



Himalayan Brown Bear

Why in News?

The [Himalayan brown bear](#) (*Ursus arctos isabellinus*) population in **Kashmir** is facing numerous challenges that threaten both their survival and human safety.

- Recent incidents of **bears entering residential areas** and wrecking graveyards have raised concerns among local communities.
- These incidents highlight the urgent need to **address the underlying factors causing this behavior** and safeguard the habitat of this critically endangered species.

What are Himalayan Brown Bears?

- **About:**
 - Himalayan brown bears are **a subspecies of brown bears** that inhabit the high-altitude regions of the Himalayas, ranging from Pakistan to Bhutan.
 - They have **thick fur that is most often sandy or reddish-brown in color.**
 - They can **grow up to 2.2 meters long** and weigh up to 250 kilograms.



- **Status:**
 - [IUCN Red List](#)- **Critically Endangered**
 - Brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) is listed as **Least Concern.**
 - [CITES](#) - **Appendix I.**

- Only the populations of Bhutan, China, Mexico and Mongolia; all other populations are included in Appendix II.
- **Indian [Wildlife \(Protection\) Act of 1972](#) - Schedule 1.**
- **Food:**
 - **Omnivorous.**
- **Behavior:**
 - They are **nocturnal**, and their sense of smell is acutely developed and believed to be their principal means of finding food.
- **Threat:**
 - Human-animal conflict, rapid habitat loss, poaching for fur, claws, and organs, and, in some rare cases, bear baiting.
- **Range:**
 - North-western and central Himalaya, including India, Pakistan, Nepal, the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China, and Bhutan.
- **Challenges:**
 - **Insufficient Food Sources and Altered Behavior:**
 - The bears' peculiar behavior of digging up graves and wandering into residential areas can be attributed to insufficient food in their natural habitats.
 - A study conducted by **Wildlife SOS**, an organization established with the goal of making lasting changes to protect and conserve India's natural heritage, forests, and biodiversity, revealed that a significant portion of the bears' diet in Kashmir consists of **scavenged garbage, including plastic bags, chocolate wrappers, and other edible waste.**
 - This disrupts their **natural foraging patterns and alters their behavior, leading to conflicts with humans.**
 - Improper disposal of kitchen waste by both local residents and hoteliers near bear habitats has provided easy access to food, leading to frequent interactions between bears and humans.
 - This altered behavior, **coupled with complacency in hunting for food,** has created a dependence on human-generated waste, further exacerbating conflicts.
 - **Restricted Distribution and Declining Population:**
 - The restricted distribution of the Himalayan brown bear in the alpine meadows of the Himalayas has made it challenging for researchers to gather comprehensive data on the species.
 - Habitat destruction caused by factors like **habitat encroachment, tourism, and grazing pressure** has contributed to the declining population of bears.
 - With only an estimated **500-750 bears left in India,** urgent conservation efforts are required to ensure their survival.
 - **Future Threats and Conservation Recommendations:**
 - The Himalayan brown bear's future remains bleak, as a study predicts a **decline of about 73% of their habitat by 2050** in the **western Himalayas.**
 - **Climate change** poses a significant risk, necessitating preemptive spatial planning of **protected areas to ensure the long-term viability of the species.**
 - Conservation efforts should focus on **habitat preservation, creating biological corridors, and promoting responsible waste management** to minimize human-bear conflicts.
 - Should Strengthen the legal protection and enforcement by implementing the **Wildlife (Protection) Act of 2022** and **CITES regulations.**

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Consider the following fauna: (2023)

1. Lion-tailed Macaque
2. Malabar Civet
3. Sambar Deer

How many of the above are generally nocturnal or most active after sunset?

- (a)** Only one
- (b)** Only two
- (c)** All three
- (d)** None

Ans: (b)

- The lion-tailed macaque is not a nocturnal animal. It is an arboreal and diurnal creature, they sleep at night in trees (typically, high in the canopy of rainforest). These macaques are territorial and very communicative animals. **Hence, 1 is not correct.**
- Malabar civet is primarily nocturnal. It is a small, carnivorous mammal that is native to the Western Ghats region of India.
- It has a solitary and secretive nature, making it challenging to observe in the wild. Its nocturnal behavior helps it avoid predators and increases its chances of finding prey in the darkness. **Hence, 2 is correct.**
- Sambar deer are nocturnal. They more commonly communicate by scent marking and foot stamping. They prefer the dense cover of deciduous shrubs and grass. **Hence, 3 is correct.**
- **Hence, option (b) is correct.**

Source: DTE

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