



Olms in Postojna Cave of Slovenia

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Why in News

Recently, three **Olms** have been put on display in **Slovenia's Postojna Cave**, where they hatched in 2016 in a rare successful breeding.

Key Points

- **Description:**

- The Olms are **eyeless (skin covered eyes) pink animals** also known as the "**baby dragon**" and "**human fish**" for its pale skin-like colour.
- They feed on **detritus and endemic cave vertebrates** and hide in crevices or bottom sediment when disturbed. They **can survive without food for up to 10 years**.
- A long-lived species that only matures to a sexual stage after the age of 12-15 years and **reproduces very slowly**.
- It can live a century and breeds only once a decade usually in laboratories throughout Europe or deep in caves away from people.
- They have a **powerful sensory system** of smell, taste, hearing and electrosensitivity.

- **Threats:**

- The olm requires **clean water**, and is therefore **vulnerable to water pollution**.
- Consequently, the major threats to the olm are pollution and habitat disturbance from land use changes occurring above the cave systems.

- **Habitat:**

- They are found in large subterranean **aquatic karst systems** formed in **limestone and dolomite rocks**, and may be found in cave entrances.
- They are an entirely aquatic species and prefer waters ranging from 5-15°C.
- Found in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Italy, Slovenia and France.



Karst Topography

- Any **limestone or dolomitic region** showing typical landforms produced by the action of groundwater through the processes of solution and deposition is called Karst topography.
- It is named after the typical topography developed in limestone rocks of Karst region in the **Balkans adjacent to Adriatic sea.**

The name of this type of topography comes from the **Karst region in Yugoslavia**, karst topography can be found all over the world.

- The karst topography is also characterised by **erosional and depositional landforms**. Karst landscapes feature **caves, underground streams and sinkholes** on the surface. Where erosion has worn away the land above ground, steep rocky cliffs are visible.



Source: HT

