

# Ballia's Surha Tal UP's 13th Ramsar site, India's 100th

PM expresses joy, officials say eco-tourism, conservation will get a fillip

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**LUCKNOW/VARANASI:** The Surha Tal in Ballia district, which provides habitat for over 310 bird species (including 125 waterbirds) and hosts up to 200,000 individual migratory birds during the winter, has been designated as Uttar Pradesh's 13th Ramsar site and the 100th in India, putting the vast natural oxbow lake in the international spotlight. Surha Tal is known officially as Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed joy over the recognition on Friday.

The announcement was made at a World Environment Day programme attended by chief minister Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow. UP forest minister Arun Kumar Saxena presented the certificate related to the site to Adityanath on the stage during the programme, an official statement said, according to a PTI report. The achievement will prove to be a milestone in promoting eco-tourism, officials said. Uttar Pradesh holds second position in the tally of Ramsar sites in India. Tamil Nadu is in first place.

Surha Tal falls on the Central Asian Flyway, through which migratory birds travel from Central Asia to the Indian subcontinent, making it a crucial stop-over point.

The site has a natural rain-fed lake spread over nearly 2,549 to



Surha Tal has a natural rain-fed lake spread over nearly 2,549 to 3,432 hectares

3,432 hectares. The area expands to around 42 square kilometres during the monsoon.

"Out of 13 Ramsar sites (in Uttar Pradesh), 12 were declared in the past seven years," said Aditi Singh, chief conservator of forest, Uttar Pradesh.

Surha Tal was created by the consolidation of the land area of 45 villages of Baansdih in Ballia town area, aggregating to a total of 3432.93 hectares.



Starting 10 km from the Ballia City area, it stretches west to Bhikampur village and is bound by Dulwara Village to the south-east and Singhauli to the north-east. Located near Basantpur village, around 17 kilometres from the district headquarters, Surha Tal was declared a bird sanctuary by the Uttar Pradesh government in 1991.

Prime Minister Modi wrote on X, "A century as far as Ramsar

sites are concerned! Glad that the Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary (Surha Tal) in Ballia, Uttar Pradesh has been designated as India's 100th Ramsar site."

Ballia chief development officer Ojashwi Raj said Surha Tal's recognition as a wetland of international importance is a matter of pride not only for the state but for the entire country.

UP's director general Tourism Vedpati Mishra said the Ramsar designation would act as a catalyst for both conservation and economic growth.

"The recognition not only strengthens efforts to preserve wetlands and biodiversity but also creates opportunities for eco-tourism-driven development. Increased tourist arrivals will generate employment, support local businesses and improve incomes."

## WHAT IS A RAMSAR SITE?

- Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention, an environmental treaty established in 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar.
- Ramsar sites are significant for conserving biodiversity, particularly waterfowl habitats.
- These sites, covering marshes, fens, and lakes, require sustainable management to maintain ecological character.
- Ramsar sites are selected based on their international significance regarding ecology, botany, zoology, limnology, or

hydrology. Applicant countries designate sites that meet at least one of nine criteria, such as supporting vulnerable species, maintaining biodiversity.

● Ramsar sites are significant as they can serve as model examples of the nation's commitment to conservation and management under internationally accepted frameworks. In designating a wetland as a Ramsar site, countries agree to establish and oversee a management framework aimed at conserving the wetland.

## BIRD SPECIES FOUND AT SURHA TAL

- The resident bird species found at Surha Tal include Little Cormorant, Great Cormorant, Grey Heron, Purple Heron, Painted Stork, Spot-billed Pelican, Bronze-winged Jacana, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Common Moorhen, Common Coot, Purple Swamphen, White-breasted Waterhen, River Tern, Brahminy Kite and White-throated Kingfisher.
- The migratory birds include Bar-headed Goose, Eurasian Teal, Red-crested Pochard, Common Pochard, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Eurasian Wigeon, Wood Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank, Common Redshank, Northern Lapwing, Black-winged Stilt and Common Greenshank.