



Introduction

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Chapter 2: Forest and Wildlife Resources

Chapter 2: Forest and Wildlife Resources

Introduction

Forests are an important resource for any country. They not only provide a habitat to various organisms but are also the primary producers of all resources on which all the other living beings depend.

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Flora and Fauna in India

India is known for its rich biodiversity. The term 'biodiversity' is used to describe various life forms which are found on the Earth. This includes flora, fauna and various ecosystems in which species live or depend on one another.

Because of deforestation, the demand for hides and horns of animals and for medicinal plants, commercialisation etc., many species of plants and animals are on the verge of extinction at present.

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Flora and Fauna in India

According to their present numbers, various species of plants and animals can be categorised into the following divisions:

Normal Species: Those species whose numbers are considered normal for their survival are known as normal species. Some examples are sal, pine, rodents and cattle.

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Extinct Species: Extinct species are those species of plants and animals which cannot be found in the wild or in captivity in areas where they may occur. For example, the cheetah in India and the dodo bird in the world have become extinct.

Endangered Species: Species which are facing a grave threat to their lives and are in danger of becoming extinct are known as endangered species. Black buck and Indian rhino are examples of such species.

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Vulnerable Species: These species can become endangered if positive steps are not taken to improve their numbers. Desert fox and Asiatic elephants are examples of such species.

Rare Species: Species which are very uncommon or scarce in numbers are called rare species. They can become vulnerable or endangered if their numbers continue to decline. Some examples of this species are wild Asiatic buffalo, hornbill and desert fox.

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Endemic Species: These kinds of species are only found at a particular region, range or location in the world. Andaman wild pig and Nicobar pigeon are examples of such species.

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Factors Leading to the Depletion of Flora and Fauna

Factors which have contributed to the decline in various species of plants and animals:

- The Indian forests were greatly damaged during the colonial period. The British brought many areas under cultivation to earn revenues. The expansion of railways led to the destruction of huge chunks of forests. Reckless mining and commercial forestry have further led to the destruction of forests.

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Factors Leading to the Depletion of Flora and Fauna

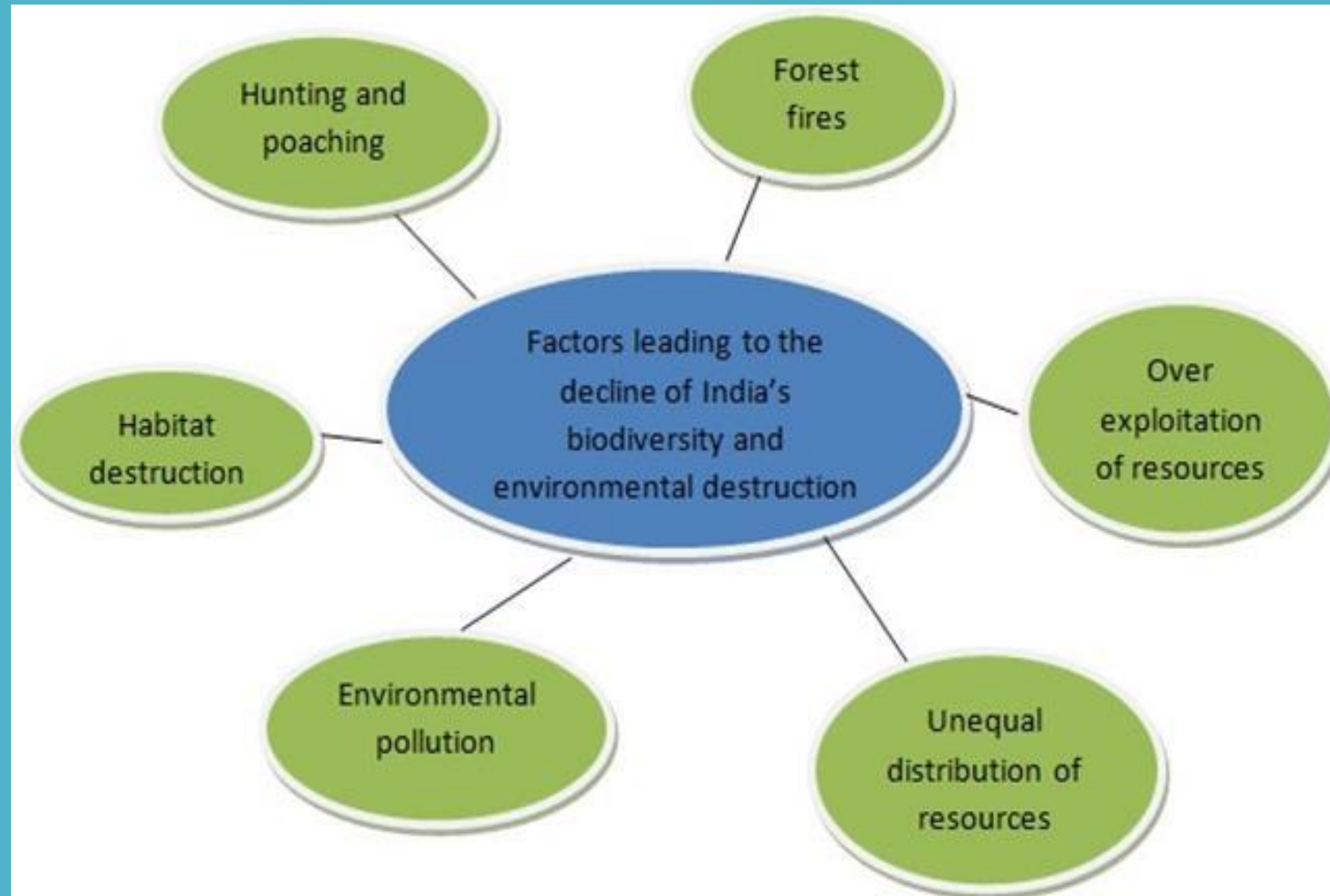
- In the post-independence period, the expansion of cultivation continued. This also led to the destruction of forests and consequently the depletion of various species.
- Many river valley projects have resulted in the loss of forest lands. For example, the Narmada Sagar Project in Madhya Pradesh has resulted in the reduction of forest cover of the region.

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Factors Leading to the Depletion of Flora and Fauna

- **Uncontrolled mining has resulted in deforestation. Mining not only disturbs the habitat of many species but also blocks the migration route of several animals. For example, dolomite mining has threatened the tigers in the Buxa Tiger Reserve in West Bengal.**
- **According to many environmentalists, the collection of fuel wood and the grazing of animals have also depleted the forest ecosystems.**

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Conservation of Forest and Wildlife in India:

- Conservation is vital since it will help us to protect our environment and protect our ecosystem which in turn helps to preserve the genetic diversity that the ecosystem has.
- The Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act was implemented in 1972, which made various provisions for protecting habitats.

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Rhino and deer in Kaziranga National Park

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Conservation of Forest and Wildlife in India:

- The central government also announced several projects for protecting specific animals, which were gravely threatened, including the tiger, the one horned rhinoceros, the Kashmir stag or hangul, three types of crocodiles – fresh water crocodile, saltwater crocodile and the Gharial are some of the animals. Under the Wildlife Act of 1980 and 1986, several hundred butterflies, moths, beetles, and one dragonfly have been added to the list of protected species.
- The government has also provided partial or full legal protection to animals such as Indian elephants, black buck, snow leopard etc. to protect them from extinction.

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Types of Forests in India:

Forests in India are controlled by the Indian Forest Department, which has divided forests into

- **Reserved Forests:** In India, more than half of the total forest land has been declared as reserved forests.
- **Protected Forests:** Protected forests are protected from any further destruction of forest cover.
- **Unclassed Forests:** This class of forests include the forests and wetlands which are owned by the Government, privately or jointly by communities.

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Types of Forests in India:

Reserved and protected forests are also known as permanent forest estates. Madhya Pradesh has the largest area under permanent forests.

Biodiversity is the variety of life found on the Earth. An ecosystem which has rich biodiversity has several species of plants and animals which are closely connected to each other through biotic and abiotic factors.

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Types of Forests in India:

Biodiversity helps in boosting the productivity of the ecosystems in which each species plays an important role. For example, a large number of plant species results in greater varieties of crops. Similarly, many microorganisms play an important role in biodiversity. They fertilise the soil and play a role in recycling of many minerals (e.g. carbon) in the environment. This helps in sustaining and improving human lives.

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Conservation of Forests and Wildlife in India:

Efforts of the Government towards Protecting Forests and Wildlife in India:

- In 1972, the Indian Wildlife Act was passed. In this Act, various provisions were made to preserve the endangered species of animals by banning hunting, restricting trade in wildlife and providing legal protection to wildlife habitats.



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Conservation of Forests and Wildlife in India:

- As a result, many wildlife sanctuaries and national parks were established by the state and the Central Government to preserve the habitat of many wild animals.
- Many animals such as tigers, one-horned rhinoceros, saltwater crocodile, black buck and snow leopard have been give protection against hunting and trading in the country.

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Conservation of Forests and Wildlife in India:

- Many conservation projects of the Government are now focusing on the preservation of biodiversity of the country rather than just protecting certain species of plants and animals.

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Role of Communities towards Conservation:

- In India, apart from the Government and Forest Departments, various communities have played an important role in conserving and protecting forests. The Chipko Movement was an example of communities coming together to save forests from the reckless felling by private contractors.
- Sacred groves are an example of the conservation of forests by tribal and village communities. Many forest areas are considered sacred by these communities, and any kind of activity or human interference in these patches of forests is banned.

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Role of Communities towards Conservation:



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Role of Communities towards Conservation:

- Similarly, villagers of the five villages in the Alwar district have declared 1,200 hectares of forests protected and do not allow any kind of interference, hunting or poaching in the forest area.
- In Sariska Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan, villagers have fought against mining by citing the Wildlife Protection Act.

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Role of Communities towards Conservation:

- Mahua is worshipped by the the Mundas and the Santhal of Chota Nagpur region while tamarind and mango are worshipped by the tribes of Odisha and Bihar during weddings. In Indian Hindu society, peepal trees is considered sacred.
- Blackbuck, peacocks and nilgai are seen as an integral part of the Bishnoi villages in Rajasthan and aren't harmed or killed.

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Role of Communities towards Conservation:

- **Joint Forest Management is a programme in India which involves local communities in the management of forest lands. In this programme, local village communities undertake management of degraded parts of forests which are managed by the Forest Department. In return for their help, the communities are allowed to have a share in non-timber and timber products which are harvested by the joint efforts of the local communities and the Forest Departments. Odisha was the first state in India to pass the Joint Forest Management programme.**

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Role of Communities towards Conservation:

- Beej Bachao Andolan in Tehri and Navdanya has promoted people to stop using synthetic chemicals as sufficient crop harvest can be produced even without the use of chemical fertilizers.

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