

Ecological character description

Jay Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary is located approximately 10 kilometers from Ballia Town, within the Maniar Range of the Ballia Social Forestry Division. This freshwater wetland, part of the Ganga river basin, supports a resident bird population year-round and attracts migratory birds from the Central Asian Flyway during the winter. In recognition of its ecological significance, the Government of Uttar Pradesh designated 34.3293 square kilometers (3432.93 hectares) as a bird sanctuary under notification No.1088 (1) 14-3-19/85, dated 27.03.1991. This area includes 132.78 hectares of gram samaj land and 3300.15 hectares of private land. The water spread area of the sanctuary extends through two tehsils (subdivisions) of the district: the southern end falls under Ballia tehsil, while the larger northeastern side is part of Bansdeeh tehsil. The sanctuary is attracting a variety of migratory and resident birds, especially during winter when water birds congregate in large numbers. During the migratory season, this site provides essential habitat for waterfowls including Bar-headed goose (*Anser indicus*), Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*), Northern Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*), Gadwall (*Mareca strepera*), Red-crested Pochard (*Netta rufina*), Common pochard (*Aythya ferina*), Common Teal (*Anas crecca*) etc. During summer, when water becomes the limiting factor for most of the surrounding wetlands as they dry completely, the site becomes the favored habitat of resident birds. The sanctuary's major inflows come from three channels: Katahar Nullah, which is connected to the Ganga river and provides the main freshwater supply, followed by the Madha and Garaai channels. The Katehar-nala is mostly dry during summer and in the winter months has a sluggish current. However, during the rains, it swells to a large size, either forming an escape for the water of the lake, or else, when the Ganges is high, reversing its action and pouring the water of the river into lake. Surrounding the sanctuary are agricultural lands where crops like paddy, maize, wheat, gram, and groundnuts are cultivated, supporting the local rural economy. The margins of this perennial wetland are used to grow a special variety of rice known as "floating" or deep-water rice, which adapts to high water levels by extending its stalks above the water. The dominant weed in and around the wetland is *Eichhornia crassipes*. The sanctuary has significant recreational value, attracting 40,352 tourists and visitors in the 2023-2024 period.