

INDIA NAMES ITS 99th SITE FOR THE LIST OF WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

June 2026

In April 2026 [India has added Sheikha Jheel Bird Sanctuary to the List of Wetlands of International Importance \(the Ramsar List\)](#), bringing its total number of Ramsar Sites to 99 in the country.

[This partially human-made wetland complex](#) comprises Sheikha Jheel Lake and surrounds deciduous forest. It was formed following the construction in the 1850s of the Upper Ganges Canal, which flows adjacent to the Site. The transition between the open water body and the forest has created ecological niches, resulting in a large variety of plant and animal species. This biodiversity is reflected in the presence of 249 bird species, among which 62 are wetland-dependent. Notable birds include the vulnerable Indian river tern (*Sterna aurantia*) and sarus crane (*Grus antigone*). Owing to its importance for bird conservation, the Site has been designated as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) by BirdLife International. The Site also supports other water-dependent species, such as three threatened turtle species: the black pond turtle (*Geoclemys hamiltonii*), Indian flap-shelled turtle (*Lissemys punctata*), and Ganges soft-shelled turtle (*Nilssonina gangetica*). Ongoing management interventions include de-siltation of the lake to restore optimal water depth, and measures to control invasive species.

With the inclusion of Sheikha Jheel Bird Sanctuary, the total number of Ramsar Sites rises to 99, making India one of the countries that have made a great investment in the Convention on Wetlands. India ranks third globally and first in Asia. The countries with the most Sites are the United Kingdom with 176 and Mexico with 144. Brazil has the largest area with 267,000 square km under the Convention protection; Bolivia, Canada, Chad, Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo have also each designated over 100,000 square km.

Studies demonstrate that wetland area and quality continue to decline in most regions of the world. As a result, the ecosystem services that wetlands provide to people are compromised.

Managing wetlands is a global challenge and the Convention on Wetlands presently counts 172 countries as [Contracting Parties](#), which recognize the value of having one international treaty dedicated to a single ecosystem.



The Convention on Wetlands uses a broad definition of wetlands. This includes all lakes and rivers, underground aquifers, swamps and marshes, wet grasslands, peatlands, oases, estuaries, deltas and tidal flats, mangroves and other coastal areas, coral reefs, and all human-made sites such as fish ponds, rice paddies, reservoirs and salt pans.

At the time of joining the Convention, each Contracting Party must designate at least one wetland site within their territory for inclusion in the [List of Wetlands of International Importance](#) (the "Ramsar List"). These "Ramsar Sites" acquire a new national and international status. They are recognized as being of significant value not only for the country in which they are located, but for humanity as a whole. There are currently [over 2,500 Ramsar Sites](#) around the world. They cover over 2.5 million square kilometres.

[Wetlands are vital for human survival](#). They are among the world's most productive environments; cradles of biological diversity that provide the water and productivity upon which countless species of plants and animals depend for survival. Wetlands are indispensable for the countless benefits or "ecosystem services" that they provide humanity, ranging from freshwater supply, food and building materials, and biodiversity, to flood control, groundwater recharge, and climate change mitigation.

To know more

[The Convention on Wetlands website](#)

[News: India names its 99th Wetlands of International Importance](#)

[List of Ramsar sites in India in Wikipedia.com](#)

[Ramsar countries and sites](#)

[Wetlands of International Importance](#)

[Global Wetland Outlook 2025 in Ramsar.org](#)

[Ramsar Strategic Plan](#)

[Ramsar sites in India in lotusarise.com](#)

[Ramsar Wetlands in India in Mongabay.com](#)

[Article in timesofindia.indiatimes.com](#)

