

Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary

The Bakhira Bird Sanctuary is situated 44 km east of Gorakhpur city. The sanctuary came into existence in 1990. This sanctuary is situated in the Sant Kabir Nagar district. It is the largest natural flood plain wetland in Uttar Pradesh.

Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh was listed as one of the Ramsar sites of India on the occasion of World Wetland Day 2022 (2nd February 2022).

About Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary

- Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary is an open habitat for a large variety of migratory and resident birds.
- It has been declared a Bird Sanctuary in 1990 by the Forest and Wildlife Department, Government of Uttar Pradesh, India.
- Bakhira bird sanctuary also known as Bakhira Tal, located to the west of the Rapti riverbank, is a shallow-water, river-connecting wetland.
- Bakhira Tal (wetland) is the largest natural wetland of Eastern U.P. It is a perennial wetland, where the source of water is natural rain and the Ami River, a tributary of the Rapti River.
- Apart from birds, the Sanctuary has a variety of trees, shrubs, hydrophytes.
- About 40,000 birds belonging to about 30 species have been recorded during winters.
- It is a vast stretch of water body expanding over an area of 29 sq. km.
- The landscape and terrain of the wetland is almost flat, representing a typical 'Terai' landscape.
- The sanctuary is named after the village Bakhira located adjacent to the lake.
- The villagers of the surrounding villages depend on the wetland for their livelihood in the form of fishing, agricultural activities and fuelwood collection.

Importance of the Sanctuary

- Though the wetland has been declared as a Wildlife Sanctuary, there are several anthropogenic pressures on it.
- Fishing and poaching of migratory birds are key issues.
- It is an important habitat for sarus as well as winter migratory birds; hence, it is important to conserve the area/wetland.

- The loss of wetland can reduce the number of stopover sites for migrating birds as well as nesting species.

Ecosystem

- Bakhira lake is one of the significant wetlands of eastern Uttar Pradesh.
- The sanctuary provides breeding and nesting ground to a large number of migratory and resident birds.
- The majority of the migratory birds come from Siberia, Tibet, China and Europe.
- Moreover, certain species of fish, amphibians, reptiles and mammals are also found dwelling in and around Bakhira Tal.
- The flora of this area is represented by semi-arid vegetation and typical aquatic vegetation of the lake in the plains of North India.
- The Bakhira Lake supports a variety of aquatic plants typical to the upper Gangetic system.
- However, it is also said that the sanctuary has a relatively lesser number of aquatic species due to the harsh climatic conditions and rocky soil.
- The water bodies are shallow and boggic.
- The average annual rainfall in the district is 1166 mm.
- During the winter, the mean minimum temperature is about 9 °C and the mean maximum - 23 °C.
- In the post-monsoon seasons, the relative humidity is high and reaches above 70%.