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Hudsonian Godwit and CMS – 42 Migratory Species Proposed for Global Protection

24 March 2026

SUBJECTS COVERED

ENVIRONMENT

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24 March 2026 · 4 min read

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Hudsonian Godwit and CMS — 42 Migratory Species Proposed for Global Protection

At the UN Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) meeting in Brazil in March 2026, the Hudsonian Godwit — whose population has declined by 95% over four decades — and 42 other migratory species were proposed for enhanced international protection.

THE HUDSONIAN GODWIT — A MARATHON MIGRANT IN PERIL

The Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*) undertakes one of the most extraordinary migrations in the animal kingdom:

Migration Profile

FEATURE	DETAIL
Annual migration distance	~30,000 km
Breeding grounds	Arctic Canada and Alaska
Wintering grounds	Patagonia, southern South America
Non-stop flight legs	Up to 10,000 km without rest
Population decline	95% over 4 decades
IUCN status	Near Threatened
Family	Scolopacidae (sandpipers and allies)
Order	Charadriiformes

Why Is It Declining?

- ❶ **Habitat loss at stopover sites:** The godwit relies on specific wetlands along its route for refuelling — destruction of these wetlands leaves it with no energy reserves
- ❷ **Climate change:** Shifting seasons disrupt the timing of insect emergence in the Arctic, which the birds depend on for breeding
- ❸ **Coastal development:** Mudflats and estuaries used for feeding are being converted for ports, aquaculture, and urbanisation
- ❹ **Hunting:** Still legally hunted in parts of South America

CMS/BONN CONVENTION — THE FRAMEWORK

The **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)**, also called the **Bonn Convention**, is the only global convention dedicated specifically to migratory species.

Key Details

FEATURE	DETAIL
Adopted	1979, Bonn, Germany
Entered into force	1983
Parties	133 countries (including India)
India ratified	1983
Secretariat	Bonn, Germany (under UNEP)
Appendix I	Endangered migratory species — strictest protection
Appendix II	Species needing cooperative agreements

CMS Conferences of Parties (COPs)

COP	YEAR	LOCATION	KEY OUTCOME
COP13	2020	Gandhinagar, India	Central Asian Flyway Action Plan launched
COP14	2024	Samarkand, Uzbekistan	State of World's Migratory Species report
Current meeting	2026	Brazil	42+ species proposed for listing

The State of Migratory Species Report (COP14)

- **44%** of CMS-listed species have declining populations
- **22%** of species listed face extinction threat
- **Habitat loss** and **overexploitation** are the top threats
- **Climate change** is the fastest-growing threat

THE 42 PROPOSED SPECIES

The March 2026 CMS meeting in Brazil proposed enhanced protection for 42 species across categories:

Birds

- Hudsonian Godwit (star species — 95% decline)
- Several shorebirds and raptors using the Americas flyway
- Seabirds affected by plastic pollution and overfishing

Marine Species

- Several shark and ray species facing bycatch mortality

- Sea turtles with declining nesting success

Terrestrial Mammals

- Migratory ungulates in Central Asia and Africa

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR INDIA

India is one of the world's most important countries for migratory species:

Central Asian Flyway (CAF)

- Passes through India
- Covers **30 countries**
- Hosts approximately **280 waterbird species**
- India launched the **Central Asian Flyway Action Plan** at CMS COP13 in Gandhinagar (2020)

Key Indian Wetlands for Migratory Birds

WETLAND	STATE	SIGNIFICANCE
Chilika Lake	Odisha	Largest coastal lagoon in India; Ramsar site
Keoladeo NP	Rajasthan	UNESCO World Heritage Site; Siberian Crane habitat
Wular Lake	J&K	Largest freshwater lake in India; Ramsar site
Harike Wetland	Punjab	Confluence of Sutlej and Beas; Ramsar site
Sultanpur NP	Haryana	Over 250 bird species including migratory
Point Calimere	Tamil Nadu	Greater Flamingo wintering ground

India's Migratory Species Framework

- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Protects migratory species in Indian territory
- **Ramsar Convention** signatory: 80+ Ramsar sites (wetlands of international importance)
- **Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS):** India's premier ornithological body (established 1883)
- **Important Bird Areas (IBAs):** 554 identified by BirdLife International/BNHS

BAR-TAILED GODWIT — THE RECORD HOLDER

For comparison, the Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) holds the record for the **longest non-stop flight** by any bird: **13,560 km** from Alaska to New Zealand without stopping (tracked via satellite in 2020). This species is also declining due to habitat loss in the Yellow Sea.

UPSC RELEVANCE

CMS/Bonn Convention, Appendix I vs II, COP13 Gandhinagar, Central Asian Flyway, Ramsar Convention, Hudsonian Godwit IUCN status

MAINS GS-III:

Biodiversity conservation, transboundary environmental governance, wetland protection

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HUDSONIAN GODWIT:

Scientific name: *Limosa haemastica*

Migration: ~30,000 km annually (Arctic to Patagonia)

Population decline: 95% in 4 decades

IUCN status: Near Threatened

Family: Scolopacidae

Order: Charadriiformes

CMS/BONN CONVENTION:

Adopted: 1979, Bonn, Germany

Parties: 133 (including India, ratified 1983)

Appendix I: Endangered — strictest protection

Appendix II: Cooperative agreements needed

Secretariat: Bonn, under UNEP

COP13: Gandhinagar (2020) — CAF Action Plan

COP14: Samarkand (2024)

CENTRAL ASIAN FLYWAY:

Countries: 30

Waterbird species: ~280

India: Key stopover and wintering country

Action Plan: Launched at CMS COP13, Gandhinagar

INDIA'S RAMSAR SITES:

Total: 80+ (as of 2025)

Largest: Sundarbans, West Bengal

Highest altitude: Tso Kar, Ladakh

Most sites: Tamil Nadu

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Bar-tailed Godwit: Longest non-stop flight record — 13,560 km (Alaska to NZ)

BNHS: Bombay Natural History Society (est. 1883, Mumbai)

IBAs in India: 554 (BirdLife International)

Siberian Crane: Critically Endangered, formerly visited Keoladeo NP (last seen 2002)

Amur Falcon: Migratory raptor, passes through Nagaland (largest congregation globally)

Sources: [CMS](#), [Down to Earth](#), [BNHS](#)

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