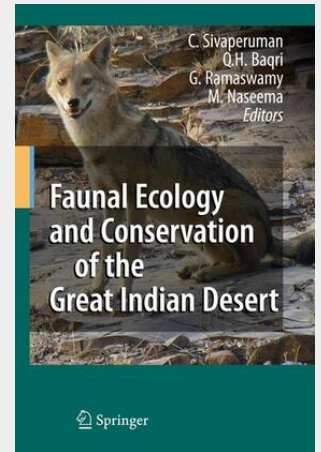


Faunal Ecology and Conservation of the Great Indian Desert

The Thar Desert, also known as the Great Indian Desert, is a large, arid region in the 2 northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent. With an extent of 280,000 km², it is the 17th largest desert in the world. It lies mostly in the Indian state of Rajasthan, and extends into the southern portion of Haryana and Punjab and into northern Gujarat. The Thar Desert is bounded in the northwest by the Sutlej River, in the east by the Aravalli Range, in the south by a salt marsh known as the Rann of Kutch, and in the west by the Indus River. In spite of the fact that climatic conditions are very harsh, this extremely hot region of the country exhibits a vivid and spectacular biodiversity. It is an important area biologically, at the confluence of very different habitats, namely grassland, sand dunes and rocky expanses as well as forested domains. Due to the diversified habitats, the vegetation and animal life in this arid region are very rich. Some wildlife species, fast disappearing from other parts of India, are found in large numbers in this desert, such as the Great Indian Bustard, Blackbuck, Indian Gazelle and Indian Wild Ass in the Rann of Kutch. The Desert National Park is an excellent example of the Thar Desert ecosystem, and its diverse fauna. The region is a haven for migratory and resident desert birds.



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