

February 20-21, 2009, Bhuj

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Ecological Sites

1. Rann of Kachchh (RK)

The Great Rann, a part of the Rann of Kachchh, is a salt-impregnated wilderness region or saline desert extending to about 16,000 km². It includes the only breeding site of Greater Flamingo (locally called 'Flamingo city') in the country and is home for the last surviving population of Asiatic Wild Ass. It is 110km north off Bhuj. Nearest airport and Railway Station is at Bhuj.

2. Pachchham Island (Kala Dungar)

Pachchham, with its black hills (Kala Dungar), the tallest peak, is the northern most highland of the Kachchh mainland located on the border of GRK, which is about 100 km from Bhuj. This island is about 469 km² and supports natural habitats that include savannah, scrub thorn forests and wetlands. Well known for its high flora and faunal diversity. It is 100 km north off Bhuj. Nearest airport and Railway Station is at Bhuj.

3. Banni Grassland

Banni covers an area of 3847 km², which is about 8.4% of total geographical area of the district. Once it was one of the largest grasslands in Asia. This is about 55 km from Bhuj. The area is absolutely flat with an altitude ranging between 3-5 m above sea level. More than two third of its area is high in salinity. The natural depressions which gets filled with water during monsoon is home for about 273 bird species, in addition to being home for many other wild faunal species viz. Chinkara, Wolf, Houbara Bustard, and Common Cranes. Nearest airport and Railway Station is at Bhuj.

4. Chhari Dhand - Wetland

Chhari Dhand is the largest among the all the seasonal wetlands, in Banni with a water spread of about 10 km². It is approximately 75 km west off Bhuj. More than

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50000 waterfowls and 32 species of raptors have been recorded from this lake. It is recommended as a Ramsar Site. Nearest airport and Railway Station is at Bhuj.

5. Narayan Sarovar Sanctuary (NSS)

Narayan Sarovar Sanctuary extending to 444.23 km², has been set up for the conservation of the threatened Indian Gazelle or Chinkara. Thorn Forest and Savanna are the two most dominating natural vegetation types in Kachchh forming a mosaic in part of Lakhsat taluka and adequately represented within the Protected Area (PA). It is about 110 km west of Bhuj. It supports diverse floral (c.250 species) and faunal elements represented by threatened species like, Caracal, Wolf, Desert Cat, Ratel, and Spiny-tailed Lizard. Nearest airport and Railway Station is at Bhuj.

6. North Western Mangroves -Jakhau Port

The Mangroves are mainly concentrated along the western part of the district. It extends from the Kori Creek in the north and Jakhau Port in the south. It includes a total extent of about 670 km² of mangrove the second largest in the country. This is unique as it is dominated by only one mangrove species- *Avicennia marina*. It is home for diverse fish species as evident from Jakhau Port being the second largest fish landing centers in Gujarat. Nearest airport and Railway Station is at Bhuj.

7. Wild Ass Sanctuary

The wild Ass Sanctuary encompasses a total area of 4953.70 km² of the Little Rann of Kachchh extending into Surendranagar, Rajkot, Mehsana, Banaskantha, and Kachchh (Little Rann of Kachchh- LRK) districts. The nearest air-port 140 km located at Rajkot (Saurashtra). The nearest railway station is at Dhrangadhra, which is 22 km. LRK is famous for the last remaining population of endemic Wild Ass.

8. Fossil Park- Vithon

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9. Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary (Naliya Grassland)

This is a 2 km² PA notified for the protection of the globally threatened Great Indian Bustard (GIB). This PA is located in the vast tract of grassland ecosystem (about 100km²) located on the outskirts of Naliya town in Abdasa taluka. Bhuj. It is the only abode for GIB in Gujarat. It is home for a diverse floral and faunal species, which includes the Houbura Bustards and Lesser Florican. This is of high conservation significance due to presence of nine threatened floral species and ten threatened faunal. The nearest air-port is at Bhuj, which 110 km.

10. Gir Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park

This PA is the last home of the Asiatic Lions, which extends to about 1412.13 km² is located at Sasan, in Junagadh District. In addition to the lions it harbours diverse floral and faunal species. Leopard, Chausinga / Four-horned Antelope, Sambar Deer, Spotted Deer, Chinkara are the other major faunal species present. The nearest railway station is at Junagadh (60 km) and the air port is at Veraval (55 km).

11. Marine National Park and Sanctuary

This is located in the Gulf of Kachchh in the Jamnagar district, extending to about 457.92 km². This PA had great diversity of habitats like the mangroves, coral reefs, degraded reefs, intertidal mudflats, creeks, estuaries, sandy strands, saline grassland, marshy areas and rocky islands. It harbours divers species of Sponges, Corals, Jellyfish, Sea horse, Octopus, Pearl Oyster, Star Fish, Lobster, fishes, birds, and Dolphin and Dugong. The nearest railway station and airport is at Hapa (10 km) and Jamnagar (7km) respectively.

12. Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary

This wetland is one of the largest shallow lakes in the country located in Ahmedabad district extending to 120.82 km². This is shallow basin (a maximum depth of 3m), with about 360 scattered plateau. It is represented by 120 floral species, 76

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zooplankton and zoo-benthos. It harbours about 250 species of birds that includes 158 species of waterfowls. The nearest air port and railway station is at Ahmedabad (64km). Nearest bus stations are at Viramgam (about 35km) and Sanand (42 km).

13. Blackbuck National Park, Velavadar

This PA includes the tropical grassland, internationally known for the largest concentration of Blackbuck, Harriers and largest breeding population of Lesser Florican. It extends to about 34.08km² and located in Velavadar in Bhavnagar district. This PA is bestowed with 95 species of flowering plants, which includes 39 species of grass. Fourteen species of mammals, seven species of reptiles and more than 140 species birds marks the diversity of fauna. The nearest railway station and airport is at Dhala (52km) and Bhavnagar (72km) respectively.