

State of India's forest, untold story
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Abstract: The detrimental consequences of human activities for the environment has been of concern to scientists (Huston 1994) and policy makers for more than four decades (1972, Stockholm). Government and the concerned departments need to realize that biodiversity is essential for existence and well being of humankind (Primack, 2008). In India, the entire nature conservation approach has tended "to focus on protection of a few flagship species such as...*Elephas maximus*, *Rhinoceros unicornis*, *Panthera leo*" (Gadgil, 1996), and recently *Panthera tigris*.

Forest Survey of India, has been publishing biennial "State of the Forest Report" since 1987. The recent one was "India State of the Forest 2009". These reports only document the forest area in terms of canopy cover. Within the span of seven years between 1974 and 1981, India lost 16.5 % of its forests equivalent to 2.79 % of its geographical area (FSI, 1987). In the first NRSA report it was admitted that small patches of forests and plantations did not come within mapping unit size and therefore missed. The State of Forest Report (FSI, 1987) mentioned the estimated populations of plants, mammals, birds, and insects. The recent FSI report shows 23.84% of India's geographical area as forest and the measure becomes 25.25% excluding the area above the tree line, however there is no mention of estimated animal diversity and floral diversity is only limited to woody plants (FSI, 2009).

The increase recorded in forest cover in all successive reports do not really show the actual status of biodiversity and ecological stability of a particular region. The paper will highlight the major points that we should take into consideration while reporting the change in forest cover and scope of including biodiversity as indicator of stable ecosystem and not canopy cover only.

References:

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