

Chapter-5 Geography Natural Vegetation and Wildlife

- With over 47,000 plant species, India occupies tenth place in the world and fourth in Asia in plant diversity.
- India has 89,000 species of animals as well as a rich variety of fish in its fresh and marine waters.
- Plant community which grows naturally with no human help and is not disturbed by humans for a long time is termed as natural vegetation.
- Virgin vegetation which are purely Indian are known as endemic species and those which have come from outside India are termed as exotic plants.

Relief

- The nature of land influences the type of vegetation.
- Different types of soils provide basis for different types of vegetation.

Climate

- The character and extent of vegetation are mainly determined by temperature along with humidity in the air, precipitation and soil.
- Period of exposure to sunlight varies for different plants leading to their different rates of growth.
- Areas of heavy rainfall have more dense vegetation as compared to other areas of less rainfall.
- Forests are renewable resources and play a major role in enhancing the quality of the environment.
- Vegetation in most parts of India has been modified at some places, or replaced or degraded by human occupancy.

Ecosystem

- All the plants and animals in an area are interdependent and interrelated to each other in their physical environment, thus forming an ecosystem.
- A very large ecosystem on land having distinct type of vegetation and animal life is called a biome.

Types of Vegetation

- The major types of vegetation in India are Tropical Rainforests, Tropical Deciduous Forests, Tropical Thorn Forests and Scrubs, Montane Forests and Mangrove Forests.
- With warm and wet climate all year round the Tropical Rainforests have luxurious trees, shrubs and creepers.
- A large variety of animals are found in the rainforests.
- The most widespread forests of India — the Tropical Deciduous Forests — are also known as the Monsoon Forests.
- On the basis of the availability of water, these forests are further divided into moist and dry deciduous forests.
- The leaves of vegetation in Thorn Forests and Scrubs are mostly thick and small to minimize evaporation and have succulent stems to conserve water.

- Montane forests have a succession of natural vegetation belts in the same order as we see from the tropical to the Tundra region.
- Wet temperate forests are found between a height of 1000 and 2000 metres while temperate grasslands are found at higher elevations.
- At 3600 metres above sea level temperate forests and grasslands give way to alpine vegetation.
- The mangrove tidal forests are found in the areas of coasts influenced by tides.
- Dense mangroves are the common varieties with roots of the plants submerged underwater.

Wildlife

- India has more than 1200 species of birds, 2500 species of fish and between 5 to 8 per cent of the world's amphibians, reptiles and mammals.
- India is the only country in the world that has both tigers and lions.
- The Himalayas have a large range of animals that survive the bitter cold.
- Every species of animal has a role to play in the ecosystem; hence conservation is essential.
- Hunting and pollution is causing threat to animal species.
- To protect the flora and fauna of the country, the government has taken many steps.
- Fourteen biosphere reserves have been set up in the country to protect flora and fauna.
- 89 National Parks, 49 Wildlife Sanctuaries and Biosphere Reserves have been set up to take care of natural heritage.