

Key Terms to remember

- Natural vegetation refers to a plant community that has been left undisturbed over a long time, individual species to adjust themselves to climate and soil conditions.
- Social forestry means the management and protection of forests and afforestation on barren lands with the purpose of helping in the environmental, social and rural development.
- Social forestry is classified into three categories. These are Urban forestry, Rural forestry and Farm forestry.

Tropical Evergreen and Semi Evergreen Forests

- These forests are found in the western slope of the Western Ghats, NE and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- They are found in warm and humid areas with an annual precipitation of over 200 cm.
- Tropical evergreen forests are well stratified. In these forests, trees reach great heights up to 60 m or above.
- There is no definite time for trees to shed their leaves. As such these forests appear green all the year round.
- Species found in these forests include rosewood, mahogany, aini, ebony, etc.

Tropical Deciduous Forests

- These are the most widespread forests in India. They are also called the monsoon forests.
- They spread over regions which receive rainfall between 70-200 cm.
- These forests are further divided into moist and dry deciduous.
- Teak, sal, shisham, hurra, mahua, amla, semul, kusum, and sandalwood etc.
- As the dry season begins, the trees shed their leaves completely.

Tropical Thorn Forests

- Tropical thorn forests occur in the areas which receive rainfall less than 50 cm.
- These consist of a variety of grasses and shrubs.
- They are found in semi-arid areas of south west Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat.
- In these forests, plants remain leafless for most part of the year.
- Important species found are babool, ber, and wild date palm, khair, neem, khejri, palas, etc.
- Tussocky grass grows upto a height of 2 m as the under growth.

Montane Forests

- In mountainous areas, increasing altitude leads to a corresponding change in vegetation.
- Deciduous forests are found in the foothills of the Himalayas.
- Wet temperate type of forests between an altitude of 1,000-2,000 m.
- In the higher hill ranges evergreen broad leaf trees such as oak are found.
- Between 1,500-1,750 m, pine forests are found, Chir Pine as a very useful commercial tree.
- Blue pine and spruce appear at altitudes of 2,225-3,048 m.
- At higher altitudes, mosses and lichens form part of the tundra vegetation.

Littoral and Swamp Forests

- Mangroves grow along the coasts in the tidal creeks, mud flats and estuaries.
- They consist of a number of salt-tolerant species of plants.
- These forests give shelter to a wide variety of birds.
- They are highly developed in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Sunderbans of West Bengal.
- These forests too, are being encroached upon, and hence, need conservation.

Forests and Life

- To a vast number of tribal people, the forest is a home, a livelihood, their very existence.
- Forest provides them food, fruits of all kinds, edible leaves, honey, nourishing roots and wild game.
- Forests are the source of sustenance and livelihood for tribal communities.
- Tribal districts are generally rich in forest cover.

Some of the important reasons of the declining of wildlife are as follows:

- Forest resources are exploited due to Industrial and technological advancement.
- More and more forests were cleared for agriculture, human settlement, roads, mining, etc.
- Lopping for fodder and fuelwood and removal of small timber by the local people.
- Grazing by domestic cattle caused an adverse effect on wildlife and its habitat.
- Hunting was taken up as a sport by the elite and now commercial poaching is rampant.
- Incidence of forest fire.

Wildlife Conservation In India

- In 1972, a comprehensive Wildlife Act was enacted,
- 101 National parks and 553 wildlife sanctuaries were established in the country.
- Special schemes like Project Tiger (1973) and Project Elephant (1992) have been launched.
- Crocodile Breeding Project, Project Hangul and conservation of Himalayan Musk deer have also been launched by the Government of India.
- Special steps have been initiated such as 'Man and Biosphere Programme'.
- There are 18 Biosphere Reserves in India