



Fishing Cats

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Why in News

The Odisha Government has started a two-year conservation project for **Fishing Cats** in **Bhitarkanika National Park**.

Like several other rare species, little is known about **fishing cats** in the wild.



Key Points

- **Scientific Name:** *Prionailurus viverrinus*.
- **Description:**
 - It is twice the size of a house cat.
 - The fishing cat is **nocturnal (active at night)** and apart from fish also preys on frogs, crustaceans, snakes, birds, and scavenges on carcasses of larger animals.
 - The species breed all year round.
 - They spend most of their lives in areas of dense vegetation close to water bodies and are excellent swimmers.
- **Habitat:** In India, fishing cats are mainly found in the mangrove forests of the Sundarbans, on the foothills of the Himalayas along the Ganga and Brahmaputra river valleys and in the Western Ghats.

- **Threats:**
 - **Habitat Destruction:** A major threat for fishing cats is the destruction of wetlands, their preferred habitat.
 - **Shrimp Farming:** Shrimp farming is another growing threat to **mangrove habitats** of the Fishing Cat.
 - **Hunting:** This unique cat also faces threats from hunting for meat and skin.
 - **Ritual Practices:** Tribal hunters indulge in ritual hunting practices throughout the year.
 - **Poaching:** It is also occasionally poached for its skin.
 - **Poisoning:** Indiscriminate trapping, snaring and poisoning.
- **Protection Status:**
 - **IUCN Red List: Vulnerable.** Despite multiple threats, the Fishing Cat was recently downlisted to “Vulnerable” from “Endangered” in the IUCN Red List species assessment.
 - **CITES: Appendix II**
 - **Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Schedule I**
- **Conservation Efforts:**
 - The Fishing Cat Project, launched in 2010 started raising awareness about the Cat in West Bengal.
 - In 2012, the **West Bengal** government officially declared the **Fishing Cat** as the **State Animal** and the Calcutta Zoo has two big enclosures dedicated to them.
 - In Odisha, many NGOs and wildlife conservation Societies are involved in Fishing Cat research and conservation work.

Source: DTE