

# Western Ghats Under Threat: Report

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Many natural and mixed World Heritage Sites, including the Western Ghats, are threatened by harmful industrial activities such as mining, says a report.

The harmful industrial activities include oil and gas exploration and extraction, mining, illegal logging and large-scale constructions, according to the report, 'Protecting people through nature,' prepared by the World Wildlife Fund and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Three of the seven such Indian sites – Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, Sundarbans, and the serial sites of Western Ghats – have been listed as being under threat.

The report highlights that the Western Ghats support “the single largest population of endangered Asian elephants and vulnerable Indian bison.”

The report concludes that “nearly half of all natural World Heritage Sites, including the Grand Canyon and the Great Barrier Reef, are threatened by industrial activities.” The data for the study was drawn from the IUCN's World Heritage Outlook.

On Western Ghats, the report says the sites are facing 'extractive threats' in the form of 'oil and gas concessions' and “mines and mining concessions.” The Manas Wildlife Sanctuary faces unsustainable water use whereas Sundarbans has issues related to water management. The survey estimates that 11 million people directly depend on the World Heritage Sites for food, water, shelter, and medicine. The harmful industrial development poses a threat to these 'ecosystem services and the communities that depend on them.’

Responding to the assessment, V.B. Mathur, director, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, said the methodology of the report and its outcome were too generic in nature.

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