



NEW RAMSAR SITES - ENVIRONMENT

News: The government announced the inclusion of three new Ramsar sites in India, bringing the country's total to 85. The newly designated sites are the **Nanjarayan Bird Sanctuary and Kazhuveli Bird Sanctuary** in Tamil Nadu, and the **Tawa Reservoir** in Madhya Pradesh.

What's in the news?

The New Ramsar Sites

Nanjarayan Bird Sanctuary (Tamil Nadu):

- **Location:** Situated on the banks of the Noyyal River.
- **Significance:** Originally a water reservoir, it has evolved into an important ecosystem supporting diverse bird species like the Eurasian coot, spot-billed duck, and various herons. It is also a key stopover for migratory birds along the Central Asian Highway and supports local livelihoods through fishing.

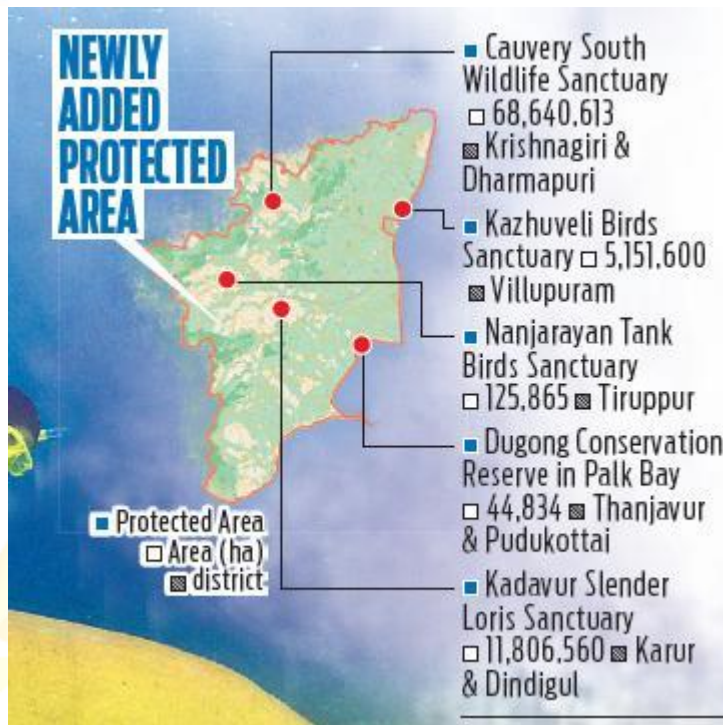
Kazhuveli Bird Sanctuary (Tamil Nadu):

- **Location:** On the Coromandel Coast, this is one of the largest brackish water wetlands in South India.
- **Significance:** The sanctuary features a mix of salt marshes, mudflats, and shallow waters, providing habitat for globally endangered species such as the black-headed ibis and greater flamingo. It serves as a crucial stopover for migratory birds along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway and contributes to flood control and groundwater recharge.

Tawa Reservoir (Madhya Pradesh):

- **Location:** Created by damming the Tawa River.
- **Significance:** The reservoir is a major wintering ground for migratory birds and supports regional water management by providing irrigation water, drinking water to local communities, and sustaining nearby fisheries.

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Why Wetlands are vital?

- Wetlands are defined by the Ramsar Convention as “**areas of marsh, fen, peatland, or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish, or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six meters.**”
- This broad definition encompasses **lakes, rivers, aquifers, swamps, marshes, and other water bodies.**

Wetlands are vital for several reasons:

- **Climate Regulation:** They play a crucial role in regulating climate conditions through carbon sequestration, which is the storage of atmospheric carbon.
- **Water Purification:** Wetlands help in purifying water by filtering out pollutants from shallow waters.
- **Buffer:** Wetlands are essential for mitigating floods and storms by absorbing excess rainfall and acting as buffers against extreme weather events.

The Ramsar Convention

- The Ramsar Convention, signed in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran, is an **intergovernmental treaty** aimed at the conservation and protection of wetlands worldwide.
- It encourages the designation of Ramsar sites based on criteria such as the support they provide to plant and animal species at critical life stages or during adverse conditions, as well as their ability to support fish and waterbirds.



- With **172 signatory countries, including India**, the convention mandates the creation of wetland reserves and the promotion of sustainable use of these habitats.
- India joined the convention in 1982, initially designating **Chilika Lake in Orissa** and **Keoladeo National Park in Rajasthan** as Ramsar sites. Today, India boasts one of the highest numbers of Ramsar sites in Asia.

Threats to Wetlands

- **Encroachment:** Human expansion and development.
- **Pollution:** Agricultural and industrial runoff deteriorating water quality.
- **Urbanization:** Rapid growth leading to the degradation and shrinking of wetland areas.
- The **Ramsar Convention's Global Wetland Outlook (2018)** reported a 35% loss of global wetlands between 1970 and 2015, driven largely by human activities.
- In India, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has launched initiatives to address these challenges, such as the
 - **National Wetland Conservation Programme (1986)**
 - **2015 National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Wetlands**

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