

The importance of Mangroves

What are Mangroves?

A mangrove is a shrub or small tree that grows in coastal **saline or brackish water**. The term is also used for tropical coastal vegetation consisting of such species. Mangroves occur worldwide in the **tropics and subtropics**, mainly between latitudes 25° N and 25° S.

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mangrove>)



<https://i2.wp.com/floratube.files.wordpress.com/2016/12/mangroves.jpg?ssl=1>

Why are they important?

- They sequester **1.5 metric tonnes of carbon per hectare per year**.
- If **just 2%** of the worlds mangroves are **lost**, the carbon released will be **50 times** the natural sequestration rate.
- They prevent **coastal erosion**.
- They trap **nutrient rich sediment**.
- They provide protection against **extreme weather and tsunamis**.
- They provide **fish nurseries**.
 - **520 million people** rely on fisheries.

Threats

- They are being cleared for **tourism, shrimp farms and aquaculture**.
- **Shrimp farms** pose the greatest threat. Hundreds of thousands of acres are being cleared to create artificial ponds.
- **Climate change** poses a threat to mangroves.
 - Mangroves, according to **IPCC forecasts**, are predicted to decline in area, and structural complexity.

Synoptic Link – Coasts

Mangroves are an essential defence for coasts against **coastal erosion, storm surges and tsunamis**.

- A **root cause** of the massive fatalities during the **2001 Indian Ocean Tsunami** were the loss of mangroves along the Pacific coast.
- Mangroves were cleared to **create tourism resorts and beaches**, which increased the **environmental vulnerability** of coastal settlements and put tourists in direct risk from tsunamis.
- The loss of mangroves is accelerating due to **coastalisation**.

