

More Introduction on Wildlife

Wildlife helps in maintaining ecological balance of nature. Killing of carnivores leads to increase in population of herbivores, which results in reduction of natural vegetation. Thus, wildlife provides stability to various processes of nature. Cleaning of our environment is possible because of scavengers and decomposers which feed upon the dead and convert them into nutrients and release energy back to nature increasing the fertility of the soil. Just as the present day cultivated plants and animals are derived from wildlife, new foods and medicines and other products may be obtained from wildlife in future.

Like its flora, India is also rich in its fauna. It has approximately 90,000 of animal species. The country has about 2,000 species of birds. They constitute 13% of the world's total. There are 2,546 species of fish, which account for nearly 12% of the world's stock. It also shares between 5 and 8 per cent of the world's amphibians, reptiles and mammals.

The elephants are the most majestic animals among the mammals. They are found in the hot wet forests of Assam, Karnataka and Kerala. One-horned rhinoceroses are the other animals, which live in swampy and marshy lands of Assam and West Bengal. Arid areas of the Rann of Kachchh and the Thar Desert are the habitat for wild ass and camels respectively. Indian bison, *nilgai* (blue bull), *chousingha* (four horned antelope), gazel and different species of deer are some other animals found in India. India is the only country in the world that has both tigers and lions. The natural habitat

of the Indian lion is the gir forest in Gujarat. Tigers are found in the forests of Madhya Pradesh the Sundarbans of West Bengal and the Himalayan region. Leopards too are members of the cat family. They are important among animals of prey.

The Himalayas harbour a hardy range of animals, which survive in extreme cold. Ladakh's freezing high altitudes are a home to yak, the shaggy horned wild ox weighing around one tonne, the Tibetan antelope, the bharal (blue sheep), wild sheep and the kiang (Tibetan wild ass). Furthermore, the ibex, bear, snow-leopard and very rare red panda are found in certain pockets.

In the rivers, lakes and coastal areas, turtles, crocodiles and gharials are found.

