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Manasbal Lake, Reviving India's Deepest Freshwater Lake

20 July 2026

ENVIRONMENT

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Manasbal Lake, Reviving India's Deepest Freshwater Lake

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✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

*in the **Ganderbal district of Jammu and Kashmir**, regarded as **India's deepest natural freshwater lake**, has shown a marked ecological revival in **2026** following de-weeding and dredging, with the return of **Siberian migratory birds** along the **Central Asian Flyway**.*

ABOUT MANASBAL LAKE

Manasbal Lake lies about **30 km north of Srinagar** and is one of the most striking water bodies in the Kashmir Valley. At a depth of roughly **13 metres**, it is considered **India's deepest natural freshwater lake**. Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India, and its lakes are among the country's most valued freshwater ecosystems.

The lake is fed partly by **springs**, which help keep its water clear, and is famous for its summer blooms of **lotus (Nelumbo)**. Its name is often linked to the sacred Lake Manasarovar, and it has long been a retreat prized for its calm, mirror-like waters.

The 2026 Revival

Years of weed infestation and sediment build-up had degraded the lake's health. A restoration drive involving **de-weeding and dredging** has improved water quality and revived aquatic habitat. The clearest sign of recovery has been the return of **migratory waterfowl** in larger numbers.

FEATURE	DETAIL
Location	Ganderbal district, Jammu and Kashmir
Distance from Srinagar	About 30 km north
Depth	Roughly 13 metres (India's deepest freshwater lake)
Water source	Fed partly by springs
Signature flora	Lotus (Nelumbo)
Flyway	Central Asian Flyway

MIGRATORY BIRDS AND THE CENTRAL ASIAN FLYWAY

Manasbal serves as a **winter stopover** for waterfowl travelling along the **Central Asian Flyway**, one of the world's major bird migration routes. Species recorded returning to the lake include **mallards, grebes, teals** and the globally threatened **white-headed duck**.

India has adopted a **National Action Plan for the Conservation of Migratory Birds along the Central Asian Flyway**, recognising the country's position as a critical wintering ground for birds breeding in Siberia and Central Asia. Healthy wetlands like Manasbal are essential links in this chain.

Why Wetlands Matter

Wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems on Earth. They recharge groundwater, buffer floods, filter pollutants and support rich biodiversity. Their conservation in India is anchored by two frameworks.

FRAMEWORK	FOCUS
Ramsar Convention (1971)	International treaty for wetlands of international importance
National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA)	Central scheme for restoring lakes and wetlands

KASHMIR'S LAKES IN CONTEXT

Manasbal is best understood alongside the Valley's other famous water bodies. **Dal Lake**, the tourism icon of Srinagar, faces severe pressure from **encroachment** and pollution. **Wular Lake**, one of Asia's largest freshwater lakes, is a designated **Ramsar site** and a natural flood absorber for the Jhelum basin.

The Geography of Himalayan Lakes

Himalayan lakes form through varied processes, from tectonic activity to glacial action and river oxbows. Manasbal, being spring-fed and relatively deep, differs from the shallow, silt-heavy Dal Lake. Its restoration offers a template: targeted de-weeding, **catchment** management and community involvement can reverse years of degradation and bring migratory birds back to a wetland.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 1: Geography of India; important lakes and physical features; distribution of natural resources.

GS Paper 3: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation; biodiversity and wetland ecosystems.

Prelims pointers:

- **Manasbal Lake** is in **Ganderbal district**, Jammu and Kashmir, and is **India's deepest freshwater lake** (about 13 metres).
- It lies on the **Central Asian Flyway** for migratory birds.
- The **white-headed duck** is among the threatened species that visit the lake.
- **Wular Lake** is a **Ramsar site**; **Dal Lake** is not.
- The **Ramsar Convention** dates to **1971**; the **NPCA** is India's central lake-conservation scheme.

Mains question: Wetland restoration is central to both biodiversity conservation and water security. Discuss with reference to the revival of lakes in the Kashmir Valley.

FACTS CORNER

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The Central Asian Flyway covers 30 countries and links breeding grounds in the Arctic and Central Asia with wintering grounds in the Indian subcontinent.

India has over 90 Ramsar sites, the highest in Asia.

The white-headed duck is listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List.

Wular Lake was designated a Ramsar site in 1990 and is fed by the Jhelum river.

The NPCA merged two earlier schemes, the National Lake Conservation Plan and the National Wetlands Conservation Programme.

Sources: Wildlife Institute of India, Central Asian Flyway, The Hindu on Manasbal revival, Ramsar Convention

Source: Manasbal Lake, Reviving India's Deepest Freshwater Lake — Ujiyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs

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