



WWF Conservation Drive on World Wildlife Day

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Why in News

Recently, on the occasion of **World Wildlife Day (3rd March)**, the **Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF)** called on multiple stakeholders, including the **European Union (EU)**, to save Europe's last old-growth forests.

WWF was **established in 1961** and is **headquartered at Gland, Switzerland**. Its mission is to conserve nature and reduce the most pressing threats to the diversity of life on Earth.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - Europe's Old-Growth Forests (OGF) are **primitive forests that are dominated by natural processes**. They include virgin, near-virgin, long-untouched forests by humans, eg: Białowieża Forest in Poland.
 - To date, 3,50,000 hectares (ha) of old-growth and virgin forests had been identified in Central and Southeastern Europe. Of these, only 2,80,000 ha were legally protected.
- **Location:**

The largest areas of surviving OGF and forest habitats in Europe (outside of Russia) were found primarily in Romania, Ukraine, Slovakia and Bulgaria.
- **Ecological Importance:**
 - They were **home to Europe's largest surviving large carnivore populations**, as well as thousands of other species of flora and fauna.
 - These forests **rendered important ecosystem services** such as filtering and storing freshwater to regulating the climate and were thus essential to people and to the economy.

- **Threats:**
 - Increasing pressure on forests from both **unsustainable legal and illegal logging**, as well as the **impacts of climate change**.
 - The fragmentation and destruction of forest habitats meant that **both animals and disease vectors were inadvertently coming into more frequent contact and conflict with humans**.
- **Steps that can be Taken:**
 - Developing and promoting **sustainable compensation mechanisms**.
 - Developing **forest-based local green business and investment schemes** to support sustainable development of such forests.

World Wildlife Day

- **About:**
 - It is celebrated every year on the 3rd of March, since 2013. The date chosen coincides with the day the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)** was signed in 1973.
 - The **United Nations General Assembly** resolution also designated the CITES Secretariat as the facilitator for the global observance of this special day for wildlife on the UN calendar.
- **Theme:**

The theme of World Wildlife Day 2021 is **Forests and Livelihoods: Sustaining People and Planet**. It is set in alignment with the UN **Sustainable Development Goals**.
- **In India:**

On this occasion, **the Union Environment Ministry declared that it is dedicated for reintroduction of Cheetah**, which went extinct in 1952.

Source: DTE