



New Plateau in the Western Ghats

Why in News?

Recently, a rare low-altitude basalt plateau discovered in Maharashtra in the [Western Ghats](#) can help study the effects of [climate change](#) on species survival and increase awareness of the conservation needs of rock outcrops and their immense [biodiversity](#) value in the global context.

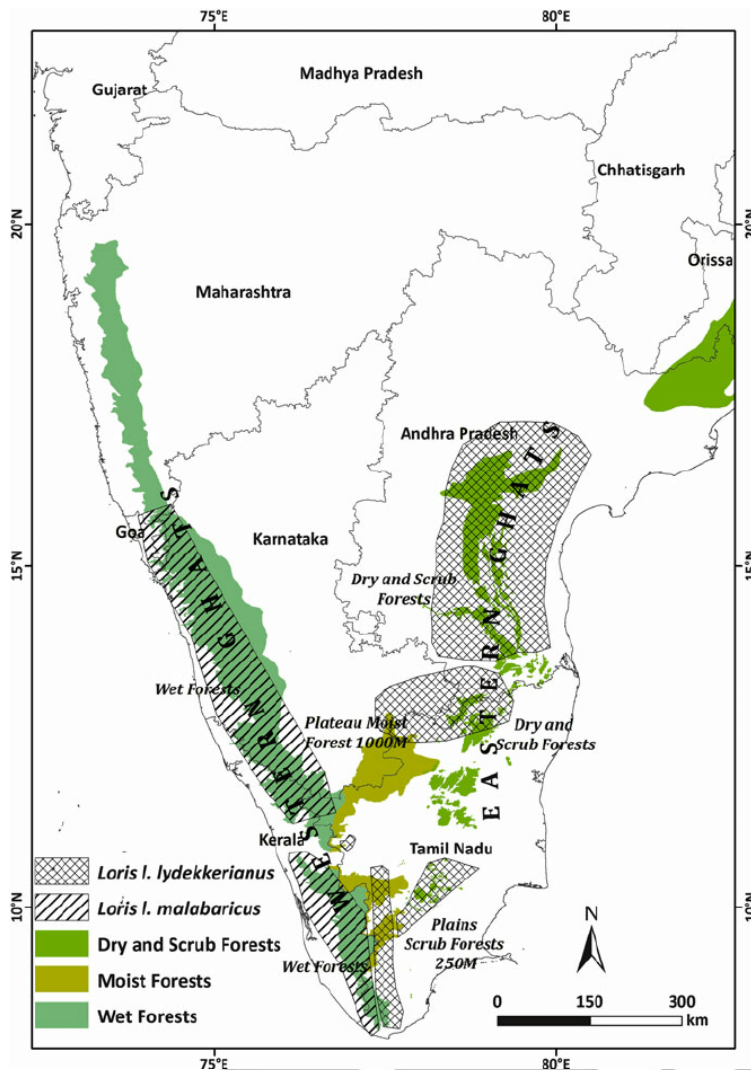
What are the Important Findings About the Plateau?

- **Low-Altitude Basalt Plateau:** This is the fourth type of plateau to be identified in the region; the previous three are laterites at high and low altitudes and basalt at high altitudes.
- **Diverse Biodiversity:** During the survey of the plateau, 76 species of plants and shrubs from 24 different families were reported. This is **considered an important discovery**, as the plateau shares the vegetation with the three other rock outcrops, simultaneously holding a few unique species.
 - This gives a **unique model system to study the species' interactions** in varying environmental conditions.

Note: Rock outcrops have seasonal water availability, limited soil and nutrients, making them ideal laboratories to study the effects of climate change on species survival. Plateaus are thus a **valuable source of insight into how species can survive in extreme conditions**.

Western Ghats: What's Important to Know?

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▪ About:

- Western Ghats **consists of a chain of mountains parallel to India's Western Coast** and passing from the states of Kerala, Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.
- The Western Ghats is **one of four global biodiversity hotspots in India.**
 - **The other three are the Himalayas,** the Indo-Burma region and the Sundaland (includes the **Nicobar Islands**).
- It is recognized as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site.**

▪ Significance:

- The Ghats **influence the Indian monsoon weather patterns** that mediate the warm tropical climate of the region.
- They **act as a barrier to rain-laden monsoon winds** that sweep in from the south-west.
- Western Ghats are **home to tropical evergreen forests, as well as to 325 globally threatened species.**
- Plateaus **are the dominant landscapes in the Western Ghats,** significant because of the predominance of endemic species.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q1. Consider the following statements: (2017)

1. In India, the Himalayas are spread over five States only.
2. Western Ghats are spread over five States only.
3. Pulicat Lake is spread over two States only.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a)** 1 and 2 only
- (b)** 3 only
- (c)** 2 and 3 only
- (d)** 1 and 3 only

Ans: (b)

Q2. 'Gadgil Committee Report' and 'Kasturirangan Committee Report', sometimes seen in the news, are related to (2016)

- (a)** constitutional reforms
- (b)** Ganga Action Plan
- (c)** linking of rivers
- (d)** protection of Western Ghats

Ans: (d)

Source: PIB

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