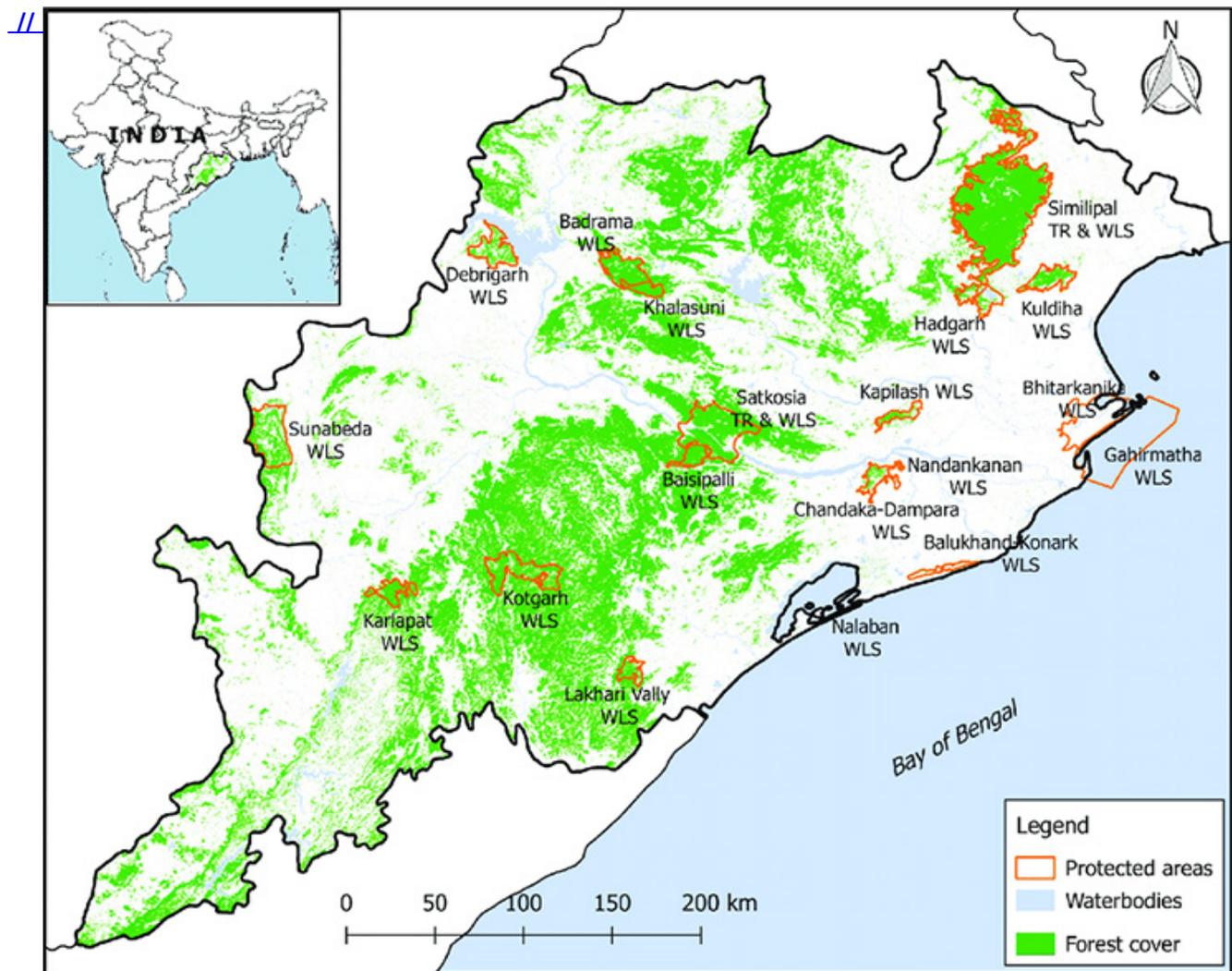




Threat to Bhitarkanika National Park: Odisha

Why in News

Recently, some environmental activists pointed out that Odisha's [Bhitarkanika National Park](#), is **under severe threat** due to planned diversion of freshwater from the **Brahmani river basin**.



Key Points

▪ Concerns:

- Excess water allocation for industries, which is likely **to reduce fresh water discharge to the sea.**
- The **lack of normal flow of fresh water would increase saline ingression** upstream,

it would **affect the local flora and fauna** as well as the livelihoods of the farmers and fishermen dependent upon the Brahmani and the Kharasrota (tributary of the Brahmani).

- There could be a quantum increase in the **man-crocodile conflict** since the estuarine crocodiles would leave the core sanctuary area and migrate upstream once salinity increases.
- The reduction in water discharge will **reduce the mangroves** and without the mangroves, the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary will become a marine desert.

- Nutrients from Bhitarkanika are flushed out to the **Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary**, which attracts the world's largest population of **Olive Ridley sea turtles** for congregation and nesting.

▪ **Bhitarkanika National Park:**

◦ **About:**

- It has the **second-largest mangrove forest in India and is a Ramsar site**. It was declared as a Bhitarkanika National Park **in the year of 1988**.
- Bhitarkanika is **located in the estuary of Brahmani, Baitarani, Dhamra, and Mahanadi river** systems. It is located in **Kendrapara district of Odisha**.
- It is **one of Odisha's finest biodiversity hotspots** and is famous for its mangroves, migratory birds, turtles, estuarine crocodiles, and countless creeks.
- It is said to house **70% of the country's estuarine or saltwater crocodiles**, conservation of which was started way back in 1975.
- **Protected Areas:** The Bhitarkanika is represented by **3 Protected Areas** which are:
 - Bhitarkanika National Park.
 - Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary.
 - Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary.

▪ **River Brahmani:**

- It is a river in **northeastern Odisha state**, eastern India. Formed by the **confluence of the Sankh and South Koel rivers** in southern Bihar state, the Brahmani flows for 300 miles.
- It winds generally south-southeast past Bonaigarh and Talcher and then turns east to **join northern branches of the Mahanadi River**, which then **empties into the Bay of Bengal at Palmyras Point**.
- It is **one of the few rivers that cut across the Eastern Ghats**, and it has formed a **minor gorge at Rengali**, where a dam has been built.



Source: TH

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