

# Similipal Forest Fire

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**In news :** A fire which started in the Similipal forest reserve area in February was finally brought under control

## About Similipal Forest reserve

- **Name:** Similipal, which derives its name from 'Simul' (silk cotton) tree, is a national park and a tiger reserve.
- The Government of Odisha declared Simlipal as a wildlife sanctuary in 1979
- It was declared as a National Park in the year of 1980.
- Similipal is part of the Similipal-Kuldiha-Hadgarh Elephant Reserve popularly known as Mayurbhanj Elephant Reserve, which includes 3 protected areas i.e. Similipal Tiger Reserve (2750.00 km<sup>2</sup>), Hadagarh Wildlife sanctuary (191.06 km<sup>2</sup>) and Kuldiha wildlife sanctuary (272.75 km<sup>2</sup>).
- **Location:** It is situated in the northern part of Odisha's Mayurbhanj district.
- **Biosphere reserve:** Similipal and the adjoining areas, comprising 5,569 sq km, was declared a biosphere reserve by the Government of India on June 22, 1994, and lies in the eastern end of the eastern ghat.
- **WNBR:** This protected area is part of the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves since 2009
- **Flora:** It is the abode of 94 species of orchids and about 3,000 species of plants
- **Fauna:** The identified species of fauna include 12 species of amphibians, 29 species of reptiles, 264 species of birds and 42 species of mammals, all of which collectively highlight the biodiversity richness of Similipal.
- **Dominant species:** Sal

## **Simlipal forest & its vulnerability to forest fire**

- With the onset of summers and towards the end of autumn, the forest area remains vulnerable to forest fires.
- They are a recurrent annual phenomenon, but are also brought under control due to short span of precipitation
- The last incident of a major forest fire was reported in 2015.
- This duration coincides with the shedding of deciduous forests in the forest areas.
- The fallen leaves are more vulnerable to catching fire and facilitate the spreading of these forest fires quickly over the entire forest area.

## **Causes of forest fire in Simlipal**

**Natural causes:** It is assumed that lightning or even soaring temperatures can cause forest fire

### **Man Made causes:**

- With dried leaves and tree trunks, even a spark can lead to a raging fire. The instances of poaching and hunting wherein the poachers set a small patch of forest on fire to divert the wild animals can lead to such fires
- Jungle areas are also set on fire by villagers to clear the dry leaves on the ground for easy collection of mahua flowers. These flowers are used to prepare a drink which is addictive in nature.
- Villagers also believe burning patches of sal trees will lead to better growth when planted again.
- This year, along with man-made factors, an advanced heat wave with the early onset of summer further deteriorated the condition.

## **Prevention and control of Forest fires**

- These kinds of fires are generally brought under control by natural rains.

- Forecasting fire-prone days and including community members to mitigate incidents of fire, creating fire lines, clearing sites of dried biomass, and crackdown on poachers are some of the methods to prevent fires
- The forest fire lines which are strips kept clear of vegetation, help break the forest into compartments to prevent fires from spreading.