



Ladakh's Tso Kar Wetland Complex: Ramsar Site

Why in News

Recently, India has added **Tso Kar Wetland Complex** in Ladakh as its **42nd Ramsar site**, a conservation status conferred by [International Ramsar Convention on Wetlands](#).

- Previously, the [Lonar lake in Maharashtra and Sur Sarovar](#) (also known as **Keetham lake**) in **Agra** were added to the list of Ramsar sites.

Key Points //



▪ About Tso Kar Wetland Complex:

- The Tso Kar Basin is a **high-altitude wetland complex**, consisting of two principal waterbodies:
 - **Startsapuk Tso**, a **freshwater lake** of about 438 hectares to the south,
 - **Tso Kar** itself, a **hypersaline lake** of 1800 hectares to the north, situated in the **Changthang region of Ladakh**.
- It is **called Tso Kar**, meaning **white lake**, because of the **white salt efflorescence** found on the margins **due to the evaporation of highly saline water**.
- It is an **A1 Category Important Bird Area (IBA)** as per **Bird Life International** and a **key staging site** in the [Central Asian Flyway](#).

• Important Bird Area (IBA):

- The IBA programme of the Bird Life International aims to identify, monitor and protect a global network of IBAs for conservation of the world's birds and associated biodiversity.
- **Bird Life International** is a global partnership of non-governmental organizations that strives to conserve birds and their habitats.

• Central Asian Flyway (CAF):

- It covers a **large continental area of Eurasia between the Arctic and**

Indian Oceans and the associated island chains.

- The Flyway **comprises several important migration routes** of waterbirds, most of which **extend from** the northernmost breeding grounds in the Russian Federation (**Siberia**) to the southernmost non-breeding (wintering) grounds in **West and South Asia**, the Maldives and the British Indian Ocean Territory.
- It covers at least **279 populations** of **182 migratory waterbird** species, including **29 globally threatened species**.
- The site is also one of the most important breeding areas of the **near threatened Black-necked Crane (*Grus nigricollis*)** in India.
- It is the major breeding area for **Great Crested Grebe** (*Podiceps Cristatus*), **Bar-headed Geese** (*Anser Indicus*), **Ruddy Shelduck** (*Tadorna ferruginea*), **Brown-headed Gull** (*Larus Bunocephalus*), **Lesser Sand-Plover** (*Charadrius Mongolus*) and many other species.

▪ **Importance of Wetlands:**

- **Wetlands** are defined as "lands transitional between terrestrial and aquatic eco-systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water".
- Wetlands **provide** a wide range of **important resources and ecosystem services** such as food, water, fibre, groundwater recharge, water purification, flood moderation, erosion control and climate regulation.
- They are, in fact, a **major source of water** and the main supply of freshwater comes from an array of wetlands which **help soak rainfall and recharge groundwater**.

Ramsar Site

- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is an **intergovernmental treaty adopted in 1971** in the Iranian city of Ramsar, on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea.
- It came into **force for India on 1st February, 1982**.
- Those **wetlands which are of international importance** are declared as **Ramsar sites**.
- The Convention's mission is the **conservation and wise use of all wetlands** through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world.
- The **Montreux Record** is a **register of wetland sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance where changes in ecological character have occurred**, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference.
 - It is **maintained as part of the Ramsar List**.
- At present, **two wetlands** of India are in **Montreux Record**:
 - **Keoladeo National Park** (Rajasthan) and
 - **Loktak Lake** (Manipur).
 - **Chilika Lake** (Odisha) **was placed in the record but later removed from it**.

Source:PIB