

Odisha's Bhitarkanika mangrove forests added to wildlife sanctuary, see details here

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The area between Dhamara mouth to Barunei on the coast of the Mangrove forest has now been added to the area of Odisha's Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary.

Bhubaneswar: Much to the surprise of non-visitors, Odisha, like Bengal, has mangroves too. A mangrove is a shrub or tree that grows in coastal saline or brackish water. The mangrove biome, often called the mangrove forest or mangal, is a distinct saline woodland or shrubland habitat characterized by depositional coastal environments.

Odisha's Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary, with an area of 672 square kms., comprises of Mangrove forests. The area between Dhamara mouth to Barunei on the coast of the forest has now been added to the area of the wildlife sanctuary.

The core area of the sanctuary, with an area of 145 square kms, was declared Bhitarkanika National Park in September 1998. The Gahirmatha Marine Wildlife Sanctuary, which bounds the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary to the east, was created in September 1997, and encompasses Gahirmatha Beach and an adjacent portion of the Bay of Bengal. Bhitarkanika Mangroves were designated a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance in 2002.

MANGROVES SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE ECOSYSTEMS

Mangroves are good for sustainable coastal and marine ecosystems. They protect nearby areas from Tsunamis and extreme weather events. Mangrove forests are also effective at carbon sequestration and storage and mitigate climate change. As the effects of climate change become more severe, mangrove ecosystems are expected to help local ecosystems adapt and be more resilient to changes like extreme weather conditions and sea-level rise.

Section 26A of the Wildlife Protection Act defines the declaration of the sanctuary. It says that the State Government may declare its intention to constitute an area which consists of adequate ecological, flora, fauna, natural or zoological significance for the protection of wildlife.

The distinct flora and fauna supported by the Mangroves will now receive special protection from the government authorities for the conservation of the rich diversity.

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