



1068C-H02

FOREST AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES



Module-2

Conservation of Forest and Wildlife in India:

Conservation in the background of rapid decline in wildlife population and forestry has become essential. But why do we need to conserve our forests and wildlife? Conservation preserves the ecological diversity and our life support systems – water, air and soil. It also preserves the genetic diversity of plants and animals for better growth of species and breeding. For example, in agriculture, we are still dependent on traditional crop varieties. Fisheries too are heavily dependent on the maintenance of aquatic biodiversity. In the 1960s and 1970s, conservationists demanded a national wildlife protection programme. The Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act was implemented in 1972, with various provisions for protecting habitats. An all-India list of protected species was also published. The thrust of the programme was towards protecting the remaining population of certain endangered species by banning hunting, giving legal protection to their habitats, and restricting trade in wildlife.

Subsequently, central and many state governments established national parks and wildlife sanctuaries about which you have already studied. The central government also announced several projects for protecting specific animals, which were gravely threatened, including the tiger, the one horned rhinoceros, the Kashmir stag or *hangul*, three types of crocodiles – fresh water crocodile, saltwater crocodile and the *Gharial*, the Asiatic lion, and others. Most recently, the Indian elephant, black buck (chinkara), the great Indian bustard (*godawan*) and the snow leopard, etc. have been given full or partial legal protection against hunting and trade throughout India.

The conservation projects are now focusing on biodiversity rather than on a few of its components. There is now a more intensive search for different conservation measures. Increasingly, even insects are beginning to find a place in conservation planning. In the notification under Wildlife Act of 1980 and 1986, several hundred butterflies, moths, beetles, and one dragonfly have been added to the list of protected species. In 1991, for the first time plants were also added to the list, starting with six species.

Types and Distribution of Forest and Wildlife Resources:

Even if we want to conserve our vast forest and wildlife resources, it is rather difficult to manage, control and regulate them. In India much of its forest and wildlife resources are either owned or managed by the government through the Forest Department or other government departments. These are classified under the following categories.

(i) *Reserved Forests*: More than half of the total forest land has been declared reserved forests. Reserved forests are regarded as the most valuable as far as the conservation of forest and wildlife resources are concerned.

(ii) *Protected Forests*: Almost one-third of the total forest area is protected forest, as declared by the Forest Department. This forest land are protected from any further depletion.

(iii) *Unclassed Forests*: These are other forests and wastelands belonging to both government and private individuals and communities. Reserved and protected forests are also referred to as permanent forest estates maintained for the purpose of producing timber and other forest produce, and for protective reasons.

Madhya Pradesh has the largest area under permanent forests, constituting 75 per cent of its total forest area. Jammu and Kashmir, Andhra Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Maharashtra have large percentages of reserved forests of its total forest area whereas Bihar, Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan have a bulk of it under protected forests. All North-eastern states and parts of Gujarat have a very high percentage of their forests as unclassified forests managed by local communities.