



## A Call on World Wetland Day from Udaipur

### Background:

<https://sdg.iisd.org/events/world-wetlands-day-2024/>

Celebrated annually on 2 February, World Wetlands Day aims to raise global awareness about the vital role of wetlands for people and the planet. The Day also marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea.

World Wetland Day 2024 will focus on the theme of 'Wetlands and Human Wellbeing'. The theme recognizes wetlands as critical to people and nature, underscoring the intrinsic value of wetland ecosystems and their benefits and services, including contributions to sustainable development and human wellbeing.

### The wetlands of Udaipur:

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/travel/travel-news/udaipur-set-to-become-countrys-first-wetland-city/articleshow/104366189.cms>

<https://udaipurtimes.com/wild-life/udaipur-wetland-ramsar-status/cid12811700.htm>

Amidst the efforts to declare Udaipur as a Ramsar wetland city, the first in India and the efforts to declare Menar as a Ramsar heritage site, commercial concerns related to business as usual mean that efforts to bring pollution, deforestation and related air, water quality and siltation of lakes are still far from satisfactory. Last year in collaboration with National Platform for small scale fish workers and the local organisation of fishers around Jaisamand lake, concerns related to Tilapia invasion and the ever increasing urban demand from Udaipur that were resulting the depletion of fish catch had been raised. The depletion of fish catch and the invasion of Tilapia also affects the other ponds and lakes in Udaipur city and its surroundings as well. These lakes are rich in **phytoplankton** and **zooplankton** bringing in thousands of migratory birds every year. The **nullahs** that carry the overflow waters wind through the city and are a sanctuary for waders, fish in pools and kingfishers year-round. Not just the city lakes, but also the ones around it harbour threatened and endangered species like Mahasher, a fish that weighs no less than 40-50kgs and was considered a great sport fish, in Lake Badi. Far from restoring the prevalence of the Mahasher, without seriously addressing the issues raised above, single minded focus on

tourism and its related pollution will destroy rather than save these lakes which the the efforts at declaring Udaipur a Ramsar heritage city are driving at.

### **Menar wetlands and other wetlands in the hinterland of Udaipur**

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/udaipurs-bird-village-set-to-be-declared-wetland/article65563912.ece>

<https://jda.urban.rajasthan.gov.in/content/dam/environment/env-swa/FinalWetlandGazetteNotification/Brahm%20Talab%20and%20Dhand%20Talab%20Menar%20Wetland%20Udaipur.pdf>

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/rajasthan-proposes-to-develop-5-wetlands-as-ramsar-sites/articleshow/106338889.cms>

Recognised as the “bird village” following community-driven conservation efforts, Menar in Udaipur district is set to be notified as Rajasthan's new wetland. This will pave the way for getting the Ramsar site status for this rural heartland of the Mewar region. The two lakes in the village – the Brahma and Dhandh – play host to a large number of migratory birds in the winter season every year. Here as in Ghana National Park ( a Ramsar Wetland Heritage Site) issues related to deforestation, pollution from fertilizers and pesticide in agriculture and issues related to invasive species if unaddressed will seriously threaten the long term stability and development of the region.

### **Issues with the wetlands of Udaipur**

<https://udaipurtimes.com/issues/addressing-pollution-environment-and-traffic-in-udaipur/cid11201464.htm>

<https://www.networkideas.org/news-analysis/2018/01/destroying-wetlands/>

The consequences of this callous and enormous lapse are now being felt all over the country, as precisely the activities that are supposed to be forbidden are merrily undertaken on wetlands. And this is the concern in the city of Udaipur, Rajasthan, where a five-star hotel is being constructed on land that is clearly a wetland, in an island on one of the city’s lakes.

The lake in question – Udaisagar – was constructed around 1565 by Maharaja Udai Singh, founder of the city. Surrounded by Aravalli hills, it has a catchment of 31 square km. On this lake there is an island of around 8 hectares, which was under the tenancy of some peasants. More than three-fourths of the island lies below the high flood level. Since the island is partially submerged during the monsoons, the peasants would cultivate their land when the rain water receded, and in general it was a safe habitat for a wide variety of avian and aquatic species.

Such issues plague other wetlands of Udaipur as well. Efforts at conservation and eco-restoration have been undertaken by a number of agencies across the district with varying results. The biodiversity park at Amberi located off the National highway near Chirva Ghat is one such which has helped to restore the native biodiversity to its pristine glory. Work related to watershed development is being seriously examined in some locations in relation to its potential for development of other wetland sites. These need to be properly documented as well.

**What can be done ?**

<https://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/IELA-Press-Note-Fishermen-of-Jaisamand-Celebrated-WWD-Program-English.pdf>

Last year IELA in collaboration with NPSSFW and the fishermen of Jaisamand celebrated world wetland day at Jaisamand, it was for the first time that issues related to fishermen in Jaisamand lake were raised in connection with World Wetland Day, this cry of the fishermen resonated with others across the country. Expanding the scope of this call IELA is making a more comprehensive call related to the wetlands of Udaipur. Resonating with the move to declare Udaipur as the first wetland city of India, we want to highlight the larger issues at stake when seriously engaging with what this move takes. We call on all residents of Udaipur District to join hands with us in this endeavour.

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