

Chapter- 9

NATURAL VEGETATION AND WILD LIFE

STUDY NOTES

The growth of vegetation depends on temperature and moisture. It also depends on factors like slope and thickness of soil. The type and thickness of natural vegetation varies from place to place because of the variation in these factors.

Natural vegetation is generally classified into three broad categories as follows:

Forests: It grows where temperature and rainfall are plentiful to support a tree cover. Depending upon these factors, dense and open forests are grown.

Grasslands: Which grow in the region of moderate rain.

Shrubs: Thorny shrubs and scrubs grow in the dry region.

Forests

Tropical Evergreen Forests

Tropical Evergreen forests are also called tropical rainforests. These thick forests occur in the regions near the equator and close to the tropics. These regions are hot and receive heavy rainfall throughout the year. As there is no dry season, the trees do not shed their leaves. This is the reason they are called evergreen. The thick canopies of the closely spaced trees do not allow the sunlight to penetrate inside the forest even in the day time. Hardwood trees like rosewood, ebony, mahogany are common here.

Tropical Deciduous Forests

Tropical deciduous are the monsoon forests found in the large part of India, northern Australia and in Central America. These regions experience seasonal changes. Trees shed their leaves in the dry season to conserve water. The hardwood trees found in these forests are sal, teak, neem and shisham which are used to make furniture, transport and constructional materials. Tigers, lions, elephants, langoors and monkeys are the common animals of these regions.

Temperate Evergreen Forests

The temperate evergreen forests are located in the mid latitudinal coastal region. They are commonly found along the eastern margin of the continents, e.g., In south-east USA, South China and in South-East Brazil. They comprise both hard and softwood trees like oak, pine, eucalyptus, etc.

Temperate Deciduous Forests

Temperate Deciduous forests are found towards higher latitudes. These are found in the northeastern part of USA, China, New Zealand, Chile and also found in the coastal regions of Western Europe. They shed their leaves in the dry season. The common trees are oak, ash, beech, etc. Deer, foxes, wolves are the animals commonly found. Birds like pheasants, monals are also found here.

Mediterranean Vegetation

The west and south-west margins of the continents are covered with Mediterranean vegetation. It is mostly found in the areas around the Mediterranean sea in Europe, Africa and Asia. This kind of vegetation is also

found outside the actual Mediterranean region in California in the USA, south-west Africa, southwestern South America and Southwest Australia. Citrus fruits such as oranges, figs, olives and grapes are commonly cultivated here.

Coniferous Forests

In the higher latitudes of Northern hemisphere, the spectacular Coniferous forests are found. These are also called Taiga. These forests are also seen in the higher altitudes. Chir, pine, cedar are the important variety of trees in these forests. Silver fox, mink, polar bear are the common animals found here.

Grasslands

Tropical grasslands: These occur on either side of the equator and extend till the tropics. This vegetation grows in the areas of moderate to low amount of rainfall. The grass can grow very tall, about 3 to 4 metres in height. Savannah grasslands of Africa are of this type. Elephants, zebras, giraffes, deer, leopards are common in tropical grasslands.

Temperate grasslands: These are found in the mid latitudinal zones and in the interior part of the continents. Usually, grass here is short and nutritious. Wild buffaloes, bison, antelopes are common in the temperate region.

Thorny bushes: These are found in the dry desert-like regions. Tropical deserts are located on the western margins of the continents. The vegetation cover is scarce here because of scanty rain and scorching heat.

In the polar region, the growth of natural vegetation is very limited. Only mosses, lichens and very small shrubs are found here. It grows during the very short summer. This is called Tundra type of vegetation.



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