

2020



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CURRENT AFFAIRS

ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

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BusinessLine



1. State of India's Bird 2020

Why in News?

Recently, the State of India's Bird 2020 was released at the **13th Conference of Parties of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals** under the United Nation.

State of India's Birds 2020

- It is an assessment of the long-term trend, current trend, distribution range size, and the overall conservation status of 867 Indian bird species.
- It places Indian species into Low, Moderate and High categories of Conservation Concern for India.

Key Points

- **Categorisation of Birds:**
 - The study categorised 101 species as “high concern”, 319 as “moderate concern” and 442 into “low concern”.
 - Out of the species categorised as a high concern, 26% are classified globally by IUCN as “least concern”.
- **Declining trend:**
 - Over 50% of 867 species studied exhibit a population decline in the long term.
 - Raptors, migratory shorebirds, and endemics to the Western Ghats have declined considerably.
 - Common species like Small Minivet, Common Greenshank and Oriental Skylark have declined.
 - Birds that eat invertebrates have declined as a group.
 - The four species of bustards in India have all suffered continuous population decline. **Four species of bustards are:**
 - Great Indian Bustard
 - Macqueen's Bustard
 - Lesser Florican
 - Bengal Florican
 - The report points out that the Indian vultures have experienced catastrophic population declines starting in the early 1990's.
 - The decline is mostly attributed to inadvertent poisoning by the livestock anti-inflammatory drug diclofenac.
- **Causes for decline in bird population:**
 - Widespread habitat loss
 - Anthropological activities
 - Widespread use of toxins and pesticides
 - Hunting and pet trade

- **Increasing Trend:**
 - 126 species have had stable or increasing trends over the last 25+ years.
 - Species like House Sparrow and Indian Peafowl have a stable population.
 - The numbers of India's national bird, the Indian Peafowl/Peacock, has increased dramatically over the past few decades.

Key Recommendations

- Updation of global and national priorities using conservation assessments.
- Fund conservation efforts on High Concern species and habitats where species have declined.
- Support monitoring efforts by citizen scientists and researchers.
- Promote collaborations between researchers and the public at large

2. New Species of Urban Lizard

- A new species of lizard, the urban bent-toed gecko (**Cyrtodactylus urbanus**) was discovered in Guwahati, Assam.
- The bent-toed gecko was earlier thought to be the same as the **Khasi Hills lizard**.
- The species falls within the khasiensis group.
 - However, differs from other members of this group in **mitochondrial sequence data** and aspects of **morphology**
 - **Morphology is a branch** of biology that deals with the form and structure of plants and animals.
- The new species of lizard is also markedly different in molecular structure, blotch and colour from the **Cyrtodactylus guwahatiensis**, or the Guwahati bent-toed gecko, that was discovered two years ago.
- **Urbanization** is a major **threat** to the survival of geckos.
- Guwahati is home to numerous important species.
 - The city provides an edge for urban biodiversity to thrive because it encompasses 18 hills, 8 reserve forests, 2 wildlife sanctuaries and a **Ramsar Site (Deepor Beel)** besides the Brahmaputra river.

Gecko

- **Geckos** (suborder Gekkota), are more than 1,000 species of lizards making up 6 families of the suborder Gekkota.
- Geckos are mostly small, usually nocturnal reptiles with soft skin.

3. Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

Why in News?

At the ongoing **13th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)** in Gujrat three species have been included in **Appendix I of UN Convention on Migratory Species.**

The Species are -

- **Great Indian Bustard**
- **Asian Elephant**
- **Bengal Florican**

Asian Elephant

- **India is the natural home of the largest population of Asian elephants.**
- It is also found in **Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar.**
- It usually resides in shrublands, artificial/terrestrial forests and grasslands.
- The challenges confronting Asian elephant conservation in most elephant Range States are habitat loss and fragmentation, human-elephant conflict, and poaching and illegal trade of elephants.
- **Conservation Status**
 - **IUCN Red List of threatened species - 'Endangered'**
 - **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) -Appendix I**
 - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 - Schedule I**

Great Indian Bustard

- The Great Indian Bustard is one of the **heaviest flying birds** in the world.
- It usually resides in **dry grasslands and scrublands** on the Indian subcontinent; its largest populations are found in the Indian state of Rajasthan.
 - The Great Indian Bustard is the **state bird of Rajasthan.**
- 90% of its population has been reduced within 50 years (six generations) majorly due to poaching.
- **Conservation Status**
 - **IUCN Red List of threatened species - 'Critically Endangered'**
 - **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) -Appendix I**
 - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 - Schedule I**

Bengal Florican

- The species has two disjunct populations, one in the Indian Subcontinent, the other in South-East Asia.

- The former occurs in Indian Subcontinent mainly in India (**Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh**) and **terai region of Nepal**.
- It inhabits lowland dry, or seasonally inundated, natural and semi-natural grasslands, often interspersed with scattered scrub or patchy open forest.
- It has a very small, rapidly declining population largely as a result of widespread **loss of its grassland habitat**.



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4. Madhav National Park

- Madhav National Park is situated in Shivpuri District, **Madhya Pradesh**.
- Madhav National Park is a part of the **Ranthambhore-Kuno-Madhav (Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan) Tiger Corridor** of Central India & Eastern Ghats landscape.
- The Park falls within one of the 32 major Tiger Corridors of the country, which are operationalised through the Tiger Conservation Plan.
- It is a **part of the upper Vindhyan hills**.
- It has a diverse ecosystem consisting of lakes, dry deciduous & dry thorn forests.
- The forest is home to tigers, leopards, Nilgai, and Chinkara (*Gazella bennettii*) and Chousingha (*Tetracerus quadricornis*) and Deers (Chital, Sambar and Barking Deer) among others.
- It is home to **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG)** like Saharia.

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