

Class: IX

Subject: Social Science (087) - Geography

Chapter: 5 Natural Vegetation and Wildlife

Notes

- India is one of the 12 mega biodiversity countries in the world.
- With about 47,000 plant species, India occupies 10th place in the world and fourth in Asia in plant diversity.
- There are about 15,000 flowering plants in India which account for 6% of the world's total number of flowering plants. The country has many non-flowering plants such as ferns, algae and fungi.
- India also has 89,000 species of animals as well as a rich variety of fish in the fresh and marine waters.
- Natural vegetation refers to a plant community which has grown naturally without human aid and has been left undisturbed by humans for a long time. This is termed as **virgin vegetation**.
- The term **flora** is used to denote plants of a particular region or period.
- The species of animals are referred to as **fauna**.

Types Of Vegetation

Based on the major forest types, India has following types of vegetation.

1. Tropical Evergreen Forests
2. Tropical Deciduous Forests
3. Tropical Thorn Forests and Scrubs
4. Montane Forests
5. Mangrove Forests

Tropical evergreen forest or equatorial forests

- These forests are found in the area having more than 200cm of rainfall with the short dry season
- Trees have broad leaves and hardwood
- **Trees** – Mahogany, ebony, Rosewood, rubber, cinchona
- **Wildlife** – Crocodile, elephants, one horned rhinoceros, monkey, lemur, deer, alligator, hippopotamus, scorpions and snails
- **Regions** – These forests are found in heavy rainfall areas of Western ghats, Lakshadweep, Andaman, Nicobar Islands and Assam and Tamil Nadu coast.

Tropical Deciduous Forests or Monsoon forest

- They are not as dense as evergreen forest
- They shed their leaves about 6-8 weeks during the dry season
- On the basis of the availability of water these forests are divided into two categories i.e., Moist & Dry deciduous forests

a) Moist deciduous forests

- These forests are found in the area of 100 cm to 200 cm of rainfall
- **Trees** – Teak, bamboo, shisham, sandalwood and sal, khair, mulberry are the common trees.
- **Regions** – Northeastern states, Foothills of Himalayas, Orissa, Chattisgarh.

b) Dry deciduous forests

- These forests are found in areas having rainfall between 100 cm and 70 cm
- **Regions** – These are found wetter parts of the plateau, Bihar, UP
- **Trees** – Teak, sal, peepal, Neem
- **Common animals** – Lion, tiger, pig, deer, elephant, snakes, tortoises.

The Thorn Forests and Scrubs

- Rainfall less than 70 cm
- Plant have long roots and succulent stem, tiny, waxy and leathery leaves,
- **Regions** – North Western part of the country, semi-arid areas of Gujarat Haryana, Rajasthan some part of Madhya Pradesh.
- **Plants** – Acacia, palm, euphorbias, cacti, Babul, kikar
- **Common animals** – Rats, mice, fox, wolf, horses, camel, snake, lizards

Montane Forests

- Trees are tall, straight and long about 30m and more
- Trees leaves are needle like-shaped
- At higher altitudes, Mosses and lichens are the tundra vegetation.
- Found between a height of 1000 and 2000 metres.
- **Regions** – Southern slopes of Himalaya, North- East India
- **Trees** – Deodar, spruce, cedar, fir, pine.
- **Animals** – Panda, deer, yak, snow leopard, squirrels, Shaggy horned wild ibex, bear, red panda, sheep and goat with thick hair

Mangrove Forests or Tidal forests

- These forests are found in areas of the coast or marshy regions.
- **Regions** – the delta of the Ganga, the Mahanadi, the Krishna, the Godavari, and the Kaveri,
- **Sundari trees** are found in the Ganga-Brahmaputra Delta which provide durable hard Timber
- **Trees** – Palm, coconut, agar, also growing in some part of the delta.
- **Wildlife** – Royal Bengal tiger is a famous animal in this forest. Turtles, crocodile gharials and snakes are also found in these Forests.

Wildlife

- Elephants are found in the hot wet forests of Assam, Karnataka and Kerala.
- One-horned rhinoceroses are found in Assam and West Bengal.
- Rann of Kachchh is the habitat for wild donkey whereas the Thar Desert is the habitat for camels.
- The natural habitat of the Indian lion is the Gir forest in Gujarat.
- Tigers are found in the forests of Madhya Pradesh, the Sundarbans of West Bengal and the Himalayan region.
- Ladakh's freezing high altitudes are home to yak, the shaggy horned wild ox, the Tibetan antelope, the bharal (blue sheep), wild sheep, and the kiang (Tibetan wild donkey).
- In the rivers, lakes and coastal areas, turtles, crocodiles and gharials are found.
- Peacocks, pheasants, ducks, parakeets, cranes and pigeons are some of the birds inhabiting the forests and wetlands of the country.

Cause of Major Threat to flora and fauna

About 1,300 plant species are endangered and 20 species are extinct. The main causes of this major threat to nature are:

- Hunting for commercial purposes
- Pollution due to chemical and industrial waste
- Rapidly cutting of the forests for cultivation and habitation

Government Initiative to Protect Flora and Fauna

The government has taken many steps to protect the flora and fauna of our country.

1. 18 biosphere reserves have been set up in India to protect flora and fauna. 10 out of these have been included in the world network of biosphere reserves.
2. Financial and technical assistance has been provided to many botanical gardens by the government since 1992.
3. Project Tiger, Project Rhino, Project Great Indian Bustard and many other eco-developmental projects have been introduced by the government.
4. 103 National Parks, 535 Wildlife Sanctuaries and Zoological gardens are set up to take care of natural heritage.