



World Wetlands Day

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Why in News

- **World Wetlands Day** is celebrated every year on the 2nd of February. This day marks the date of the adoption of the **Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971** in the **Iranian city of Ramsar**.
- The **theme** for 2020 is '**Wetlands and Biodiversity**'.
- It was **first celebrated in 1997**.

Wetlands

- **Wetlands** are ecosystems saturated with water, either **seasonally or permanently**. They include mangroves, marshes, rivers, lakes, deltas, floodplains and flooded forests, rice-fields, coral reefs, marine areas no deeper than 6 metres at low tide, as well as **human-made wetlands** such as waste-water treatment ponds and reservoirs.
- Though they cover only around **6% of the Earth's land** surface, **40% of all plant and animal species** live or breed in wetlands.

Significance of Wetlands

- Wetlands are a critical part of our natural environment. They **mitigate floods, protect coastlines** and **build community resilience to disasters, reduce the impacts of floods, absorb pollutants** and **improve water quality**.
- Wetlands are critical to human and planet life. More than 1 billion people depend on them for a living and 40% of the world's species live and breed in wetlands.
- They are a **vital source for food, raw materials, genetic resources for medicines**, and **hydropower**.
- **30%** of land-based **carbon** is stored in **peatland**.
- They play an important **role in transport, tourism and the cultural and spiritual well-being of people**.

- Many wetlands are areas of natural beauty and many are important to **Aboriginal people**.

Threats

- As per the **IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services)**'s global assessment wetlands are the **most threatened ecosystem**.
- Wetlands are **disappearing 3 times faster than forests** due to human activities and global warming.
- According to **UNESCO**, the threat to wetlands will have an **adverse impact on 40% of the world's flora and fauna** that live or breed in wetlands.
- **Major threats:** Agriculture, development, pollution and climate change.

IPBES

- IPBES is an **independent intergovernmental** body established to strengthen the **science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services** for the **conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity**, long-term human well-being and sustainable development.
- It was established in **Panama City (US)**, in April **2012**.
- It is **not** a United Nations body.

Status of Wetlands in India

- Recently, the Ramsar Convention declared **10 wetlands** from India as Ramsar sites taking the total number of Ramsar Sites in the country to **37**.
 - Wetlands declared as Ramsar sites are protected under strict guidelines of the convention.
 - There are currently over **2,300 Ramsar Sites around the world**.
- India has over 7 lakh wetlands, covering **4.5%** of the country's **area**, yet **none** of the wetlands has been notified under domestic laws.
- Wetlands are regulated under the **Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017**.
- The 2010 version of the Rules provided for a **Central Wetland Regulatory Authority**, but new Rules of 2017 replaced it with **state-level bodies** and created a **National Wetland Committee**, which functions in an **advisory role**.
 - The newer regulations **removed** some items from the definition of "wetlands" including **backwaters, lagoons, creeks, and estuaries**.
 - Under the 2017 regulations process to identify the wetlands has been **delegated to the States**.

Source: IE