

Conservation of Plants and Animals

Biodiversity

❖ INTRODUCTION

If you look around yourself, you may get to see several different kinds of plants and animals. A typical neighbourhood park may be home to a variety of flowers, each differing in size, shape, colour, and smell. The kind of trees found here could range from big trees such as the banyan tree to small bushes that may have been planted to border the pavement. Biodiversity refers to existence of a wide range of different types of organisms in a given place at a given time.

Uses of Biodiversity

1. Source of food and improved varieties: Biodiversity is used to modern agriculture in three ways as a source of

- (a) New crops
- (b) Material for breeding improved varieties
- (c) New biodegradable pesticides.

2. Drugs & Medicines: e.g. Morphine: *Papaver somniferum* [Analgesic],

Quinine- *Chincona ledgeriana* [Treatment of malaria],

Taxol- *Taxus brevifolia* [Anticancer drug].

3. Aesthetic and cultural benefits: e.g. *Ocimum sanctum*- Tulsi,

Ficus religiosa- Pipal, *Prosopis cineraria*- Khejri.

4. Ecosystem services

Project Tiger: 'Project Tiger' is one of the successful operations for conserving wildlife in India.

There were about 40,000 Bengal tigers in 1910. There was a sharp decline in their numbers to 1827 in 1972. The main reasons for the extinction of tigers are hunting, deforestation and taming of rivers for human needs. Realizing this decline, a project named 'Project Tiger' was initiated in 01 April 1973. The project was funded by the World-Wide Fund for Nature.

The project focussed on protecting tiger habitats by creating sanctuaries and extending the existing ones. Under this project, there are 18 tiger reserves in India.

1. Jim Corbett National Park (Uttaranchal)
2. Periyar National Park (Kerala)
3. Ranthambore National Park (Rajasthan)
4. Kanha National Park (Madhya Pradesh)
5. Sariska National Park (Rajasthan)
6. Sunderban National Park (West Bengal)