

## Asan Conservation Reserve: First Ramsar Site of Uttarakhand



Photo by: Aanchal Saklani

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Asan Conservation Reserve, spanning 444.4 ha in Dehradun, is the first Ramsar site of Uttarakhand. Situated at the confluence of the Asan and Yamuna Rivers, it was designated as a Conservation Reserve in 2005 under Section 36A of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. This biodiverse wetland lies strategically along the Central Asian Flyway, serving as a critical habitat for numerous migratory and resident species.

The site supports 330 species of birds, including several globally threatened species. Notable among them are the critically endangered white-rumped vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*), Baer's pochard (*Aythya baeri*), and red-headed vulture (*Sarcogyps calvus*); endangered species like Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*), steppe eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*), and black-bellied tern (*Sterna acuticauda*); and vulnerable species including marbled teal (*Marmaronetta angustirostris*), common pochard (*Aythya ferina*), Indian spotted eagle (*Clanga hastata*), and lesser white-fronted goose (*Anser erythropus*). The wetland is especially known for hosting large flocks of ruddy shelduck during winter.

Beyond avifauna, the reserve supports a rich biological diversity with 78 invertebrate species, 49 fish species, 4 amphibians, 1 reptile, and 20 mammal species. Among the fish, the endangered golden mahseer (*Tor putitora*) is particularly significant, as the wetland functions as an important feeding, migration, and spawning site.

In terms of Ramsar criteria, Asan Conservation Reserve qualifies under multiple categories:

- **Criterion 2:** Supports numerous globally threatened species and their ecological communities.
- **Criterion 3:** Hosts a wide range of floral and faunal diversity.
- **Criterion 4:** Provides essential wintering and staging habitats for migratory birds such as ruddy shelduck, gadwall, Eurasian wigeon, northern pintail, and bar-headed goose.
- **Criterion 6:** Supports more than 1% of the global population of certain waterbird species, including ruddy shelduck (2.03%) and red-crested pochard (1.02%).
- **Criterion 8:** Serves as a vital spawning ground, feeding, and migration route for native fish species.