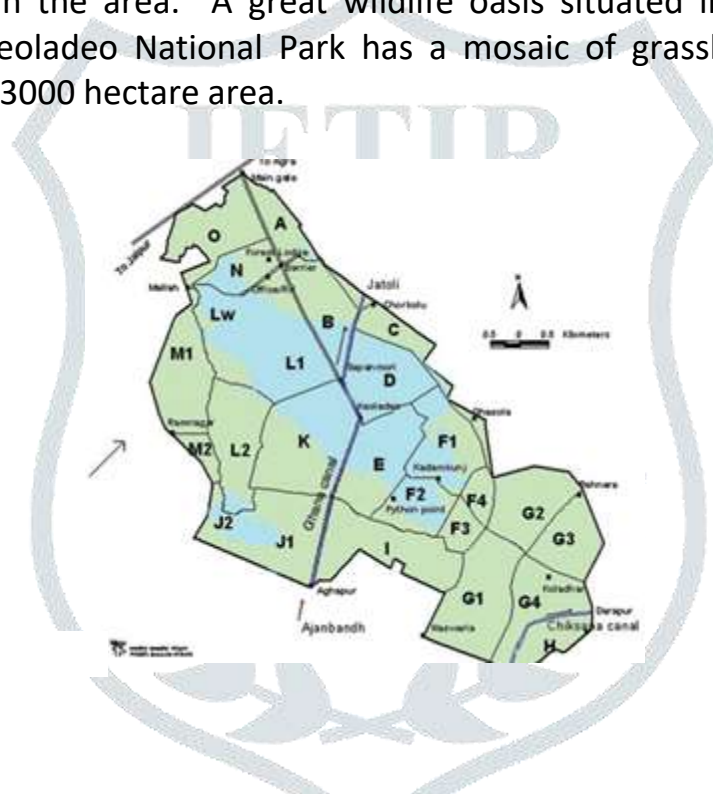


Ecology and Biodiversity of Keoladeo National Park

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Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur is an important wintering ground of water birds and is famous for its large flocks of resident breeding birds. As it is situated in the middle of Central Asian migratory flyway and has a regulated water supply from nearby reservoirs and seasonal rivers, large congregations of ducks, geese, coots, pelicans etc arrive here in great numbers in winter. It was developed in a natural depression wetland that was managed as a duck shooting reserve at the end of the 19th century and was a traditional hunting spot for the Maharajas of Bharatpur. Since it was declared a National Park in 1982, hunting has ceased in the area. A great wildlife oasis situated in the midst of densely populated suburb, Keoladeo National Park has a mosaic of grasslands, woodlands and wetlands in less than 3000 hectare area.



Flora of the Park:

Keoladeo national park was earlier known as Ghana Bird Sanctuary, the word GHANA used for its dense forest. A wide variety of flora of around 180 different genera are present in this forest. Besides dry grasslands, thick forest areas have trees of Kadam (*Mitragyna parvifolia*), Babul (*Acacia nilotica*) and Jamun (*Syzygium cuminii*). The open woodland has babul, kandi (*Prosopis spicigera*) and ber (*Zizyphus mauritiana*). Khus grass is predominant in the grassland.

Aquatic vegetation consists of *Nymphaea* (water lily), *Nilumbium* (lotus), *Lemna* (duckweeds) and *Azola* (water fern). In some areas *Cyperus*, *Typhaea* and *Ipomia* predominate. *Hydrilla*, *Chara* and *Naga* are chief submerged plants. Major portion of the biomass is formed by *Paspalum* which is a perennial amphibious grass.

Fauna of the Park:

In Keoladeo, the invertebrates like worms, insects and molluscs are found in abundance. These insects are food of birds and fishes and are a major link in the food

chain to maintain ecosystem. A number of land insects are the food of land birds. Reptiles including turtles, lizards, snakes especially pythons can be seen in abundance here. Few species of frogs are also found.

Keoladeo National Park boasts almost 250 bird species that have made this sanctuary their favourite home as it is the most protected zone for them. Before dispersing to various regions the migratory waterfowls entering the Indian subcontinent are directly attracted to this place because of its geographical location. In addition, the wetland is a wintering area for large congregations of waterfowl. It is the only wintering area in India for Siberian Cranes. Birds at the park include cranes, pelicans, geese, ducks, shanks, stints, wagtails, warblers, , flycatchers, larks, pipits, babblers, bee-eaters, bulbuls, buntings, chats, francolins, quails, Indian grey hornbill and iora. Raptors found in the park are osprey, peregrine falcon, , short-toed eagle, , imperial eagle, spotted eagle and crested serpent eagle.

During the breeding season 15 species of herons, ibis, cormorants, spoonbills and storks form a large heronry and almost about 20,000 birds nests.

Mammalian fauna of Keoladeo National Park comprises of 27 species of monkeys, langurs, cats, chital deer, blackbuck, nilgai, sambar, hog deer, mongoose, jackal, hyaena etc. Many species of rats, mice, gerbils and bats are also found in the park.

Protection and management of the Park

Keoladeo National Park has effective legal protection under the provisions of Indian Forest Act, 1927 and Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Rajasthan Forest Department and local communities along with the help of national and international conservation organizations manage the park.

Water supply uncertainties and invasive vegetations like *Prosopis*, *Paspalum* and *Eichhornia* are the main threats to the ecology of the park. To bring a permanent solution to the water crisis The Ministry of Environment and Forests and State government have developed Goverdhan Canal and Chambal water projects. Invasive alien species have been removed through cooperative arrangements with the surrounding populations. There is a two metres high boundary wall surrounding the park to prevent poaching, encroachment and pollution. Noise pollution from the adjoining Bharatpur city and National Highway are minimal. All proposed developmental activities around the area have to take clearance from Environmental ministry.