

NEWS AND NOTES

DESERT NATIONAL PARK-JAISALMER

After many years of deliberation and reports of National Agriculture Commission in 1976 and Wildlife Advisory Board Expert Committee 1977, an area of 3162 square km falling in Jaisalmer and Barmer districts of Rajasthan was selected in 1980 to be developed as the Desert Wildlife Sanctuary. There are 73 villages located in the Sanctuary area having a total population more than 49000. The cattle population of all these villages is approximately 3, 29,000. In addition nine satellite areas outside the boundary of sanctuary have also been identified and fenced to supplement welfare factors to wildlife of the region. The area is situated near the border area of Pakistan and India at 25 degree 47 minute to 26 46 N and 70 45 E. The nearest railway station of this Sanctuary is Jaisalmer and can be approached both by train and by road from Jodhpur city.

Desert National Park is the only Sanctuary in India which represents typical desert ecosystem. The main objectives of creating and managing this sanctuary were to conserve the flora, fauna and the landscape in its natural form perpetually, to protect the natural habitat of critically endangered state bird of Rajasthan the Great Indian Bustard and build up a viable optimum population and to promote regulated eco-tourism and induce people's participation in conservation. Beside this it was aimed to carry out basic and applied research for the endemic rare fauna and flora of this area for sound park management.

The flora of this region are phog (*Callogonum polygonoides*), Khara (*Haloxylon salicornicum*), bui (*Aerva persica*), Tumba (*Citrullus colocynthis*) etc. Beside this Jal (*Salvadora oleoides*), Khejri (*Prosopis*

cineraria), Ker (*Capparis deciduas*), Guggal (*Commiphora weightii*), clumps of Sewan grass (*Lasirus indicus*) are commonly found on the sandy areas of DNP. The rich insect fauna, which is a characteristic of this desert, plays a remarkable role as micro-consumer in the existing ecosystem besides amphibian, fauna including one species of toad and five species of frog, reptilian fauna spiny tailed lizard (*Uromia hardwickii*), desert monitor (*Varanus griseus*), fat tailed lizard (*Eublepharis macularius*), lacertid (*Acanthodactylus cantoris*), lizards (*Calotes versicolor*); species of snakes like cobra, eryx, pythas species, krait- *Bungarus careuiesns*, Russel's viper (*Vipera russelli*), spiny-tailed lizard (*Uromaxiys hardwicki*) etc. are usually found on shrubs and trees. Bird population includes grey partridge (*Francolinus pondicerianus*), The Great Indian Bustard, desert courser, tawny eagle, spotted eagle, hawks, etc. Sixty species of mammals including chinkara (*Gazella dorcus*), roza (*Blue bull*), desert cat (*Felis lebyca*), desert fox (*Vulpes v. pusilla*), the jackal (*Canis aureus*), the wolf (*Canis lupus*), the hare (*Lepus nigricollis*) and hedge hog (*Hemiechinus auritus collaris*) are fairly common in this area.

The Desert National Park has tremendous importance in terms of economic value by virtue of sewan grass (*Lasirus indicus*), one of the finest fodder grasses in India), conservation value (for endangered Great Indian Bustard or Godavan), ecological value (for soil conservation and sand dune stabilization), educational and scientific value (for children, teachers, scientists and local people and tourism (revenue from tourism), etc. It is a place worthy to see for every community, society and professionals.

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