

# ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY: HIGH-SCORING AREAS FOR UPSC PRELIMS 2026

Environment & Ecology has emerged as one of the **most high-scoring and trend-driven sections** of the UPSC Civil Services Preliminary Examination. Over the last decade, UPSC has consistently asked **15-20 questions** from this area, often blending **static concepts with current environmental issues**.

For **UPSC Prelims 2026**, aspirants must focus on **core ecology concepts, biodiversity, environmental laws, climate change frameworks, and international conventions**, along with strong current-affairs integration. This article provides a **comprehensive, exam-oriented guide** to the **high-scoring areas in Environment & Ecology**, along with a smart preparation strategy and FAQs.

## Why Environment & Ecology is a High-Scoring Section in Prelims

- Consistently high weightage in Prelims
- Questions are largely **static + current-based**, not opinion-driven
- Strong overlap with **Geography, Science & Current Affairs**
- Conceptual clarity leads to easy elimination in MCQs

☐☐ *With focused preparation, Environment can become a sure-shot scoring area.*

## PART I: CORE ECOLOGY CONCEPTS (MUST-KNOW)

### 1. Ecosystem & Its Components

UPSC frequently tests basic ecological understanding.

Key concepts:

- Biotic and abiotic components
- Producers, consumers, decomposers
- Food chain and food web
- Ecological pyramids (number, biomass, energy)

- Energy flow (10% law)

## 2. Biogeochemical Cycles

- Carbon cycle
- Nitrogen cycle
- Phosphorus cycle
- Water (hydrological) cycle

□□ Questions often focus on **human intervention and climate impact.**

## 3. Ecological Succession & Biomes

- Primary vs secondary succession
- Climax community
- Major biomes: tundra, taiga, grasslands, deserts, tropical forests

# **PART II: BIODIVERSITY & CONSERVATION (VERY HIGH WEIGHTAGE)**

## 4. Biodiversity: Levels & Importance

- Genetic, species, ecosystem diversity
- Keystone species
- Endemic species
- Flagship, umbrella, and indicator species

## 5. Biodiversity Hotspots

- Concept by Norman Myers
- Criteria for hotspot identification

- Indian hotspots:
  - Himalayas
  - Indo-Burma
  - Western Ghats-Sri Lanka
  - Sundaland (Nicobar Islands)

## 6. Protected Areas in India

Highly favourite area for UPSC.

- National Parks
- Wildlife Sanctuaries
- Biosphere Reserves
- Conservation Reserves & Community Reserves

☐☐ Focus on **differences, legal status, and recent additions.**

## 7. Species in News

- IUCN Red List categories
- Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable species
- Important fauna & flora in news
- Invasive alien species

# PART III: ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION & CLIMATE CHANGE

## 8. Environmental Pollution

- Air pollution (PM2.5, PM10)
- Water pollution (BOD, COD)

- Soil pollution
- Noise pollution
- Eutrophication

## 9. Climate Change

One of the **most repeatedly tested themes**.

Key topics:

- Greenhouse effect & global warming
- Greenhouse gases
- Climate feedback mechanisms
- Carbon sequestration
- Mitigation vs adaptation

## 10. International Climate Agreements

- UNFCCC
- Kyoto Protocol
- Paris Agreement
- Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)
- IPCC reports

☐☐ India's climate commitments are highly important.

## **PART IV: ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS, INSTITUTIONS & GOVERNANCE**

### **11. Environmental Laws in India**

UPSC often asks statement-based questions.

Important Acts:

- Environment Protection Act, 1986
- Wildlife Protection Act, 1972
- Forest Conservation Act, 1980
- Biological Diversity Act, 2002
- National Green Tribunal Act, 2010

## **12. Environmental Institutions**

- Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)
- National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)
- Central & State Pollution Control Boards
- National Green Tribunal (NGT)

## **PART V: CURRENT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES (PRELIMS GOLDMINE)**

### **13. Environmental Conventions & Protocols**

- Ramsar Convention
- CITES
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- Basel, Rotterdam & Stockholm Conventions
- Montreal Protocol

### **14. Government Initiatives & Schemes**

- National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)
- National Afforestation Programme

- CAMPA
- Project Tiger & Project Elephant
- Mission LiFE

## Smart Strategy to Prepare Environment & Ecology for Prelims 2026

1. Build **strong static foundation** in ecology
2. Integrate static topics with **current environmental news**
3. Revise protected areas and species regularly
4. Solve previous year questions (PYQs) thoroughly
5. Use maps for national parks & biosphere reserves

## Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Studying Environment without basics of ecology
- Ignoring international conventions
- Memorising species without understanding habitat
- Skipping revision due to vastness

## Conclusion

Environment & Ecology is a **decisive section for clearing UPSC Prelims 2026**. Its predictable nature, combined with current relevance, makes it a high-scoring subject if prepared strategically. Aspirants who master ecology fundamentals and link them with environmental governance and current affairs can gain a significant edge over others.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

**Q1. How many questions are asked from Environment in Prelims?**

Usually 15–20 questions every year.

## **Q2. Is Environment & Ecology purely current-affairs based?**

No. It is a mix of static ecology concepts and current developments.

## **Q3. Are international environmental conventions important?**

Yes. UPSC frequently asks questions from global environmental agreements.

## **Q4. Should I memorise all species for Prelims?**

Focus on species in news and their habitat, not all species.

## **Q5. Is Environment useful for Mains as well?**

Yes. It overlaps with GS Paper III and Essay topics.

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