

5. ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF GANGES

The Ganga is home to 265 **fish species** and contributes significant economic benefits to the riparian communities and the national economy. Out of the total fish landings in river Ganga, 29.8% of fishing is from a riverine source. The 89 fish species were recorded from the Ganga river at Allahabad. The **Hilsa** that once swam all the way from the Bay of Bengal to Delhi to titillate the palate of Mughal royalty now finds the Ganga so dirty that it cannot swim upriver for more than 75 km. The Hilsa actually assemble near the mouth of the Ganga but then mostly find the water too shallow and move towards Bangladesh and Myanmar.



The Sunderbans lies across the outer deltas of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers. At 10,000 sq.km, it forms the largest mangrove forest in the world, with 40% falling in India, and 60% in Bangladesh. The Sunderbans delta is the largest mangrove forest in the world. Mangrove forests consist of salt-tolerant plant species and occur along the inter-tidal zones of rivers and seas. Like most mangroves, the Sunderbans consist of a number of small, forested islands floating amidst tidal streams. It is also home to a number of rare fauna, most notably, the Bengal Tiger.

