

World Wetlands Day 2020

The World Wetlands Day is celebrated every year on 2nd February to mark the anniversary of signing of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance in 1971. This inter-governmental treaty provides the framework for national action and international co-operation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. This year's theme World Wetlands Day was Wetlands and Biodiversity.

Life thrives in Wetlands. Wetlands offer wide – ranging opportunities for biodiversity to flourish. In fact, nearly 40% of all species live or breed in wetlands. Over 100,000 freshwater species have been identified in wetlands so far. Moreover, wetlands provide freshwater supply, food and building materials, flood control, water quality improvement, groundwater recharge, recreation, climate change mitigation and other ecosystem services. These productive ecosystems are of immense ecological, socioeconomic as well as cultural importance. Consequently, they are also under constant pressure. They are threatened by reclamation and degradation through drainage and landfill, pollution, hydrological alteration, over-exploitation of their natural resources resulting in loss of biodiversity and disruption in ecosystem services provided by them. Wetlands are vanishing three times faster than forests. 35% of wetlands have disappeared since the 1970s.

Recognizing the need for their conservation and sustainable wise use, India became a party to the Ramsar Convention Wetlands of International Importance in 1982. Over the years, India has designated many important wetland sites as Ramsar wetlands. This year, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands has designated 10 new wetlands from India as Ramsar sites of International importance. This is in addition to earlier 27 sites from India bringing the total number of Ramsar sites in India now at 37. Of the 10 sites, 6 of the newly designated sites are from Uttar Pradesh, namely, Nawabganj, Saman, Samaspur, Parvati Arga, SarsaiNawarJheel and Sandi. 3 sites are from Punjab – Keshopur-Miani Community Reserve, Beas Conservation Reserve and Nangal. Nandur Madhameshwar from Maharashtra is the first Ramsar site from the state. The 10 wetlands are fitting nod to this year's theme of biodiversity

National level celebration of the World Wetlands Day (Vishwa Ardra Bhoomi Diwas) was organized at Keetham, Uttar Pradesh, on 02-02-2020 by Ministry of Environment & Forests in collaboration with the Deptt of Forests, Govt of Uttar Pradesh. This wetland is also known as Soor Sarovar Bird Sanctuary, situated in Agra is also a proposed Ramsar site. Named after the famous poet, Soordas, the sanctuary is spread across 7.97 sq. km area.



Keetham Lake in the Soor Sarovar Bird Sanctuary, Uttar Pradesh

The day began with an early-morning bird walk for the locals, students and other attendees. The Bird Festival 2020 also included a photo exhibition and origami stall along with day-long bird ringing workshop. On this occasion people from various sectors of society, officials and students along-with representation from Ministry of Environment & Forests were present. Chief Guest also distributed prizes to winning students who participated in various competitions held on the eve of WWD on various environmental themes.

An exhibition area was set up showcasing the works of several organisations and departments working to conserve wildlife and water in the state and the country, including, State Wetland Authority, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA), Wildlife Institute of India (WII), various Bird sanctuaries of the state and others. The exhibition showcased the work being done in the country and urged visitors to do their bit for the conservation of nature. Simultaneously, technical session for students and visitors were available throughout the day with live lessons, documentaries and trainings.

The day was marked by the presence and words of the following dignitaries:

1. Shri Dara Singh Chauhan, Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (Uttar Pradesh)
2. Shri Anil Sharma, MoS
3. Shri Ravi Agrawal, Additional Secretary, MoEF&CC,
4. Manju Pandey, Joint Secretary, MoEF&CC,
5. Shri Pawan Kumar Sharma, Project Tiger
6. Rajiv Ranjan Mishra, NMCG
7. Shri Sunil Chaudhary, Chief Wildlife Warden (West)
8. Shri Sunil Pandey, Chief Wildlife Warden

Informative booklets on the newly designated Ramsar Sites of India and the brochure for transformative idea of the Government of India 100 days programme. were released on the occasion. Students also came together to perform a series of dance and stage performances on various environmental issues like deforestation, impacts of radiation on birds and conservation of nature.



Inauguration by dignitaries



Release of Booklet on 10 new sites



Speech by Addl. Secretary (MoEF&CC)



Exhibition Show