

Corporation and the forest department have cut in the Andaman Islands an average of 3000 ha every year or a total of 18 lakh trees during the last 20 years. Hereto annexed and marked Annexure-E is a chart of the forest department showing the trees cut by the department and the corporation every year. In addition to the cutting of trees, stone quarrying and mining operations are also going on in the Little Andamans as can be seen in the enclosed map.

18. The Little Andamans is significant from an ecological, botanical and zoological point of view. It is home for various rare and endemic creatures such as Andaman wild pigs, giant robber crabs, Andaman teals, salt water crocodiles, great leather back or leathery turtles, green sea turtles and the dugong; all Schedule I species under the Wild Life Protection Act 1972. The forestry operations are directly affecting these creatures. As a result of the Onge is being increasingly invaded affecting not only the food availability but also the way of life. This is the principal reason for the precipitous decline in the population of the Onge. If things proceed as they are the Onge would be extinct in the next few years.

19. The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) conducted an investigation and made a report establishing the link between deforestation, soil erosion and the slow death of the coral reefs in the sea area of the Andamans.

20. The centre for Herpetology, Madras Crocodile Bank Trust, Tamilnadu in its report found that the salt water crocodile habitat of this endangered species were being destroyed. On account of deforestation, encroachment and poaching the population of wild pig which is the food of the Onge has been depleted. So too the dugong, a sea animal hunted by the Onge, and which is listed as virtually extinct in the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). According to the Red Data Book, trade in dugong parts is banned by the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). It is also a protected marine animal under the Wild Life Protection Act 1972.