



Illegal Trade of Red Panda

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Why in News

The trade monitoring network TRAFFIC has released a report titled **“Assessment of illegal trade-related threats to Red Panda in India and selected neighbouring range countries”** recently.

The report has analysed poaching and illegal trade of the species **for the ten-year period from July 2010 to June 2019.**

Key Findings

- The red panda survival is **crucial for the eastern and north-eastern Himalayan subalpine conifer forests and the eastern Himalayan broadleaf forests.**
- The animal has been **hunted for meat and fur, besides illegal capture for the pet trade.**

An estimated **14,500 animals are left** in the wild across Nepal, Bhutan, India, China and Myanmar.
- The report has indicated that the **traditional demand for red panda meat and related products** has **reduced** over time.
- Also, the reduction in poaching and illegal trade of red panda is indicative of the **success of awareness campaigns** about the conservation of the species.

Recommendations

- **Community-based conservation** and protection for the species as its habitat stretches across remote areas.

- **Trans-boundary law enforcement co-operation** through the use of multi-government platforms like **SAWEN (South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network)**.
 - SAWEN was formally established at an inter-governmental meeting hosted in Paro (a town in Bhutan) by the Royal Government of Bhutan, in January **2011**.
 - It aims to establish **multilateral collaboration to fight wildlife crime** in the region.

Red Panda



- The red panda is a **small reddish-brown arboreal mammal**.
- The only living member of the **genus Ailurus**.
- It is also the state animal of **Sikkim**.
- It is listed as **Endangered in the IUCN** red list of Threatened Species and under **Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- It is found in the forests of **India, Nepal, Bhutan and the northern mountains of Myanmar and southern China**.
- It thrives best at 2,200-4,800m, in **mixed deciduous and conifer forests** with dense understories of bamboo.
- In India, About 5,000-6,000 red pandas are estimated to be present in **Sikkim, western Arunachal Pradesh, Darjeeling district of West Bengal and parts of Meghalaya**.
 - This is the second-largest population after China (6,000-7,000).
 - Red pandas have been reported from 11 districts of **Arunachal Pradesh**, which is **presumed to hold the largest red panda population in the country**.

TRAFFIC – The Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network

- TRAFFIC is a leading **non-governmental organisation** working globally on trade in wild animals and plants in the context of both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.
- It is a joint program of **WWF and IUCN** – the International Union for Conservation of Nature created in 1976.
- TRAFFIC focuses on leveraging resources, expertise and awareness of the latest globally urgent species trade issues such as tiger parts, elephant ivory and rhino horn.

Source: TH