

## Banni Grassland Reserve

The Banni Grassland Reserve, (also known as Banni Grasslands) is a region consisting of an arid grassland system. They are located near the southern edge of the salt flats of Rann of Kutch in Gujarat, India

Spread across an area of 3847 Square Kilometers, the Banni Grassland Reserves are known for its rich wildlife and biodiversity

This article will further give details about Banni Grassland Reserve within the context of the IAS Exam.

### Overview of the Banni Grassland Reserve

'Banni' is from the hindi word 'banai' meaning 'made'. The name alludes to the origin of the grassland reserve that was made when sediments and river deposits from the Indus were accumulated over the years in the region.

Those who inhabit the region say that before the earthquake near the Rann of Kutch in 1819, the Indus river flowed through the region which had a thriving agricultural industry. Following the earthquake, the river changed its course and flowed into the neighbouring region of Sindh, now in Pakistan. As a result the region became arid and dry.

The Banni Grassland is inhabited by sindhi speaking cattle breeders who hail from the Jat, Mutwa, Hingora, Hingorja tribes. As per the Indian Forest Act of 1927, the Banni Grassland has been declared a protected forest since May 1955.

### Facts about Banni Grassland Reserve

1. The grasslands are home to mammals such as the:

- Nilgai
- Chinkara
- Blackbuck
- Wild boar
- Golden jackal
- Indian hare
- Indian wolf
- Caracal

2. The Banni Grassland REserves have a wide array of birds and invertebrates. The water bodies that swell up during the monsoon seasons attract large migratory flocks of flamingos and cranes. The water bodies also provide nourishment to over 150 species of birds, both migratory and resident in nature.

3. Along with the Narayan Sarovar Sanctuary, the grasslands of Banni have been designated as the last habitat of the Indian Cheetah by the Wildlife Institute of India. These areas have been recommended as sites for the reintroduction of the species in the future.

4. The wetlands of the Banni reserve, including a portion of it in Pakistan, are divided into four areas named in the Kutchi-Sindhi language. They are Kar, which is the smallest out of the four, Chhachh, bigger than Kar, Thathh and the biggest being Dhand.

5. The Banni Grassland Reserve is located in the path of the migratory birds. The birds use the areas for resting, foraging etc. Migratory birds like waterfowl and cranes start arriving in August and stay until March every year.

## Environmental Concerns of the Banni Grassland Reserve

Like many reserves and biosphere parks, Banni Grassland Reserve has its own fair share of ecological concerns. They are as follows:

- The Banni Grassland Reserve is under threat from overgrazing
- It is also facing threat from alien species such as *Prosopis juliflora*
- Due to change in the traditional vocation of the pastoralists, livestock grazing has become far more prominent in contrast to the previous occupation of livestock breeding
- The climate being arid receives far less rainfall during the monsoon months. Since there are no river systems or streams the land faces drought like conditions during certain years. With the weather changing on account of global warming it will get even worse.