



Hokersar Wetland | Jammu & Kashmir | 12 Nov 2024

Why in News?

In recent years, a significant shortage of water caused by **deficient rainfall** at the **Hokersar wetland** in the [Kashmir Valley](#) has adversely **affected the arrival of migratory bird** populations in the area.

Key Points

▪ Hokersar Wetland:

◦ Location:

- The Hokersar wetland, a [Ramsar site](#), is situated in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir. It is **also known as the 'Queen Wetland of Kashmir'**.

◦ Geographic Setting:

- It is a natural, perennial **wetland that is part of the Jhelum basin** and is located in the **northwest Himalayan biogeographic province of Kashmir**, at the foot of the snow-draped [Pir Panchal range](#).

◦ Water Source:

- The wetland receives water from the **Doodhganga River, a tributary of the Jhelum**.

◦ Flora and Fauna:

- It is **home to the last remaining reedbeds of Kashmir** and serves as a **critical pathway for 68 waterfowl species**.
- These birds, **migrating from regions like Siberia, China, Central Asia, and Europe**, include species such as the **little cormorant, common shelduck, large egret, and great crested grebe**.
- The wetland is **vital for local biodiversity**, offering food sources, spawning grounds, and nurseries for fish, along with breeding habitats for various species.

▪ Impact of Rainfall Deficit on the Wetland:

- According to the [India Meteorological Department \(IMD\)](#), the **region is experiencing an 81% rainfall deficit**.
- Experts suggest that the **lack of rainfall is not the sole reason for the reduced bird arrival**. Typically, over one lakh birds arrive by this time, with numbers reaching millions by the season's end in March and April.
 - However, **this season, only around 500 birds have arrived**, marking the lowest number since 2016.

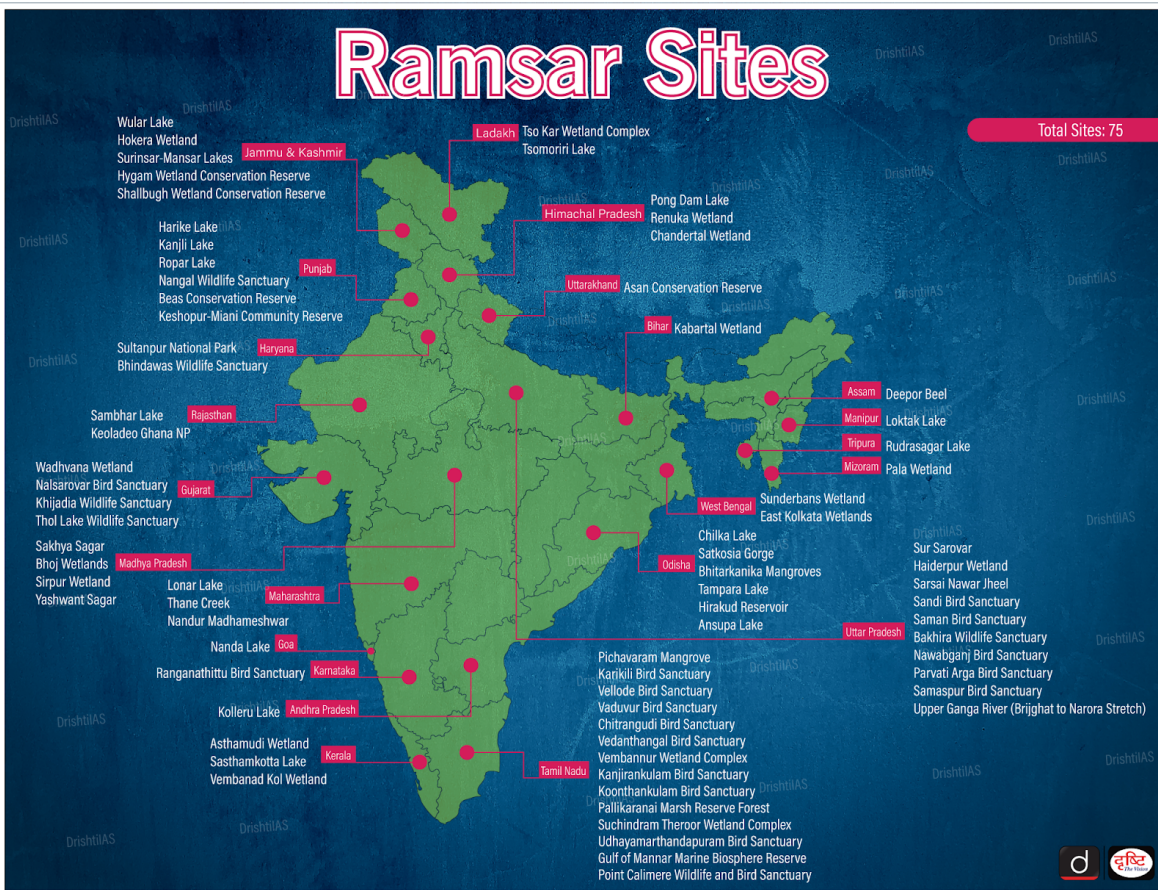
▪ Additional Factors:

- [Illegal sand mining](#), **habitat degradation**, and [encroachment](#) have compounded the impact of rainfall deficit.
 - Reduced water from upstream sources like **Doodhganga and Sukhnag Nallah**, along with [mining activities](#), have exacerbated the situation, draining the wetland's water.

▪ Urgent Need for Conservation:

- Experts and activists stress the **urgent need for conservation efforts** to protect the wetland, highlighting its **crucial role for both wildlife and local livelihoods**.
- **Sustainable practices must be prioritized** to restore the wetland's health and ensure its continued ecological function.

Ramsar Sites



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