

Bhitarkanika National Park

Bhitarkanika National Park is a large national park in northeast Kendrapara district of Odisha in eastern India. It is spread for 145 km² and **Bhitarkanika is the second-largest Mangrove ecosystem of India.**

It is the breeding place for the endangered saltwater crocodiles, which are the prime attractions of the sanctuary.

About the Bhitarkanika National Park - Key Facts

- The national park is home to a varied species of flora and fauna
- It was designated on September 16, 1998, and obtained the status of a Ramsar site on August 19, 2002
- This national park is surrounded by the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary
- It emerges out of a historical and cultural past as it was the hunting ground of the royal Raj Kanika family
- **Geographical Aspect:**
 - The National park is carved out of the core area of the sanctuary and is the land for impeccable biodiversities
 - It lies in the estuarial region of Brahmani-Baitrani with the Bay of Bengal lying in the East
 - Gahirmatha Beach and Marine Sanctuary are to the east, separating swamp region and mangroves from the Bay of Bengal
- It is a point for tourist attraction and a revenue-generating aspect for the state of Odisha

Flora and Fauna in Bhitarkanika

- The Gahirmatha Beach which forms the boundary of the wildlife sanctuary in the east is the largest colony of the Olive Ridley Sea Turtles
- It is a location encompassing rivers, streams, creeks, accumulated land, backwater and mudflats
- There are 215 bird species present in Bhitarkanika, including 8 varieties of kingfisher and the migratory birds from Europe and Central Asia
- Venomous Cobras and Indian Pythons, the endangered water monitor lizards, Chitals, Jungle cat, Wild Pigs, Otter, Rhesus Monkeys, Sambar, Spotted Deer, Wild Boar and the Fishing Cat, are a few of the many reptiles, mammals and vertebrates that can be seen in Bhitarkanika
- The Asian Open Bill, Cormorants, Darters, Black Ibis, Egrets, open billed storks, sandpipers, sea eagles, whistling teals, kites and seagulls are the frequently noticed avians of the sanctuary

Need for Mangrove Forests

India was hit back to back by cyclones and had affected the coastal regions of the country. Odisha, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Goa, Gujarat and many other regions were hit by the cyclones, thus affecting the mangroves.

Given below are the points of importance of the Mangrove forests:

- Mangroves are important as they act as a natural barrier against storm surge, coastal flooding and sea-level rise
- They protect shorelines from damaging winds and waves
- Due to their tangles root system, it helps in preventing erosion
- Mangrove provides a diverse array for biodiversity to flourish