Clarity UPSC

PRELIMS 2027 · FREE EDITION



THE YEARLY COMPILATION

Species in News

2027

VOLUME 1 | **January–October 2026**

Every plant and animal in India's news from January to October 2026, explained for Prelims 2027: the status, the protection, the news and the trap, with a source for every fact.

62	158	321	66
SPECIES PAGES	NEW TO SCIENCE	MORE STORIES	PRACTICE QUESTIONS

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Free for every aspirant. The full story behind each species is on the website; the Clarity UPSC app is on Android, iPhone and the web.

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How to read a species page

Every entry answers four questions Prelims asks: how endangered the species is, how India protects it, why it was in the news, and where it lives.

State names follow the official list of 2026: Kerala has been Keralam since 25 August 2026, and the location tables use the new name. News items and sources from before that date keep the old name.

1 · GLOBAL RISK: THE IUCN RED LIST

THREATENED CATEGORIES

EX	EW	CR	EN	VU	NT	LC
Extinct No individual is known to survive.	**Extinct in the Wild** Survives only in captivity or outside its natural range.	**Critically Endangered** Extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.	**Endangered** Very high risk of extinction in the wild.	**Vulnerable** High risk of extinction in the wild.	**Near Threatened** Close to qualifying for a threatened category.	**Least Concern** Widespread; lowest risk.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) publishes the Red List, which measures risk across the world. A species can be secure worldwide and still rare in India, so read the Indian protection status beside it. Data Deficient (DD) means too little is known to judge.

2 · PROTECTION IN INDIA: WILDLIFE (PROTECTION) ACT, 1972

The 2022 amendment cut the Act's six schedules to four. Hunting any animal in Schedule I or II is an offence, and Schedule I carries the heaviest penalties.

I
Highest protection
Animals such as the tiger, Asiatic lion and Great Indian Bustard.

II
Lesser protection
Animals that are protected, with lighter penalties than Schedule I.

III
Protected plants
Plants such as the Khasi pitcher plant and the blue vanda orchid.

IV
CITES specimens
Lets India regulate trade in species listed in the CITES appendices.

3 · INTERNATIONAL TRADE: CITES APPENDICES

I
Threatened with extinction
Commercial trade in wild-caught specimens is banned.

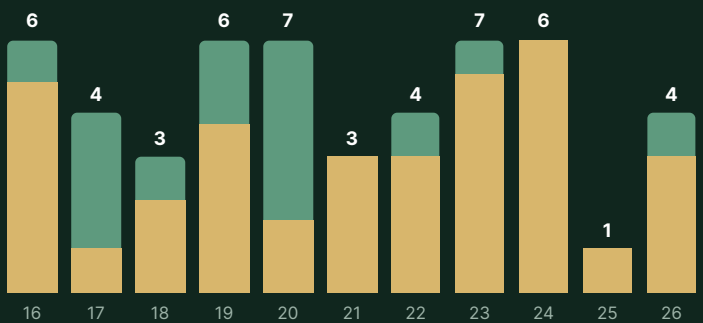
II
Trade must be controlled
Trade needs export permits so that it does not threaten survival.

III
Listed by one country
A country asks the others to help it control trade.

4 · WHY IT PAYS: SPECIES IN PRELIMS

51 questions

came from species and protected areas in the eleven Prelims papers from 2016 to 2026. Prelims 2026 asked about the **Amur falcon**, the **western hoolock gibbon**, the **foxtail orchid** and **Madhav National Park**.



Clarity UPSC analysis of UPSC Prelims GS Paper I, 2016–2026

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MAMMALS · 01

Bengal Tiger

Panthera tigris tigris

EX | EW | CR | **EN** | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Endangered

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

JUL 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

The sixth **All India Tiger Estimation** (AITE 2026), launched by NTCA and the Wildlife Institute of India in August 2025, is under way. Until it reports, the official figure is the 2022 estimate of **3,682 tigers**.

Source: NTCA, STRIPES (Dec 2025); NTCA–WII, Status of Tigers 2022; DD News, 29 Jul 2026

ABOUT

The tiger is the largest living cat and the only striped one; no two tigers share a stripe pattern. In India it lives in forests, grasslands and mangroves across five landscapes: the Shivalik hills and Gangetic plains, central India and the Eastern Ghats, the Western Ghats, the north-east and the Sundarbans. It hunts chital, sambar, gaur and wild pig.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- The 2022 estimate ranged from 3,167 to 3,925, up from 2,967 in 2018. **Madhya Pradesh** had the most tigers (785), then Karnataka (563) and Uttarakhand (560).
- **Tiger reserves** are notified by state governments on NTCA's recommendation (Section 38V, Wild Life (Protection) Act). Madhav became the 58th in March 2025, giving Madhya Pradesh nine, the most.
- NTCA data recorded **167 tiger deaths** in 2025, up from 126 in 2024; 31 were cubs. Madhya Pradesh, the state with the most tigers, had the most deaths (55).
- **Project Tiger** began in 1973 with nine reserves covering 18,278 sq km. NTCA runs it and leads the estimation every four years.

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- A roaring cat: tigers roar, grunt and chuff. They hunt mainly at night and swim well, even hunting in water.
- Solitary and territorial: tigers mark their ranges with scent and scratches on trees. A male's territory overlaps those of one to three females.
- Breeds year-round; in India mating peaks from November to April. Gestation lasts about 103 days, with one to five cubs.
- Cubs become independent at 18–28 months. As an apex predator and umbrella species, the tiger shields whole forests when protected.

PRELIMS TRAP

Madhya Pradesh has the most tigers (785) and the most reserves (9), but the reserve with the most tigers is **Corbett** in Uttarakhand: 260 within its boundaries in 2022, ahead of Bandipur (150) and Nagarhole (141).

BIG CATS OF INDIA: WHO ROARS

KIND	SCIENTIFIC NAME	WHERE IN INDIA	IUCN		COUNT
Tiger	*Panthera tigris*	MP 785, Karnataka 563, Uttarakhand 560	Endangered	roars	**3,682 (2022)**
Asiatic lion	*Panthera leo*	Gujarat only: 7 districts of Saurashtra	Endangered	roars	**891 (2025)**
Leopard	*Panthera pardus*	MP 3,907; Maharashtra 1,985	Vulnerable	roars	**13,874 (2022)**
Snow leopard	*Panthera uncia*	Ladakh 477, Uttarakhand 124 + 4 more	Vulnerable	cannot roar	**718 (2019–23)**
Clouded leopard	*Neofelis nebulosa*	NE states, Sikkim, N Bengal, Bihar	Vulnerable	cannot roar	
Cheetah	*Acinonyx jubatus*	Madhya Pradesh: Kuno + 2 more sites	Vulnerable	cannot roar	**58 (Oct 2026)**

Tiger, lion and leopard roar. The snow leopard, clouded leopard and cheetah cannot. Counts are the latest official estimates; the leopard figure covers 70% of its habitat.

WHERE IN INDIA

58 tiger reserves in 18 states

PROTECTED AREA (STATE)	DISTRICT	TIGERS 2022
Madhav TR (Madhya Pradesh) 58TH, 2025	Shivpuri	
Ratapani TR (Madhya Pradesh) 57TH, 2024	Raisen, Sehore	
Guru Ghasidas–Tamor Pingla TR (Chhattisgarh) 56TH, 2024	Koriya region; 3rd-largest TR (2,829 sq km)	
Corbett TR (Uttarakhand)	Nainital, Pauri Garhwal	**260**
Pench TRs (Madhya Pradesh / Maharashtra) SPANS 2 STATES Two reserves, one population: MP 77, Maharashtra 48	Seoni, Chhindwara (MP); Nagpur (MH)	**125**
Sundarbans TR (West Bengal)	South 24 Parganas; borders Bangladesh	**101**

TR tiger reserve. Counts are 2022 estimates within reserve boundaries. Source: NTCA list of tiger reserves; NTCA–WII, Status of Tigers 2022 (Table I.3.3); All India Radio; PTI.

IN THE WORLD

~75% live in India

The IUCN lists the tiger as Endangered. Its 2022 assessment estimated 3,726–5,578 tigers in the wild, a rise it credited mainly to better monitoring. India holds about 75% of them. Tiger landscapes cross into Nepal (Valmiki–Chitwan), Bhutan (Buxa–Manas–Royal Manas) and Bangladesh, which holds 58% of the Sundarbans.

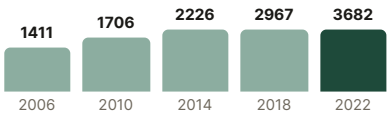
Source: IUCN press release (21 Jul 2022); NTCA–WII, Status of Tigers 2022

CONSERVATION

Project Tiger (1973) is a centrally sponsored scheme of MoEFCC. NTCA, made statutory by the 2006 amendment to the Wild Life (Protection) Act, oversees it and approves each reserve's Tiger Conservation Plan. M-STrIPES digitises field monitoring; 23 reserves are CA|TS-accredited. India hosts the International Big Cat Alliance, launched in 2023.

3,682

Wild tigers in India, 2006–2022



NTCA–WII, Status of Tigers

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2026 · Q22

Also asked: 2012 · 2017 · 2020

With reference to Madhav National Park, which of the following statements is/are correct ? 1. It was declared a Tiger Reserve in India in 2025. 2. Sakhya Sagar, which is designated as a Ramsar Site, is situated within this National Park. 3. Its area is shared between Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Select the answer using the code given below :

(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 (c) 2 and 3 (d) 3 only

UPSC KEY **(b) 1 and 2.** Madhav NP became India's 58th tiger reserve in March 2025 and holds Sakhya Sagar, a Ramsar site. The park lies wholly in Madhya Pradesh (Shivpuri district).

MAMMALS · 02

Asiatic Lion

Panthera leo (Asiatic population)

EX | EW | CR | **EN** | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Endangered

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



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SEP 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

A September 2026 study of lions in **Barda Wildlife Sanctuary** found wild pigs were 55% of prey occurrences in their dung. A male came unaided in 2023; five females were brought in. Barda held **26 lions** in August 2026.

Full story

Video

Source: Clarity UPSC daily news, 19 Oct 2026; PLOS One study (9 Sep 2026); Porbandar Deputy Conservator of Forests via The Times of India (20 Aug 2026)

ABOUT

The Asiatic lion differs from Africa's lions in a few marks: a smaller, shorter mane in males, a more pronounced fold of skin along the belly and a larger tuft at the elbow. It lives in the dry deciduous forest, scrub, grassland and farmland of Saurashtra, Gujarat, and preys on sambar, chital, nilgai, wild boar and livestock.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Gujarat counts its lions every five years by Direct Beat Verification. Numbers have risen at every count since 2001.
- **Barda Wildlife Sanctuary** near Porbandar is the lion's second home in Gujarat: 17 lived there in 2025. Lions were last recorded there in 1879.
- **Project Lion**, announced in August 2020, plans habitat and health work across the lion landscape.
- Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh was prepared for lions. It received African cheetahs in 2022 instead.

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- It roars; both sexes mark territory by roaring and by scent marking with urine. It is the most social cat, though most Gir prides hold only two females.
- No fixed breeding season: cubs can be born in any month, though in Asia births peak from late winter to early summer.
- Gestation lasts 100–119 days, with one to four cubs. Infanticide causes up to 60% of cub deaths among Asia's lions.
- Mainly nocturnal, it makes over 95% of its kills at night; by day Gir lions keep to dense cover.

PRELIMS TRAP

Gir is the core, not the whole range. The 2025 count found 394 lions in the core (Gir National Park, the Gir and Pania sanctuaries and adjoining areas) and 497 outside it, in satellite populations and corridors.

BIG CATS OF INDIA: WHO ROARS

KIND	SCIENTIFIC NAME	WHERE IN INDIA	IUCN		COUNT
Tiger	*Panthera tigris*	MP 785, Karnataka 563, Uttarakhand 560	Endangered	roars	**3,682 (2022)**
Asiatic lion	*Panthera leo*	Gujarat only: 7 districts of Saurashtra	Endangered	roars	**891 (2025)**
Leopard	*Panthera pardus*	MP 3,907; Maharashtra 1,985	Vulnerable	roars	**13,874 (2022)**
Snow leopard	*Panthera uncia*	Ladakh 477, Uttarakhand 124 + 4 more	Vulnerable	cannot roar	**718 (2019–23)**
Clouded leopard	*Neofelis nebulosa*	NE states, Sikkim, N Bengal, Bihar	Vulnerable	cannot roar	
Cheetah	*Acinonyx jubatus*	Madhya Pradesh: Kuno + 2 more sites	Vulnerable	cannot roar	**58 (Oct 2026)**

Only the lion, tiger and leopard roar among India's big cats; the snow leopard, clouded leopard and cheetah cannot. Counts are the latest official estimates.

WHERE IN INDIA

Gujarat only · lions in 7 districts

PROTECTED AREA (STATE)	DISTRICT	LIONS 2025
Gir NP & Gir WLS (Gujarat) CORE	Junagadh, Gir Somnath, Amreli	**384**
Pania WLS (Gujarat) CORE	Amreli	**10**
Girnar WLS (Gujarat)	Junagadh	**54**
Mitiyala WLS (Gujarat)	Amreli	**32**
Barda WLS (Gujarat) NEW HOME	Porbandar, Devbhumi Dwarka	**17**
Coasts, farmland, corridors (Gujarat)	mainly Amreli, Bhavnagar, Gir Somnath, Rajkot	**394**

NP national park · WLS wildlife sanctuary. Counts include adjoining areas. Source: Gujarat Forest Department: lion estimation report 2025 (Tables 1, 3), Gir book 2023, Barda Sanctuary page.

IN THE WORLD

Asia: India only

The lion lives mainly in Africa south of the Sahara. In Asia it survives in the wild only in Gujarat. It once ranged from Syria through Iraq, Iran and Pakistan to Bihar. Its last records: Iraq 1918, Iran 1942. IUCN groups India's lions with West and Central Africa's as *Panthera leo leo*.

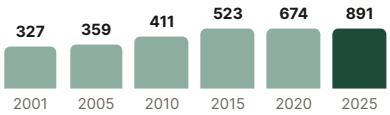
Source: IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group; Gujarat Forest Department (Gir book, 2023)

CONSERVATION

Gujarat declared Gir a sanctuary in 1965 and began its Lion Project in 1972. Project Lion, announced on 15 August 2020, has a ten-year MoEFCC budget of ₹2,927.71 crore; its plan is 'Lion @ 47: Vision for Amrutkal'. A National Referral Centre for wildlife health is being built at Junagadh.

891

Asiatic lions counted, 2001–2025



Gujarat Forest Department

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2019 · Q22

Also asked: 2017 · 2024

Consider the following statements : 1. Asiatic lion is naturally found in India only. 2. Double-humped camel is naturally found in India only. 3. One-horned rhinoceros is naturally found in India only. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

UPSC KEY **(a) 1 only.** Wild Asiatic lions live only in Gujarat. The Bactrian camel is native to Central Asia; the one-horned rhino also lives in Nepal.

MAMMALS · 03

Cheetah

Acinonyx jubatus

EX | EW | CR | EN | **VU** | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Vulnerable

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

OCT 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

On 7 October 2026 two cheetahs from Kuno were released into enclosures in **Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve**, the third cheetah site in Madhya Pradesh. After two young cheetahs died later that month, the state forest department counted **58 cheetahs** on 27 October: 52 in Kuno, 4 in Gandhi Sagar and 2 in Veerangana Durgavati.

Full story

Source: DD News (6 Oct 2026); PTI (7 and 27 Oct 2026), quoting the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department

ABOUT

The cheetah is a slender, long-legged cat whose tawny coat carries solid black spots, unlike a leopard's rosettes. A black 'tear line' runs from each eye to the mouth, and a long tail balances it at speed. It lives in open grassland and savanna and hunts small animals such as gazelles.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- **Project Cheetah** began on 17 September 2022 with eight cheetahs from Namibia. Twelve came from South Africa in February 2023 and nine from Botswana in February 2026.
- Most cheetahs are now **India-born**: 41 of 60 on 5 October 2026. Mukhi became the first India-born cheetah to give birth, with five cubs at Kuno in November 2025.
- **Gandhi Sagar WLS**, which the Chambal river divides, became the second site on 20 April 2025, when two males moved there from Kuno. Two females followed.
- India declared the cheetah extinct in 1952; the last three were shot in 1947 in Koriya, now in Chhattisgarh. Project Cheetah is the first intercontinental translocation of a large carnivore.

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- It cannot roar. Instead it purrs, chirps, barks, growls and hisses.
- Unlike most cats it hunts mainly by day: it stalks, then sprints at up to 103 km/h, seldom over 300 m.
- Females live alone with their cubs. Males stay solitary or form coalitions of two or three, usually littermates.
- Gestation lasts 90–98 days, with one to six cubs. Its claws are only semi-retractable, gripping the ground in fast turns.

PRELIMS TRAP

The cheetahs in India are African cheetahs from Namibia, South Africa and Botswana. The **Asiatic cheetah** that once lived in India survives only in Iran, with fewer than 50 adults, and is Critically Endangered.

BIG CATS OF INDIA: WHO ROARS

KIND	SCIENTIFIC NAME	WHERE IN INDIA	IUCN		COUNT
Tiger	*Panthera tigris*	MP 785, Karnataka 563, Uttarakhand 560	Endangered	roars	**3,682 (2022)**
Asiatic lion	*Panthera leo*	Gujarat only: 7 districts of Saurashtra	Endangered	roars	**891 (2025)**
Leopard	*Panthera pardus*	MP 3,907; Maharashtra 1,985	Vulnerable	roars	**13,874 (2022)**
Snow leopard	*Panthera uncia*	Ladakh 477, Uttarakhand 124 + 4 more	Vulnerable	cannot roar	**718 (2019–23)**
Clouded leopard	*Neofelis nebulosa*	NE states, Sikkim, N Bengal, Bihar	Vulnerable	cannot roar	
Cheetah	*Acinonyx jubatus*	Madhya Pradesh: Kuno + 2 more sites	Vulnerable	cannot roar	**58 (Oct 2026)**

Tiger, lion and leopard roar. The snow leopard and clouded leopard cannot, and the cheetah purrs instead. Counts are the latest official estimates.

WHERE IN INDIA

Madhya Pradesh: 3 sites, 58 cheetahs

PROTECTED AREA (STATE)	DISTRICT	CHEETAHS, 27 OCT 2026
Kuno NP (Madhya Pradesh) FIRST SITE, 2022	Sheopur	**52**
Gandhi Sagar WLS (Madhya Pradesh) SINCE 2025	Mandsaur, Neemuch	**4**
Veerangana Durgavati TR (Madhya Pradesh) NEW HOME	Sagar, Damoh, Narsinghpur	**2**
Banni grasslands (Gujarat) PLANNED	Kutch; proposed next site	

NP national park · WLS wildlife sanctuary · TR tiger reserve. Counts include cubs. Source: MP Forest Department via PTI (27 Oct 2026); NTCA cheetah action plan (2021); MP Forest Department, Gandhi Sagar plan; DD News (6 Oct 2026); NTCA, 28th meeting record (Dec 2025).

IN THE WORLD

Africa and Iran

Most wild cheetahs live in the drier parts of sub-Saharan Africa; Namibia–Botswana and Kenya–Tanzania are the strongholds. The IUCN lists the species as Vulnerable, with about 6,500 mature adults in 33 subpopulations. The cheetah once ranged from Africa through Iran and Afghanistan to central India.

Source: IUCN Red List (Durant et al. 2022); IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group

CONSERVATION

Project Cheetah began on 17 September 2022 under NTCA's Action Plan for Introduction of Cheetah in India and runs under Project Tiger. NTCA, the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department and WII implement it. More than 350 villagers serve as 'Cheetah Mitras', explaining cheetah behaviour and helping to reduce conflict.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2024 · Q25

Also asked: 2012

Consider the following statements : 1. Lions do not have a particular breeding season. 2. Unlike most other big cats, cheetahs do not roar. 3. Unlike male lions, male leopards do not proclaim their territory by scent marking. Which of the statements given above are correct ?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

UPSC KEY **(a) 1 and 2 only.** Lions breed in any season and cheetahs purr but cannot roar. Male leopards do mark territory with scent.

MAMMALS · 04

Asian Elephant

Elephas maximus

EX | EW | CR | **EN** | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Endangered

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

OCT 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

Northeast Frontier Railway said in October 2026 that its measures prevented train collisions involving **255 elephants** in January–September 2026: AI intrusion alerts, patrols, speed limits and **Plan Bee** devices that play bee sounds. India's first DNA-based count, SAIEE 2021–25, estimated 22,446 wild elephants.

Full story

Source: Clarity UPSC daily news, 10 Oct 2026; Northeast Frontier Railway via The Economic Times (5 Oct 2026); Wildlife Institute of India, SAIEE 2021–25

ABOUT

The Asian elephant is slightly smaller than its African cousins and has one finger-like tip on its trunk. Only some males grow large tusks; most females and some males have small tushes. A forest animal and herbivore, it eats mainly grass, with leaves, bark, roots and fruit: 74–150 kg of food a day.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Teams collected 21,056 dung samples. **DNA** fingerprints identified 4,065 individual elephants, and mark–recapture models estimated the total.
- **Project Elephant**, a centrally sponsored scheme since 1992, protects elephants, their habitats and corridors. India has 33 Elephant Reserves covering 80,777 sq km in 14 states.
- India has **150 elephant corridors**, mapped in 2023: East-Central 52, North-East 48, Southern 32, Northern 18. West Bengal has the most (26); six cross into Nepal.
- The elephant is India's **National Heritage Animal**. A 2022 amendment to the Wild Life (Protection) Act lets certified owners transfer captive elephants for religious or other purposes, under 2024 rules.

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Herds are female-led groups of related females and their young. Males leave the herd at puberty, between 8 and 13 years.
- Gestation lasts 21.5–22 months, the longest of any animal. A cow usually bears one calf, at least four to five years apart.
- Adult males go through musth, a testosterone surge that makes them aggressive. Elephants call in infrasonic rumbles humans barely hear.
- A keystone species, it spreads seeds over long distances and creates paths and water holes used by other wildlife.

PRELIMS TRAP

SAIEE 2021–25 is a new DNA-based baseline. The report says it is not comparable with earlier counts, such as 29,964 in 2017, because the method changed; the lower figure is not a measured decline.

ELEPHANTS: ASIAN AND AFRICAN (THREE SPECIES)

KIND	SCIENTIFIC NAME	WHERE IN INDIA	IUCN	COUNT
Asian elephant	*Elephas maximus*	Karnataka 6,013; Assam 4,159; TN 3,136	Endangered	**22,446 (2021–25)**
African savanna elephant	*Loxodonta africana*	Sub-Saharan Africa: grassland to desert	Endangered	
African forest elephant	*Loxodonta cyclotis*	Central African forests; West Africa	Critically Endangered	

IUCN first assessed Africa's two elephant species separately in March 2021; until then it listed one species, as Vulnerable. India's figure is the DNA-based SAIEE estimate.

WHERE IN INDIA

Four landscapes · Western Ghats lead

LANDSCAPE (STATES)	LARGEST STATE COUNTS	ELEPHANTS
Western Ghats (Karnataka / Tamil Nadu / Keralam) SPANS 3 STATES	Karnataka 6,013 · Tamil Nadu 3,136	**11,934**
North-East hills & Brahmaputra plains (Assam / Meghalaya / West Bengal / Arunachal Pradesh / Nagaland / Tripura / Mizoram / Manipur) SPANS 8 STATES	Assam 4,159 · Meghalaya 677	**6,559**
Shivalik hills & Gangetic plains (Uttarakhand / Uttar Pradesh / Bihar) SPANS 3 STATES	Uttarakhand 1,792 · Uttar Pradesh 257	**2,062**
Central India & Eastern Ghats (Odisha / Chhattisgarh / Jharkhand / Andhra Pradesh / Madhya Pradesh / Maharashtra / West Bengal) SPANS 7 STATES	Odisha 912 · Chhattisgarh 451	**1,891**

Counts are SAIEE 2021–25 DNA-based estimates; the four landscapes add up to 22,446. North Bengal counts with the North-East, south Bengal with Central India; Maharashtra counts with Central India. Source: Wildlife Institute of India, SAIEE 2021–25, Table E.1.

IN THE WORLD

Most live in India

Asian elephants live wild in 13 countries, from India, Nepal and Sri Lanka to Sumatra and Borneo. The IUCN lists the species as Endangered (2020); its range-wide estimate for 2018 was 48,323–51,680. India holds the largest share, which the government puts at nearly 60%.

Source: IUCN Red List (Williams et al. 2020); PIB, World Elephant Day backgrounder (12 Aug 2026)

CONSERVATION

Project Elephant (1992, MoEFCC) has run with Project Tiger as one scheme, Project Tiger & Elephant, since 2023–24. The Gajah Suchana app keeps DNA profiles of captive elephants, and rail measures cut train-hit elephant deaths from 26 in 2013 to 12 in 2024.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2020 · Q72

Also asked: 1999 · 2003

With reference to Indian elephants, consider the following statements : 1. The leader of an elephant group is a female. 2. The maximum gestation period can be 22 months. 3. An elephant can normally go on calving till the age of 40 years only. 4. Among the States in India, the highest elephant population is in Kerala. Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 4 only (c) 3 only (d) 1, 3 and 4 only

Since then: Karnataka, not Kerala, has the most elephants: 6,013 in the 2021–25 DNA-based count.

UPSC KEY **(a) 1 and 2 only.** Herds are led by an older female and gestation can reach 22 months. Females calve beyond 40.

MAMMALS · 05

Ganges River Dolphin

Platanista gangetica

EX | EW | CR | **EN** | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Endangered

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

JAN 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

India's second range-wide estimation of river and estuarine dolphins began from Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh, on 17 January 2026. The Wildlife Institute of India coordinates it. Irrawaddy dolphins are counted for the first time. The first estimate (2021–23) put the number at **6,327**.

Source: PIB (MoEFCC), 17 Jan 2026 and 3 Mar 2025; WII, Population Status of River Dolphins in India 2021–23

ABOUT

The Ganges river dolphin, or susu, is a greyish-brown freshwater dolphin with a long, thin snout holding up to 130 sharp teeth, a low triangular dorsal fin and rudimentary eyes. Females are larger than males, reaching 2.67 m against 2.12 m. It prefers deep water where rivers meet, and hunts fish and shrimp.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- The **first estimate** by state: Uttar Pradesh 2,397, Bihar 2,220, West Bengal 815, Assam 635, Jharkhand 162, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh 95, Punjab 3.
- The dolphin became India's **National Aquatic Animal** after a decision at the first National Ganga River Basin Authority meeting on 5 October 2009. National Dolphin Day falls on 5 October.
- The dolphin is nearly blind. It finds its way and its prey by **echolocation**: it sends out clicks and reads the returning echoes.
- In December 2024 a male was fitted with a **satellite tag** in Assam's Kulsi river. It was the first tagging of a Ganges river dolphin anywhere.

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Its rudimentary eye lacks a lens and may only sense light. It was the first cetacean found to swim on its side.
- It makes no whistles; its sounds are clicks, which it emits continuously.
- Gestation lasts 9–11 months. A female, mature at 10–12 years, bears one calf every two to three years.
- An indicator of river health, it moves with water levels: in the dry season many leave tributaries for the main channels.

PRELIMS TRAP

The 6,327 figure covers two species: 6,324 Ganges river dolphins and 3 Indus river dolphins in Punjab's Beas. IUCN has assessed the Indus river dolphin, *Platanista minor*, as a separate species since 2022.

RIVER AND ESTUARINE DOLPHINS OF INDIA

KIND	SCIENTIFIC NAME	WHERE IN INDIA	IUCN	COUNT
Ganges river dolphin	*Platanista gangetica*	UP, Bihar, WB, Assam, Jharkhand, MP, Raj	Endangered	**6,324 (2021–23)**
Indus river dolphin	*Platanista minor*	Lower Beas near Harike, Punjab	Endangered	**3 (2021–23)**
Irrawaddy dolphin	*Orcaella brevirostris*	Chilika (Odisha); Sundarbans (WB)	Endangered	**159 in Chilika (Jan 2026)**

Ganges dolphins by state: UP 2,397, Bihar 2,220, West Bengal 815, Assam 635, Jharkhand 162, Rajasthan and MP 95. The 2026 estimation adds Irrawaddy dolphins.

WHERE IN INDIA

28 rivers in 8 states · UP, Bihar lead

PROTECTED AREA (STATE)	WHERE	DOLPHINS 2021–23
Ganga main stem (Uttar Pradesh / Bihar / Jharkhand / West Bengal) SPANS 4 STATES	Bijnor (UP) to the delta	**3,275**
Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary (Bihar)	Bhagalpur: Sultanganj–Kahalgaon, 60 km	
Hastinapur WLS (Uttar Pradesh)	Ganga, Bijnor to Garhmukteshwar	
National Chambal Sanctuary (Rajasthan / Madhya Pradesh / Uttar Pradesh) SPANS 3 STATES	lower Chambal, Basai Dang to the Yamuna	
Brahmaputra & tributaries (Assam)	incl. Kulsi near Guwahati (tagged 2024)	**635**
Bhagirathi–Hooghly (West Bengal)	Farakka to Kakdwip; scarce in Sundarbans	

WLS wildlife sanctuary. Counts are WII river-wise estimates (2021–23); the Ganga figure includes the sanctuaries on the main stem. Punjab's Beas holds 3 Indus dolphins. Source: WII river-dolphin estimate 2021–23; WII protected-area pages and Chambal report 2026; PIB (Dec 2024); AIR (Mar 2025); Down To Earth; Das et al. 2025 (Frontiers); Mitra & Roy Chowdhury 2018 (JoTT).

IN THE WORLD

India: ~90% of all

The Ganges river dolphin lives only in the Ganges–Brahmaputra–Meghna and Karnaphuli–Sangu river systems of India, Nepal and Bangladesh. About 90% of the population is in India. Its closest relative, the Indus river dolphin, lives in Pakistan's Indus and in a tiny pocket of India's Beas.

Source: PIB (Dec 2024); Rai et al. 2023, Ecology and Evolution; IUCN SSC Cetacean Specialist Group (2022); Mongabay India (2024)

CONSERVATION

Project Dolphin, launched on 15 August 2020, covers river and marine dolphins under a Comprehensive Action Plan (2022–2047). The 2022 WPA amendment lists Ganges and Indus dolphins as separate species in Schedule I. Bihar notified the Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary in 1991. WII coordinates the range-wide estimation.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2014 · Q14

Also asked: 2015 · 2019

Other than poaching, what are the possible reasons for the decline in the population of Ganges River Dolphins? 1. Construction of dams and barrages on rivers 2. Increase in the population of crocodiles in rivers 3. Getting trapped in fishing nets accidentally 4. Use of synthetic fertilizers and other agricultural chemicals in crop-fields in the vicinity of rivers Select the correct answer using the code given below.

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1, 3 and 4 only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

UPSC KEY (c) 1, 3 and 4 only. Dams and barrages, fishing nets and farm chemicals harm the dolphin. Crocodiles are not a recognised threat.

MAMMALS · 06

Indian Wolf

Canis lupus pallipes

EX | EW | CR | EN | **VU** | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Vulnerable

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

OCT 2025 **WHY IN NEWS**

In October 2025 the IUCN Red List assessed the **Indian wolf** on its own for the first time and listed it as **Vulnerable**. The assessment estimates 2,877–3,310 mature wolves in India and Pakistan. Only about 12% of the wolf's range lies inside protected areas, so most wolves live near farms and herds.

Full story

Source: Wildlife Institute of India (11 Oct 2025); APP report on the IUCN assessment (Oct 2025); IUCN SSC Canid Specialist Group

ABOUT

The Indian wolf is small: adults weigh 17–25 kg and have a sandy-brown coat with black hair tips. It sheds most of its fur in summer, which suits it to hot, semi-arid plains. It lives in grassland, scrub and farmland and hunts blackbuck, chinkara and hares; where wild prey is scarce, it lives mainly on goats and sheep.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Genetic studies place the Indian wolf in its own **lineage**, found only in India and Pakistan. The IUCN assessed it separately because it may be a distinct species.
- A top predator of open grasslands and scrub, it loses ground to farming and industry, and faces scarce prey, retaliatory killing and dog-borne disease.
- Wolves range widely and need scrub for dens, so researchers urge **landscape-level** conservation of grasslands beyond protected areas.
- The WPA lists it in Schedule I as the grey wolf, *Canis lupus*. **CITES** puts wolves of India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bhutan in Appendix I; others in Appendix II.

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Lives in packs led by a monogamous alpha pair, which defend territories of 150–300 sq km by scent marking and howling.
- Mates in October–November; pups are born in December–January in an underground den dug by the alpha pair.
- Gestation lasts 62–63 days; litters average 4.8 pups, and young may leave the pack after eight months.
- Hunts mostly at night. Packs number 6–12 where wild prey abounds but 1–4 where livestock form the diet.

PRELIMS TRAP

The grey wolf (*Canis lupus*) is Least Concern worldwide, but the Indian wolf, assessed separately in 2025, is **Vulnerable**. India's other wolf, the Himalayan wolf of Ladakh and Lahaul–Spiti, was also listed Vulnerable, in 2023.

WOLVES AND THE DHOLE IN INDIA

KIND	SCIENTIFIC NAME	WHERE IN INDIA	IUCN
Indian wolf	*Canis lupus pallipes*	~15 states; Karnataka a stronghold	Vulnerable
Himalayan wolf	*Canis lupus chanco*	Ladakh, Lahaul–Spiti (HP), Sikkim	Vulnerable
Grey wolf (whole species)	*Canis lupus*	~68 countries: Asia, Europe, N America	Least Concern
Dhole (Asiatic wild dog)	*Cuon alpinus*	W Ghats, central India, NE; Uttarakhand	Endangered

IUCN assesses the Indian and Himalayan wolves separately; genetic studies find them deeply divergent lineages. The dhole, a different genus, hunts in packs of 2–24.

WHERE IN INDIA

~15 states, mostly outside PAs

PROTECTED AREA (STATE)	WHERE
Deccan plateau grasslands (Maharashtra / Karnataka / Telangana / Andhra Pradesh) SPANS 4 STATES	dry plains; Karnataka a stronghold
Bankapura Wolf WLS (Karnataka) WOLF SANCTUARY	Koppal; about 332 ha
Mahuadanr Wolf WLS (Jharkhand) WOLF SANCTUARY	Latehar; declared 1976
Kailadevi WLS (Rajasthan)	Karauli
Velavadar (Blackbuck) NP (Gujarat)	Bhavnagar, Bhal region
Rajaji TR (Uttarakhand)	Dehradun, Haridwar, Pauri; first photos 2022

WLS wildlife sanctuary · NP national park · TR tiger reserve. Most wolves live outside protected areas. Source: Gubbi et al. 2020, Mahajan & Khandal 2021, Krishna et al. 2022 (Canid Biology & Conservation); Jharkhand Forest Department; Down To Earth (Bankapura, Feb 2025); Bhavnagar district administration.

IN THE WORLD

India and Pakistan

The Indian wolf lives only in India and Pakistan, mostly in India; Pakistan holds an estimated 269–290 mature wolves. The grey wolf species, which includes it, ranges across about 68 countries in Asia, Europe and North America.

Source: IUCN Red List assessment as reported by APP (2025); Gubbi et al. 2020

CONSERVATION

Protection rests on WPA Schedule I and CITES Appendix I. Mahuadanr in Jharkhand, declared on 23 June 1976, was India's first wolf sanctuary; Karnataka's Bankapura Wolf Sanctuary in Koppal recorded two litters of eight pups in early 2025. Researchers urge protecting dens and grasslands outside reserves, where most wolves live.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2002 · Q74

Which one of the following animals is monogamous?

(a) Wolf (b) Walrus (c) Seal (d) Deer

ANSWER **(a) Wolf.** A wolf pack is usually a breeding pair that stays together, with its offspring. Walrus, seals and deer males mate with many females.

BIRDS · 01

Great Indian Bustard

Ardeotis nigriceps

EX | EW | **CR** | EN | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

OCT 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

On 4 October 2026 the Union Environment Minister released **two male great Indian bustards** into the wild at Sam in Desert National Park, Jaisalmer. They were the first of 11 birds set aside for release. The breeding centres at Sam and Ramdevra hold 97 birds: 57 bred in captivity and 40 from wild-laid eggs.

Full story

Source: PIB (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change), 4 October 2026

ABOUT

The great Indian bustard is one of India's largest flying birds. Males stand 1–1.2 m tall and weigh 15–18 kg; females are smaller. Males have a white neck and a black nape. It has no hind toe, so it cannot perch; it lives on the ground in arid grassland and eats insects, lizards, rodents, berries and crops.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- WII's 2024–25 survey of about 14,000 sq km of the Thar estimated **130 ± 21** wild birds, stable since 2017–18. The birds used only about 16% of the area.
- In **M.K. Ranjitsinh v. Union of India** (19 December 2025), the Supreme Court fixed priority areas of 14,013 sq km in Rajasthan and 740 sq km in Gujarat.
- Bustards fly into **power lines** because their eyes face sideways. The court barred new overhead lines above 11 kV outside set corridors, and new wind turbines, in priority areas.
- Kutch in Gujarat has only three wild females. Under the **jumpstart** method, captive-laid eggs placed under wild females have hatched six chicks in Rajasthan and two in Gujarat.

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Males court in leks: a displaying male inflates his throat pouch until it nearly touches the ground, and booms.
- The female usually lays one egg a year, two after a good monsoon, on bare ground; incubation takes about 28 days.
- Only the mother cares for the chick, which may follow her for more than a year.
- An omnivore, it eats locusts, grasshoppers, lizards, desert jirds and berries, and takes millet, jowar and groundnut from fields.

PRELIMS TRAP

WII's 130 ± 21 is an estimate of wild birds in the Thar survey area of Rajasthan. The 97 birds at Sam and Ramdevra are captive stock, and Gujarat's three wild females lie outside that survey.

BUSTARDS OF INDIA

KIND	SCIENTIFIC NAME	WHERE IN INDIA	IUCN	COUNT
Great Indian bustard	*Ardeotis nigriceps*	Thar, Rajasthan; Kutch, Gujarat	Critically Endangered	**130 ± 21 wild (Thar, 2024–25)**
Lesser florican	*Sypheotides indicus*	Breeds SE Rajasthan, W MP, Gujarat	Critically Endangered	**500–600 (2018)**
Bengal florican	*Houbaropsis bengalensis*	Assam, Arunachal, UP Terai grasslands	Critically Endangered	
MacQueen's bustard	*Chlamydotis macqueenii*	Winter visitor to the Thar, Rajasthan	Vulnerable	

All four are globally threatened. The lesser florican, the smallest bustard, breeds in the monsoon; displaying males leap 2–3 m, up to 600 times a day.

WHERE IN INDIA

Thar stronghold · 3 females in Kutch

PROTECTED AREA (STATE)	DISTRICT	BIRDS
Desert NP & Pokhran range (Rajasthan)	Jaisalmer, Barmer	**130 ± 21**
Sam & Ramdevra breeding centres (Rajasthan) CAPTIVE	Jaisalmer	**97**
Kutch Bustard Sanctuary, Naliya (Gujarat)	Kutch (Abdasa taluka)	**3 females**

NP national park · WLS wildlife sanctuary. The wild estimate covers about 14,000 sq km of the Thar; the captive count is for October 2026. Maharashtra and Karnataka have had only single sightings since 2022, and Rollapadu WLS (Andhra Pradesh) none since 2019. Source: WII Thar survey report 2024–25; PIB, 4 Oct 2026; Gujarat Forest Department via ThePrint (May 2026); BNHS bustard status report 2026.

IN THE WORLD

India and Pakistan

The great Indian bustard lives only on the Indian subcontinent. It once ranged from Sindh in Pakistan east to the Chota Nagpur plateau and south to Tamil Nadu. It has vanished from about 90% of that range. IUCN lists India and Pakistan, where a few birds survive in the Cholistan desert.

Source: IUCN Red List (BirdLife International, 2018); BNHS bustard status report 2026; Dawn (April 2025)

CONSERVATION

The Bustard Recovery Programme of MoEFCC, the Rajasthan Forest Department and WII, funded by National CAMPA, breeds birds at Sam and Ramdevra; the state has fenced about 200 sq km of grassland in Desert NP. A National GIB Conservation Action Plan was announced in March 2025.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2020 · Q95

Also asked: 2010 · 2012

With reference to India's Desert National Park, which of the following statements are correct ? 1. It is spread over two districts. 2. There is no human habitation inside the Park. 3. It is one of the natural habitats of Great Indian Bustard. Select the correct answer using the code given below :

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

UPSC KEY (c) 1 and 3 only. Desert NP spans Jaisalmer and Barmer districts of Rajasthan and holds the bustard's largest population. Villages lie inside the park.

BIRDS · 02

Slender-billed Vulture

Gyps tenuirostris

EX | EW | **CR** | EN | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix II**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

AUG 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

On 7 August 2026 **five captive-bred slender-billed vultures** and five white-rumped vultures were released from the Jatayu Soft Release Centre at Tewaripal, Biswanath, Assam. The Assam Forest Department and the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) run the programme. It was the world's first release of captive-bred slender-billed vultures.

Source: PTI, from a BNHS statement, 8 August 2026; The Sentinel (Assam), 8 August 2026

ABOUT

The slender-billed vulture is one of India's Gyps vultures, named for its slender bill. It feeds on carcasses, largely of cattle and buffalo. It was once widespread across the lower Gangetic plains and the Brahmaputra valley; in India it now nests only in Upper Assam.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Three of India's resident **Gyps vultures**, the white-rumped, Indian and slender-billed, are Critically Endangered. They crashed from the mid-1990s after eating carcasses of cattle treated with diclofenac.
- WII's first pan-India vulture assessment (2023–25) found only 20 active slender-billed vulture nests, at 12 sites, all in Upper Assam. Most nests were on tall silk-cotton trees.
- The **Rani centre** in Kamrup, run by BNHS and the Assam Forest Department since 2007, held 57 slender-billed vultures in 2025–26. The Pinjore centre in Haryana held 66.
- The Environment Ministry estimated India's slender-billed vultures at about **1,000** in 2017, against 26,500 Indian and 6,000 white-rumped vultures.

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- It nests high in tall trees, mostly silk-cotton (*Bombax ceiba*) in floodplains, so felling big trees costs it nest sites.
- A slow breeder: it lays one egg, incubated for about 55 days. Even at best, a wild vulture population takes about ten years to double.
- Diclofenac in carcasses causes kidney failure, with uric-acid crystals coating the organs (visceral gout); 75% of dead vultures tested had it.
- Feral dogs now crowd many carcass dumps and block vultures' access to carrion, WII's 2023–25 survey found.

PRELIMS TRAP

Meloxicam and tolfenamic acid are vulture-safe livestock painkillers. India has banned diclofenac (2006), ketoprofen and aceclofenac (2023) and nimesulide (2024) for animal use.

VULTURES OF INDIA (9 SPECIES)

KIND	SCIENTIFIC NAME	WHERE IN INDIA	IUCN	COUNT
White-rumped vulture	*Gyps bengalensis*	69 nest sites, incl. Assam and Himachal	Critically Endangered	**~6,000 (2017)**
Indian vulture	*Gyps indicus*	Central India; released in Maharashtra	Critically Endangered	**~26,500 (2017)**
Slender-billed vulture	*Gyps tenuirostris*	Nests only in Upper Assam	Critically Endangered	**~1,000 (2017)**
Red-headed vulture	*Sarcogyps calvus*	Scattered; 5 nest sites found 2023–25	Critically Endangered	

India has nine vulture species; the other five are the Egyptian, Himalayan griffon, Eurasian griffon, cinereous and bearded vultures. Counts: MoEFCC estimates, 2017.

WHERE IN INDIA

Wild nests only in Upper Assam

PROTECTED AREA (STATE)	DISTRICT	COUNT
Kaziranga NP & TR, 6th addition (Assam) RELEASE	Biswanath (Tewaripal release site)	**5 birds**
Dimow nesting colony (Assam)	Sivasagar	**15 nests**
Rani breeding centre, Jorasal RF (Assam) CAPTIVE	Kamrup	**57 birds**
Jatayu breeding centre, Pinjore (Haryana) CAPTIVE	Near Pinjore, by Bir Shikargaha WLS	**66 birds**

NP national park · TR tiger reserve · RF reserved forest · WLS wildlife sanctuary. Nest and captive counts are for 2025–26. WII found all 20 active nests of 2023–25 in Upper Assam. Source: BNHS Annual Report 2025–26; PTI (8 Aug 2026); ANI via The Tribune (9 Dec 2025); WII via Down To Earth (3 Nov 2025).

IN THE WORLD

South & SE Asia

The slender-billed vulture lives on the Gangetic plain and in the Brahmaputra valley of India, in southern Nepal and in Bangladesh. Small numbers survive in Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar; it is extinct in Thailand and Malaysia. BirdLife estimates 730–870 mature birds worldwide, most of them in India.

Source: IUCN Red List (BirdLife International, 2021)

CONSERVATION

Pinjore in Haryana, set up with BNHS in September 2001, became India's first vulture conservation breeding centre after the 2004 South Asia Vulture Recovery Plan. Rani (Assam, 2007) and Rajabhatkhawa (West Bengal) followed under MoEFCC's species recovery programme. Releases of captive-bred birds include Haryana (2024), Maharashtra (2025–26) and Assam (2026).

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2012 · Q100

Vultures which used to be very common in Indian countryside some years ago are rarely seen nowadays. This is attributed to

(a) the destruction of their nesting sites by new invasive species
(b) a drug used by cattle owners for treating their diseased cattle
(c) scarcity of food available to them
(d) a widespread, persistent and fatal disease among them

UPSC KEY **(b) a drug used by cattle owners for treating their diseased cattle.** Vultures that eat carcasses of cattle treated with diclofenac die of kidney failure. India banned the drug for veterinary use in 2006.

REPTILES · 01

Gharial

Gavialis gangeticus

EX | EW | **CR** | EN | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

SEP 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

A Wildlife Institute of India boat survey of 22 Ganga-basin rivers (2020–23), published in September 2026, counted at least **3,037 gharials** in 13 rivers; 2,097 were in the Chambal. In April 2026 the Supreme Court stayed Rajasthan's de-notification of 732 hectares of the National Chambal Sanctuary in a case on illegal sand mining.

Source: Hussain et al. (WII), Frontiers in Conservation Science, 16 Sep 2026; Supreme Court order of 2 Apr 2026 (PTI)

ABOUT

The gharial is a crocodilian with a very long, thin snout suited to catching fish. Males can exceed 6 m and grow a bulbous knob on the snout tip, the ghara, named after an Indian pot. It lives in deep, flowing rivers with high sandbanks for basking and nesting, and eats mainly fish.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Only **107 adult males** were seen across the basin, 80 of them in the Chambal. Surveyors identify adult males by the ghara, a knob on the snout tip.
- More than **9,000 captive-reared gharials** have been released into Ganga-basin rivers, yet most rivers hold fewer than 100. Only about 10% of the rivers' length is highly suitable habitat.
- The **Ghaghra** holds the second-largest group (463), but no nests have been found there. The authors think gharials disperse downstream from the Girwa in Katarniaghat.
- **Project Crocodile** began in the mid-1970s with habitat protection and 'grow and release'. Chambal numbers have grown about 7% a year since 1979, when 107 were counted.

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- **Temperature-dependent sex**: in WII's Chambal study, nests near 32 °C gave mostly males; cooler or hotter nests mostly females.
- Mating takes place in December–January; in March–April females dig **hole nests** in river sandbanks and lay about 40 eggs.
- Its eggs are the largest of any crocodilian. Mothers guard hatchlings but, unlike most crocodilians, do not carry them in their jaws.
- Among the most aquatic crocodilians, adults cannot walk semi-upright on land; they leave the water mainly to bask and nest.

PRELIMS TRAP

India has three crocodilians. IUCN rates the gharial Critically Endangered, the mugger Vulnerable and the saltwater crocodile Least Concern. All three are in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act.

CROCODILIANS OF INDIA (THREE SPECIES)

KIND	SCIENTIFIC NAME	WHERE IN INDIA	IUCN	COUNT
Gharial	*Gavialis gangeticus*	UP, MP, Rajasthan, Bihar, Odisha	Critically Endangered	**3,037 (WII, 2020–23)**
Mugger (marsh crocodile)	*Crocodylus palustris*	Gujarat, TN, MP and 15 other states	Vulnerable	
Saltwater crocodile	*Crocodylus porosus*	Bhitarkanika, Odisha; India's east coast	Least Concern	**1,858 in Bhitarkanika (Jan 2026)**

All three are in WPA Schedule I and CITES Appendix I. The mugger has the broadest snout, the gharial a long, thin one; the saltwater crocodile is the largest crocodilian.

WHERE IN INDIA

13 Ganga-basin rivers + Mahanadi

PROTECTED AREA (STATE)	WHERE	GHARIALS 2020–23
National Chambal Sanctuary (Rajasthan / Madhya Pradesh / Uttar Pradesh) SPANS 3 STATES CORE	Jawahar Sagar Dam to Yamuna confluence	**2,097**
Ghaghra river (Uttar Pradesh)	below Girijapuri barrage	**463**
Katarniaghat WLS (Uttar Pradesh)	Bahraich; Girwa river, 36 nests in 2022	**158**
Gandak river (Bihar / Uttar Pradesh) SPANS 2 STATES	Valmikinagar barrage to Sonepur	**108**
Son Gharial WLS (Madhya Pradesh)	Sidhi; Son, Banas and Gopad rivers	**34**
Satkosia Gorge WLS (Odisha)	Angul; Mahanadi, wild hatchlings since 2021	

WLS wildlife sanctuary. Counts are WII minimum counts for each river (2020–23), not for a sanctuary alone; the Mahanadi lay outside the survey. Bihar's 2025 Gandak count was 372; a February 2026 estimate found at least 433 (Wildlife Trust of India). Source: Hussain et al. 2026 (Frontiers, Table 1); WII Chambal report 2026; Vashistha et al. 2023 (Oryx); Mongabay India (2023); Sidhi district (MP); India-WRIS; Down To Earth (2023); PTI (Aug 2025).

IN THE WORLD

India and Nepal

The gharial is found only in the Indian subcontinent. It survives in the Ganga, Mahanadi and Brahmaputra basins of India and Nepal, with occasional records from Bangladesh. It once also lived in the Indus, Kaladan and Irrawaddy systems, from Pakistan to Myanmar. India's Chambal holds the largest population.

Source: Hussain et al. 2026 (WII), Frontiers in Conservation Science

CONSERVATION

Project Crocodile began in 1975 with FAO and UNDP support. It set up rearing centres and 13 crocodile sanctuaries covering 8,000 sq km, among them the National Chambal Sanctuary (1978). Eggs are still collected for 'grow and release', and WII surveys gharials under the National Mission for Clean Ganga.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2017 · Q67

Also asked: 2013 · 2015

If you want to see gharials in their natural habitat, which one of the following is the best place to visit ?

(a) Bhitarkanika Mangroves (b) Chambal River (c) Pulicat Lake (d) Deepor Beel

UPSC KEY **(b) Chambal River.** The Chambal, in the National Chambal Sanctuary (Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh), holds the largest wild gharial population.

REPTILES · 02

Olive Ridley Turtle

Lepidochelys olivacea

EX | EW | CR | EN | **VU** | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Vulnerable

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

APR 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

In April 2026 Tamil Nadu's environment department said early satellite data showed that some olive ridleys tagged on its coast had already reached the **Sri Lanka Dome**. In this seasonal upwelling zone off Sri Lanka, cool, nutrient-rich water rises to the surface. Its plankton blooms draw fish, whales, seabirds and turtles. Experts expect Odisha's nesting turtles to feed there too.

Full story

Source: Clarity UPSC daily news, 26 Apr 2026; Tamil Nadu environment department satellite-tagging data, via The Hindu

ABOUT

The olive ridley and Kemp's ridley are the smallest sea turtles. Adults are about 60–75 cm long and weigh up to about 45 kg. The olive ridley is named for its olive-green, heart-shaped shell. It lives mainly in the open tropical ocean, also uses coastal waters, and eats algae, crustaceans, molluscs and tunicates.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- An **arribada** is a synchronised mass nesting by thousands of females; only ridley turtles do it. India's main arribada beaches are in Odisha.
- The Indian Coast Guard's **Operation Olivia** patrols Odisha's turtle waters every November to May. In February 2025, a record 6.98 lakh turtles nested at Rushikulya, it said.
- Odisha requires trawlers to fit **Turtle Excluder Devices**, grids that let caught turtles escape the net. In October 2026 MPEDA gave Odisha's trawler owners 1,200 TEDs free.
- A turtle tagged by **ZSI** at Gahirmatha in 2021 nested at Guhagar, Maharashtra, in January 2025 after travelling about 3,600 km: the first recorded turtle to nest on both coasts.

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- **Temperature-dependent sex**: sand temperature in the middle third of incubation fixes each hatchling's sex; warmer sand gives more females.
- Females nest every year, one to three times a season, laying about 100 eggs each time; Odisha's arribada clutches average about 120.
- **Omnivorous**: it eats algae, crustaceans, molluscs and tunicates, and dives to about 150 m to feed on the seabed.
- Hatchlings find the sea by moving away from the dark landward dunes and vegetation; beach lights can disorient them.

PRELIMS TRAP

The olive ridley is **Vulnerable** on the IUCN Red List. Its look-alike, Kemp's ridley of the Gulf of Mexico, is Critically Endangered. In India the olive ridley is in WPA Schedule I, the highest protection.

SEA TURTLES OF INDIA (FIVE SPECIES)

KIND	SCIENTIFIC NAME	WHERE IN INDIA	IUCN	COUNT
Olive ridley	*Lepidochelys olivacea*	Odisha mass nesting; all mainland coasts	**Vulnerable**	**6.98 lakh nested, Rushikulya, Feb 2025**
Green turtle	*Chelonia mydas*	Lakshadweep, Gujarat, A&N Islands	LC (N. Indian Ocean: VU)	
Leatherback	*Dermochelys coriacea*	Great Nicobar, Little Andaman (A&N)	**Vulnerable**	**869 nests, Galathea Bay, 2025–26**
Hawksbill	*Eretmochelys imbricata*	A&N (South Reef Island), Lakshadweep	**Critically Endangered**	
Loggerhead	*Caretta caretta*	Gulf of Mannar, Palk Bay (Tamil Nadu)	**Vulnerable**	

All five are in WPA Schedule I and CITES Appendix I. Only the loggerhead does not nest in India. The leatherback, the largest, lacks a hard shell.

WHERE IN INDIA

Odisha arribadas · nests on all coasts

PROTECTED AREA (STATE)	WHERE	NESTERS 2025
Gahirmatha Marine WLS (Odisha)	Kendrapara; fishing banned all year	**6.07 lakh**
Rushikulya river mouth (Odisha)	Ganjam	**6.98 lakh**
Devi river mouth (Odisha)	Puri; sporadic nesting in 2025	
Cuthbert Bay WLS (Andaman & Nicobar Islands)	Andaman Islands; minor arribada site	
Coringa WLS (Andhra Pradesh)	Kakinada; nests Jan–Mar on the sand spit	
Konkan beaches (Velas, Guhagar) (Maharashtra)	Ratnagiri leads; solitary nesting	

WLS wildlife sanctuary. Counts are officials' estimates for the 2025 arribadas (Rushikulya: February phase). Other rows have sporadic or solitary nesting. Source: Down To Earth (Nov 2026); PIB/Indian Coast Guard (May 2025); PTI (Mar 2024, Feb 2025, Apr 2025); IUCN MTSG regional report 2019; East Godavari and Kakinada district sites; Mongabay India (2022).

IN THE WORLD

Tropical oceans

The olive ridley lives in tropical waters of the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic oceans. A few beaches host arribadas: La Escobilla in Mexico, Nancite and Ostional in Costa Rica, and Odisha's three sites. After nesting, Odisha's turtles mostly stay in the Bay of Bengal, moving south towards Sri Lanka.

Source: NOAA Fisheries species page; IUCN SSC Marine Turtle Specialist Group, regional report 2019

CONSERVATION

Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary (1997) protects nesting waters. Odisha bans fishing off its nesting coasts from 1 November to 31 May under the Orissa Marine Fishing Regulation Act, 1982. The Indian Coast Guard runs Operation Olivia each season, and trawlers must use TEDs. MoEFCC's National Marine Turtle Action Plan covers 2021–26.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2002 · Q138

Also asked: 2015

The sea coast of which one of the following states has become famous as a nesting place for the giant Olive Ridley turtles from South America?

(a) Goa (b) Gujarat (c) Orissa (d) Tamil Nadu

Since then: Genetic studies by the Wildlife Institute of India and CCMB show that Odisha's olive ridleys are a distinct Indian Ocean population; they do not come from South America.

ANSWER (c) Orissa. Odisha's coast holds mass-nesting beaches at Gahirmatha, Rushikulya and the Devi river mouth.

CORALS · 01

Reef-building Corals

Scleractinia (reef-building corals)

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

44% of species threatened

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix II**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

OCT 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

IUCN published its global reassessment of reef-building corals in *Nature* in October 2026. Of 774 species with enough data, **340 (44%) are threatened**, up from about one-third in 2008. IUCN first announced the figure at COP29 in Baku in November 2024. Climate change is the main threat: it decides the status of over 90% of the species most at risk.

Source: IUCN press releases, 13 Nov 2024 (COP29, Baku) and 15 Oct 2026

ABOUT

Reef-building corals are colonial animals related to jellyfish. A colony is made of many small polyps with tentacles, which lay down a hard calcium carbonate skeleton. Algae living in their tissues supply most of their food, so they grow in clear, shallow, warm seas where sunlight reaches the algae.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- **Reef-building corals** are colonies of polyps that lay down calcium carbonate skeletons. Algae in their tissues are their main food. Warm water makes corals expel them and turn white (bleaching).
- IUCN says the true share is probably higher. Its assessment closed before the fourth global bleaching event of 2023–2025, when extreme ocean heat bleached reefs worldwide, India's included.
- India has moved over 16,000 corals in the Gulf of Kutch, its largest coral translocation. Corals have also been restored in the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay.
- All stony corals (order **Scleractinia**) are in WPA Schedule I, with black, fire and organ-pipe corals. Coral reefs are also CRZ-IA areas under the Coastal Regulation Zone notifications.

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- **Zooxanthellae**, algae in coral tissue, pass up to 90% of the food they make by photosynthesis to the coral, which shelters them.
- Polyps feed mostly at night, catching small animals with tentacles armed with stinging cells (**nematocysts**), like their jellyfish relatives.
- Most species are **broadcast spawners**, releasing eggs and sperm in mass events timed by the moon; polyps also bud off clones.
- Only hard (stony) corals build reefs; soft corals lack rigid calcium carbonate skeletons.

PRELIMS TRAP

Stony corals are in WPA **Schedule I**, India's highest protection, but in CITES **Appendix II** (since 1990), not Appendix I. CITES lets them be traded across borders with export permits.

WHERE IN INDIA

4 main reef areas + 2 west-coast patches

PROTECTED AREA (STATE)	DISTRICT / LOCATION	BLEACHED 2023–24
Gulf of Kutch Marine NP (Gujarat)	Jamnagar, Devbhumi Dwarka	
Gulf of Mannar Marine NP (Tamil Nadu)	Ramanathapuram, Thoothukudi	**27%**
Lakshadweep atolls (Lakshadweep)	Kavaratti and other atolls	**84.6%**
Mahatma Gandhi Marine NP (Andaman & Nicobar Islands)	Wandoor, South Andaman	**15–18%**
Malvan Marine WLS (Maharashtra)	Sindhudurg	
Netrani Island reef (Karnataka)	18 km off Murdeshwar	

NP national park · WLS wildlife sanctuary. Bleaching shares are the Ministry of Earth Sciences' 2023–24 figures for each region; the Andaman figure covers South Andaman only. Source: PIB (Ministry of Earth Sciences), Lok Sabha reply, 4 Dec 2024; MoEF draft ESZ notification for the Gulf of Kutch (2012); Tamil Nadu Tourism; CMFRI (Wandoor; Netrani, 2008); Maharashtra sanctuary notification, 13 Apr 1987.

IN THE WORLD

Warm seas worldwide

Reef-building corals grow in shallow, warm tropical and subtropical seas. IUCN finds 43% of assessed Indo-Pacific species and 50% of Atlantic species threatened. Its first Red List of Ecosystems for coral reefs (October 2026) rated 96% of 127 reef ecoregions Critically Endangered. India's mapped reefs cover 1,439 sq km.

Source: IUCN press releases, 15 and 22 Oct 2026; PIB (Ministry of Earth Sciences), 4 Dec 2024

CONSERVATION

Stony corals are in WPA Schedule I; reefs are CRZ-IA areas under the 2011 and 2019 CRZ notifications. INCOIS (MoES) issues satellite bleaching alerts, NCSCM (MoEFCC) runs the CReON monitoring network and ZSI has monitored reefs since 2002. Marine national parks protect the Gulf of Kutch (1982) and Wandoor (1983).

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2014 · Q41

Also asked: 2007 · 2012 · 2018

Which of the following have coral reefs? 1. Andaman and Nicobar Islands 2. Gulf of Kachchh 3. Gulf of Mannar 4. Sunderbans Select the correct answer using the code given below.

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2 and 4 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

UPSC KEY **(a) 1, 2 and 3 only.** India's reefs lie in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the Gulf of Kachchh, the Gulf of Mannar and Lakshadweep. The Sundarbans has mangroves.

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PLANTS · 01

Guggul

Commiphora wightii

EX | EW | **CR** | EN | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered

CITES Appendix II | Not in WPA Schedules I–III



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

AUG 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

In August 2026 Kachchh's Nature Foundation planted 2,500 saplings of guggul, locally Khara Guggal (*Commiphora wightii*), and 1,250 of Mitha Guggal (*C. stocksiana*) on grazing commons in Bhuj, Nakhatrana and Mandvi talukas. In India, Mitha Guggal is known only from a few Kachchh localities. Guggul has been in **CITES Appendix II** since 5 March 2026.

Source: Clarity UPSC daily news, 25 Aug 2026; Nature Foundation project statement via Down To Earth

ABOUT

Guggul is a slow-growing, spiny, deciduous shrub or small tree of the family Burseraceae; most Rajasthan plants stand 1–3 m tall. It grows on rocky hills and shallow, gravelly, unfertile soils in the thorn forest and scrub of arid north-west India. Its oleo-gum-resin, also called guggul or Indian bdellium, is the traded product.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- **Guggul** is a slow-growing shrub or small tree of rocky, dry land. Cuts in its stems ooze a gum-resin, used for centuries in Ayurvedic medicine.
- Deep tapping usually kills a plant within six months, and regeneration is poor. Gujarat's forest department collected 30 tonnes of resin in 1963 and only 2.42 tonnes in 1999.
- Rajasthan has banned tapping. India has barred exports of wild-harvested resin for over 30 years, so Indian manufacturers now process resin mostly imported from Pakistan.
- Gujarat's forest department planted guggul on 1,550 hectares of Kachchh between 2018 and 2023, under a **National Medicinal Plants Board** project.

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- The resin is prized as a **cholesterol-lowering** agent; traditional tapping yields 250–500 g of dry resin per tree each season.
- It **regenerates poorly**: natural germination is low, growth is slow, and saplings were under 6% of adults in a Rajasthan survey.
- Hardly any seedlings were found in Kachchh, a loss blamed on overgrazing. Invasive *Prosopis juliflora* and lantana also invade its sites.
- A 1996 study found wild stands mostly **female**: they set seed without pollen (**apomixis**), and male plants are rare.

PRELIMS TRAP

Guggul is **Critically Endangered** on the IUCN Red List (2015) but sits in CITES **Appendix II**, not Appendix I. The Red List measures extinction risk; CITES appendices set trade rules. Guggul is not among the 19 plants in WPA Schedule III.

WHERE IN INDIA

Arid NW India · Gujarat, Rajasthan, MP

PROTECTED AREA (STATE)	DISTRICTS
Kachchh drylands (Gujarat)	Kachchh
Thar desert, western Rajasthan (Rajasthan)	Barmer, Jaisalmer, Jalore, Jodhpur
Aravalli hills (Rajasthan)	Ajmer, Pali, Rajsamand, Sirohi
Chambal ravines (Madhya Pradesh)	Morena, Bhind

Landscapes with wild guggul. A CAZRI survey (2017) found it at 68 of 604 sites in 20 Rajasthan districts, most in Ajmer and Barmer. Source: CAZRI survey (Taiwania 62: 43–49, 2017); IUCN/TRAFFIC analysis of CoP20 Prop. 43; Mongabay India (26 Sep 2023); MoEFCC ENVIS centre on medicinal plants (FRLHT).

IN THE WORLD

Asia: 3 countries

Guggul grows wild only in the arid zones of India, Pakistan and Oman. A recent study in Pakistan found the shrubs getting shorter because adult plants are tapped for resin. Oman's populations are reported stable. In India, local studies find healthy stands in some areas, such as Kachchh.

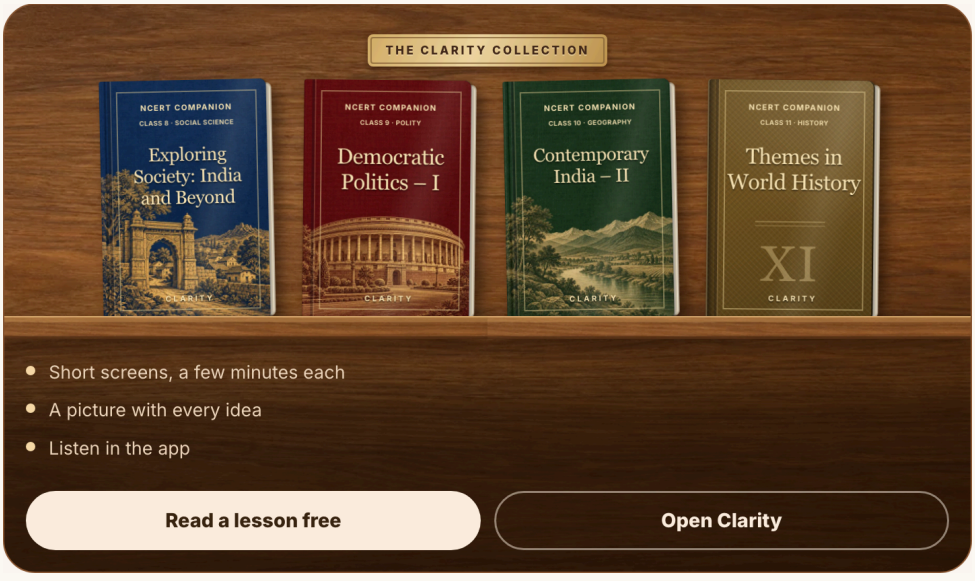
Source: IUCN/TRAFFIC analyses of the CoP20 proposals (Prop. 43); CITES Species+

CONSERVATION

The National Medicinal Plants Board (Ministry of Ayush) funded guggul planting in Kachchh. Rajasthan bans tapping, and India bars exports of wild-harvested resin. ICFRE's Arid Forest Research Institute, Jodhpur, has developed tissue-culture methods to raise planting stock for state forest departments. CITES Appendix II took effect on 5 March 2026.

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NCERT, made clear.



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INVASIVE · 01

Lantana

Lantana camara

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

Invasive alien species

Invasive alien species



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

FEB 2026 WHY IN NEWS

State of India's Environment 2026 (CSE and Down To Earth, 25 February 2026) described **"lantana tigers"**. Lantana thickets smother native grasses, so chital and sambar avoid them and cattle graze there. Tigers near Bandhavgarh and Tadoba increasingly use these thickets outside the reserves and hunt the cattle.

Source: Centre for Science and Environment, State of India's Environment 2026 release, 25 Feb 2026

ABOUT

Lantana camara is a vigorous shrub, usually 1.2–2.4 m tall, with stout, hooked prickles and a strong smell. Its flowers open yellow and turn pink, white or red, depending on the variety. Its fruits are small, shiny, blackish drupes. It thrives in open, sunny places such as wasteland and forest edges.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- **Lantana camara**, a thicket-forming shrub of Central and South America, reached India in 1807 as a garden ornamental. Birds eat its fruit and spread the seeds.
- A Wildlife Institute of India survey of 207,100 sq km of forest (2020) found lantana in 154,837 sq km. It put 303,607 sq km, 44% of India's forests, at risk.
- A 2025 *Nature Sustainability* study of 2006–2022 monitoring data found invasive plants spreading into about 15,500 sq km of natural areas a year, led by lantana in most states.
- Clearing it by hand is costly, and cleared plots refill from soil seed banks, bird-dropped seeds and regrowing roots, a **Rajaji** National Park study found (2014).

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- It flowers in most places **all year round** when moisture and light allow.
- **Allelopathic**: chemicals from lantana reduce the vigour of nearby plants and have cut orchard yields.
- **Toxic**: triterpenoids in its leaves and seeds poison cattle, buffalo, sheep and goats and make them sensitive to light.
- It resprouts after repeated cutting and forms a continuous layer of 'ladder' fuel that can change how fires burn.

PRELIMS TRAP

Read the 2020 WII figure in two parts. Lantana was found in 154,837 sq km of the forest surveyed; 303,607 sq km, or 44% of India's forests, is at risk. The 44% is the area threatened, not the area already invaded.

WHERE IN INDIA

Shivaliks, central India, Western Ghats

PROTECTED AREA (STATE)	WHAT WAS REPORTED
Bandipur TR (Karnataka)	substantially invaded (WII study, 2020)
Bandhavgarh TR (Madhya Pradesh)	lantana tigers just outside (2026)
Tadoba-Andhari TR (Maharashtra)	lantana tigers just outside (2026)
Kanha TR (Madhya Pradesh)	lantana tigers in the landscape around
Rajaji TR (Uttarakhand)	cleared plots re-invaded (2014 study)

TR tiger reserve. The 2020 WII survey found the Shivalik hills, central India's deciduous forests and the southern Western Ghats worst hit. Source: WII study reported by Mongabay India (18 Aug 2020); CSE SoE 2026 release; Down To Earth (2 Jun 2026); Indian Forester 140(2), 2014; NTCA list of tiger reserves.

IN THE WORLD

World's 100 worst

Lantana is native to Central and South America. European colonial powers carried it round the world from the 1690s. It now grows in more than 60 countries, and the IUCN Invasive Species Specialist Group lists it among the 100 of the World's Worst Invasive Alien Species.

Source: IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group, Global Invasive Species Database; Kannan et al., Biological Invasions (2013)

CONSERVATION

Clearing lantana in India's protected areas costs up to ₹6,000 a hectare, and cleared plots regrow without follow-up (2014 study). IUCN's invasive species database notes that biocontrol agents shrink plants and ease other control. Target 6 of the Kunming–Montreal framework (December 2022) aims to halve new invasive introductions by 2030.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2023 · Q13 · ON INVASIVE SPECIES

'Invasive Species Specialist Group' (that develops Global Invasive Species Database) belongs to which one of the following organizations?

(a) The International Union for Conservation of Nature
(b) The United Nations Environment Programme
(c) The United Nations World Commission for Environment and Development
(d) The World Wide Fund for Nature

UPSC KEY **(a) The International Union for Conservation of Nature.** The Invasive Species Specialist Group belongs to the IUCN Species Survival Commission and runs the Global Invasive Species Database.

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Mammals

16 SPECIES

MAMMALS

Greater One-horned Rhinoceros

Rhinoceros unicornis

EX | EW | CR | EN | **VU** | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Vulnerable

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



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JAN 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

Assam recorded **no rhino poaching in 2025**, the state government reported on 1 January 2026. In September 2026 its forest minister called it only the second poaching-free year since the 1970s; the first was 2022.

India: ~80% of all The one-horned rhino survives only in India and Nepal: 4,075 animals in March 2025. Nepal's 752 live mainly in Chitwan, with smaller herds in Bardia, Shuklaphanta, Parsa and Koshi Tappu.

ABOUT

A massive rhino with a single black horn and thick, armour-like skin. It lives in floodplain grasslands, swamps and riverine forest, eats grass, leaves, fruit and aquatic plants, and swims well.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- India held **3,323** of the world's 4,075 one-horned rhinos in March 2025. Kaziranga's 2022 count, 2,613, is the largest single population.
- The largest of Asia's three rhinos, it weighs up to 2,800 kg and lives 45–50 years. Grazing keeps grasslands open; its wallows create waterholes.
- West Bengal's **Jaldapara** NP holds India's second-largest population: 331 rhinos in March 2025. Neighbouring Gorumara had 61.

Kinds in India: Asia has three rhinos. India's greater one-horned and the Javan carry one horn; the Sumatran has two. Javan (about 50) and Sumatran (34–47) rhinos survive only in Indonesia.

WHERE IN INDIA · ASSAM, WEST BENGAL, UTTAR PRADESH

Kaziranga NP (Assam) · Golaghat, Nagaon, Sonitpur

Orang NP, Pobitora WLS, Manas NP (Assam) · Darrang, Morigaon, Baksa, Chirang

Jaldapara NP, Gorumara NP (West Bengal) · Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri

Dudhwa NP (Uttar Pradesh) · Lakhimpur Kheri; reintroduced 1984

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- No fixed breeding season. A female in heat whistles loudly and urinates often, which draws males to her.
- A single calf is born after about 16 months' gestation. A female calves roughly every 28 months.
- Its horn is keratin, like hair and nails. Rhinos share dung heaps, called middens, that carry scent messages.

PRELIMS TRAP

The one-horned rhino is **Vulnerable** on the IUCN Red List; the Javan and Sumatran rhinos are Critically Endangered. All three Asian rhinos are in CITES Appendix I.

CONSERVATION

Indian Rhino Vision 2020 restocked Manas from Kaziranga and Pobitora. A national strategy seeks to return rhinos to former range. In July 2026 NBWL's Standing Committee discussed a DNA-indexing strategy.

Sources: CITES CoP20 Doc. 84 Annex 3 (2025); PTI, 1 Jan and 15 Sep 2026; AIR, 19 Mar 2025; PIB; NTCA–WII 2023; Mongabay India

MAMMALS

Nilgiri Tahr

Nilgiritragus hylocrius

EX | EW | CR | **EN** | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Endangered

WPA Schedule I | **Not in CITES**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

JUN 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

Tamil Nadu's third synchronised Nilgiri tahr survey, held in April 2026 across 14 forest divisions, estimated **1,364** animals, up from 1,303 in 2025 and 1,031 in 2024. The state released the report on World Environment Day, 5 June 2026.

Found only in India The Nilgiri tahr lives only in the Western Ghats of Keralam and Tamil Nadu, from the Nilgiris south to the Kanyakumari hills. It survives in isolated patches of grassland and cliff habitat.

ABOUT

A stocky mountain ungulate, called varai aadu ('cliff goat') in Tamil. It lives on high montane grasslands beside steep cliffs, mostly at 1,200–2,600 m. Females are grey-brown; adult males are darker, with thick curved horns.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- The 2025 Keralam–Tamil Nadu count found **2,668**, the species' entire known wild population: Keralam 1,365, Tamil Nadu 1,303.
- Males older than about six years grow a pale, silvery 'saddle' on the back. Surveyors count these **saddlebacks** as a separate class.
- It is Tamil Nadu's **state animal**, mentioned in Sangam literature. Older works call it *Hemitragus hylocrius*; it now has its own genus, *Nilgiritragus*.

Kinds in India: India has two tahrs, both in WPA Schedule I: the Himalayan tahr (*Hemitragus jemlahicus*) of the Himalaya and the Nilgiri tahr (*Nilgiritragus*) of the Western Ghats.

WHERE IN INDIA · KERALAM & TAMIL NADU ONLY · 2,668

Eravikulam NP (Keralam) · Munnar, Idukki; 841 in 2025

Grass Hills NP (Tamil Nadu) · in Anamalai TR; 334 in 2025

Mukurthi NP (Tamil Nadu) · Nilgiris district; 282 in 2025

Kalakad–Mundanthurai TR (Tamil Nadu) · Kalakkad & Ambai: 117 in 2025

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- A grazer that lives in herds: all-female groups average about 9 animals, mixed herds about 27.
- It mates through the year, with a winter peak in births. A single kid is born after about seven months.
- Active by day, from dawn to dusk. Rival males battle on mountain slopes for access to females.

PRELIMS TRAP

The Nilgiri tahr is Tamil Nadu's state animal, but its largest single population is in Keralam: Eravikulam NP held 841 of Keralam's 1,365 in 2025.

CONSERVATION

Tamil Nadu's Project Nilgiri Tahr (2022) runs surveys and habitat restoration and is building a conservation centre in Coimbatore. Nilgiri Tahr Day falls on 7 October.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2010 · Q64 · ON ERAVIKULAM

Consider the following pairs: Protected area — Well-known for 1. Bhitarkanika, Orissa — Salt Water Crocodile 2. Desert National Park, Rajasthan — Great Indian Bustard 3. Eravikulam, Kerala — Hoolak Gibbon Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched ?

(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 2 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

ANSWER **(b) 1 and 2 only.** Bhitarkanika is known for saltwater crocodiles and Desert NP for the great Indian bustard. Eravikulam NP in Kerala is the Nilgiri tahr's stronghold, not a hoolock gibbon site.

Sources: Kerala Forest Dept, Nilgiri Tahr Estimation 2025; Tamil Nadu Forest Dept; Mongabay India, Sep 2026; Deccan Chronicle, 5 Jun 2026; WPA 2022

MAMMALS

Hangul (Kashmir Stag)

Cervus hanglu hanglu

EX | EW | **CR** | EN | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

Found only in India The hangul lives only in the Kashmir Valley's mountains. It once ranged into Chamba (Himachal Pradesh) and parts of Pakistan. Its species has Yarkand and Bactrian subspecies in China and Central Asia.

OCT 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

A 2025 census counted **323 hangul** in Dachigam National Park and adjoining areas, up from 289 in 2023. Jammu and Kashmir's wildlife department then closed Dachigam to visitors from 1 to 31 October 2026, the hangul's rutting season.

ABOUT

Kashmir's red deer. Stags carry branched antlers, and thick brown coats suit the cold winters. The hangul lives in the mountains of the Kashmir Valley, mainly in Dachigam National Park.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Hangul migrate between higher and lower altitudes. Stags shed and regrow antlers yearly and clash in the rut, after herds return to lower valleys.
- Wildlife department censuses counted 261 hangul in 2021, 289 in 2023 and 323 in 2025; estimates had fallen to 140–160 by 1992.
- A 2023 study of 19 years' monitoring warned the hangul could die out without action: females far outnumber males, and few new fawns join herds.

Kinds in India: Three threatened deer with small ranges: hangul (Dachigam, Kashmir); barasingha (Terai of UP and Uttarakhand, Kanha in MP, Kaziranga–Manas in Assam); sangai (Keibul Lamjao, Manipur).

WHERE IN INDIA · KASHMIR ONLY · MAINLY DACHIGAM NP

Dachigam NP (Jammu and Kashmir) · Srinagar, Pulwama; 141 sq km

Brain Nishat & Khimber-Dara CRs (Jammu and Kashmir) · Srinagar

Tral WLS & Shikargah (Jammu and Kashmir) · Pulwama; breeding centre

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- A mixed feeder: herbs (forbs) lead its spring diet, while in winter it browses mostly on trees and shrubs.
- Calves are born in late spring and carry spotted coats through their first summer.
- Its natural predators include leopards, foxes and jackals; Asiatic black bears also take calves.

PRELIMS TRAP

Critically Endangered is the IUCN category of the Kashmir subspecies, *Cervus hanglu hanglu*. Its species, the Central Asian red deer, is Least Concern.

CONSERVATION

Hangul is in MoEFCC's Recovery Programme for Critically Endangered Species, with a conservation breeding centre at Shikargah, Tral. Scientists urge monitoring calf survival and controlling free-ranging dogs.

Sources: Mongabay India, 25 Mar 2026; J&K Wildlife Protection Department order, 5 Oct 2026; Ahmad et al. 2023, Oryx; Rising Kashmir; WPA 2022; CITES

MAMMALS

Sloth Bear

Melursus ursinus

EX | EW | CR | EN | **VU** | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Vulnerable

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

JUL 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

In July 2026 the NTCA and the Wildlife Institute of India published the first national habitat suitability assessment for sloth bears. Occupied habitat in tiger landscapes grew from 1,70,094 sq km (2018–19) to **1,88,357 sq km** (2022–23).

Indian subcontinent The sloth bear is found only in the Indian subcontinent: India, Sri Lanka and Nepal. Bhutan has no record since 2009. It has died out in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Central India is its core.

ABOUT

A shaggy black bear with a pale U- or Y-shaped chest mark, a long pale muzzle with mobile lips, and long ivory-coloured front claws for digging. It lives in lowland deciduous forest, scrub and grassland.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- The sloth bear lacks the two middle upper incisors. Through this gap and its mobile lips it sucks up **termites and ants**, its main food.
- Cubs ride on their mother's back while young and stay with her for 1.5–2.5 years. In disturbed forests the bears are mostly nocturnal.
- Only 28% of the modelled suitable habitat lies in protected areas. **Madhya Pradesh** has the largest share, about 38,900 sq km.

Kinds in India: India has four of the world's eight bears: sloth bear (lowland forests), Asiatic black bear (Himalaya and north-east), Himalayan brown bear (Himalaya) and sun bear (few, north-east border).

WHERE IN INDIA · CENTRAL INDIA CORE · MP LEADS

Nagarjunasagar–Srisailam TR (Andhra Pradesh) · Nallamala hills, Eastern Ghats

Kanha, Pench, Satpura TRs (Madhya Pradesh) · Satpura–Maikal landscape

Daroji Bear Sanctuary (Karnataka) · Ballari & Vijayanagara

Jessore & Ratanmahal WLS (Gujarat) · Banaskantha; Dahod

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- It does not hibernate. It also climbs trees to knock down honeycombs, and eats fruit and flowers.
- It closes its nostrils against dust while feeding, and is the only bear with long hair on its ears.
- Mating falls in May–July. Delayed implantation stretches gestation to 4–7 months; one or two cubs are born in a den.

PRELIMS TRAP

1,88,357 sq km is the area sloth bears occupied in tiger landscapes in 2022–23; 2,31,899 sq km is modelled suitable habitat. The report mapped habitat, not numbers.

CONSERVATION

Karnataka has sanctuaries for the species at Daroji, Gudekote and Arasikere; Gujarat at Jessore. MoEF released a National Bear Conservation and Welfare Action Plan in November 2012.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2023 · Q19 · ON TOOL USE

Which one of the following makes a tool with a stick to scrape insects from a hole in a tree or a log of wood?

(a) Fishing cat (b) Orangutan (c) Otter (d) Sloth bear

UPSC KEY **(b) Orangutan.** The orangutan uses sticks to scrape insects out of holes. The sloth bear sucks termites out of mounds with its lips and long snout.

Sources: NTCA–WII sloth bear habitat report TR-0038-2026 (Jul 2026); NTCA–WII tiger status 2022; PIB, 27 Nov 2012; IBA; WPA 2022; Species+

MAMMALS

Indus River Dolphin

Platanista minor

EX | EW | CR | **EN** | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Endangered

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

JAN 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

India's second dolphin estimation, begun on 17 January 2026, covers the Indus river dolphin in its first phase. The first estimate (2021–23) found three in India, all in Punjab's Beas. In May 2026 Punjab told the National Green Tribunal a count is due in 2026.

ABOUT

A freshwater dolphin with a long, sensitive snout that it uses to probe the riverbed for prey. It lives in the turbid, braided, sand-bedded channels of the Indus river system. Locally called *bhulan*.

Indus basin only Found only in the Indus system. Nearly all live in Pakistan's Indus, about 2,000 animals split by irrigation barrages; the species has lost about 80% of its range. India's Beas holds three.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- A 2021 study of skulls, teeth and DNA split it from the Ganges river dolphin as a separate species. IUCN assessed it separately in 2022.
- Punjab declared it the **State Aquatic Animal** on 8 March 2019. Its Indian population lives in the Beas Conservation Reserve, notified in 2017.
- Its eyes lack lenses, so it is functionally blind. It swims mostly on its **side** and finds prey by echolocation.

Kinds in India: India's freshwater dolphins: Ganges river dolphin 6,324 and Indus river dolphin 3 (Beas), counted 2021–23. The coastal Irrawaddy dolphin also lives in Chilika lagoon: 159 in 2026.

WHERE IN INDIA · PUNJAB ONLY · BEAS RIVER

Beas Conservation Reserve (Punjab) · Talwara to Harike, 185 km

Core stretch: Beas bridge–Harike (Punjab) · 70 km; mainly Tarn Taran

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- It lives alone or in very small groups, usually a mother with her calf.
- It has no fixed breeding season and can breed at any time of year.
- Long, sharp teeth show even when the beak is closed. Its dorsal fin is only a low, fleshy hump.

PRELIMS TRAP

The Indus river dolphin also lives in India: three in Punjab's Beas (2021–23). It is Punjab's state aquatic animal; the Ganges river dolphin is India's national aquatic animal.

CONSERVATION

Punjab's State Wildlife Board banned all fishing in the Beas Conservation Reserve in July 2023. About 150 trained 'Beas Dolphin Mitras' watch the river. Project Dolphin covers it.

Sources: PIB, 17 Jan 2026; WII dolphin estimate 2021–23; Punjab Chief Wildlife Warden's NGT affidavit, May 2026; IUCN Red List 2022; Down To Earth

MAMMALS

Irrawaddy Dolphin

Orcaella brevirostris

EX | EW | CR | **EN** | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Endangered

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

S & SE Asia It lives along coasts and estuaries from the Bay of Bengal to South-East Asia. Its three river populations, in the Ayeyarwady, Mekong and Mahakam, are Critically Endangered. Lagoon populations live in Chilika and Thailand's Songkhla.

JAN 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

The Wildlife Wing of Odisha's forest department counted 765 dolphins and porpoises on 20 January 2026, along the coast and in Chilika lagoon. Irrawaddy dolphins numbered 208; Chilika held 159, the same as in 2025.

ABOUT

A dolphin of shallow coasts, estuaries, lagoons and some large rivers, often in turbid water near river mouths. Its rounded head has only a very short beak, as its name *brevirostris*, 'short-beaked', says.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Odisha's 2026 count by species: humpback 497, Irrawaddy 208, bottlenose 55, spinner 3 and finless porpoise 2.
- It is **euryhaline**: it lives in salt, brackish and fresh water. River populations live up to about 1,000 km from the sea in Myanmar's Ayeyarwady.
- Chilika holds India's largest known population. About 60% of its dolphins use the deeper **Outer Channel**, which links the lagoon to the Bay of Bengal.

Kinds in India: India's freshwater dolphins: Ganges river dolphin 6,324 and Indus river dolphin 3 (Beas), counted 2021–23. The coastal Irrawaddy dolphin also lives in Chilika lagoon: 159 in 2026.

WHERE IN INDIA · MOSTLY CHILIKA · ODISHA, WB

Chilika lagoon (Odisha) · Puri, Khordha, Ganjam

Odisha coast, incl. Bhitarkanika (Odisha) · Balasore to Ganjam

Sundarbans & Hooghly estuary (West Bengal) · Indian part of the delta

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Its flexible neck, unusual among dolphins, lets it turn its head and shows as creases behind the head.
- It lives in groups of three to six and has often been seen spitting water.
- One calf at a time, weaned at about two years. In one population, females gave birth every three years.

PRELIMS TRAP

India's 6,327 river dolphins (2021–23) were Ganges and Indus dolphins only. Irrawaddy dolphins enter the national estimation for the first time in 2026, in the Sundarbans and Odisha.

CONSERVATION

Odisha's Wildlife Wing counts dolphins every year. Chilika has been a Ramsar site since 1981. Project Dolphin covers the species.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2019 · Q29

Consider the following pairs : Wildlife : Naturally found in 1. Blue-finned Mahseer : Cauvery River 2. Irrawaddy Dolphin : Chambal River 3. Rusty-spotted Cat : Eastern Ghats Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Since then: The blue-finned mahseer was bred and stocked in the Cauvery; read strictly, pair 1 is also open to question.

UPSC KEY (c) 1 and 3 only. The rusty-spotted cat lives in the Eastern Ghats and UPSC's key accepts the blue-finned mahseer in the Cauvery. The Irrawaddy dolphin lives in Chilika and coastal waters, not the Chambal.

Sources: Odisha Forest Department census (Down To Earth, 11 Feb 2026); PIB, 17 Jan 2026; WII; IUCN Red List 2017; CMS; JoTT 2018

MAMMALS

Wild Water Buffalo

Bubalus arnee

EX | EW | CR | **EN** | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Endangered

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix III**

OCT 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

On 11 October 2026, eight wild water buffaloes from Kaziranga (six females, two males) entered a 17-hectare enclosure in **Kanha Tiger Reserve**. They arrived in April–May. Madhya Pradesh, where the species vanished about a century ago, plans 50 within three years.

ABOUT

The wild ancestor of the domestic buffalo, weighing 700–1,200 kg. It lives in maternal groups that graze waterlogged floodplain grasslands, swamp edges and floodplain forests.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- India's third-largest land mammal, after the elephant and the rhino. Males are about 20% larger than females.
- It is **Chhattisgarh's state animal**. Its tiny population survives in Udanti-Sitanadi and Indravati; buffaloes from Manas (Assam) were moved to Barnawapara WLS.
- Assam's herds live in Kaziranga, Manas, Orang and Dibru-Saikhowa, occupying about 717 sq km of swampy grassland and marsh.

Kinds in India: WPA 2022 lists three wild cattle in Schedule I: gaur, wild yak and wild water buffalo. The domestic buffalo, *Bubalus bubalis*, descends from the wild buffalo.



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

Mostly in India The wild water buffalo, ancestor of all domestic buffalo, survives in small, scattered pockets of South and South-east Asia, including Nepal. Fewer than 4,000 remain, and India, mainly Assam, holds most.

Read the full story
www.clarityupsc.com

WHERE IN INDIA · ASSAM, CHHATTISGARH · NEW: KANHA

Kaziranga, Manas & Orang TRs; Dibru-Saikhowa NP (Assam) · Brahmaputra floodplain, ~717 sq km

Udanti-Sitanadi TR (Chhattisgarh) · Gariaband, Dhamtari

Indravati TR & Gadchiroli forests (Chhattisgarh / Maharashtra) SPANS 2 STATES · Bijapur (CG); Gadchiroli (MH)

Kanha TR (reintroduced 2026) (Madhya Pradesh) · Mandla, Balaghat; Supkhar range

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Both sexes carry horns, and its horns have the widest spread of any bovid.
- Heavily dependent on water, it spends much of the day wallowing in rivers and mud holes.
- Gestation lasts 300–340 days. A female usually bears a single calf every two years.

PRELIMS TRAP

It is in CITES **Appendix III**, listed by Nepal, not Appendix I; yet India's WPA 2022 gives it the highest protection, Schedule I.

CONSERVATION

Asian wild buffalo is in MoEFCC's Recovery Programme for Critically Endangered Species. Assam supplies founders: Manas animals went to Barnawapara (Chhattisgarh), Kaziranga animals to Kanha (2026).

Sources: AIR, 12 Oct 2026; PTI, 28 Apr and 11 Oct 2026; NTCA–WII 2023; IUCN SSC Asian Wild Cattle SG; Chhattisgarh govt; WPA 2022

MAMMALS

Hard-ground Barasingha

Rucervus duvaucelii branderi

EX | EW | CR | EN | **VU** | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Vulnerable

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

APR 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

A Wildlife Institute of India–Madhya Pradesh Forest Department study, reported in April 2026, found that hard-ground barasingha moved from Kanha to **Satpura Tiger Reserve** now form a second population. The 98 founders (2015–23) had grown to 172 by 2023.

Found only in India The swamp deer lives in India and Nepal. The hard-ground subspecies lives only in Madhya Pradesh. The northern subspecies also uses Nepal's Shuklaphanta, linked by the Sharda river to Uttar Pradesh's Kishanpur.

ABOUT

Central India's swamp deer, the subspecies *branderi*. It grazes open grassland meadows within sal forest and depends on these grasslands. Kanha National Park in Madhya Pradesh is its natural home.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Persecution and habitat loss left only **66** hard-ground barasingha in the wild by 1970. Kanha now holds about 1,050, all in its core zone.
- Its hooves are adapted to firm, rugged ground in open savanna forest. The northern and eastern swamp deer live in wet floodplain grasslands.
- It is **Madhya Pradesh's state animal**; Kanha's mascot is 'Bhoorsingh the Barasingha'. Herds now also live in Satpura, Bandhavgarh and Van Vihar NP.

Kinds in India: Three threatened deer with small ranges: hangul (Dachigam, Kashmir); barasingha (Terai of UP and Uttarakhand, Kanha in MP, Kaziranga–Manas in Assam); sangai (Keibul Lamjao, Manipur).

WHERE IN INDIA · MADHYA PRADESH ONLY · 4 SITES

Kanha TR (Madhya Pradesh) · Mandla, Balaghat; ~1,050 (core)

Satpura TR (Madhya Pradesh) · Narmadapuram; from 2015

Bandhavgarh TR (Madhya Pradesh) · Umaria; introduced 2023, now 64

Van Vihar NP (Madhya Pradesh) · Bhopal; reintroduced herd

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- 'Barasingha' means 'twelve-tined'. Adult stags carry 10–15 tines, sometimes up to 20.
- In the rut, stags coat themselves in scented mud, bugle, and gather harems of up to 30 hinds.
- A hind bears one fawn a year, rarely twins, after about eight months' gestation.

PRELIMS TRAP

Three subspecies, three places: northern swamp deer in the UP–Uttarakhand Terai, hard-ground barasingha in Madhya Pradesh, eastern swamp deer only in Kaziranga and Manas (Assam).

CONSERVATION

Kanha's management rebuilt the subspecies from 66 animals in 1970. Translocations since 2015 created herds in Satpura, Bandhavgarh and Van Vihar. Swamp deer are in MoEFCC's species recovery programme.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2020 · Q75

Also asked: 2012 · 2013

Which one of the following protected areas is well-known for the conservation of a sub-species of the Indian swamp deer (Barasingha) that thrives well on hard ground and is exclusively graminivorous ?

(a) Kanha National Park
(b) Manas National Park
(c) Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary
(d) Tal Chhapar Wildlife Sanctuary

UPSC KEY **(a) Kanha National Park.** Kanha holds the hard-ground barasingha, which lives on firm grassland and eats only grass.

Sources: Mongabay India, 28 Apr 2026; Kanha Tiger Reserve; NTCA–WII, Status of Tigers 2022; Down To Earth 2018; WPA 2022; CITES

MAMMALS

Eurasian Lynx

Lynx lynx

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | NT | **LC**

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Least Concern

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix II**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

JUL 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

A camera trap on Sikkim's Tso Lhamo plateau (Mangan district, about 5,250 m) photographed a **Eurasian lynx** in January 2026. Reported in July 2026, it is Sikkim's first confirmed photographic record and the second from the Eastern Himalaya.

ABOUT

A long-legged wild cat, the tallest lynx, with black ear tufts, a short black-tipped tail and grey to reddish fur. In Central Asia and the high Himalaya it uses open, thinly wooded country and steppe, up to 5,500 m.

Europe to Himalaya The Eurasian lynx has one of the widest ranges of any cat: from western Europe across Russia, which holds about 75% of its range, to Central Asia, the Tibetan plateau and the Himalaya.

Read the full story
www.clarityupsc.com

PRELIMS POINTERS

- The camera belonged to a long-term **snow leopard and rangeland monitoring** programme. The same plateau holds Pallas's cat, Tibetan wolf, Tibetan gazelle and kiang.
- It is a **solitary, territorial** hunter. It preys mostly on small and medium hoofed animals; where these are scarce it takes hares, birds and marmots.
- In India the lynx is known mostly from Ladakh. A 2025 photograph from Arunachal Pradesh was the Eastern Himalaya's first.

Kinds in India: The caracal (*Caracal caracal*), once classified with *Lynx*, is a separate cat of dry thorn forest and scrub in north-western India, such as Ranthambhore in Rajasthan.

WHERE IN INDIA · MAINLY LADAKH; NE RECORDS 2025–26

Ladakh cold desert (Ladakh) · most Indian records

Tso Lhamo plateau (Sikkim) · Mangan district; ~5,250 m

Arunachal Pradesh record (Arunachal Pradesh) · first Eastern Himalaya photo, 2025

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Mostly active at dawn and dusk. It can kill prey up to three or four times its own size.
- In winter, dense hair on its paws works like snowshoes on deep snow.
- Mates February–early April; after 68–73 days' gestation, one to four kittens arrive in late May or early June.

PRELIMS TRAP

IUCN rates the Eurasian lynx Least Concern worldwide (2015), yet India gives it top protection in WPA Schedule I. CITES lists it in Appendix II.

CONSERVATION

Recent records came from camera-trap surveys run by the Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh forest departments with WWF-India.

Sources: Mongabay India, 4 Aug 2026; IUCN 2015 via IUCN Cat Specialist Group; WPA 2022 Schedule I; EU Reg. 2026/1383 (CITES); PLOS ONE 2025

MAMMALS

Striped Hyena

Hyaena hyaena

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | **NT** | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Near Threatened

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix II**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

MAR 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

CITES CoP20 in Samarkand moved the striped hyena from Appendix III to **Appendix II** on 4 December 2025, effective 5 March 2026. On 29 March 2026 the Convention on Migratory Species (COP15, Campo Grande, Brazil) added it to its Appendices I and II.

ABOUT

A shaggy, medium-sized carnivore (26–41 kg) with vertical stripes on its flanks, striped legs, a bushy tail and a prominent mane. It lives in dry open country: thorn scrub, savanna, rocky valleys and open woodland.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- The striped hyena is mostly nocturnal and forages alone. It scavenges carrion, crushes bones with **strong jaws**, and eats fruit and insects.
- The 2022 tiger survey found hyenas in Sariska, Ranthambore and Panna, but not in high-tiger-density Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Pench or Tadoba.
- India protects it in **WPA Schedule I** (item 89). CITES had listed it in Appendix III at Pakistan's request from 2014 until March 2026.

Kinds in India: The striped hyena is India's only hyena. Its three relatives live only in Africa: the spotted hyena (sub-Saharan), the brown hyena (southern Africa) and the aardwolf (East and southern Africa).

Africa to India It has the widest range of any hyena: North and East Africa, the Middle East, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent, east to West Bengal. IUCN estimates 5,000–9,999 mature adults.

WHERE IN INDIA · DRY INDIA · ABSENT FROM ASSAM

Sariska & Ranthambore TRs (Rajasthan) · dry forests of eastern Rajasthan

Panna TR & dry forests (Madhya Pradesh) · Betul and Bhopal forest circles

Palamau TR & Hazaribag (Jharkhand)

Bandipur–Mudumalai–Sathyamangalam (Karnataka / Tamil Nadu) SPANS 2 STATES · rare south of the Palghat gap

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- When threatened, it raises the long hair of its mane and looks about 38% bigger.
- No fixed breeding season: one to six cubs are born in a den after about 90 days' gestation.
- It can go without water for long periods. Its voice is limited, mostly soft growls.

PRELIMS TRAP

CITES lists the striped hyena in Appendix II, after Tajikistan's Appendix I proposal failed. CMS, the separate treaty on migratory species, lists it in both Appendices I and II.

CONSERVATION

CMS COP15 adopted a Concerted Action for the striped hyena, bringing it into the Central Asian Mammals Initiative, whose range states include India.

Sources: IISD ENB summary of CITES CoP20 (8 Dec 2025); Species+; CMS COP15 report (29 Mar 2026); NTCA–WII tiger status 2022; WPA 2022

MAMMALS

Indian Pangolin

Manis crassicaudata

EX | EW | CR | **EN** | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Endangered

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

South Asia It ranges from eastern Pakistan across much of the Indian subcontinent to Sri Lanka. It also lives in southern Nepal and is almost gone from Bangladesh.

SEP 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

On 10 September 2026 the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) reported six operations in ten days that seized about **24 kg of pangolin scales** and other wildlife parts; 13 were arrested. In April the DRI seized 16.5 kg of Indian pangolin scales in Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh.

ABOUT

A large pangolin of 10–16 kg whose body is covered in broad, overlapping scales. It lives in forest, scrub and grassland from the plains to the hills, and digs burrows up to 6 m deep.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- It is solitary and nocturnal. With a long, sticky tongue it eats **ants and termites**, and when threatened it curls into a tight ball.
- A female usually bears a **single young** after a gestation of 65–70 days, so populations recover slowly from poaching.
- CITES CoP17 (2016) moved all eight pangolin species to **Appendix I**. A 2018 TRAFFIC report found nearly 6,000 pangolins poached in India in 2009–2017.

Kinds in India: India has two pangolins: the Indian (Endangered) across most of the country and the Chinese (Critically Endangered) in the North-East. DNA studies propose a third, Himalayan species.

WHERE IN INDIA · MOST OF INDIA EXCEPT THE NE

Jasrota & Surinsar-Mansar WLS (Jammu and Kashmir) · Jammu Shiwaliks; camera traps 2024

Col. Sher Jung (Simbalbara) NP (Himachal Pradesh) · Sirmaur; first photo, 2022

Nandankanan breeding centre (Odisha) · Bhubaneswar; captive breeding

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- It has no teeth. Its keratin scales make up a quarter to a third of its body weight.
- It walks with its front claws tucked under its feet, and can climb trees, using its tail for support.
- Young are born mainly in November–December. A young pangolin clings to its mother's tail when she forages.

PRELIMS TRAP

India's two pangolins are both in WPA Schedule I and CITES Appendix I, but their IUCN categories differ: the Indian pangolin is Endangered, the Chinese pangolin Critically Endangered.

CONSERVATION

Schedule I and CITES Appendix I protection; the DRI and state forest departments act against scale trafficking. Nandankanan Zoo, Bhubaneswar, runs a conservation breeding centre for the species.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2021 · Q23 Also asked: 2004

Consider the following animals : 1. Hedgehog 2. Marmot 3. Pangolin To reduce the chance of being captured by predators, which of the above organisms rolls up/roll up and protects/protect its/their vulnerable parts?

(a) 1 and 2 (b) 2 only (c) 3 only (d) 1 and 3

UPSC KEY (d) 1 and 3. Hedgehogs and pangolins roll into a ball to protect their soft parts; marmots escape into burrows.

Sources: AIR, 10 Sep 2026; The Hitavada, 15 Apr 2026; Mongabay-India, 20 May 2026; IUCN SSC Pangolin SG; JoTT 2023, 2024; WPA 2022; CITES.

MAMMALS

Pygmy Hog

Porcula salvania

EX | EW | CR | **EN** | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Endangered

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

JUL 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

In June 2026, 15 captive-bred pygmy hogs were released in the Kuribeel grasslands of Manas National Park, where the six founder hogs were caught in 1996. Releases now total **194**. On 9 July the NBWL Standing Committee discussed its inclusion in the Species Recovery Programme.

Found only in India Wild pygmy hogs now live only in Assam. The species once ranged along a narrow belt of foothill grassland from Uttar Pradesh and southern Nepal through Bihar and north Bengal to Assam.

ABOUT

The world's smallest wild pig: about 65 cm long, 25 cm tall and 6.6–9.7 kg. It lives in dense, tall, wet grassland at the foot of the Himalaya, now only in Assam.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Unusually among pigs, **both sexes build roofed grass nests** and use them all year, not only for giving birth.
- The Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme began breeding in 1996 near Guwahati with six hogs from Manas. Releases started in 2008 at Sonai Rupai.
- Probably fewer than 350 live in the wild. African swine fever from domestic pigs could wipe out the captive stock.

Read the full story
www.clarityupsc.com

WHERE IN INDIA · ASSAM ONLY · FOUR RELEASE SITES

Manas NP (Assam) · Kuribeel; 15 released Jun 2026
Rajiv Gandhi Orang NP (Assam) · 59 released, 2011–15
Sonai Rupai WLS (Assam) · First release, 2008
Barnadi WLS (Assam) · Released 2016–17

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Births peak at the monsoon's onset, in late April–May. Litters hold two to six young, usually three or four.
- Family groups of four to six hold adult females and young; adult males mostly keep to themselves.
- It eats roots, tubers, shoots and ground plants, along with worms and other invertebrates.

PRELIMS TRAP

IUCN now lists the pygmy hog as **Endangered**; it was Critically Endangered before, as many older notes still say. Wild hogs survive only in Assam.

CONSERVATION

Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme (Assam Forest Department, Durrell, IUCN Wild Pig Specialist Group, Ecosystems-India; since 1995): breeding near Guwahati, pre-release at Potasali, releases. Target: about 300 wild hogs by 2040.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2013 · Q7

Consider the following: 1. Star tortoise 2. Monitor lizard 3. Pygmy hog 4. Spider monkey Which of the above are naturally found in India?

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 4 only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Since then: The pygmy hog was Critically Endangered when this was asked; IUCN moved it to Endangered in 2019 after captive breeding and releases in Assam.

UPSC KEY (a) 1, 2 and 3 only. The star tortoise, monitor lizard and pygmy hog live wild in India; spider monkeys are from Central and South America.

Sources: Durrell, 11 Jun 2026; PIB, 9 Jul 2026; Down To Earth, 24 Jan 2026 and 25 Apr 2018; IUCN SSC Wild Pig SG; WPA 2022.

MAMMALS

Lion-tailed Macaque

Macaca silenus

EX | EW | CR | **EN** | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Endangered

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

Found only in India The lion-tailed macaque is found only in India, in the rainforests of the Western Ghats of Karnataka, Keralam and Tamil Nadu.

JUL 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

On 10 March 2026 the Karnataka High Court barred ground work for the 2,000 MW Sharavathi pumped-storage project inside the Sharavathi Lion-tailed Macaque Sanctuary. In July the Centre told the court an expert panel had not approved it. The sanctuary holds about 700 macaques.

ABOUT

A black, tree-living monkey with a silver-white mane around its face and a lion-like tuft at the tail tip. It lives in the canopy of evergreen rainforest in the Western Ghats.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- The most arboreal macaque, it is **active by day** and eats mainly fruit, about 80% of its diet. Groups usually hold 10–20 animals.
- About 4,000 survive in 47 isolated subpopulations at seven locations; fewer than 2,500 are mature. IUCN lists it as Endangered.
- A 2026 study of four decades in the Anamalai Hills found groups surviving in forest fragments among plantations; their numbers rose in some.

Kinds in India: It shares its rainforests with the Nilgiri langur, a leaf-eater. The lion-tailed macaque eats mainly fruit, with insects for protein.

WHERE IN INDIA · WESTERN GHATS · 3 STATES

Sharavathi LTM WLS (Karnataka) · Shivamogga, Uttara Kannada

Silent Valley NP (Keralam) · Large cluster; NP since 1984

Anamalai Hills (Tamil Nadu) · Valparai plateau fragments

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- It has no fixed breeding season. After about six months' gestation, a female bears a single infant.
- It is the only macaque whose males use loud calls to advertise their group's territory.
- Females stay in their birth group; young males leave and live in all-male groups until they win their own group.

PRELIMS TRAP

It is **diurnal**, active by day in the canopy. Its natural range is the Western Ghats of Keralam, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka; Andhra Pradesh has none.

CONSERVATION

Karnataka's Sharavathi Lion-tailed Macaque Sanctuary is named after it. Silent Valley became a national park after a hydroelectric dam that threatened its rainforest was dropped in 1983.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2013 · Q35 Also asked: 2012 · 2023

In which of the following States is lion-tailed macaque found in its natural habitat? 1. Tamil Nadu 2. Kerala 3. Karnataka 4. Andhra Pradesh Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2 only (c) 1, 3 and 4 only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

UPSC KEY **(a) 1, 2 and 3 only.** The lion-tailed macaque lives only in the Western Ghats of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka.

Sources: Deccan Herald, 11 Jul 2026; Down To Earth, 11 Jul 2025, 17 Jan and 19 Feb 2026; Mongabay-India; JoTT 2021; WPA 2022; CITES.

MAMMALS

Himalayan Brown Bear

Ursus arctos isabellinus

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | NT | **LC**

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

Least Concern (species level)

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

MAY 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

In May 2026 Himachal Pradesh recorded the Himalayan brown bear in two sanctuaries. On 9 May a sow with two cubs was photographed in **Rakchham-Chitkul**, Kinnaur, the second photographic record there. **Gamgul Siyabehi**, Chamba, got its first photographs of the bear: a male on 13 May, a female and cub on 20 May.

Holarctic species Brown bears live across North America, Europe and Asia. In Asia the range runs from Turkey and Iran along the Himalaya of Pakistan, India and Nepal to China, Mongolia, Russia and Japan.

ABOUT

A large bear with thick reddish-brown fur. It lives in alpine and subalpine meadows, scrub and rocky slopes at 3,000–5,000 m in the western Himalaya.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- It spends up to **seven months of winter** dormant in a den, without eating or drinking. Its diet mixes plants with marmots and small mammals.
- Its possible range in India is about 36,800 sq km: Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and northern Sikkim.
- It is in WPA Schedule I. CITES puts the Himalayan subspecies, *isabellinus*, in **Appendix I**, while most other brown bear populations are in Appendix II.

Kinds in India: India has four bears: sloth, Asiatic black, Himalayan brown and sun bear, all in WPA Schedule I. Asiatic black bears overlap with brown bears in the subalpine zone.

WHERE IN INDIA · WESTERN HIMALAYA · LADAKH CORE

Drass, Suru, Shargole & Zanskar (Ladakh) · Kargil; best habitat (2025)

Eight protected areas (Jammu and Kashmir) · High ranges

Kugti WLS and 9 other PAs (Himachal Pradesh) · Ten protected areas

Gangotri & Govind NPs (Uttarakhand) · Bhagirathi basin

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- It mates in May–July, but implantation is delayed; two or three cubs are born in January–March, during the winter sleep.
- Adults are solitary; cubs stay with their mother until at least their second spring, usually longer.

PRELIMS TRAP

IUCN assesses only the species, *Ursus arctos*, as **Least Concern** (2017); the Himalayan subspecies has no separate category. Reports calling it Critically Endangered or Endangered are wrong.

CONSERVATION

A 2025 Wildlife Institute of India study, run under the National Mission for Himalayan Studies with Ladakh's Department of Wildlife Protection, identifies priority valleys in western Ladakh for protection.

Sources: Clarity UPSC daily news, 15 and 30 May 2026; Khan et al., Scientific Reports, 27 Nov 2025; Mongabay-India, 9 Jan 2026; WPA 2022; EU Reg. 2026/1383 (CITES).

MAMMALS

Blue Whale

Balaenoptera musculus

EX | EW | CR | **EN** | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Endangered

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

JUN 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

On 27 June 2026 a **7.6 m blue whale calf** stranded and died on the rocky Bandra shore in Mumbai. Vets did a necropsy and the calf was buried on the beach. Whale strandings are rare on the Maharashtra coast.

ABOUT

The largest animal on Earth, a baleen whale. It takes huge gulps of seawater and strains out krill through baleen plates. It lives in all oceans except the Arctic.

Oceans worldwide Blue whales live in all oceans except the Arctic, in five recognised subspecies. A resident population is reported from the northern Indian Ocean; pygmy blue whales are commonest off Australia, Madagascar and New Zealand.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- It feeds almost only on **krill**; the biggest blue whales may eat up to 6 tons a day. Calves are weaned at 6–7 months.
- A CMFRI study counted 33 baleen whale strandings on India's south-west coast in 2004–2023, ten times more often after 2014, mostly in the monsoon.
- Blue whales have had full protection from commercial whaling since **1966**, under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling.

Kinds in India: Bryde's whale is the most-stranded baleen whale on India's south-west coast: 21 of 33 strandings in 2004–2023. The 2023 strandings included two blue whales.

WHERE IN INDIA · ARABIAN SEA COAST · STRANDINGS

Bandra shore, Mumbai (Maharashtra) · Calf stranded, 27 Jun 2026

South-west coast (Karnataka / Keralam) SPANS 2 STATES · Most baleen strandings

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Among the loudest animals on Earth: other whales can hear its calls up to about 1,600 km away.
- Gestation lasts about 10–12 months, and a female calves every two to three years on average.
- Its average lifespan is estimated at 80–90 years; it is usually alone or in pairs.

PRELIMS TRAP

The blue whale is a **mammal**, the largest animal on Earth. The whale shark, which also filter-feeds, is a shark and the largest fish.

CONSERVATION

WPA Schedule I and CITES Appendix I. In Mumbai, trained fishers and lifeguards alert a stranding network, which informs the forest department; vets carry out necropsies.

Sources: Mongabay, 6 Aug 2026; ICAR-CMFRI, Regional Studies in Marine Science 2025; NOAA Fisheries; WPA 2022; EU Reg. 2026/1383.

MAMMALS

Snow Leopard

Panthera uncia

EX | EW | CR | EN | **VU** | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Vulnerable

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

OCT 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

On 7 October 2026 Ladakh launched a **snow leopard safari**, which its administration calls India's first high-altitude snow leopard wildlife safari. Six vehicles, run by a community-based operator with the wildlife department, start with Rumbak, Shang and Uley. It aims to support conservation through local participation.

12 Asian countries The snow leopard lives in the high mountains of 12 Asian countries, from Afghanistan and Russia to Mongolia, Nepal and Bhutan. About 60% of its range lies in China. IUCN puts mature adults at 2,710–3,386.

Read the full story
www.clarityupsc.com

ABOUT

A pale grey big cat with dark rosettes, thick fur, large paws and a bushy tail almost as long as its body. It lives on rocky slopes, cliffs and ridges, usually between 3,000 and 5,000 m.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- **SPAI** (2019–23), India's first national estimate, found 718: Ladakh 477, Uttarakhand 124, Himachal 51, Arunachal 36, Sikkim 21, Jammu and Kashmir 9.
- It **cannot roar**: its vocal folds lack the fibro-elastic tissue that lets the lion, tiger, leopard and jaguar roar. It yowls in the breeding season.
- It is the **state animal** of Himachal Pradesh and, since 2021, of Ladakh. It preys mainly on wild sheep and goats.

Kinds in India: Two other 'leopards' live in India: the leopard (*Panthera pardus*), a roaring big cat, and the clouded leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*) of north-eastern forests, which cannot roar either.

WHERE IN INDIA · LADAKH 477 OF 718 · 6 STATES/UTS

Hemis NP (Ladakh) · Leh; highest density recorded

Spiti & Pin valleys (Himachal Pradesh) · Lahaul & Spiti; Upper Kinnaur

Nanda Devi–Gangotri landscape (Uttarakhand) · incl. Gangotri NP, Uttarkashi

Khangchendzonga–Tawang landscape (Sikkim / Arunachal Pradesh) SPANS 2 STATES · incl. Tso Lhamo plateau, Mangan

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- A solitary hunter, most active at dawn and dusk. It can kill prey up to three times its own weight.
- It mates from January to mid-March. After about 100 days' gestation, one to five cubs are born, mostly in May–June.
- An enlarged nasal cavity suits thin, cold air; its long tail aids balance and wraps round the body for warmth.

PRELIMS TRAP

The snow leopard is **Vulnerable**, not Endangered. IUCN moved it from Endangered, its category since 1986, to Vulnerable in 2017. India keeps it in WPA Schedule I.

CONSERVATION

Project Snow Leopard began in 2009. India has three priority landscapes and belongs to the 12-nation Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Programme.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2012 · Q97

Also asked: 2012

Consider the following : 1. Black-necked crane 2. Cheetah 3. Flying squirrel 4. Snow leopard Which of the above are naturally found in India?

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

UPSC KEY **(b) 1, 3 and 4 only.** The black-necked crane, flying squirrels and the snow leopard occur naturally in India. The cheetah had gone extinct; those in Kuno today were brought from Africa.

Sources: Ladakh administration via Clarity UPSC daily news, 9 Oct 2026; PIB (MoEFCC), 30 Jan 2024; HP Forest Dept–NCF via Down To Earth, Oct 2025; PLOS ONE 2025; IUCN 2017; IUCN Cat Specialist Group

Birds

10 SPECIES

BIRDS

Amur Falcon

Falco amurensis

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | NT | **LC**

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Least Concern

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix II**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

E. Asia to S. Africa Amur falcons breed in north-east China, Mongolia and nearby East Asia and winter in southern Africa, from Zimbabwe and Botswana to South Africa. India lies on their autumn passage.

Read the full story
www.clarityupsc.com

OCT 2026 WHY IN NEWS

On 22 October 2026 two satellite-tagged Amur falcons, **Apapang and Alang**, returned to Tamenglong, Manipur, after a nearly year-long loop through 23 countries of Asia and Africa. Wildlife Institute of India scientists had tagged them there in November 2025.

ABOUT

A small falcon that breeds in East Asia and winters in southern Africa. Each October large flocks reach north-east India and feed there before crossing the Arabian Sea.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- From Manipur the falcons fly non-stop for about six days and 6,000 km to Somalia, crossing about 3,000 km of the **Arabian Sea**.
- At stopovers in Tamenglong they spend two to three weeks feeding on **termites** to build fat reserves for the sea crossing.
- The 2022 amendment of the Wild Life (Protection) Act lists it in **Schedule I**. Tagged birds have wintered in Somalia, Zimbabwe and Botswana.

WHERE IN INDIA · NORTH-EAST STOPOVER · OCT–NOV

Tamenglong stopovers (Chiuluan) (Manipur) · Tamenglong; tagging site

Doyang Lake roost (Nagaland) · Oct–Nov stopover

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- It never builds a nest: it takes over nests of other birds, often domed magpie nests.
- It gathers in huge flocks at stopovers; in 2012 an estimated 120,000–140,000 were being trapped yearly in Nagaland.

PRELIMS TRAP

The Amur falcon breeds in north-east China and Mongolia and winters in southern Africa. North-east India is a **stopover**; it neither breeds nor winters there.

CONSERVATION

Manipur's forest department and WII have satellite-tagged falcons since 2018 to map routes and stopovers. Local communities protect the birds at roosts in Manipur and Nagaland.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2026 · Q37

Which of the following statements with regard to the arrival of Amur Falcons at Doyang Lake in Nagaland each year from Mongolia is/are correct ? 1. It showcases how sustained local conservation efforts can contribute to the arrival and protection of international migratory birds. 2. It reflects the global success of advanced tracking technologies that guide migratory birds back to their stopover sites. 3. It confirms that Amur Falcons have adapted to permanent residency in India due to favourable habitat changes. Select the answer using the code given below :

(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 (c) 2 and 3 (d) 3 only

UPSC KEY **(a) 1 only.** Pangti and other Nagaland villages ended the hunting of Amur falcons. Satellite tags only record their routes, and the birds are passage migrants, not residents.

Sources: AIR, 23 Oct 2026; PTI, 27 Feb 2026; Eastern Mirror, 27 Feb 2026; UPSC Prelims 2026 (Q37); WPA 2022; EU Reg. 2026/1383.

BIRDS

Indian Vulture

Gyps indicus

EX | EW | **CR** | EN | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix II**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

JAN 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

From 2 January 2026 BNHS soft-released **15 captive-bred Indian vultures** from a pre-release aviary in the Somthana range of Melghat Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra. The birds came from the Pinjore breeding centre and carried GSM and satellite tags fitted on 19 December 2025.

South Asia The Indian vulture is a bird of South Asia. Nearly all recent records come from India, with a few from Pakistan and Nepal. WII found it nesting at 110 Indian sites in 2023–25.

ABOUT

A large Gyps vulture of South Asia that scavenges on carcasses of livestock and wild animals. It is India's most widespread breeding vulture, now nesting mainly in central India's protected areas.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Diclofenac in carcasses of treated cattle causes **kidney failure** in vultures (visceral gout). Three-quarters of dead vultures examined showed it.
- In 2025–26 BNHS tests found **paracetamol** safe for Gyps vultures, but a survey still found diclofenac, aceclofenac or nimesulide in 47 of 59 pharmacies.
- The Pinjore centre held **215 Indian vultures** in 2025–26. The Environment Ministry's 2017 estimate put India's wild population at about 26,500.

Kinds in India: India records nine vultures, all in WPA Schedule I. Four are Critically Endangered: white-rumped, Indian, slender-billed and red-headed; the Egyptian vulture is Endangered.

WHERE IN INDIA · MAINLY CENTRAL INDIA'S PAS

Melghat TR (Somthana range) (Maharashtra) · Amravati; release site 2026

Pench & Tadoba-Andhari TRs (Maharashtra) · Release sites for Pinjore birds

Jatayu breeding centre, Pinjore (Haryana) · 215 Indian vultures (2025–26)

VCBC Bhopal & Halali Dam (Madhya Pradesh) · Bhopal; Raisen (releases)

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- It nests in colonies, almost only on cliffs and old ruins; tree nests are known from one cliffless area.
- It is long-lived and slow to replace itself: one generation spans about 12 years.
- It often feeds alongside white-rumped vultures at carcass dumps and slaughterhouses.

PRELIMS TRAP

The Indian vulture is also called the long-billed vulture; both names mean *Gyps indicus*. The slender-billed vulture, *Gyps tenuirostris*, is a separate species of the Gangetic plain and Assam.

CONSERVATION

Breeding centres under the species recovery programme (Pinjore, Bhopal, Rajabhatkhawa and others) raise birds for release. India banned veterinary diclofenac in 2006; meloxicam is the safe substitute.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2012 · Q100

Vultures which used to be very common in Indian countryside some years ago are rarely seen nowadays. This is attributed to

(a) the destruction of their nesting sites by new invasive species
(b) a drug used by cattle owners for treating their diseased cattle
(c) scarcity of food available to them
(d) a widespread, persistent and fatal disease among them

UPSC KEY **(b) a drug used by cattle owners for treating their diseased cattle.** Vultures that eat carcasses of cattle treated with diclofenac die of kidney failure. India banned the drug for veterinary use in 2006.

Sources: PTI, 6 Jan 2026; BNHS Annual Report 2025–26; PIB, 5 Dec 2024; WII via Down To Earth, 3 Nov 2025; Haryana Forest Dept; WPA 2022.

BIRDS

Black-necked Crane

Grus nigricollis

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | **NT** | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Near Threatened

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

Tibetan Plateau Most black-necked cranes live on the Qinghai–Tibetan Plateau in China. Smaller numbers winter in Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh. In India, Ladakh holds the only breeding birds.

AUG 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

BNHS's June 2026 monitoring counted **19 breeding pairs** in Ladakh's wetlands, though several sites could not be surveyed. In August Ladakh held its first Black-necked Crane Festival, and BNHS reported sterilising over 2,950 free-ranging dogs in crane breeding areas since 2022.

ABOUT

A grey crane named for its black head and neck. The only alpine crane among the world's 15 cranes, it breeds in summer on high wetlands of the Tibetan Plateau and Ladakh.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Pairs return each spring to the same marshes and build simple nests of grass and sedge. Free-ranging dogs raid nests for **eggs and chicks**.
- Ladakh's breeding population is about 110–130 birds, with roughly 20–25 breeding pairs a year, in the Changthang Cold Desert Wildlife Sanctuary and nearby marshes.
- It became the **state bird of Ladakh** after Ladakh became a Union Territory; it was earlier the state bird of Jammu and Kashmir.

WHERE IN INDIA · BREEDS LADAKH · WINTERS ARUNACHAL

Changthang Cold Desert WLS (Ladakh) · Hanle, Tso Kar, Nyoma wetlands

Suru Valley marshes (Ladakh) · Kargil; outlying breeders

Sangti valley (Arunachal Pradesh) · West Kameng; winter

Zemithang (Pangchen) (Arunachal Pradesh) · Tawang; winter

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- It prefers to nest in about 30 cm of water at large lakes, which probably reduces nest predation.
- Omnivorous, it eats roots, tubers, snails, fish, frogs and rodents; in winter it feeds on waste grain in fields.

PRELIMS TRAP

IUCN lists the black-necked crane as **Near Threatened**, not Vulnerable, as some reports still say. It breeds in Ladakh in summer and winters in Arunachal Pradesh and Bhutan.

CONSERVATION

BNHS, with the Army and Ladakh's forest and animal husbandry departments, has sterilised over 2,950 free-ranging dogs since 2022, and counts breeding pairs every June.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2012 · Q97

Also asked: 2014

Consider the following : 1. Black-necked crane 2. Cheetah 3. Flying squirrel 4. Snow leopard Which of the above are naturally found in India?

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

UPSC KEY **(b) 1, 3 and 4 only.** The black-necked crane, flying squirrels and the snow leopard occur naturally in India. The cheetah had gone extinct; those in Kuno today were brought from Africa.

Sources: Down To Earth, 13 Aug 2026 and 21 Feb 2026; AIR, 12 Aug 2026; GBIF/eBird records; WPA 2022; EU Reg. 2026/1383.

BIRDS

Sarus Crane

Antigone antigone

EX | EW | CR | EN | **VU** | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Vulnerable

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix II**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

OCT 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

BNHS organised an all-India **sarus crane survey** on 10–11 October 2026, inviting forest departments, farmers and citizen scientists to set a national baseline. Uttar Pradesh's winter census in early 2026 had counted 20,628 sarus, up from 19,994.

ABOUT

The world's tallest flying bird, about 1.5 m tall. It lives in wetlands, marshes, grassland and farmland in the plains of northern, western and central India.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- India's only **resident breeding crane**, it nests in the monsoon, often in paddy fields, as in eastern Vidarbha.
- Uttar Pradesh's 2026 winter count found the most sarus in **Etawah** (3,304) and Mainpuri (2,899) divisions; about 10,000 volunteers covered 68 forest divisions.
- The State of India's Birds report estimates a long-term decline of about 77% and a current fall of 4.3% a year.

Kinds in India: WPA Schedule I lists six cranes for India: sarus and black-necked cranes breed here; common and demoiselle cranes visit in winter; hooded and Siberian cranes are rare or past visitors.

Asia and Australia Sarus cranes live in India and southern Nepal, in Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam, and in northern Australia. Uttar Pradesh alone counted over 20,000 in 2026.

Read the full story
www.clarityupsc.com

WHERE IN INDIA · NORTH & WEST PLAINS · UP LEADS

Etawah–Mainpuri farmland (Uttar Pradesh) · Etawah, Mainpuri, Auraiya

Wetland and farm pockets (Gujarat / Rajasthan / Madhya Pradesh / Haryana) SPANS 4 STATES

Eastern Vidarbha paddy wetlands (Maharashtra) · Gondia, Bhandara, Chandrapur

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Pairs are thought to mate for life; their duet, the unison call, strengthens the bond and guards territory.
- It builds a large, island-like nest of reeds and grass in wetlands; a clutch holds one to three eggs.
- Omnivorous, it eats aquatic plants, grain, insects and other invertebrates, and small vertebrates such as frogs.

PRELIMS TRAP

The sarus is the state bird of **Uttar Pradesh**. It is Vulnerable (IUCN) and in WPA Schedule I, but in CITES Appendix II; the black-necked crane is in Appendix I.

CONSERVATION

BNHS runs a sarus project in Vidarbha (2023–26) with nest monitoring, GPS tracking and farmer engagement. Uttar Pradesh counts its state bird twice a year, in summer and winter.

Sources: Down To Earth, 9 Oct 2026; IANS, 5 Feb 2026; BNHS Annual Report 2025–26; WPA 2022; EU Reg. 2026/1383; GBIF records.

BIRDS

Nilgiri Wood Pigeon

Columba elphinstonii

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | NT | **LC**

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Least Concern

WPA Schedule I | **Not in CITES appendices**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

FEB 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

IUCN downlisted the Nilgiri wood pigeon from Vulnerable to **Least Concern** in October 2025. A 2026 study in the Proceedings of the Indian National Science Academy used 9,757 eBird records and projects that its suitable habitat will grow until 2040, then shrink sharply by 2081–2100.

ABOUT

A large, dark pigeon with a chequered black-and-white patch on the back of its neck. It lives in the canopy of wet evergreen and shola forests of the Western Ghats, mostly in the hills.

Found only in India The Nilgiri wood pigeon is found only in the Western Ghats of India, from Maharashtra and Goa south to Keralam and Tamil Nadu.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- It feeds mainly on **forest fruits** taken in the canopy and depends on unbroken forest, so it is sensitive to forest loss.
- It is found only in the Western Ghats, from Maharashtra and Goa through Karnataka to Keralam and Tamil Nadu.
- In BirdLife's 2024 review, State of India's Birds data showed a **stable trend**, too little decline even for Near Threatened.

WHERE IN INDIA · WESTERN GHATS ONLY · 5 STATES

Nilgiri and Anamalai hills (Tamil Nadu / Keralam) SPANS 2 STATES · Main stronghold

Central Western Ghats (Karnataka / Goa) SPANS 2 STATES

Northern Western Ghats (Maharashtra)

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Most breeding takes place in shola forest above 2,000 m, generally in March–July.
- It seems to wander in search of fruit, ranging farther than most Western Ghats birds.

PRELIMS TRAP

The 2025 downlisting from Vulnerable to **Least Concern** was coded non-genuine: it reflects better information, not a growing population. The bird stays in WPA Schedule I.

Sources: IUCN Red List 2025-2, Table 7; BirdLife forum, Nov 2024; Edward et al., Proc. INSA, Feb 2026; The Hindu, 27 Feb 2026; WPA 2022; GBIF.

BIRDS

Bengal Florican

Houbaropsis bengalensis

EX | EW | **CR** | EN | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

AUG 2025 **WHY IN NEWS**

A synchronised survey of Manas National Park, Assam, on 9–10 April 2025 counted **38 displaying males** and 2 females. Assuming one female per male, the Assam Forest Department–WII report estimated about 76 birds and noted new sites such as Kuklung.

ABOUT

A medium-sized bustard. Breeding males are black with a crest and white wing patches that show in flight. It lives in lowland grasslands, dry or seasonally flooded, on the Terai and Brahmaputra floodplains.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- In the breeding season males leap into the air, flap and call to attract females. Several males display near one another, a **lek**.
- A 2021 survey of Manas recorded 50 males and 17 females, up from 24 males in 2009 (Journal of Threatened Taxa, 2024).
- The 2025 report found controlled burning in February–March keeps florican grassland suitable. The Kokilabari farm area held one-third of the birds seen.

Kinds in India: WPA Schedule I lists five bustards: great Indian bustard, Bengal florican, lesser florican, Macqueen's bustard and little bustard. The first three are Critically Endangered.

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- It shows reverse size dimorphism: the female is slightly larger than the male.
- No nest is built: the female lays one or two eggs on the ground among grass and rears them alone.
- Omnivorous, it eats seeds, grass shoots, grasshoppers, ants and beetles, even frogs and small snakes.

S. Asia + Cambodia Two separate populations survive: one from Uttar Pradesh through Nepal's Terai to Assam and Arunachal, the other in Cambodia's Tonle Sap grasslands (subspecies blandini). BirdLife puts the world total at 250–999 adults.

Read the full story
www.clarityupsc.com

WHERE IN INDIA · ASSAM CORE · ARUNACHAL & UP

Manas NP (Assam) · ~76 birds 2025; Kokilabari, Kuklung

Kaziranga & Orang NPs (Assam) · Brahmaputra floodplain

D'Ering Memorial WLS (Arunachal Pradesh) · East Siang

Dudhwa & Pilibhit TRs (Uttar Pradesh) · Lakhimpur Kheri, Pilibhit

PRELIMS TRAP

The Bengal florican lives in Terai and Brahmaputra grasslands and is in CITES Appendix I. The lesser florican breeds in western and central India and is in Appendix II.

CONSERVATION

Community programmes around Kokilabari farm, next to Manas, have reduced hunting and egg collection. Joint Forest Management Committees look after grassland at Bhairabkunda, Assam.

Sources: Assam Forest Department–WII Manas survey (EastMojo, 6 Aug 2025); JoTT 2024; Down To Earth, Apr 2026; BirdLife/IUCN 2018; WPA 2022.

BIRDS

Indian Skimmer

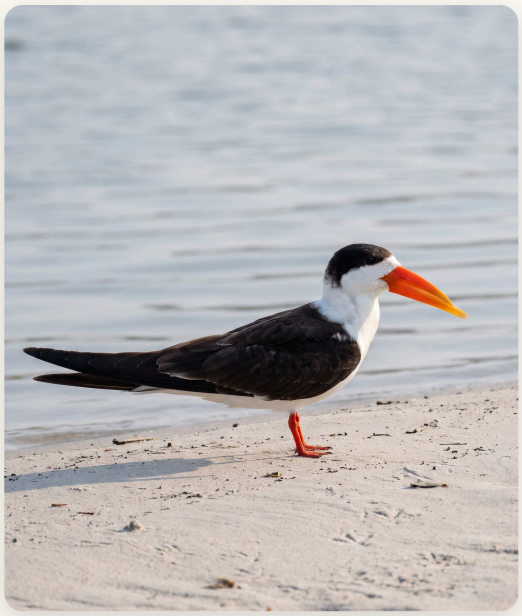
Rynchops albicollis

EX | EW | CR | **EN** | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Endangered

WPA Schedule I | **Not in CITES appendices**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

APR 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

On 29 April 2026 BNHS scientist Parveen Shaikh won a **Whitley Award** for her 'Guardians of the Skimmer' work on the Chambal. Nest survival rose from 14% to 27% and the local population from about 400 (2017) to about 1,000. It will extend to Prayagraj.

ABOUT

A tern-like river bird with a bright orange bill whose lower mandible is longer than the upper. It breeds on large, exposed river sandbars and winters on rivers, estuaries and coasts.

India + Bangladesh Once found from Pakistan to the Mekong, it is extinct in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. It breeds almost only in India and many winter in Bangladesh. BirdLife estimates 2,450–2,900 adults.

Watch the short
Clarity UPSC on YouTube

PRELIMS POINTERS

- It feeds by flying low with the bill open, slicing the water with the longer lower mandible to snatch fish.
- It nests in colonies on sandbars. In Odisha, laying peaks in April, the median clutch is three eggs and incubation lasts about 22 days.
- Dams, irrigation and sand mining change river levels: high water floods colonies, and low water lets dogs, jackals and people reach them.

WHERE IN INDIA · CHAMBAL CORE · GANGA, MAHANADI

National Chambal Sanctuary (Rajasthan / Madhya Pradesh / Uttar Pradesh) SPANS 3 STATES · largest breeding population

Ganga–Yamuna confluence, Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh) · Prayagraj; new guardian sites

Mahanadi river (Odisha) · breeding colonies

Pong Dam & Tawa Reservoir (Himachal Pradesh / Madhya Pradesh) SPANS 2 STATES · breeding records

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Birds return to sandbar colonies from February, once river levels fall enough to expose the bars, and leave by August.
- After breeding, many move to estuaries and coasts; marked Chambal birds reached Gujarat and Kakinada, over 1,000 km away.

PRELIMS TRAP

The Indian skimmer now breeds almost only in India, but a large share of the world population winters in Bangladesh's Padma–Meghna delta.

CONSERVATION

BNHS's 'Guardians of the Skimmer' has trained over 30 nest guardians on the Chambal. At Prayagraj it plans predator-proof fencing and GPS mapping of nests.

Sources: Whitley Fund for Nature, 30 Apr 2026; Mongabay India, 30 Apr 2026; BirdLife/IUCN 2020; Ali & Ripley; WPA 2022.

BIRDS

Nicobar Megapode

Megapodius nicobariensis

EX | EW | CR | EN | **VU** | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Vulnerable

WPA Schedule I | **Not in CITES appendices**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

MAY 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

In May 2026 the Nicobarese Tribal Council sought withdrawal of three wildlife sanctuaries notified in October 2022 to offset the Great Nicobar project. They include a 1.29 sq km **Megapode Sanctuary** on Menchal Island and a leatherback sanctuary on Little Nicobar.

ABOUT

A ground-dwelling bird whose genus name, Megapodius, means 'big foot'. Found only in the Nicobar Islands, it lives in forest and secondary growth, most densely in coastal forest.

Found only in India Found only in India's Nicobar Islands, in two races: abbotti on Great and Little Nicobar and nearby islets, and nicobariensis on the central islands. BirdLife estimates 750–1,500 adults.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Parents never sit on eggs; these lie in mounds of sand, loam and humus near the shore. In large mounds incubation takes about 72 days.
- Several pairs often share one mound. Unpaired males build and defend mounds to attract a mate.
- The 2004 tsunami cut numbers by about two-thirds. Surveys in 2006 estimated 395–790 breeding pairs, mostly on Great and Little Nicobar.

WHERE IN INDIA · NICOBAR ISLANDS ONLY

Great Nicobar (Campbell Bay & Galathea NPs) (Andaman & Nicobar Islands) · 203–406 pairs (2006)

Little Nicobar (Andaman & Nicobar Islands) · 82–164 pairs (2006)

Megapode Sanctuary, Menchal Island (Andaman & Nicobar Islands) · 1.29 sq km; notified Oct 2022

Central Nicobars (Camorta to Tillanchong) (Andaman & Nicobar Islands) · race nicobariensis

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Chicks hatch feathered, dig out of the mound alone, and on emerging can run, forage and fly without parental care.
- It is a non-migratory member of Galliformes, the chicken-like birds. Pairs are mostly monogamous and share mound upkeep.

PRELIMS TRAP

The megapode is found only in the Nicobar group; old reports from Little Andaman are unproven. It is one of India's 22 species-recovery-programme species.

CONSERVATION

One of 22 species in the Centre's recovery programme (IDWH scheme). It lives in Campbell Bay and Galathea NPs, the Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve and the Menchal sanctuary.

Sources: BirdLife/IUCN assessment 2021; Outlook Traveller, 16 May 2026; The News Minute, 2024; WII–MoEFCC IDWH list; WPA 2022.

BIRDS

White-bellied Heron

Ardea insignis

EX | EW | **CR** | EN | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered

WPA Schedule I | **Not in CITES appendices**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

MAY 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

On 8 May 2026 the Forest Advisory Committee gave in-principle forest clearance to the 1,200 MW **Kalai-II** dam on the Lohit in Anjaw district, Arunachal Pradesh. Herons occur about 50 km upstream at Walong, but the project's EIA did not mention the bird.

ABOUT

A large grey heron with a white belly. It hunts fish in clear rivers with sand or gravel bars, in or near subtropical broadleaved forest, up to about 1,500 m.

E Himalaya, Myanmar It lives in the eastern Himalayan foothills of Bhutan and north-east India and in northern Myanmar; China's first record came in 2014. It is extinct in Nepal. Bhutan counted 26 wild birds in 2026.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- It nests alone rather than in colonies. Bhutan's known nests sit in large chir pines on ridges near where a forest stream meets a river.
- Mongabay (June 2026) reports only about six to nine birds in India, all in Arunachal Pradesh.
- Bhutan's 2026 survey counted 31 birds, 26 in the wild and 5 in a conservation breeding centre, its highest count since 2003.

WHERE IN INDIA · ARUNACHAL ONLY · 6–9 BIRDS

Namdapha TR (Arunachal Pradesh) · Changlang; India's breeding site

Walong, Lohit valley (Arunachal Pradesh) · Anjaw; 50 km above Kalai-II

Kaziranga, Manas & Dibru-Saikhowa NPs (Assam) · past seasonal records

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Fish is its only food. It waits still for prey in clear, shallow, fast streams, moving less than other herons.
- Very sensitive to disturbance: one pair took 48 hours to return to its breeding site after being disturbed.
- Non-migratory: in Bhutan it nests from March to early June, then winters up to 30 km away on river sandbars.

PRELIMS TRAP

IUCN places it in the band of 50–249 mature individuals; field counts suggest fewer than 60 wild birds. Bhutan's 2026 total of 31 includes five captive birds.

CONSERVATION

Bhutan's Royal Society for Protection of Nature runs yearly counts and a conservation breeding centre. In India the bird breeds in Namdapha Tiger Reserve.

Sources: Mongabay India, 19 Jun 2026; Indian Express, 4 Jan & 28 May 2026; RSPN Bhutan survey 2026; BirdLife/IUCN 2018; WPA 2022.

BIRDS

Indian Grey Hornbill

Ocyceros birostris

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | NT | **LC**

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Least Concern

WPA Schedule II | **Not in CITES appendices**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

JUL 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

In July 2026 Gujarat reported that Indian grey hornbills released in **Gir** are breeding in the wild. The bird had vanished from Gir between 1950 and 1960. Forty birds from the Aravalli forest division were released in 2021–23.

Indian subcontinent It lives in India, Pakistan and Nepal; Bangladesh has only vagrants. In India it is widespread but absent from the north-east and the high Himalaya.

Read the full story
www.clarityupsc.com

ABOUT

A small brownish-grey hornbill with a curved bill topped by a casque; males have the larger casque. It lives in deciduous forest, open woodland, farmland and even town gardens.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- The female seals herself inside a tree cavity with mud for about two months. The male brings all the food for her and the chicks.
- It eats mainly fruit and disperses seeds in dry forest. In Gir the birds chose tall, thick-trunked trees for their nests.
- Satellite-tagged males first roamed over about 61 sq km on average, then settled into ranges of about 6 sq km.

Kinds in India: WPA 2022 names nine hornbills: eight in Schedule I and the Indian grey hornbill in Schedule II. Five of the nine are Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List.

WHERE IN INDIA · MOST OF INDIA · NOT THE NORTH-EAST

Gir NP & WLS (Gujarat) · reintroduced 2021–23

Aravalli Forest Division (Gujarat) · source birds, ~380 km from Gir

Nagarjunasagar–Srisailam TR (Andhra Pradesh) · Eastern Ghats site

Sathyamangalam WLS (Tamil Nadu) · Erode; Eastern Ghats site

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- It nests in natural or previously dug tree holes, reusing the same site year after year.
- Breeding runs mainly from March to June. Females lay 2–5 eggs, which hatch after about 21 days.
- Figs make up about a quarter of its diet outside the breeding season; insects and flowers are minor foods.

PRELIMS TRAP

The Indian grey hornbill (Least Concern, Schedule II) differs from the Malabar grey hornbill, a Western Ghats endemic that is Vulnerable and in Schedule I.

CONSERVATION

The Gujarat Forest Department's Gir reintroduction released 40 birds in two phases (2021–23) and tracked 11 males by satellite.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2016 · Q22 · ON THE GREAT HORNBILL

Also asked: 2018

In which of the following regions of India are you most likely to come across the 'Great Indian Hornbill' in its natural habitat?

(a) Sand deserts of northwest India
(b) Higher Himalayas of Jammu and Kashmir
(c) Salt marshes of western Gujarat
(d) Western Ghats

UPSC KEY **(d) Western Ghats.** The great Indian hornbill lives in the tall evergreen forests of the Western Ghats and the north-east.

Sources: Ram et al., Birds 6(4): 58 (24 Oct 2025); IANS, 14 Jul 2026; BirdLife/IUCN 2020; WPA 2022 Schedules I–II.

Reptiles & Amphibians

5 SPECIES

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

King Cobra

Ophiophagus hannah; O. kaalinga (Western Ghats)

EX | EW | CR | EN | **VU** | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Vulnerable

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix II**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

FEB 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

A February 2026 study in *Biotropica* used two decades of snake-rescue records from Goa. King cobras turned up at railway stations far from suitable habitat; the authors suspect freight trains carried them there by accident.

South & SE Asia King cobras range from India and eastern Pakistan through Nepal, Bhutan and southern China to South-East Asia, Indonesia and the Philippines. The Western Ghats species is found only in India.

ABOUT

The world's longest venomous snake, usually about 3–4 m long, dark with pale crossbands. It lives in forests from the Western Ghats to the Himalayan foothills, north-east and eastern India.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- The only snake known to build a nest: the female heaps leaf litter into a mound, lays her eggs inside and guards them.
- It eats mainly other snakes, including cobras. Its genus name, Ophiophagus, means 'snake-eater'.
- A 2024 revision split the king cobra into four species. India has two: the northern king cobra and the Western Ghats king cobra, *O. kaalinga*.

Kinds in India: The four king cobras: northern (O. hannah: north and east India, Andamans), Western Ghats (O. kaalinga), Sunda (O. bungarus) and Luzon (O. salvatana).

WHERE IN INDIA · WESTERN GHATS, HIMALAYA, EAST, A&N

Western Ghats (O. kaalinga) **(Karnataka / Keralam / Tamil Nadu / Goa / Maharashtra)** **SPANS 5 STATES** · type locality Agumbe, Shivamogga

Himalayan foothills (O. hannah) **(Uttarakhand / West Bengal / Sikkim)** **SPANS 3 STATES** · Nainital, Mussoorie, Darjeeling

North-east (O. hannah) **(Assam / Meghalaya / Arunachal Pradesh)** **SPANS 3 STATES** · Kokrajhar, Shillong, Itanagar

East coast & islands (O. hannah) **(Odisha / Andaman & Nicobar Islands)** **SPANS 2 STATES** · Bhitarkanika NP; South Andaman

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Its low hiss sounds like a dog's growl. When threatened it can rear its front body up to 1.2 m.
- Breeding runs from January to April. Clutches hold 21–40 eggs, warmed by heat from the nest's rotting leaves.
- Active by day, it can live about 20 years in the wild.

PRELIMS TRAP

WPA 2022 lists 'all species of the genus Ophiophagus' in Schedule I, so both Indian king cobras are Schedule I. Indian cobras (genus Naja) are also Schedule I.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2010 · Q103

Also asked: 1995 · 2008

King Cobra is the only snake that makes its own nest. Why does it make its nest?

(a) It is a snake-eater and the nest helps attract other snakes
(b) It is a viviparous snake and needs a nest to give birth to its offspring
(c) It is an oviparous snake and lays its eggs in the nest and guards the nest until they are hatched
(d) It is a large, cold blooded animal, and needs a nest to hibernate in the cold season

ANSWER **(c) It is an oviparous snake and lays its eggs in the nest and guards the nest until they are hatched.** The king cobra lays eggs. The female builds a nest of leaf litter and guards it until the eggs hatch.

Sources: Mongabay, 11 Feb and 3 Mar 2026; Das et al. 2024, European Journal of Taxonomy 961; Whitaker et al. 2013; WPA 2022; EU 2026/1383.

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Mugger (Marsh Crocodile)

Crocodylus palustris

EX | EW | CR | EN | **VU** | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Vulnerable

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

JUL 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

A July 2026 study in *Ecological Applications* mapped mugger habitat across the 81,155 sq km Kaveri basin. Only about **38%** of 2,209 sq km of suitable habitat lies inside protected areas; about 990 sq km of priority habitat lies outside them.

South Asia + Iran The mugger lives in India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan and Iran; stray individuals reach Bangladesh. Sri Lanka's many man-made lakes hold large numbers.

Watch the short
Clarity UPSC on YouTube

ABOUT

The most broad-snouted of the true crocodiles, usually 3–4 m long. It prefers still fresh water such as lakes, marshes, slow rivers and reservoirs, and sometimes enters brackish water.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Females lay eggs in sandbanks between February and April. Muggers dig burrows, up to 10 m long, to escape summer heat and winter cold.
- It appears to be the only crocodilian that regularly breeds twice a year, laying clutches 30–57 days apart.
- Nest temperature sets the hatchlings' sex: cool and very warm nests give females, intermediate temperatures give males.

Kinds in India: India's three crocodilians: gharial (river specialist, Critically Endangered), mugger (fresh still water, Vulnerable) and saltwater crocodile (estuaries, Least Concern). All are in WPA Schedule I.

WHERE IN INDIA · KAVERI BASIN STUDY · WIDESPREAD

KRS backwaters & Ranganathittu (Karnataka) · Mandya; Kaveri river

Hogenakkal–Mettur stretch (Tamil Nadu) · Dharmapuri, Salem

Kollidam river & Kodiyakarai (Tamil Nadu) · Mayiladuthurai; Nagapattinam

Moyar & Amaravati rivers (Tamil Nadu / Karnataka)
SPANS 2 STATES · earlier studied populations

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Muggers have been recorded using twigs and sticks as lures to catch birds, a rare example of tool use.
- A dietary generalist, it eats fish, birds, mammals and reptiles, and has been seen herding fish.
- It digs a hole nest for 25–30 or more eggs; after 55–75 days the female helps the hatchlings to water.

PRELIMS TRAP

The mugger (Vulnerable) is in CITES Appendix I. The saltwater crocodile (Least Concern) has only five populations in Appendix II: Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and Palawan (Philippines).

CONSERVATION

India restocked depleted rivers with captive-reared muggers from the 1970s. The Kaveri study proposes five priority regions, about 540 sq km, outside protected areas.

Sources: Mongabay India, 6 Jul 2026; IUCN SSC Crocodile Specialist Group; Lang & Andrews 1994; WPA 2022; EU 2026/1383.

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Himalayan Salamander

Tylototriton himalayanus

EX | EW | CR | EN | **VU** | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Vulnerable

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix II**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

APR 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

On 29 April 2026 Darjeeling conservationist Barkha Subba won a **Whitley Award** for the first grassroots programme to protect Himalayan salamander breeding wetlands. About 30 breeding sites remain in the Darjeeling hills, many outside protected areas; she will work on seven.

ABOUT

A tailed amphibian up to 17 cm long that can live 11 years. It lives in the cool, shaded wetlands and forest edges of the Darjeeling hills and breeds in small ponds called pokhris.

India, Nepal, Bhutan Endemic to the eastern Himalaya of India, Nepal and Bhutan. In India it is known from the Darjeeling hills of West Bengal.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Each monsoon it returns to the pond where it hatched to breed (philopatry). Courtship lasts about 90 minutes; eggs stick to semi-submerged plants.
- Jorepokhri in Darjeeling became India's first salamander sanctuary in 1985. Concrete and tourist works have since left it without salamanders.
- Threats include wetlands drained for housing and tourism, tea-garden expansion, detergent run-off, roads that crush migrating salamanders and chytrid fungus.

Kinds in India: WPA Schedule I names two Indian Tylototriton newts: the Himalayan salamander (T. himalayanus) and the crocodile newt (T. verrucosus). CITES lists all Tylototriton in Appendix II.

WHERE IN INDIA · DARJEELING HILLS, WEST BENGAL

Darjeeling hill wetlands (West Bengal) · about 30 breeding sites left

Namthing BHS (West Bengal) · Darjeeling; Whitley project site

Mirik & Pokhriabong ponds (West Bengal) · Darjeeling; Whitley project sites

Jorepokhri WLS (West Bengal) · Darjeeling; salamanders now gone

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Like other salamanders, it can regrow lost limbs.
- Because it depends on clean breeding ponds, it serves as an indicator of wetland health.

PRELIMS TRAP

The Darjeeling salamander is now Tylototriton himalayanus, described in 2015. Older sources call it T. verrucosus, which WPA 2022 lists separately as the crocodile newt.

CONSERVATION

Jorepokhri WLS (1985) was set up for the species. The Whitley-funded project restores seven ponds, removes invasive plants, screens for chytrid and seeks Nepal–Bhutan cooperation.

Sources: Whitley Fund for Nature, 28 Apr 2026; Mongabay India, 17 Feb and 30 Apr 2026; IUCN Red List via GBIF; WPA 2022; EU 2026/1383.

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Galaxy Frog

Melanobatrachus indicus

EX | EW | CR | EN | **VU** | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Vulnerable

Not in WPA schedules | **Not in CITES appendices**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

JAN 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

A *Herpetology Notes* study, reported in December 2025, found that all **seven galaxy frogs** at a Kerala site vanished between March 2020 and August 2021. Photographer groups had overturned 25 logs; the researchers withheld the site's location.

ABOUT

A tiny frog, 2–3.5 cm long, with black skin speckled like a starry sky. It lives under rotting logs and stones on the forest floor above 900 m in the southern Western Ghats.

Found only in India Found only in India, in the southern Western Ghats of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, above about 900 m.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- It is the only species in its genus, Melanobatrachus, and an EDGE species: evolutionarily distinct and globally endangered.
- It depends on the moist shelter under rotting logs. The study links the loss of all seven frogs to logs being overturned.
- Mathikettan Shola National Park in Kerala adopted the galaxy frog as its flagship species in 2021.

WHERE IN INDIA · SOUTHERN WESTERN GHATS ONLY

Mathikettan Shola NP (Keralam) · Idukki; park's flagship species

Anamalai hills (Tamil Nadu) · type locality (1878)

Undisclosed study site (Keralam) · 7 frogs lost, 2020–21

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- It is a small narrow-mouthed frog (family Microhylidae) with scarlet blotches on its belly and forearms, seen out at night.
- Each frog's scarlet markings differ, so photographs may help researchers tell individuals apart.
- Reported from only about a dozen localities, it was found in a shaded Munnar cardamom plantation in 2023, a first.

PRELIMS TRAP

The galaxy frog is Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, yet WPA 2022 does not name it in Schedule I or II, and CITES does not list it.

Sources: Mongabay India, 2 Jan 2026 (Herpetology Notes study); IUCN Red List via GBIF; WPA 2022 Schedules I–II; EU 2026/1383.

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Saltwater Crocodile

Crocodylus porosus

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | NT | **LC**

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Least Concern

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

JAN 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

Odisha's January 2026 census counted **1,858 saltwater crocodiles** in and around Bhitarkanika National Park, up from 1,826 in 2025. Between 6 October and 3 November 2026 five were found dead, raising concern over illegal fishing nets.

India to Australia It ranges from Sri Lanka and India's east coast to the Caroline Islands in the Pacific, and from Myanmar through South-East Asia to northern Australia.

ABOUT

The largest crocodilian and a strong contender for largest living reptile: adult males commonly reach 4–5 m, some over 6 m. It lives in tidal and freshwater rivers, mangrove creeks and swamps.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Females lay about 50 eggs in a mound nest and guard it. Flooding kills many; monitor lizards are the main predator of eggs and hatchlings.
- Bhitarkanika's count has risen from 1,192 in 2000. The 2025 census included 18 albino crocodiles.
- In 2006 Guinness World Records recognised a 7.01 m crocodile from Bhitarkanika as the world's largest.

Kinds in India: India has three crocodilians: gharial (Critically Endangered), mugger (Vulnerable) and saltwater crocodile (Least Concern). All three are in WPA Schedule I.

WHERE IN INDIA · EAST COAST DELTAS + A&N ISLANDS

Bhitarkanika NP & WLS (Odisha) · Kendrapara; 1,858 in Jan 2026

Sundarbans (West Bengal) · South 24 Parganas

Andaman & Nicobar Islands (Andaman & Nicobar Islands) · North & Little Andaman creeks

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Nest temperature fixes the hatchlings' sex: intermediate temperatures give males; cooler and warmer nests give females.
- Salt glands on its tongue excrete excess salt, helping it live in brackish and sea water.
- It rides sea currents on long journeys, reaching distant islands.

PRELIMS TRAP

Least Concern is a global IUCN rating. In India the saltwater crocodile stays in WPA Schedule I, and India's population is in CITES Appendix I.

CONSERVATION

Bhitarkanika's crocodile project began in 1975 with UNDP help, when about 95 survived. Captive rearing stopped in 2024 after numbers reached 'saturation'.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2010 · Q64

Also asked: 2015

Consider the following pairs: Protected area — Well-known for 1. Bhitarkanika, Orissa — Salt Water Crocodile 2. Desert National Park, Rajasthan — Great Indian Bustard 3. Eravikulam, Kerala — Hoolak Gibbon Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched ?

(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 2 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

ANSWER **(b) 1 and 2 only.** Bhitarkanika in Odisha is known for saltwater crocodiles and Desert NP for the great Indian bustard. Eravikulam is known for the Nilgiri tahr, not the hoolock gibbon.

Sources: Down To Earth, 23 Jan 2025 and 3 Nov 2026; IUCN SSC Crocodile Specialist Group; Das & Jana 2018 (Oryx); WPA 2022; EU 2026/1383.

Fish

4 SPECIES

FISH

Manta and Devil Rays

Mobula spp. (family Mobulidae)

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

Devil rays CR–EN · mantas EN, VU

WPA Sch. I mantas · II sicklefin | **CITES Appendix I**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

OCT 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

A Thoothukudi study reported in October 2026 found spinetail devil ray landings per vessel at Threspuram down 86% between 2013 and 2023. India accounts for 28.2% of mobulids killed worldwide. CITES CoP20 had moved all mobulids to **Appendix I**.

Warm seas worldwide Mobulids live in tropical and subtropical seas worldwide. Of ten species, seven occur in the Indian Ocean. India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Peru account for 87% of mobulids killed.

ABOUT

Manta and devil rays, together called mobulids, are large rays with broad, wing-like pectoral fins. They glide through coastal and open seas and feed on zooplankton, small crustaceans and small fish.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Mobulids give birth to live young: one pup per pregnancy, usually every one to three years. They mature at 5–10 years.
- WPA 2022: giant and reef mantas in **Schedule I**, sicklefin devil ray in Schedule II, four other devil rays only in Schedule IV.
- Dried gill plates sell as traditional medicine in Asia. In 2025 IUCN moved the spinetail, sicklefin and bentfin devil rays from Endangered to **Critically Endangered**.

Kinds in India: India has seven mobulids: the giant (oceanic) and reef mantas, and five devil rays: spinetail, sicklefin, bentfin, shorthorned pygmy and longhorned pygmy.

WHERE IN INDIA · LANDED ON BOTH COASTS

Gulf of Mannar coast (Tamil Nadu) · Thoothukudi, Mandapam landings

Kerala coast (Keralam) · landings; gill plates traded

Gujarat coast (Gujarat) · meat and entrails used for oil

Andaman Islands (Andaman and Nicobar Islands) · reef and oceanic mantas

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- The giant manta is the world's largest ray, with a wingspan of up to about 8 m.
- Mantas filter-feed: two cephalic lobes funnel water and plankton over the gill plates.
- The cephalic lobes make mantas the only vertebrates with three paired appendages. Giant mantas can live up to 45 years.

PRELIMS TRAP

CITES Appendix I bans international commercial trade only. It does not cover catch and sale within India, which the WPA governs.

CONSERVATION

Mobulids are listed in both appendices of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS); India has been a CMS party since 1983.

Sources: CITES Notification 2026/005; ENB, 8 Dec 2025; Mongabay India, 19 Oct 2026; ICAR-CMFRI devil ray NDF (2022); IUCN Red List; WPA 2022

FISH

Golden Mahseer

Tor putitora

EX | EW | CR | **EN** | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Endangered

Not in WPA schedules | **Not in CITES appendices**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

MAR 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

A global assessment of migratory freshwater fishes prepared for the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), reported in March 2026, named the golden mahseer among India-linked species of concern. Dams, barrages and altered flows in the Ganga–Brahmaputra–Meghna basin are serious threats.

ABOUT

The golden mahseer is a large carp of Himalayan rivers, named for its golden hues. It can exceed 50 kg. Its life cycle needs connected deep pools, shallow riffles and side channels.

Himalayan rivers The golden mahseer lives in Himalayan rivers of India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh, and possibly Afghanistan. The CMS assessment makes the Ganga–Brahmaputra–Meghna basin a priority region.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- A migrant, it once swam freely up Ganga tributaries to spawn ahead of the monsoon. It matures late and lays relatively few eggs.
- The Tehri dam on the Bhagirathi and the Srinagar dam on the Alaknanda are impassable; stocks above Srinagar dam are now genetically cut off.
- IUCN assessed it as **Endangered** in 2018, with a decreasing, severely fragmented population and a generation length of seven years.

Kinds in India: Other mahseers: the chocolate mahseer or Katli (Near Threatened), and the hump-backed mahseer (Critically Endangered) of Karnataka, Keralam and Tamil Nadu.

WHERE IN INDIA · HIMALAYAN RIVERS, J&K TO ARUNACHAL

Ganga headwaters and foothills (Uttarakhand / Uttar Pradesh) SPANS 2 STATES · Tehri, Srinagar dams block runs

Western Himalayan rivers (Jammu and Kashmir / Himachal Pradesh / Punjab / Haryana) SPANS 4 STATES

Eastern Himalaya and north-east (Sikkim / West Bengal / Assam / Arunachal Pradesh / Meghalaya / Nagaland / Manipur / Mizoram) SPANS 8 STATES

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- It is omnivorous: it eats fish, fly larvae, zooplankton and plant matter; fingerlings feed mainly on algae.
- It breeds over gravel and stones upstream, then returns to perennial pools; fry shelter among stones at stream edges.

PRELIMS TRAP

The golden mahseer is IUCN Endangered but appears in no WPA 2022 schedule and no CITES appendix.

CONSERVATION

ICAR-Directorate of Coldwater Fisheries Research, Bhimtal, runs mahseer hatchery and breeding programmes. The Wildlife Institute of India has radio-tracked golden mahseer in Uttarakhand.

Sources: Mongabay India, 24 Mar and 23 Oct 2026; IUCN Red List (2018); WPA 2022; CITES Appendices (5 Mar 2026)

FISH

Seahorses

Hippocampus spp.

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

Three-spot EN · spotted VU

WPA Schedule I | **CITES Appendix II**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

AUG 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

A KUFOS-led team described a new seahorse, *Hippocampus amandavincentae*, in Zootaxa on 5 August 2026 from two trawl-bycatch specimens landed at Thoothukudi. The name thorny seahorse had covered three species; this Indian Ocean form is the new one.

Indian Ocean form The new species lives across the Indian Ocean: India, Madagascar, Mozambique, the Seychelles and the northern Red Sea. The true thorny seahorse is now restricted to the Pacific.

ABOUT

Seahorses are small bony fishes that swim upright, with a horse-like head and a curled tail. They live in shallow coastal waters such as seagrass beds, reefs, mangroves and estuaries.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- **Males give birth.** The female places her eggs in the male's brood pouch, where he fertilises and carries them until the young emerge.
- All seahorses and pipefishes are in WPA **Schedule I**. The genus has been in CITES Appendix II since 15 May 2004.
- A 2020 study estimated 13 million seahorses a year caught as bycatch in India (2015–17). IUCN uplisted the three-spot seahorse to Endangered in 2026.

Kinds in India: Seven seahorse species are now known from Indian waters, among them the spotted (*H. kuda*, Vulnerable) and three-spot (*H. trimaculatus*, Endangered) seahorses.

WHERE IN INDIA · BOTH COASTS, RICHEST IN TAMIL NADU

Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay (Tamil Nadu) · Thoothukudi; Palk Bay coast

Keralam coast (Keralam) · new species photographed

Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Andaman and Nicobar Islands) · three-spot seahorse

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Ambush predators with no teeth or stomach, they suck small crustaceans, zooplankton and fish larvae through the snout.
- Poor swimmers, they anchor themselves with a gripping (prehensile) tail; each eye moves independently to scan for prey.
- The spotted seahorse keeps one partner; each morning the pair dances, changes colour and entwines tails.

PRELIMS TRAP

Seahorses are fishes, not invertebrates or mammals. The male, not the female, carries the developing young in a brood pouch.

CONSERVATION

CITES CoP20 urged countries with illegal or unsustainable trade in dried seahorses to draw up national or regional action plans with experts and stakeholders.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2013 · Q10

Also asked: 2021

Consider the following animals: 1. Sea cow 2. Sea horse 3. Sea lion Which of the above is/are mammal/mammals?

(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 3 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

UPSC KEY (b) 1 and 3 only. The sea cow (dugong) and the sea lion are mammals; the seahorse is a fish.

Sources: Zootaxa 5862(2), 5 Aug 2026; Mongabay India, 20 Oct 2026; ENB, 8 Dec 2025; IUCN Red List 2026-1; WPA 2022; CITES Species+

FISH

Snow Trout

Schizothorax richardsonii

EX | EW | CR | EN | **VU** | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Vulnerable

Not in WPA schedules | **Not in CITES appendices**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

OCT 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

Kumaun University released about 350 lab-bred snow trout fingerlings into a cage in Nainital's Naini lake on 27 April 2026, to restore a fish considered locally extinct there for 30 years. In October, programme staff reported more than half dead.

ABOUT

The snow trout, locally called Asela, is a native fish of cold, snow-fed Himalayan rivers such as the Bhagirathi and Alaknanda. It thrives in flowing water rather than still lakes.

Himalayan rivers The snow trout lives in Himalayan rivers of Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal and Bhutan. In Bhutan, communities protect it by not fishing during the spawning season.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- It needs cold, oxygen-rich water of 8–22°C and takes more than three years to mature and breed. IUCN classes it as a full migrant.
- Snow trout thrived in the Kumaon lakes until the 1980s. Sewage, falling oxygen and competition from exotic common carp then caused a collapse.
- IUCN has listed it as **Vulnerable** since 2010. Naini lake's water reached 27°C in July 2026, and the lake has needed aerators since 2007.

WHERE IN INDIA · HIMALAYA, J&K TO ARUNACHAL

Kumaon lakes: Naini, Bhimtal, Sattal, Naukuchiatal (Uttarakhand) · Nainital; also Almora, Champawat

Garhwal rivers: Bhagirathi, Alaknanda (Uttarakhand) · Uttarkashi, Tehri, Pauri, Dehradun

Eastern Himalaya and north-east (Sikkim / West Bengal / Arunachal Pradesh / Assam / Meghalaya / Nagaland / Manipur) SPANS 7 STATES · Teesta basin a stronghold

Western Himalayan rivers (Jammu and Kashmir / Himachal Pradesh) SPANS 2 STATES

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- A herbivore, it feeds mainly on algae, water plants and detritus among the rocks of mountain streams.
- Mature fish breed in April and May. Its flesh is prized, and it is fished commercially and for sport.

PRELIMS TRAP

Despite its name, the snow trout is a native carp (Cyprinidae). The rainbow and brown trout found in Himalayan waters are introduced salmonids.

CONSERVATION

Kumaun University breeds it with biofloc and recirculating aquaculture systems; ICAR-DCFR runs a parallel snow trout effort at Bhimtal lake.

Sources: Mongabay India, 29 Oct and 23 Oct 2026; IUCN Red List (2010, errata 2020); IUCN species pages for rainbow and brown trout

Marine invertebrates

1 SPECIES

MARINE INVERTEBRATES

Horseshoe Crabs

Tachypleus gigas; Carcinoscorpius rotundicauda

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

Data Deficient (both, 1996)

WPA Schedule II | **Not in CITES appendices**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

JUN 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

Ahead of International Horseshoe Crab Day (20 June 2026), former CSIR-NIO scientist Anil Chatterji warned that Odisha could lose its horseshoe crabs within eight to ten years. Long-term studies found a 73% fall along the Odisha coast between 1988 and 2006 (PTI).

Asia and Atlantic Both Indian species range from India to Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines. Relatives live in East Asia (the Endangered tri-spine horseshoe crab) and on North America's east coast.

ABOUT

Horseshoe crabs are marine arthropods with a domed, horseshoe-shaped shell. They live in shallow coastal waters, estuaries and mangroves, and come ashore on sandy beaches to lay their eggs.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Their blood is blue and copper-based. A lysate made from it (the **LAL test**) detects bacterial endotoxins in vaccines, injectable drugs and medical devices.
- They spawn on sandy beaches in step with tides and the moon. Balramgari near Chandipur, Balasore, held a large breeding gathering found in June 1987.
- India first protected horseshoe crabs in 2009, in Schedule IV of the WPA. Since the 2022 amendment both Indian species are in **Schedule II**.

Kinds in India: India has two species: the coastal or Indo-Pacific horseshoe crab (*Tachypleus gigas*) and the mangrove horseshoe crab (*Carcinoscorpius rotundicauda*).

WHERE IN INDIA · ODISHA COAST IS THE STRONGHOLD

Balramgari and Chandipur beaches (Odisha) · Balasore

Kendrapara coast (Odisha) · Kendrapara

West Bengal coast (West Bengal) · Sundarbans; few left

Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Andaman and Nicobar Islands) · parts; few left

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Called living fossils, horseshoe crabs predate the dinosaurs; the long tail steers in water and flips an overturned crab.
- The mangrove horseshoe crab can carry tetrodotoxin, a nerve poison; eating it has poisoned people in Asia.

PRELIMS TRAP

Despite the name, horseshoe crabs are not crabs: they are closer to spiders and scorpions. Both Indian species are in WPA Schedule II, not Schedule I.

CONSERVATION

Protected under the WPA since 2009. In 2023 scientists asked the Centre and Odisha for a species recovery plan and a conservation reserve at a Balasore breeding site.

Sources: PTI, 19 Jun 2026; Mongabay India, 17 Nov 2023; NOAA Ocean Service; IUCN Red List (1996, 2018); WPA 2022

Insects & invertebrates

2 SPECIES

INSECTS & INVERTEBRATES

Orange Oakleaf

Kallima inachus

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Not Evaluated

Not in WPA schedules



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

OCT 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

Chhattisgarh's State Wildlife Board finalised the orange oakleaf as the state's first state butterfly after an online public poll, The New Indian Express reported on 27 October 2026. Formal notification was awaited. Madhya Pradesh's forest department proposed the same species in December 2025.

ABOUT

A forest butterfly of the family Nymphalidae. At rest it folds its wings, and the brown undersides look like a dead leaf. It lives in moist hill forests from the Himalaya to central India.

South and East Asia Records stretch from the Himalaya and north-east India through Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and Thailand to China, Taiwan and Japan. IUCN has not assessed it globally.

Read the full story
www.clarityupsc.com

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Its **leaf disguise** is painted on: pigment marks, not wing veins, form the 'midrib' and side 'veins' on the underside, shown when it rests.
- Chhattisgarh's online poll (31 July–31 August 2026) gave it 3,000 of 5,813 votes, ahead of the common banded peacock and spot swordtail.
- In Madhya Pradesh it is uncommon and found mainly in Satpura National Park, the forest department noted while proposing it.

WHERE IN INDIA · HIMALAYA TO CENTRAL INDIA

Satpura NP (Madhya Pradesh) · main site in the state

Forests of Chhattisgarh (Chhattisgarh)

Western Himalayan hills (Jammu and Kashmir / Uttarakhand) SPANS 2 STATES

Eastern and north-eastern forests (West Bengal / Jharkhand / Odisha / Assam / Meghalaya / Arunachal Pradesh) SPANS 6 STATES

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Its caterpillars feed on *Strobilanthes* plants of the acanthus family, the genus of neelakurinji.
- Adults feed on tree sap, rotting fruit and dung, and only occasionally visit flowers.

PRELIMS TRAP

The orange oakleaf is in no WPA schedule. Three relatives are in Schedule II: the blue, scarce blue and white oakleaf (*Kallima horsfieldi, K. knyvetti, K. albofasciata*).

Sources: The New Indian Express, 27 Oct 2026; India Today, 8 Dec 2025; WPA 2022 Schedule II; BMC Evolutionary Biology 2014; GBIF records

INSECTS & INVERTEBRATES

Long-tailed Duskhawker

Gynacantha khasiaca

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Data Deficient

Not in WPA schedules



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

MAY 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

A Journal of Threatened Taxa paper (26 May 2026) reported the first confirmed sighting of this dragonfly in Arunachal Pradesh in 110 years: a male photographed on 16 October 2024 at Deban, Namdapha National Park and Tiger Reserve.

ABOUT

A large hawker dragonfly (family Aeshnidae) with a bright green thorax bearing two dark side stripes and a long, slender abdomen. It keeps to shaded forest edges in eastern and north-eastern India.

South Asia, Myanmar Known from India, Nepal and Myanmar, with later records in Bangladesh; Tibet is uncertain. IUCN lists it Data Deficient (2010) for want of data on range, season and habitat.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Duskhawkers are **crepuscular**: they fly mainly at twilight. By day the Namdapha male hung vertically in shaded roadside vegetation.
- McLachlan described it in 1896 from Meghalaya's Khasi Hills. Arunachal's previous record came from the Abor Hills (Laidlaw, 1914).
- An August 2026 correction reassigned one of the paper's three photos to the spoon-tailed duskhawker (*G. basiguttata*), itself a first for India.

Kinds in India: India has about 10 *Gynacantha* species among 504 dragonfly and damselfly species. Both duskhawkers were photographed on the same Namdapha road on 16 October 2024.

WHERE IN INDIA · NORTH-EAST AND EAST INDIA

Namdapha NP & TR (Arunachal Pradesh) · Changlang · Deban, Oct 2024

Deopahar, Orang NP and others (Assam) · Golaghat, Sonitpur

Gorumara NP and plains sites (West Bengal) · Purba Medinipur, Cooch Behar

Khasi Hills (type locality) (Meghalaya) · described 1896

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Dragonfly larvae live underwater as ambush predators, seizing prey with an extendable lower lip (labial mask).
- Metamorphosis is incomplete: the aquatic larva turns directly into the flying adult, with no pupal stage.
- Adults are aerial predators that hunt by sight; dragonflies are reliable indicators of ecosystem health.

PRELIMS TRAP

The 110-year gap applies only to Arunachal Pradesh. The species was photographed in West Bengal and Assam in 2014–15 and in Maharashtra in 2020.

Sources: Journal of Threatened Taxa 18(5), 26 May 2026, and 18(8), Aug 2026; Biodiversity Journal 8(1), 2017; IUCN Red List 2010

Plants

4 SPECIES

PLANTS

Sal

Shorea robusta

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | **NT** | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Near Threatened

Not in WPA schedules | **Not in CITES appendices**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

South Asia only Sal grows wild in India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and southern Tibet, Kew's World Checklist records. India's sal forests covered about 105,790 sq km in two regions, northern and central (1972 count).

SEP 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

In September 2026 the Centre allowed Madhya Pradesh to fell **156,319 sal trees** infested by the sal heartwood borer: 146,784 in Dindori and 9,535 at Amarkantak (Anuppur). In October 2025 IUCN moved sal to Near Threatened.

ABOUT

Sal is a tall tree of the dipterocarp family. It dominates the deciduous forests of India's northern foothills and central and eastern plateaus. It gives hard, durable timber, and its seeds and leaves support forest livelihoods.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Sal seed is **recalcitrant**: it loses viability as it dries and dies about six days after harvest, so it cannot be stored for sowing.
- The **sal heartwood borer** (*Hoplocerambyx spinicornis*) spends most of its year-long life inside the trunk. Adults emerge with the monsoon and live only 20–30 days.
- The 1996–2001 borer epidemic hit more than 3.5 million sal trees. About 1.59 million were felled in the Dindori and Mandla divisions alone.

WHERE IN INDIA · CENTRAL AND NORTHERN SAL BELTS

Central and eastern plateaus (Odisha / Madhya Pradesh / Chhattisgarh / Jharkhand) SPANS 4 STATES · Odisha had the most sal (1972)

Dindori & Amarkantak forests (Madhya Pradesh) · Dindori, Anuppur · borer, 2026

Shivalik–Terai foothills (Uttarakhand / Uttar Pradesh / Himachal Pradesh / Haryana) SPANS 4 STATES

Bengal and the North-east (West Bengal / Assam / Meghalaya / Tripura) SPANS 4 STATES

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Light-demanding and fire-hardy, sal survives fires better than most trees, so it often grows in pure stands.
- Its fruit bears five wing-like sepals, and the seed germinates soon after falling if the soil is moist.
- Fat from sal seed kernels can replace cocoa butter in chocolate; the tree also coppices well from cut stumps.

PRELIMS TRAP

Near Threatened is not one of IUCN's three threatened categories (CR, EN, VU). Sal moved there from Lower Risk/least concern in October 2025, on new information.

CONSERVATION

Foresters fell trap trees at the start of the monsoon to lure and kill adult borers, remove heavily infested trees, then protect the felled areas for regeneration.

Sources: Down To Earth, Sep 2026; IUCN Red List 2025-2, Table 7; XII World Forestry Congress paper (2003); Silva Fennica (2000)

PLANTS

Neelakurinji

Strobilanthes kunthiana

EX | EW | CR | EN | **VU** | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Vulnerable

WPA Schedule III | **Not in CITES appendices**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

AUG 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

In August 2026 the Environment Ministry asked the **National Green Tribunal** to direct Keralam, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka to file annual conservation plans for neelakurinji. The tribunal took up the case after IUCN listed the shrub as Vulnerable in 2024.

Found only in India Neelakurinji grows wild only in India: on the high grasslands of the southern Western Ghats in Keralam, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, with small outliers in the Shevaroy (Yercaud) and Sandur hills.

Read the full story
www.clarityupsc.com

ABOUT

Neelakurinji is a shrub of the acanthus family. It grows on the montane grasslands and shola edges of the southern Western Ghats, mostly at 1,300–2,400 m, and covers whole slopes in blue-violet flowers.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- It is **semelparous**: plants flower together about once in 12 years, set seed and then die. Eravikulam bloomed in 2018, Munnar's Chokramudi in 2026.
- Records from 1832 to 2018 place it in 34 localities. BSI says most populations are fragmented and some hold fewer than 500 plants.
- IUCN's first assessment (2024) rated it **Vulnerable**, citing invasive eucalyptus and black wattle, infrastructure, afforestation and climate change.

Kinds in India: *Strobilanthes* is the largest genus of the acanthus family: about 463 species, all in Asia. India has about 146 taxa, BSI says.

WHERE IN INDIA · SOUTHERN WESTERN GHATS, 3 STATES

Eravikulam NP & Munnar hills (Keralam) · Idukki

Nilgiri hills, Mukurthi NP (Tamil Nadu) · Nilgiris (most of TN's plants)

Palani hills, Kodaikanal WLS (Tamil Nadu) · Dindigul

Baba Budangiri–Kudremukh (Karnataka) · Chikkamagaluru

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- The Indian honey bee (*Apis cerana indica*) is its main pollinator, drawn in large numbers by the mass bloom.
- Its stigma is touch-sensitive: once a visiting bee touches it, it curls back, preventing self-pollination within the flower.

PRELIMS TRAP

IUCN's Vulnerable label is a global risk rating. Indian law protects neelakurinji through WPA Schedule III; no state has proposed a threatened-species notification under the Biological Diversity Act.

CONSERVATION

Keralam declared Kurinjimala Sanctuary (Idukki) for it in 2006. MoEFCC wants states to fund a JNTBGRI action plan through the Development of Wildlife Habitats scheme.

Sources: The Hindu, 26 Aug and 29 Sep 2026; NGT OA 1071/2024 affidavits (BSI, MoEFCC); WPA 2022 Schedule III; Bot. J. Linn. Soc. (2008)

PLANTS

Red Sanders

Pterocarpus santalinus

EX | EW | CR | **EN** | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Endangered

WPA Schedule IV | **CITES Appendix II**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

FEB 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

In February 2026 Down To Earth reported that smugglers move **red sanders** logs out of Andhra Pradesh's Seshachalam hills in the Tirumala pilgrim rush, when vehicles often go unchecked. Forest staff had seized 75 logs on 9 January. The wood fetches high prices in China and Japan.

Found only in India Red sanders grows wild only in India, on the dry hills of the southern Eastern Ghats in Andhra Pradesh. Kew's World Checklist records it as introduced in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Read the full story
www.clarityupsc.com

ABOUT

Red sanders is a small to medium deciduous tree of dry, rocky hills at 150–1,000 m in the southern Eastern Ghats. Its hard, heavy, deep-red heartwood goes into furniture, musical instruments and dye.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Red sanders is a slow-growing **legume** (pea family). Despite its trade name, red sandalwood, it is unrelated to the fragrant sandalwood tree.
- CITES has listed it in **Appendix II** since 1995. The listing covers logs, wood-chips, powder and extracts.
- In November 2025 the National Biodiversity Authority paid Rs 3 crore in benefit-sharing to 198 red sanders growers in 48 Andhra Pradesh villages.

WHERE IN INDIA · WILD ONLY IN ANDHRA PRADESH

Seshachalam Hills BR (Andhra Pradesh) · Near Tirupati · largest wild stand

Farms paid by NBA (2025) (Andhra Pradesh) · Chittoor, Nellore, Tirupati, Kadapa

Farm-grown wood for export (Tamil Nadu) · 900 t of the 1,290 t quota

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Yellow flowers open February–April, after new leaves; each round, **winged pod** holds one seed and ripens about a year later.
- IUCN rated it Endangered from 1997, **Near Threatened** in 2018, then Endangered again in 2021 after a 50–80% decline.
- CITES's **Review of Significant Trade** scrutinised India's red sanders exports from 2004 until India was removed in November 2023.

PRELIMS TRAP

Red sanders is in WPA Schedule IV as a CITES Appendix II species, not among Schedule III's 19 specified plants. India allows exports only of cultivated wood, within DGFT quotas.

CONSERVATION

Exports are allowed only for cultivated wood, under DGFT quotas. The NBA has paid Rs 48 crore to Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka bodies to protect and conserve red sanders.

ASKED IN PRELIMS 2016 · Q53 Also asked: 2024

With reference to 'Red Sanders', sometimes seen in the news, consider the following statements : 1. It is a tree species found in a part of South India. 2. It is one of the most important trees in the tropical rain forest areas of South India. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

UPSC KEY **(a) 1 only.** Red sanders grows on dry, rocky hills of the southern Eastern Ghats, mainly in Andhra Pradesh, in dry deciduous forest, not rain forest.

Sources: Down To Earth, 6 Nov 2025 and 21 Feb 2026; CITES Species+; WPA 2022 Schedule IV; FAO Ecocrop; IUCN Red List 2021

PLANTS

Indian Sandalwood

Santalum album

EX | EW | CR | EN | **VU** | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Red List: Vulnerable

Not in WPA schedules | **Not in CITES appendices**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

FEB 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

In the **Union Budget 2026-27** (1 February 2026) the Finance Minister said the Centre will partner with states to promote focused sandalwood cultivation and post-harvest processing. A central Sandalwood Development Committee report treats sandalwood as farmers' produce.

ABOUT

Indian sandalwood is a tree prized for its fragrant heartwood and oil. In the wild it was confined largely to forests of Karnataka, Keralam and Tamil Nadu; farmers now grow it in many states.

Asia–Pacific tree Sandalwood grows in India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia (Java, Timor and nearby islands), the Philippines and northern Australia. Kew's World Checklist treats the Indian and Sri Lankan trees as introduced.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Sandalwood is a **hemi-root parasite**: it makes its own food but draws water and nutrients from host plants' roots, so growers plant hosts beside it.
- Since 2022 Karnataka and Maharashtra have eased rules on private cultivation and sale. Plantations covered 23,000–30,000 ha by 2024, adding about 600 ha a year.
- Between 1996-97 and 2023-24 India imported about 505 tonnes of sandalwood oil and exported 139 tonnes. Class I heartwood: Rs 7,500 a kg (government price).

WHERE IN INDIA · WILD IN THE SOUTH, FARMED WIDELY

Southern forests (wild range) (Karnataka / Keralam / Tamil Nadu) SPANS 3 STATES

Private plantations (Karnataka / Maharashtra) SPANS 2 STATES · rules eased since 2022

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Its roots tap hosts through **haustoria**, which form within 30 days of germination; at least 300 species can be hosts.
- **Spike disease**, caused by a phytoplasma (a wall-less bacterium) and first reported in the late 1800s, devastates sandal in India.

PRELIMS TRAP

Sandalwood (*Santalum album*) is IUCN Vulnerable and not CITES-listed. Red sanders (*Pterocarpus santalinus*), traded as red sandalwood, is a legume: IUCN Endangered and CITES Appendix II.

CONSERVATION

The Sandalwood Development Committee treats sandalwood as farmers' produce; its advice to ease cutting, sale and marketing rules has been accepted. AYUSH has supported 3,275 ha of plantations.

Sources: Budget speech 2026-27 (para 81); Down To Earth, 1 Feb and 1 Sep 2026; IUCN Red List (2018 assessment); CITES Species+

Invasive species

7 SPECIES

INVASIVE SPECIES

Spectacular Cassia

Senna spectabilis

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | NT | **LC**

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Least Concern (global) · invasive alien in India

Invasive alien species



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

JUN 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

In June 2026 Karnataka's forest department began uprooting invasive **Senna spectabilis** from about 60 hectares of Male Mahadeshwara Hills Wildlife Sanctuary. Under a four-year pact with the NGO Vana Jana, grasses and native plants are replanted as fodder for herbivores.

From the Americas *Senna spectabilis* is native from Mexico through Central America to Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay and northern Argentina. It has become naturalised across tropical Africa, South and South-East Asia and Pacific islands.

ABOUT

Senna spectabilis is a fast-growing legume tree from tropical America with golden-yellow flowers. Planted in South India in the 1980s for shade, beauty and firewood, it now forms dense thickets in forests.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Each tree makes up to 6,000 seeds a season, and the seeds stay viable for nearly a decade. Young trees flower within two years.
- Cut or bark-stripped stumps resprout within weeks, so crews in Wayanad pull out whole roots and patrol cleared land for a year.
- Its thickets choke the grasses that feed deer and gaur. Ecologists link rising human–wildlife conflict in Wayanad, Bandipur and Mudumalai to the invasion.

WHERE IN INDIA · NILGIRI BIOSPHERE RESERVE AND MM HILLS

Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (Keralam / Tamil Nadu / Karnataka) SPANS 3 STATES · spread across the reserve

Wayanad WLS (Keralam) · Wayanad · over 40% (estimate)

Mudumalai TR (Tamil Nadu) · Nilgiris

Nagarhole TR, DB Kuppe range (Karnataka) · uprooting extended by MoU

Male Mahadeshwara Hills WLS (Karnataka) · Chamarajanagar

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- **Asian elephants** are its main seed dispersers in the Western Ghats; passing through their dung helps the seeds germinate.
- Though a legume, it does **not fix nitrogen**. It resists fire and termites and tolerates strongly acid soils.
- Self-compatible, it sets seed by both cross- and self-pollination. Stingless bees (*Tetragonula iridipennis*) are its main flower visitors.

PRELIMS TRAP

IUCN rates *Senna spectabilis* Least Concern; that rating covers its native range in the Americas. In India it is an invasive alien, planted deliberately in the 1980s.

CONSERVATION

The Tholpetty project covers 560 acres: workers uproot whole trees with a hand-held tool and patrol for seedlings. An MoU with Karnataka's forest department extends the work to Nagarhole.

Sources: Deccan Chronicle, 25 Jun 2026; Down To Earth, 1 Sep 2025; IUCN Red List (2020); Kew WCVP; Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve records

INVASIVE SPECIES

Vilayati Babul (Mesquite)

Neltuma juliflora (syn. Prosopis juliflora)

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | NT | **LC**

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Least Concern (global) · invasive alien in India

Invasive alien species



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

MAR 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

On 18 March 2026 the Madras High Court (*Vaiko v. Chief Secretary*) made District Collectors responsible for clearing **seemai karuvelam** across Tamil Nadu and named two retired judges to supervise. It noted 11 years had passed since it first took up the issue.

ABOUT

Vilayati babul (Tamil: seemai karuvelam) is a fast-spreading shrub or small tree of the legume family from the Americas. Kew now names it *Neltuma juliflora*; most Indian documents still say *Prosopis juliflora*.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Blackbuck and other herbivores eat its pods in the dry season and spread the seeds, helping it colonise semi-arid land.
- It was introduced to green drylands, check soil erosion and supply fuelwood. Critics blame its dense canopy for drawing down groundwater.
- Ecologists advise removing it from forests, river banks and protected habitats, while keeping managed coppices on arid, low-biodiversity land for fuel.

From the Americas Mesquite is native from Mexico through Central America and the Caribbean to Venezuela and Peru. It has been planted and gone wild across Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and Australia.

WHERE IN INDIA · DRY LANDS; TAMIL NADU CLEARANCE

Statewide clearance drive (Tamil Nadu) · District Collectors in charge

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- A hardy, **nitrogen-fixing** legume, it thrives under drought, salinity and pollution, where few other plants survive.
- Its sharp **thorns** injure animals and hinder wildlife movement, and its dense stands displace native plants.

PRELIMS TRAP

Vilayati babul (*Prosopis*, now *Neltuma*, *juliflora*) is an American invader. Khejri (*Prosopis cineraria*), the tree Bishnois died protecting at Khejarli in 1730, is native to India.

CONSERVATION

Native species replace cleared stands. In August 2026 the court ordered Rs 185 crore from district mineral funds and said water bodies must be cleared first.

Sources: LiveLaw, 19 Mar 2026; The Hindu, 26 Aug 2026; Down To Earth, 18 Jul 2025, 3 Dec 2025 and 24 Feb 2026; Kew WCVP

INVASIVE SPECIES

Water Hyacinth

Pontederia crassipes (syn. Eichhornia crassipes)

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

Invasive alien species

Invasive alien species



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

MAR 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

In March 2026 the National Biodiversity Authority told the National Green Tribunal it had set up an **expert committee** and needs two years to draft national guidelines on invasive species. The case concerns water hyacinth and other weeds in the Kole wetlands Ramsar site.

ABOUT

Water hyacinth is a free-floating plant from South America. Its glossy, rounded leaves rise on spongy, bulbous stalks, its roots hang in the water, and it bears spikes of lavender-blue flowers.

From South America Water hyacinth is native to South America, from Brazil and the Guianas to Argentina and Chile. Spread as a pond ornamental, it now grows in more than 50 countries on five continents.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Mats can double in 6–18 days. It multiplies mainly through daughter plants, though it also sets long-lived seed.
- In sewage-rich lakes it can add 250–400 kg of dry matter per acre a day, IISc found. Scientists call untreated sewage the root cause.
- Dense mats block light and oxygen, choke canals, boats and fishing, and harbour mosquitoes. It is one of the world's 100 worst invasive species.

WHERE IN INDIA · LAKES AND WETLANDS NATIONWIDE

Kole wetlands (Ramsar) (Keralam) · Thrissur, Malappuram · NGT case

Vembanad Lake (Ramsar) (Keralam) · persistently infested

East Kolkata Wetlands (Ramsar) (West Bengal) · Kolkata · severely affected

Powai and Pashan lakes (Maharashtra) · Mumbai, Pune · glyphosate plans

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Wind, currents and boats carry its offshoots; plants discarded from ponds and aquariums are a major source of spread.
- It is **frost-sensitive** and does not tolerate brackish water, so salinity limits it in coastal lagoons.
- It soaks up nutrients and heavy metals, and has been used to clean sewage and sludge ponds (**bioremediation**).

PRELIMS TRAP

Water hyacinth's accepted name is now *Pontederia crassipes*; most Indian texts still use *Eichhornia crassipes*. Both names refer to the same South American species.

CONSERVATION

The NBA committee (chair Dhananjai Mohan, co-chair A. Biju Kumar) is drafting national guidelines; ZSI, BSI, WII and CMFRI are updating India's invasive species lists.

Sources: Down To Earth, 24 Mar 2026; ETV Bharat, 21 Mar 2026; IUCN SSC Global Invasive Species Database; India Water Portal (IISc data)

INVASIVE SPECIES

African Catfish (Thai Magur)

Clarias gariepinus

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | NT | **LC**

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

IUCN Least Concern (global) · invasive alien in India

Invasive alien species **Culture and trade banned in India**



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

AUG 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

In August 2026 Nagpur fisheries officials destroyed nearly 36 tonnes of banned **Thai magur** (African catfish) from 11 illegal ponds in Parshivni taluka. Similar raids had destroyed about 51 tonnes in three months.

ABOUT

The African catfish is a large freshwater catfish, up to 1.7 m long, with whisker-like barbels. It prefers shallow, swampy water over soft mud and tolerates poor water quality.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- A facultative **air-breather**, it survives in oxygen-poor water. It is an opportunistic predator of native fish, fish eggs, amphibians, reptiles and birds.
- Private traders smuggled it in from Bangladesh in the late 1980s or early 1990s for fish farms, first in West Bengal, Assam and Andhra Pradesh.
- India bans its culture and trade under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. An NGT order of 22 January 2019 (OA 435/2018) reinforced the ban.

From Africa African catfish are native to almost all of Africa and to Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and southern Turkey. Farmed and released in Asia, Europe and South America, they harm native fish in several countries.

WHERE IN INDIA · ILLEGAL FARMS ACROSS INDIA

Illegal ponds, Parshivni (Maharashtra) · Nagpur · 36 t destroyed, 2026

Ujani reservoir (Maharashtra) · Pune · 2.4 t seized (2024)

Mattupetty reservoir (Keralam) · Idukki · invasive (2021 study)

First farms (1990s) (West Bengal / Assam / Andhra Pradesh) SPANS 3 STATES

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- It can **leave the water at night**, crawling on strong pectoral fins and spines to feed or reach breeding sites.
- It spawns in the **rainy season**: adults migrate onto flooded plains to breed, and the young stay there to grow.

PRELIMS TRAP

Thai magur is the African catfish (*Clarias gariepinus*), an invasive species banned in India. Desi magur (*Clarias magur*) is native to India and Bangladesh and IUCN Endangered.

CONSERVATION

District Collectors and fisheries departments raid illegal farms and destroy the stock under NGT directions. BNHS scientists help identify seized fish and assess the damage.

Sources: Free Press Journal, 21 Aug 2026; BNHS review, 8 Dec 2025; FishBase; Indian Journal of Fisheries (2021); IUCN Red List

INVASIVE SPECIES

Sailfin Catfish

Pterygoplichthys spp. (P. pardalis, P. disjunctivus)

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

Invasive alien species

Invasive alien species



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

AUG 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

In April 2026 the Bombay Natural History Society opened India's first community-run centre for collecting invasive **sailfin catfish**, at Bhigwan on Maharashtra's Ujani reservoir. Fishers get Rs 2 a kilogram above the auction rate. By August over 36 tonnes were removed.

ABOUT

Sailfin catfish are South American armoured catfish with bony plates, a tall dorsal fin and a sucker mouth. Common aquarium fish, they graze algae and detritus on the bottom of lakes and rivers.

From the Amazon *P. pardalis* is native to the Amazon basin and *P. disjunctivus* to the Madeira basin of South America. Released or escaped pet fish now live wild in many warm countries.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Males dig nesting burrows 1.2–1.5 m long in banks and guard the eggs. Dense burrows can erode and destabilise banks.
- They can breathe air through an enlarged stomach, so they survive in stagnant, oxygen-poor water where many fish cannot.
- Specimens from Thiruvananthapuram, Keralam (2015), mixed *P. pardalis*, *P. disjunctivus* and intermediate forms, so possible hybrids make identification hard.

WHERE IN INDIA · RELEASED AQUARIUM FISH, 4 STATES

Cauvery and Vaigai basins (Tamil Nadu) · most waters sampled (2025)

East Kolkata Wetlands (West Bengal) · Kolkata · invasion studied 2019

Thiruvananthapuram drainages (Keralam) · city canals (2015 study)

Ujani reservoir, Bhigwan (Maharashtra) · Pune / Solapur

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Mostly grazers of algae and detritus, they also eat fish eggs; their bottom foraging can uproot water plants.
- They **damage cast and gill nets**; in India they have cost fishers money and displaced native fish.
- Females lay 500–3,000 eggs, and young grow fast, often passing 30 cm by age two.

PRELIMS TRAP

India has two invasive catfish in the news: sailfin catfish (*Pterygoplichthys*), South American aquarium escapes, and African catfish (*Clarias gariepinus*), the 'Thai magur' smuggled in for fish farms.

CONSERVATION

The 2025 Tamil Nadu study found that mechanical removal had not stopped the spread and calls for stakeholder awareness and policy curbs on pet releases.

Sources: Indian Express, 8 Aug 2026; Ecology, Economy and Society (INSEE), 31 Jul 2025; J. Threatened Taxa (2015); Acta Ichthyol. Piscat. (2019); FishBase; IUCN SSC GISD

INVASIVE SPECIES

Forked Fanwort (Pink Bloom)

Cabomba furcata

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

Invasive alien species

Invasive alien species



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

From the Americas Forked fanwort is native to tropical Central and South America and the Caribbean. Kew's World Checklist also records it, introduced, in Malaysia and Sri Lanka; the aquarium trade has carried it abroad.

MAR 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

The National Biodiversity Authority's March 2026 report to the National Green Tribunal names *Cabomba furcata*, nicknamed '**pink bloom**' for its heavy flowering, as an invader of the Kole wetlands, alongside water hyacinth and *Salvinia molesta*. It has turned many Kole canals pink.

ABOUT

Forked fanwort is a rooted aquatic plant of the water-shield family (Cabombaceae) from Central and South America. A common aquarium plant, it grows in still and slow-flowing fresh water.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- It spreads readily from broken stem fragments, each able to root and start a new patch, so careless cutting can widen an infestation.
- Keralam's earliest record dates to 1952. By 2003 it covered about 13 km around Eloor and Aluva; within a decade it reached the Kole wetlands.
- Kerala Forest Research Institute scientists warn it can choke water bodies and drainage canals and harm water quality and freshwater life.

WHERE IN INDIA · CENTRAL KERALAM WATERWAYS

Kole wetlands (Ramsar) (Keralam) · Thrissur, Malappuram

Puzhakkal river (Keralam) · Thrissur

Eloor–Aluva industrial area (Keralam) · Ernakulam · 13 km stretch (2003)

Other early records (Keralam) · Kottayam, Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- Like other fanworts it grows fully submerged, with feathery, fan-like leaves; only small floating leaves and flowers reach the surface.
- Fanworts need permanent water and cannot survive drying out, so draining or shading a water body helps control them.
- Its family, Cabombaceae, belongs with the water lilies (Nymphaeales), among the **oldest surviving lineages** of flowering plants.

PRELIMS TRAP

Pink bloom in the Kole wetlands is a flowering water plant, *Cabomba furcata*; the pink comes from its massed flowers, not from algae.

CONSERVATION

The NBA's expert committee on invasive alien species, formed after the Kole wetlands case, is drafting national guidelines and a consolidated national list.

Sources: Down To Earth, 24 Mar 2026 and 15 Dec 2020 (KFRI study); Kew WCVP; IUCN SSC GISD (genus Cabomba)

INVASIVE SPECIES

Giant African Land Snail

Lissachatina fulica (syn. Achatina fulica)

EX | EW | CR | EN | VU | NT | LC

GONE — THREATENED — SAFE

Invasive alien species

Invasive alien species



AI illustration · Clarity UPSC

AUG 2026 **WHY IN NEWS**

After the 2026 monsoon, giant African land snails spread across farms and homes in Malappuram, Thrissur, Kottayam, Idukki and Kannur, reaching school campuses. Kerala Agricultural University launched containment drives, including in Idukki's **Bison Valley** cardamom estates.

From East Africa Native to Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania, the snail has spread with trade and gardening across tropical Asia, the Pacific, the Americas and Africa. IUCN experts list it among the world's 100 worst invasive species.

Read the full story
www.clarityupsc.com

ABOUT

The giant African land snail has a narrow, conical, reddish-brown shell, usually 5–10 cm long but over 20 cm in large adults. It thrives in warm, humid lowlands, plantations, gardens and forest edges.

PRELIMS POINTERS

- Each snail is a **hermaphrodite** and can store sperm, so one mated snail can found a colony. It lays up to 1,000 eggs in all.
- It can carry the rat lungworm (*Angiostrongylus cantonensis*), which causes eosinophilic meningitis in people who eat raw or undercooked infected snails.
- First recorded in India in West Bengal in 1847, it reached epidemic numbers in Odisha in 1946–47, damaging vegetables and rice.

WHERE IN INDIA · KERALAM OUTBREAKS, 2026

Bison Valley cardamom estates (Keralam) · Idukki · KAU drive, 2026

Thirunavaya school campuses (Keralam) · Malappuram

Odisha croplands (Odisha) · epidemic in 1946–47

First Indian record (West Bengal) · 1847

BIOLOGY PRELIMS POINTERS

- It goes dormant through dry months (**aestivation**) and hibernates in cold; direct sunshine kills it.
- It travels with farm produce, nursery plants, soil, cargo and vehicles; small snails and eggs hide in shipping containers.
- Snails mature at 5–15 months and usually live 5–6 years, at most about nine.

PRELIMS TRAP

Lissachatina fulica and *Achatina fulica* are the same snail; the genus name changed. It is native to East Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania) and feeds on at least 500 plant species.

CONSERVATION

Kerala Agricultural University runs district drives: collect snails and kill them in 25% salt solution, ring fields with 1% copper sulphate and set flour-jaggery-yeast bait traps.

Sources: The South First, 19 Aug 2026; The Hindu (via our news, Sep 2026); IUCN SSC Global Invasive Species Database

New to science

158 SPECIES IN OUR NEWS, JANUARY–OCTOBER 2026

BIRDS

BIRD

OCT 2026

Barklouse

Allocaecilius nilgiriensis

Story

Shola and evergreen forests of the… (Tamil Nadu / Keralam)

ZSI Southern Regional Centre, Chennai · Zootaxa

In October 2026 ZSI Chennai scientists named Allocaecilius nilgiriensis, a tiny barklouse from shola and evergreen forests of the southern Western Ghats. Brown patches in three forewing cells mark it. It is India's second Allocaecilius species.

Source: Zootaxa / Magnolia Press; Research Matters

REPTILES

REPTILE

APR 2026

Bent-toed gecko Cyrtodactylus raimonaensis

Cyrtodactylus raimonaensis

Story

Kachugaon, Kokrajhar district (Assam)

In April 2026 researchers described Cyrtodactylus raimonaensis, a new bent-toed gecko from a forest patch at Kachugaon, Kokrajhar district, Assam, on the fringe of Raimona National Park, in Zootaxa.

Source: journal paper; EastMojo; India Today NE

REPTILE

JUN 2026

Bishnoi desert lizard

Mesalina bishnoi

Story

Gajner, Bikaner district, Rajasthan (Rajasthan)

ZSI with Tiger Watch · Rec. Zool. Surv. India

In June 2026 researchers described Mesalina bishnoi from Gajner, Bikaner district, Rajasthan, the first confirmed Mesalina lizard in India. It was first spotted near a roadside tea stall in August 2025 and honours the Bishnoi community.

Source: reptile-database.reptarium.cz; journal paper

REPTILE

OCT 2026

Dima bent-toed gecko

Cyrtodactylus dimaensis

Story

Umrangso, Dima Hasao district, Assam (Assam)

Mizoram University · J. Threatened Taxa

In October 2026 Mizoram University herpetologists described the Dima bent-toed gecko, Cyrtodactylus dimaensis, from roadside stone walls at Umrangso in Assam's Dima Hasao district. It is the eighth Cyrtodactylus species described from Assam.

Source: journal paper; Journal of Threatened Taxa; ThePrint

REPTILE

APR 2026

Garo Hills reed snake

Calamaria garoensis

Story

Oragitok village, Rongram block (Meghalaya)

In April 2026 researchers described the Garo Hills reed snake, Calamaria garoensis, from Oragitok in West Garo Hills, Meghalaya, in Taprobanica; it had earlier been mistaken for Calamaria pavimentata.

Source: web.dbuniversity.ac.in; EastMojo

REPTILE

APR 2026

Jayaditya's forest bent-toed gecko

Cyrtodactylus jayadityai

Story

Chamtilla village, near Rowa WLS (Tripura)

Help Earth, Mizoram University · Eur. J. Taxonomy

A nocturnal bent-toed gecko of lowland forest in North Tripura. It is the sister species of C. tripuraensis, with a 4.7–5.2% DNA difference. Its whole known range covers only 8–12 sq km.

- Shelters in burrows along moss-covered roadside mud bunds and forages at night, mostly 1.5–1.8 m above ground.
- Named after Guwahati herpetologist Jayaditya Purkayastha; it raises Northeast India's Cyrtodactylus count to 31.

Source: Bohra et al., European Journal of Taxonomy 1048: 265–303, published 14 Apr 2026 (CC BY 4.0).

REPTILE

MAY 2026

Jhuma's leopard gecko

Eublepharis jhuma

Story

Parari, outskirts of Kaimur WLS (Bihar)

ZSI Kolkata, WII and partners · Herpetozoa

A leopard gecko, a lizard with movable eyelids, up to 142 mm from snout to vent. Large flat scales and two pale body bands set it apart. Its DNA differs 6.9–7.8% from its sister, E. satpuraensis.

- First documented leopard gecko from Bihar; all Eublepharis species are in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act.
- Named after ZSI Director Dhriti Banerjee, nicknamed Jhuma, the first woman to head the Zoological Survey of India.

Source: Mohapatra et al., Herpetozoa 39: 161–176, published 8 May 2026 (CC BY 4.0); WPA Schedule I (2022).

REPTILE

JAN 2026

Mizoram reed snake

Calamaria mizoramensis

Story

Reiek Community Reserve Forest, Mamit (Mizoram)

Mizoram University and foreign partners · Zootaxa

A non-venomous, semi-burrowing reed snake of montane evergreen forest. Mizoram specimens had been filed under the Southeast Asian Calamaria pavimentata. DNA shows a deeply divergent lineage, at least 15.3% distinct from its relatives.

- Nocturnal; recorded at 670–1,295 m around Aizawl, Reiek, Sihphir and Sawleng, including Mizoram University's campus.
- The paper also lists Mizoram's herpetofauna: 169 species, 52 amphibians and 117 reptiles.

Source: Lalremsanga et al., Zootaxa 5741(1): 49–86, 5 Jan 2026; PTI, 6 Jan 2026.

REPTILE

MAY 2026

Lalremsanga's slender snake

Trachischium lalremsangai

Video

Murlen National Park, Champhai district (Mizoram)

Mizoram University, Max Planck Inst. · Herpetozoa

In May 2026 Mizoram University researchers and a Max Planck colleague described Trachischium lalremsangai, an iridescent burrowing snake, from Murlen National Park, Champhai district, Mizoram, in Herpetozoa. A 2003 museum specimen from Chin State, Myanmar, matched it.

Source: journal paper; zenodo.org

REPTILE

JUL 2026

Three spotted ground geckos

Cyrtodactylus shenbagathoppuensis, C. kalakadensis and C. satpuraensis

SMTR and KMTR (TN); Satpura hills (Tamil Nadu / Madhya Pradesh / Maharashtra)

Thackeray Wildlife Foundation · Vertebrate Zoology

Small, short-tailed ground geckos (subgenus Geckoella) with spotted backs. Two are each known from one small area of a Tamil Nadu tiger reserve. The third spans over 700 km of the Satpuras with almost no DNA difference.

- C. shenbagathoppuensis: Shenbagathoppu, Srivilliputhur–Megamalai TR; C. kalakadensis: Kalakad range, Kalakad–Mundanthurai TR.
- C. satpuraensis is recorded in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, including Satpura and Kanha tiger reserves.

Source: Agarwal et al., Vertebrate Zoology 76: 421–454, published 14 Jul 2026 (CC BY 4.0).

REPTILE

SEP 2026

Two rock geckos of Telangana

Hemidactylus cairnicola and H. koyaorum

Story

Nalgonda cairns; Pakhal WLS, Warangal (Telangana)

ZSI, WII, Nehru Zoological Park · Eur. J. Taxonomy

Two cryptic geckos, look-alikes of H. treutleri, recognised by DNA and scale differences. H. cairnicola shelters in man-made stone cairns; H. koyaorum, grey with four white flower-like marks, lives among boulders in Pakhal.

- H. koyaorum honours the Koya, an indigenous tribal community; H. cairnicola is named for the stone cairns it uses.
- They raise Telangana's endemic reptiles to six; the team was led by Pratyush P. Mohapatra of ZSI.

Source: Bhupathi et al., European Journal of Taxonomy 1102: 1–29, published 30 Sep 2026 (CC BY 4.0).

REPTILE

MAR 2026

Ultapani grass lizard

Takydromus ultapaniensis

Story

Ultapani Forest Range (Assam)

In March 2026 researchers led by Sikkim University described Takydromus ultapaniensis, a new grass lizard from the Ultapani range of Manas Reserve Forest, Kokrajhar district, Assam, in the journal Zootaxa.

Source: Zootaxa / Magnolia Press; Northeast Now

AMPHIBIANS

AMPHIBIAN

SEP 2026

Aizawl eastern frog

Ingerana aizawl

Story

Mizoram (Mizoram)

Mizoram Univ., Cotton Univ., Help Earth · Zootaxa

In September 2026 Mizoram University, Cotton University and Help Earth researchers described Ingerana aizawl in Zootaxa from Hratdawng Stream on the Mizoram University campus near Aizawl. Mizoram frogs listed as I. borealis since 2009 belong to it.

Source: Northeast Now; uniindia.com

AMPHIBIAN

AUG 2026

Ammachi's, Sendenyu and Beautiful cascade frogs

Amolops ammachi, A. sendenyu and A. bella

Jampui Hills · Sendenyu · West Bengal (Tripura / Nagaland / West Bengal)

University of Delhi; Harvard · Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool.

Three new cascade frogs of the genus Amolops, which live by rocky waterfalls in forest hill streams. A. ammachi is about 80 mm, light brown with olive-green netting. A. bella is green with a mosaic pattern.

- A. ammachi honours Kerala social worker Padmini Varkey ('Ammachi'); A. sendenyu is named after Sendenyu village, Nagaland.
- The 15-year study also added five Amolops species to India's list; cascade frogs diversified about 32 million years ago.

Source: Biju et al., Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool., 11 Aug 2026 (authors' release); EastMojo, 12 Aug 2026.

AMPHIBIAN

SEP 2026

Chandgad caecilian

Gegeneophis chandgadi

Buzawade, Chandgad, Kolhapur district (Maharashtra)

ZSI Pune and partners · Records of the ZSI

A legless, burrowing amphibian (caecilian) from the northern Western Ghats. Genetic, body-shape and count data separate it from relatives such as G. mhadeiensis of Goa. It lives in village backyards outside protected forests.

- Named after Chandgadi, the Marathi dialect of the Chandgad area; villagers helped researchers find the specimens.
- India has 41 caecilian species; Gegeneophis now has 12, of which 11 are endemic to the Western Ghats.

Source: PIB, 12 Sep 2026; Shikalgar et al., Records of the ZSI, 2026; Down To Earth, 15 Sep 2026.

AMPHIBIAN

MAR 2026

Kali night frog

Nyctibatrachus kali

Story

Castlerock, Kali Tiger Reserve (Karnataka)

Manipal Academy; Kali Tiger Reserve staff · PeerJ

A cryptic night frog of Kali river streams that looks like the Kumbara night frog. Its calls and DNA set it apart. It is the 35th Nyctibatrachus species, a genus found only in the Western Ghats.

- The type locality lies 49 m from the Castlerock railway line; line doubling and road widening threaten it.
- Adult males measure 47–48 mm; Kali Tiger Reserve forest staff are co-authors of the description.

Source: Aravind et al., PeerJ 14: e20895, 27 Mar 2026; Mongabay India, 15 May 2026.

AMPHIBIAN

MAY 2026

Khasi Hills toad

Duttaphrynus dhara

Mawphlang, East Khasi Hills district (Meghalaya)

Assam Don Bosco Univ., Help Earth & BRIN · Taprobanica

In May 2026 researchers from Assam Don Bosco University and Help Earth described Duttaphrynus dhara, a small toad from fallow fields beside montane forest at Mawphlang, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya. Its name honours the Khasi women's garment, the Dhara.

Source: journal paper; taprobanica.org

AMPHIBIAN

APR 2026

Motijheel fanged frog

Limnonectes motijheel

Story

Kamala Valley, Namdapha Tiger Reserve (Arunachal Pradesh)

Wildlife Institute of India · Zootaxa

A small, ground-dwelling fanged frog with tooth-like projections on the lower jaw. Males are larger than females and call from mud nests hidden under leaf litter. It also occurs in northern Myanmar.

- Named after Motijheel, a small wetland in Namdapha where at least 10 amphibian species breed.
- With this species and a new record of L. longchuanensis, India now has six Limnonectes species.

Source: Boruah, Rajiv, Dutta & Das, Zootaxa 5796(3): 551–571, 22 Apr 2026; Mongabay India, 9 Jun 2026.

AMPHIBIAN

JAN 2026

Soman's and Mechuka slender-armed frogs

Leptobrachium somani; Leptobrachium mechuka

Story

Lower Dibang Valley and Shi Yomi… (Arunachal Pradesh)

In January 2026 a team including S.D. Biju described two new slender-armed frogs, Leptobrachium somani and L. mechuka, from Lower Dibang Valley and Shi Yomi districts, Arunachal Pradesh, in the journal PeerJ.

Source: The Week; ThePrint; journal paper

AMPHIBIAN

JAN 2026

Valmiki's caecilian

Gegeneophis valmiki

Story

Valmiki Plateau, Paneri, Patan taluka (Maharashtra)

In December 2025 Zoological Survey of India scientists and colleagues described Gegeneophis valmiki, a new caecilian from the Valmiki Plateau at Paneri, Patan taluka, Satara district, Maharashtra, in the journal Phyllomedusa.

Source: Deccan Chronicle; Hindusthan Samachar; journal paper

AMPHIBIAN

APR 2026

Western trickle frog

Ingerana occidens

Video

Garo and Khasi Hills (Meghalaya)

R. S. Naveen, Griffith University · J. Natural History

In April 2026 R. S. Naveen of Griffith University described Ingerana occidens, the western trickle frog, from forest streams of Meghalaya's Garo and Khasi Hills. The Brahmaputra separates it from its northern relative, I. borealis.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters; gbif.org

FISH

FISH

OCT 2026

Arabian black electric ray

Tetronarce ramanamurthyi

Story

Deep waters, south-eastern Arabian Sea (Keralam coast)

ZSI Chennai; Moss Landing Marine Labs, USA · Zootaxa

A deep-sea electric ray with a uniformly bluish-black or dark-brown back, no small bumps (papillae) around its breathing holes and a disc wider than long. It is the first confirmed Tetronarce from the northern Indian Ocean.

- Described from nine specimens and named after M. V. Ramana Murthy, Mission Director of the Deep Ocean Mission.
- Studied under a Deep Ocean Mission (MoES) project on deep-sea cartilaginous fishes in Indian waters.

Source: PIB, 27 Oct 2026; Bineesh, Kasinath & Ebert, Zootaxa 5890(4): 557–570, 19 Oct 2026.

FISH

AUG 2026

Arabian skate

Dipturus dhritiae

Story

Continental slope of the south-eastern... (Keralam / Tamil Nadu)

ZSI + ICAR-CMFRI + Moss Landing (USA) · J Ocean Sci Found

In August 2026 Zoological Survey of India and ICAR-CMFRI scientists, with US shark expert David Ebert, described Dipturus dhritiae, the Arabian skate, from deep-sea trawl bycatch off south-western India, in the Journal of the Ocean Science Foundation.

Source: journal paper; dailypioneer.com; ETV Bharat

FISH

JUN 2026

Arabian slender catshark

Apristurus drona

Video

Kollam continental slope (400–650 m) (Keralam)

ZSI (MBRC Chennai, Kolkata) · Zootaxa

In June 2026 Zoological Survey of India scientists described Apristurus drona, the Arabian slender catshark, in Zootaxa from four specimens caught as deep-sea shrimp-trawl bycatch at 400–650 metres on the Kollam slope off Keralam.

Source: journal paper; zenodo.org; Mongabay India

FISH

AUG 2026

Begonia

Begonia neelamorum

Story

Rock walls along the Keyi River (Arunachal Pradesh)

D. Borah, M. Khanal, M. Taram & N. Gap · Taiwania

In August 2026 Dipankar Borah and colleagues described Begonia neelamorum in Taiwania. This single-leaved, white-flowered begonia grows on wet rock walls along the Keyi River in Keyi Panyor district, Arunachal Pradesh. It honours the Nyishi Neelam clan.

Source: journal paper; taiwania.ntu.edu.tw; Times of India

FISH

FEB 2026

Blind well loach

Gitchak nakana

Story

A dug-out well, Goalpara district (Assam)

Senckenberg; Assam Don Bosco University · Sci. Reports

A 2 cm, blind, unpigmented loach that lives in groundwater. It is a new genus with no bony skull roof; skin alone covers its brain. It is the first aquifer-dwelling fish known from Northeast India.

- All 13 specimens came from one village well; the authors withheld the exact site to protect it.
- The name joins Garo words: gitchak (red), na·tok (fish) and kana (blind).

Source: Britz et al., Scientific Reports 16: 7746, 26 Feb 2026 (open access).

FISH

JUL 2026

Blood-red groundwater swamp eel

Rakthamichthys anchi

Story

Dug wells in a village of Goalpara… (Assam)

Senckenberg Dresden; Assam Don Bosco Univ. · Zootaxa

In July 2026 Ralf Britz of Senckenberg Dresden and Indian colleagues described Rakthamichthys anchi, a blind, blood-red swamp eel from village wells in Goalpara district, Assam, in Zootaxa. Anchi is the Garo word for blood.

Source: journal paper; Down To Earth

FISH

MAR 2026

Catfish Amblyceps vayavy

Amblyceps vayavy

Story

Kundalika river (Kolad, Raigad district) (Maharashtra / Goa)

In March 2026 Balaji Vijayakrishnan with Thackeray Wildlife Foundation researchers described Amblyceps vayavy in Zootaxa, a new catfish known only from the Kundalika river, Maharashtra, and the Ragada river, Goa, the second Amblyceps from the Western Ghats.

Source: journal paper; Mongabay India

FISH

SEP 2026

Conger eel

Ariosoma cmfriense

Story

Off Kollam (Quilon), Arabian Sea (Keralam)

ICAR-CMFRI Kochi · Zootaxa

In September 2026 ICAR-CMFRI scientists named Ariosoma cmfriense, a conger eel caught about 300 metres deep off Kollam, Keralam, in January 2026. Fine black speckling below the lateral line sets it apart; COI DNA separates it from Ariosoma indicum.

Source: Zootaxa / Magnolia Press; ICAR

FISH

SEP 2026

Conger eel

Bathymyrus perplexus

Story

Bay of Bengal off Paradip (Odisha) (Odisha / West Bengal / Andhra Pradesh)

ZSI Gopalpur + ICAR-CIFA · Bulletin of Marine Science

In September 2026 Smrutirekha Acharya, Anil Mohapatra and colleagues at the Zoological Survey of India's Gopalpur centre described Bathymyrus perplexus, a conger eel known from 32 specimens off India's east coast, in the Bulletin of Marine Science.

Source: journal paper; ETV Bharat

FISH

MAR 2026

Gudgeon goby Butis bargabhimae

Butis bargabhimae

Story

Rupnarayan River near Tamluk (West Bengal)

In March 2026 researchers from Tamralipta Mahavidyalaya and Vidyasagar University described Butis bargabhimae, a new gudgeon goby from the Rupnarayan River near Tamluk, Purba Medinipur, West Bengal, in Zootaxa.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters

FISH

JUL 2026

Indian dory

Cyttopsis indica

350–500 m, slope off southern Keralam (Keralam coast)

ICAR-CMFRI, Kochi · Indian Journal of Fisheries

A deep-sea dory of the continental slope. Indian Ocean fish of this kind had been called Cyttopsis rosea, now treated as Atlantic only. Two anal-fin spines and a 4.6–11% DNA difference separate it.

- Described from six specimens landed by deep-sea trawlers at Sakthikulangara fishing harbour, Kollam.
- The genus Cyttopsis previously held two species, C. rosea and C. cypho; this is the third.

Source: ICAR release, 3 Jul 2026; Ajithan et al., Indian Journal of Fisheries 73(2), 30 Jun 2026.

FISH

AUG 2026

Indonepalese blind earthworm eel

Gangaichthys indonepalicus

Story

Borewells near Balgangwa (Bihar)

Thackeray Wildlife Foundation and partners · ZooKeys

In August 2026 Thackeray Wildlife Foundation researchers and partners described Gangaichthys indonepalicus, a blind, pigmentless earthworm eel from borewells in Pashchim Champaran, Bihar. It is the first subterranean fish known from the Indo-Gangetic Plain's alluvial aquifers.

Source: journal paper

FISH

APR 2026

Kaage labeo

Labeo kaage

Cauvery River upstream of… (Karnataka)

ICAR-NBFGR, Kochi · Journal of Fish Biology

In April 2026 ICAR–NBFGR scientists described Labeo kaage, a uniformly dark green-to-black carp from the Cauvery above Shivanasamudra Falls, Karnataka, in the Journal of Fish Biology. Local fishers call it kaage meenu, the crow fish.

Source: journal paper; researcharchive.calacademy.org; thesouthfirst.com

FISH

JUL 2026

Kakinada snake eel

Bascanichthys chepakakiensis

Kakinada fishing harbour, Bay of Bengal (Andhra Pradesh coast)

ICAR-NBFGR, KUFOS, ZSI · Journal of Ichthyology

A long, slender snake eel of the Bay of Bengal. Its dorsal fin starts before the middle of the head, and its snout is dusky to dark brown. Its DNA differs 15.8–20.1% from two related Bascanichthys.

- Named from Telugu 'chepa' (fish) and 'kaki' (for Kakinada): 'a fish from Kakinada'.
- Based on two specimens, it is only the second Bascanichthys described from Indian waters, after a six-decade gap.

Source: ICAR-NBFGR release, 14 Jul 2026; Sangamithra et al., Journal of Ichthyology 66(4): 526–534 (online May 2026).

FISH

JUL 2026

Khairi's catfish

Pseudolaguvia khairii

Story

Budhabalanga River, Mayurbhanj district (Odisha)

Independent researcher + WII + Similipal TR · Zootaxa

In July 2026 Balaji Vijayakrishnan, Gaurav Anil Shinde of the Wildlife Institute of India and Similipal field director Prakash Chand Gogineni described Pseudolaguvia khairii, a tiny catfish from Odisha's Budhabalanga River, in Zootaxa. It honours the tigress Khairi.

Source: journal paper; odishatv.in

FISH

MAY 2026

Likimro hill-stream catfish

Pseudecheneis likimroensis

Story

Likimro River, Nagaland (Nagaland)

Kohima Science College, ZSI Kolkata · J. Ichthyol.

In May 2026 researchers from Kohima Science College and ZSI described Pseudecheneis likimroensis, a rock-clinging catfish from the Likimro River, Kiphire district, Nagaland. Known locally as Nupedro, it is the Chindwin basin's sixth Pseudecheneis.

Source: EastMojo; Mongabay India

FISH

JUN 2026

Periyar Channa barb

Eechathalakenda incognita

Story

Upper Periyar River, Keralam (Keralam)

Univ. of Kerala colleges, KUFOS · Syst. Biodivers.

In June 2026 Kerala-based researchers described Eechathalakenda incognita, a barb from fast hill streams above 900 m in Periyar Tiger Reserve. For about 70 years it had been confused with E. ophicephala of the Pamba basin.

Source: journal paper; research.calacademy.org

FISH

AUG 2026

Spiny seahorse

Hippocampus amandavincentae

Story

Bycatch at Tuticorin (Thoothukudi)... (Tamil Nadu / Keralam)

KUFOS Kochi with G. Short · Zootaxa

In August 2026 Kochi-based KUFOS researchers described the spiny seahorse Hippocampus amandavincentae in Zootaxa, from bycatch at Tuticorin harbour, Tamil Nadu. It splits the old thorny seahorse, H. histrix, and honours Amanda Vincent.

Source: journal paper; The Hindu

FISH

MAR 2026

Torrent catfish Glyptothorax sentimereni and barb Oreichthys elianae

Glyptothorax sentimereni; Oreichthys elianae

Story

Dikhu River and a tributary of the... (Nagaland)

In March 2026 J. Praveenraj and Balaji Vijayakrishnan described two new fishes from Mokokchung district, Nagaland, in Zootaxa: the torrent catfish Glyptothorax sentimereni from the Dikhu River and the barb Oreichthys elianae from a Tsurang River tributary.

Source: journal paper; EastMojo; Northeast Now

INSECTS

INSECT

JUN 2026

Agni canscora

Canscora agni

Story

Sus Hill, Pune, Maharashtra (Maharashtra)

IISER Pune, Savanna Science Foundation · Nordic J. Bot.

In June 2026 Ashish Nerlekar and Sharad Kambale described Canscora agni, a dwarf white-flowered herb of the gentian family from the fire-prone savanna of Sus Hill, Pune. Its name, Sanskrit for fire, marks fire's role in savannas.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters

INSECT

JAN 2026

Ant-nest hoverflies

Metadon ghorpadei; Metadon reemeri

Story

Delhi Ridge, New Delhi; Siruvani hills (Delhi / Tamil Nadu)

In December 2025 Hariharakrishnan Sankararaman and S.S. Anooj described two new ant-nest hoverflies in Zootaxa: Metadon ghorpadei from the Delhi Ridge and M. reemeri from the Siruvani hills, Tamil Nadu.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters

INSECT

MAY 2026

Aphid wasp

Spilomena malabarica

Story

Kozhikode district, Keralam (Keralam)

ZSI Kozhikode · Records of the ZSI

In May 2026 Zoological Survey of India entomologists described Spilomena malabarica, a 3.5 mm aphid-hunting wasp caught in a yellow pan trap in Kozhikode district, Keralam. It is named after the Malabar region.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters

INSECT

FEB 2026

Army ants

Aenictus chittoorensis; Aenictus lankamallensis

Story

Sri Venkateswara Wildlife Sanctuary... (Andhra Pradesh)

In February 2026 NISER and ATREE researchers described two new army ants in Asian Myrmecology: Aenictus chittoorensis from Sri Venkateswara Wildlife Sanctuary and A. lankamallensis from Lankamalleswara Wildlife Sanctuary, Andhra Pradesh.

Source: Mongabay India; atree.org

INSECT

FEB 2026

Assamese spiny ant

Polyrhachis garbhangaensis

Story

Garbhanga Reserve Forest, near Guwahati (Assam)

National Institute of Advanced Studies researchers described Polyrhachis garbhangaensis, the 'Assamese spiny ant', from Garbhanga Reserve Forest near Guwahati, Assam, in Asian Myrmecology on 30 January 2026.

Source: India Today NE; Research Matters; biorxiv.org

INSECT

MAR 2026

Basar Duke

Euthalia zubeengargi

Story

Basar, Leparada district (Arunachal Pradesh)

In March 2026 researchers described the Basar Duke (Euthalia zubeengargi), a new butterfly from Basar in Leparada district, Arunachal Pradesh, named after Assamese singer Zubeen Garg; surveys had recorded only two individuals.

Source: entomon.in; EastMojo

INSECT

APR 2026

Boghawker dragonflies

Sarasaeschna nuboides; Sarasaeschna sigotaayo; Sarasaeschna dosdewaensis

Story

Forest pond in the Siang Valley (Arunachal Pradesh / Assam)

In April 2026 researchers described three new boghawker dragonflies in Zootaxa: Sarasaeschna nuboides and S. sigotaayo from a forest pond in Arunachal Pradesh's Siang Valley, and S. dosdewaensis from Assam's Sribhumi (formerly Karimganj) district.

Source: journal paper; Zootaxa / Magnolia Press; EastMojo; ncbs.res.in

INSECT

MAR 2026

Cyphostemma annamalaii

Cyphostemma annamalaii

Story

Sanjeevi Hill, Villupuram district (Tamil Nadu)

Annamalai University · Phytotaxa

In March 2026 Annamalai University botanists described Cyphostemma annamalaii, a herbaceous climber of the grape family, from tropical dry forest on Sanjeevi Hill, Villupuram district, Tamil Nadu, in the journal Phytotaxa.

Source: journal paper; x.com

INSECT

JUN 2026

Damselfly

Mortonagrion santha

Video Story

Farm pond in a coconut plantation (Andaman and Nicobar Islands)

ZSI Chennai; University of Madras · Zootaxa

In June 2026 Zoological Survey of India and University of Madras scientists described Mortonagrion santha, a damselfly from a farm pond at Dasarathpur, Rangat, in Middle Andaman, in the journal Zootaxa. It honours field entomologist P. Santhakumar.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters

INSECT

APR 2026

Fireflies

Diaphanes meghalayanus; Diaphanes mawlynnong

Story

East Khasi Hills district (incl.... (Meghalaya)

In April 2026 Assam Don Bosco University researchers reported two new fireflies, Diaphanes meghalayanus and D. mawlynnong, from the East Khasi Hills of Meghalaya, raising India's known Diaphanes species to 15.

Source: journal paper; jibs.modares.ac.ir; India Today NE

INSECT

JUL 2026

Firefly

Pygoluciola mawsynram

Story

Mawsynram, East Khasi Hills district (Meghalaya)

Assam Don Bosco Univ. & Debraj Roy College · AJCB

In July 2026 zoologists from Assam Don Bosco University and Debraj Roy College described Pygoluciola mawsynram, a firefly found at 10 of 29 surveyed sites around Mawsynram, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya. It is the 29th species in its genus.

Source: journal paper; ajcb.in; India Today NE

INSECT

MAY 2026

Flowering herb

Sonerila roxburghii

Story

Mankulam Reserve Forest and Kallar (Keralam)

Univ. of Calicut & BSI · Annales Botanici Fennici

In May 2026 botanists from the University of Calicut and the Botanical Survey of India described Sonerila roxburghii, a pink-flowered herb from the Mankulam forests of Idukki district, Keralam, at 1,380–1,480 m. It honours William Roxburgh.

Source: journal paper; ETV Bharat

INSECT

JUL 2026

Flowering herb

Disporum yobinorum

Story

Vijaynagar, Changlang district (Arunachal Pradesh)

BSI Arunachal Pradesh Regional Centre · Phytotaxa

In July 2026 Botanical Survey of India botanists described Disporum yobinorum, a herb of shaded streamside evergreen forest near Vijaynagar, Changlang district, Arunachal Pradesh. Fewer than 40 plants are known. The name honours the Yobin community.

Source: journal paper; EastMojo

INSECT

OCT 2026

Flowering shrub

Osbeckia assamensis

Story

Grasslands of Manas National Park, Assam (Assam)

Gauhati Univ. (Das & Nath) · Phytotaxa

In October 2026 Gauhati University botanists Barnali Das and Namita Nath described Osbeckia assamensis, a pink-flowered shrub from the grasslands of Manas National Park, Assam, in the journal Phytotaxa. It is known only from Manas.

Source: journal paper; assamtribune.com; telanganatoday.com; Northeast Now

INSECT

MAR 2026

Fruit flies Acidoxantha paratotoflava and Hemilea suneriae

Acidoxantha paratotoflava; Hemilea suneriae

Story

Solan region, Himachal Pradesh (Himachal Pradesh)

In February 2026 Maneesh Pal Singh and David Hancock described two new fruit flies, Acidoxantha paratotoflava and Hemilea suneriae, from Solan, Himachal Pradesh, in Zootaxa and recorded the genus Rhagoletis in India for the first time.

Source: Zootaxa / Magnolia Press; Research Matters

INSECT

MAY 2026

Hoverflies

Eristalinus sapphirinus; Eristalinus brunettii

Several districts of the Gangetic plains (West Bengal)

ZSI Kolkata · European Journal of Taxonomy

In May 2026 Zoological Survey of India scientists described two hoverflies from the Gangetic plains of West Bengal, Eristalinus sapphirinus and E. brunettii, in the European Journal of Taxonomy. They are India's first new Eristalinus species since 1923.

Source: journal paper; PIB; rhs.org.uk

INSECT

MAY 2026

Kali forester moth

Mimeusemia kali

Video

Story

Kali Tiger Reserve, Karnataka (Karnataka)

ZSI Pune with G. László · Zootaxa

In May 2026 Aparna Kalawate of ZSI's Western Regional Centre, Pune, and Gyula László described Mimeusemia kali in Zootaxa, a day-flying forester moth from Kali Tiger Reserve, Karnataka, the genus's first new species in nearly 30 years.

Source: journal paper; zenodo.org

INSECT

JAN 2026

Hoya nagaensis

Hoya nagaensis

Story

Kavünhou Community Reserved Forest (Nagaland)

In January 2026 Nagaland University researchers described Hoya nagaensis, a wax plant from Kavünhou Community Reserved Forest, Phek district, Nagaland, in Kew Bulletin; in April 2026 a Kew Bulletin reassessment treated it as a synonym of Hoya longifolia.

Source: journal paper; EastMojo

INSECT

OCT 2026

Mawphlang cicada

Neoterpnosia mawphlangensis

Story

Mawphlang hills, East Khasi Hills (Meghalaya)

Assam Don Bosco University · J. Threatened Taxa

In October 2026 Assam Don Bosco University zoologists Anastasia Ting and Jane Wanry Shangpliang described the cicada Neoterpnosia mawphlangensis from the Mawphlang hills, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya, in the Journal of Threatened Taxa, using its anatomy and calls.

Source: journal paper; Journal of Threatened Taxa; themeghalayanexpress.com

INSECT

FEB 2026

Jasmine blossom midge

Contarinia icardiflores

Story

India (ICAR-Directorate of... (Maharashtra)

In August 2025 ICAR announced that scientists of its Directorate of Floricultural Research, Pune, led by D.M. Firake, had described Contarinia icardiflores, a new blossom midge infesting jasmine (Jasminum sambac) flower buds.

Source: ICAR; krishijagran.com; floraldaily.com

INSECT

JAN 2026

Meadow katydids

Conocephalus usmanii; Conocephalus nagariensis; Conocephalus gandebali

Story

Kashmir Valley, Jammu and Kashmir (Jammu and Kashmir)

In December 2025 Aligarh Muslim University researchers described three new meadow katydids from Kashmir, Conocephalus usmanii, C. nagariensis and C. gandebali, in the journal Zootaxa.

Source: Zootaxa / Magnolia Press; ETV Bharat

INSECT

MAR 2026

Micromoths Eudemopsis hunliensis and Eudemopsis gobuka

Eudemopsis hunliensis; Eudemopsis gobuka

Story

Hunli (Lower Dibang Valley district)… (Arunachal Pradesh)

In March 2026 ICAR-IARI scientists described two new micromoths, Eudemopsis hunliensis and E. gobuka, from Lower Dibang Valley and Upper Siang districts, Arunachal Pradesh, the genus's first record in India.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters

INSECT

AUG 2026

Nagaland stingless bee

Tetragonula nagalandensis

Story

Medziphema, Nagaland (Nagaland)

UAS Bengaluru, Nagaland Univ, CAU Imphal · Oriental Insects

In August 2026 researchers from UAS Bengaluru, Nagaland University and Central Agricultural University, Imphal, described Tetragonula nagalandensis in Oriental Insects. The 5-mm stingless bee nests about 80 cm underground near Medziphema, Nagaland.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters

INSECT

APR 2026

Nagalim dog teak

Dillenia nagalim

Story

Choro village, Kamjong district (Manipur)

In April 2026 Dhanamanjuri University botanists described Dillenia nagalim, a yellow-flowered shrub known from one site at Choro village, Kamjong district, Manipur, in Phytotaxa and assessed it as Critically Endangered.

Source: journal paper; phytotaxa.mapress.com; India Today NE; Northeast Now

INSECT

JUN 2026

Narrow-banded wall

Chonala albistricta

Video

Mayodia Pass (Arunachal Pradesh)

Kunte, Khan & Pawar (NCBS Bengaluru) · Zootaxa

In June 2026 Krushnamegh Kunte's team at the National Centre for Biological Sciences described Chonala albistricta, the narrow-banded wall butterfly, from Mayodia Pass in Lower Dibang Valley, Arunachal Pradesh. It is the tenth known Chonala species.

Source: journal paper; easternmirrornagaland.com

INSECT

JUL 2026

Parasitoid wasp

Tetrastichus narayandebnathi

Story

Rajarhat wetlands, near Kolkata (West Bengal)

Univ. of Kalyani & Cairo Univ. · Int. J. Trop. Insect Sci.

Researchers from the University of Kalyani and Cairo University described Tetrastichus narayandebnathi in July 2026. Eight of these parasitoid wasps emerged from one tortoise beetle pupa in Rajarhat wetlands near Kolkata. The name honours cartoonist Narayan Debnath.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters

INSECT

SEP 2026

Parasitoid wasp

Oxyserphus narendrani

Story

Dibru-Saikhowa National Park (Assam)

ZSI Kolkata · Species (Discovery Scientific Society)

In September 2026 Rupam Debnath and Keloth Rajmohana of the Zoological Survey of India, Kolkata, described Oxyserphus narendrani, a 3.3 mm parasitoid wasp from Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, Assam, in the journal Species. It is the genus's first Indian record.

Source: discoveryjournals.org

INSECT

AUG 2026

Parasitoid wasp

Homoporus tridentata

Story

Jammu and Kashmir (University of… (Jammu and Kashmir)

Univ. of Kashmir + SKUAST-K · J Kansas Entomol Soc

In August 2026 University of Kashmir and SKUAST-Kashmir researchers described the new species Homoporus tridentata, a parasitoid wasp from Jammu and Kashmir, in the Journal of the Kansas Entomological Society. It is also the genus's first record from northern India.

Source: journal paper

INSECT

MAR 2026

Parasitoid wasp Chelonus mahadeb

Chelonus mahadeb

Story

Upper Assam (a tea estate (Assam)

In March 2026 Zoological Survey of India scientists, with University of Guelph and Kalinga Foundation colleagues, described the braconid wasp Chelonus (Carinichelonus) mahadeb from Assam in Zootaxa and extended the known range of C. siangensis.

Source: journal paper; Zootaxa / Magnolia Press

INSECT

APR 2026

Pendry's alpine lettuce

Melanoseris pendryi

Story

Eastern Sikkim (Sikkim)

Univ. of Calcutta, Univ. of Kashmir · Ann. Bot. Fennici

In April 2026 botanists from the University of Calcutta, the University of Kashmir and Sikkim's forest department described Melanoseris pendryi, a lavender-flowered daisy-family herb known from about 32 plants above 4,000 m in east Sikkim.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters

INSECT

MAR 2026

Peninsular cockroach

Neoloboptera peninsularis

Story

Farmland around Nathachiwadi (Maharashtra)

In March 2026 the Zoological Survey of India announced Neoloboptera peninsularis, a new cockroach found in farmland around Nathachiwadi in Pune district, Maharashtra, and confirmed with DNA sequencing; India's known cockroach species rose to 190.

Source: DT Next

INSECT

MAY 2026

Rattlepod

Crotalaria phulei

Khairi Butibori–Umred forest (Maharashtra)

Chaudhary, Gadpayale & Somkuwar (Nagpur) · Phytotaxa

In May 2026 three Nagpur-region botanists described Crotalaria phulei in Phytotaxa. This yellow-flowered undershrub grows to 1.5 m in forest near Khairi village, Nagpur district, Maharashtra. Its name honours the social reformer Savitribai Phule.

Source: journal paper; thehitavada.com

INSECT

APR 2026

Rove beetles

Megalopinus arunachalensis; Megalopinus mithun; Megalopinus micros

Story

Forests of Arunachal Pradesh (Arunachal Pradesh)

In April 2026 Rajiv Gandhi University and University of Tübingen researchers described three new rove beetles, Megalopinus arunachalensis, M. mithun and M. micros, from forests of Arunachal Pradesh including Pakke Tiger Reserve and Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary.

Source: soil-organisms.org; demo.arunachaltimes.in

INSECT

AUG 2026

Rove beetles

Stenus spp.

Story

Arunachal Pradesh (Arunachal Pradesh)

Volker Puthz (with RGU and Tübingen) · Linzer biol. Beitr.

In August 2026 researchers announced 15 Stenus rove beetles new to science from Arunachal Pradesh's waterfalls and forests, described by Volker Puthz from Rajiv Gandhi University–Tübingen collections. The state's Stenus count rose to 103.

Source: arunachaltimes.in; species.wikimedia.org

INSECT

MAY 2026

Sahyadri everlasting

Anaphalis sahyadrica

Montane grasslands and shola margins (Keralam)

Govt Victoria College Palakkad, CSIR-NBRI · Novon

In May 2026 botanists from Government Victoria College, Palakkad, and CSIR-NBRI described Anaphalis sahyadrica, an everlasting of the daisy family, from montane grasslands and shola margins of Keralam's southern Western Ghats, in the journal Novon.

Source: journal paper; tb.plazi.org

INSECT

FEB 2026

Slender bombardier

Lyriothemis keralensis

Story

Coastal plains adjoining the Western… (Keralam)

Odonatologists described Lyriothemis keralensis, the slender bombardier, from Kerala's coastal plains in the International Journal of Odonatology on 7 February 2026; it had long been misidentified as the north-eastern L. acigastra.

Source: journal paper; worlddragonfly.org

INSECT

JUL 2026

Spreadwing damselfly

Lestes paloti

Story

Western slopes of the Western Ghats (Keralam)

Alphonsa College; TIES; TNHS · Int. J. Odonatology

In July 2026 Keralam odonatologists described Lestes paloti, a spreadwing damselfly of laterite hillocks first seen at Taliparamba, Kannur, in the International Journal of Odonatology. Earlier southern Indian records of Lestes nodalis were this species.

Source: journal paper; onmanorama.com

INSECT

JUL 2026

Stingless bee

Tetragonula yikhumensis

Story

Yikhum village, Wokha district, Nagaland (Nagaland)

Nagaland University; ZSI · Sociobiology

In July 2026 Nagaland University and ZSI researchers described Tetragonula yikhumensis, a stingless bee nesting more than two metres underground in Wokha district, Nagaland, in Sociobiology. At about 5.6 mm it is India's largest stingless bee.

Source: journal paper; easternmirrornagaland.com

INSECT

JUL 2026

Telangana ammannia

Ammannia telanganensis

Story

Telangana (Telangana)

BSI Hyderabad, Univ. of Hyderabad · Phytotaxa

In July 2026 BSI Hyderabad and university botanists described Ammannia telanganensis in Phytotaxa, an annual wetland herb of the pomegranate family from Rangareddy and Amrabad Tiger Reserve, Nagarkurnool, that flowers from November to February.

Source: journal paper; phytotaxa.mapress.com

INSECT

APR 2026

Three plants: two spurges and a lantern flower

Euphorbia ananthapuramensis; Euphorbia chalamensis; Ceropegia andhrica

Nigidi forest (Ananthapuramu district) (Andhra Pradesh)

K. Prasad (SV College, DU) with AP & KFRI botanists

Between January and April 2026, botanists led by Kothareddy Prasad described three Andhra Pradesh plants: Euphorbia ananthapuramensis from Nigidi forest, E. chalamensis from Gundla Brahmeswaram sanctuary, and Ceropegia andhrica from Paderu forest division.

Source: journal paper

INSECT

JUN 2026

Thrips

Trachynotothrips vyaghravahini

Story

Pilikula Nisargadhama, Mangaluru (Karnataka)

KSNUAHS Shivamogga; ICAR-NBAIR · Annales Zoologici

In June 2026 entomologists from KSNUAHS Shivamogga and ICAR–NBAIR described Trachynotothrips vyaghravahini, a thrips from Lagerstroemia flowers at Pilikula Nisargadhama, Mangaluru, in Annales Zoologici. The same paper recorded Dendrothrips latimaculatus in India for the first time.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters

INSECT

JUN 2026

Tiger moth

Antaram idukki

Video

Idukki district (Keralam)

ZSI Pune; NHM London · J. Lepidopterists' Society

In June 2026 Zoological Survey of India and Natural History Museum, London scientists described Antaram idukki, a new genus and species of tiger moth, from one male collected in 2024 in Idukki, Keralam.

Source: journal paper; Mongabay India

INSECT

MAR 2026

Two lichen moths

Caulocera hollowayi and Asura buxa

Story

Golitar, Sikkim · Panijhora, West Bengal (Sikkim / West Bengal)

ZSI Kolkata & Jabalpur; Punjabi University · Zootaxa

Two lichen moths (tribe Lithosiini) described by a ZSI team. C. hollowayi has pale white forewings with thin black bands. A. buxa is bright ochre-yellow. Their caterpillars feed on lichens, so the moths can indicate air quality.

- C. hollowayi honours lepidopterist Jeremy D. Holloway; A. buxa is named after the adjoining Buxa Tiger Reserve.
- The same Zootaxa paper recorded seven more lichen moth species from India for the first time.

Source: PIB, 12 Mar 2026; Singh, Bhattacharya, Singh & Kirti, Zootaxa 5763(1): 93–108, 2 Mar 2026.

INSECT

JUL 2026

Two solitary digger bees

Elaphropoda triangulata; Habropoda adi

Story

Pasighat (East Siang district) and... (Arunachal Pradesh)

ATREE, Bengaluru · European Journal of Taxonomy

In July 2026 ATREE entomologists Femi E. Benny and D. R. Priyadarsanan described two solitary bees from Arunachal Pradesh: Elaphropoda triangulata from Pasighat and Habropoda adi from Yingku, named after the Adi community. Each is known from one male.

Source: journal paper; europeanjournaloftaxonomy.eu

SPIDERS

SPIDER

APR 2026

Himalayan happy-face spider

Theridion himalayana

Story

Uttarakhand (Uttarakhand)

In April 2026 researchers described Theridion himalayana, a 'happy-face' spider from Uttarakhand with 32 recorded colour morphs, in Evolutionary Systematics; it differs by about 8.5 per cent in COI from Hawaii's happy-face spider.

Source:

SPIDER

APR 2026

Jumping spiders Mogrus shushka and Mogrus pune

Mogrus shushka; Mogrus pune

Story

Arid Rajasthan (M. shushka); Alfa… (Rajasthan / Maharashtra)

In April 2026 arachnologists described two new jumping spiders in the European Journal of Taxonomy: Mogrus shushka from arid Rajasthan and Mogrus pune from Alfa Laval Biodiversity Park, Pimpri-Chinchwad, Pune.

Source: journal paper; europeanjournaloftaxonomy.eu; thebridgechronicle.com

SPIDER

FEB 2026

Kolhapur trapdoor spider

Titanidiops kolhapurensis

Story

Outskirts of Kolhapur city (type… (Maharashtra)

In January 2026 researchers from the Thackeray Wildlife Foundation and Shivaji University described Titanidiops kolhapurensis, a new trapdoor spider from grassland and forest patches around Kolhapur, Maharashtra, in the Journal of Natural History.

Source: tandfonline.com

SPIDER

JUN 2026

Mawlyngot lynx spider

Hamataliwa mawlyngot

Video

Story

Mawlyngot village (Meghalaya)

ZSI, University of Calcutta · Natl Acad Sci Lett

In June 2026 Zoological Survey of India and University of Calcutta arachnologists described Hamataliwa mawlyngot, a lynx spider from Mawlyngot village, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya, in National Academy Science Letters. It is the genus's first Meghalaya record.

Source: journal paper; hubnetwork.in

SPIDER

JUN 2026

Onomastus jumping spiders

Onomastus brahmagiri; Onomastus silentvalley; Onomastus wijesinghei

Story

Western Ghats, Keralam; Sri Lanka (Keralam)

Christ College Irinjalakuda, NIFS Kandy · Zootaxa

In June 2026 Christ College, Irinjalakuda, and Sri Lankan arachnologists described three Onomastus jumping spiders in Zootaxa: O. brahmagiri and O. silentvalley from Western Ghats sky islands in Keralam, and O. wijesinghei from Sri Lanka.

Source: journal paper; Zootaxa / Magnolia Press; wsc.nmbe.ch

SPIDER

AUG 2026

Scorpion

Liocheles gracilipalpus

Story

Judda, Reasi district, Jammu & Kashmir (Jammu and Kashmir)

Bhardwaj, Katal, Lalremsanga & Mirza · Euscorpius

In August 2026 researchers named Liocheles gracilipalpus, a scorpion found under flat rocks at Judda, about 1,655 metres up in Reasi district, Jammu and Kashmir. Its males have long, slender pedipalps, and COI DNA set it apart.

Source: mds.marshall.edu; journal paper; The Tribune

SPIDER

MAY 2026

Spiders

Simonia lawbah; Hamataliwa papikonda

Story

Krem Lawbah cave (Meghalaya / Andhra Pradesh)

ZSI Kolkata · Zootaxa; Rec. Zool. Surv. India

In May and June 2026 ZSI scientists described two spiders: Simonia lawbah, a ray spider under 2 mm from Krem Lawbah cave, Meghalaya, India's first Simonia; and Hamataliwa papikonda, a lynx spider from Papikonda National Park, Andhra Pradesh.

Source: journal paper; wsc.nmbe.ch

SPIDER

JUL 2026

Trapdoor spider

Tigidia singhal

Story

Semi-arid grassland near Rehekuri... (Maharashtra)

ATREE and WII · Arachnology

In July 2026 researchers from ATREE and the Wildlife Institute of India described Tigidia singhal, a trapdoor spider from semi-arid Deccan grassland in Maharashtra, the genus's first record from an open natural ecosystem.

Source: journal paper

SPIDER

MAY 2026

Two Nagaland sheet-web spiders

Psechrus ntu and Psechrus phenshunyu

Story

Ntu (Peren) and Phenshunyu (Tseminyu) (Nagaland)

ZSI Kolkata · Zootaxa

Two Psechrus spiders that weave large horizontal sheet webs in humid forest. Both were described from females and differ in their copulatory organs. Each is named after the village where it was found.

- India now has nine Psechrus species; P. himalayanus was recorded in Northeast India for the first time.
- The same ZSI release reported the first revision of India's whip scorpions in over 100 years.

Source: PIB, 13 May 2026; Sudhin, Mali & Sen, Zootaxa 5796(1): 124–134, 20 Apr 2026.

OTHER INVERTEBRATES

OTHER INVERTEBRATE

JUL 2026

Agatti porcelain crab

Pachycheles ravichandrani

Coral reefs of Agatti Island (Lakshadweep)

ICAR-NBFGR, Lucknow · Zootaxa

A porcelain crab only about 3 mm in size. Porcelain crabs share a superfamily with squat lobsters. Bristles (setae) on its carapace ridges and a gap between the fingers of its smaller claw set it apart.

- Named after M. Ravichandran, former Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, who led marine exploration under the Deep Ocean Mission.
- One of two new marine species ICAR-NBFGR announced in July 2026; the other is a Kakinada snake eel.

Source: ICAR-NBFGR release, 14 Jul 2026; Sureandiran et al., Zootaxa 5849(2): 227–238, 13 Jul 2026.

OTHER INVERTEBRATE

MAY 2026

Cave micro-snails

Georissa meghalayaensis; Acmella bensoni

Krem Puri and Arwah Cave (Meghalaya)

ATREE, Bengaluru · European Journal of Taxonomy

In May 2026 ATREE scientists Nipu Kumar Das and N. A. Aravind described two micro-snails from Meghalaya caves: orange-red Georissa meghalayaensis from the mouth of Krem Puri, and Acmella bensoni from inside Krem Puri and Arwah Cave.

Source: journal paper; europeanjournaloftaxonomy.eu

OTHER INVERTEBRATE

FEB 2026

Deep-sea squat lobster

Leiogalathea samudragiri

Story

Seamount off Minicoy Island (Lakshadweep)

In February 2026 CMLRE scientists described Leiogalathea samudragiri, a new deep-sea squat lobster collected at about 360 m on a seamount off Minicoy, Lakshadweep, during a Deep Ocean Mission expedition.

Source: journal paper; WoRMS

OTHER INVERTEBRATE · MAR 2026

Earthworm Drawida vazhania

Drawida vazhania

Story

Vazhani Dam area (Keralam)

In March 2026 researchers from Christ College, Irinjalakuda, and Mahatma Gandhi University described the earthworm Drawida vazhania from the Vazhani Dam area of Peechi-Vazhani Wildlife Sanctuary, Thrissur district, Kerala, in Zootaxa.

Source: journal paper; Zootaxa / Magnolia Press

OTHER INVERTEBRATE · APR 2026

Freshwater crab

Indopotamon alipurduarense

Uttar Rampur village (West Bengal)

R.K. Das (Asutosh College) & S. Mitra (ZSI) · Proc. INSA

In April 2026 Ram Krishna Das of Asutosh College and Santanu Mitra of the Zoological Survey of India described Indopotamon alipurduarense. This freshwater crab digs burrows up to 1.5 m deep in rice fields at Uttar Rampur, Alipurduar district.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters

OTHER INVERTEBRATE · JUL 2026

Freshwater shrimp

Caridina sharmai

Story

Gomti River between Kudia Ghat and… (Uttar Pradesh)

BSNV PG College & Navyug Kanya PG College, Lucknow

In July 2026 researchers from two Lucknow colleges described Caridina sharmai, a 15-24 mm freshwater shrimp from the Gomti River at Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. It is the first atyid shrimp recorded from the Gomti at Lucknow.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters

OTHER INVERTEBRATE · SEP 2026

Incomparable drawida

Drawida incomparabilis

Story

Western Ghats (Keralam / Tamil Nadu)

ZSI Kolkata, MG University Kottayam · Zootaxa

In September 2026 ZSI and Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, researchers described Drawida incomparabilis, a large Western Ghats earthworm from Keralam and Tamil Nadu, and re-collected D. loricata in Tamil Nadu 81 years after its description.

Source: journal paper; Zootaxa / Magnolia Press

OTHER INVERTEBRATE · AUG 2026

Karnataka Ghatiana crab

Ghatiana karnataka

Story

Karnataka (Karnataka)

ZSI Kolkata with Karnataka Forest Dept · Species

In August 2026 beat forester Ajmeer K and ZSI zoologist Santanu Mitra described Ghatiana karnataka, a purple freshwater crab from Mookambika Wildlife Sanctuary, Udupi district. It is the genus's 15th species, all endemic to the Western Ghats.

Source: deccanherald.com; greenminute.in

OTHER INVERTEBRATE · MAR 2026

Mangrove crab Chhapgarus ngankeeae

Chhapgarus ngankeeae

Story

Galgibag River estuary (Goa / Karnataka / Maharashtra)

In March 2026 ZSI researcher Sameer Kumar Pati described Chhapgarus ngankeeae, a new varunid mangrove crab from India's west coast, from museum specimens long misidentified; the holotype came from the Galgibag River, Goa.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters

OTHER INVERTEBRATE

MAY 2026

Marine tardigrade

Actinarctus odissi

Video

Off Markandi, Ganjam district (Odisha)

CSIR-NIO Goa; Univ. Minho · Marine Biodiversity

In May 2026 CSIR–National Institute of Oceanography scientists and a Portuguese colleague described Actinarctus odissi, a marine tardigrade from seabed sand 14 m deep off Markandi, Odisha. It is the genus's first new species since 1982.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters

OTHER INVERTEBRATE

MAR 2026

Moniligastrid earthworms

Moniligaster girishi; Drawida reynoldsi

Story

Silent Valley National Park (Keralam)

In February 2026 researchers described two new moniligastrid earthworms, Moniligaster girishi and Drawida reynoldsi, from Silent Valley National Park, Kerala, in the journal Zootaxa.

Source: journal paper; api.gbif.org

OTHER INVERTEBRATE

FEB 2026

Muddy bristle worm

Paraleocrates indica

Story

Intertidal mudflats, Champa Estuary (West Bengal)

Zoological Survey of India and Mexican researchers described Paraleocrates indica, a new bristle worm from mudflats of the Champa Estuary, West Bengal, in the Journal of Ocean University of China in 2026, the genus's first Indian record.

Source: link.springer.com; Research Matters

OTHER INVERTEBRATE

AUG 2026

Pistol shrimps, two new species

Alpheus vembanadi; Alpheus harii

Story

Cochin estuary (Vembanad backwaters) (Keralam)

CUSAT Kochi with NHM Chiba, CSIR-NIO · Crustaceana

In August 2026 researchers at Cochin University of Science and Technology, with Japanese taxonomist Tomoyuki Komai, described two snapping shrimps from the Cochin estuary in Keralam: Alpheus vembanadi and the low-salinity A. harii. Both papers appeared in Crustaceana.

Source: journal paper; ETV Bharat; WoRMS

OTHER INVERTEBRATE

FEB 2026

Sikkim two-pronged bristletail

Lepidocampa sikkimensis

Story

Near Ravangla, Namchi district, 1,680 m (Sikkim)

ZSI Kolkata · Zootaxa

A blind, wingless, soil-dwelling hexapod of the order Diplura (two-pronged bristletails). Body scales, bristle patterns and appendages separate it from relatives. It is the first dipluran described by an Indian team.

- India had 17 dipluran species, all described by foreign researchers; the new species also occurs at Kurseong, West Bengal.
- The study gives the first DNA barcodes for an Indian Lepidocampa and refound L. juradii bengalensis after nearly 50 years.

Source: PIB, 16 Feb 2026; Kar et al., Zootaxa 5741(3): 482–494, 7 Jan 2026.

OTHER INVERTEBRATE

FEB 2026

Snapping shrimp

Alpheus madhusoodanai

Story

Cochin estuary (Kochi backwaters) (Keralam)

In January 2026 researchers described Alpheus madhusoodanai, a mangrove-associated snapping shrimp from the Cochin estuary, Kerala, in the Journal of the Marine Biological Association of the UK; it was the first alpheid species described from the estuary.

Source: WoRMS; journal paper

OTHER INVERTEBRATE · MAY 2026

Snapping termite

Pseudocapritermes novus

Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary (West Bengal)

ZSI Kolkata; Univ. of Calcutta · J. Insect Biodiv. Syst.

In May 2026 Zoological Survey of India scientists described Pseudocapritermes novus, a soil-feeding snapping termite found under a fallen sal log in Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary, West Bengal. It is India's fifth Pseudocapritermes species.

Source: jibs.modares.ac.ir; Research Matters

OTHER INVERTEBRATE · OCT 2026

Springtails

Folsomia ciega; Folsomia unioculata

Story

Udhagamandalam, The Nilgiris district (Tamil Nadu)

Govt Arts College Ooty, ZSI Kolkata, Spain · Zootaxa

In October 2026 researchers from Government Arts College, Udhagamandalam, and colleagues described two springtails from the Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, in Zootaxa: the eyeless Folsomia ciega and F. unioculata, which has one eye-spot on each side.

Source: journal paper; zenodo.org

OTHER INVERTEBRATE · FEB 2026

Squat lobster

Galathea balasubramaniani

Story

Lakshadweep (Agatti lagoon per news… (Lakshadweep)

In February 2026 a team including ICAR-NBFGR scientists described Galathea balasubramaniani, a new squat lobster from Lakshadweep, in the journal Zootaxa.

Source: WoRMS; journal paper

OTHER INVERTEBRATE · OCT 2026

Three Rhysida centipedes

Rhysida quadrispinosa; Rhysida coorgensis; Rhysida neyyarensis

Story

Kozhikode and Neyyar… (Keralam / Karnataka)

ZSI WGRC & Malabar Christian College, Kozhikode · IJTIS

In October 2026 scientists from ZSI's Western Ghat Regional Centre and Malabar Christian College, Kozhikode, described three Rhysida centipedes from National Zoological Collection specimens: R. quadrispinosa (Kozhikode), R. coorgensis (Kodagu, Karnataka) and R. neyyarensis (Neyyar, Keralam).

Source: journal paper; Down To Earth; onmanorama.com

OTHER INVERTEBRATE · OCT 2026

Tilari micro-snail

Dicharax tilariensis

Story

Tilari, Kolhapur district, Maharashtra (Maharashtra)

Thackeray Wildlife Foundation · J. Conchology

In October 2026 Amrut Bhosale, Tejas Thackeray and Akshay Khandekar of the Thackeray Wildlife Foundation described Dicharax tilariensis, the Tilari micro-snail, from semi-evergreen forest at Swapnavel Point, Tilari Nagar, Kolhapur district, Maharashtra.

Source: journal paper; conchsoc.org

OTHER INVERTEBRATE · FEB 2026

Two nereidid polychaete worms

Namalycastis solenotognatha; Nereis dhritiae

Story

Intertidal mangrove and sandy-beach… (West Bengal)

Zoological Survey of India researchers described two new nereidid worms, Namalycastis solenotognatha and Nereis dhritiae, from intertidal mangrove and sandy-beach sites in Purba Medinipur, West Bengal, in Zootaxa in December 2025.

Source: Zootaxa / Magnolia Press; ETV Bharat

OTHER INVERTEBRATE

SEP 2026

Wedge clam

Deltachion ravenshaw

Story

Near the Devi estuary, Astaranga (Odisha)

Dalai, Mishra, Raut (Odisha); J. G. M. Raven · Basteria

In 2026 Sanjaya Dalai, Aparna Mishra, Hans Raven and Dipti Raut described Deltachion ravenshaw, a tiny wedge clam of the family Donacidae from sand near the Devi estuary, Odisha, in the Dutch journal Basteria.

Source: WoRMS

PLANTS

PLANT

AUG 2026

Assam ophiorrhiza

Ophiorrhiza assamensis

Story

Kamrup Metropolitan district, Assam (Assam)

Girijananda Chowdhury Univ., Guwahati · Phytotaxa

In August 2026 Selim Mehmud and Birina Bhuyan described Ophiorrhiza assamensis in Phytotaxa, a white-flowered coffee-family herb known from about 23 plants by the Sajjanpara-Satargaon road in Rani, Kamrup Metropolitan district, Assam.

Source: journal paper; phytotaxa.mapress.com; EastMojo

PLANT

SEP 2026

Begonia

Begonia rajvikramanii

Story

Rosemala, Kollam district (Keralam)

JNTBGRI Thiruvananthapuram · Phytotaxa

In September 2026 JNTBGRI botanists named Begonia rajvikramanii from Rosemala in Kollam district, Keralam. About 200 mature plants grow on wet rocky cliffs and road-cut walls at 200–350 metres. The authors assessed it Data Deficient.

Source: phytotaxa.mapress.com; The Hindu

PLANT

OCT 2026

Ceropegia

Ceropegia tamilnaduensis

Story

Nellai Wildlife Sanctuary (Tamil Nadu)

Botanical Survey of India · Kew Bulletin

In October 2026 Botanical Survey of India botanists named Ceropegia tamilnaduensis from a stream-side slope at about 380 metres in Nellai Wildlife Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu. They counted over 50 flowering plants with solitary, dark brownish-purple flowers.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters

PLANT

AUG 2026

Coastal herb

Leucas droupadiae

Story

Coastal sand dunes, Coromandel Coast (Tamil Nadu)

Annamalai Univ. & Govt Siddha Medical College · Phytotaxa

In August 2026 botanists from Annamalai University and Government Siddha Medical College described Leucas droupadiae, a 15 cm unbranched mint-family herb of coastal sand dunes in Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu. It honours President Droupadi Murmu.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters

PLANT

FEB 2026

Cobra lily

Arisaema siahaense

Story

Siaha (Saiha) district, southern Mizoram (Mizoram)

In January 2026 Botanical Survey of India botanists R. Sengupta and S.S. Dash described Arisaema siahaense, a new cobra lily from Siaha district in southern Mizoram, in the Nordic Journal of Botany.

Source: ipni.org; journal paper

PLANT

FEB 2026

Dicliptera pakhalica

Dicliptera pakhalica

Story

Pakhal Wildlife Sanctuary (Telangana)

Botanical Survey of India scientists described Dicliptera pakhalica, a new Acanthaceae herb from Pakhal Wildlife Sanctuary, Mahabubabad district, Telangana, in the journal Brittonia in January 2026.

Source: journal paper

PLANT

AUG 2026

Didymocarpus nautiyalii

Didymocarpus nautiyalii

Story

Hone, Shi-Yomi district (Arunachal Pradesh)

GBPNIHE, Sikkim Univ. & partners · Taiwania

In August 2026 GBPNIHE-led botanists described Didymocarpus nautiyalii in Taiwania. The small, rock-dwelling herb with bluish-purple flowers grows near Hone in Shi-Yomi district, Arunachal Pradesh, where only 19 flowering plants were seen.

Source: taiwania.ntu.edu.tw; ThePrint

PLANT

JAN 2026

Diplocentrum papillosum

Diplocentrum papillosum

Story

Kanthalloor–Marayoor, Idukki district (Keralam)

Researchers from SD College Alappuzha, the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation and partners described Diplocentrum papillosum, a new pink-and-white orchid from Kanthalloor in Idukki district, Kerala, in the journal Species in January 2026.

Source: onmanorama.com; journal paper

PLANT

MAY 2026

Evergreen tree

Humboldtia nairiana

Video

Cheenikkala (Keralam)

JNTBGRI Palode · J. Plant Development Sciences

In May 2026 scientists at the Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute described Humboldtia nairiana, an evergreen legume tree. Fewer than 10 mature trees grow in riverside forest in Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary, Kollam district, Keralam.

Source: jpds.co.in; jntbgri.res.in

PLANT

JUL 2026

Fern

Pteris madhusoodananii

Story

Kolli Hills (near Puliansolai shola) (Tamil Nadu)

Govt Victoria College; Sri Vyasa NSS College · Nordic J. Bot

In July 2026 Keralam botanists described Pteris madhusoodananii, a fern known from two small sites in the Kolli Hills of Tamil Nadu's Eastern Ghats, in the Nordic Journal of Botany. They proposed it be assessed Critically Endangered.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters

PLANT

JUN 2026

Five balsams

Impatiens flavispicata; Impatiens filcyii; Impatiens ninanii; Impatiens xanthopetala; Impatiens berchmansiensis

Mamalakkandam (Ernakulam district)… (Keralam)

CMS College Kottayam, SB College & TIBR · PhytoKeys

In June 2026 botanists from CMS College Kottayam, St Berchmans College and the Travancore Institute for Bioscience Research described five new balsams (Impatiens) from Idukki and Ernakulam districts in Keralam's southern Western Ghats.

Source: journal paper; phytokeys.pensoft.net

PLANT

JUL 2026

Flowering tree

Mitrephora rashmiae

Story

Between Daporijo and Taliha (Arunachal Pradesh)

Thackeray Wildlife Foundation, Mumbai · Feddes Repertorium

In July 2026 Thackeray Wildlife Foundation researchers described Mitrephora rashmiae, a custard-apple-family tree known from one seven-metre tree beside a stream near Daporijo, Upper Subansiri district, Arunachal Pradesh. It is the genus's first andromonoecious species.

Source: journal paper; deccanherald.com

PLANT

JUL 2026

Four-winged begonia

Begonia quadricornualata

Story

Senki View (Arunachal Pradesh)

BSI Howrah and Kolkata · Nordic J. Botany

In July 2026 Botanical Survey of India botanists described Begonia quadricornualata from Senki View on the edge of Itanagar Wildlife Sanctuary, Papum Pare district, Arunachal Pradesh, in the Nordic Journal of Botany. Its fruit bears four wings.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters

PLANT

JUN 2026

Ginger lily

Hedychium zubeengargianum

Story

Botanical Survey of India garden (Meghalaya)

Birjhora Mahavidyalaya + BSI Shillong · Phytotaxonomy

In June 2026 botanists from Birjhora Mahavidyalaya and the Botanical Survey of India, Shillong, described Hedychium zubeengargianum, a fragrant ginger lily named after singer Zubeen Garg, in Phytotaxonomy. It is known only from BSI's Shillong garden.

Source: journal paper; EastMojo; Northeast Now

PLANT

AUG 2026

Leopard's-bane

Doronicum sanctum

Story

On the way to Damteng (Chumi Gyatse… (Arunachal Pradesh)

CSIR-IHBT, Palampur · Biologia

In August 2026 CSIR–IHBT Palampur botanists described Doronicum sanctum, a leopard's-bane daisy collected at 4,086 m near Damteng in Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh, in Biologia. It is named for the sacred Chumi Gyatse waterfalls nearby.

Source: journal paper; ipni.org

PLANT

JAN 2026

Lepidagathis konkanensis

Lepidagathis konkanensis

Story

Lateritic plateaus (Maharashtra)

Researchers from Parulekar College and partner institutes described Lepidagathis konkanensis, a yellow-flowered herb known from under 65 sq km of lateritic plateaus in Ratnagiri district, Maharashtra, in the Nordic Journal of Botany in January 2026.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters

PLANT

MAR 2026

Osbeckia zubeengargiana

Osbeckia zubeengargiana

Story

Grasslands of Manas National Park (Assam)

In March 2026 Gauhati University botanists described Osbeckia zubeengargiana, a pink-flowered shrub from the grasslands of Manas National Park, Baksa district, Assam, in Phytotaxa, naming it after singer Zubeen Garg.

Source: journal paper; Times of India

PLANT

OCT 2026

Shidi and Pema ophiorrhizas

Ophiorrhiza shidiensis; Ophiorrhiza pemae

Story

Vijoynagar, Changlang district (Arunachal Pradesh)

Chowlu, Lalnunfeli & Sahani · Taiwania

In October 2026 Krishna Chowlu, Renthlei Lalnunfeli and Vinay Kumar Sahani described two herbs of the coffee family from Changlang district, Arunachal Pradesh: pink-flowered Ophiorrhiza shidiensis and Ophiorrhiza pemae, named after Chief Minister Pema Khandu.

Source: journal paper; taiwania.ntu.edu.tw

PLANT

SEP 2026

Singjang-kumol

Tetrataenium manipurense

Story

Manipur (Manipur)

Manipur Univ. & Mizoram Univ. · Phytotaxa

In September 2026 botanists from Manipur University and Mizoram University described Tetrataenium manipurense in the journal Phytotaxa. The aromatic herb, locally called Singjang-kumol, is already eaten in Manipuri dishes and sold in local markets.

Source: journal paper; Northeast Now

PLANT

APR 2026

Stauranthera aureoglossa

Stauranthera aureoglossa

Story

Upper Subansiri district (Arunachal Pradesh)

In April 2026 botanists described Stauranthera aureoglossa, a herb of shaded stream banks in Upper Subansiri district, Arunachal Pradesh, named for the golden tongue-like patch inside its flower, in Feddes Repertorium.

Source: journal paper

PLANT

FEB 2026

Tetrataenium paikadae

Tetrataenium paikadae

Story

Eravikulam National Park (Keralam)

In February 2026 botanists from St Joseph's College, Devagiri, described Tetrataenium paikadae, a new species of the carrot family (Apiaceae) from Eravikulam National Park, Idukki, Kerala, in the Nordic Journal of Botany.

Source: journal paper; ETV Bharat; ipni.org

PLANT

APR 2026

Wayanad sedge

Fimbristylis wayanadensis

Story

Thollayiram forest and Chembra Peak area (Keralam)

In March 2026 botanists described Fimbristylis wayanadensis, a new sedge from the Thollayiram forest and Chembra Peak area of Wayanad, Kerala, growing where rock outcrops meet high-altitude grassland up to about 1,900 m.

Source: link.springer.com; Research Matters

PLANT

JAN 2026

White parakaempferia

Parakaempferia alba

Story

Single locality on shaded stream banks (Arunachal Pradesh)

In January 2026 botanists from Pasighat, Dhubri and CSIR-NEIST described Parakaempferia alba, a new ginger from stream banks in East Siang district, Arunachal Pradesh, in the Nordic Journal of Botany.

Source: journal paper; EastMojo

PLANT

MAR 2026

Wild kiwi

Actinidia indica

Story

Near Ziro Valley (Arunachal Pradesh)

In March 2026 Botanical Survey of India botanists described Actinidia indica, a new wild kiwi from near Ziro Valley, Lower Subansiri district, Arunachal Pradesh, in the journal Feddes Repertorium.

Source: journal paper; EastMojo; assamtribune.com

PLANT

AUG 2026

Woolly-haired Osbeckia

Osbeckia ulotricha

Story

Muthukuzhivayal, Agasthyamala BR (Tamil Nadu)

BSI Southern Regional Centre, Coimbatore · Lilloa

A bushy shrub, 2–3 m tall, of damp shola and grassland edges at 1,200–1,500 m. A near-round flower base with woolly, curly hairs and an upward-haired style separate it from its relative O. yercaudensis.

- About 50 flowering plants were found at three sites within 1 sq km; the authors assess it Data Deficient.
- Named from Greek 'oulos' (woolly) and 'thrix' (hair); it flowers and fruits from February to May.

Source: Sujana et al., Lilloa 63(2): 249–259 (online 24 Aug 2026); Down To Earth, 3 Sep 2026.

FUNGI

FUNGUS

JUL 2026

Amaltas leaf-spot fungus

Hyalokamalomyces cassiae

Story

Chandraprabha Wildlife Sanctuary (Uttar Pradesh)

BHU Varanasi, NFCCI Pune · Mycological Progress

In July 2026 Banaras Hindu University mycologists described Hyalokamalomyces, a new fungal genus, in Mycological Progress. Its type species, H. cassiae, was isolated from diseased amaltas leaves in Chandraprabha Wildlife Sanctuary, Chandauli, Uttar Pradesh.

Source: journal paper; ETV Bharat

FUNGUS

AUG 2026

Brittlegill mushroom

Russula griseopurpurata

Story

Sal forests at Jirang, Ri-Bhoi district (Meghalaya / West Bengal)

Gauhati University · Phytotaxa

In August 2026 Gauhati University researchers Niranjan Roy, Pinaki Chattopadhyay, Arun Kumar Dutta and Bhaben Tanti described Russula griseopurpurata, a grey-to-purple mushroom growing under sal trees in Meghalaya and West Bengal, in Phytotaxa.

Source: journal paper; themeghalayanexpress.com

FUNGUS

OCT 2026

Endophytic fungus

Mollisia sokpayensia

Story

Jorbotay, Uttarey (Sikkim)

L. S. Singh et al. (Sikkim/Manipur) · Fungal Diversity

In October 2026 Fungal Diversity published Mollisia sokpayensia, a new fungus living inside the rhizome of the rare medicinal plant Panax sokpayensis at Uttarey, west Sikkim. Manipur microbiologist Laishram Shantikumar Singh led the team.

Source: journal paper; India Today NE

FUNGUS

SEP 2026

Fossil fungus

Vizellopsidites miocenicus

Story

Siwalik sediments, Himachal Pradesh (Himachal Pradesh)

Sidho-Kanho-Birsha Univ., Purulia · NZ J. Bot.

In September 2026 Sampa Kundu and Mahasin Ali Khan of Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University described Vizellopsidites miocenicus, a fossil leaf-surface fungus on a dicot leaf from Late Miocene (12–8 million years) Siwalik rocks of Himachal Pradesh.

Source: journal paper

FUNGUS

JUN 2026

Indian Himalayan bolete

Suillellus indohimalayanus

Kapra, Bhaderwah, Doda district (Jammu and Kashmir)

University of Jammu, BSI · Taiwania

A bolete, a mushroom with pores instead of gills, from deodar and blue pine forest at 1,865–2,462 m. Its flesh bruises blue. It is the third Suillellus recorded from India.

- Grows in clusters on soil under Cedrus deodara and Pinus wallichiana; collected in July 2023.
- Named for the Indian Himalayan region; DNA suggests unnamed Pakistani collections may belong to the same species.

Source: Rajput, Das & Sharma, Taiwania 71(3): 538–545 (online 25 Jun 2026); BSI monthly report, July 2026.

FUNGUS

JUL 2026

Polypore fungus

Microporellus kolhapurensis

Bediv, Bhudargad taluka (Ajara border) (Maharashtra)

A.R. Patil & Y.S. Patil (Rajaram College) · Nelumbo

In July 2026 Rajaram College botanists A.R. Patil and Y.S. Patil described Microporellus kolhapurensis, a stalked polypore fungus that grows from soil among tree roots at Bediv, Bhudargad taluka, Kolhapur district, Maharashtra.

Source: journal paper; nelumbo-bsi.org

FUNGUS

JUL 2026

Two script lichens of Agasthyamalai

Carbacanthographis agasthyamalana and C. kalakadensis

Shendurney WLS; Kalakad–Mundanthurai TR (Keralam / Tamil Nadu)

BSI Southern Regional Centre · Ann. Bot. Fennici

Two crust lichens growing on tree bark; a lichen is a fungus living with an alga. Both have fully blackened fruit-body walls. They raise Carbacanthographis to 62 species worldwide, eight in India.

- C. agasthyamalana: Kambakakadu, Shendurney WLS, Kollam district (Kerala), 170 m; on bark in moist mixed deciduous forest.
- C. kalakadensis: Kalakad–Muthallaru forest, KMTR, Tirunelveli district (Tamil Nadu), 606 m. Both are known from one site each.

Source: Mathew & Jagadeesh Ram, Annales Botanici Fennici 63: 177–181, 15 Jul 2026; BSI monthly report, July 2026.

LICHENS

LICHEN

SEP 2026

Button lichen

Buellia maharajensis

Story

Mathikettan Shola National Park (Keralam)

Anilkumar, Sequeira et al. · Taiwania

In September 2026 Aswathi Anilkumar, Stephen Sequeira and four colleagues described Buellia maharajensis, a rock-dwelling crust lichen from Mathikettan Shola National Park, Idukki, Keralam, in Taiwania. They also recorded two other Buellia species in Keralam for the first time.

Source: journal paper; forest.kerala.gov.in

LICHEN

MAY 2026

Script lichens

Allographa keralensis; Allographa nayakae; Allographa paraconsanguinea; Allographa persistinspersa; Allographa semicarbonisata

Western Ghats, India (Keralam)

MACS-Agharkar Research Institute, Pune · Mycol. Progress

In May 2026 MACS-Agharkar Research Institute lichenologists, with Robert Lücking of Berlin, described five new script lichens (Allographa) from the Western Ghats, using DNA from three genetic markers alongside shape and chemistry.

Source: journal paper

ALGAE AND CYANOBACTERIA

ALGA

JUL 2026

Freshwater red alga

Sheathia meghalayensis

Story

Crinoline Waterfalls stream, Shillong (Meghalaya)

Botanical Survey of India · Current Science

In July 2026 Botanical Survey of India scientists U. Elaya Perumal and M. Palanisamy described Sheathia meghalayensis, a freshwater red alga from the Crinoline Waterfalls stream in Shillong, and proposed it as Critically Endangered.

Source: journal paper; currentscience.ac.in

ALGA

MAY 2026

Green alga

Interfilum shuklaii

Video

Soil of a tropical forest in the... (Keralam)

Catholicate College, Pathanamthitta · Vegetos

In May 2026 botanists at Catholicate College, Pathanamthitta, described Interfilum shuklaii, a green alga grown from tropical forest soil in the Western Ghats of Keralam, in the journal Vegetos. It honours astronaut Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla.

Source: journal paper; vegetosindia.org

ALGA

APR 2026

Pushkar cyanobacterium

Pushkarnema curajae

Story

Pushkar Lake, Ajmer district, Rajasthan (Rajasthan)

In April 2026 Central University of Rajasthan scientists described Pushkarnema curajae in Fottea, a new genus and species of filamentous cyanobacterium isolated from Pushkar Lake in semi-arid Rajasthan.

Source: fottea.czechphycology.cz; lpsn.dsmz.de

MOSSES

MOSS

MAY 2026

Moss

Indopottia himalayensis

Story

Madhyamaheshwar area (Uttarakhand)

Botanical Survey of India · Phytotaxa

In May 2026 Botanical Survey of India botanists described Indopottia himalayensis, a moss on moist soil over rock near Madhyamaheshwar, Uttarakhand, in Phytotaxa. It is the genus's third species and its first Himalayan record.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters; gbif.org

BACTERIA AND PROTISTS

MICROBE

JUN 2026

Bacterium

Brachybacterium netajii

Story

Water of the river Ganga... (West Bengal)

Univ. of Burdwan with IIT (BHU), Hiroshima · Sci. Rep.

In June 2026 researchers from the University of Burdwan, Netaji Mahavidyalaya, IIT (BHU) and Hiroshima University described Brachybacterium netajii, a bacterium from Ganga (Hooghly) water in West Bengal that breaks down the pollutant p-nitrophenol. It honours Subhas Chandra Bose.

Source: journal paper; europepmc.org

MICROBE

JUL 2026

Bacterium

Microbacterium pollutisoli

Story

HCH pesticide dumpsite, Ummari village (Uttar Pradesh)

University of Delhi and CSIR-IMTECH · Scientific Reports

In July 2026 University of Delhi and CSIR-IMTECH scientists described Microbacterium pollutisoli, a bacterium isolated from hexachlorocyclohexane-contaminated soil at a pesticide dumpsite in Ummari village, Uttar Pradesh.

Source: journal paper

MICROBE

JAN 2026

Foraminifer

Portatrochammina bharatensis

Jaitapur Creek, Ratnagiri district (Maharashtra)

Agharkar Research Institute, Pune · Micropaleontology

In January 2026 Tushar Kaushik's team at Agharkar Research Institute, Pune, described Portatrochammina bharatensis, a single-celled foraminifer that builds its shell from quartz grains, from sediments of Jaitapur Creek in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra.

Source: journal paper; WoRMS; Research Matters

MICROBE

JUL 2026

Soil bacterium

Micromonospora shyamaprasadii

Story

Mulberry rhizosphere; Raiganj University (West Bengal)

Raiganj University · SeqCode Registry

In July 2026 Raiganj University scientists in West Bengal named a new bacterium from mulberry root soil Micromonospora shyamaprasadii and registered it with SeqCode. It honours Syama Prasad Mookerjee on his 125th birth anniversary.

Source: Times of India; registry.seqco.de

FOSSIL SPECIES

FOSSIL

JUL 2026

Long-necked dinosaur

Ceratocaudia antiqua

Kachchh Basin, Gujarat (Gujarat)

IIT Bombay · J. Vertebr. Paleontol.

In July 2026 IIT Bombay palaeontologists named Ceratocaudia antiqua, a 7-metre Jurassic sauropod from the Kaladongar Formation of Kachchh, Gujarat. A horn-like crest on a tail vertebra gave the name; it is India's earliest diagnosable macronarian.

Source: journal paper; sci.news; groups.google.com

More species in the news

JANUARY 2026 – OCTOBER 2026 · 321 STORIES FROM OUR DAILY NEWS

SIGHTINGS AND FIRST RECORDS

Arakan snapper *Lutjanus arakan*

Odisha

MAY 2026 In May 2026 scientists of ZSI's Estuarine Biology Regional Centre, Gopalpur, and Fakir Mohan University reported the Arakan snapper from India for the first time in Zootaxa, from a fish landed off Gopalpur, Odisha.

Source: journal paper

Asian woolly-necked stork

Ciconia episcopus Near Threatened

Tamil Nadu

Story

APR 2026 In April 2026 a birdwatcher spotted the woolly-necked stork in paddy fields near Vannarapettai village, Thanjavur district, Tamil Nadu, and the Endangered Wildlife and Environmental Trust documented the sighting with photographs.

Source: Times of India; dailythanthi.com

Black-headed ibis

Threskiornis melanocephalus Least Concern

Keralam

Story

SEP 2026 In September 2026 flocks of black-headed ibis fed in the freshly ploughed Pallar paddy fields at Tirunavaya, Malappuram district, Keralam. Breeding in these wetlands was first documented in 2022; local birders report no nests since 2025.

Source: The Hindu; Journal of Threatened Taxa; stateofindiasbirds.in; onmanorama.com

Blue-and-white flycatcher

Cyanoptila cyanomelana Least Concern

Gujarat

Story

MAR 2026 On 8 March 2026 birdwatchers saw a male blue-and-white flycatcher on Pavagadh Hill, Gujarat. The songbird breeds in Japan, Korea and north-east Asia, winters in South-East Asia and seldom reaches India.

Source: Clarity UPSC daily news, 11 Mar 2026

Caspian cobra *Naja oxiana*

Near Threatened

Himachal Pradesh

Story

JUL 2026 In July 2026 Himachal Pradesh's Forest Department confirmed a Caspian cobra filmed by forest guard Gajendra Verma on a routine patrol in the Upper Forest Range of Chamba district. The Central Asian species is rarely recorded in the Himalaya.

SEP 2026 In September 2026 a study in Epidemiology International led by Dr Omesh Kumar Bharti documented India's first recorded deaths from Caspian cobra bites: two men in Chamba district, Himachal Pradesh, bitten in July 2020 and July 2021.

Source: ETV Bharat; himachaldastak.com; The Tribune; gbif.org

Colletid bee *Colletes bhutanicus*

Arunachal Pradesh

Story

AUG 2026 In August 2026 Zoological Survey of India scientists reported Colletes bhutanicus, a colletid bee described from Bhutan in 2003, from Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh. It is the species' first record in India.

Source: journal paper; thehindubusinessline.com

Common bronzeback tree snake

Dendrelaphis tristis Least Concern

Uttar Pradesh

MAY 2026 In May 2026 Nazirun Nisha, a wildlife monitor in Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, Uttar Pradesh, photographed a common bronzeback, a slender non-venomous tree snake, in the Belrayan range after a bird survey. Officials called it a rare record for the reserve.

Source: ETV Bharat; gbif.org

Coppersmith barbet

Psilopogon haemacephalus Least Concern

Telangana

Story

SEP 2026 On 27 September 2026 birdwatchers Joydeep Vasudeva and Dhaval Joshi photographed a cream-yellow coppersmith barbet feeding on wild figs in north Hyderabad, possibly Telangana's first record of this colour form.

Source: newindianexpress.com

Cordyceps fungus *Cordyceps sp.*

Arunachal Pradesh

MAY 2026 In May 2026 a mushroom-survey team led by Dr Senpon Ngomle of the College of Agriculture, Pasighat (Central Agricultural University) reported a Cordyceps fungus at unusually low altitude in East Siang district, Arunachal Pradesh. The species is not yet identified.

Source: EastMojo

Dhole *Cuon alpinus* Endangered

Madhya Pradesh / Maharashtra

Story

JAN 2026 In January 2026 Forest Department camera traps set for tiger estimation recorded dholes at about four locations in Ratapani Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh; officials described it as the species' first sighting in the reserve.

JUL 2026 In July 2026 an NCBS–Maharashtra Forest Department study in Environmental DNA, using DNA from dhole scat collected in 2022–23, showed that dholes in Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve eat mainly chital, sambar and wild pig; livestock was a negligible share.

Source: ETV Bharat; Free Press Journal; Mongabay India

Dusky eagle-owl *Ketupa coromanda*

Least Concern

Uttarakhand

Story

MAR 2026 Around 1 March 2026 naturalist Himanshu Tiruva photographed a pair of dusky eagle-owls in the Phato zone of Terai West forest division, beside Corbett Tiger Reserve, Uttarakhand; he said the species was last recorded there about 15 years earlier.

Source: kaleidonews.com; x.com; newindianexpress.com

Eastern grass owl *Tyto longimembris*

Least Concern

Assam

Story

JUL 2026 In July 2026 birdwatchers reported a rare eastern grass owl, also called the Australian grass owl, at Maguri-Motapung Beel beside Dibru-Saikhowa National Park in Tinsukia district, Assam.

Source: India Today NE; indianbirds.in; gbif.org

Eastern imperial eagle *Aquila heliaca*

Vulnerable

Tamil Nadu

Story

JAN 2026 In December 2025 The Hindu reported that photographer Murali Moorthy had recorded a pair of eastern imperial eagles in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, where eBird shows the species wintering regularly since 2020.

Source: The Hindu

Eurasian otter *Lutra lutra* Near Threatened

Jammu and Kashmir

Story

FEB 2026 In late January 2026 a Forest Department range officer photographed a Eurasian otter in the Sindh River near Gutlibagh, Ganderbal district, Kashmir, the first direct photographic record of the species from the Sindh Nallah.

Source: greaterkashmir.com; Down To Earth

Eurasian whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Least Concern

Keralam

Story

SEP 2026 In September 2026 a Eurasian whimbrel photographed at Elathur beach, Kozhikode, carried BNHS flag 0J3. BNHS had ringed it at Kadalundi-Vallikkunnu Community Reserve, about 20 km away, on 29 January 2020. It was the bird's first resighting.

Source: The Hindu

European bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

Least Concern

Tamil Nadu

Story

OCT 2026 In October 2026 birders photographed a juvenile European bee-eater at the Adyar estuary by Broken Bridge, Chennai. Local birders called it the city's first known record. The species winters mainly in Africa, with small numbers in southern India.

Source: Times of India; gbif.org

Ferruginous duck *Aythya nyroca*

Near Threatened

Tamil Nadu

Story

FEB 2026 On 14 February 2026 three Chennai birders photographed a female ferruginous pochard among common pochards at Amoor lake, Chengalpattu district, Tamil Nadu; it was the Chennai Metropolitan Area's second record, after Pallikaranai marsh in 2023.

Source: The Hindu

Forest owlet *Athene blewitti* Endangered

Madhya Pradesh

Story

MAR 2026 In February 2026 tourism operator Labh Yadav spotted an endangered forest owlet in the Parond beat of Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh; Vivek Patel of the Wildlife Research and Conservation Society confirmed it, the park's first authenticated record.

Source: The Tribune; thehitavada.com; Deccan Chronicle

Fulvous whistling duck

Dendrocygna bicolor Least Concern

Keralam

Story

SEP 2026 In early September 2026 more than 30 fulvous whistling ducks were recorded at the Ambalpadam wetlands in Cherumukku, Malappuram district, Keralam, where the species is seldom reported.

Source: Clarity UPSC daily news, 3 Sep 2026

Giri's geckoella *Cyrtodactylus varadgiri*

Least Concern

Maharashtra

MAY 2026 In May 2026 naturalists reported Giri's geckoella, a ground-dwelling gecko described in 2016 and seldom seen under leaf litter, in Mumbai's Aarey forest, Maharashtra.

Source: Clarity UPSC daily news, 11 May 2026

Golden puffball *Bovista colorata*

Arunachal Pradesh

Story

JUN 2026 On 4 June 2026 Dr Deep Narayan Mishra of ICAR's Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Longding, found a bright yellow puffball in Zedua village, Longding district, Arunachal Pradesh. It was tentatively identified as Bovista colorata, pending microscopic and DNA tests.

Source: India Today NE; gbif.org

Great cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Least Concern

Telangana

Story

SEP 2026 On 20 September 2026 Hyderabad-born, Canada-based birder Raghuvamsh Chavali photographed a leucistic great cormorant, almost white among dark cormorants, at Ameenpur Lake near BHEL, Hyderabad. He found few such records from India.

Source: telanganatoday.com

Greater flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*

Least Concern

Tamil Nadu

Story

OCT 2026 On 25 October 2026 researchers led by J. Pandiyan of AVC College, Mayiladuthurai, recorded 18 greater flamingos at Veeranam Lake, Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu, an unusual inland site for a bird of coastal wetlands.

Source: Clarity UPSC daily news, 27 Oct 2026

Greater sand plover

Anarhynchus leschenaultii Least Concern

Haryana

Story

JUL 2026 In July 2026 birders Anil Gandas and Gaurav Yadav photographed a greater sand plover at Chandu village, Gurugram, Haryana. It was the fifth documented record of this mainly coastal shorebird in the region.

Source: Times of India

Green keelback *Rhabdophis plumbicolor*

Least Concern

Karnataka

Story

OCT 2026 In October 2026 local snake experts identified a green keelback found at Gangawadi village, Yelandur taluk, near the Biligiri Ranganatha hills in Chamarajanagar district, Karnataka, and released it into the forest. The frog-eating snake occurs across peninsular India.

Source: deccanherald.com; reptile-database.reptarium.cz; journal paper; onmanorama.com

Henckelia monophylla

Henckelia monophylla

Arunachal Pradesh

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 Botanical Survey of India scientists rediscovered Henckelia monophylla, a gesneriad endemic to Arunachal Pradesh, in Lohit district, its first record in about 189 years.

Source: journal paper; deccanherald.com

Himalayan griffon *Gyps himalayensis*

Near Threatened

Maharashtra

Story

FEB 2026 In early February 2026 a wild Himalayan griffon was seen feeding and socialising in Melghat Tiger Reserve with 15 captive-bred long-billed vultures that BNHS and the Maharashtra Forest Department had released on 2 January 2026.

Source: Free Press Journal; bnhs.org

Himalayan serow

Capricornis sumatraensis thar Vulnerable

Himachal Pradesh

Story

AUG 2026 On 2 August 2026 forest staff on patrol filmed a Himalayan serow in the Dalhousie catchment forests next to Kalatop-Khajjiar Wildlife Sanctuary, Chamba, Himachal Pradesh. It was the division's first documented record in nearly two decades.

Source: Times of India

Himalayan tricarinate hill turtle

Melanochelys tricarinata Endangered

Chhattisgarh

MAY 2026 In May 2026 Chhattisgarh forest officials reported that the tricarinate hill turtle, a Himalayan-foothill species, is now recorded regularly in Udanti-Sitanadi Tiger Reserve. It was first photographed there in 2016 and published as the state's first record in 2021.

Source: Times of India; dispatchnews.in; zoosprint.org

Hog deer *Axis porcinus* Endangered

Assam

Story

MAY 2026 In May 2026 Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma shared a video of a rare albino hog deer in Kaziranga National Park. Albinism removes the melanin pigment, so the white deer stands out to predators.

Source: Indian Express

Honey badger *Mellivora capensis*

Least Concern

Madhya Pradesh

Story

APR 2026 In April 2026 the Dewas forest division confirmed honey badgers in Kheoni Wildlife Sanctuary, Madhya Pradesh, after CCTV cameras installed deep in the forest recorded a pair.

Source: Times of India

Indian giant flying squirrel

Petaurista philippensis Least Concern

Uttarakhand

JUL 2026 In July 2026 forest rescuers of the Kosi Range, Ramnagar Forest Division, took an Indian giant flying squirrel from a house in Teda village near Corbett, Uttarakhand. Department records put the area's last sighting in 2014.

Source: ETV Bharat; pioneeredge.in

Indian giant squirrel *Ratufa indica*

Least Concern

Maharashtra / Chhattisgarh

Story

JAN 2026 On 5 January 2026 forest staff recorded an Indian giant squirrel on a transect near Tiger Point at Aatvan, Lonavala, Pune Forest Division, Maharashtra, during the All India Tiger Estimation 2026 survey.

MAY 2026 From 5 to 25 May 2026 the Maharashtra Forest Department counted Indian giant squirrels in Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary, Pune district, guided by IISc ecologist Renee Borges. Two-person teams logged sightings and nests. The 2023 count estimated about 2,500.

MAY 2026 In May 2026 a nature enthusiast on a Balodabazar forest division summer camp trail recorded an Indian giant squirrel in the Devpur forest near Barnawapara, Chhattisgarh, far from the Western Ghats.

Source: mypunepulse.com; mid-day.com; Times of India; gbif.org

Indian peafowl *Pavo cristatus*

Least Concern

Assam

Story

SEP 2026 In September 2026 Assam Forest Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah announced the first official record of the Indian peafowl in Orang National Park and Tiger Reserve, photographed by Nejib Ahmed and Chandan Saikia after staff sightings near Rowmari and Hazaribagh camps.

Source: Northeast Now; hubnetwork.in

Kashmir flycatcher *Ficedula subrubra*

Vulnerable

Keralam

Video

MAY 2026 In May 2026 birdwatchers recorded a Kashmir flycatcher at the Chemmattam Vayal wetlands, Kasaragod district, Keralam, one of the first records in northern Keralam. The Vulnerable songbird breeds in the north-western Himalayas.

Source: Clarity UPSC daily news, 20 May 2026

Knob-billed duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*

Least Concern

Himachal Pradesh

JUN 2026 In June 2026 Forest Department birdwatcher Ankush Dhiman recorded a lone knob-billed duck in the Sathana area of Pong Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, Kangra, Himachal Pradesh. It was the first record at the wetland and the second in the state.

Source: The Tribune

Laudankia vine snake

Ahaetulla laudankia Least Concern

Rajasthan

Story

JUL 2026 On 12 July 2026 wildlife photographer Rohit Dwivedi photographed a Laudankia vine snake in the Ubeshwar wildlife area near Udaipur, Rajasthan, the area's first documented record of the species in nearly 30 years.

Source: Times of India; reptile-database.reptarium.cz

Marine amphipod Stenothoe lowryi

Stenothoe lowryi

Odisha

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 Berhampur University researchers reported the amphipod Stenothoe lowryi, earlier known only from Malaysia, from the rocky shore at Arjyapalli, Ganjam district, Odisha, its first record in Indian waters.

Source: journal paper; Times of India

Mishmi takin *Budorcas taxicolor taxicolor*

Vulnerable

Sikkim

Video

JUN 2026 In June 2026 Sikkim's forest department released patrol footage of a herd of eight Mishmi takins in the Bakuchen area of Tingda Reserve Forest, North Sikkim, the largest group recorded there.

Source: ThePrint; India Today NE

Mondo grass *Ophiopogon japonicus*

Arunachal Pradesh

Story

AUG 2026 In August 2026 botanists reported Ophiopogon japonicus, the East Asian mondo grass of the asparagus family, as a new record for India in Discover Plants, from a shaded forest edge near Shergaon, West Kameng district, Arunachal Pradesh.

Source: journal paper; gbif.org

Orchid Eulophia picta *Eulophia picta*

Andhra Pradesh

Story

APR 2026 In April 2026 botanists reported the terrestrial orchid Eulophia picta from Kondapalli Reserve Forest in the Eastern Ghats near Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, the species' first record in central Andhra Pradesh.

Source: The Hans India

Painted leopard gecko

Eublepharis pictus

Chhattisgarh

Story

APR 2026 In April 2026 forest staff rescued and released a gecko found at Dilmili railway station, Bastar district, Chhattisgarh, that experts provisionally identified as a painted leopard gecko, a species described from the Eastern Ghats in 2022.

Source: ETV Bharat; evolsyst.pensoft.net

Pygmy grasshoppers

Kerala

Story

FEB 2026 In January 2026 Christ College, Irinjalakuda, researchers reported 12 pygmy grasshopper species from Kerala's Kole wetlands in the Journal of Orthoptera Research; four were new records for Kerala, and two genera were new to the state.

Source: journal paper; natureinitiative.blogspot.com

Rakhine keelback; Kachin Hills keelback

Herpetoreas davidi; Hebius gilhodesi

Mizoram / Arunachal Pradesh

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 Wildlife Institute of India researchers reported the Rakhine keelback from Ngengpui Wildlife Sanctuary, Mizoram, and the Kachin Hills keelback from Namdapha and Kamlang tiger reserves, Arunachal Pradesh, both first records for India.

Source: Journal of Threatened Taxa

Red-headed vulture *Sarcogyps calvus*

Critically Endangered

Uttarakhand

Story

OCT 2026 In October 2026 members of the Monal birdwatching group photographed and filmed a red-headed vulture at Patal Thaur, about 2,650 metres up, below Balati Band above Munsiyari in Pithoragarh district, Uttarakhand.

Source: newindianexpress.com; gbif.org

Red-necked falcon *Falco chicquera*

Near Threatened

Telangana

Story

MAY 2026 In May 2026 wildlife researcher Venkat Anagandhula photographed a red-necked falcon during a field survey in the Kothapet forests of the Indanpalli range, Kawal Tiger Reserve, Mancherial district, Telangana. He called it a significant record.

Source: telanganatoday.com

Red-necked phalarope

Phalaropus lobatus Least Concern

Haryana

Story

MAY 2026 In May 2026 a red-necked phalarope, an Arctic-breeding shorebird, stayed for about a week at the Chandu Budhera wetland near Gurugram, Haryana. Indian records are mostly coastal; Delhi-NCR's previous inland sighting was at the same wetland in 2022.

Source: Hindustan Times

Rusty-spotted cat

Prionailurus rubiginosus Near Threatened

Rajasthan / Haryana

Story

JAN 2026 In January 2026 a forest camera trap in Shergarh Sanctuary, Baran district, Rajasthan, recorded a rusty-spotted cat, the first live record of the species in the Hadoti region.

MAY 2026 In May 2026 Indira Gandhi University zoologists reported in Zoo's Print a female rusty-spotted cat with her kitten, photographed in July 2025 near Kot village, Faridabad district, Haryana. It is the first breeding record from the Aravallis near Delhi.

Source: ETV Bharat; catsg.org; The Hindu; Indian Express

Sambar *Rusa unicolor* Vulnerable

Himachal Pradesh

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department reported the first camera-trap records of sambar in the high-altitude Kalatop-Khajjiar (above 2,500 m) and Gamgul (above 3,000 m) wildlife sanctuaries of Chamba district.

Source: The Tribune

Sanderling *Calidris alba* Least Concern

Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Story

APR 2026 In June 2025 an Andaman Police officer photographed on Narcondam Island a sanderling flagged at Brown Bay, South Australia, on 13 April 2025, 7,472 km away; the record was reported in April 2026.

Source: The Tribune

Schokari sand racer

Psammophis schokari Least Concern

Gujarat

Story

SEP 2026 In September 2026 Gujarat forest staff photographed a Schokari sand racer near Kala Dungar in Kutch. Officials linked it to a Kutch record from Ferdinand Stoliczka's 1872 survey; the snake ranges from North Africa to north-western India.

Source: Indian Express; reptile-database.reptarium.cz; journal paper

Sea slug Discodoris cebuensis

Discodoris cebuensis

Maharashtra

Story

APR 2026 On 21 April 2026 naturalists photographed the dorid sea slug Discodoris cebuensis in an intertidal pool on the rocky shore at Haji Ali, Mumbai, the species' first record from the Indian coast.

Source: oldisrj.lbp.world; marineinfo.org; WoRMS

Shaheen falcon

Falco peregrinus peregrinator Least Concern

Keralam

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 The Hindu reported a pair of Shaheen falcons nesting in an under-construction residential building in Kochi, Keralam. This resident peregrine subspecies usually lives on rocky hills and is rare in Keralam.

Source: The Hindu (Kochi), 20 Mar 2026

Sharp-tailed sandpiper

Calidris acuminata Vulnerable

Haryana

Story

AUG 2026 On 30 August 2026 birder Akshit Dua photographed a sharp-tailed sandpiper, a Vulnerable wader that breeds in the Russian tundra, in fields at Chandu village near Najafgarh Jheel, Gurugram, Haryana. It was Delhi-NCR's first record since September 2019.

Source: Times of India; gbif.org

Sirkeer malkoha *Taccocua leschenaultii*

Least Concern

Uttarakhand

Story

JAN 2026 In December 2025 forest staff photographed a sirkeer malkoha near Barkot in Uttarkashi district, Uttarakhand, the first record of this lowland scrub cuckoo in the district.

Source: Hindusthan Samachar

Sistan sand boa *Eryx sistanensis*

Rajasthan

Video Story

MAY 2026 In May 2026 Vivek Sharma and Dharmendra Khandal of Tiger Watch reported three live Sistan sand boas from the northern Thar Desert of Rajasthan in the Journal of Threatened Taxa. It is India's first record of the species.

Source: journal paper; Mongabay India

Smew *Mergellus albellus* Least Concern

Assam

Story

FEB 2026 In January 2026 Kaziranga's seventh waterbird count, held from 4 to 11 January, recorded the park's first documented smew among 105,540 waterbirds of 107 species.

JAN 2026 In January 2026, during the Kaziranga waterbird count, surveyors photographed a smew, a small diving duck of northern Eurasia, at Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary in Nagaon district, Assam. Officials called it the sanctuary's first record.

Source: EastMojo; newsarenaindia.com; inaturalist.org; gbif.org

Smooth-coated otter

Lutrogale perspicillata Vulnerable

Uttarakhand / Tamil Nadu

Story

FEB 2026 In February 2026 Uttarakhand's forest department reported smooth-coated otters in Nandhaur Wildlife Sanctuary, recorded by camera traps and patrol teams; a 2025 Journal of Threatened Taxa paper had already published the first photographs there.

JUL 2026 In July 2026 a survey reported a significant smooth-coated otter population along the Mettur dam reservoir and Kaveri river stretches of Salem district, Tamil Nadu, where local fishers and residents put their number above 1,000.

Source: thebetterindia.com; Journal of Threatened Taxa; Mongabay India; gbif.org

Snow leopard *Panthera uncia* Vulnerable

see page 45

Ladakh / Himachal Pradesh

Story

FEB 2026 On 1 February 2026 the Border Roads Organisation shared a video, credited to its Project Himank, of three snow leopards moving together through deep snow in Ladakh.

Source: odishatv.in; The Tribune

Spoon-tailed duskhawker

Gynacantha basiguttata Least Concern

Arunachal Pradesh

Story

AUG 2026 In August 2026 a Journal of Threatened Taxa paper gave India's first record of the spoon-tailed duskhawker, a dragonfly. A male photographed on 16 October 2024 in Namdapha, first labelled another species, was reassigned to Gynacantha basiguttata.

Source: journal paper; Journal of Threatened Taxa; Times of India

Spot-bellied eagle-owl *Bubo nipalensis*

Least Concern

Uttarakhand / Keralam

Story

FEB 2026 In February 2026 a video of a spot-bellied eagle-owl recorded in the Jim Corbett National Park landscape near Ramnagar, Uttarakhand, was shared by PTI and drew wide attention as a rare sighting.

OCT 2026 In October 2026 birder Sunil Titto and guide Sudheesh A. photographed a spot-bellied eagle-owl at Janakikadu, beside the Kuttiyadi River in Kozhikode. It is the district's first verified photographic record of this large nocturnal forest owl.

Source: odishatv.in; latestly.com; newindianexpress.com; journal paper

Thread-legged assassin bug Myiophanes kempi

Myiophanes kempi

Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 SACON researchers reported the thread-legged assassin bug Myiophanes kempi from Baratang caves, Andaman Islands, its first record since its 1924 description from Siju Cave, Meghalaya, and over 1,000 km from there.

Source: journal paper; Mongabay India

Tibetan schizothoracine fish

Schizopygopsis waddellii Least Concern

Arunachal Pradesh

SEP 2026 In September 2026 ICAR-Central Institute of Coldwater Fisheries Research reported Schizopygopsis waddellii, a Tibetan carp-family fish, from a lake at about 3,900 m in Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh: its first record in India. Specimens were collected in July.

Source: sentinelassam.com; gbif.org

Wild blueberry relative *Vaccinium piliferum*

Endangered

Arunachal Pradesh

MAY 2026 In May 2026 researchers from SEED, Changlang, and CSIR-NEIST reported in Feddes Repertorium the rediscovery of Vaccinium piliferum, an Endangered blueberry relative, at Vijoynagar, Changlang district, Arunachal Pradesh, 188 years after William Griffith collected it in 1836.

Source: journal paper; Northeast Now

Yellow-throated marten

Martes flavigula Least Concern

Assam

Story

JUN 2026 In June 2026 Assam's Chief Minister's Office announced that a yellow-throated marten, a golden-throated predator of the weasel family, had been sighted in Kaziranga National Park. The Times of India reported it as new to the park.

Source: Times of India; gbif.org

SURVEYS AND COUNTS

Birds

Gujarat / Delhi / Keralam

Story

FEB 2026 Gujarat's 2026 bird census at Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary, a Ramsar site near Ahmedabad, recorded about 6.42 lakh birds of 270 species, the Forest Department reported in February 2026.

AUG 2026 In August 2026 a monsoon survey by the Thiruvananthapuram Wildlife Division and the birdwatching collective Warblers and Waders recorded 124 bird species in Peppara Wildlife Sanctuary, Keralam, including nesting broad-tailed grassbirds.

JUN 2026 In June 2026 a study in Environmental Monitoring and Assessment found that among 15 habitats in Delhi's Asola-Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary, abandoned mines and deep lakes held the richest bird communities. Surveyors recorded 130 species in 2024.

Source: tennews.in; journal paper; newindianexpress.com; onmanorama.com

Birds of Silent Valley National Park

Kerala

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 a Kerala Forest Department and Malabar Natural History Society survey recorded 192 bird species in Silent Valley National Park, including the park's first records of Asian and Western house martins.

Source: onmanorama.com; Times of India

Butterflies

Assam

Story

JUL 2026 In July 2026 naturalist Sarangapani Neog's second edition of 'Butterflies of Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary' listed 281 butterfly species from Hoollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary, a 20.98 sq km forest island in Jorhat district, Assam.

Source: assamtribune.com

Butterflies and moths, 13,703 species

Story

JUL 2026 In July 2026 Rahul Joshi and Navneet Singh of the Zoological Survey of India, Solan, published a Zootaxa monograph cataloguing 1,689 Lepidoptera species. It puts India's butterflies and moths at 13,703 species in 102 families.

Source: journal paper

Dragonflies and damselflies

Gujarat / Maharashtra / Goa / Karnataka / Keralam

APR 2026 In April 2026 researchers published the first Ghats-wide survey of dragonflies and damselflies in Biology Bulletin Reviews. At 144 sites in five states in 2021–23 they recorded 143 species, about 65 per cent of the 222 known.

Source: journal paper

Fauna of Megamalai Wildlife Sanctuary

Tamil Nadu

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 the Zoological Survey of India published its 2018-2022 faunal survey of Megamalai Wildlife Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu, recording 977 species, including nine new to science such as the jumping spider Stenaelurillus megamalai.

Source: Times of India

Fishing cat *Prionailurus viverrinus*

Vulnerable

Assam

Story

FEB 2026 On 22 February 2026 Kaziranga's Tiger Cell and Fishing Cat Project scientist Tiasa Adhya released the park's first fishing cat assessment, identifying at least 57 individuals in tiger-estimation camera-trap images across more than 450 km^2.

Source: Down To Earth; EastMojo; Mongabay India

Gaur *Bos gaurus* Vulnerable

Odisha / Keralam

Story

JAN 2026 In January 2026 a three-day census counted 848 gaur in 69 herds in Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Odisha, up from 788 in May 2025 and 659 in the first census in November 2024.

MAY 2026 In May 2026 a gaur strayed about 13.5 km from forest into towns around Thalassery in Kannur district, Keralam. Forest staff darted it at Eranholi and on 10 May released it in the Tholpetty range of Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary.

JUN 2026 In June 2026 Odisha's wildlife wing put on hold a plan to move about 10 gaur from Debrigarh to Chandaka-Dampara Wildlife Sanctuary near Bhubaneswar, because cattle and human pressure around Chandaka could spread disease to the animals.

Source: OrissaPOST; odishabytes.com; thestatesman.com; ommcomnews.com

Gharial *Gavialis gangeticus*

Critically Endangered see page 20

Madhya Pradesh / Rajasthan / Uttar Pradesh / Bihar

Story

JAN 2026 In January 2026 a Wildlife Institute of India survey report recorded 3,037 gharials in the Ganga basin from boat counts made between November 2020 and March 2023, with the Chambal holding the most.

JAN 2026 A February 2026 estimate put the Gandak River's gharial population in Bihar at a minimum of 433, up from 372 counted in 2025; the Wildlife Trust of India called it the world's second-largest gharial population.

JUN 2026 In June 2026 Bihar's forest department and the Wildlife Trust of India returned 154 gharial hatchlings from six nests to the Gandak River, starting with 31 from a nest at Dhanaha, West Champaran, on 6 June.

Source: Mongabay India; uttarakhandnews24.com; wti.org.in; The Week

Greater hog badger

Arctonyx collaris Vulnerable

Assam

Video Story

JUN 2026 In June 2026 Kaziranga's Tiger Cell, with the Wildlife Conservation Trust and The Fishing Cat Project, published the park's first assessment of the greater hog badger. Tiger-survey camera traps showed at least 55 over 1,100 sq km.

Source: Mongabay India; India Today NE

Irrawaddy dolphin *Orcaella brevirostris*

Endangered see page 35

West Bengal / Odisha

Story

JAN 2026 On 17 January 2026 India began its second range-wide survey of river and estuarine dolphins under Project Dolphin from Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh; it adds Irrawaddy dolphin estimation in the Sundarbans and Odisha.

Source: All India Radio; ThePrint

Jungle cat *Felis chaus* Least Concern

Madhya Pradesh / Rajasthan / Odisha / Chhattisgarh / Maharashtra / Gujarat

Story

MAR 2026 In February 2026 a Scientific Reports study by University of Wyoming and Wildlife Institute of India researchers mapped the jungle cat across India from over 26,000 camera-trap locations, finding it favours semi-arid open landscapes, often outside protected areas.

Source: journal paper; Mongabay India

Leopard *Panthera pardus* Vulnerable

see page 45

Odisha / Karnataka / Chandigarh / Rajasthan / West Bengal

Story

JAN 2026 On 28 January 2026 The Times of India reported that recent surveys had recorded more than 70 leopards in Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuary, Nuapada district, Odisha, a former Maoist stronghold.

FEB 2026 In February 2026 photographs by wildlife photographer Arvind Karthik of a black (melanistic) leopard and a spotted leopard drinking side by side in the backwaters of Bhadra Tiger Reserve, Karnataka, went viral.

APR 2026 A Wildlife Institute of India camera-trap survey of Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary, Chandigarh, on 20–27 November 2025 identified two adult male leopards; in April 2026 Chandigarh's forest chief said leopards had made the sanctuary their permanent home.

AUG 2026 In August 2026 a melanistic, almost black leopard cub was photographed near Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary in the Darjeeling hills, West Bengal. Its rosettes can still show in suitable light.

OCT 2026 In October 2026 a WWF-India and Rajasthan Forest Department report on Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary, Karauli, identified 29 leopards (3.65 per 100 sq km) from 2023–24 camera traps and recorded three adult tigers and eight cubs over five years.

Source: Times of India; business-standard.com; Free Press Journal; digitalcameraworld.com; Clarity UPSC daily news, 20 Aug 2026

Lion-tailed macaque *Macaca silenus*

Endangered

see page 42

Story

Tamil Nadu

FEB 2026 In February 2026 a Journal for Nature Conservation study of four decades of monitoring in the Anamalai Hills reported that lion-tailed macaque troops have persisted in fragmented forests, with group numbers rising in some plantation landscapes.

Source: journal paper; Down To Earth

Migratory waterbirds

Story

Odisha

JAN 2026 In January 2026 the annual winter bird census in Bhitarkanika National Park, Kendrapara district, Odisha, counted 1,52,762 birds of 106 species, against 1,51,614 birds of 118 species in 2025.

Source: ThePrint; sambadenglish.com

Nilgiri tahr *Nilgiritragus hylocrius*

Endangered

see page 31

Story

Tamil Nadu / Kerala

APR 2026 In late April 2026 Tamil Nadu, with Kerala's forest department, held the third synchronised Nilgiri tahr survey across 177 blocks in 14 forest divisions; results released in June counted 1,364 tahr in Tamil Nadu.

Source: DT Next; Deccan Chronicle

Resplendent shrub frog

Raorchestes resplendens Endangered

Story

Keralam

SEP 2026 A Munnar Wildlife Division survey on 3–6 September 2026 logged 1,938 encounters with the Endangered resplendent shrub frog in Eravikulam National Park, among 54 amphibian and 52 reptile species recorded across five protected areas.

Source: The Hindu; thenewsminute.com

Saltwater crocodile *Crocodylus porosus*

Least Concern

see page 60

Story

Odisha

JAN 2026 In January 2026 Odisha's annual census, held from 8 to 10 January, counted 1,858 saltwater crocodiles in and around Bhitarkanika National Park, 32 more than the 1,826 counted in 2025.

SEP 2026 In early September 2026 hundreds of saltwater crocodile hatchlings began leaving their nests in Bhitarkanika National Park, Kendrapara, Odisha, for the creeks. Forest officials had identified 117 nesting sites that season.

Source: The Hans India; OrissaPOST

Sarus crane *Antigone antigone* Vulnerable

see page 49

Story

Uttar Pradesh

FEB 2026 The Uttar Pradesh forest department's 2026 winter census across 68 forest divisions counted 20,628 sarus cranes, up 634 from 19,994 a year earlier, with Etawah division recording the most (3,304).

Source: prokerala.com

Shorebirds

Story

Tamil Nadu

JUN 2026 In June 2026 a study in Regional Environmental Change reported that shorebirds on Tamil Nadu's Gulf of Mannar coast fell about 57 per cent between 1985 and 2024. Siberian sand plover and curlew sandpiper declined most.

Source: journal paper

Sloth bears, leopards, wild boars, peafowl

Vulnerable

see page 33

Story

Andhra Pradesh

OCT 2026 In October 2026 camera traps set for the tiger census in the Lankamala forests of Kadapa and Annamayya districts, Andhra Pradesh, recorded sloth bears, leopards, wild boars, deer and many peafowl. Officials saw more bears and leopards than before.

Source: Deccan Chronicle

Smooth-coated otter; Asian small-clawed otter; Eurasian otter

Lutrogale perspicillata; Aonyx cinereus; Lutra lutra

Vulnerable

Tamil Nadu

JUN 2026 In June 2026 researchers reported that otters in Tamil Nadu's Thamirabarani River, once seen from Papanasam to Srivaikuntam, now appear only along about 10 km below Papanasam. They urged protecting this stretch as a biodiversity heritage site.

Source: ETV Bharat; fishery.news; atree.org

Snakes

Story

Bihar

JUL 2026 In July 2026 a field report described Valmiki Tiger Reserve in West Champaran, Bihar's only tiger reserve, as the state's main snake hotspot, with more than 45 species recorded. Monsoon floods were bringing snakes closer to villages.

Source: Clarity UPSC daily news, 15 Jul 2026

Tigers, leopards and other wildlife

Maharashtra

MAY 2026 On the Buddha Purnima night of 1 May 2026, the machan census at waterholes in Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra, logged 5,765 wildlife sightings, including 42 tigers and 13 leopards. Herbivores made up 53.6 per cent.

Source: ThePrint; Times of India

Tigers, leopards, Himalayan bears and other mammals

Story

Uttarakhand

MAY 2026 In May 2026 Uttarakhand's forest department began preparing a scientific wildlife census of Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary, Almora, dividing its 47.59 sq km into 50 grids for more than 100 camera traps to track tigers, leopards, bears, deer and foxes.

Source: Times of India

Vultures

Story

Keralam

FEB 2026 In February 2026 Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary staff and experts reported that vulture breeding had declined but numbers held at about 80 birds, mostly white-rumped vultures, with red-headed and Indian vultures also present.

SEP 2026 On 26 September 2026 the Forest Department's Wayanad Wildlife Division began a two-day vulture survey in Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, Keralam, with WWF-India and the Hume Centre. It tracks white-rumped, Indian and red-headed vultures, all Critically Endangered.

Source: The Hindu; onmanorama.com

White-bellied sea eagle

Story

Haliaeetus leucogaster Least Concern

Kerala

FEB 2026 In February 2026 a survey led by the Malabar Awareness and Rescue Centre for Wildlife with the social forestry divisions found 17 white-bellied sea eagle nests in Kannur and Kasaragod, Kerala, up from 13 the previous year.

Source: onmanorama.com; Mongabay India

CONSERVATION AND POLICY

Bengal fox *Vulpes bengalensis*

Story

Least Concern

Maharashtra

JUN 2026 In June 2026 four Bengal (Indian) foxes, rescued in April from traffickers who hid them under vegetable crates on NH-53 near Navapur, Nandurbar, were released into the wild after rehabilitation by Pune's RESQ Charitable Trust.

Source: Times of India; gbif.org

Blackbuck *Antilope cervicapra*

Story

Least Concern

Chhattisgarh

APR 2026 In April 2026 Chhattisgarh's forest department said fresh releases had taken Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary's wild blackbuck population to 130 (about 190 including enclosures) after 77 were reintroduced in 2018, and planned Gomardha Wildlife Sanctuary next.

APR 2026 In April 2026 Prime Minister Modi's Mann Ki Baat hailed the blackbuck's return to Chhattisgarh, where 77 animals reintroduced to Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary from 2018 had grown to more than 200.

Source: Times of India; telanganatoday.com; Indian Express; ThePrint

Cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus* Vulnerable

see page 8

Story

Madhya Pradesh

MAR 2026 In October 2026 Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav released two cheetahs, Vyom and Neera, in Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve (Nauradehi), Sagar district, making it the state's third cheetah site after Kuno and Gandhi Sagar.

SEP 2026 On 20 September 2026 Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav released Radha (CCB-2), a three-year-old female from Botswana moved from Kuno, into a soft-release enclosure in Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary, its fourth cheetah.

Source: ThePrint; All India Radio; Deccan Chronicle; newindianexpress.com

Chital *Axis axis* Least Concern

Story

Chhattisgarh / Maharashtra

APR 2026 In April 2026 forest staff on routine monitoring sighted a rare melanistic, almost black, chital in Umred-Pauni-Karhandla Wildlife Sanctuary near Nagpur, Maharashtra.

JUN 2026 In June 2026 forest officials arrested two villagers of Amad, inside Udanti-Sitanadi Tiger Reserve, Chhattisgarh, with suspected chital meat, bows, arrows and wire snares. One admitted killing a chital near Taripani Ghat on 17 June.

Source: Times of India; prsindia.org; thelivenagpur.com

Chocolate mahseer

Neolissochilus hexagonolepis Near Threatened

Sikkim

Story

OCT 2026 On 11 October 2026 Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang released chocolate mahseer, the native Katley, into the Rangeet River at a fish-ranching site near Jorethang, on the second day of the Chirbirey River Fest.

Source: ThePrint; journal paper

Clouded leopard *Neofelis nebulosa*

Vulnerable

Arunachal Pradesh / Assam / Manipur / Meghalaya / Mizoram / Nagaland / Sikkim / Tripura

Story

JUL 2026 In July 2026 the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wild Life, meeting in Coimbatore, released a Clouded Leopard Conservation Action Plan. Prepared under a GEF-UNDP project, it names 14 priority landscapes across north-east India.

Source: All India Radio; The Tribune

Galaxy frog *Melanobatrachus indicus*

Vulnerable see page 59

Tamil Nadu / Keralam

Story

JAN 2026 In December 2025 a paper in Herpetology Notes reported that seven galaxy frogs found under logs in the southern Western Ghats in March 2020 had vanished by August 2021, after repeated visits by photographers.

SEP 2026 In late September 2026 Tamil Nadu environment official Supriya Sahu shared photographs of the galaxy frog, a Vulnerable microhylid of the southern Western Ghats known since 1878, renewing public interest in the rarely seen species.

Source: Mongabay; Mongabay India; thecsrjournal.in; journal paper

Ganges river dolphin

Platanista gangetica Endangered see page 12

Story

OCT 2026 On 29 October 2026, at the UN biodiversity conference in Yerevan, UNEP, FAO and the CBD Secretariat released a restoration report naming Ganges river dolphin recovery in India among the successes of UN World Restoration Flagships.

Source: unep.org

Golden langur *Trachypithecus geei*

Endangered

Assam

Video

JUN 2026 In June 2026 Assam's Forest Department released seven golden langurs into Sikhna Jwhwlao National Park in the Bodoland region. Assam Police's Special Task Force had seized eight from traffickers in Chirang district three days earlier; one died.

Source: wti.org.in; Northeast Now; sentinelassam.com

Great Indian bustard *Ardeotis nigriceps*

Critically Endangered see page 16

Rajasthan

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 two Great Indian bustard chicks hatched at Rajasthan's conservation breeding centre in Jaisalmer, one from natural mating and one from artificial insemination, raising the captive flock to 70.

Source: Times of India

Greater adjutant *Leptoptilos dubius*

Near Threatened

Assam

Video

JUN 2026 On 28 June 2026, in the 135th Mann Ki Baat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised Assam's Hargila Army, thousands of women led by biologist Purnima Devi Barman, for protecting greater adjutant storks and their nesting trees.

Source: pmindia.gov.in; ianslive.in; birdlife.org

Greater one-horned rhinoceros

Rhinoceros unicornis Vulnerable see page 30

Uttar Pradesh

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 tigers killed Rajeshwari, a female greater one-horned rhino of about 30 years, at Amha Tal in Dudhwa Tiger Reserve's Rhino Rehabilitation Area, Uttar Pradesh, leaving the reserve with 49 rhinos.

JUN 2026 In June 2026 the fourth rhino census in Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, Uttar Pradesh, run by 20 teams on elephants, counted 53 greater one-horned rhinos: 17 adult males, 25 adult females and 11 calves. Eleven now roam free.

Source: Times of India; newsdrum.in; ThePrint

Grey slender loris *Loris lydekkerianus*

Near Threatened

Tamil Nadu / Kerala

Story

JAN 2026 In January 2026 Down To Earth reported that Kerala and Tamil Nadu had begun restoring grey slender loris habitat, with forest watchers in Tamil Nadu's Kadavur Reserve Forest mapping canopy corridors and planting native trees.

Source: Down To Earth

Himalayan musk deer

Moschus leucogaster Endangered

Jammu and Kashmir / Himachal Pradesh

Story

OCT 2026 In October 2026 The New Indian Express reported, from Central Zoo Authority data obtained under RTI, that India's recognised zoos held only two musk deer, both males, at Jammu Zoo and Himachal Pradesh's Himalayan Nature Park.

Source: newindianexpress.com; journal paper

Himalayan oaks

Uttarakhand

Story

APR 2026 In early April 2026 the Uttarakhand High Court barred Mussoorie's municipality from felling trees without forest department permission, on a petition over oak trees cut for road widening in Husain Ganj, where four oaks had been illegally felled.

Source: ThePrint

Indian skimmer *Rynchops albicollis*

Endangered see page 52

Uttar Pradesh / Bihar / Madhya Pradesh / Rajasthan / Uttarakhand

Story

JAN 2026 On 14 January 2026 Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Patil launched a BNHS project under the National Mission for Clean Ganga to protect Indian skimmer nesting sandbars on the Chambal and Ganga, with local nest guardians.

Source: ddnews.gov.in; Down To Earth

Indian softshell turtle

Nilssonia gangetica Endangered

Uttar Pradesh / Assam

Story

APR 2026 On 1 April 2026 police in Jarcha, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh, found 16 Indian softshell turtles in a scooter rider's jute bag, arrested the alleged smuggler and alerted the forest department.

MAY 2026 On 15 May 2026, Endangered Species Day, a Wildlife Institute of India team led by Abhijit Das released India's first satellite-tagged Ganges softshell turtle, a healthy adult, on the Brahmaputra's north bank in Kaziranga, Assam.

Source: Indian Express; Northeast Now; gbif.org

Indian star tortoise *Geochelone elegans*

Vulnerable

Telangana / Maharashtra

Story

FEB 2026 In February 2026 Dr Kalyan Sagar, an ITDA medical officer, rescued an Indian star tortoise from a ground fire beside the highway in the Domalapenta range of Amrabad Tiger Reserve, Telangana, and handed it to forest staff at Achampet.

AUG 2026 In August 2026 Maharashtra's Forest Department and Resqink Association for Wildlife Welfare released 216 trafficked Indian star tortoises from Mumbai and Thane in Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, Chandrapur. The move launched Project STRIPES.

Source: Deccan Chronicle; Times of India

Indian vulture *Gyps indicus*

Critically Endangered see page 47

Maharashtra / Madhya Pradesh / Rajasthan

Video Story

JAN 2026 On 2 January 2026 BNHS began the soft release of 15 captive-bred Indian vultures, fitted with GSM and satellite tags, from a pre-release aviary in Melghat Tiger Reserve's Somthana range, Amravati, Maharashtra.

JUN 2026 In June 2026 X67, a five-year-old female Indian vulture bred at Pinjore and released in Melghat Tiger Reserve in January, reached Ranthambhore in Rajasthan after flying 3,334 km in 27 days, via Satpura, Bhopal and Kuno.

Source: The Week; ThePrint; thehitavada.com

Jeypore ground gecko

Cyrtodactylus jeyporensis Endangered

Odisha

Story

OCT 2026 In October 2026 herpetologists reported four sightings since October 2025 of the endangered Jeypore ground gecko in Odisha's Balda hills, where a 145-hectare opencast bauxite mine received environmental clearance in September 2025.

Source: newindianexpress.com

Kutki *Picrorhiza kurrooa* Endangered

Himachal Pradesh

Story

JUL 2026 In July 2026 nearly 180 farmers in Mandi district, Himachal Pradesh, were growing kutki, a threatened Himalayan medicinal herb, under a scientific cultivation programme. Its harvesting method leaves the mother plant alive in the soil.

Source: Clarity UPSC daily news, 24 Jul 2026

Loggerhead turtle *Caretta caretta*

Vulnerable

Maharashtra

Story

AUG 2026 In August 2026 a Yellow Gate police patrol rescued a struggling loggerhead sea turtle of over 100 kg in the Arabian Sea off Mumbai. After treatment, it was moved to the sea turtle treatment centre at Dahanu.

Source: Times of India

Long-tailed marmot *Marmota caudata*

Least Concern

Jammu and Kashmir

Story

AUG 2026 In August 2026, during the Amarnath Yatra, wildlife observers warned pilgrims in Jammu and Kashmir against feeding, chasing or handling the long-tailed marmots that live along the routes.

Source: Clarity UPSC daily news, 23 Aug 2026

Madras hedgehog

Paraechinus nudiventris Least Concern

Tamil Nadu / Andhra Pradesh / Kerala / Karnataka

Story

JAN 2026 In January 2026 the Tamil Nadu Forest Department began its first dedicated study of the Madras hedgehog, in the Theri red-sand forests of Thoothukudi district.

APR 2026 In April 2026 researchers from BOKU University, Vienna, and the Hedgehog Conservation Alliance published the complete mitochondrial genome of the Madras hedgehog, a species endemic to southern India, in Mitochondrial DNA Part A.

Source: x.com; thebetterindia.com; journal paper; biorxiv.org

Malabar pied hornbill

Anthracoceros coronatus Near Threatened

Chhattisgarh

Story

FEB 2026 In February 2026 Udanti-Sitanadi Tiger Reserve in Chhattisgarh was developing six 'hornbill restaurants', plantings of fruit trees such as peepal and banyan, to feed Malabar pied hornbills; a 40-hectare site at Sornammal already drew frequent sightings.

Source: Deccan Chronicle

Mangrove clam *Geloina erosa*

Kerala

Story

FEB 2026 In November 2025 ICAR-CMFRI scientists achieved induced breeding of the mangrove clam Geloina erosa at their Njarakkal mariculture facility, Kochi, Kerala, with spat settling from day 18; CMFRI announced it in February 2026.

Source: cmfri.org.in; ddnews.gov.in; ThePrint

Mugger crocodile *Crocodylus palustris*

Vulnerable see page 57

Rajasthan / Gujarat

Story

JUL 2026 In July 2026 Rajasthan's forest department told the National Green Tribunal it accepted a joint committee's finding of the banned pesticide aldrin in Kota's Chandraloi river, where mugger crocodiles died in December 2024, but denied responsibility.

AUG 2026 On 22 August 2026 a man slipped into the monsoon-swollen Vishwamitri River at Talsat village, on Vadodara's outskirts, Gujarat, and was killed by a mugger crocodile. Locals recovered his body that night.

Source: Down To Earth; indiaenvironmentportal.org.in; Times of India; gbif.org

Musk deer *Moschus sp.* Endangered

Assam

Story

SEP 2026 In September 2026 Assam Police seized six suspected musk deer pods weighing 158 grams at Medhikuchi in Sonapur, near Guwahati, and held two men from Arunachal Pradesh. The pods' species, source and destination were under investigation.

Source: Northeast Now

Ngarsing, a Himalayan snow trout

Schizothorax sp. (reported as Schizothorax pelzami)

see page 64

Arunachal Pradesh

JUN 2026 In June 2026 Nyishi villagers of the Sangno clan moved 52 fingerlings of a snow trout they call Ngarsing from the Lapabung stream into the Richaso stream at Weshi, East Kameng, beyond reach of predatory mahseer.

Source: The Hindu; gbif.org; researcharchive.calacademy.org

Olive ridley turtle *Lepidochelys olivacea*

Vulnerable see page 22

Andhra Pradesh / Tamil Nadu

Story

MAR 2026 During the 2026 nesting season the Wildlife Management Authority and Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary conserved nearly 20,000 olive ridley eggs from 174 nests on Hope Island in Kakinada Bay, Andhra Pradesh, the Times of India reported in April 2026.

Source: Times of India; DT Next; Mongabay India

Orangutan *Pongo sp.* Critically Endangered

Odisha

Story

SEP 2026 In September 2026 five infant orangutans, three males and two females, were found in a casuarina plantation in Odisha's Balasore district. The environment ministry set up a four-member Wildlife Crime Control Bureau team to examine trafficking links.

SEP 2026 In September 2026 five baby orangutans, apes native only to Borneo and Sumatra, were rescued from Bichitrapur forest in Odisha's Balasore district, raising trafficking suspicions. They are in quarantine at Nandankanan Zoological Park, Bhubaneswar.

Source: Times of India; Northeast Now; Mongabay India; ThePrint

Oriental darter *Anhinga melanogaster*

Least Concern

Karnataka

Story

AUG 2026 In August 2026 Bengaluru birders and the Avian and Reptile Rehabilitation Centre reported a surge of Oriental darters with bills tangled in onion-net plastic, puja cloth and fishing net at at least 10 city lakes, including Doddanekundi.

Source: The Hindu

Pangolins

Nagaland

Story

FEB 2026 In a resolution reported on 12 February 2026, the United Sangtam Likhum Pumji, apex body of the Sangtam Naga in Nagaland's Kiphire and Tuensang districts, banned pangolin hunting under the Wildlife Trust of India's pangolin project.

Source: thefrontiermanipur.com; Northeast Now

Phayre's leaf monkey

Trachypithecus phayrei Endangered

Tripura / Mizoram / Assam

Story

JAN 2026 In January 2026 Down To Earth reported that habitat loss was pushing Phayre's langurs into secondary forests and rubber plantations, and that studies in Tripura's Sepahijala Wildlife Sanctuary found rubber leaves in their diet.

OCT 2026 In October 2026 a camera captured a pair of Phayre's leaf monkeys resting together in Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary, South Tripura. Records outside Sepahijala, the Endangered langur's known stronghold, are rare; it is Tripura's state animal.

Source: Down To Earth; sentinelassam.com; gbif.org

Pygmy hog *Porcula salvania* Endangered

see page 41

Assam

Story

JAN 2026 In January 2026 Down To Earth reported that probably fewer than 350 pygmy hogs survive in the wild, while the Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme has reintroduced 179 captive-bred hogs into four Assam protected areas over 20 years.

Source: Down To Earth

Red sand boa *Eryx johnii* Near Threatened

Telangana

MAY 2026 On 17 May 2026 the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Hyderabad, caught a man trying to sell two live red sand boas at Warangal, Telangana, in a decoy operation. The snakes were handed to the Warangal forest range.

Source: The Week; uniindia.com

Red-crowned roofed turtle

Batagur kachuga Critically Endangered

Madhya Pradesh / Rajasthan / Uttar Pradesh

Story

MAR 2026 Down To Earth reported in March 2026 (online; print December 2025) that the Chambal held the red-crowned roofed turtle's only viable wild population, under 1,000 adults, and that 20 turtles released into the Ganga in April 2025 were surviving.

Source: Down To Earth; Mongabay

Rhesus macaque *Macaca mulatta*

Least Concern

Delhi

Story

JAN 2026 In January 2026 the Delhi government told the Assembly that 6,591 monkeys were relocated to Asola-Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary in 2021–2025, though its own yearly figures add up to 6,291.

Source: The Week; ThePrint

Royle's pika *Ochotona roylii* Least Concern

Jammu and Kashmir / Himachal Pradesh / Uttarakhand / Sikkim / Arunachal Pradesh

Story

JAN 2026 In January 2026 Down To Earth reported scientists' fears that Royle's pika, an alpine Himalayan mammal living at 2,400–5,000 m, faces a steep loss of suitable habitat by 2050 and 2070 as the climate warms.

Source: Down To Earth

Ruddy shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Least Concern

Ladakh

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 Down To Earth reported that Cha Tsogspa, a 12-member bird association formed in 2003 in Mudh village, eastern Ladakh, escorts ruddy shelduck broods to the Indus each breeding season.

Source: Down To Earth

Sloth bear *Melursus ursinus* Vulnerable

see page 33

Karnataka

Story

APR 2026 On 30 March 2026 Karnataka forest staff tranquilised a GPS-collared female sloth bear that had entered Shivamogga's Rashtrakavi Kuvempu Airport at Sogane after travelling nearly 50 km in 24 hours, and moved it to the Shivamogga zoo.

Source: The Hindu; Times of India

Southern birdwing *Troides minos* Least Concern

Telangana

JUN 2026 In June 2026 Forest Section Officer Nilesh and biologist Ravikanth recorded a southern birdwing in Amrabad Tiger Reserve, Telangana. Officials called it the first record in the state of this large Western Ghats butterfly.

Source: siasat.com; Times of India; citizenmatters.in

Steppe eagle *Aquila nipalensis* Endangered

Rajasthan

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 parties to the CMS endorsed a Global Action Plan for the Steppe Eagle (2026-2035) that names Jorbeer Conservation Reserve near Bikaner and Desert National Park near Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, where surveys recorded over 2,000 eagles.

Source: Down To Earth; raptors.cms.int; CMS

Tibetan antelope *Pantholops hodgsonii*

Near Threatened

Delhi

Story

APR 2026 In March 2026 a Delhi court jailed Jaipur gallery owner Syed Shahid Ahmed Kashani for three years for trying to export shahtoosh shawls of Tibetan antelope wool, seized at Delhi airport in 2008, in the CBI's first wildlife prosecution.

Source: ddnews.gov.in; ThePrint; The Week

Tiger *Panthera tigris* Endangered

see page 4

Maharashtra / Chhattisgarh / Arunachal Pradesh / Andhra Pradesh / Madhya Pradesh / Uttar Pradesh / Odisha / Uttarakhand / Assam / West Bengal / Bihar / Telangana / Tripura / Rajasthan

Story

JAN 2026 In January 2026 forest officials moved PKT7CP1, a three-year-old male tiger orphaned as a cub in Yavatmal and raised at a Pench Tiger Reserve centre, into a 5-hectare area of Dnyanganga Wildlife Sanctuary, Buldhana, Maharashtra, for rewilding.

JAN 2026 On 25 January 2026 a forest patrol found a two-year-old tiger dead in the Kuterpani compartment of Achanakmar Tiger Reserve, Mungeli district, Chhattisgarh; the post-mortem pointed to a territorial fight with another tiger.

FEB 2026 On the night of 2 February 2026 a tiger killed head constable Chikseng Manapang on the Roing–Mayodia road in Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary, Arunachal Pradesh; the Chief Wildlife Warden then authorised its capture.

FEB 2026 On 7 February 2026 tigress STR-06 'Hirkani', captured in Pench Tiger Reserve, was released into the Koyna core of Sahyadri Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra, the third tigress brought in under Operation TARA.

FEB 2026 In February 2026 Andhra Pradesh forest officials released a radio-collared male tiger, nicknamed Explorer, into Papikonda National Park after capturing it in East Godavari district; it had dispersed from Tadoba, Maharashtra.

FEB 2026 In February 2026 the Madhya Pradesh High Court directed Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve's field director to report on tiger deaths; the report listed eight deaths from November 2025 to early February 2026, four by electrocution in general forest areas.

Source: newsdrum.in; outlookindia.com; outlooktraveller.com; hubnetwork.in; Clarity UPSC daily news, 19 Aug 2026

Tiger (continued) *Panthera tigris*

Endangered

see page 4

Story

Maharashtra / Chhattisgarh / Arunachal Pradesh / Andhra Pradesh / Madhya Pradesh / Uttar Pradesh / Odisha / Uttarakhand / Assam / West Bengal / Bihar / Telangana / Tripura / Rajasthan

MAR 2026 On 28 February 2026 forest staff found an adult male tiger dead near the Dhamela watchtower, between the Mahof and Mala ranges of Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, Uttar Pradesh; the carcass went to IVRI, Bareilly, for post-mortem.

APR 2026 In March 2026 Chhattisgarh forest officials said tigers had been regularly camera-trapped in Udanti-Sitanadi Tiger Reserve since May 2025, and that the ongoing tiger census, covering all 143 beats for the first time, would likely count three.

APR 2026 On 3 January 2026 forest staff in Nagarjunsagar–Srisailam Tiger Reserve, Andhra Pradesh, began the camera-trap phase of the All India Tiger Estimation 2026, with about 40 days of trapping in each block.

APR 2026 In April 2026 three cubs of tigress T-141 died within a week in Kanha Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh; the first two, found on 21 and 23 April in the Sarhi range, had empty stomachs.

MAY 2026 On 5 May 2026 a two-year-old male tiger was found dead in Panna Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh. Captured from Tara village on 26 April, it was declared fit, collared and released. It was the state's 28th tiger death that year.

MAY 2026 In May 2026 Arunachal Pradesh's forest department and ATREE reported the first camera-trap photograph of a tiger in D'Ering Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary near Pasighat, taken on 14 January 2026. It confirmed the tiger's return after nearly two decades.

Source: newsdrum.in; outlookindia.com; outlooktraveller.com; hubnetwork.in; Clarity UPSC daily news, 19 Aug 2026

Tiger (continued) *Panthera tigris*

Endangered

see page 4

Story

Maharashtra / Chhattisgarh / Arunachal Pradesh / Andhra Pradesh / Madhya Pradesh / Uttar Pradesh / Odisha / Uttarakhand / Assam / West Bengal / Bihar / Telangana / Tripura / Rajasthan

JUN 2026 In June 2026 IFS officer Ramesh Pandey shared on X a rare picture from Similipal Tiger Reserve, Odisha: a pseudo-melanistic tigress with three dark cubs. A recessive Taqpep gene mutation widens and merges their stripes.

JUL 2026 On 3 July 2026 Assam's forest minister Jayanta Malla Baruah said Nameri Tiger Reserve's tigers rose from three in 2022 to 12 by the end of 2025, a count validated by the Wildlife Institute of India.

JUL 2026 In July 2026 Assam's forest minister said two tigers had returned to Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary, Nameri Tiger Reserve's satellite core. NTCA's STRIPES had recorded the first camera-trap image in 2024 and WII-validated proof of two in 2024–25.

AUG 2026 In August 2026 Odisha's wildlife wing sought approval to bring a male and a female tiger from central India to Similipal. In the first phase, Tadoba tigress Zeenat, moved in November 2024, bore four cubs in May 2026.

AUG 2026 On 9 August 2026 tourists filmed a Bengal tiger near Zero Point in Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary, Almora, at about 8,000 ft. The forest department confirmed its presence, set camera traps, activated a quick response team and cautioned visitors.

AUG 2026 In August 2026 veterinarians in Madhya Pradesh added giloy (Tinospora cordifolia), a climbing herb of Indian medicine, to the care of a young tigress with canine distemper.

Source: newsdrum.in; outlookindia.com; outlooktraveller.com; hubnetwork.in; Clarity UPSC daily news, 19 Aug 2026

ON CLARITYUPSC.COM · DAILY QUIZ

Read a statement. Is it correct?

● LEVEL 1 POLITY

The President of India can return a Money Bill to Parliament for reconsideration.

✓ True ✕ False

Tap your answer — the reason follows.

clarityupsc.com/daily-quiz

Tiger (continued) *Panthera tigris*

Endangered see page 4

Story

Maharashtra / Chhattisgarh / Arunachal Pradesh / Andhra Pradesh / Madhya Pradesh / Uttar Pradesh / Odisha / Uttarakhand / Assam / West Bengal / Bihar / Telangana / Tripura / Rajasthan

AUG 2026 In August 2026 a Zoological Survey of India camera-trap survey with the Margherita West range photographed a male tiger in Dihing Patkai National Park, Assam. Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah announced it on 19 August; earlier only pugmarks were known.

AUG 2026 In August 2026 Bhola, a male tiger of about nine well known in the Phato zone near Corbett, Uttarakhand, died at the Dhela rescue centre. He had been treated there since a June rescue for a deep leg wound.

SEP 2026 In September 2026 West Bengal and the NTCA prepared to move a tigress from Bihar's Valmiki Tiger Reserve to Buxa Tiger Reserve. The three-year-old female was released in Buxa on 2 October 2026, starting a phased tiger reintroduction.

SEP 2026 In September 2026 Mongabay India reported why Telangana's Kawal Tiger Reserve has no resident tigers. A 2010–2022 Oryx study found prey for more than 30 tigers, but only 15 dispersing tigers, two of them female, arrived from Maharashtra.

SEP 2026 On 16 September 2026 Bijalee (T2), an 18-year-old tigress kept at Mumbai's Sanjay Gandhi National Park since she came from Pench in 2016, died after her food intake declined. Officials linked it to age; a post-mortem was ordered.

SEP 2026 In September 2026 Maharashtra moved sub-adult tigress T163-SAF2 from the Moharli range of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve to Painganga Wildlife Sanctuary, Yavatmal. She was the third tiger moved there in 2026, after a tigress in January and a male in July.

Source: newsdrum.in; outlookindia.com; outlooktraveller.com; hubnetwork.in; Clarity UPSC daily news, 19 Aug 2026

Tiger (continued) *Panthera tigris*

Endangered see page 4

Story

Maharashtra / Chhattisgarh / Arunachal Pradesh / Andhra Pradesh / Madhya Pradesh / Uttar Pradesh / Odisha / Uttarakhand / Assam / West Bengal / Bihar / Telangana / Tripura / Rajasthan

SEP 2026 On 10 September 2026 Nameri Tiger Reserve, Assam, won CA|TS-approved status, so all four of Assam's tiger reserves now hold it. Its recorded tigers rose from three in 2022 to 12 by 2025.

OCT 2026 On 6 October 2026 a three-year-old tigress being treated for symptoms of canine distemper virus died at the Mukki wildlife treatment centre in Kanha Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh. A patrol had found her very weak on 26 August.

AUG 2026 Three Bengal tiger cubs born around 30–31 August 2026 at Sepahijala Zoological Park, Tripura, took the zoo's tigers to seven, its director said in October. The same pair had three cubs in 2025; two survived.

OCT 2026 On 25 October 2026 tigress T-2403, about four and a half years old, was seen with three cubs, her first litter, in Zone 8 of Ranthambore Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan. Both parents descend from tiger T-57, renewing inbreeding concerns.

OCT 2026 A tigress from Bihar's Valmiki, released in West Bengal's Buxa Tiger Reserve on 2 October 2026, crossed the Sankosh river into Assam's Raimona National Park on 25 October. She was darted on 3 November and taken back to Buxa.

Source: newsdrum.in; outlookindia.com; outlooktraveller.com; hubnetwork.in; Clarity UPSC daily news, 19 Aug 2026

Tokay gecko *Gekko gecko* Least Concern

Story

Assam

SEP 2026 On 22 September 2026 the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence seized 86 live tokay geckos at Mariani, Assam, and handed the animals and two people held to the forest department. The lizard is traded as an exotic pet.

Source: Clarity UPSC daily news, 25 Sep 2026

Western hoolock gibbon

Hoolock hoolock Endangered

Story

Assam

FEB 2026 On 8 February 2026 forest staff found a male western hoolock gibbon electrocuted by the 25 kV line on the railway through Assam's Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary, about 30 m from a new canopy bridge.

MAY 2026 On 15 May 2026 a male western hoolock gibbon was filmed crossing a rope canopy bridge over the Lumding–Dibrugarh railway in Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary, Jorhat. The Assam Forest Department and WII built the bridges with Northeast Frontier Railway.

Source: Down To Earth; Northeast Now; journal paper

White-bellied heron *Ardea insignis*

Critically Endangered see page 54

Story

Arunachal Pradesh

JAN 2026 In December 2025 the Environment Ministry's expert appraisal committee recommended clearance for THDC's 1,200 MW Kalai-II dam on the Lohit River in Anjaw district, Arunachal Pradesh, though its EIA omitted the white-bellied heron.

Source: Northeast Now

White-rumped vulture

Gyps bengalensis Critically Endangered

Story

Kerala / Tamil Nadu

FEB 2026 In February 2026 a white-rumped vulture rescued at Nilambur, Malappuram district, was released in the Muthanga range of Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, the only place in Kerala where vultures live.

JUN 2026 On 28 June 2026 a captive-bred, radio-tagged white-rumped vulture died on an overhead power line in the Nilgiris near Ooty. Released in Tadoba in December 2025, it had strayed to Kalaburagi and was moved to Mudumalai in April.

Source: The Hindu; kathmandupost.com; DT Next; gbif.org

Wild water buffalo *Bubalus arnee*

Endangered see page 36

Story

Assam / Madhya Pradesh / Chhattisgarh

MAR 2026 In March 2026 Kaziranga prepared to capture wild water buffaloes for Kanha Tiger Reserve; on 28 April 2026 the first four were released in Kanha, Madhya Pradesh, under a plan to move about 50.

JUN 2026 In June 2026 the Indian Express reported that only one wild water buffalo, an ageing male, survives in Chhattisgarh's Udanti-Sitanadi Tiger Reserve. Officials plan to release three female buffaloes of Assam stock there.

AUG 2026 In August 2026 Chhattisgarh's forest department said it would propose to the Centre bringing wild buffaloes from Assam into enclosures in Udanti-Sitanadi, Indravati and Pamed, where only 12–16 survive. Three females are to join Udanti's lone ageing male.

SEP 2026 In September 2026 a wild buffalo that had strayed out of Burachapori Wildlife Sanctuary gored a man working in a jute field on a Brahmaputra river island in Nagaon district, Assam. He died on the way to hospital.

Source: Northeast Now; Times of India; Indian Express; India Today NE

INVASIVE SPECIES

African catfish *Clarias gariepinus*

Least Concern see page 75

Story

Keralam

JUL 2026 In July 2026 a project led by the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies began removing invasive African catfish from Periyar Tiger Reserve, turning the catch into jerky, pickles and pet chews to give tribal communities an income.

Source: pressreader.com; gbif.org

Buff-tip moth *Phalera cf. bucephala*

Ladakh

APR 2026 In April 2026 Kargil scientists reported the buff-tip moth, Phalera cf. bucephala, as a new invasive pest stripping white willows in Ladakh's Suru Valley. In May 2026 a central plant-protection team surveyed the infested villages.

Source: journal paper; ladakh.gov.in

Invasive alien species

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 the National Biodiversity Authority set up an Expert Committee on Invasive Alien Species after National Green Tribunal suo motu proceedings. Over two years it will compile a national list and draft prevention and control guidelines.

Source: All India Radio

Invasive aquatic weeds

Jammu and Kashmir

JUN 2026 In May and June 2026 workers of Jammu and Kashmir's Lake Conservation and Management Authority cleared sewage-fed weeds from Srinagar's Dal Lake every day, by hand and with excavators and harvesting machines.

Source: wsls.com; dailyexcelsior.com

Invasive fish

Maharashtra

Story

FEB 2026 In February 2026 Maharashtra's Fisheries Department and BNHS released 12.2 million native carp fingerlings into the Ujani reservoir. A BNHS centre at Bhigwan, opened in April, had paid fishers to remove over 36 tonnes of invasive suckermouth catfish by August.

Source: Down To Earth; Indian Express

Mesquite *Prosopis juliflora*

see page 73

Story

Tamil Nadu

MAR 2026 In March 2026 the Madras High Court ordered Tamil Nadu to eradicate the invasive seemai karuvelam (Prosopis juliflora) statewide, gave private landowners 30 days to uproot it and named two former judges to oversee the drive.

OCT 2026 In October 2026 Tamil Nadu's Water Resources Department, with Exnora, began clearing Prosopis juliflora (seemai karuvelam) from 20 irrigation tanks along the Palar in Vellore; six were cleared before the north-east monsoon.

Source: The Hindu; newindianexpress.com; Times of India; Clarity UPSC daily news, 14 Oct 2026

Red-eared slider

Trachemys scripta elegans Least Concern

Story

Tamil Nadu

JAN 2026 On 28 November 2025 customs officers at Chennai airport seized nearly 3,000 red-eared slider hatchlings from a Malaysian passenger arriving from Kuala Lumpur; the turtles were deported to Malaysia.

Source: newstodaynet.com

Water hyacinth *Pontederia crassipes*

see page 74

Story

Maharashtra / Tamil Nadu

APR 2026 In March 2026 water hyacinth mats again choked the Mula–Mutha river in Pune, including the Mundhwa stretch, weeks after the civic body began removal drives in February.

MAY 2026 In May 2026 Nagpur Municipal Corporation began clearing water hyacinth from Ambazari Lake before the monsoon. Two harvesters bought with mineral-fund money, each lifting 4.5–5 tonnes per run, worked alongside five Poclains and two JCBs.

JUL 2026 In July 2026 dense water-hyacinth mats covered the Bhavani near Kooduthurai, close to its confluence with the Cauvery in Erode district, Tamil Nadu. Farmers and residents asked the authorities to remove them.

Source: Free Press Journal; punekarnews.in; Times of India; Clarity UPSC daily news, 29 Jul 2026

ALSO IN THE NEWS

Agarwood *Aquilaria malaccensis*

Critically Endangered

Story

Tripura / Assam

JAN 2026 On 24 January 2026 Union DoNER Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia laid the foundation stone of an ₹80 crore agarwood value-chain scheme in North Tripura, with central processing centres planned in Tripura and at Golaghat, Assam.

Source: ianslive.in; news.webindia123.com

Akarkara *Anacyclus pyrethrum*

Story

Delhi / Uttar Pradesh

FEB 2026 On 11 February 2026, at the National Medicinal Plants Board's 25th-anniversary Chintan Shivir in New Delhi, Ayush Minister Prataprao Jadhav launched a new variety of akarkara (Anacyclus pyrethrum) developed by CSIR-CIMAP, Lucknow.

Source: PIB; All India Radio

Amur falcon *Falco amurensis*

Least Concern

see page 46

Story

Manipur

FEB 2026 In February 2026 Manipur's forest department and the Wildlife Institute of India reported that three Amur falcons satellite-tagged at Chiuluan, Tamenglong, in November 2025 (Ahu, Alang and Apapang) were wintering in Somalia, Botswana and Zimbabwe.

Source: ThePrint; India Today NE; All India Radio

Asian elephant *Elephas maximus*

Endangered

see page 10

Story

Madhya Pradesh / Assam / West Bengal

SEP 2026 From 24 to 28 September 2026 Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, Umaria district, Madhya Pradesh, held a five-day elephant festival and rejuvenation camp near Parasi Gate. Nine of its 15 camp elephants got rest, health checks and special food.

Source: All India Radio; economictimes.indiatimes.com

Bacillus subtilis *Bacillus subtilis*

Story

Kerala

JAN 2026 On 23 January 2026 Kerala declared Bacillus subtilis its state microbe, the first such designation by an Indian state, as Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan dedicated the Centre of Excellence in Microbiome in Thiruvananthapuram.

Source: thesouthfirst.com; daijiworld.com

Bactrian camel *Camelus bactrianus*

Story

Delhi / Ladakh

JAN 2026 In January 2026 two Bactrian camels, recently inducted for cold-desert duty in Ladakh, joined the Indian Army's first animal contingent in the Republic Day parade on Kartavya Path, New Delhi.

Source: All India Radio; Deccan Chronicle; morungexpress.com; Down To Earth

Balsam *Impatiens nagorum*

Nagaland

Story

FEB 2026 In February 2026 EastMojo reported Impatiens nagorum, a balsam named after the Naga tribes and known only from Fakim Wildlife Sanctuary, Kiphire district, Nagaland; botanists had described it in Phytotaxa in June 2017.

Source: journal paper; EastMojo; tb.plazi.org

Barn swallow *Hirundo rustica* Least Concern

Manipur

MAR 2026 In March 2026 Wildlife Institute of India scientists reported barn swallows breeding year-round in Manipur's Imphal Valley, the first record of a resident population there. They banded 45 adults at about 50 nesting homes and buildings.

Source: jwls.in; The Hindu

Black-necked crane *Grus nigricollis*

Near Threatened see page 48

Story

Ladakh / Arunachal Pradesh

FEB 2026 In February 2026 Down To Earth published Asad R. Rahmani's warning that the black-necked crane's Ladakh population was declining; Hanle's wetlands, once home to four breeding pairs, held only one or two.

Source: Down To Earth

Caracal *Caracal caracal* Least Concern

Rajasthan / Madhya Pradesh

Story

MAY 2026 In May 2026 Rajasthan launched Project Caracal, an 18-month study by SACON, WII, the state forest department and Tiger Watch. It tracks the rare cat across four tiger reserves; WII believes India holds fewer than 100 caracals.

JUN 2026 In June 2026 a camera trap deep inside Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park photographed a caracal at night. Field director Uttam Kumar Sharma said it was the park's first caracal record in his four years there.

Source: ThePrint; Mongabay India; newindianexpress.com

Cheer pheasant *Catreus wallichii*

Vulnerable

Story

Jammu and Kashmir / Himachal Pradesh / Uttarakhand

FEB 2026 In February 2026 Down To Earth published ornithologist Asad R. Rahmani's account of threats to the cheer pheasant, naming hunting, grassland loss and breeding-season fires across its western Himalayan range.

OCT 2026 In October 2026 Himachal Pradesh's wildlife wing reported that all 10 cheer pheasants released in 2024–25 survived, against 11% of 18 in 2019–20. In Wildlife Week it soft-released 12 more from Chail's Khadiyun centre into forest near Koti, Shimla.

Source: Down To Earth; Indian Express

Darkling beetle

Steneucyrtus wayanadensis

Story

Keralam

AUG 2026 In August 2026 scientists from the Zoological Survey of India, MES Mampad College and the University of Calicut described Steneucyrtus wayanadensis, a golden-green darkling beetle from Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, Keralam. They also rediscovered S. pexicollis, described in 1896.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters; gbif.org

Freshwater crab Vela carli *Vela carli*

Data Deficient

Story

Kerala

MAR 2026 In March 2026 ZSI and MES Mampad College researchers reported three gynandromorph Vela carli crabs from Silent Valley National Park, Kerala, the first gynandromorphy recorded in the freshwater crab family Gecarcinucidae.

Source: journal paper; Research Matters

Green pill millipede

Arthrosphaera lutescens

Story

Kerala

APR 2026 In April 2026 Kerala researchers published in Scientific Data a dataset on the exoskeleton chemistry, surface structure and water-repellence of the green pill millipede Arthrosphaera lutescens, collected near Seetharkundu, Palakkad.

Source: journal paper; europepmc.org

Himalayan monal

Lophophorus impejanus Least Concern

Uttarakhand

Story

SEP 2026 In September 2026 the Indian Express reported a Garhwal University study: Himalayan monals in noisy Chopta, with roads and pilgrim traffic, use higher-frequency calls than monals in quieter Madmaheshwar, Kedarnath Musk Deer Sanctuary.

Source: Indian Express; journal paper

Himalayan tahr *Hemitragus jemlahicus*

Near Threatened

Uttarakhand / Himachal Pradesh

Story

FEB 2026 In February 2026 Aligarh Muslim University researchers reported that camera traps in the Rudranath–Tungnath area of Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary, Uttarakhand, recorded Himalayan tahr feeding at garbage dumps left by trekkers and temporary camps.

APR 2026 In March 2026 Chamba's wildlife division recorded a rare white (albino) female Himalayan tahr in the Dharol beat of Kugti Wildlife Sanctuary, Bharmour, Chamba district, Himachal Pradesh, and stepped up surveillance to protect it.

OCT 2026 In October 2026 Uttarakhand's Kedarnath Wildlife Division planned to restrict human activity in high meadows and clean up waste after a survey found visitors and residents feeding Himalayan tahr, drawing the animals to roads near Chopta and other places.

Source: Down To Earth; The Tribune; thenewzradar.com; newindianexpress.com

Indian crested porcupine

Hystrix indica Least Concern

Jammu and Kashmir

Story

APR 2026 On 4 April 2026 Jammu and Kashmir's Forest Minister told the Assembly the government was running night patrols, live-trapping cages and a control room at Khrew to curb porcupines digging up saffron corms in Pampore.

Source: ThePrint

Indian grey hornbill *Ocyceros birostris*

Least Concern see page 55

Tamil Nadu

Story

FEB 2026 In February 2026 Tirupattur district, Tamil Nadu, named the Indian grey hornbill its 'Bird of Tirupattur' after a month-long Forest Department poll in which it won 41,243 of about 1.04 lakh votes.

Source: The Hindu

Indian sandalwood *Santalum album*

Vulnerable see page 71

Story

FEB 2026 On 1 February 2026 the Union Budget announced that the Centre would work with states on sandalwood cultivation and post-harvest processing; an inter-ministerial Sandalwood Development Committee report had been launched in October 2025.

Source: Down To Earth; PIB

Indian social spider

Stegodyphus sarasinorum

Keralam

Story

AUG 2026 In August 2026 Keralam researchers mapped the venom gland of the Indian social spider in Scientific Reports. They found 32 proteins and 81 metabolites, and gland extracts killed lymphoma cells in culture and showed antioxidant activity.

Source: journal paper

Indus river dolphin *Platanista minor*

Endangered see page 34

Punjab

Story

APR 2026 Down To Earth reported in April 2026 (print December 2025) that India's Indus river dolphins lived in a 70-km stretch of the Beas between Beas bridge and Harike, Punjab, inside the Beas Conservation Reserve, helped by community 'Dolphin Mitras'.

Source: Down To Earth

Jamun

Himachal Pradesh

Story

APR 2026 In April 2026 the government publicised a Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences study of fossil jamun (Syzygium) leaves from Himachal Pradesh's Kasauli Formation, which argued the genus arose in East Gondwana about 80 million years ago.

Source: PIB; dst.gov.in; journal paper

Karbi Anglong ginger

Zingiber officinale

Assam

Story

MAR 2026 On 2 March 2026 Assam, with APEDA, flagged off the first export of GI-tagged Karbi Anglong ginger, a 1.2-tonne consignment to London.

Source: foodtechbiz.com; sentinelassam.com

Leafy liverwort *Indocolea devendrae*

Keralam

Video

JUN 2026 In June 2026 Keralam botanists created a new liverwort genus, Indocolea, in the Journal of Bryology for a leafy liverwort they had described in 2023. It grows on bracket fungus in sacred groves of northern Keralam.

Source: journal paper; ETV Bharat

Mithun *Bos frontalis*

Arunachal Pradesh

AUG 2026 Over July and early August 2026 foot-and-mouth disease killed more than 200 mithuns in Arunachal Pradesh's Dibang Valley district, most in Acheso and Angrim villages. The state sent expert teams and alerted eastern districts.

Source: Deccan Chronicle

Nagauri ashwagandha

Withania somnifera

Rajasthan

Story

JAN 2026 On 24 November 2025 the Geographical Indications Registry registered Nagori Ashwagandha, the Withania somnifera grown around Nagaur on the fringes of the Thar Desert, Rajasthan; January 2026 reports called it Rajasthan's 22nd GI product.

Source: ETV Bharat; search.ipindia.gov.in

New species and records

JUN 2026 In June 2026 Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav released ZSI's Animal Discoveries 2025 and BSI's Plant Discoveries 2025 in Kolkata. India added 483 animal species new to science, 226 animal first records and 353 plant taxa.

Source: Down To Earth; BSI; aimamedia.org

Nilgiri wood pigeon

Columba elphinstonii Least Concern see page 50

Kerala / Tamil Nadu / Karnataka

Story

FEB 2026 In February 2026 a study in the Proceedings of the Indian National Science Academy projected that climate change could shrink the Nilgiri wood pigeon's suitable habitat in the Western Ghats to a few isolated pockets by 2081–2100.

Source: journal paper; The Hindu; forums.birdlife.org

Northern goshawk *Astur gentilis*

Least Concern

Punjab

Story

SEP 2026 In September 2026 Punjab's state bird, the northern goshawk or baaj, entered election speeches after Harsimrat Kaur Badal said one guarded Sukhbir Badal's hospital. Official searches in 2018 and 2025 found no goshawk in Punjab.

Source: Indian Express

Peacock tarantula

Poecilotheria metallica Critically Endangered

Andhra Pradesh

Story

MAY 2026 In May 2026 Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan posted photographs of the peacock tarantula, calling it a rare gem of the Eastern Ghats. A survey of the spider in Nagarjunasagar-Srisailam Tiger Reserve was planned.

Source: Times of India; gbif.org

Polychaete worms *Polychaeta*

Tamil Nadu / Maharashtra

Story

SEP 2026 In September 2026 Mongabay-India profiled India's bristle worms. Shrimp hatcheries on the east coast use about 400 kg a day as broodstock feed, and an Annamalai University team has patented a way to farm the native Perinereis nuntia.

Source: Mongabay India; journal paper

Red-naped ibis *Pseudibis papillosa*

Least Concern

Rajasthan

Story

JUL 2026 In July 2026 Udaipur researchers reported in EcoHealth that gut bacteria in red-naped ibis droppings carried multidrug resistance: 40 per cent of 60 isolates from 45 samples resisted at least three classes of antibiotics.

Source: journal paper

Rugda *Astraeus spp.*

Jharkhand

Story

OCT 2026 In October 2026 Down To Earth reported on rugda, a puffball-like wild mushroom of Jharkhand's sal forests that grows with the trees' roots. Tribal collectors, guided largely by women's knowledge, gather it each monsoon; it fetches Rs 500-3,000/kg.

Source: Down To Earth; journal paper

Sahiwal cattle *Bos indicus*

Uttar Pradesh

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 ICAR-IVRI, Izatnagar, announced five Sahiwal calves born from 28 February 2026 through ovum pick-up, in vitro fertilisation and embryo transfer, the institute's first success with this technique.

Source: Down To Earth; Times of India

Sal heartwood borer *Hoplocerambyx spinicornis*

Madhya Pradesh

JUL 2026 In July 2026 Madhya Pradesh's Dindori forest division sought central approval to fell 147,380 sal trees hit by a sal borer outbreak. Tribal residents, paid ₹2 per beetle, had collected over 1.4 million adult borers.

SEP 2026 In September 2026 the Centre allowed Madhya Pradesh to fell 146,784 sal trees hit by the sal heartwood borer in Dindori district and 9,535 at Amarkantak, Anuppur. Felling began that month; villagers are paid Rs 2 per beetle collected.

Source: Down To Earth

Tangkhul Hui and Kombai dog breeds

Story

Canis lupus familiaris

Manipur / Tamil Nadu

FEB 2026 In February 2026 the Assam Rifles reported that six Tangkhul Hui dogs from Manipur had joined its dog squads for narcotics detection, and that it would induct Tamil Nadu's Kombai from April 2026.

Source: thesangaiexpress.com; deccanherald.com

Vrindavani and Karan Fries cattle

Uttar Pradesh / Haryana

Story

JAN 2026 On 12 November 2025 ICAR's Breed Registration Committee registered Karan Fries (NDRI Karnal, Haryana) and Vrindavani (IVRI Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh) as synthetic dairy cattle breeds; Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan presented their certificates in January 2026.

Source: outlookbusiness.com; ICAR

Western honey bee *Apis mellifera*

Jammu and Kashmir

Story

APR 2026 By February 2026 scientists at the CSIR-IIIM field station in Pulwama, Kashmir, had kept western honey bee colonies alive through the sub-zero winter, a step towards sparing beekeepers the annual migration to the plains.

Source: kashmirahead.com; Down To Earth

Wild banana *Musa sikkimensis*

Nagaland

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 Nagaland University highlighted its study in Flora and Fauna (2025) showing wide genetic diversity among Musa sikkimensis landraces in Nagaland, useful for breeding climate-resilient bananas; the university keeps a Banana Biodiversity Corridor.

Source: EastMojo; journal paper

AROUND THE WORLD

Cetacean morbillivirus

Story

JAN 2026 In December 2025 a study in BMC Veterinary Research reported cetacean morbillivirus in drone-collected breath samples from humpback whales off northern Norway, the first evidence of the virus in Arctic waters.

Source: kcl.ac.uk; eurekalert.org

Giant phantom jellyfish

Stygiomedusa gigantea

Story

FEB 2026 An Argentine-led expedition aboard Schmidt Ocean Institute's research vessel Falkor (too) filmed a giant phantom jellyfish at about 250 m depth off Argentina; the footage was released in early February 2026.

Source: gulfnews.com; nbcnewyork.com

Mindoro bleeding-heart

Gallicolumba platenae Critically Endangered

Story

AUG 2026 In August 2026 a camera trap in the Iraya Mangyan ancestral domain on Mindoro, Philippines, photographed a Mindoro bleeding-heart above 900 metres. It was the first confirmed photograph of this ground pigeon since December 2005.

Source: conservation-innovations.org; searchforlostbirds.org; Mongabay; unesco.org

Oarfish

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 a video of beachgoers guiding two oarfish back to deeper water at Cabo San Lucas, Baja California Sur, Mexico, went viral.

Source: businesstoday.in; aol.com

Peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus*

Least Concern

Story

FEB 2026 In February 2026 the Australian Wildlife Conservancy reported that ecologist Tim Henderson had photographed a Siberian peregrine falcon at Newhaven Wildlife Sanctuary near Alice Springs, the subspecies' first record in central Australia.

Source: livescience.com; tooraktimesgeelong.com.au

Chinstrap penguin

Pygoscelis antarcticus Least Concern

Story

OCT 2026 In October 2026 a British Antarctic Survey study in Current Biology found occupied chinstrap penguin nests on Zavodovski Island fell 63% from 2011 to 2025, likely because warming moved krill south. Zavodovski lost its title of world's largest penguin colony.

Source: journal paper; bas.ac.uk

Monarch butterfly *Danaus plexippus*

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 Mexico's Semarnat and Conanp with WWF Mexico reported that overwintering monarch colonies covered 2.93 hectares in 2025-26, up 64% from 1.79 hectares the previous season.

Source: Down To Earth; monarchwatch.org

Charophytes

Story

JAN 2026 In January 2026 Germany's freshwater institute IGB reported that charophyte cover increased in 77% of 27 test lakes in north-eastern Germany after four years of reintroduction measures, with no change in reference lakes.

Source: igb-berlin.de; fv-berlin.de

Emperor penguin *Aptenodytes forsteri*

Endangered

Story

APR 2026 In April 2026 the IUCN Red List moved the emperor penguin from Near Threatened to Endangered because loss of Antarctic sea ice is projected to halve its population by the 2080s.

Source: Down To Earth; IUCN; Mongabay

Flesh-footed shearwater

Ardenna carneipes Near Threatened

Story

SEP 2026 In September 2026 a 16-year Earth's Future study on Lord Howe Island reported record plastic in flesh-footed (sable) shearwater fledglings: one held 894 pieces in 2025. Plastic prevalence stayed at 75–85%, but loads per bird rose sharply after 2022.

Source: journal paper; Down To Earth

Floreana giant tortoise

Chelonoidis niger Extinct

Story

FEB 2026 In February 2026 Galápagos National Park and partners released 158 juvenile giant tortoises, bred from Wolf Volcano animals carrying Floreana ancestry, onto Floreana Island, where tortoises had been absent for more than 180 years.

Source: darwinfoundation.org; news4jax.com

Hudsonian godwit *Limosa haemastica*

Vulnerable

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 the CMS COP15 meeting in Campo Grande, Brazil, added the Hudsonian godwit to Appendix I after studies estimated its population had fallen by more than 95 percent since 1980.

Source: CMS; manomet.org

Humpback whale

Megaptera novaeangliae Least Concern

Story

APR 2026 In March 2026 a sick humpback whale, nicknamed Timmy, stranded repeatedly on Germany's Baltic coast at Timmendorfer Strand and Wismar Bay; it was later barged to the North Sea and found dead off Denmark in May.

Source: cp24.com; euronews.com; wlrn.org

Hydrothermal-vent molluscs

Story

JUL 2026 In July 2026 the IUCN Red List update assessed 201 molluscs found only at deep-sea hydrothermal vents and rated 125 (62%) threatened, mainly by proposed seabed mining. The Indian Ocean vent snail Lirapex felix was listed Critically Endangered.

Source: Down To Earth

Indo-Pacific leopard shark

Stegostoma tigrinum Endangered

Story

JAN 2026 In December 2025 Thailand's StAR Project released four aquarium-bred Indo-Pacific leopard sharks off Ko Maiton near Phuket, taking its releases to seven; Reuters reported the rewilding effort in January 2026.

Source: thestar.com.my; thethaiger.com

Przewalski's horse

Equus ferus przewalskii Endangered

Story

AUG 2026 On 22 and 31 August 2026 two male Przewalski's horse foals were born in a 56-hectare enclosure at the Alibi reintroduction centre, Altyn Dala, central Kazakhstan. Partners call them the country's first wild-born foals in about 200 years.

Source: Mongabay; Down To Earth; astanatimes.com

Rice's whale *Balaenoptera ricei*

Critically Endangered

Story

APR 2026 On 31 March 2026 the US Endangered Species Committee exempted Gulf of Mexico oil and gas activity from the Endangered Species Act, removing protections for the Rice's whale, of which about 51 remain.

Source: pbs.org; usa.oceana.org; sierraclub.org

Slaty egret *Egretta vinaceigula* Vulnerable

Story

AUG 2026 In August 2026 a survey in Botswana's Okavango Delta found no slaty egrets nesting at the previous year's main colony. Fire and elephants had destroyed two of four nest sites in Jao Conservancy. One new three-egg nest was found.

Source: unep.org; gbif.org

Snowy owl *Bubo scandiacus* Vulnerable

Story

APR 2026 In March 2026 the CMS COP15 meeting in Campo Grande, Brazil, added the snowy owl to Appendix II, which asks range states to cooperate on the species' conservation.

Source: CMS

Stingless bees

Story

JAN 2026 In October and December 2025 the Peruvian Amazon municipalities of Satipo and Nauta passed ordinances recognising legal rights of native stingless bees, the first insects anywhere given such rights.

Source: ecojurisprudence.org; Mongabay

Striped hyena *Hyaena hyaena*

Near Threatened

West Bengal

see page 39

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 the CMS COP15 at Campo Grande, Brazil, listed the striped hyena on Appendices I and II of the Convention on Migratory Species, adopting a proposal by Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

JUL 2026 In July 2026 a study in Oryx, based on 104 interviews in West Bengal, found two local identities for the striped hyena: Gaadha, a harmless scavenger, and Kuia, a ferocious hunter said to attack people.

Source: newsroom.wcs.org; Down To Earth; CMS; journal paper

Sulawesi babirusa *Babyrousa celebensis*

Vulnerable

Story

AUG 2026 In August 2026 Chester Zoo announced the birth of Rana, a female babirusa and the fifth piglet of Matano. A zoo-backed camera-trap study in Sulawesi had recorded babirusas only twice in 2023–2024, as African swine fever spreads.

Source: Down To Earth

Tapanuli orangutan

Pongo tapanuliensis Critically Endangered

Video

JUN 2026 In June 2026 a Current Biology study estimated that landslides from Cyclone Senyar in November 2025 killed about 58 Tapanuli orangutans in Batang Toru, North Sumatra: about 7% of the species.

Source: ljmu.ac.uk; Mongabay; Times of India

Whales

Story

SEP 2026 From 27 September to 2 October 2026 the International Whaling Commission held its 70th meeting in Hobart, Australia. India's statement there called for closer scientific and regional cooperation on whales, dolphins and porpoises.

Source: iwc.int

Northern pike *Esox lucius* Least Concern

Story

SEP 2026 In 2026 the Alaska Department of Fish and Game planned to treat Lalen and Visnaw lakes with rotenone in autumn 2026 to remove introduced northern pike, then restock them in 2027.

Source: adfg.alaska.gov

Seabirds after invasive rat removal

JUN 2026 In June 2026 Island Conservation and Koror State reported that, a year after invasive rats were removed from Ulong Island in Palau, bridled tern calls rose 286% and fish biomass at one reef site rose 183%.

Source: islandconservation.org; jointheiocc.org

African elephant *Loxodonta africana* Endangered

JUL 2026 Between 24 June and 24 July 2026, 15 elephants died at Kimana Sanctuary and Kuku Ranch in Kenya's Amboseli ecosystem. Ten were partly paralysed before death, and Kenya Wildlife Service investigated a possible toxin.

Source: Mongabay

Aldabra giant tortoise *Aldabrachelys gigantea*

Vulnerable

JUN 2026 In June 2026 Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the giant tortoise enclosure at the Seychelles National Botanical Garden in Victoria with President Patrick Herminie. He was Guest of Honour at Seychelles' golden jubilee National Day.

Source: ThePrint; india.com; ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

Barbary macaque *Macaca sylvanus*

Endangered

Story

APR 2026 In March 2026 a Scientific Reports study found that Gibraltar's Barbary macaques eat soil, mostly red terra rossa, more often when they eat more tourist food, and called the habit a socially learned, human-induced tradition.

Source: journal paper; Down To Earth; scientificamerican.com

Cacti

MAR 2026 In March 2026 University of Reading biologists Jamie Thompson and Chris Venditti reported in Biology Letters, across more than 750 cactus species, that lineages whose flower length evolves fastest speciate fastest. Flower length itself barely predicts speciation.

Source: journal paper; sciencedaily.com

Caribou *Rangifer tarandus* Vulnerable

Story

APR 2026 A SUNY ESF-led study of Alaska's Western Arctic Herd, published in Polar Biology in December 2025 and publicised in April 2026, found caribou in lichen-rich areas up to nine times likelier to survive winter unless snow exceeded about 50 cm.

Source: Down To Earth; journal paper

Chocolate chip sea star *Protoreaster nodosus*

JUN 2026 In June 2026 a PNAS study led by the University of Pennsylvania reported that the arm-tip plate of the chocolate chip sea star holds cone-shaped calcite structures that guide and focus light into an internal cavity.

Source: journal paper; engineering.upenn.edu

Darwin's bark spider

Caerostris darwini

Video Story

JAN 2026 In November 2025 a study in Integrative Zoology by Matjaž Gregorič and colleagues reported that the extreme silk toughness of Caerostris bark spiders, the genus of Darwin's bark spider, is limited to adult females.

Source: journal paper

Diamondback terrapin

Malaclemys terrapin Vulnerable

Massachusetts

Story

SEP 2026 In September 2026 Mass Audubon staff found a two-headed diamondback terrapin hatchling, weighing 5.2 g, at a protected nesting site in Wellfleet, Cape Cod. It reached the Cape Wildlife Center on 17 September, the area's third in five years.

Source: livescience.com

Diplodocus *Diplodocus sp.*

Story

SEP 2026 In September 2026 Fundación Dinópolis palaeontologists reported in the Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology that 14 tail vertebrae from La Tejería, El Castellar, Teruel, Spain, belong to Diplodocus, the genus's first find outside North America.

Source: newsroom.taylorandfrancisgroup.com

Eurasian beaver *Castor fiber*

Least Concern

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 a University of Birmingham-led study reported that a beaver wetland in northern Switzerland stored about 1,194 tonnes of carbon over 13 years, up to ten times more than similar streams without beavers.

Source: Down To Earth

Gentoo penguin *Pygoscelis papua*

Least Concern

Story

FEB 2026 In February 2026 Australia confirmed H5 bird flu in gentoo penguins on sub-Antarctic Heard Island, the first bird infections on Australian territory, after earlier detections in southern elephant seals and Antarctic fur seals there.

Source: Down To Earth; unmc.edu

Himalayan pangolin *Manis aurita*

Video

JUL 2026 In July 2026 a study in Communications Biology revalidated the Himalayan pangolin, Manis aurita, as a species separate from the Chinese pangolin. Genomes and museum specimens showed the two lineages split about 1.8 million years ago.

Source: journal paper; Mongabay

Koala *Phascolarctos cinereus* Vulnerable

Story

MAR 2026 In March 2026 a whole-genome study of 418 koalas in Science showed that Victoria's koalas, descended from a few animals moved to French Island around 1920, regained genetic diversity as their numbers grew.

JUL 2026 In July 2026 the University of Queensland set up the state's first coordinated koala sperm and egg bank at its Gatton campus. Cells from koalas that die or cannot breed are frozen in liquid nitrogen and screened for chlamydia.

Source: nautil.us; wyso.org; news.uq.edu.au; abc.net.au

Loggerhead turtle *Caretta caretta*

Vulnerable

Story

FEB 2026 In February 2026 a 17-year study of loggerhead turtles on Sal Island, Cabo Verde, published in Animals, found that warmer seas made females nest earlier, while the gap between breeding seasons doubled from about two to four years.

Source: eurekalert.org; journal paper; qmul.ac.uk

Narwhal *Monodon monoceros*

Least Concern

Story

AUG 2026 In August 2026 a Nature Communications study of Greenland narwhal tusks found collagen fibrils twisted left-handed in the outer cementum and right-handed in the inner dentine. These opposite twists build the tusk's left-handed spiral on a straight tooth.

Source: journal paper; fisheries.noaa.gov

Reticulated python

Malayopython reticulatus Least Concern

Story

FEB 2026 In February 2026 Guinness World Records recognised 'Ibu Baron', a female reticulated python from Maros, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, measured at 7.22 m on 18 January 2026, as the longest verifiably measured wild snake.

Source: guinnessworldrecords.com; Down To Earth

Shellear *Parakneria thysi*

Story

APR 2026 In April 2026 a Scientific Reports study documented thousands of small shellear fish climbing the 15-metre Luvilombo Falls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo during end-of-rainy-season floods, gripping wet rock with hook-bearing fin pads.

Source: journal paper

Southern elephant seal and kelp gull

Mirounga leonina; Larus dominicanus

Story

Vulnerable

OCT 2026 In October 2026 Australian authorities confirmed H5 bird flu on sub-Antarctic Macquarie Island in samples from a southern elephant seal and a kelp gull, the island's first H5 event, after research-station staff were withdrawn.

Source: canberratimes.com.au; antarctica.gov.au

Southern right whale

Eubalaena australis Least Concern

Story

SEP 2026 From July 2026 unusually many southern right whale calves died around Península Valdés, Argentina. Researchers found the bacterium Erysipelothrix rhusiopathiae in calves; by October juveniles and adults were also dying.

Source: clarin.com; stiripesurse.ro; gbif.org

Sperm whale *Physeter macrocephalus*

Story

Vulnerable

MAR 2026 In March 2026 University of St Andrews researchers published drone footage in Marine Mammal Science showing sub-adult sperm whales headbutting each other, filmed off the Azores and the Balearic Islands between 2020 and 2022.

Source: sciencedaily.com; news.st-andrews.ac.uk

Spotted hyena *Crocuta crocuta*

Story

Least Concern

MAR 2026 In March 2026 a University of Sheffield study led by Gidey Yirga found that spotted hyenas eating offal in Mekelle, Ethiopia, prevent over 1,000 tonnes of carbon emissions a year and save the city over US$100,000.

Source: Down To Earth

Tapirs

Story

APR 2026 On 27 April 2026 conservationists marked World Tapir Day, highlighting habitat loss and hunting as threats to the tapirs of tropical America and Southeast Asia.

Source: tapirday.org

Urban dung beetle *Onthophagus orpheus*

Story

AUG 2026 In August 2026 Clark University biologists reported that the green-bronze dung beetle in Massachusetts prefers dog dung to cow dung. Its young grew faster on dog dung, but nearly 60% of brood balls failed, against 25% on cow dung.

Source: journal paper

Venus flytrap *Dionaea muscipula*

Vulnerable

Story

JUN 2026 In June 2026 CNRS and Aix-Marseille University physicists reported in Science that the Venus flytrap snaps shut because outer-layer cell walls soften by 30–40% within about a second, releasing stress stored like a loaded spring.

Source: ddnews.gov.in; gbif.org

Dudgeon's epaulette shark

Hemiscyllium dudgeonae

Story

JUN 2026 In June 2026 Jess Blakeway, Christine Dudgeon and colleagues described Hemiscyllium dudgeonae, a walking shark found on a night dive in Milne Bay, Papua New Guinea. It is the genus's tenth species and is named after Dudgeon.

Source: journal paper; sci.news; sciencenews.org

Fire amoeba *Incendiamoeba cascadensis*

Story

SEP 2026 In September 2026 NASA-funded scientists led from Syracuse University reported in Cell that Incendiamoeba cascadensis, an amoeba from hot water in Lassen Volcanic National Park, California, divides at 63°C, a record for nucleus-bearing cells.

Source: science.nasa.gov

Fossil harvestman Balticolasma wunderlichi

Balticolasma wunderlichi

Story

APR 2026 In March 2026 palaeontologists described Balticolasma wunderlichi, a harvestman about 35 million years old from Baltic amber and Ukraine's Rovno amber, the first fossil of Ortholasmatinae, a subfamily now confined to East Asia and North and Central America.

Source: journal paper; app.pan.pl; sci.news; snsb.de

Galápagos blue octopus

Microeledone galapagensis

Story

MAY 2026 In May 2026 Field Museum scientist Janet Voight and colleagues described Microeledone galapagensis in Zootaxa: a golf-ball-sized blue octopus collected in 2015 by a remotely operated vehicle at 1,773 m near Darwin Island, Galápagos.

Source: journal paper; sciencedaily.com; darwinfoundation.org; Mongabay

Likweli *Colobus congoensis*

Story

JUL 2026 In July 2026 scientists described Likweli, Colobus congoensis, a black-and-white colobus monkey from Lomami National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is only the fifth new African monkey species found in 75 years.

Source: journal paper

Thismia daemona *Thismia daemona*

Story

AUG 2026 In August 2026 Thai botanists from Chulalongkorn University and Prince of Songkla University described Thismia daemona in PhytoKeys. The blackish-flowered plant lacks chlorophyll and feeds through soil fungi; fewer than 50 grow in Thong Pha Phum National Park.

Source: journal paper; phytokeys.pensoft.net

Tilcayo *Leopardus tilcayo*

SEP 2026 In September 2026 a University of Antwerp-led team described the tilcayo, Leopardus tilcayo, in Current Biology. Genomes of 38 cats split South America's tiger cats into five species; the tilcayo lives in Bolivia's Yungas cloud forests.

Source: journal paper; nationalgeographic.com; Mongabay

Check yourself

66 QUESTIONS ON THE SPECIES IN THIS BOOK, WRITTEN TO THE PRELIMS PATTERN

1. BENGAL TIGER

PAGE 4

With reference to tigers in India, consider: 1. Madhya Pradesh has both the most tigers and the most tiger reserves. 2. Tiger reserves are notified by state governments on the recommendation of the NTCA. 3. The 2022 estimation put the tiger population above 3,500. How many of the statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

2. ASIATIC LION

PAGE 6

With reference to the Asiatic lion, consider: 1. Its only wild population is in Gujarat. 2. The 2025 estimation counted more than 850 lions. 3. Barda Wildlife Sanctuary near Porbandar has become a second home for the lion. How many of the statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

3. CHEETAH

PAGE 8

With reference to Project Cheetah, consider: 1. All cheetahs brought to India so far came from southern Africa. 2. The Chambal river divides Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary. 3. The IUCN Red List classifies the cheetah as Endangered. How many of the statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

4. ASIAN ELEPHANT

PAGE 10

Consider the following statements about elephants in India: 1. SAIEE 2021–25 identified individual elephants from DNA in dung. 2. Assam has more elephants than any other state. 3. The IUCN Red List lists the Asian elephant as Endangered. Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 and 3 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

5. GANGES RIVER DOLPHIN

PAGE 12

With reference to river dolphins in India, consider: 1. The first range-wide estimate found more dolphins in Uttar Pradesh than in Bihar. 2. Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary lies in Assam. 3. The Indus river dolphin is found only in Pakistan. How many of the statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

6. INDIAN WOLF

PAGE 14

With reference to the Indian wolf, consider: 1. The IUCN Red List lists it as Endangered. 2. Mahuadanr Wolf Sanctuary is in Odisha. 3. CITES lists India's wolf population in Appendix II. How many of the statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

7. GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD

PAGE 16

With reference to the great Indian bustard, consider: 1. The Supreme Court's December 2025 judgment fixed its priority areas in Rajasthan and Gujarat. 2. It is found only in India. 3. The first birds from the breeding centres were released in Kutch. How many of the statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

8. SLENDER-BILLED VULTURE

PAGE 18

With reference to the slender-billed vulture, consider: 1. It is listed in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. 2. Meloxicam is among the drugs India has banned for animal use to protect vultures. 3. Its only known breeding population in India is in Assam. How many of the statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

9. GHARIAL

PAGE 20

Consider the following statements about the gharial: 1. The National Chambal Sanctuary spans Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. 2. The WII basin survey found more gharials in the Ghaghra than in the Girwa. 3. The mugger is Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List. Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

10. OLIVE RIDLEY TURTLE

PAGE 22

With reference to the olive ridley turtle, consider: 1. Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary lies in Odisha's Kendrapara district. 2. Odisha's seasonal fishing ban off its nesting coasts runs from 1 November to 31 May. 3. The IUCN Red List rates the species Vulnerable. How many of the statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

11. REEF-BUILDING CORALS

PAGE 24

With reference to reef-building (stony) corals, consider: 1. All species of the order Scleractinia are in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. 2. They are listed in Appendix I of CITES. 3. IUCN's reassessment found about 44% of species with enough data threatened. How many of the statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

12. GUGGUL

PAGE 26

Consider the following statements about guggul (Commiphora wightii): 1. It is listed in Appendix II of CITES. 2. It is one of the specified plants in Schedule III of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. 3. It grows wild only in India. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

13. LANTANA

PAGE 28

With reference to Lantana camara, consider: 1. It is native to Central and South America. 2. It is on the IUCN Invasive Species Specialist Group's list of 100 of the World's Worst Invasive Alien Species. 3. It was brought to India as cattle fodder. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

14. GREATER ONE-HORNED RHINOCEROS

PAGE 30

Consider the following protected areas: 1. Jaldapara National Park 2. Orang National Park 3. Dudhwa National Park 4. Keibul Lamjao National Park. In how many of the above are wild greater one-horned rhinoceroses found?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) All four

15. NILGIRI TAHR

PAGE 31

Consider the following statements about the Nilgiri tahr: 1. It is the state animal of Keralam. 2. Its largest single population is in Eravikulam National Park. 3. It is found only in the Western Ghats of Keralam and Tamil Nadu. Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

16. HANGUL (KASHMIR STAG)

PAGE 32

With reference to the hangul, consider: 1. It is a red deer subspecies found only in the Kashmir Valley. 2. IUCN lists its parent species, Cervus hanglu, as Critically Endangered. 3. The 2025 census counted more hangul than the 2023 census. Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 3 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

17. SLOTH BEAR

PAGE 33

Consider the following pairs (bear species : main range in India): 1. Sloth bear : central and peninsular India 2. Malayan sun bear : Western Ghats 3. Himalayan brown bear : Himalaya. Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 and 3 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

18. INDUS RIVER DOLPHIN

PAGE 34

With reference to the Indus river dolphin, consider the following statements: 1. It is the State Aquatic Animal of Punjab. 2. IUCN assesses it as a subspecies of the Ganges river dolphin. 3. India's 2021–23 estimate found it only in the Beas river. Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 and 3 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

19. IRRAWADDY DOLPHIN

PAGE 35

With reference to the Irrawaddy dolphin, consider the following statements: 1. India's first range-wide dolphin estimate (2021–23) included it. 2. In Odisha's 2026 census, Chilika held more Irrawaddy dolphins than the rest of Odisha's coast. 3. It lives only in fresh water. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

20. WILD WATER BUFFALO

PAGE 36

With reference to the wild water buffalo, consider: 1. It is the state animal of Chhattisgarh. 2. It is listed in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. 3. Domestic buffaloes descend from it. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) None (b) Only one (c) Only two (d) All three

21. HARD-GROUND BARASINGHA

PAGE 37

Consider the following pairs (swamp deer subspecies : stronghold): 1. Hard-ground barasingha : Kanha Tiger Reserve 2. Eastern swamp deer : Kaziranga National Park 3. Northern swamp deer : Keibul Lamjao National Park. How many of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

22. EURASIAN LYNX

PAGE 38

With reference to the Eurasian lynx, consider: 1. The IUCN Red List rates it Least Concern. 2. It is listed in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. 3. Sikkim's first photographic record came from the Tso Lhamo plateau. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

23. STRIPED HYENA

PAGE 39

With reference to the striped hyena, consider: 1. CITES CoP20 placed it in Appendix I. 2. The Convention on Migratory Species listed it in its Appendices I and II in 2026. 3. India lists it in Schedule II of the Wild Life (Protection) Act. How many of the statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

24. INDIAN PANGOLIN

PAGE 40

Consider the following statements about pangolins in India: 1. The Indian pangolin is listed as Critically Endangered by IUCN. 2. All eight recognised pangolin species are in CITES Appendix I. 3. The Indian pangolin usually gives birth to a single young. Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

25. PYGMY HOG

PAGE 41

With reference to the pygmy hog, consider the following statements: 1. Both sexes build grass nests and use them throughout the year. 2. Its wild populations today are found in Assam and Nepal. 3. Captive-bred hogs have been released in four protected areas of Assam. Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

26. LION-TAILED MACAQUE

PAGE 42

Consider the following statements about the lion-tailed macaque: 1. It is active mainly by day. 2. It is endemic to the Western Ghats. 3. Fruit makes up most of its diet. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

27. HIMALAYAN BROWN BEAR

PAGE 43

Consider the following pairs (bear : status): 1. Himalayan brown bear : CITES Appendix I 2. Brown bear (Ursus arctos) : IUCN Least Concern 3. Himalayan brown bear : WPA Schedule II. How many of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

28. BLUE WHALE

PAGE 44

Consider the following statements: 1. The blue whale feeds mainly on krill, filtered through baleen plates. 2. The whale shark is the largest mammal in the sea. 3. The blue whale is listed in Schedule I of India's Wild Life (Protection) Act. Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

29. SNOW LEOPARD

PAGE 45

With reference to the snow leopard, consider: 1. India's first national estimate found more snow leopards in Uttarakhand than in Himachal Pradesh. 2. It is listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List. 3. Like the tiger, it can roar. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

30. AMUR FALCON

PAGE 46

Consider the following statements about the Amur falcon: 1. On migration it crosses the Arabian Sea between India and Africa. 2. At stopovers in north-east India it feeds on termites. 3. It is listed in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act as amended in 2022. Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

31. INDIAN VULTURE

PAGE 47

Consider the following statements: 1. The Indian vulture and the long-billed vulture are the same species. 2. Meloxicam is among the veterinary drugs banned in India to protect vultures. 3. Veterinary diclofenac kills vultures through kidney failure. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

32. BLACK-NECKED CRANE

PAGE 48

With reference to the black-necked crane, consider the following statements: 1. It is the state bird of Ladakh. 2. It breeds in Arunachal Pradesh in summer. 3. It is listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

33. SARUS CRANE

PAGE 49

Consider the following pairs (crane : status in India): 1. Sarus crane : resident breeder 2. Demoiselle crane : winter visitor 3. Black-necked crane : breeds in Arunachal Pradesh. Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

34. NILGIRI WOOD PIGEON

PAGE 50

With reference to the Nilgiri wood pigeon, consider the following statements: 1. IUCN uplisted it to Vulnerable in 2025. 2. It is found in the forests of north-east India. 3. It is listed in Schedule II of the Wild Life (Protection) Act. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

35. BENGAL FLORICAN

PAGE 51

Consider the following statements about the Bengal florican: 1. It is listed in Appendix I of CITES. 2. Its Indian population lives mainly in the grasslands of Rajasthan and Gujarat. 3. Males perform leaping displays in the breeding season. Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

36. INDIAN SKIMMER — PAGE 52

With reference to the Indian skimmer, consider the following statements: 1. Its lower mandible is longer than the upper. 2. It nests in colonies on exposed river sandbars. 3. Almost all of its breeding now takes place in India. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

37. NICOBAR MEGAPODE — PAGE 53

Consider the following statements about the Nicobar megapode: 1. It incubates its eggs in mounds instead of sitting on them. 2. It is found only in the Nicobar group of islands. 3. A Megapode Sanctuary was notified on Menchal Island in 2022. Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

38. WHITE-BELLIED HERON — PAGE 54

With reference to the white-bellied heron, consider the following statements: 1. In India it now survives mainly in Arunachal Pradesh. 2. It nests in large mixed colonies with egrets. 3. The Kalai-II hydroelectric project lies on the Lohit river. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

39. INDIAN GREY HORNBILL — PAGE 55

Consider the following pairs (hornbill : schedule of the Wild Life (Protection) Act as amended in 2022): 1. Indian grey hornbill : Schedule II 2. Great hornbill : Schedule I 3. Narcondam hornbill : Schedule II. Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

40. KING COBRA — PAGE 56

Consider the following statements: 1. The king cobra builds a nest of leaf litter for its eggs. 2. The Western Ghats king cobra was named Ophiophagus kaalinga in 2024. 3. The Wild Life (Protection) Act places the king cobra in Schedule II. Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

41. MUGGER (MARSH CROCODILE) — PAGE 57

Consider the following pairs (crocodilian : IUCN Red List category): 1. Gharial : Critically Endangered 2. Mugger : Endangered 3. Saltwater crocodile : Least Concern. Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1 and 3 only

42. HIMALAYAN SALAMANDER — PAGE 58

With reference to the Himalayan salamander, consider the following statements: 1. In India it is known from the Darjeeling hills of West Bengal. 2. It is listed in Appendix II of CITES. 3. Jorepokhri Wildlife Sanctuary holds its largest Indian population. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

43. GALAXY FROG — PAGE 59

With reference to the galaxy frog, consider the following statements: 1. It is endemic to the southern Western Ghats. 2. It is listed in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act as amended in 2022. 3. It lives mainly in fast-flowing streams. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

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44. SALTWATER CROCODILE — PAGE 60

Consider the following statements about the saltwater crocodile: 1. It is listed as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List. 2. It is listed in Schedule II of the Wild Life (Protection) Act as amended in 2022. 3. Females lay their eggs in mound nests. Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 3 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

45. MANTA AND DEVIL RAYS — PAGE 61

Consider the following pairs (Species : Schedule of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2022): 1. Giant manta : Schedule I 2. Sicklefin devil ray : Schedule I 3. Reef manta : Schedule II. How many of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

46. GOLDEN MAHSEER — PAGE 62

With reference to the golden mahseer (Tor putitora), consider the following statements: 1. It is listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List. 2. It is protected under Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. 3. It migrates within river systems to spawn. Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

47. SEAHORSES — PAGE 63

Consider the following statements about seahorses: 1. The male carries the developing young in a brood pouch. 2. All seahorses are listed in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. 3. The genus Hippocampus is listed in CITES Appendix II. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

48. SNOW TROUT — PAGE 64

Consider the following statements about the snow trout (Schizothorax richardsonii): 1. It belongs to the carp family. 2. It was introduced to Himalayan rivers from Europe for sport fishing. 3. It is listed in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

49. HORSESHOE CRABS — PAGE 65

With reference to horseshoe crabs found in India, consider the following statements: 1. They are closer to spiders and scorpions than to true crabs. 2. Their blood is blue and copper-based. 3. Both Indian species are in Schedule II of the Wild Life (Protection) Act. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

50. ORANGE OAKLEAF — PAGE 66

With reference to the orange oakleaf butterfly, consider the following statements: 1. It is listed in Schedule II of the Wild Life (Protection) Act. 2. Its leaf-like pattern is on the underside of its wings. 3. Satpura National Park is its main site in Madhya Pradesh. Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

51. LONG-TAILED DUSKHAWKER — PAGE 67

With reference to the long-tailed duskhawker, consider the following statements: 1. Before 2024 it had not been seen anywhere in India since 1914. 2. Dragonflies of its genus are mostly active at twilight. 3. It is listed in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

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52. SAL — PAGE 68

With reference to sal (Shorea robusta), consider the following statements: 1. IUCN moved it to Near Threatened in 2025. 2. Its seeds can be dried and stored for several years. 3. The sal heartwood borer spends most of its life cycle inside the trunk. Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 and 3 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

53. NEELAKURINJI — PAGE 69

With reference to neelakurinji (Strobilanthes kunthiana), consider the following statements: 1. It is listed in Schedule III of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. 2. Each plant flowers once in its lifetime and then dies. 3. It is endemic to the Eastern Himalaya. Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

54. RED SANDERS — PAGE 70

With reference to red sanders (Pterocarpus santalinus), consider the following statements: 1. It is a specified plant in Schedule III of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. 2. It is listed in CITES Appendix I. 3. It grows wild only in India. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

55. INDIAN SANDALWOOD — PAGE 71

With reference to Indian sandalwood (Santalum album), consider the following statements: 1. It draws water and nutrients from the roots of host plants. 2. It is listed in CITES Appendix II. 3. India imports more sandalwood oil than it exports. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

56. SPECTACULAR CASSIA — PAGE 72

With reference to Senna spectabilis, consider the following statements: 1. It is native to tropical America. 2. Its seeds can stay viable for nearly a decade. 3. It reached India accidentally as a contaminant of grain imports. Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

57. VILAYATI BABUL (MESQUITE) — PAGE 73

With reference to seemai karuvelam (vilayati babul), consider the following statements: 1. It is native to India's Thar desert. 2. It is the same species as khejri. 3. The Madras High Court made the Forest Department the sole nodal agency for its removal. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

58. WATER HYACINTH — PAGE 74

With reference to water hyacinth, consider the following statements: 1. It is native to South America. 2. Its spongy, bulbous leaf stalks help it float. 3. It is on the IUCN expert list of 100 of the World's Worst Invasive Alien Species. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

59. AFRICAN CATFISH (THAI MAGUR) — PAGE 75

With reference to the African catfish (Thai magur), consider the following statements: 1. It is the same species as the native Indian magur, Clarias magur. 2. It can breathe air. 3. The National Green Tribunal first created the ban on its culture in 2019. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

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60. SAILFIN CATFISH — PAGE 76

With reference to sailfin catfish (Pterygoplichthys), consider the following statements: 1. They are native to South America. 2. They can breathe air. 3. Their spread in India is linked to the aquarium trade. Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

61. FORKED FANWORT (PINK BLOOM) — PAGE 77

With reference to 'pink bloom' in the Kole wetlands of Keralam, consider the following statements: 1. It is caused by a plant native to Keralam. 2. It is an algal bloom. 3. The plant can spread from broken stem fragments. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

62. GIANT AFRICAN LAND SNAIL — PAGE 78

With reference to the giant African land snail, consider the following statements: 1. Each snail is a hermaphrodite. 2. It is native to South America. 3. It can carry the rat lungworm. Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

63. ARABIAN BLACK ELECTRIC RAY — PAGE 83

With reference to Tetronarce ramanamurthyi, described in 2026, consider: 1. It is an electric ray from the deep south-eastern Arabian Sea. 2. It is the first confirmed record of its genus in the northern Indian Ocean. 3. It was described by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute. How many of the statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

64. CHANDGAD CAECILIAN — PAGE 81

Consider the following statements about Gegeneophis chandgadi, described in 2026: 1. It is a limbless amphibian. 2. It was found inside a tiger reserve of the Western Ghats. 3. Its name comes from a local dialect of Marathi. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

65. JHUMA'S LEOPARD GECKO — PAGE 80

Consider the following statements about Eublepharis jhuma: 1. It was described from the Kaimur Plateau in Bihar. 2. Its species name honours a river of the Kaimur hills. 3. All species of its genus are in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

66. WOOLLY-HAIRED OSBECKIA — PAGE 103

Osbeckia ulotricha was in the news in 2026. Consider the following statements: 1. Botanical Survey of India scientists described it from the Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve. 2. Its type locality lies in Kerala's Idukki district. 3. Its describers assessed it as Data Deficient. How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

Answers

1 **(c) All three.** Madhya Pradesh leads with 785 tigers and nine reserves; states notify reserves on NTCA's recommendation (Section 38V); the 2022 estimate was 3,682.

2 **(c) All three.** Lions live wild only in Gujarat; the 2025 count was 891; a male reached Barda on its own in 2023 and five lionesses were moved in, and 26 lived there in August 2026.

3 **(b) Only two.** Namibia, South Africa and Botswana are all in southern Africa; the Chambal divides Gandhi Sagar; the IUCN lists the cheetah as Vulnerable.

4 **(b) 1 and 3 only.** SAIEE used dung DNA with mark–recapture; Karnataka (6,013) leads, ahead of Assam (4,159); the IUCN lists the species as Endangered.

5 **(a) Only one.** UP had 2,397 and Bihar 2,220; Vikramshila is in Bihar's Bhagalpur district; three Indus dolphins live in Punjab's Beas.

6 **(d) None.** The IUCN listed it Vulnerable in 2025; Mahuadanr is in Latehar, Jharkhand; India's wolves are in CITES Appendix I.

7 **(a) Only one.** The court fixed 14,013 sq km in Rajasthan and 740 sq km in Gujarat; a few birds survive in Pakistan; the first release was at Sam, Jaisalmer.

8 **(b) Only two.** It is in Schedule I; meloxicam is the safe substitute, not a banned drug; WII found every active nest in Upper Assam.

9 **(a) 1 and 2 only.** The sanctuary spans three states; the Ghaghra had 463 and the Girwa 158; the mugger is Vulnerable, while the gharial is Critically Endangered.

10 **(c) All three.** Gahirmatha is in Kendrapara; the 2026–27 ban runs from 1 November to 31 May; IUCN lists the olive ridley as Vulnerable.

11 **(b) Only two.** 1 is correct (Schedule I, Part K); 2 is wrong, as CITES lists them in Appendix II; 3 is correct: 340 of 774 species.

12 **(a) Only one.** Appendix II since 5 March 2026; Schedule III's 19 plants exclude guggul; it also grows wild in Pakistan and Oman.

13 **(b) Only two.** 1 and 2 are correct (IUCN Global Invasive Species Database); 3 is wrong: lantana reached India in 1807 as a garden ornamental.

14 **(c) Only three.** Jaldapara (West Bengal), Orang (Assam) and Dudhwa (Uttar Pradesh) hold rhinos; Keibul Lamjao in Manipur is the home of the sangai deer.

15 **(b) 2 and 3 only.** It is Tamil Nadu's state animal; Eravikulam held 841 in 2025, the largest single population; it lives only in the Western Ghats of Keralam and Tamil Nadu.

16 **(a) 1 and 3 only.** The hangul is endemic to Kashmir; only the subspecies is Critically Endangered, the species is Least Concern; counts rose from 289 to 323.

17 **(b) 1 and 3 only.** Central India is the sloth bear's core; sun bears occur in small numbers on the north-east border; brown bears live in the Himalaya.

18 **(b) 1 and 3 only.** Punjab declared it State Aquatic Animal in 2019; IUCN has assessed Platanista minor as a separate species since 2022; all three counted were in the Beas.

19 **(a) Only one.** The 2021–23 estimate covered Ganges and Indus dolphins; Chilika held 159 of Odisha's 208; the species lives in salt, brackish and fresh water.

20 **(d) All three.** Chhattisgarh names it its state animal; WPA 2022 places it in Schedule I; it is the wild ancestor of all domestic buffalo breeds.

21 **(b) Only two.** Kanha holds the hard-ground form and Kaziranga the eastern form; Keibul Lamjao shelters the sangai, while northern swamp deer live in the UP–Uttarakhand Terai.

22 **(c) All three.** IUCN rated it Least Concern in 2015; WPA 2022 Schedule I lists it; a January 2026 camera trap on Tso Lhamo gave Sikkim's first photograph.

23 **(a) Only one.** CoP20 rejected Appendix I and adopted Appendix II; CMS COP15 listed it in Appendices I and II; WPA 2022 lists it in Schedule I.

24 **(b) 2 and 3 only.** The Indian pangolin is Endangered (the Chinese is Critically Endangered); CoP17 put all eight in Appendix I; one young per birth is usual.

25 **(c) 1 and 3 only.** Both sexes build and use nests all year; wild hogs now survive only in Assam; releases went to Sonai Rupai, Orang, Barnadi and Manas.

26 **(c) All three.** It is diurnal; it lives only in the Western Ghats of Karnataka, Keralam and Tamil Nadu; fruit is about 80% of its diet.

27 **(b) Only two.** CITES lists isabellinus in Appendix I; IUCN rates the species Least Concern; the 2022 Act puts the brown bear in Schedule I.

28 **(c) 1 and 3 only.** Blue whales filter krill through baleen; the whale shark is a fish; the blue whale is in WPA Schedule I.

29 **(a) Only one.** Uttarakhand 124 exceeds Himachal 51; IUCN moved it to Vulnerable in 2017; its vocal folds lack the tissue needed to roar.

30 **(d) 1, 2 and 3.** Tagged birds cross about 3,000 km of the Arabian Sea; termites fuel the Tamenglong stopovers; the 2022 schedules list it in Schedule I.

31 **(b) Only two.** Both names refer to Gyps indicus; meloxicam is the vulture-safe substitute, not a banned drug; diclofenac causes kidney failure (visceral gout).

32 **(a) Only one.** It is Ladakh's state bird; it breeds in Ladakh and only winters in Arunachal; IUCN lists it as Near Threatened.

33 **(a) 1 and 2 only.** The sarus is India's only resident breeding crane; demoiselle cranes come in winter; the black-necked crane breeds in Ladakh and only winters in Arunachal.

34 **(d) None.** IUCN downlisted it from Vulnerable to Least Concern in 2025; it lives only in the Western Ghats; the 2022 Act lists it in Schedule I.

35 **(c) 1 and 3 only.** It is in CITES Appendix I; it lives in Terai and Brahmaputra grasslands of UP, Assam and Arunachal; males leap in display.

36 **(c) All three.** The lower mandible is longer and skims the water; it nests colonially on sandbars; it breeds almost only in India, with rare breeding in Bangladesh.

37 **(d) 1, 2 and 3.** Mound heat incubates the eggs; it is endemic to the Nicobars; the 1.29 sq km Menchal sanctuary was notified in October 2022.

38 **(b) Only two.** India's six to nine birds are in Arunachal; it nests alone, not in colonies; Kalai-II is on the Lohit in Anjaw district.

39 **(a) 1 and 2 only.** The Indian grey hornbill is the only hornbill in Schedule II; the great and Narcondam hornbills are both in Schedule I.

40 **(a) 1 and 2 only.** It is the only nest-building snake; O. kaalinga was named in 2024; WPA 2022 lists all Ophiophagus species in Schedule I.

41 **(d) 1 and 3 only.** The gharial is Critically Endangered, the mugger Vulnerable and the saltwater crocodile Least Concern.

42 **(b) Only two.** It lives in Darjeeling's hill wetlands; CITES lists all Tylototriton in Appendix II; Jorepokhri no longer has salamanders.

43 **(a) Only one.** It is a southern Western Ghats endemic; WPA 2022 does not schedule it; it shelters under rotting logs on the forest floor.

44 **(b) 1 and 3 only.** IUCN rates it Least Concern; WPA 2022 lists it in Schedule I; females guard mound nests of about 50 eggs.

45 **(a) Only one.** Both the giant and reef mantas are in Schedule I; the sicklefin devil ray is in Schedule II. Only pair 1 is right.

46 **(c) 1 and 3 only.** IUCN lists it Endangered (2018); it is in no WPA 2022 schedule; it moves up tributaries to spawn, so dams block it.

47 **(c) All three.** Males brood the eggs and release the young; WPA Schedule I covers all Syngnathidae; Hippocampus spp. have been in Appendix II since 2004.

48 **(a) Only one.** It is a native Himalayan cyprinid (carp family); introduced sport fish are rainbow and brown trout; it is in no WPA 2022 schedule.

49 **(c) All three.** NOAA places them nearer spiders and scorpions; their blood is blue and copper-based; WPA 2022 Schedule II, Part G, lists both Indian species.

50 **(c) 2 and 3 only.** Schedule II lists the blue, scarce blue and white oakleaf, not this one; the leaf pattern is on the underside; in Madhya Pradesh it lives mainly in Satpura.

51 **(a) Only one.** It was photographed in West Bengal, Assam and Maharashtra after 1914; Gynacantha are crepuscular; Schedule I lists only the Himalayan relict dragonfly.

52 **(b) 1 and 3 only.** 1 and 3 are correct (IUCN 2025-2; borer adults live only 20–30 days outside the tree); 2 is wrong: sal seed dies about six days after harvest.

53 **(a) 1 and 2 only.** 1 is correct (Schedule III, item 1); 2 is correct (semelparous, 12-year cycle); 3 is wrong: it is endemic to the southern Western Ghats.

54 **(a) Only one.** Only 3 is correct: red sanders is endemic to the southern Eastern Ghats; it is in WPA Schedule IV and CITES Appendix II.

55 **(b) Only two.** 1 and 3 are correct (hemi-root parasite; 505 t imported vs 139 t exported); 2 is wrong: sandalwood is not CITES-listed.

56 **(a) 1 and 2 only.** 1 and 2 are correct; 3 is wrong: it was planted deliberately in the 1980s for shade, beautification and firewood.

57 **(d) None.** All are wrong: it comes from the Americas; khejri is Prosopis cineraria; District Collectors are the nodal authority.

58 **(c) All three.** All are correct (IUCN SSC Global Invasive Species Database: native range, bulbous spongy stalks, 100 worst list).

59 **(a) Only one.** Only 2 is correct: Thai magur is Clarias gariepinus; the ban rests on the Environment (Protection) Act, and the NGT reinforced it in 2019.

60 **(d) 1, 2 and 3.** All are correct: native to the Amazon and Madeira basins; air-breathing via the stomach; released pet fish (FishBase, GISD, INSEE 2025).

61 **(a) Only one.** Only 3 is correct: pink bloom is Cabomba furcata, a flowering plant native to tropical America.

62 **(c) 1 and 3 only.** 1 and 3 are correct (GISD); 2 is wrong: it is native to East Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania).

63 **(b) Only two.** It is a deep-sea electric ray of the south-eastern Arabian Sea and its genus's first confirmed northern Indian Ocean record; the Zoological Survey of India described it.

64 **(b) Only two.** It is a caecilian, a limbless amphibian; it was found in village backyards at Buzawade, outside protected forests; it is named after the Chandgadi dialect.

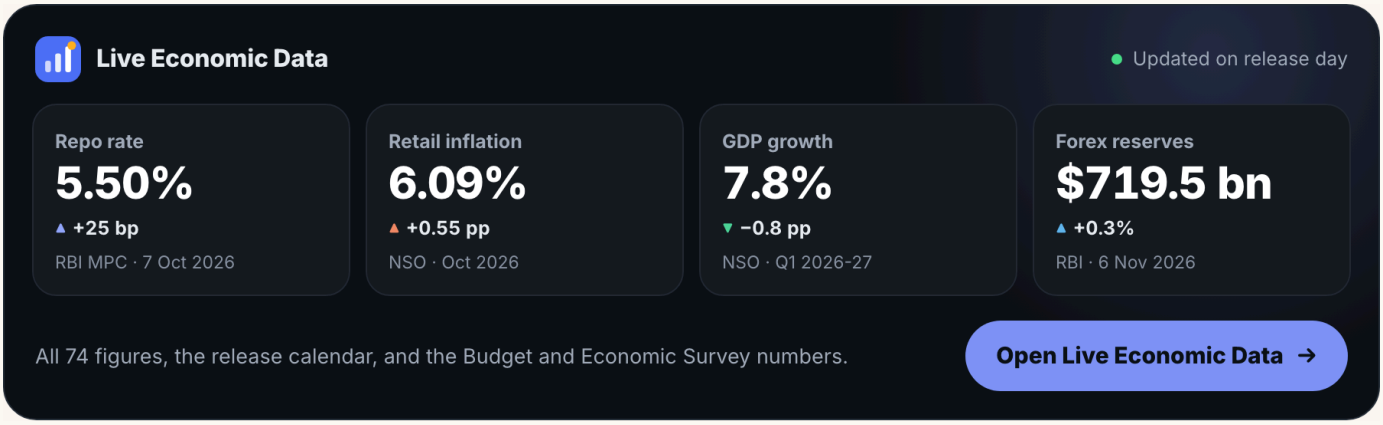
65 **(b) Only two.** 1 and 3 are correct (Herpetozoa 2026; WPA Schedule I, 2022); 2 is wrong: 'Jhuma' is the nickname of ZSI Director Dhriti Banerjee.

66 **(b) Only two.** 1 and 3 are correct (Lilloa, 2026); 2 is wrong: the type locality, Muthukuzhivayal, is in Kanyakumari district, Tamil Nadu.

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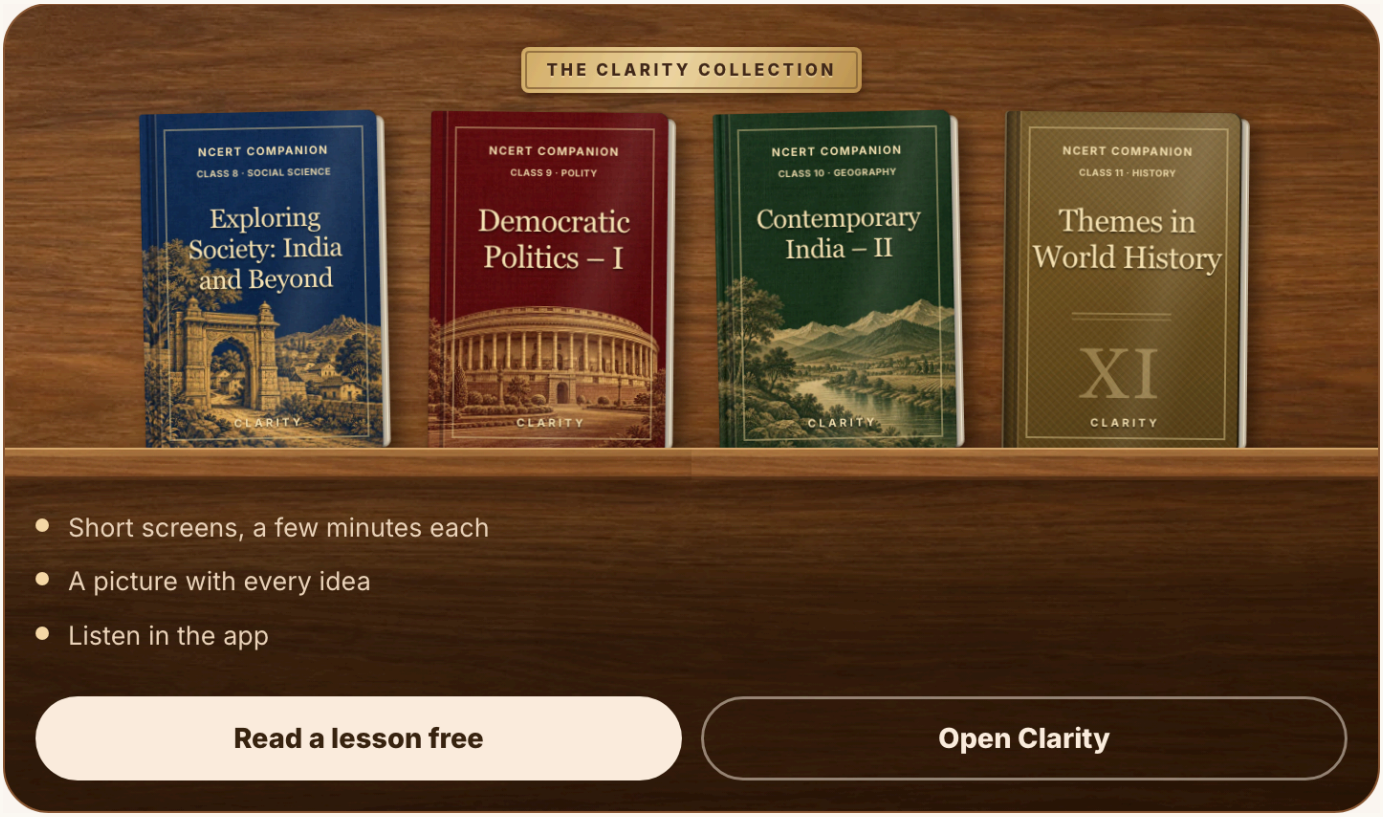
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to come

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