

If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—for ever.

— George Orwell



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## *Kawar bird sanctuary gets international status*

**By Abhay Singh**  
The Times of India News Service

PATNA: The Union government has identified the 63.11 square-km Kawar fresh water lake in Begusarai district as an internationally recognised "Ramsar site" which is suitable for migratory birds visiting it, as also by the resident birds of special variety found in different parts of the country. Thus, Kawar has become one of the 16 bird sanctuaries in the country, and the first from Bihar, to acquire this status.

The Union government issued the relevant notification in February this year. The notification has been sent to the state government.

This information was given by Arvind Mishra who has recently been nominated the state coordinator by the Indian Bird Conservation Network (IBCN), Mumbai, for Bihar. Mishra, who before his new assignment was the secretary of the Bhagalpur-based Mandar Nature Club (MNC), is one of the 18 state coordinators nominated by the IBCN in the country.

Besides Kawar, the other bird sanctuaries in Bihar are Udhwa of Sahebganj, Nagi and Nakti of Jamui, Kusheshwarthan of Darbhanga, Goga of Katihar, Barella of Hajipur, and Saraiyaman of West Champaran.

As per the Ramsar Convention of bird conservationists held in Teheran in 1975, a wetland area which is rich in bio-diversity is designated as Ramsar site, meaning that it is suitable for visitation by the migratory and resident birds of a country. "Now, Kawar has come on the international map of important bird sanctuaries", Mishra said. Special birds which visit the Kawar lake are white-eyed pochard, great-crested grebe, black ibis, crested serpent eagle, spotted eagle, Ballion's Crake etc., he informed.

However, the status report prepared on Kawar fresh water lake by him does not make happy reading for the concerned bird-watchers and practising ornithologists. Under the sub-head "threats", he has pointed out that the lake is being choked by weeds, suffers from poaching, and



KM Sharma

has polluted water. Hunting and fishing is practised in the sanctuary area on a large scale.

Sources in Begusarai informed that vested interests have been trying to convert the choked laked area into agricultural land. They have the backing of "some powerful politicians" from the area, including a former agriculture minister from the state. It is learnt that the Union government, in the past, had sanctioned "several lakhs" of rupees for improving the lake area so as to make it suitable as a bird habitat.

The money, however, has remained unutilised, since no work was possible or undertaken due to political interference and lack of cooperation on the part of vested interests. Moreover, those indulging in fishing have been doing so by "poisoning the waters of the lake", the sources said. As a result, the water of the lake has got polluted. This has forced the special birds of the migratory and resident nature to alight in the nearby waterpoints to catch fish and survive.

**Migratory birds landing at the Kawar fresh water lake in Begusarai district. The site has been declared as a bird sanctuary by the Centre.**