

For XAT , CMAT , SNAP , MAT , IIFT Exam

NATURAL VEGETATION

- Natural vegetation refers to a plant community unaffected by man either directly or indirectly
- The term flora is used to denote plants of a particular region or period. Similarly, the species of animals are referred to as fauna
- According to India State of Forest Report 2011, the forest cover in India is 21.05 per cent.

TYPES OF VEGETATION

- The following major types of vegetation may be identified in India
 1. Tropical Evergreen Forests
 2. Tropical Deciduous Forests
 3. Tropical Thorn Forests and Scrubs
 4. Montane Forests
 5. Mangrove Forests

Tropical Evergreen Forests

- These forests are found in areas with 200 cm or more annual rainfall. The annual temperature is about more than 22°C and the average annual humidity exceeds 70 percent in this region
- These forests are restricted to heavy rainfall areas of the Western Ghats and the island Groups of Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar, upper parts of Assam and Tamil Nadu coast
- The most important trees are rubber, mahogany, ebony, rosewood, coconut, bamboo, cinchona, candel, palm, iron wood and cedar.
- The common animals found in these forests are elephants, monkeys, lemur and deer.
- The one horned rhinoceros are found in the jungles of Assam and West Bengal

Tropical Deciduous Forests

- These are the most **widespread forests of India.**
- These are found in the areas with 70 to 200cm. annual rainfall. These are called '**Monsoon Forests**'. The mean annual temperature of this region is about 27 °C
- The trees of these forests drop their leaves during the spring and early summer.
- On the basis of the availability of water, these forests are further divided into moist and dry deciduous
- The **moist deciduous forests** are found in areas receiving rainfall between 200 and 100 cm
- These forests mostly exist in the eastern part of the country –northeastern states, along the foothills of the Himalayas, Jharkhand, West Orissa and Chhattisgarh, and on the eastern slopes of the Western Ghats
- Teak is the most dominant species of this forest. Bamboos, sal, shisham, sandalwood, khair, kusum, arjun and mulberry are other commercially important species.
- The **dry deciduous forests** are found in areas having rainfall between 100 cm and 70 cm
- These forests are found in the rainier parts of the peninsular plateau and the plains of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. There are open stretches, in which teak, sal, peepal and neem grow. A large part of this region has been cleared for cultivation and some parts are used for grazing.

Tropical Thorn Forests and Scrubs

- The thorn forests are found in the regions which receive less than 70 cm of rainfall. They have low humidity and high temperature
- Trees are scattered and have long roots penetrating deep into the soil in order to get moisture. The stems are succulent to conserve water. Leaves are mostly thick and small to minimize evaporation
- This type of vegetation is found in the north-western part of the country including semi-arid areas of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana
- The animals found in these forests are rats, mice, rabbits, fox, wolf, tiger, lion, wild ass, horses and camels.
- Acacias, palms, euphorbias and cacti are the main plant species.

Mountain or Montane Forest

- In mountainous areas, the decrease in temperature with increasing altitude leads to the corresponding change in natural vegetation.
- As such, there is a succession of natural vegetation belts in the same order as we see from the tropical to the tundra region.
- The wet temperate type of forests are found between a height of 1000 and 2000 metres. Evergreen broad-leaf trees, such as oaks and chestnuts predominate.
- Between 1500 and 3000 metres, temperate forests containing coniferous trees, like pine, deodar, silver fir, spruce and cedar, are found. These forests cover mostly the southern slopes of the Himalayas, places having high altitude in southern and north-east India.
- At higher elevations, temperate grasslands are common.
- At high altitudes, generally, more than 3,600 metres above the sea level, temperate forests and grasslands give way to the Alpine vegetation. Silver fir, junipers, pines and birches are the common trees of these forests. However, they get progressively stunted as they approach the snow-line. Ultimately, through shrubs and scrubs, they merge into the Alpine grasslands. These are used extensively for grazing by nomadic tribes, like the Gujjars and the Bakarwals.
- At higher altitudes, mosses and lichens form part of tundra vegetation.
- The common animals found in these forests are Kashmir stag, spotted deer, wild sheep, jack rabbit, Tibetan antelope, yak, snow leopard, squirrels, Shaggy horn wild ibex, bear and rare red panda, sheep and goats with thick hair.

Mangrove Forests

- The mangrove tidal forests are found in the areas of coasts influenced by tides. Mud and silt get accumulated on these coasts
- The deltas of the Ganga, the Mahanadi, the Krishna, the Godavari and the Kaveri are covered by such vegetation
- The delta of the Ganga-Brahmaputra has the largest tidal forest. Sundari trees are found in this delta and Royal Bengal Tiger is the famous animal in these forests.