

INTRODUCTION

Twenty first century will be dominated by biological sciences and major development and progress is expected in different disciplines of biology including genetic engineering, molecular biology, biotechnology etc. Biological capital of a country has become an important asset. In this age of intellectual property right patenting and global trade in food, fodder, and medicinal plant species, germplasm wealth of any country is of prime importance.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is one of achievements of the UN Conference on Environment and Development held at Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. It aims to conserve the world's biodiversity for meeting the human needs. Assessment and monitoring of biodiversity is critical for conservation planning. The Global Biodiversity Assessment project originated in July 1992 when the GEF Technical and Scientific Advisory Panel (STAP) recommended to UNEP that a global assessment of current knowledge in the broad field of biodiversity be carried out. For more than four decades The World Conservation Union (IUCN), through its Species Survival Commission (SSC) has been assessing the conservation status of species, subspecies and varieties on a global scale in order to highlight taxa threatened with extinction, and therefore promote their conservation. The taxa assessed for the IUCN Red List are the bearers of genetic diversity and the building blocks of ecosystems, and information on their conservation status and distribution provides the foundation for making informed decisions about conserving biodiversity from local to global levels. The IUCN Species Programme and SSC are finalizing plans to tackle Target 2 of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC). It aims at the preliminary assessment of the conservation status of all known plant species, at national, regional and international levels by 2010. There is need for extensive explorations, and study of biodiversity for its utilization in sustainable development and conservation for future needs.

India possesses rich biodiversity. India's biodiversity capital is appreciated throughout the world. However being developing country, there is a great pressure on natural resources of our country. In this age of biodiversity loss there is an urgent need to document biodiversity especially of remote areas for many direct and indirect benefits and sustainable development of our country.

Protected areas are internationally recognised as a major tool in conserving species and ecosystems. They also provide a range of goods and services essential to sustainable use of natural resources. There are 97 existing national parks in India covering an area of 38,199.47 km², which is 1.16% of the geographical area of the country. In addition to the above, 74 national parks covering an area of 16,630.08 km² are proposed in the Protected Area Network Report. There are 508 existing wildlife sanctuaries in India covering an area of 118,236.94 km², which is 3.60% of the geographical area of the country. Another 217 sanctuaries are proposed in the Protected Area Network Report covering an area of 16,669.44 km². In Maharashtra state, there are 6 national parks covering an area of 1273.60 km² which is 0.41 % of the geographical area of the state and 35 wildlife sanctuaries covering an area of 14152.69 km² which is 4.60% of the geographical area of the state. (National Wildlife Database, 2008, www.wii.gov.in). Protected areas in India have remained unexplored from botanical point of view. Thus it is very much essential to explore the angiosperm diversity of these important areas for conservation of biodiversity, utilization of plant resources and their management.

Sagareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary, which is situated at the junction of three tahsils in Sangali district, namely Kadegaon, Walwa and Palus, is unique in a number of ways. This protected area was previously declared as a Forest Park and a Deer Park was established within this on over 35 Ha. Of chain link fenced area.

The status of the area is progressively upgraded. It was first brought under the category of park. It becomes Sagaroba game reserve in 1980 and thereafter, in 1985, it became Sagreshwar Wildlife Sanctuary vide notification No. WLP/1085/CR-588/VII/F-5 DT. 16-09-1985, when its ecological significance was fully realized. Forest type of this protected area are 5A/C, 3, Southern dry mixed deciduous and 6A/C, 1, Southern thorn forests.

Total area of the Sanctuary is 1087.75 hectares or 10.87 Sq. km. It occupies the forestland from 10 villages, namely Mohite Vadgaon, Asad, Kumbhargaon, Devarashtre of Kadegaon tahsils, Kundal, Ghogaon, Dhayari and Tupari of Palus tahsils and Takari, Dudhari from Walwa Tahsil.

The maximum temperature in summer is 44⁰C and minimum temperature in winter is 8⁰C. The area receives the rains during South-West Monsoon. The mean

annual rainfall is 600 mm, which sets in June to September. Premonsoon showers are received sometime in the month of April-May.

PLATE - I : Scenic Views of Sagareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary

