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Effect of anthropogenic factors on the mangrove ecosystem in the Sundarban delta in India

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Abstract The Sundarban delta is intersected by a complex network of tidal waterways, mudflats and small islands of salt-tolerant mangrove forests. The fertile soils of the delta have been subject to intensive human use for centuries, and the eco-region has been mostly converted to intensive agriculture, with few enclaves of forest remaining. As a result of population pressure, half of this eco-region's mangrove forests have been cut down to supply fuel wood and other natural resources. Despite the intense and large-scale exploitation, this still is one of the largest contiguous areas of mangroves in the world. Due to their multiple uses, the people have exploited the mangrove forests indiscriminately and caused extensive damage to the mangrove ecosystem, resulting in ecological decline in the Sundarban. Human activities, including settlements in newer areas, indiscriminate use of natural resources and diversion of water have caused immense damage to the delta.

Key words anthropogenic factors; mangrove ecosystem; Sundarban delta, India