During the Mauryan period (c. 321–185 BCE), India practised an early form of state-led wildlife conservation through *Abhayaranyas*, meaning “forests without fear”. These protected forest zones restricted hunting and the killing of animals. Their existence is associated with Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*, reflecting an early institutional approach to environmental protection.

Emperor Ashoka further strengthened wildlife protection through his edicts, including restrictions on the slaughter of specified animal species, protection of pregnant and nursing animals, and prohibition of unnecessary forest burning. These measures demonstrate the presence of conservation principles in ancient Indian governance, centuries before Yellowstone National Park was established in 1872.

APSC Relevance: Ancient Indian History, Wildlife Conservation