



Semal Trees

Why in News?

Semal trees are **disappearing from south Rajasthan**, launching a cascade of adverse consequences for forests and people in the area.

Key Points

- Large quantities of semal are cut in southern Rajasthan, in places like Bhil and Garasia, and sold in Udaipur.
- The cutting violates many laws, from the **Rajasthan Forest Act, 1953** to the [Forest \(Conservation\) Act 1980](#).
- Semal is an integral species that holds the forest ecosystem together. The rock bees nestle on its branches because the tree's spikes keep its predator, the sloth bears, away.
 - Members of tribal communities consume the tree's reddish root for food during the monsoons. Larvae of the moth ***Bucculatrix crateracma*** feed on its leaves.
 - The [golden-crowned sparrow](#) weaves the lining of its nests with white cotton from its seeds.
 - The **Dysdercus bugs**, the **Indian crested porcupine**, [Hanuman langurs](#), and some other species feast on the nectar in its flowers.
- The **Garasia tribe** in the area also believe they are descended from semal trees. The **Kathodi tribe** use its wood to craft musical instruments while those of the Bhil use it to make utensils.

Semal trees



- Also known as the **silk cotton tree and Bombax Ceiba**, the Semal tree is a large, **fast-growing tree native to India**.
- It is known for its distinctive, spiky red flowers and its fluffy seed pods, which contain a cotton-like substance that was once used for stuffing pillows and mattresses.
- The tree is prized for its ornamental value and is often grown in parks and gardens.

Indian Crested Porcupine



- **Scientific Name:** *Hystrix indica*
- **Geographical Range:** It is found throughout **southeast and central Asia** and in parts of the **Middle East**, including such countries as India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Israel, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.
- **Behaviour:**
 - Nocturnal creatures that spend around **7 hours foraging every night**.
 - Live in **natural caves or excavated burrows**.
 - Predators include **large cats, wolves, hyenas, and humans**.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - **IUCN Status:** Least Concern (LC)
 - **Wildlife Protection Act 1972:** Schedule IV