

## Forest And Wildlife Resources

### 1. Interdependence of Life:

- We share the planet with a vast diversity of life, from tiny microbes to giant whales.
- All living things, including humans, are part of a complex web of life (ecosystem).
- We depend on this ecosystem for essential things like clean air, water, and food.
- Forests are vital because they are primary producers, meaning they form the base of the food chain.

### 2. India's Rich Biodiversity:

- India is one of the most biologically diverse countries in the world.
- Many plant and animal species are unique to specific regions within India.
- We often take this diversity for granted, but it's under threat.

### 3. Why Conserve?

- Conservation is crucial because wildlife populations and forests are declining rapidly.
- Conservation protects our life support systems (water, air, and soil).
- It also helps preserve the variety of genes within species, which is important for their survival and for things like agriculture and fisheries.

### 4. Conservation Efforts in India:

- In response to declining wildlife, India implemented the Wildlife (Protection) Act in 1972.
- This Act:
  - Bans hunting of endangered species.
  - Protects their habitats.
  - Restricts trade in wildlife.
- India has established national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.
- Projects have been launched to protect specific endangered animals like tigers, rhinos, and elephants.

### 5. Shifting Focus:

- Conservation efforts are now moving beyond just protecting a few species.
- The focus is on protecting entire ecosystems and their biodiversity.
- Even insects and plants are now being included in conservation plans.
- The Wildlife Act now protects hundreds of butterflies, moths, beetles, and plant species.

### Managing India's Forests:

- India's forests and wildlife are mainly owned or managed by the government (Forest Department).
- They are classified into three categories:
  - **Reserved Forests:**
    - Most valuable for conservation.
    - Over half of India's total forest land.
  - **Protected Forests:**
    - Safeguarded from further decline.
    - About one-third of India's total forest area.
  - **Unclassed Forests:**
    - Belong to both government and private individuals/communities.
    - Often include wastelands.
- **Permanent Forest Estates:**
  - Reserved and protected forests together make up the permanent forest estates.
  - Purpose:
    - Producing timber and other forest products.
    - Protection of the environment.
- **Distribution of Forest Types:**
  - **Madhya Pradesh:** Highest percentage of permanent forests (75%).
  - **High Reserved Forest Percentage:** Jammu & Kashmir, Andhra Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Maharashtra.
  - **High Protected Forest Percentage:** Bihar, Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan.
  - **High Unclassed Forest Percentage:** North-eastern states and parts of Gujarat (managed by local communities).

### Community Involvement in Conservation:

- **Traditional Communities:** Many traditional communities in India live in and depend on forests.
- **Local Efforts:**
  - Communities are actively working to conserve forests, often alongside government officials.
  - Examples:
    - **Sariska Tiger Reserve:** Villagers fought against mining.
    - **Alwar district:** Villagers created their own protected area ("Bhairodev Dakav Sonchuri").
- **Chipko Movement:**
  - Successfully resisted deforestation in the Himalayas.
  - Showed the effectiveness of community afforestation with native species.
- **Sustainable Farming:**
  - Groups like Beej Bachao Andolan and Navdanya promote ecological farming.

- They demonstrate that farming can be diverse and productive without chemicals.
- **Joint Forest Management (JFM):**
  - Started in Odisha in 1988.
  - Involves local communities in managing and restoring degraded forests.
  - Communities form institutions to protect forests.
  - In return, they get benefits like non-timber forest products and a share of timber.
- **Key Takeaway:**
  - Local communities must be included in natural resource management for successful conservation.
  - We need to prioritize people-centric, environmentally friendly, and economically beneficial activities.



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