

Chhattisgarh Gets Its First Ramsar Site with Kopra Reservoir Declaration

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Chhattisgarh has entered India's wetland conservation map with the declaration of **Kopra Reservoir as its first Ramsar site**. Ramsar recognition is given only to wetlands of international importance, and this step highlights the growing role of central Indian wetlands in biodiversity protection and climate resilience.

For Chhattisgarh, this recognition brings better protection, scientific management, and sustainable livelihood opportunities for local communities dependent on the reservoir.

Kopra Reservoir: Location and Features

Kopra Reservoir is located in the **Baloda Bazar-Bhatapara district of Chhattisgarh**, a region dominated by agriculture and seasonal rivers. The reservoir was originally constructed for irrigation and water storage, but over time, it developed the characteristics of a natural wetland.

Ecological Importance of Kopra Reservoir

Kopra Reservoir plays a vital role in maintaining the ecological balance of the surrounding region. Wetlands like Kopra act as natural buffers against climate-related disasters such as floods and droughts.

- Absorbs excess rainwater during monsoon and reduces flooding
- Recharges groundwater used for drinking and farming
- Regulates local temperature and humidity
- Improves water quality by trapping sediments and pollutants
- Stores carbon and helps reduce the impact of climate change

Biodiversity and Species Found in Kopra Wetland

Kopra Wetland (Jalashay) located in Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh is an ecologically important freshwater wetland known for its rich bird diversity. The wetland supports a wide range of resident and migratory bird species due to the availability of food, nesting sites, and safe resting areas.

- Documented presence of **161 bird species**, showing high avian diversity
- **103 resident species** that depend on the wetland throughout the year
- **58 migratory species** that use it as a seasonal stopover site
- **Endangered species** recorded include the **Egyptian Vulture (Neophron percnopterus)**
- **Vulnerable species** include **Common Pochard, Woolly-necked Stork, and Lesser Adjutant Stork**
- **Near Threatened species** such as **Painted Stork, Black-headed Ibis, and Black-tailed Godwit**
- Aquatic plants like **Ipomea carnea, Otellia alismoides, and Cyperaceae species** support food chains
- Surrounding tree species such as **Acacia nilotica (Babool)** and **Ficus religiosa (Peepal)** provide nesting and roosting sites

Significance of the First Ramsar Site for Chhattisgarh

- Brings **international recognition** to Chhattisgarh for wetland conservation under the Ramsar Convention
- Strengthens **legal and policy protection** for Kopra Wetland against encroachment and degradation
- Helps in **scientific management and regular monitoring** of the wetland ecosystem
- Conserves **rich biodiversity**, especially migratory and endangered bird species
- Supports **climate change mitigation and adaptation** by regulating floods and storing carbon
- Improves **groundwater recharge** and water availability for nearby villages
- Promotes **eco-tourism and bird-watching**, creating local employment opportunities
- Encourages **community participation** in conservation and sustainable livelihood activities

What is the Ramsar Convention?

The Ramsar Convention is an international environmental treaty adopted in **1971 at Ramsar, Iran**, with the aim of conserving wetlands and promoting their wise and sustainable use. It recognizes wetlands as vital ecosystems for **biodiversity** conservation, water security, climate regulation, and human livelihoods.

India became a signatory to the **Ramsar Convention in 1982**, and since then has actively designated wetlands to strengthen ecological protection and biodiversity conservation.

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