



# Asian Water Bird Census

## Why in News?

The **Department of Wildlife Protection**, in collaboration with [the Wular Conservation and Management Authority \(WUCMA\)](#), is going to conduct [the Asian Waterbird Census 2025](#) in Kashmir.

- This annual initiative helps **estimate the population of migratory birds visiting Kashmir's wetlands** and assess the ecological health of these vital habitats.



## Key Points

- **Significance of Kashmir's Wetlands:**
  - [The Central Asian Flyway](#) was highlighted as a major migration route used by birds traveling from **Russia, Siberia, Europe, and China**.
  - The **migratory patterns of birds arriving in Kashmir's wetlands between November and March**.
    - The importance of Kashmir's wetlands as critical stopover points for migratory birds.
- **Census as a Scientific Exercise:**
  - The census is described as a crucial scientific initiative. [Bird migration](#) serves as a key indicator of wetland health.
  - Over the past two years, **officials have recorded more than 12 lakh migratory birds in Kashmir's wetlands**, reaffirming their global ecological significance.
- **Coverage of Key Wetlands:**
  - The Asian Waterbird Census 2025 will include 25 key wetlands.
  - It will cover **four Ramsar sites, Hokersar, Haigam, Shallabugh, and Wular Lake**—each serving as a vital habitat for thousands of migratory birds.
- **Execution of the Census:**
  - Trained personnel from the Wildlife Department, WUCMA, Forest Protection Force, and

- Forest Department **will conduct the census under strict supervision.**
- Avian experts will **analyze the collected data** after the field survey.
  - They will compile a comprehensive report on **species diversity, population trends, and wetland health.**
  - This report will help shape future [conservation policies](#) and [wetland management strategies.](#)

## The Asian Waterbird Census

- **About:**
  - It is a **citizen-science programme** supporting conservation and management of [wetlands](#) and waterbirds worldwide.
    - AWC is part of the global **International Waterbird Census (IWC)** coordinated by **Wetlands International.**
  - AWC **runs in parallel with other regional programmes of the IWC** in Africa, Europe, West Asia, the Neotropics and the Caribbean.
- **AWC in India:**
  - It was **initiated in the Indian subcontinent in 1987** and since then has grown rapidly to cover major regions of Asia, from Afghanistan eastwards to Japan, Southeast Asia and Australasia.
  - In India, AWC is jointly coordinated by **the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and Wetlands International.**
- **Significance:**
  - It **gives an idea of the birds at the wetland** and the health of the wetland; the more the waterbirds, the more suitable the wetland is.
  - It helps in **better implementation of the [Convention on Migratory Species \(CMS\)](#) and [the Convention on Biological Diversity's \(CBD\).](#)**

## The Central Asian Flyway (CAF)

- It is a migration route, **covering over 30 countries**, for different waterbirds linking their northernmost breeding grounds in **Russia (Siberia)** to the southernmost non-breeding (wintering) grounds in West and South Asia, **the Maldives** and **British Indian Ocean Territory.**
- CAF is among the **nine flyways in the world** and three of the nine flyways that pass through the Indian Subcontinent. The other two are:
  - **East Asian Australasian Flyway (EAAF) and Asian East African Flyway (AEAF).**
- **India has a strategic role in the flyway**, as it **provides critical stopover sites** to over **90% of the bird species** known to use this migratory route.
  - Flyways are the area used by a group of birds during their annual cycle which includes their breeding areas, stop over areas and wintering areas.