WATER BIRDS SANCTUARY. Candaba wetlands acts as a refuge for an average of 7,000 migratory birds escaping the winter season annually. However, land conversion and climate change have gradually reduced the number of migratory species nesting in this ecological habitat from 64 species observed in 2016, to just 16 species counted during the recently concluded Asian Waterbird Census.

More than a wintering area for birds, our wetlands act as the "kidney of the earth," filtering chemicals and toxic substances from the water before it drains into the sea.

During the recent celebration of World Wetlands Day, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources called for the protection of these vital ecosystems, reminding people to stop draining the wetlands and not to treat them as "wastelands".

Based on studies, the total loss of natural wetlands around the world is estimated to be 54 to 57 percent. This is a significant figure, considering that wetlands continuously remove and store atmospheric carbon, helping stave off global warming and mitigate the effects of climate change.

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