

Black-Necked Stork Breeding Stronghold

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Why in News?

A study by the Gujarat Ecological Education and Research (GEER) Foundation has identified Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary in Jamnagar district, Gujarat, as a major breeding stronghold for the Black-necked Stork.

Key Highlights of the Study

- **100% Fledging Success** - All four monitored active nests successfully raised two chicks each, resulting in eight new juveniles with zero recorded chick mortality, predation, or nest abandonment.
- **Peak Population** - The sanctuary supported a peak seasonal population of **21 to 23 Black-necked Storks**, including breeding pairs, fledglings, and five non-breeding adults.
- **Adaptation to Invasive Flora**- All four nests were constructed at heights of 3 to 4.5 metres on *Neltuma juliflora* (formerly *Prosopis juliflora*, locally known as *gando baval*).
- This demonstrates the species' structural adaptability to utilize invasive trees for nesting where native species like acacias or figs are limited.
- **Optimal Feeding Hydrology**- Nesting success was driven by adjacent shallow, semi-perennial wetlands with water depths between **0.3 and 0.7 metres**.
- It provides an abundant supply of fish, amphibians, crustaceans, and aquatic invertebrates.
- **Coordinated Biparental Care**- Adults attended nests for an average of **62 minutes per visit**, with parents swapping nest duty during foraging departures in **94% of observed instances**.

About the Black-Necked Stork (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*)

- **Taxonomy** - A large wading bird belonging to the stork family **Ciconiidae**.
- Recognized by its contrasting black-and-white body, iridescent blue-green neck, long bright red legs, and a heavy black bill.
- **Habitat** - Native to South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Australia, preferring open freshwater marshes, shallow river courses, and semi-perennial wetlands.
- **Conservation Status**
 - **IUCN Red List**- Near Threatened (Globally).
 - **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**- Protected under Schedule II (as amended in 2022).



About Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary

- **Location** - Situated in the Jamnagar district of Gujarat, along the coast of the Gulf of Kutch.
- **Unique Ecosystem**- Defined by a unique eco-tone featuring both **freshwater wetlands and saline/brackish habitats**.
- Created by a man-made bund built to prevent seawater ingress into agricultural land.
- **Ramsar Site**- Designated as a **Ramsar Site** (Wetland of International Importance) in 2022.
- **Migratory Corridor** - Serves as a vital wintering and staging ground along the **Central Asian Flyway (CAF)** for thousands of migratory and resident waterbirds.

Reference

[Times of India | Khijadiya, stronghold for black-necked stork breeding](#)