

# Juniper forest is being threatened by man, need to be conserve

By Rehana Bakhsh

**T**he juniper forest of Balochistan in north east has some major recent threats due to human activities. Major factors such as deforestation, illegal cutting of trees, and clearing of juniper covered area to make land available for agriculture purposes. Another factor which is also related to agriculture and is contributing towards deforestation of juniper forests is the construction of protective walls in mountain streams to save the land from flood. Furthermore, the cutting of the trees for use as timber and fuel wood by the local community is another reason for deforestation and the major cause of cutting of trees is for sale on a commercial basis.

Juniper forests are part of an important ecosystem in the dry temperate zone of Balochistan, and deforestation in the region has adversely affected both the floral and faunal biodiversity. Important mammalian species including urial wolf the Suleman markhor, and leopards have disappeared from the juniper valleys of Ziarat. The ground covered by herbs and shrubs is also sharply decreasing giving ways to soil erosion, and making it difficult for many species of plants including juniper to reproduce and establish a life supporting habitat.

In juniper forest valleys of Ziarat, soil is an important variable that plays a significant role in providing germination, growing medium to the plants and further ensuring their growth through continuous supply of water and nutrients.

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Communities living inside and around the juniper forests are at threat with the

degradation of the ecosystem. These communities are dependent upon this ecosystem for number of products and services ranging from fuel wood and timber to water and medicinal plants. Livestock is also entirely dependent upon juniper forest for their feed. Tourism is also now emerging as another important source of livelihoods for local communities. Degradation of forest ecosystem would affect this livelihood source of communities.

The government of Balochistan by means of the forest and wildlife department has to provide adequate resources for its restoration and improvement. There is a need of political contribution for the prevention of juniper forest deforestation. Support of the local communities and other relevant stakeholders is also very much needed for arresting the degradation process and implementation of restoration initiatives.

Government should make policies too aware the local communities that what are their responsibilities and what role they should play in the overall conservation process.

This is basically the key to success because without involvement of local communities, none of the initiatives would overcome. It has also to formulate a clear course of action for this threatened ecosystem so that further depletion should be stopped and restoration initiated.

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