



Book: 'Back from the Brink' Released

Why in discussion?

On December 19, 2022, Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and Forest Minister Mohammad Akbar released a special book '**Back from the Brink**' written by the **Wildlife Trust of India (WTI)** on the **conservation of wild buffaloes, the state animal of Chhattisgarh**, at a meeting of the Chhattisgarh State Wildlife Board .

Key Points

- For the last 17 years, **WTI has been working with Chhattisgarh Forest Department on conservation and promotion of forest buffaloes**. The book details the various aspects of the project that has been going on for the last two decades as well as a detailed description of the goal of conservation.
- **India accounts for more than 80 percent of the globally endangered wild buffalo (*Bubalus arnee*)**. In Chhattisgarh, the number of forest buffaloes in hard ground has come down to less than 50. The number of forest buffaloes in the wetlands of Assam is close to 4000.
- According to **Vivek Menon, founder and executive director of Wildlife Trust of India**, when WTI started functioning in the state in 2005, there were only six forest buffaloes left in Udanti Sanctuary along with one female wild buffalo. This meant that there was a serious threat of extinction of the isolated populations of central India.
- This report chronicles 15 years of conservation work with endangered wild buffaloes. The conservation of Chhattisgarh's State Animal requires global attention as well as the cooperation of the Central and State government.
- According to Dr. Rajendra Mishra, Deputy Director and Central Zone Head, Wildlife Trust of India, there were a maximum of 11 wild buffaloes in Udanti Sanctuary during the project period. The Forest Department also succeeded in shifting two forest buffaloes (male and female) from Manas National Park in Assam to Baranwapara Wildlife Sanctuary in the year 2020 with the technical support of WTI.
- The book states that the wild buffaloes of Udanti share a haplotype with wild buffaloes of Assam state and even Maharashtra and hence can be used to increase the population of wild buffaloes in Udanti. However, the shrinking forests and grasslands in the Udanti-Sitanadi Tiger Reserve can pose a serious threat to protect wild buffaloes.
- Through three consecutive years of public awareness campaigns, WTI has disseminated conservation and promotion of wild buffaloes to about 4000 students, 3000 villagers and 12 public service departments, whose impact has reached all sections of the society.