

## The Biodiversity of India

India's biological diversity includes a great variety of plant and animal species, their genetic variability and the organisation of species into different wilderness ecosystems. An incredible diversity of lifeforms are present in the wild and in the wide variety of traditional crops and livestock that people have nurtured over thousands of years in our country.

Understanding what is biodiversity? Who uses it? How it is degraded? And appreciating the various methods for it's conservation, are essential questions that are keys to preserving this valuable asset.

Biodiversity is the essence of future development of new pharmaceuticals, industrial products and agricultural growth. Most of these plant and animal species are found in undisturbed ecosystems in different parts of India. The hotspots of biodiversity are located in the evergreen forests of the Western Ghats, Northeast India and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Equally valuable is the biodiversity in coral reefs and wetlands. Most of the plant and animal diversity of less disturbed ecosystems is now found only in our National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries. These are the last refuges of this great natural heritage.

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Erach Bharucha, Pune, 2001





Elephants need wide tracts of forests for their survival. As corridors between forests disappear due to development the animals come into conflict with local people

## Mammals



Blackbuck India's only true antelope of open plains is now threatened by the conversion of its habitat into agricultural land.

The tiger that symbolises India's jungles is now under threat of extinction due to habitat loss and poaching for its skin and bones that are used in Chinese medicine.



The wildass lives only in the Little Rann of Kutch



## Birds



The white eyed buzzard is an important apex predator of the world of birds. These species are under threat due to the rampant increase in the use of insecticides that they ingest through the food chain



The great Indian Bustard is one of our most threatened grassland species

## Reptiles



The crocodiles once a common species of our rivers lakes and marshes is now rare



A majority of our snakes such as the vine snake are non-poisonous

## Amphibia



The Western Ghats are home to a variety of tree frogs