

The Mahanadi: Diversity, Threats, and Its Conservation

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The Odisha state is blessed with the Mahanadi River. The Mahanadi River originates from Chhattisgarh and runs through the Odisha state before falling into the Bay of Bengal (Figure 1). It beautifies the state with diverse flora, fauna, folk, and amazing landscapes. It is a lifeline for many Odias and a pride of Sambalpur and Cuttack cities of Odisha. It has several tributaries like Kathajodi, Kuakhai, Devi, Birupa, Chitratola, Paika, Surua, Genguti, and Noon. The Mahanadi Delta region is the home of Sal, Asan, Jamun, Amla, Bahada, Arjun, Palash, Sissoo, Sunari, Hinjala, Kujri, etc.



Figure 1: Mahanadi river at Cuttack, Odisha

It also provides the habitat for Tiger, Leopard, Gaur, Sambar, Mouse deer, Chausingha, Sloth bear, Gharial, Mugger crocodile, Freshwater turtles, and many amphibians and reptiles. The bird diversity like the Black-bellied tern, Great painted snipe, Indian silver bill, Indian Eagle-owl, Indian skimmer, Indian Thick-knee, River tern, Small pratincole, etc. beautifies the region. The diverse taxa of the Mahanadi River basin give a sustainable environment and play a major role in the ecological balance of Riparian habitat, but due to increasing anthropogenic activities, it is on the verge of an unbalanced environment. The most common anthropogenic activities are water pollution, sand mining, use of pesticides, sewage discharge, and excessive use of plastic and plastic materials. Conservation efforts should be taken immediately with the engagement of local communities and government institutions along with non-government organizations of the areas.