



Leopard Sterilisation

[Source: DTE](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the Maharashtra Government has decided **to sterilize Leopards for the sustainable management of population for leopards** in the State.

- Gujarat's forest department has also proposed sterilisation of leopards, especially in and around [Gir National Park](#).

What is the Need for Sterilizing Leopards and Concerns?

- **Need:**
 - In 2019-20 alone, Maharashtra saw **58 human deaths due to leopards**—over half the 97 casualties in 2010-18.
 - Maharashtra has decided to sterilize leopards as a response to the increasing **leopard-human conflicts**, rising leopard population, and the need to protect both leopards and human communities.
 - The proposed sterilisation program aims to address these challenges while complying with environmental conservation laws and regulations.
- **Concerns:**
 - Concerns about the sterilisation of leopards include **doubts about its effectiveness**, the need for comprehensive scientific research, veterinary skill development, potential stress on leopards, challenges with traditional methods, and alternative contraception options.
 - There is also an emphasis on **addressing conflicts and gaining community support for conservation efforts**.

What are the Key Points Related to Leopards?

- **Scientific Name:** Panthera pardus
- **About:**
 - The leopard is the smallest of the Big Cats (Of genus Panthera namely the [Tiger](#), [Lion](#), [Jaguar](#), [Leopard](#), and [Snow Leopard](#)), and known for its ability to adapt in a variety of habitats.
 - A nocturnal animal, the leopard hunts by night.
 - It feeds on smaller species of herbivores found in its range, such as the chital, hog deer and wild boar.
 - Melanism is a common occurrence in leopards, wherein the entire skin of the animal is black in colour, including its spots.
 - A melanistic leopard is often called [black panther](#) and mistakenly thought to be a different species.



▪ **Habitat:**

- It occurs in a wide range in sub-Saharan Africa, in small parts of Western and Central Asia, on the Indian subcontinent to Southeast and East Asia.
 - The Indian leopard (*Panthera pardus fusca*) is a leopard widely distributed on the Indian subcontinent.

▪ **Population in India:**

- As per a recent report '[Status of leopards in India, 2018](#)' released by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, there has been a "60% increase in the population count of leopards in India from 2014 estimates".
 - The 2014 estimates placed the population of leopards at nearly 8,000 which has increased to 12,852.
- The largest number of leopards have been estimated in **Madhya Pradesh (3,421) followed by Karnataka (1,783) and Maharashtra (1,690)**.

▪ **Threats:**

- Poaching for the illegal trade of skins and body parts.
- Habitat loss and fragmentation
- Human-Leopard conflict

▪ **Conservation Status:**

- [IUCN Red List](#): Vulnerable
- [CITES](#): Appendix-I
- [Indian Wildlife \(Protection\) Act, 1972](#): Schedule-I

UPSC Civil Services Exam, Previous Year Questions (PYQ)

Q. Consider the following: (2012)

1. Black-necked crane
2. Cheetah
3. Flying squirrel
4. Snow leopard

Which of the above are naturally found in India?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
(b) 1, 3 and 4 only
(c) 2 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans: (b)

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