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## Gujarat home to rare mangrove species

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AHMEDABAD : Over 13 rare species of mangrove, as high as 30 feet, are found in south Gujarat along the coast in the Valsad and Navsari.

This was revealed during a study taken up by Gujarat Ecological Education and Research foundation. GEER had taken up this study under the small grant programme of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). CN Pandey, director, GEER, said this was an 11-month project. The research so far has revealed that there are very good patches of some rare species of mangrove which have never been noticed in the state. He said a good patch of mangrove has been found at the mouth of Purna river.

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According to Pandey, it is a thick forest of mangrove as high as 30 feet. He said that 11 other species have also been reported from the area. A rare species of *Excoecaria Agallocha* has also been found in this area.

He said these species of mangroves are spread till Bharuch. Research has also shown that the local people in the area are highly dependent on mangrove for fodder, firewood and vegetation.

The population of fish is also more which boost local fishing business.

The overall decrease in the mangrove cover in the country fell by 24 sq km, Gujarat being an exception. The data of the forest survey of India (FSI) has stated that Gujarat is the only state which showed increase of nearly 20 sq km area of mangrove cover while other states either state no change or a decline. Officials said that this increase was only because of the plantation and protection measures taken by the state.

In Gujarat, Jamnagar district has registered maximum increase of 9 sq km, followed by Ahmedabad and Surat which showed with an increase of around 4 sq km.

Sources said that Gujarat government has taken up a programme to improve the mangrove cover in the state. The state has decided to undertake a major drive of mangrove plantation along the coastal regions of Kutch, Jamnagar under Gujarat Forestry Development Project.

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