



Firefly for Great Indian Bustard

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Why in News

The **Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change** (MoEFCC) along with the **Wildlife Conservation Society** (WCS) India has come up with a unique initiative a “**firefly bird diverter**” for **overhead power lines** in areas where **Great Indian Bustard** (GIB) populations are found in the wild.

The **Wildlife Conservation Society** is a **non-governmental organization** headquartered in New York, that aims to conserve the world's largest wild places in 14 priority regions.

Key Points



- **About:**
 - Firefly bird diverters are **flaps installed on power lines**. They work as reflectors for bird species like the GIB. Birds can **spot them from a distance of about 50 meters** and change **their path of flight to avoid collision with power lines**.
 - Smaller birds can change their direction but for larger bird species, it is difficult because of their **body weight** and other factors.
 - Since great Indian bustards are heavy birds with limited frontal vision, they find it difficult to change their course of flight swiftly even if they spot a live wire.
 - The diverters are called fireflies because they look like **fireflies from a distance, shining on power lines in the night**.
- **Background:**
 - According to a report by the MoEFCC, power lines (especially **high-voltage transmission** lines) with multiple overhead wires, are the most important current threat for GIBs in the **Thar region**, and are causing **unsustainably high mortality**.
 - The Supreme Court of India, in a recent hearing, directed that **power lines in GIB landscapes should be placed underground**.

Great Indian Bustard (GIB)

- **About:**
 - It is one of the **heaviest flying birds** in the world.
 - **Scientific Name: *Ardeotis nigriceps***
- **Habitat:**
 - Bustards generally favour **flat open landscapes** with minimal visual obstruction and disturbance, therefore adapt well in **grasslands**.
 - Its population is confined mostly to **Rajasthan and Gujarat**. Small populations occur in **Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh**.
- **Protection Status:**
 - **International Union for Conservation of Nature status: Critically Endangered**
 - **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES): Appendix 1**
 - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule 1**
 - It is one of the species for the **recovery programme** under the **Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats** of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate change.
 - The **Great Indian Bustard, Asian Elephant and Bengal Florican** have been included in **Appendix I of the UN Convention on Migratory Species** at the **13th Conference of the Parties (COP)** to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) in Gandhinagar (Gujarat).

- **Threats:**

- Collision/electrocution with power transmission lines,
- Hunting (still prevalent in Pakistan),
- Irrigation and farming technology
- Mining
- Wind turbines and Solar farms (photovoltaic power stations)
- Plantation of exotic shrub/tree species in deserts and grasslands in the name of afforestation

Source: TH