

National Parks in Uttarakhand, Tiger Reserves, Wildlife Sanctuaries

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National Parks are legally protected natural areas notified under the Wildlife Protection Act 1972, to conserve ecosystems, wildlife, and biodiversity without human exploitation. Other protected areas include Wildlife Sanctuaries, Biosphere Reserves, Tiger Reserves, Conservation Reserves, and Ramsar Wetlands, each serving specific conservation goals. The **National Parks in India** as well as other protected areas protect endangered species, maintain ecological balance, conserve water sources, preserve genetic diversity, and support climate stability. Human activities like hunting, mining, and deforestation are strictly regulated or prohibited within such notified regions.

Protected Areas in Uttarakhand

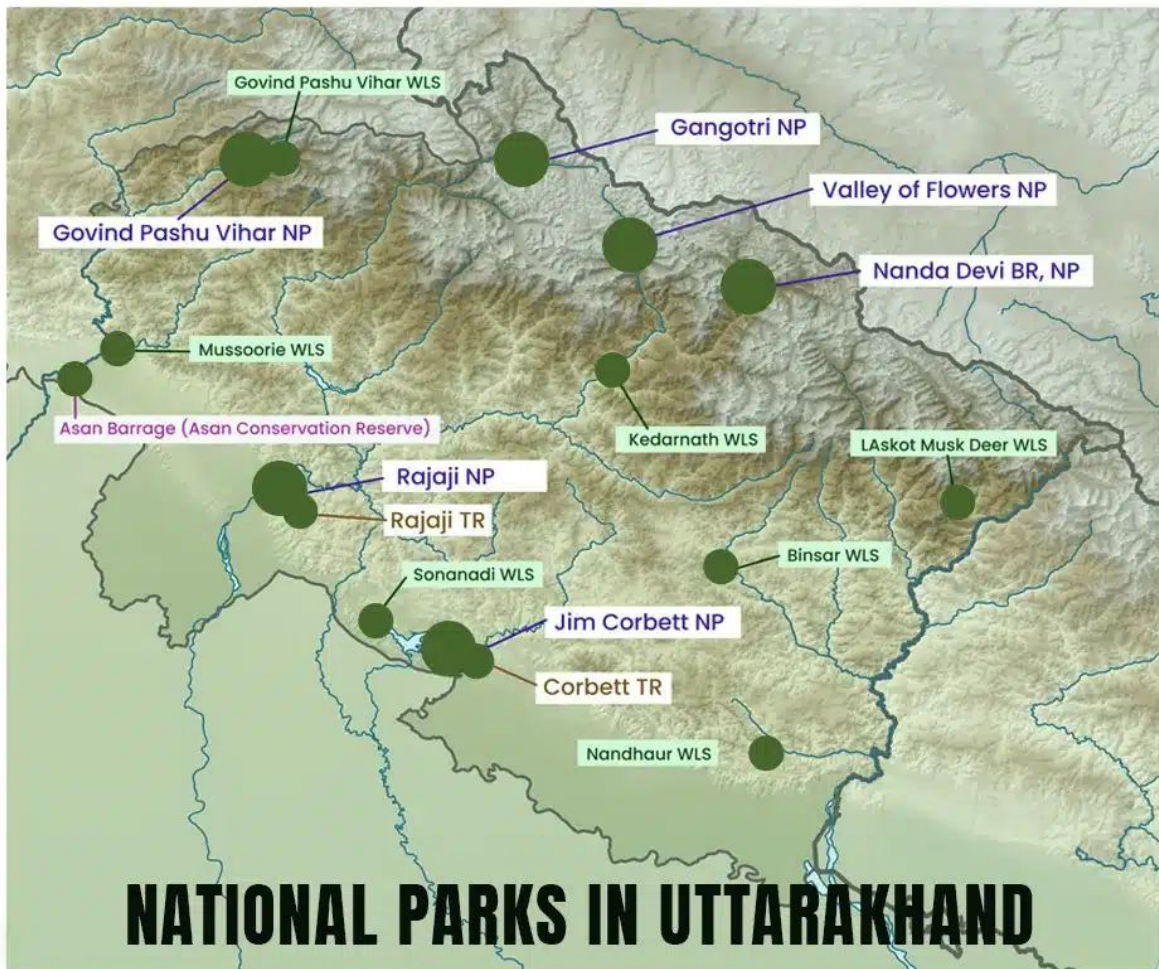
The Protected Areas in Uttarakhand conserve Himalayan **biodiversity** through legally notified parks, sanctuaries, reserves, and wetlands.

1. **National Parks:** Six parks protecting alpine, forest, and river ecosystems.
2. **Wildlife Sanctuaries:** Safeguard endangered mammals, birds, and flora.
3. **Tiger Reserves:** Maintain breeding populations and dispersal corridors.

4. **Ramsar Wetlands:** Protect migratory bird habitats and aquatic biodiversity.

National Parks in Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand hosts six notified National Parks located across the Himalayas and Terai regions, representing alpine, sub-alpine, temperate, and tropical ecosystems. These parks conserve glaciers, rivers, forests, grasslands, and high-altitude meadows. They protect globally important species such as Bengal tiger, snow leopard, Asian elephant, musk deer, and endemic alpine flora. Many parks are part of UNESCO-recognized landscapes and transboundary ecological corridors, playing a critical role in Himalayan biodiversity conservation.



Jim Corbett National Park

India's first National Park, established in 1936, Jim Corbett National Park lies in Nainital district and forms the core of Corbett Tiger Reserve, protecting rich Terai ecosystems and high tiger densities.

1. Establishment Purpose: Created to protect Bengal tigers under early wildlife conservation efforts.
2. Rivers System: Ramganga, Sonanadi, and Kosi rivers sustain wetlands and grasslands.
3. Vegetation Type: Moist deciduous forests, grasslands, chaurs, and riverine habitats.
4. Key Fauna: Bengal tiger, Asian elephant, leopard, goral, sloth bear, gharial.
5. Conservation Role: Part of WWF-supported Terai Arc Landscape ecological corridor.
6. Special Success: Captive breeding revived gharial and mugger crocodile populations.

Nanda Devi National Park

Located in Chamoli district, Nanda Devi National Park surrounds the 7,816-meter Nanda Devi peak and forms the core of the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve.

1. Global Status: UNESCO World Heritage Site under Man and Biosphere Programme.
2. Landscape Feature: Glacial basin encircled by high Himalayan peaks.
3. Flora Diversity: Fir, birch, juniper, rhododendron dominate alpine forests.
4. Key Fauna: Musk deer, Himalayan tahr, serow, black bear.
5. Ecological Value: Preserves fragile alpine ecosystems with minimal human access.

Rajaji National Park

Rajaji National Park spans Haridwar, Dehradun, and Pauri Garhwal districts, covering Shivalik hills and Indo-Gangetic plains with diverse forest types.

1. Formation Year: Created in 1983 by merging three wildlife sanctuaries.
2. River System: Ganga and Son rivers traverse the park.
3. Habitat Range: Semi-evergreen, deciduous forests, grasslands, and riverine belts.
4. Key Species: Asian elephant, Bengal tiger, sloth bear, porcupine.
5. Human Interface: Seasonal habitat of nomadic Van Gujjar community.

Gangotri National Park

Gangotri National Park lies in Uttarkashi district, covering the upper catchment of the Bhagirathi River and India-China international boundary.

1. Glacial Source: Gaumukh glacier marks origin of the River Ganga.
2. Mountain Peaks: Chaukhamba I-III, Satopanth, Kedarnath dominate terrain.
3. Vegetation Zones: Conifer forests, alpine meadows, and glacial zones.
4. Key Fauna: Snow leopard, brown bear, blue sheep, Himalayan tahr.
5. Ecological Link: Forms continuity with Govind National Park and Kedarnath Sanctuary.

Govind National Park

Govind Pashu Vihar National Park is located in Uttarkashi district and named after freedom fighter Govind Ballabh Pant.

1. Conservation Focus: Managed under India's Snow Leopard Project.
2. Forest Types: Broadleaf forests, conifers, alpine meadows, shrubs.
3. Floral Richness: Oak, maple, walnut, rhododendron, cedar species.
4. Major Fauna: Snow leopard, musk deer, Himalayan tahr, bearded vulture.
5. Altitude Range: Supports diverse species across steep elevational gradients.

Valley of Flowers National Park

Valley of Flowers National Park is a high-altitude alpine valley in Chamoli district, globally famous for endemic flowering plants.

1. UNESCO Status: Declared World Heritage Site in 2005.
2. Ecological Zone: Transition region between Zaskar and Greater Himalayas.
3. Floral Diversity: Orchids, poppies, marigolds, daisies, rhododendrons.
4. Faunal Presence: Snow leopard, brown bear, musk deer, red fox.
5. Biosphere Role: Forms core of Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve.

Tiger Reserves in Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand has two designated Tiger Reserves supporting India's highest-quality tiger habitats. These reserves play a significant role in protecting high-density tiger habitats, maintaining Terai-Shivalik wildlife corridors, and supporting elephant movement, biodiversity conservation, and long-term ecological stability. The two tiger reserves are:

1. **Corbett Tiger Reserve:** India's oldest and most tiger-dense reserve.
2. **Rajaji Tiger Reserve:** Northwestern limit of tiger and elephant distribution.

Corbett Tiger Reserve

It is located in Himalayan foothills and spans Terai and Shivalik regions across three districts. Jim Corbett National Park is the core of the Corbett Tiger Reserve with the launch of **Project Tiger in 1973**.

1. Total Area: 1,288.31 square kilometers including core and buffer.
2. Tiger Status: Highest tiger density nationally with rising population trend.
3. Habitat Type: Sal forests, chauris, grasslands, riverine belts.
4. Monitoring Tools: M-STripES, camera traps, electronic surveillance systems.

Rajaji Tiger Reserve

It was declared India's 48th Tiger Reserve in 2015, Rajaji Tiger Reserve lies along Shivalik foothills.

1. Forest Types: Sal-dominated deciduous, grasslands, pine forests.
2. Faunal Diversity: Over 50 mammal species including elephants and tigers.
3. River Network: Ganga and Son rivers enhance habitat productivity.
4. Conservation Issue: Infrastructure pressures in buffer zones monitored legally.

Wildlife Sanctuaries in Uttarakhand

Wildlife Sanctuaries in Uttarakhand protect species-rich habitats across Kumaon, Garhwal, Terai, and Shivalik landscapes. These sanctuaries conserve musk deer, elephants, snow leopards, migratory birds, and endemic flora. They safeguard river catchments, alpine meadows, temperate forests, and wildlife corridors connecting India and Nepal. Many sanctuaries support threatened species listed as Endangered, Vulnerable, or Critically Endangered, playing a vital role in national biodiversity conservation strategies.

Wildlife Sanctuaries in Uttarakhand List

Uttarakhand hosts several ecologically important wildlife sanctuaries spread across diverse Himalayan landscapes. There are 6 officially recognised Wildlife Sanctuaries in Uttarakhand as mentioned below:

1. Askot Wildlife Sanctuary: Located in Pithoragarh district, this sanctuary conserves endangered musk deer within western Kumaon Himalayas, features alpine forests, river valleys, rich birdlife, and is notified as an Eco-Sensitive Zone for ecological protection.
2. Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary: Spread across Rudraprayag and Chamoli districts, it protects musk deer habitats from Gaurikund to Kedarnath, covering Mandakini river catchment, alpine meadows, glaciers, and high Himalayan peaks like Chaukhamba and Kedarnath.
3. Nandhaur Wildlife Sanctuary: Situated in Terai Arc Landscape, it forms part of Shivalik Elephant Reserve, linking Corbett and Nepal forests, supporting elephants, tigers, leopards, and serving as a crucial transboundary wildlife corridor.
4. Sonanadi Wildlife Sanctuary: Located in Nainital district, this sanctuary acts as buffer to Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve, supporting tiger dispersal, riverine forests, grasslands, and maintaining habitat continuity within the Terai ecosystem.
5. Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary: Located in Kumaon region, this sanctuary protects oak-rhododendron forests, Himalayan bird species, and historic landscapes, once serving as summer capital of Chand rulers, offering panoramic views of Himalayan peaks.
6. Mussoorie Wildlife Sanctuary: Also known as Benog Wildlife Sanctuary, it lies near Mussoorie town, forms part of Rajaji landscape, supports diverse birds, mammals, and riverine ecology of Aglar river, a Yamuna tributary.
7. Govind Pashu Vihar Wildlife Sanctuary: It is located in Uttarkashi protects alpine forests and meadows, supports snow leopard conservation under national projects, and preserves rich Himalayan flora, raptors, and high-altitude wildlife habitats.

Ramsar Sites in Uttarakhand

As of now, Uttarakhand has only one Ramsar Site. Asan Conservation Reserve is Uttarakhand’s first Ramsar site, formed by Asan Barrage in Dehradun district. The key features of this region are:

1. Wetland Type: Reservoir at Asan-Yamuna river confluence.
2. Bird Diversity: Supports over 330 bird species annually.
3. Threatened Avifauna: Hosts critically endangered vultures and Baer’s pochard.
4. Flyway Importance: Strategic wintering site under Central Asian Flyway.
5. Ecological Role: Fish spawning, migration, feeding ground supporting wetland biodiversity.

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