

Unit 4 Ecosystems

Topic 4.3 Intruders in an ecosystem

Getting started

Imagine a new species of cactus is introduced in the Sonoran Desert. What might happen to saguaro cacti and other species in the Sonoran Desert?

Ans: The introduced species 'will take over'. Because it grows and reproduces more quickly than the native saguaro, then there will be less light, water and space for the saguaros to grow. If the saguaros disappear, or are reduced in numbers, this will reduce the numbers of other species that depend on the saguaros, such as the Gila woodpecker, termites, sap beetles and so on.

Questions in page 141

1 What is a 'native species'?

Ans: A species that has always lived in the country that it 'belongs' to.

A native species is indigenous to a given region or ecosystem if its presence in that region is the result of only local natural evolution

2 Name some native species in your country.

Ans: The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), with its headquarters in Kolkata and 16 regional stations is responsible for surveying the faunal resources of India. Possessing a tremendous diversity of climate and physical conditions, India has great variety of fauna, numbering 92,037 species, of which insects alone include 61,375 species. It is estimated that about two times that number of species still remain to be discovered in India alone.

The mammals include the majestic elephant, the gaur or Indian bison - the largest of existing bovines, the great Indian rhinoceros, the gigantic wild sheep of the Himalayas, the swamp deer, the thamin spotted deer, nilgai, the four-horned antelope, the Indian antelope or black-buck - the only representatives of these genera. Among the cats, the tiger and lion are the most magnificent of all; other splendid creatures such as the clouded leopard, the snow leopard, the marbled cat, etc., are also found. Several birds, like pheasants, geese, ducks, mynahs, parakeets, pigeons, cranes, hornbills and sun birds inhabit forests and wetlands.

Rivers and lakes harbour crocodiles and gharials. The salt-water crocodile is found along the eastern coast and in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The great Himalayan range has a very interesting variety of fauna that includes the wild sheep and goats, markhor, ibex, shrew and tapir. The panda and the snow leopard are found in the upper reaches of the mountains.

3 Suggest why it is difficult to eradicate an introduced species.

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Great Minds



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