

CHITWAN NATIONAL PARK

Chitwan National Park (932 km²), a World Heritage Site, is known for its sal forest, riveraine forest and grasslands. Some 570 species of flowering plants, 40 species of mammals, 486 bird species, 17 reptiles, and 68 fish species are known to occur in the Park. Many rare species such as tree fern, screw pine and several rare orchids and endangered mammals such as tiger, rhino, wild elephant, gaur, striped hyena, sloth bear and Gangetic dolphin occur.

Of all three protected areas (Koshi, Chitwan and Bardiya), the Gangetic dolphins are estimated to be less than 35 in three disjunct populations. Dolphins in Chitwan (Narayani River) may face local extinction because of river pollution, decline in fish population, and the Gandak Barrage.

Chitwan is the most intensively as well as extensively studied protected area in south Asia. Although several wildlife populations have increased, nearly 300,000 people reside in the 36 village development committees (VDCs) adjacent to the Park. Crop-raiding, livestock depredation, and loss of lives are associated with the spill-over of growing populations of large mammals from the park into adjacent areas, creating opportunity for ecotourism development and management dilemma.

