



IELA inputs to the task force on grazing land ecology in Rajasthan¹

Background:

In September 2022, IELA along with SPWD and Prayatana Samiti organised a two day workshop on the “ *Relevance of the Ecosystems approach to Sustainable Development: Case studies of Mahi River Basin, Aravallis and other ecosystems of India*”

http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Workshop-Report_Final_SPWD_IELA_PS.pdf

<http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Summary-Way-forward.pdf>

The workshop highlighted the relevance of taking the ecosystem as the smallest unit of climate change and the gram sabha as the smallest unit of governance. In order to merge the two aspects, the need for federating gram sabhas at the ecosystem level was also highlighted.

http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Relevance_of_Ecosystems_Approach_to_Sustainable_Development_12-13Sept2022_PPT.pdf

This presentation of which IELA was a part, pointed out how the Aravallis separated the desert elements from the rest and also showed the significance of animal husbandry in the livelihood system of the region.

http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Ecological_Aspects_of_the_Aravallis_and_Mahi_River_Basin_PPT.pdf

Specific ecological aspects related to the Aravallis and Mahi river basin as a case study are highlighted in this presentation by Dr Satish Sharma.

Not only animal husbandry, the herbivores on which the carnivores depend are dependant on the grasslands of the region.

Given the above, IELA, SPWD and Prayatana Samiti highlighted more details related to the land use of Rajasthan and the significance of animal husbandry in this regard

http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Land-Use-in-Rajasthan_-A-Perspective-on-Animal-Husbandry-and-its-centrality-to-the-ecology-of-Rajasthan.pdf

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With 10% of the land area but only 1.7% of India's rainfall the fact that the landscape of Rajasthan could support 5.6% of India's human population is explained by the fact that animal husbandry population of Rajasthan is 10% that of India. In addition, the presentation by Dr Satish Sharma referred to earlier gave detailed historical references highlighted the reason why there is comparatively more biodiversity in the region than can be explained by the ecological niches that Rajasthan has. The number of rare, endangered and endemic species are also relatively higher than one would expect.

The case for looking at the unique ecosystems prevalent in Rajasthan and its interface with grazing lands is therefore crystal clear. It is not accidental that the Orans (sacred groves) of Rajasthan and repositories of the biodiversity of the region are predominantly grazing lands as well.

Suggestions for the task force on grazing ecology

The grazing lands in Rajasthan can be broadly divided as follows

- a. Large grazing tracts mostly prevalent in Western Rajasthan.
- b. Specific ecosystem based grazing regions mostly in the Eastern part of Rajasthan which for convenience can be divided in North (Bharatpur, Alwar, Karauli, Sawai Madhopur Chambal region), Central (Ajmer, Tonk, Bhilwara) and Southern region (Udaipur) . These include the pockets within protected areas and sanctuaries within these regions.
- c. Village based grazing lands

There are overlaps between all three categories as well as issues related to privatisation and destruction of these grazing lands which take different shapes in different regions, protected Orans provide a clue as to original biodiversity in the specific ecosystem and can be the base to examine the grasslands ecology of that region.

Given the above it would be helpful to select some key ecosystems across the State to understand the ecological interlinkages within each region. The existing documentation related to each ecoregion can be pooled together to see the broader picture for each eco-region. The State perspective necessarily has to keep the centrality of the Aravallis so that the distribution of the ecosystems and their relation to each other can be understood.