



Wetlands for people & nature

The role of wetland ecosystems in climate change
adaptation and the connection with National
Adaptation Plans



Climate change

Wetlands are climate superheroes

They are the largest terrestrial carbon stores. And they protect us from droughts, floods, fires and storms

wetlands
for
people
& nature

Saloum Delta, Senegal

Biodiversity

**Wetlands support 40%
of all species, many
of which are endemic
and endangered.**





People

**Wetlands
provide
food, water and
livelihoods for a
billion people**

The world's wetlands
are under threat. The
time
to act is **now.**

[Wetlands](#)

[Challenges](#)

[About us](#)

[Our work](#)

[2030](#)

Around
0 %

1900

2024

Around
70 % of the world's wetlands
have already been lost or
degraded since 1900



And they continue to disappear
faster than any other ecosystem.

Wetlands for climate...



Wetlands for
mitigation



Wetlands for
adaptation



Wetlands for
resilience

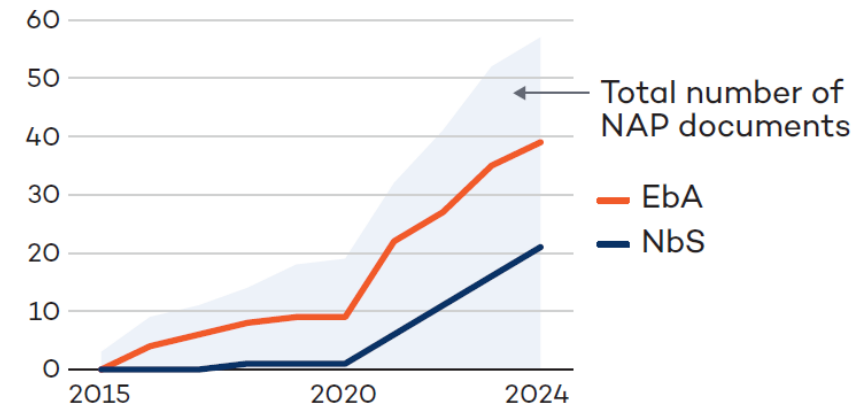
NbS have gained traction in NAP processes

NAP Global Network, 2024

- Most NAP documents mention ecosystems, biodiversity and the environment as priority sector.
- $\frac{3}{4}$ of NAPs mention ecosystems as standalone segment in their climate risk assessment
- Most countries refer to links between climate change and biodiversity loss but potential disconnect between national climate change adaptation and biodiversity planning processes

Ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) and nature-based solutions (NbS) are increasingly being integrated into NAP documents.

Number of NAP documents including term



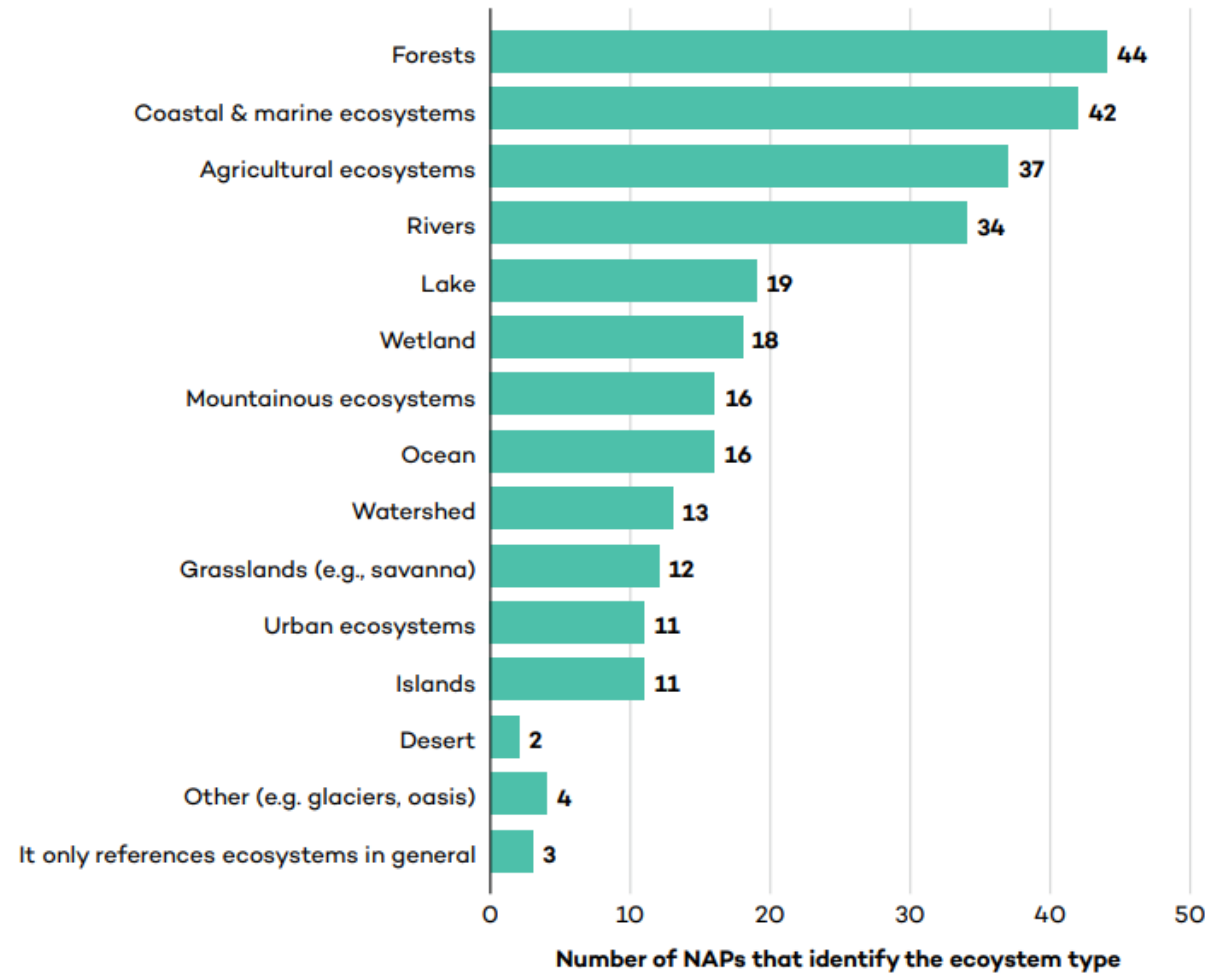
Source: 1) <https://napglobalnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/napgn-en-2024-tracking-progress-nbs-eba-nap-processes.pdf>

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Figure 5. Types of ecosystems identified as vulnerable in the climate risk assessment chapters of NAPs



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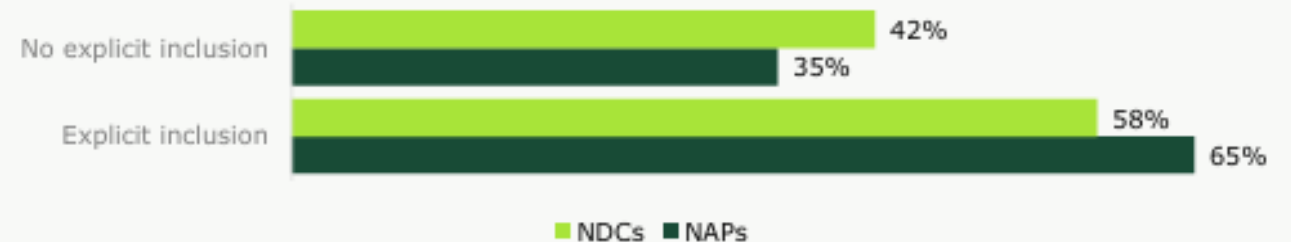
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Mangroves in assessed documents

Share of documents (%)



Source: FAO [Mangroves for adaptation and resilience: A review of national climate plans and commitments](#)



**Wetlands can
function as a cross-
cutting tool within
NDCs while
providing essential
functions for local
economies**



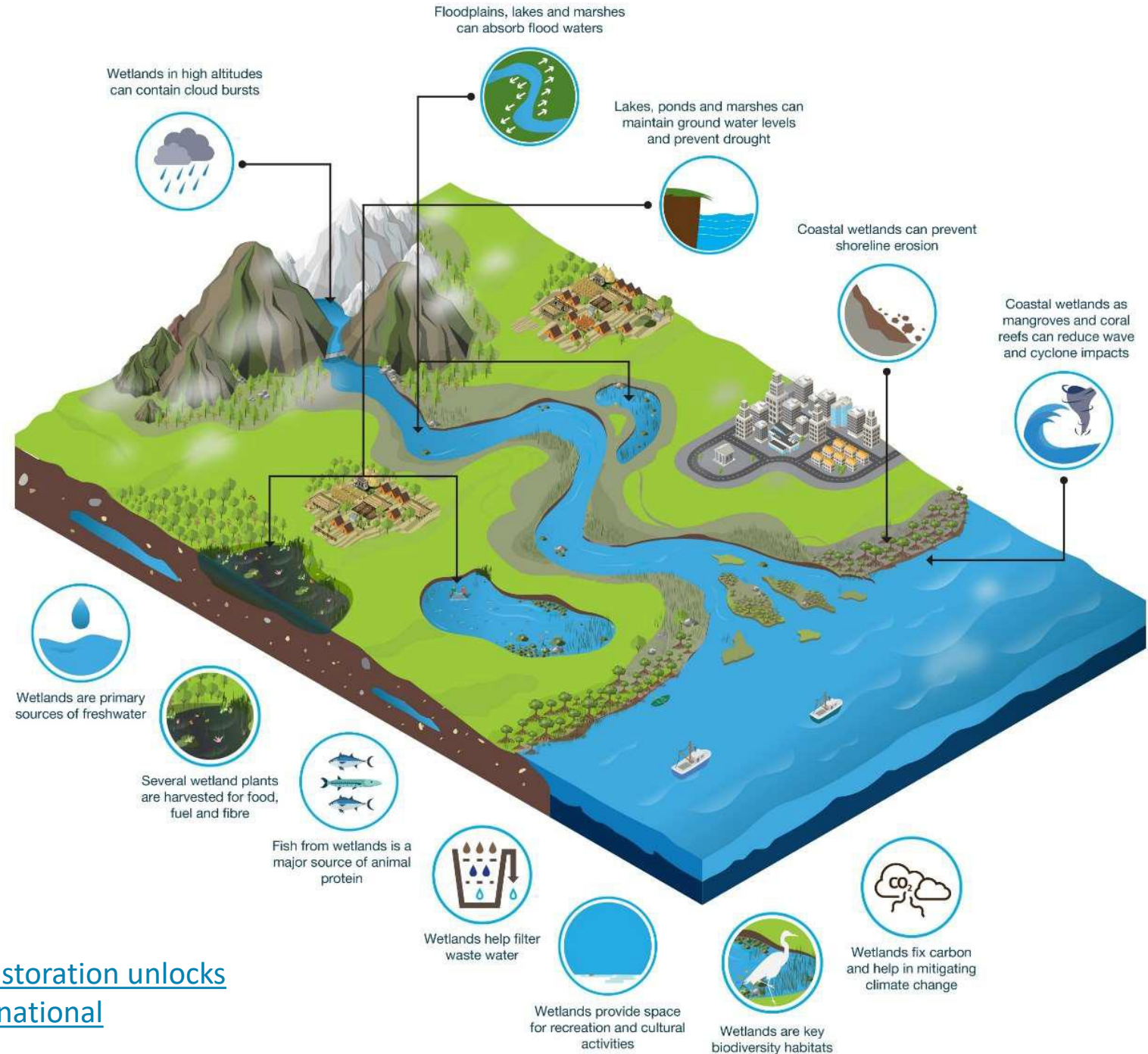
Societal benefits of large-scale river and wetland restoration

Speed et al., 2026

Water supply

In Nepal catchment restoration improved the average yield of surface and groundwater sources by 75%

More information: [Investment in river and wetland restoration unlocks economic benefits, finds major study - Wetlands International](#)

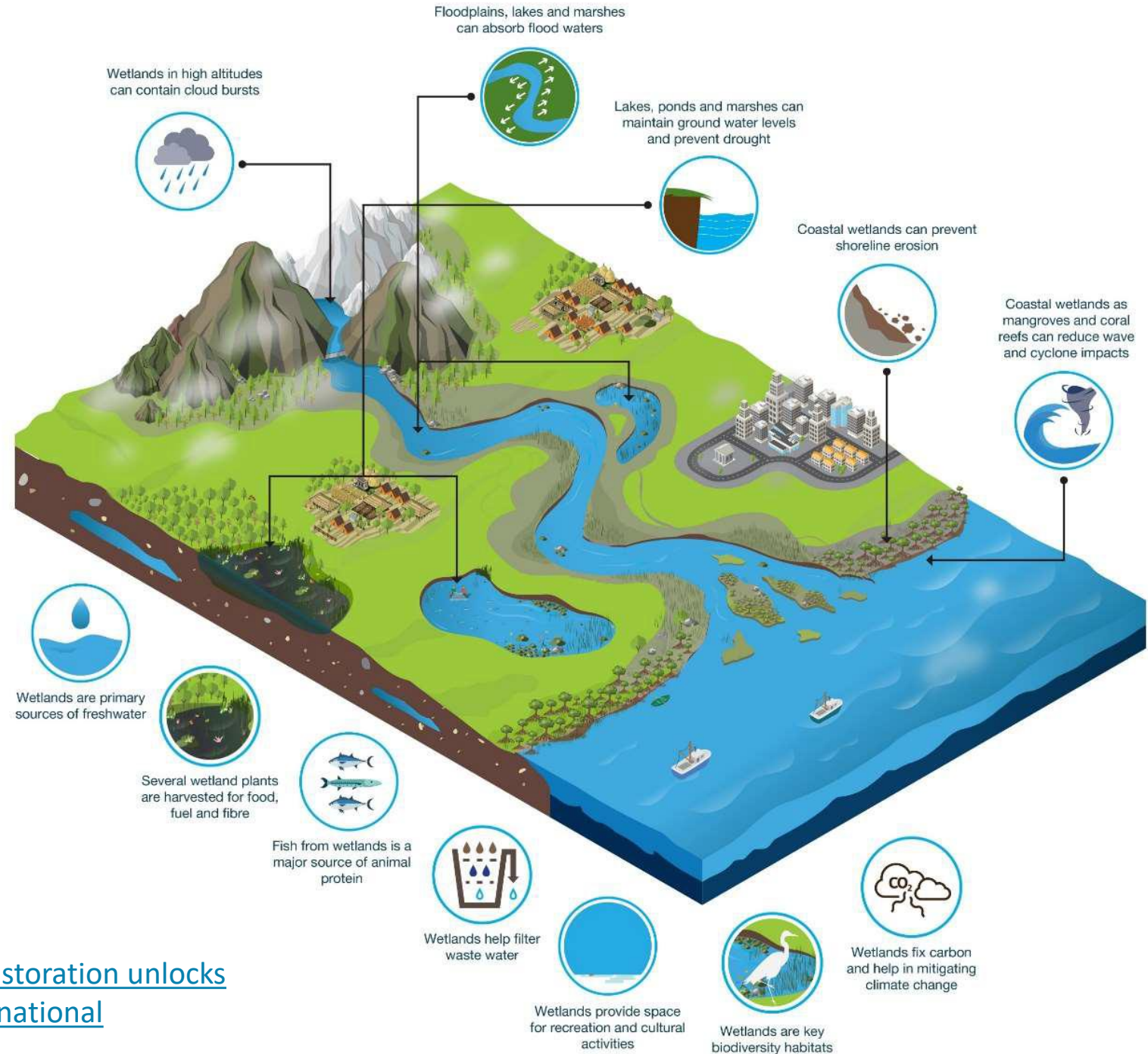


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Pollution reduction

Conservation and restoration of rivers and their catchments allowed New York city to avoid construction of an \$8-10 billion filtration plant as well as avoiding annual treatment costs of \$365 million/year



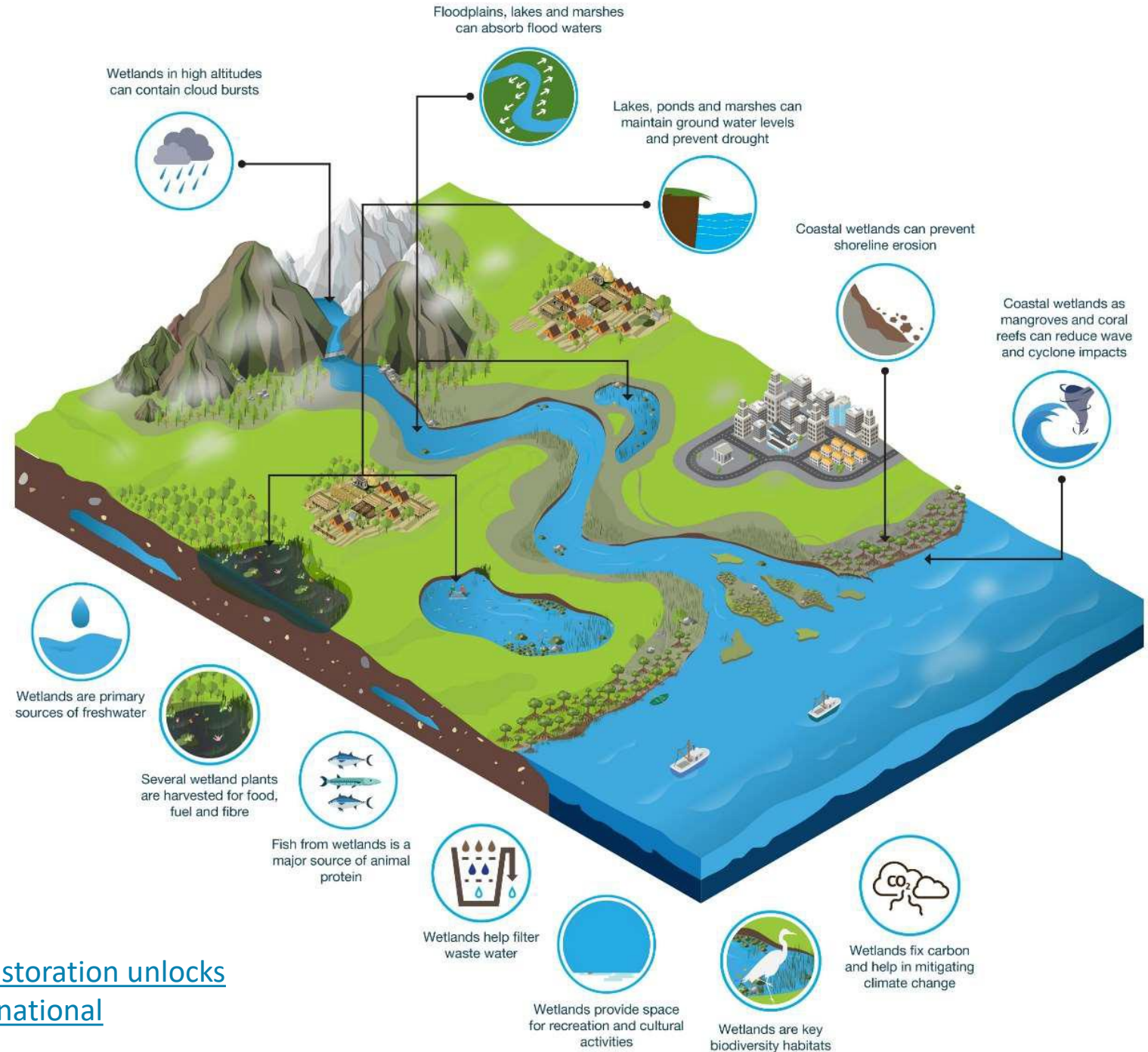
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Flood risk reduction

Work in the Yangtze basin (China) has resulted in an additional 29,700 km² of restored floodplains with a floodwater retention capacity of 8 billion m³.



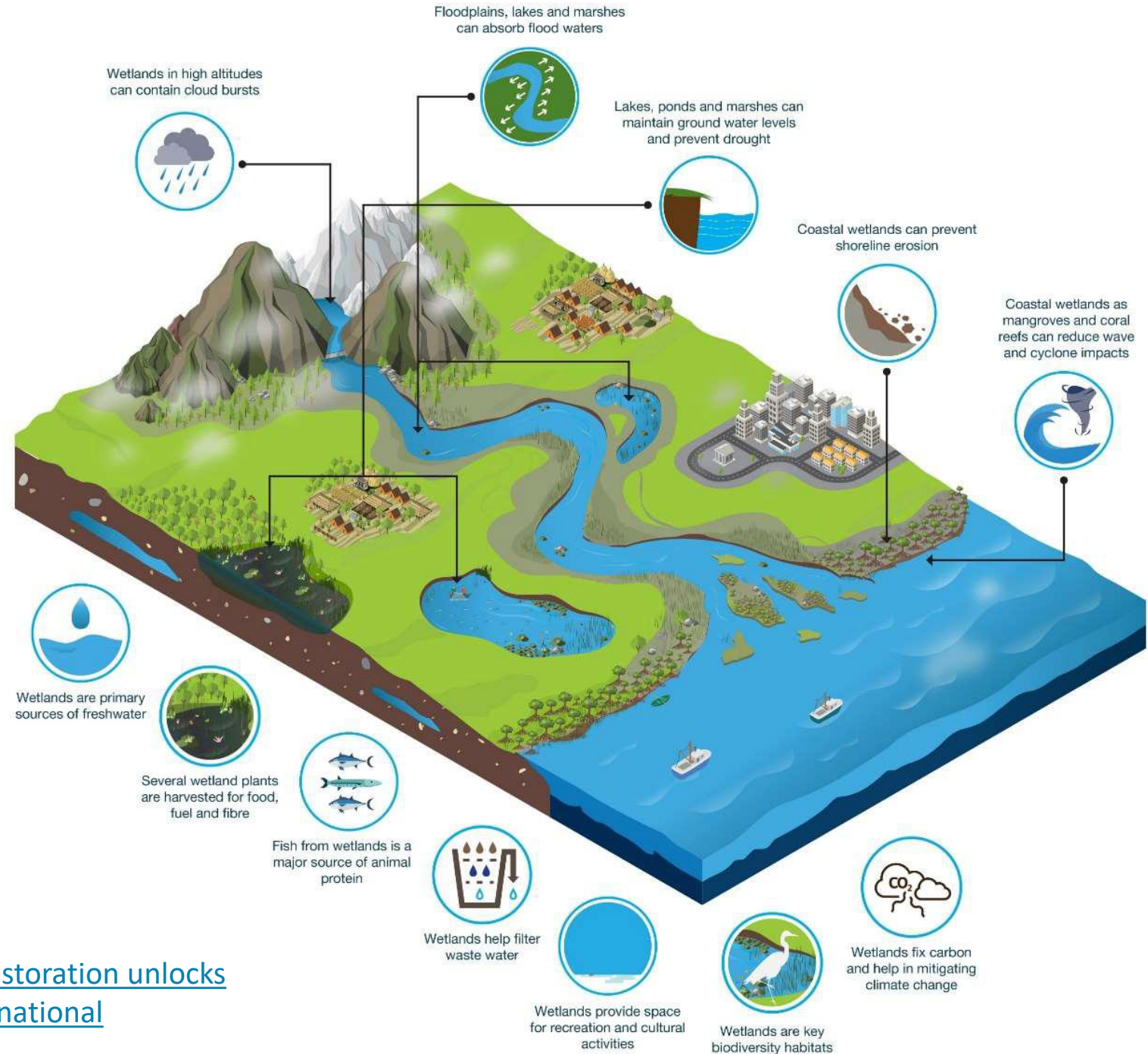
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Flood risk reduction

Through Room for the River program (Netherlands), 4,400 ha of extra floodplain area was added along the Rhine river, lowering the 1:1250 per year flood levels by 0.3m on average.



More information: [Investment in river and wetland restoration unlocks economic benefits, finds major study - Wetlands International](#)

Societal benefits of large-scale river and wetland restoration

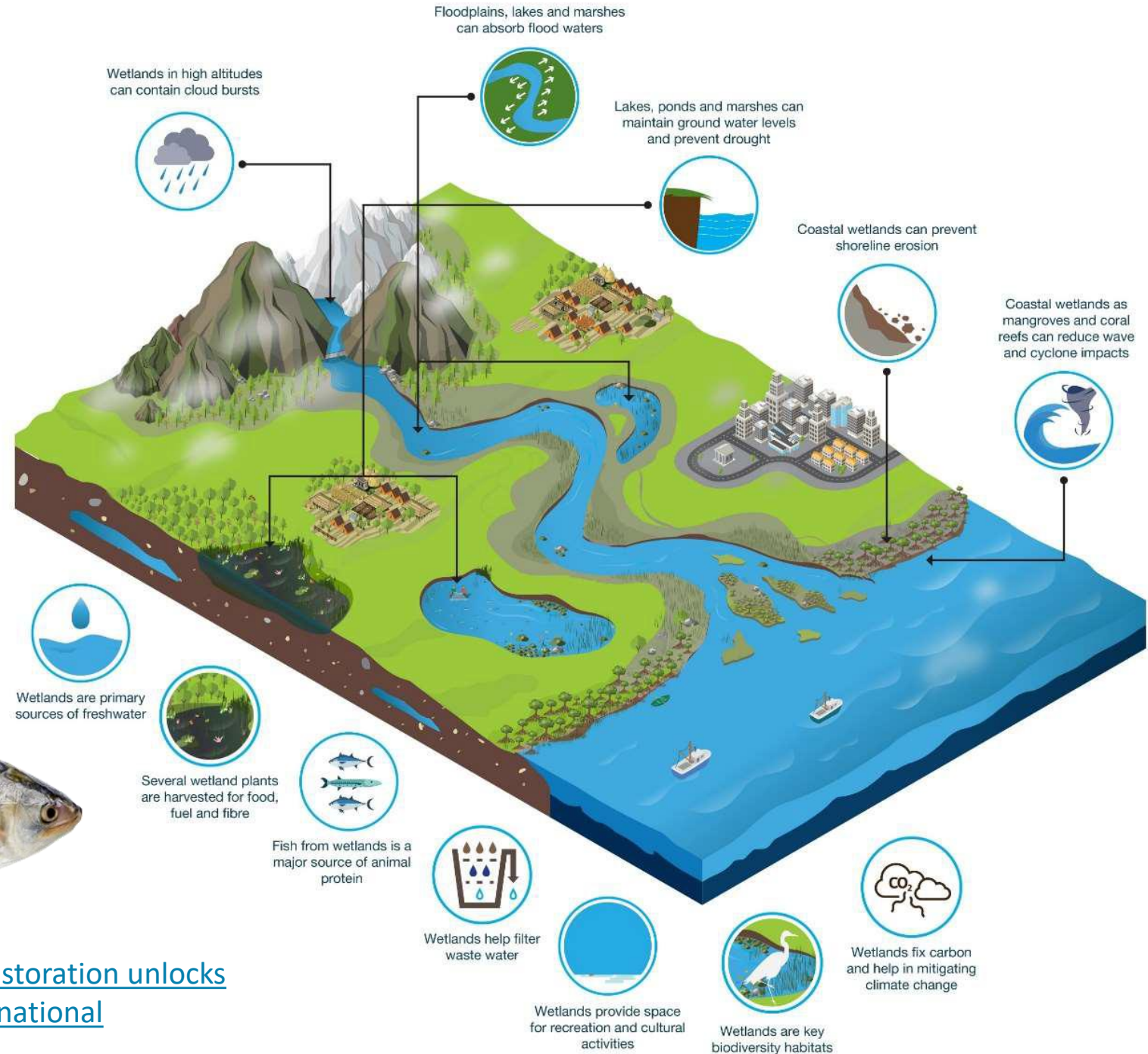
Speed et al., 2026

Food security

In Bangladesh's Hail Haor wildlife sanctuary, managed fish refuges and seasonal closures of the wetland increased fish catch by about 88% and raised fish consumption among poorer households.

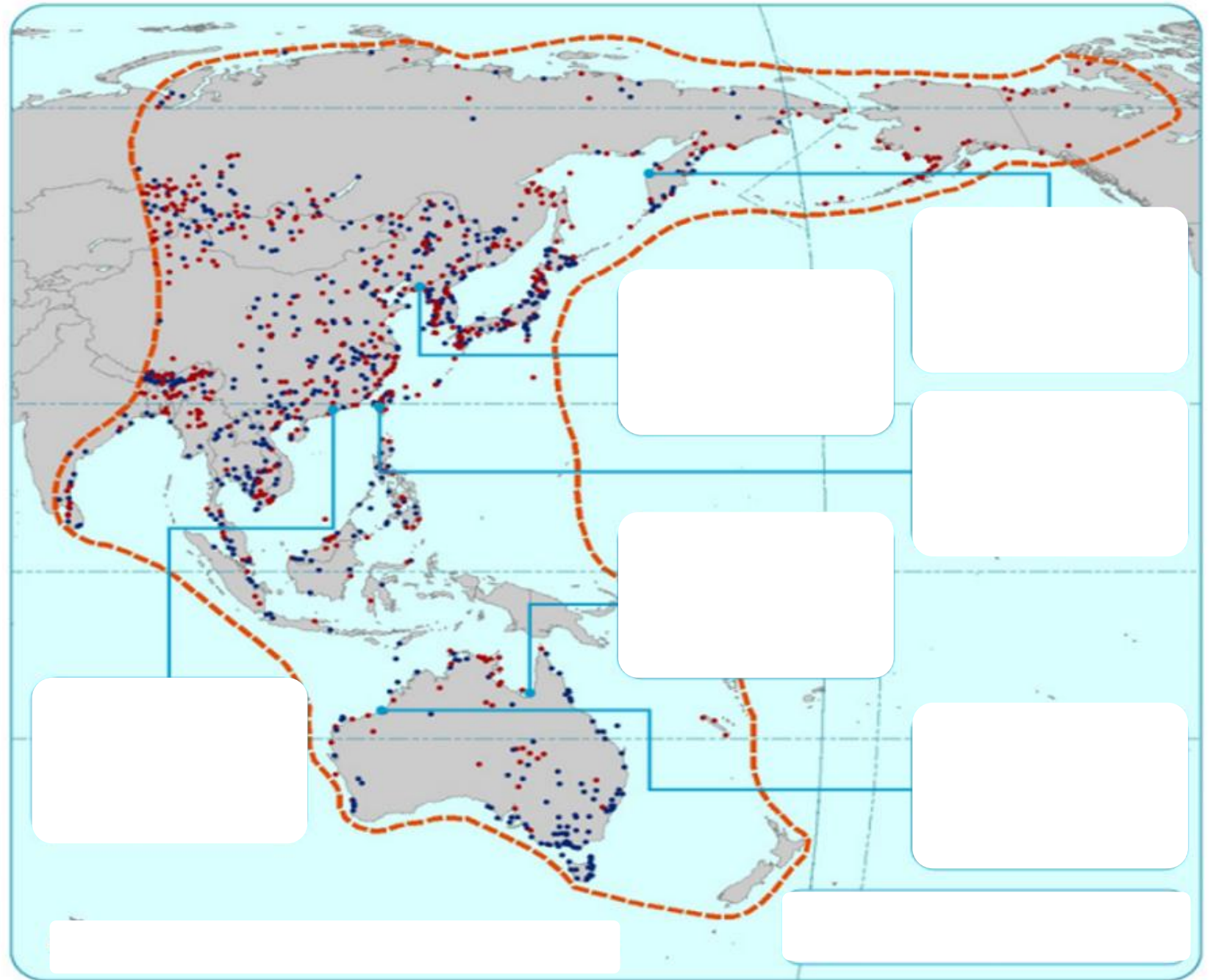


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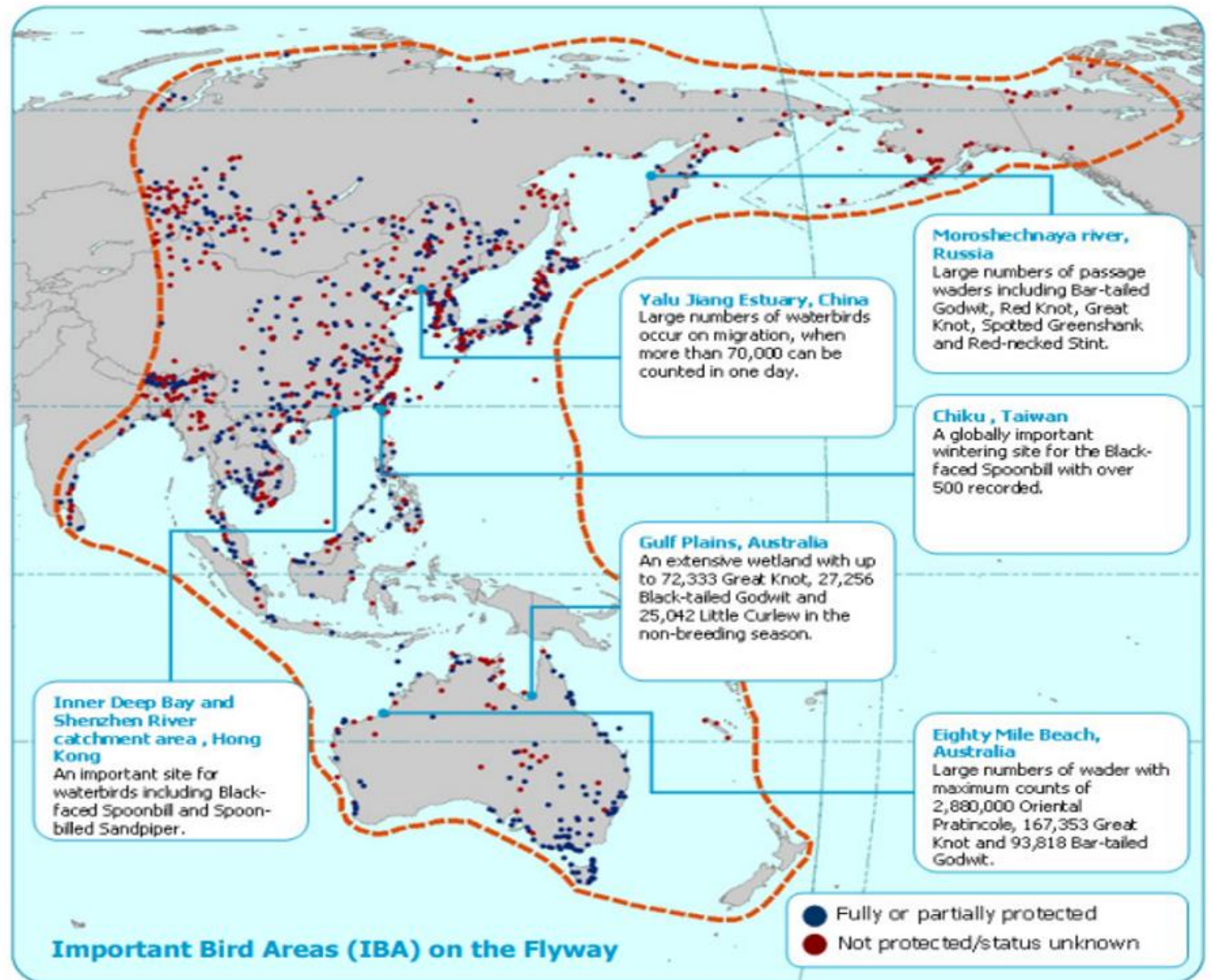


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What do you
see?



East Asian Australasian Flyway



Source: Birdlife International



NOT
EVALUATED

DATA
DEFICIENT

LEAST
CONCERN

NEAR
THREATENED

VULNERABLE

ENDANGERED



**< CRITICALLY
ENDANGERED >**

EXTINCT
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EXTINCT

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A waterbird
doesn't
experience a
wetland as an
isolated national
asset.

Spoon-billed Sandpiper

Credit, Gichan Ryu, Birds of the World

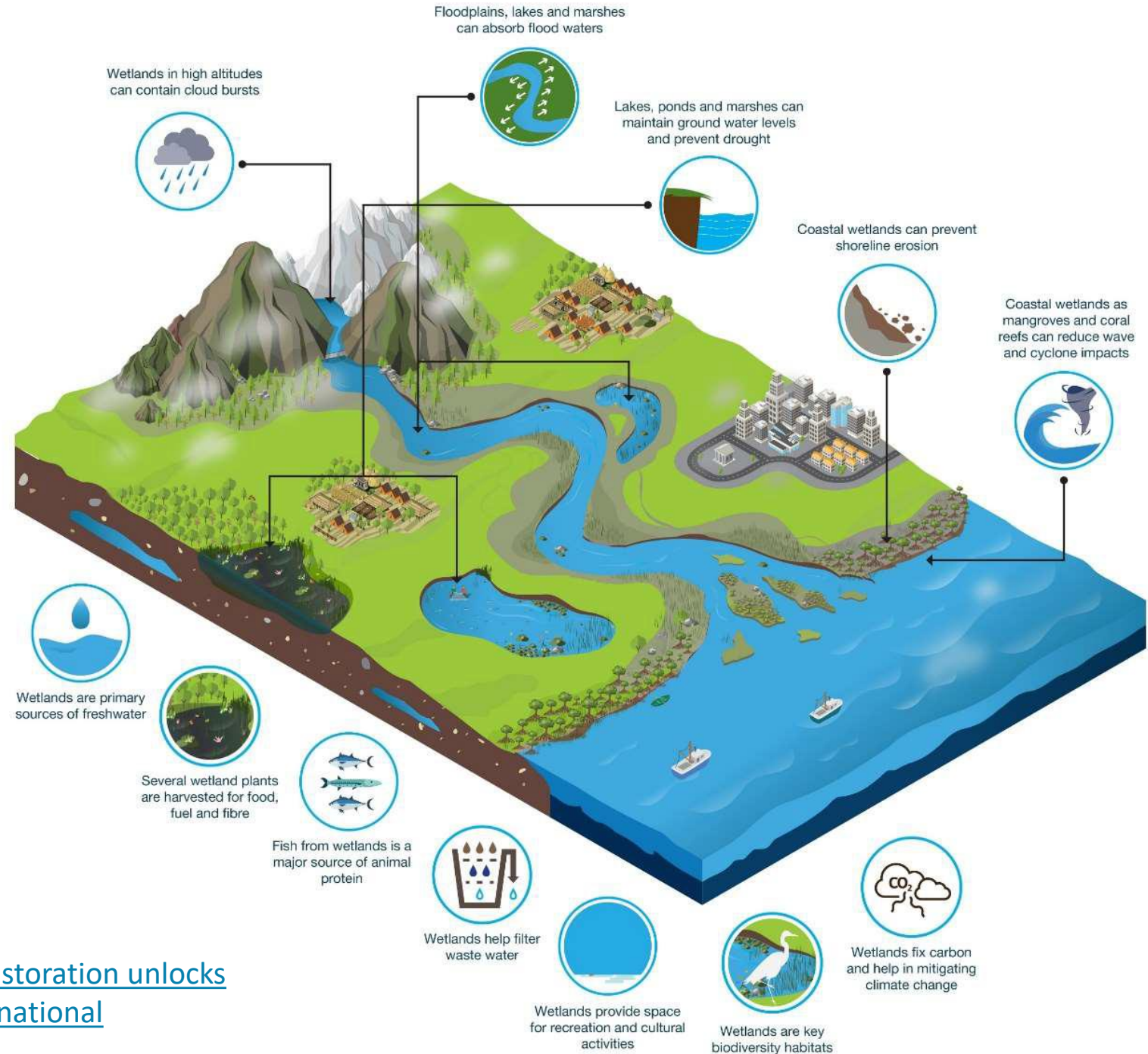
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Biodiversity

At East Dongting Lake (middle Yangtze River, China), floodplain restoration through changes to dykes yielded higher wintering waterbird richness, density and diversity.

More information: [Investment in river and wetland restoration unlocks economic benefits, finds major study - Wetlands International](#)



Multidimensional approach to climate

Flyways play a strategic role.
They link individual sites and
landscapes into transboundary
ecological systems



The value of an adaptation pathway lies not only in the risks it helps reduce, but also in the wider benefits it can create.

Discussion

When you think about the climate risks facing your country, which wetland ecosystems do you see playing a role in adaptation?

Which climate challenges can they help address?

What other challenges can they address?

How can we better reflect the role of wetland ecosystems in national adaptation planning?

What does it take to move from recognising their value to actually implementing and financing wetlands at scale?

Societal benefits of large-scale river and wetland restoration

Speed et al., 2026

Managing trade-offs

- Early and effective stakeholder engagement
- Balancing the long-range vision with short-term support measures
- Understanding the timing of costs and benefits
- Recognising that different time horizons matter to different stakeholders
- Adopting a multi-benefit focus

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Thank you !

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