

DWINDLING INDIAN SUNDARBAN MANGROVE: THE WAY OUT

ABSTRACT : Euphony of Sundarban mangrove lies in its picturesque beauty. Keeping aside Bangladesh part, Indian Sundarban mangrove forest alone have been dwindled about 58%, from 10,000 km² to 4226.6 km². By this time it has witnessed to the extinction of five important mammalian species along with ecosystems existing around them. In the array many others seem threatened. Nevertheless, the biological diversity is very much rich; so are enriched ecosystem services and economic benefits harnessed from this mangrove forest in the purpose of livelihood. The Indian Sundarban mangrove forest is the largest one in view of both area coverage and floral diversity as assessed 62% and 90% respectively, amongst other mangrove forests in India. The ecosystem services of the forest renders are noteworthy that includes nutrient release, increasing soil and water fertility, mitigation of other adversities including natural calamities which coastal areas very often encounter. The ecosystem services sustain both terrestrial and aquatic food chain that in turn facilitates economic benefits such as food, fodder, medicines, timbers, etc. upon which local people are dependent. However, a conflict prevails between resources and livelihood that apparently reflects the poor indices of ecofootprint of the Indian Sundarban areas. Some measures, if undertaken, may ensure the protection of Indian Sundarban from further degradation.
