

## CONSERVATION VALUE OF THE PROTECTED AREA

The National Chambal Sanctuary is situated on a large arc of the Chambal River across the three states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, which is the first and only tri-state protected area in India. In the state of Madhya Pradesh, the Sanctuary is spread along the River Chambal in the 435 km<sup>2</sup> area (1 km. in width and 435 km. in length).

The National Chambal Sanctuary was established in order to facilitate the 'restoration to ecological health of a major North Indian river ecosystem'. The National Chambal Sanctuary is among the most significant habitats where several globally threatened faunal elements still survive. The Chambal is one of the last remnant rivers, in the greater Gangetic Drainage Basin, that has retained significant conservation values. The National Chambal Sanctuary is an integral part of 22 Protected Areas (PAs) covering 5213.27 km<sup>2</sup> with Six PAs covering 1385.18 km<sup>2</sup>, which are located at the periphery of the basin.

While a complete picture of the hydrological regime of the Chambal Basin is unavailable in the public domain, owing to the fact that information on the Gangetic system is considered classified by the Central Water Commission, the present need is to ensure the health of the river for the health of the greater Gangetic system. Although considered a tributary of the Yamuna, the Chambal channel and its component bars are larger than those of the Yamuna at the confluence. In addition, this river sanctuary functions as a vital source and nursery for fish fry and fingerlings, contributing significantly to downstream fisheries in the Gangetic river system, that provide livelihood and sustenance to millions of dependent people. It is also the major source of ground water recharge in the region.

The National Chambal Sanctuary is recognized as an Important Birding Area as it is an important habitat for migratory waterbirds. It harbours almost 90% of the world population of Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*). It provides refuge to several species of fish, reptiles, birds and mammals of conservation importance. Apart from being a strong candidate for the World Heritage status and Ramsar Convention listing, the National Chambal Sanctuary is also subject to international treaties like the Convention on the conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, which lists both flagship species of the National Chambal Sanctuary – the Gharial and Ganges river dolphin.

A Total of 148 fish (33 families), 56 reptile (19 families), 308 bird (64 families), 60 mammal (27 families) and 37 butterfly (5 families) species are reported, including six critically endangered, 12 endangered and 18 vulnerable species, as categorized by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

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