/ RSIS



Siliserh Lake Palace/ RSIS



KOPRA JALASHAY

Chhattisgarh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : August 8, 2025

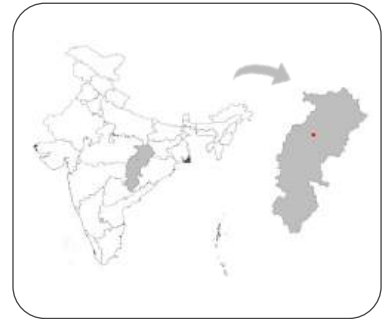
Kopra Jalashay, a reservoir in the upper basin of the River Mahanadi, was built in 1993 to mitigate regional water stress and support both domestic and agricultural needs. Kopra Jalashay functions as a combined natural and human-made wetland. The wetland forms an integral part of the region known as the 'state of ponds' and is a remarkable cultural and ecological landmark of Chhattisgarh. Its cultural significance is closely tied to the historic legacy of Ratanpur, located approximately 30 kilometres away, where the Kalachuri dynasty constructed nearly 360 ponds between the 12th and 14th centuries, earning it the title 'City of Ponds'.

Ratanpur is renowned for its numerous religious sites and historic structures. It is nationally known for the Mahamaya Temple, a Hindu shrine originally constructed by the Kalchuri rulers during the

12th to 13th century A.D., and is one of the 52 *Shakti Peethas* spread across India.

The region surrounding Kopra Jalashay is steeped in rich cultural traditions. The nearby village of Belpan, just 30 kilometres away, is renowned for the Narmadeshwar Mahadev Temple and the sacred Narmada Kund, making it an important religious and tourist destination. Other notable archaeological sites in the vicinity include Tala and Malhar, with Tala especially known for the *Devrani-Jethani* Temple complex and its iconic statue of Rudra Shiva, which dates back to the 6th century A.D.

Culturally, Kopra Jalashay is deeply integrated into the local life. Communities from nearby villages, such as Belmundi, Sarseni, Singhri, and Bahtarai, maintain deeply rooted cultural practices,



performing traditional rituals associated with every stage of life, from marriage ceremonies to funeral rites, and many of their customs revolve around the local wetlands, reflecting a long-standing spiritual and practical relationship with ponds and rivers. Kopra Jalashay also serves as a focal point for major traditional festivals, including *Hareli*, *Kamarchhat*, *Teej*, and *Pitra Paksha*, during which the reservoir becomes a vibrant centre of community life.



Mahamaya Temple, Ratanpur, Bilaspur/ Ms Sarah Welch



Rudra Shiva Sandstone Statue (Tala)/ Amit Pasricha



CHHARI-DHAND

Gujarat | DATE OF DESIGNATION : June 16, 2025

The Chhari-Dhand Wetland Conservation Reserve is situated on the boundary between the arid Banni grasslands and the marshy salt flats of the Rann of Kutch. In the local Kutchi language, 'Chhari' signifies 'salty,' and 'Dhand' denotes 'shallow wetlands'. Chhari Dhand wetland was officially recognised in 2008 as a 'conservation forest', making it the first

conservation centre established in Gujarat.

The wetland holds cultural and ecological significance for local communities, esteemed for its scenic beauty, traditional herding practices, and its role in regional folklore. The wetland is a preferred destination for eco-tourism for national and international birdwatchers and wildlife enthu-



siasts. Pilgrims from across India visit the Dattatreya Temple, a Hindu shrine atop Kaladungar (Black Hill) that offers panoramic views of the Rann of Kutch. Additionally, Dhinodhar Hill features the important yogi shrine, the Dhoramnath Temple, established by Sheth Sundarji Shivjia, a Brahma-Kshatriya, in 1821.

*Dhoramnath shrine/
Yogesh Patel*



Chhari Dhandh Conservation Reserve/ RSIS



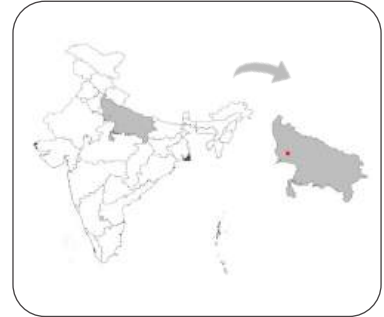
PATNA BIRD SANCTUARY

Uttar Pradesh | DATE OF DESIGNATION : December 4, 2025

Patna Bird Sanctuary holds significance as a centre of religious tourism, in addition to its ecological importance. Nestled amid dense palm forests, the sanctuary houses the ancient Shri Purna Ichheswar Mahadev Temple, a revered shrine dedicated to Lord Shiva and traditionally believed to date back to the Mahabharata period. According to legend, the temple was established by King Jarasandha of Magadha, a devout follower of Lord Shiva, during the era of Lord Krishna, and has since been regarded as a power-

ful place of faith where devotees believe their wishes are fulfilled, giving rise to the name Ichheswar Mahadev. The temple enshrines a rare *swayambhu* (self-originating) Shivalinga, noted in *Ancient Shiva Temples of India*, which rises about three feet above the ground and is believed to have no known depth, symbolising humility and devotion in local belief.

The surrounding landscape is associated in mythology with Raja Kaliya, a friend of Magadha's emperor Jarasandha. The place,



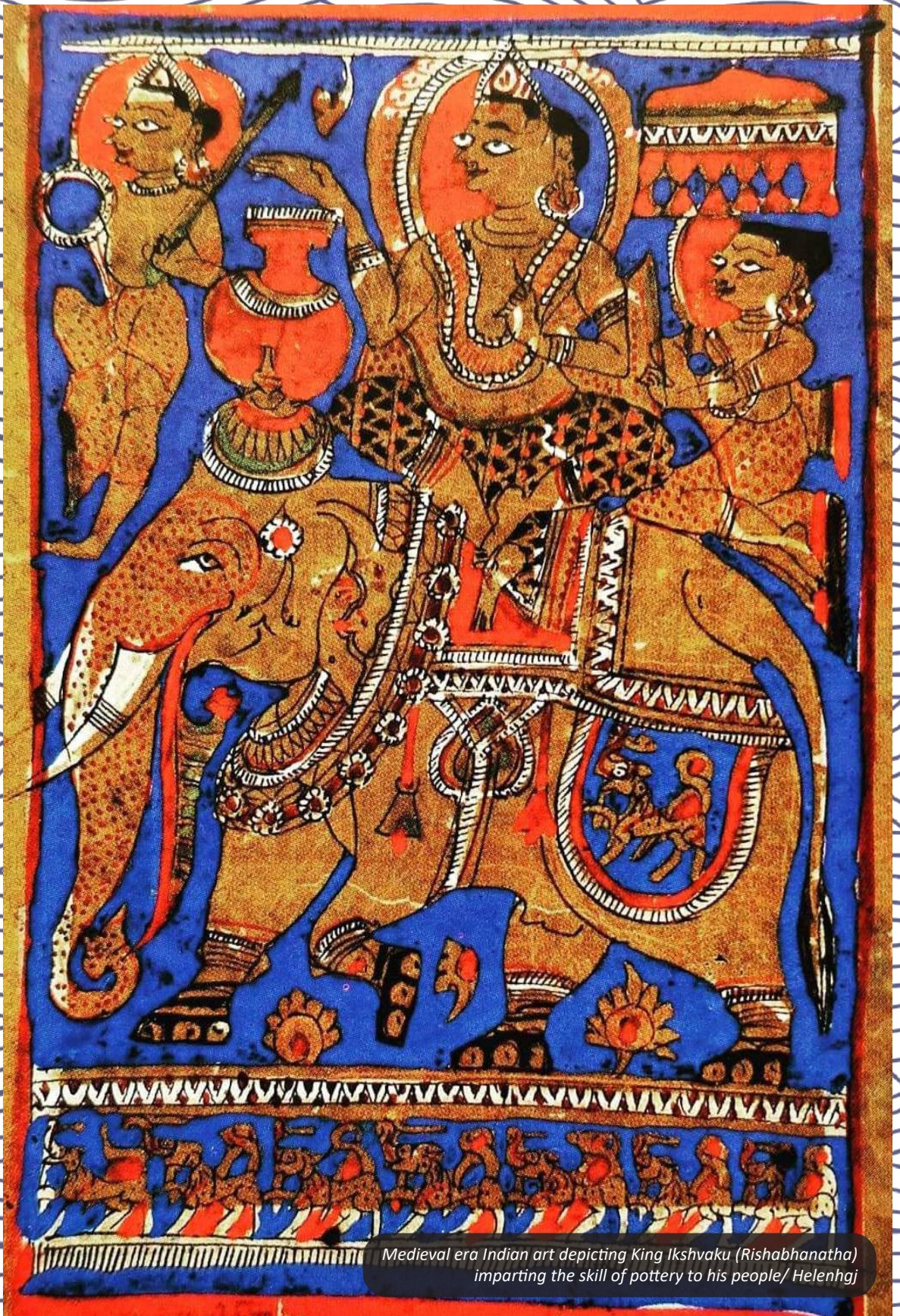
therefore, is also known as Raja Kaliya Forest. According to mythology, Lord Krishna killed a demon named Kaliya in the large lake at this site. After this, he married Rukmini. Historical narratives recount attempts to damage the temple during the Mughal period, which are said to have failed, and archaeological excavations in the date palm forests of the sanctuary have yielded coins attributed to the Dwapar era, underscoring the site's deep cultural, mythological, and historical resonance alongside its natural heritage.



Spoonbill and Greylag goose at Patna Bird Sanctuary/ RSIS



Shri Purna Ichheswar Mahadev Temple/ Vijay Upadhyay



Medieval era Indian art depicting King Ikshvaku (Rishabhanatha) imparting the skill of pottery to his people/ Helenhgj

DID YOU KNOW?



Since 2016, India has designated 72 wetlands as Ramsar Sites, increasing the total to 98. It ranks first in Asia and third worldwide, behind the UK and Mexico, for the number of Ramsar Sites. India's Ramsar wetlands comprise around 10% of the total wetland area in the country.

India is the second-largest producer of rice globally. Over 70% of India's rice is cultivated in wetlands.



Loktak Lake in Manipur is home to the world's only floating national park-Keibul Lamjao, which shelters the endangered Sangai deer.

Chilika Lake in Odisha is the 'single largest habitat of Irrawaddy dolphins' in the world and also the first Asian Ramsar Site to be removed from the Montreux Record after successful ecological restoration.



Bhitarkanika Mangroves in Odisha support the highest concentration of saltwater crocodiles (*Crocodylus porosus*) nationwide, with an estimated population of nearly 1700 individuals. Additionally, they attract approximately 500,000 Olive Ridley Turtles annually, establishing it as the world's largest mass nesting site.

Sundarbans is the largest contiguous mangrove system in the world. The second-largest contiguous mangrove system is about one-tenth the size of the Sundarbans. The Sundarbans are also home to Royal Bengal tigers that are uniquely adapted to swim across mangrove islands.



Kolkata saves about ₹4,680 million annually by avoiding expensive sewage treatment plants, thanks to the East Kolkata Wetlands acting as the city's natural kidneys and carbon sinks.

Hirakud Reservoir in Odisha is the longest earthen dam in the world.



Khichan Wetland in Rajasthan hosts over 22,000 migratory Demoiselle cranes every winter, thanks to locals who organise daily bird feeding and protect them from power-line collisions and stray dogs.

The Kuttanad Below Sea-level Farming System in the Vembanad-Kol Wetland is India's only rice cultivation system below sea level! Spanning 50,000 hectares, these 'Puncha Vayals' are created by draining delta swamps in brackish waters.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- About Kumbh. District Haridwar. *Government of Uttarakhand*. <https://haridwar.nic.in/about-kumbh/>
- About Sandi Bird Sanctuary. Environment, Forest and Climate Change Department, Government of Uttar Pradesh. <https://upforest.gov.in/web/forestnew/Default.aspx>
- Adamson, M. M. D. (2024, April 29). World Wetlands Day: Good for Wetlands, Good for Communities. *AIF: American India Foundation*. <https://aif.org/world-wetlands-day-good-for-wetlands-good-for-communities/>
- Adesh, K. & Amita, K. (2017). Sarus Crane in Indian Mythology and Culture. *International J. of Life Sciences*, Volume 5 (3) (pp. 465-470). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327861238_Sarus_Crane_in_Indian_Mythology_and_Culture
- Ambastha, K., Hussain, S. A. & Badola, R. (2007). Resource dependence and attitudes of local people toward conservation of Kabartal wetland: a case study from the Indo-Gangetic plains. *Wetlands Ecol Manage* 15, 287–302. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11273-006-9029-z>
- Baral, B., C.S.D. & Sharma, A. (2016, October 13). Golden Grass Craft - Puri, Orissa. D'Source. <https://www.dsource.in/resource/golden-grass-craft-puri-orissa/introduction>
- Bargarh. Industries and Handicrafts. *Government of Odisha*. <https://bargarh.odisha.gov.in/departments/industries-and-handicrafts>
- Bhalodi, M. M., Kamboj, R. D. & Pandey, C. N. (2014). Management Plan of Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary. *Gujarat Forest Department*. 148 pp.
- Bhasin, V. (2012). Life on an edge among the Changpas of Changthang, Ladakh. *Journal of Biodiversity*, 3(2), 85-129.
- Bhattacharyya, S. (2016, April 16). Ma Bonbibi, mother to humans and tigers. People's Archive of Rural India. <https://ruralindiaonline.org/en/articles/ma-bonbibi-mother-to-humans-and-tigers/>
- Bhindawas Bird Sanctuary. *District Jhajjar, Government of Haryana*. <https://jhajjar.nic.in/tourist-place/bhindawas-bird-sanctuary/>
- BirdLife International (2025). Site factsheet: Wular Lake and associated marshes. Downloaded from <https://datazone.birdlife.org/site/factsheet/wular-lake-and-associated-marshes> 18/04/2025
- BirdLife International (2025). Site factsheet: Suchindram Therur, Vembanoor. Downloaded from <https://datazone.birdlife.org/site/factsheet/suchindram-therur-vembanoor> 18/04/2025

- BirdLife International (2025). Site factsheet: Yeshwantsagar Reservoir. Downloaded from <https://data-zone.birdlife.org/site/factsheet/yeshwantsagar-reservoir> 18/04/2025
- Biswas, S. P. (2020). People-Nature-Culture of a Place: Understanding Festivals of the Sundarbans (pp. 151–173). *ResearchGate*.
- Chanda, I. (2015). Bonobibir Johuranama: A Method for Reading Plural Cultures. *The Delhi University Journal of the Humanities & the Social Sciences*, Volume 2, (pp. 51-62). <https://journals.du.ac.in/humsoc/pdf/CHANDA%20Bonobibir.pdf>
- Chilika History. *Chilika Development Authority, Department of Forest and Environment, Government of Odisha*. <https://www.chilika.com/chilika-history.php>
- Culture District Mainpuri. *Government of Uttar Pradesh*. <https://mainpuri.nic.in/culture-heritage/>
- Culture & Heritage - The Magic of Kuttanad (2021, December 7). *Kuttanad.com*. <https://kuttanadan.com/culture-and-heritage/>
- Dahdouh-Guebas, F. (2006, May 08). Analysing ethnobotanical and fishery-related importance of mangroves of the East-Godavari Delta (Andhra Pradesh, India) for conservation and management purposes. *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine*.
- DasGupta, A. (2020). Hydrocultural Histories and Narratives: Insights from Sundarbans. *Ecology Economy and Society—the INSEE Journal*, 3. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37773/ees.v3i2.232>
- Department of Archaeology. Kodumanal. *Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamil Nadu*. <https://www.tnarch.gov.in/kodumanal>
- Department of Environment and Climate Change, Government of Kerala and Wetlands International South Asia (2024). Sasthamkotta: An Integrated Management Plan for Conservation and Wise Use. *Wetlands International South Asia, New Delhi*.
- Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan (2019). Sambhar. *Government of Rajasthan*. https://www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in/content/dam/rajasthan-tourism/english/pdf/lakes-rivers/Sambhar_Lake_Broucher_2019.pdf
- Deputy Director, Anaimalai Tiger Reserve, Tiruppur Division (2022). Management Plan of Nanjarayan Bird Sanctuary, Tiruppur District (2022-2023 to 2032-2033). *Tamil Nadu Forest Department*. https://rsis Ramsar.org/RISapp/files/4146683/documents/IN2549_mgt231221.pdf
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH (2023). Cultural Significance of Indian Wetlands. *Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change*. <https://indianwetlands.in/wp-content/uploads/library/1682400894.pdf>
- Devi, Y. G. (2009). Glimpses of Manipuri culture. <https://books.google.co.in/books?hl=en&lr=&id=gx->

qeDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA51&dq=lai+haraoba&ots=7rON4A9MrG&sig=kskU11z3EzXDG66IR-JEYmpjwAmg&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

- Directory on Community Conserved Areas (2009). Loktak Lake. *Kalpavriksh- Environmental Action Group*. <https://kalpavriksh.org/loktak-lake/>
- Directory on Community Conserved Areas (2009). Longwood Shola. *Kalpavriksh- Environmental Action Group*. <https://kalpavriksh.org/longwood-shola/>
- Discover the Serenade of Nature at Nandur Madhyameshwar Wildlife Sanctuary. *Nandur Madhyameshwar Wildlife Sanctuary*. <https://nandurmadhyameshwar.com/index.php/home>
- District Forest Officer, Tiruvarur Forest (2016). Division Management Plan Vaduvor Bird Sanctuary- Period: 2016-17 to 2020-21. *Tamil Nadu Forest Department*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/42323268/documents/IN2493_mgt220527.pdf
- District Forest Officer, Villupuram & The Conservator of Forests, Villupuram (2023). Management Plan for Kazhuveli Wetland Birds Sanctuary (2023 TO 2033). *Villupuram Forest Division, Villupuram*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/41452335/documents/IN2548_mgt231221.pdf
- District Forest Officer and Wildlife Warden, Tirunelveli Division, Tirunelveli (2020). Management Plan for Koonthakulam Bird Sanctuary. *Tamil Nadu Forest Department*. <https://forests.tn.gov.in/storage/tnfd/de7a1311-98eb-49c6-b300-9ead8cdcfa37.pdf>
- Dora, G. (2014). Places of Tourist Interest in Odisha: A Cultural Guide. (pp. 71, 78, 170-171).
- Elangovan, T. T. (2023). Tamil Nadu Forest Department Management Plan of Karaivetti Bird Sanctuary, Ariyalur Forest Division (Period: 2023-24 to 2032-33) (With Ratification Plan from 2020-2021 to 2022-2023). *Government of Tamil Nadu*. <https://forests.tn.gov.in/storage/tnfd/398ec58f-eeaa-4c00-90bf-c5f-d30a34266.pdf>
- Farooq, M., Meraj, G., Yousuf, A. & Singh, G. (2017). Wetlands—Special Focus on Ramsar Sites of J&K. *ResearchGate*.
- Fatma, S. & Danish, M. (2024). Ecological Regeneration of Wetland: Case Study of Kanwar Lake, Begusarai. *Nature Environment and Pollution Technology*. Vol. 23, pp. 111-124. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46488/NEPT.2024.v23i01.008>
- Forest Department (Wildlife wing) Wildlife Division, Nashik (2015). Management Scheme for Nandur Madhameshwar Wildlife Sanctuary. *Government of Maharashtra Forest Department (Wildlife wing) Wildlife Division, Nashik*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/4026954/documents/IN2410_mgt181223_1.pdf
- Ghosh, S. (2018, July 27). Saving the world's only floating national park and its dancing deer. *Mongabay India*. <https://india.mongabay.com/2018/07/saving-the-worlds-only-floating-national-park-and-its-dancing-deer/>

- Gir National Park. Chhari Dhand Wetland Reserve. *Gir National Park*. <https://www.girnationalpark.online/chhari-dhand-wetland-reserve.html>
- Gokhale, Y. (2009). Sustaining resources and livelihoods: Samaspur Bird Sanctuary. *The Energy and Resources Institute*. <https://www.teriin.org/project/sustaining-resources-and-livelihoods-samaspur-bird-sanctuary>
- Gokula, V. & P.A. Raj (2021). Vaduvur and Sitheri lakes, Tamil Nadu, India: conservation and management perspective. *Journal of Threatened Taxa* 13(6): 18497–18507. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11609/jott.5547.13.6.18497-18507>
- Government of Himachal Pradesh, Renuka Integrated Management Plan 2022-26.
- Government of Madhya Pradesh. Taj-ul-Masajid. District Bhopal. *Government of Madhya Pradesh*. <https://bhopal.nic.in/en/tourist-place/taj-ul-masajid/>
- Gowtham, T. S. (2022). Draft Management Plan for Vellore Bird Sanctuary (2022-2023 to 2026-2027). *Government of Tamil Nadu*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/42341967/documents/IN2475_mgt220526.Plan_%20VBS%20March%2C2022.pdf
- Gujarat Tourism. Chhari Dhand Wetland Reserve, Kutch. *Gujarat Tourism*. <https://www.gujarattourism.com/kutch-zone/kutch/chhari-dhand-wetland-reserve.html>
- Hariharan, G. N. et al. M. Raising awareness about Kagga rice. *M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation*. <https://www.mssrf.org/our-stories/raising-awareness-about-kagga-rice>
- Hegde, M. & Jyotishi, A. The Mangroves of Aghanashini Estuary. *Azim Premji University*. <https://azim-premjiuniversity.edu.in/the-mangroves-of-aghanashini-estuary>
- Himachal Pradesh Forest Department, Himachal Pradesh State Wetland Authority, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, & Wetlands International South Asia (2023). Integrated Management Plan of Pong Dam Lake. *Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Wetlands International South Asia (WISA), New Delhi*.
- Himachal Pradesh Forest Department and Wetlands International South Asia (2021). Chandertal: An Integrated Management Plan for Conservation and Wise Use. *Wetlands International South Asia, New Delhi*.
- Huque, S. (2018). The impact of development of Kolkata on tribal culture of East Kolkata wetlands. *Indian Anthropologist*, 48(2), 53-64. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26757765>
- Iyer, M. (2020, December 5). Lonar Lake of Maharashtra. *Lakes of India*. <https://lakesofindia.com/2020/12/05/lonar-lake-of-maharashtra/>

- Jain, A., Singh, H., Rai, S. & Sharma, E. (2004). Folklores of Sacred Khecheopalri Lake in the Sikkim Himalaya of India: A Plea for Conservation. *Asian Folklore Studies*, 63.
- Javid, M. (2023). Shallabugh Wetland Conservation Reserve. 28, 24–29. *ResearchGate*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/377848403_Shallabugh_Wetland_Conservation_Reserve
- Johnson, J. A., Sivakumar, K., Vijaykumar, C., Mondal, P. S., Mitra, P., Dubey, V. K. & Sharma, A. (2021). Detailed Project Report of Bakhira Bird Sanctuary, Uttar Pradesh, India. *Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun*, Pp. 81.
- Kachchh West Division Forest Department, Gujarat State. Chhari-Dhand Conservation Reserve. *Government of Gujarat*. https://forests.gujarat.gov.in/writereaddata/images/pdf/20_Chhari_Dhandh_Conservation_Reserve.pdf
- Kerala Tourism. President's Trophy Boat Race at Ashtamudi Backwaters, Kollam. *Kerala Tourism*. <https://www.keralatourism.org/event/presidents-trophy-boatrace/393/>
- Key Biodiversity Areas (2026). Banni Grassland and Chhari Dhand, India, Asia. *KBA*. <https://www.key-biodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/18129>
- Key Biodiversity Areas (2026). Patna Bird Sanctuary, India, Asia. *KBA*. <https://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/18429>
- Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership (2025). Key Biodiversity Areas factsheet: Satkosia Gorge Wildlife Sanctuary. Extracted from the World Database of Key Biodiversity Areas. Developed by the Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership: BirdLife International, IUCN, American Bird Conservancy, Amphibian Survival Alliance, Conservation International, Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, Global Environment Facility, Re:wild, NatureServe, Rainforest Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, *World Wildlife Fund and Wildlife Conservation Society*. <https://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/site/factsheet/18337>
- Khan, M. I. (2019, August 08). Gogabeel is Bihar's first community reserve. *DownToEarth*. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/wildlife-biodiversity/gogabeel-is-bihar-s-first-community-reserve-66089>
- Khichan Village- Case Study (2009). *Kalpavriksh Environmental Action Group*. https://kalpavriksh.org/khichan-village/?srsId=AfmBOordBqjH_EpjkOEmnUy4hVprweagqMLbZvBppWB6K9lj9glrMV
- Kler, T. & Kumar, S. (2021). Avian diversity at Beas River conservation reserve under urbanization and intensive agriculture in Punjab, India (p. 400). *ResearchGate*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26832/ae-sa-2021-bdcp-011>
- Kodarkar, M. S. & Mukerjee, A. (2006, February 27). Bhoj Wetland- Experience and Lessons Learned Brief. *International Lake Environment Committee Foundation (ILEC)*. https://www.ilec.or.jp/wp-content/uploads/pub/04_Bhoj_Wetland_27February2006.pdf
- Koonthankulam Bird Sanctuary - Tamil Nadu. *Tamil Nadu Tourism*. <https://www.tamilnadutourism.com/wildlife/koonthankulam-bird-sanctuary.php>

- Kumar, A. & Kanaujia A. (2017). Sarus Crane in Indian Mythology and Culture. *International J. of Life Sciences*. 5 (3): 465-470.
- Kumar, D. (2017). River Ganges – Historical, cultural and socioeconomic attributes. *Aquatic Ecosystem Health & Management*, 20(1-2), 8–20. DOI: 10.1080/14634988.2017.1304129
- Kumar, N. (2010). Saman Bird Sanctuary Management Plan (Part- I & II). *National Chambal Sanctuary Project, U.P., Agra*. https://rsis Ramsar.org/RISapp/files/45361022/documents/IN2413_mgt200114.pdf
- Kumar, S., Das, B., Kumari, K. & Kush, A. (2023). Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary (Haryana): Bird lovers' Paradise. *ResearchGate*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.24152.67847>
- Legend of Surinsar and Mansar Lakes: A Journey Through Time (2024, September 24). *Jammu Virasat*. <https://jammuvirasat.com/legend-of-surinsar-and-mansar-lakes/>
- Lenin, J. (2006, October). Size Matters. Sanctuary Asia, Vol. 26 No. 10. *Sanctuary Nature Foundation*. <https://www.sanctuarynaturefoundation.org/article/size-matters>
- Leshnik, L. S. (1968). The Harappan "Port" at Lothal: Another View. *American Anthropologist*, 70(5), 911–922. DOI:10.1525/aa.1968.70.5.02a00070
- Lukram, M. (2023, October 9). The Meitei Beliefs and Water: A Reflection on Lai Ikouba to Khayom Lakpa. *The Manipur Journal*. <https://themanipurjournal.com/the-meitei-beliefs-and-water-a-reflection-on-lai-ikouba-to-khayom-lakpa/>
- Mahal, J. (2017, June 05). Kanjli Wetland: A tale of Punjab government's apathy. *Hindustan Times*. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/punjab/kanjli-wetland-a-tale-of-punjab-government-s-apaty/story-M5J5DfBZAhnEiUrFTGGM5M.html>
- Malik, S. (2023, April 30). The Fascinating Floating Island of Wular Lake – Zainul Lank. *Rising Kashmir*. <https://risingkashmir.com/the-fascinating-floating-island-of-wular-lake-zainul-lank/>
- Malkarnekar, G. (2022, August 4). Nanda lake in Curchorem is Goa's first Ramsar site. *The Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/goa/nanda-lake-in-curchorem-is-states-first-ramsar-site/articleshow/93332412.cms>
- Management Plan for Madhav National Park 2007-08 to 2016-17. https://rsis Ramsar.org/RISapp/files/43201142/documents/IN2483_mgt220608.7.07-management%20plan.pdf
- Mazzocchi, F. (2006, May 01). Western science and traditional knowledge. *EMBOpress*, EMBO Reports (2006), Issue 7. (pp. 463-466). DOI: <https://www.embopress.org/doi/full/10.1038/sj.embor.7400693#em-br7400693-bib-0002>
- Meena, M., Garg, K. & Jaipal, A. K. (2021). Population status of demoiselle cranes in Satlana Wetland Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India. *J. Exp. Zool. India*. 24, 705-710. DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03895.2021.24.705>

- Meitei, N. S. (2020). Loktak- the distorted mirror.
- Ministry of Culture, Government of India. (2021, March 01). Deepor Beel: A wetland protected by Karbi customs or rituals that give importance to the environment – Assam. *National List for Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)*, Ministry of Culture, Government of India. <http://www.indiaculture.nic.in/national-list-intangible-cultural-heritage-ich>
- Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India (2004 November 18). Address by External Affairs Minister Shri Natwar Singh at the International Seminar “50 Years of Panchsheel: Towards a New International Order based on Genuine Multilateralism”. Organised by ICWA at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/3938/>
- Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. Menar: The bird village of Rajasthan. *Incredible India Digital Portal*. <https://www.incredibleindia.gov.in/en/rural-tourism/menar>
- Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. Siliserh Lake, Rajasthan. *Incredible India Digital Portal*. <https://www.incredibleindia.gov.in/en/rajasthan/alwar/siliserh-lake>
- Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. Where nature’s melodies take flight. *Incredible India Digital Portal*. <https://www.incredibleindia.gov.in/en/uttar-pradesh/lucknow/nawabganj-bird-sanctuary>
- Mir, I. A. (2023). Reshis of the Kashmir valley: A case study of Baba Shakur-ud-Din Wali RA. *International Journal of Educational Review, Law and Social Sciences (IJERLAS)*. 3(5), 1504-1510.
- Mishra, P. C. (2008). Management Plan for Satkosia Gorge Sanctuary Financial Year (2007-08 to 2016-17). *Satkosia Wildlife Division, Angul, Odisha*. https://rsis Ramsar.org/RISapp/files/31502092/documents/IN2470_mgt220627.pdf
- Miththapala, S. (2012). The Gulf of Mannar and its surroundings: A resource book for teachers in the Mannar District. *IUCN Sri Lanka Office, Colombo*. x + 64 pp.
- MoEFCC (2025). India’s 85 Amrit Dharohar: Ramsar Sites of India Factbook (as of January 2025). Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India.
- Mohanty, D. S. S. (2020). Practice of Traditional Rituals and Rites of Koli Community and its Transition: A Study on Koli Community of Thane. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research*. 9(6).
- Mohanty, P. K. (2015). Ansupa Lake: The Pride of Odisha. *Odisha Review. E- Magazine, Government of Odisha*. <https://magazines.odisha.gov.in/Orissareview/2015/Jan/engpdf/109-113.pdf>
- Moudgil, M. (2016, December 5). A cut above the rest. *India Water Portal*. <https://www.indiawaterportal.org/articles/cut-above-rest>
- Nanda, R. (2009, January). Chilika and Legend of Goddess Kalijai. *Orissa Review, Department of Information & Public Relations, Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar*. (pp. 47–49)

- Naqash, R. Y. Integrated Management Action Plan- Wetland Conservation Reserves Kashmir (2022-2027). *Department of Wildlife Protection, Government of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir*.
- National Council of Educational Research and Training (2017, April). North East India People, History and Culture. *National Council of Educational Research and Training*. <https://ncert.nic.in/pdf/publication/otherpublications/tinei101.pdf>
- Nawabganj Bird Sanctuary, Unnao. *Uttar Pradesh Ecotourism*. <https://upecotourism.in/NawabganjBird-Sanctuary.aspx>
- Neermahal. District Sepahijala. *Government of Tripura*. <https://sepahijala.nic.in/tourist-place/neermahal/>
- Pala Tippo - Palak Lake. *Mizoram Tourism*. <https://www.mizoramtourism.com/top-destination/96>
- Pandey, A. & Bharti, V. (2024). Wetlands In Bihar- A comprehensive analysis of extent socio-economic significance, ecological benefits, and associated risks. *Journal of Community Positive Practices*. XXIV(1) 2024, 122-138. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35782/JCPP.2024.1.07>
- Panditrao, M. M. (2020). Management Plan for Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary, Maharashtra, India. *Maharashtra Forest Division*.
- Paonta Sahib. *District Sirmaur, Government of Himachal Pradesh*. <https://hpsirmaur.nic.in/tourist-place/paonta-sahib/>
- Parvati Arga Wildlife Sanctuary. *Uttar Pradesh Ecotourism*. <https://www.upecotourism.in/ParwatiArgaWildlifeSanctuary.aspx>
- Pong Dam Lake Wildlife Sanctuary. *Ecotourism Society of Himachal Pradesh*. https://himachalecotourism.in/pong_dam_lake_wildlife_sanctuary
- Pradhan, B. C. (2016). An ethnozoological study in the areas of Satkosia wildlife sanctuary, Angul, Odisha, India. *International Journal of Research in Engineering and Applied Sciences*. Vol 6, Issue 2.
- PSI, CEDAR (2023). Ecosystem Services - Livelihood Linkages of Renuka Wetland, Himachal Pradesh- An Assessment for Integrated Management. *Prepared for GIZ*.
- Punjab ENVIS Centre. Wetlands of Punjab. *India Environment Portal*. <http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/Wetlands%20of%20Punjab.pdf>
- Rag Rag Mein Ganga: In the Land of the Mahabharata. *Outlook India*. <https://www.outlookindia.com/environment/rag-rag-mein-ganga-in-the-land-of-the-mahabharata-news-122154>
- Rajasthan Tourism. KEOLADEO NATIONAL PARK- BIRD HAVEN. *Rajasthan Tourism*. <https://www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in/keoladeo-ghana-national-park.html>

- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2001). Kanjli. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. <https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN1160RIS.pdf>
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2001). Ropar. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. <https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN1161RIS.pdf>
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2002, August 19). Ashtamudi Wetland. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. <https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN1204RIS.pdf>
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2002, August 19). Bhoj wetland. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. <https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN1206RIS.pdf>
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2002, August 19). Kolleru Lake. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. <https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN1209RIS.pdf>
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2002, August 19). Pong Dam Lake. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. <https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN1211RIS.pdf>
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2002, August 19). Tsomoriri. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. <https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN1213RIS.pdf>
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2002, August 19). Vembanad-Kol Wetland. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. <https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN1214RIS.pdf>
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2004). Renuka Wetland. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. <https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN1571RIS.pdf>
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2004). Rudrasagar Lake. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. <https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN1572RIS.pdf>
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2004). Surinsar and Mansar Lake. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. <https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN1573RIS.pdf>
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2004). Upper Ganga River. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. <https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN1574RIS.pdf>
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2011). Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. <https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2078RIS.pdf>
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2020, May 18). Sundarban Wetland. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2370RIS_1901_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2020). Kabartal wetland. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2436RIS_2010_en.pdf

- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2020). Keshopur-Miani Community Reserve. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2414RIS_2002_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2020). Lonar Lake. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2441RIS_2011_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2020). Nangal Wildlife Sanctuary. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2407RIS_2002_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2020). Parvati Arga Bird Sanctuary. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2416RIS_2002_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2020). Sarsai Nawar Jheel. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2411RIS_2002_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2020). Sur Sarovar. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2440RIS_2011_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2021, August 6). Thol Lake Wildlife Sanctuary. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2458RIS_2108_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2021, December 8). Haiderpur Wetland. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2463RIS_2112_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2021). Tso Kar Wetland Complex. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2443RIS_2012_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2021). Wadhvana Wetland. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2454RIS_2108_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2022, August 3). Nanda Lake. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2471RIS_2208_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2022, August 3). Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2473RIS_2208_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2022, August 3). Satkosia Gorge. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2470RIS_2208_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2022, August 3). Sirpur Wetland. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2478RIS_2208_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2022, August 3). Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2477RIS_2208_en.pdf

- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2022, August 3). Vellode Bird Sanctuary. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2475RIS_2208_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2022, August 3). Vembannur Wetland Complex. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2474RIS_2208_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2022, February 2). Udhwa Lake Bird Sanctuary. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2559RIS_2502_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2022, July 25). Karikili Bird Sanctuary. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2480RIS_2207_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2022, July 25). Pallikaranai Marsh Reserve Forest. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2481RIS_2207_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2022, July 25). Pichavaram Mangrove. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2482RIS_2207_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2022, July 25). Sakhya Sagar. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2483RIS_2207_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2022, October 31). Chitrangudi Bird Sanctuary. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2491RIS_2210_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2022, October 31). Kanjirankulam Bird Sanctuary. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2486RIS_2210_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2022, October 31). Suchindram Theroor Wetland Complex. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2492RIS_2210_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2022, October 31). Tampara Lake. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2489RIS_2210_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2022, October 31). Thane Creek. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2490RIS_2210_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2022, October 31). Vaduvur Bird Sanctuary. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2493RIS_2210_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2022, October 31). Yashwant Sagar. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2495RIS_2210_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2022). Pala Wetland. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2484RIS_2207_en.pdf

- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2024, August 14). Nagi Bird Sanctuary. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2545RIS_2406_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2024, August 14). Nakti Bird Sanctuary. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2546RIS_2406_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2024, August 22). Tawa Reservoir. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2547RIS_2408_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2024, January 31). Aghanashini Estuary. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2534RIS_2401_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2024, January 31). Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2535RIS_2401_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2024, January 31). Karaivetti Bird Sanctuary. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2537RIS_2401_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2024, January 31). Magadi Kere Conservation Reserve. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2536RIS_2401_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2025, February 2). Khachoedpalri wetland. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2560RIS_2502_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2025, February 2). Sakkarakottai Bird Sanctuary. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2561RIS_2502_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2025, February 2). Therthangal Bird Sanctuary. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2562RIS_2502_en.pdf?language=en
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2025, October 30). Gogabil Lake. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2579RIS_2510_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2025, September 26). Gokul Jalashay. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2576RIS_2509_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2025, September 26). Udaipur Jheel. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2577RIS_2509_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2025). Khichan wetland. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2568RIS_2506_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2025). Menar Wetland Complex. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2567RIS_2506_en.pdf

- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2025, November 27). Patna Bird Sanctuary. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*.
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2025, December 12). Kopra Jalashay. Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS). https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2583RIS_2512_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2025, December 12). Siliserh Lake. Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS). https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/RISrep/IN2581RIS_2512_en.pdf
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (2025, December 15). Chhari-Dhand. *Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)*.
- Ranganathan, P. (2020). Dancing towards Extinction: The Sangai and its Marsh Habitat. *Jalaplavit (ISSN 2321-1881)*, Volume 10, No. 3. https://onlifeandwildlife.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/4.ranganathan_priya_sangai_jalaplavit2020.pdf
- Remani, K. N., Jayakumar P. & Jalaja T. K. (2010). Environmental Problems and Management Aspects of Vembanad Kol Wetlands in South West Coast of India. *Nature Environment and Pollution Technology*. Vol. 9, No. 2 (pp. 247-254).
- Rongmei, P. (2022, Jul 5). Vedanthangal – The story of the people and their birds. *The Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/travel/destinations/vedanthangal-the-story-of-the-people-and-their-birds/articleshow/92660163.cms>
- Roychoudhury, N. (2016, December 30). Bhitarkanika - Mangrove Forest (Wildlife) Division, Odisha - The Paradise of Nature. Presented at Institute level weekly seminar held on 30.12.2016 at Tropical Forest Research Institute, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh.
- Rupnagar Web Portal, India. History. *Government of Punjab*. <https://rupnagar.nic.in/history/>
- Sabesh, R. (2010). Kolleru Lake- Andhra Pradesh. *Eco News*, Vol. 15, No. 4. <http://indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/Kolleru%20lake.pdf>
- Saikia, A. & Adhyapak, S. (2023, August 07). How locals are trying to save the dying Deepor Beel. *DownToEarth*. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/environment/how-locals-are-trying-to-save-the-dying-deepor-beel-91050>
- Saikia, J. L. (2019). Deepor Beel Wetland: Threats to Ecosystem Services, Their Importance to Dependent Communities and Possible Management Measures. *Natural Resources and Conservation*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13189/NRC.2019.070201>
- Samaspur Bird Sanctuary. *Uttar Pradesh Ecotourism*. <https://upecotourism.in/SamaspurBirdSanctuary.aspx>
- Sambalpur. *Government of Odisha*. <https://sambalpur.odisha.gov.in/about-district/about-us>

- Sandi Bird Sanctuary. *Department of Tourism, Uttar Pradesh, India*. <https://uptourism.gov.in/en/article/sandi-bird-sanctuary>
- Sandi Bird Sanctuary. Website of District Hardoi. *Government of Uttar Pradesh*. <https://hardoi.nic.in/tourist-place/sandi-bird-sanctuary/>
- Sasikumar, K. (2014). Management Plan for Thol Wildlife Sanctuary, *Gujarat Forest Department*. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/38561641/documents/IN2458_mgt210303.pdf
- Sen, A. & Mukherjee, J. (2020, November 24). Bonbibi: A Religion of the Forest in the Sundarbans. *Environment & Society Portal*. <https://www.environmentandsociety.org/arcadia/bonbibi-religion-forest-sundarbans>
- Senapati, A. (2019, January 25). Odisha's artisans strike gold with golden grass. *DownToEarth*. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/lifestyle/odisha-s-artisans-strike-gold-with-golden-grass-62974>
- Sengar, R. (2019, May 29). Jhajjar in Haryana—of an unsuccessful love story, an ancient goddess and a special museum. *Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/travel/destinations/jhajjar-in-haryana-of-an-unsuccessful-love-story-an-ancient-goddess-and-a-special-museum/articleshow/69543033.cms>
- Shah, D. N. & Laha, A. (2022). Baseline Documentation of the Socio-Ecological Dynamics Around Select Four Wetlands in Bihar.
- Sharma, A. & Dua, S. (2017). Strategies for wetland Conservation: Asset to Natural Infrastructure – Case of Surinsar-Mansar wetland in Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir. *International Journal on Emerging Technologies*. 8(1): 497-503.
- Sharma, S. K. (2023, Dec 16). MENAR: An Ordinary Village Pond to an Important Bird Area Site and Beyond. *Rajasthan Biodiversity, a Tiger Watch Initiative*. <https://rajasthanbiodiversity.org/menar-iba/>
- Sinha, R. K. and Kedia, D. K. (2015). Water quality and the biota of Saraiyaman Lake of Udaipur Wildlife Sanctuary, Bairia, Bettiah (West Champaran). *Final Report submitted to the DFO, Bettiah Forest Division, Bettiah, Bihar*. Pp. 52. https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/44624947/documents/IN2577_lit240607.pdf
- Sivakumar, K. et al. (2018). Integrated Management Plan of the Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park and Biosphere Reserve (2018-2027). Tamil Nadu Forest Department, Chennai and Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun. Published by the *Wildlife Warden, Ramanathapuram*. 490 pp.
- Sohoni, P. & Joshi, S. (2022). Geological Wonder as a Sacred Landscape The Case of Lonar Crater. *Education About ASIA*. Volume 27, Number 3. file:///D:/Sohoni-and-Joshi-Winter-2022-1.pdf
- South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People (2020, April 10). Photoblog: Mangroves of the Aghanashini: Linking the River, Land and the Sea. *SANDRP*. <https://sandrp.in/2020/04/10/mangroves-of-aghanashini-linking-the-land-and-the-river/>

- Srivastava, P. (2018, Jul 30). Heard of Bathu ki Ladi, a unique temple in Himachal?. *Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/travel/destinations/heard-of-bathu-ki-ladi-a-unique-temple-in-himachal/articleshow/65150807.cms>
- State Wetland Authority Kerala and Wetlands International South Asia (2025). Sasthamkotta: An Integrated Management Plan for Conservation and Wise Use. *Wetlands International South Asia, New Delhi*.
- Subashchandran, M. D., Prakashmesta, M., Bhoominathan, M., Rao G. R., Vishnu, D. M. & Ramachandra, T. V. (2012). Aghanashini Estuary in Kumta Taluk, Uttara Kannada—Biological Heritage Site. *ENVIS Technical Report: 35*.
- Subramanian, M. P., Ganthi, S., & Subramonian, K. (2020). Sacred groves of Point Calimere Wildlife and Bird Sanctuary – Ideal centres for biodiversity conservation. *Int. J. Curr. Res. Biosci. Plantbiol.* 7(6): 45-54. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20546/ijcrbp.2020.706.005>
- Sukreswar Temple. Kamrup Metropolitan District. *Government of Assam*. <https://kamrupmetro.assam.gov.in/tourist-place-detail/272#%20>
- Tamil Nadu Forest Department. (2022). Management Plan of Udhayamarthandapuram Bird Sanctuary, Ramanathapuram District (Period: 2021 – 2022 To 2025 – 2026). *Tamil Nadu Forest Department*. <https://forests.tn.gov.in/storage/tnfd/f1876db7-d44c-4c71-82c7-ec30bd09546f.pdf>
- TDG Network (2024, February 29). Sambhar Salt Lake: Rajasthan's Ancient Cradle of Salinity and Serenity. *The Daily Guardian*. <https://thedailyguardian.com/others/sambhar-salt-lake-rajasthans-ancient-cradle-of-salinity-and-serenity/>
- The Wildlife Warden, Ramanathapuram Wildlife Division, Ramanathapuram (2023). Management Plan of Chitrangudi Bird Sanctuary, Ramanathapuram District (Period: 2023 – 2024 to 2032 – 2033). *Tamil Nadu Forest Department*. <https://forests.tn.gov.in/storage/tnfd/7850e6f1-2bd7-4987-8b23-3e232f70e1c2.pdf>
- The Wildlife Warden, Ramanathapuram Wildlife Division, Ramanathapuram (2023). Management Plan of Sakkarakottai Bird Sanctuary, Ramanathapuram District (Period: 2023 – 2024 To 2032 – 2033) (Ratification Apo Period: 2022 – 2023). *Tamil Nadu Forest Department*. [https://rsis Ramsar.org/RISapp/files/44643584/documents/IN2561_mgt240614.1.2.%20\(v\)%20-%20Sakkarakottai%20bird%20sanctuary%20Management%20Plan%20final.pdf](https://rsis Ramsar.org/RISapp/files/44643584/documents/IN2561_mgt240614.1.2.%20(v)%20-%20Sakkarakottai%20bird%20sanctuary%20Management%20Plan%20final.pdf)
- The Wildlife Warden, Ramanathapuram Wildlife Division, Ramanathapuram (2023). Management Plan of Therthangal Bird Sanctuary, Ramanathapuram District (Period: 2023 – 2024 To 2032 – 2033). *Tamil Nadu Forest Department*. https://rsis Ramsar.org/RISapp/files/44653057/documents/IN2562_mgt240620.pdf?language=en
- Thomas, J. V., & Kurup, B. M. (2004). Padal fishing-A unique fishing method in the Ashtamudi Estuary of Kerala (south India). *Naga, WorldFish Center Quarterly*, 27(3), 24-27.
- UNEP-WCMC. KEOLADEO NATIONAL PARK - World Heritage Datasheet. *UNESCO*. <http://world-heritage-datasheets.unep-wcmc.org/datasheet/output/site/keoladeo-national-park/>

- UNESCO - Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB). Gulf of Mannar. *UNESCO*. <https://www.unesco.org/en/mab/gulf-mannar>
- UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (2016, March 11). Keibul Lamjao Conservation Area. *UNESCO*. UNESCO World Heritage Centre. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6086/>
- UNESCO World Heritage Convention. Group of Monuments at Hampi. *UNESCO World Heritage Centre*. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/241/>
- UNESCO World Heritage Convention. Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram. *UNESCO World Heritage Centre*. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/249/>
- UNESCO World Heritage Convention. Keibul Lamjao Conservation Area. *UNESCO World Heritage Convention*. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6086/>
- Upadhyay, V. (2020). Uttar Pradesh :अद्भुत है पटना पक्षी बहिर में महाभारतकालीन इच्छेश्वर महादेव मंदिर, मगध के राजा जरासंध ने की थी इसकी स्थापना. *Vijay Upadhyay*. <https://www.vijayupadhyay.com/2020/12/29/it-is-amazing-that-the-mahabharata-era-ichveshwar-mahadev-temple-in-patna-bird-sanctuary-was-established-by-king-jarasandha-of-magadha/>
- Viswanathan, T. V., Anand, T.S., Ilayaraja, T.M. (2023). Suchindram-Theroor-Managudy Conservation Reserve Management Plan (2023-2024 to 2032-2033) Ratification for APO from 2018-2019 to 2022-2023. *Tamil Nadu Forest Department*. <https://forests.tn.gov.in/storage/tnfd/1d188144-cd55-4769-b528-a45057926b00.pdf>
- Wadhwana Lake. *Vadodara Municipal Corporation*. <https://vmc.gov.in/Wadhwana.aspx>
- Wetlands International South Asia (2019, August 8). Securing Chandertal: Perspectives and priorities. *Wetlands International South Asia*. <https://south-asia.wetlands.org/blog/securing-chandertal-wetland-through-integrated-management-planning-perspectives-and-priorities-for-conserving-himalayan-wetlands/>
- Wetlands International South Asia and Environment, Forest and Climate Change Department, Government of Bihar (2023). Gokul Jalashay: An Integrated Management Plan for Conservation and Wise Use. Wetlands International South Asia, New Delhi.
- Wildlife Institute of India (WII) (2016, November 22). Udhwa Lake Wildlife Sanctuary. *Wildlife Institute of India (WII)*. <https://wii.gov.in/nmcg/protected-areas-along-ganga/udhwa-lake-wildlife-sanctuary>
- Wildlife Warden, Ramanathapuram Wildlife Division, Ramanathapuram (2023). Management Plan of Kanjirankulam Bird Sanctuary, Ramanathapuram District (Period: 2023 - 2024 to 2032 - 2033). *Tamil Nadu Forest Department*. <https://forests.tn.gov.in/storage/tnfd/33d58114-407e-4b3c-8376-553c1cb87022.pdf>
- WISA (2013). Vemabanad – Kol Wetlands - An Integrated Management Planning Framework for Conser-

vation and Wise Use. Technical Report submitted to the IUCN and MoEF, New Delhi. *Wetlands International-South Asia, New Delhi, India.*

- WISA (2016). Kanwar Jheel - An Integrated Management Action Plan for Conservation and Wise Use. Technical Report submitted to the World Bank, New Delhi. *Wetlands International South Asia, New Delhi, India.*
- WISA and CDA (2015). Hirakud Reservoir, Odisha – An Integrated Management Plan. *Technical Report submitted to the Odisha Wetland Development Authority, Forest and Environment Department, Government of Odisha.*
- WWF India. Harike Lake- Largest man-made wetlands of northern India. *WWF India.* https://www.wwfindia.org/about_wwf/critical_regions/wetlands/harike_lake/

COMPILATION TEAM

Overall direction

Mr Ved Prakash Mishra, Joint Secretary, MoEFCC

Wetlands Division, MoEFCC

Dr Motipalli Ramesh, Scientist F

Mr Chandan Singh, Consultant

Wetlands International South Asia

Ms Aditi Patial

Ms Suchita Awasthi

Dr Ritesh Kumar



