



Red Panda

Why in News?

Recently, **the Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park** has started an ambitious programme to release 20 **Red Pandas** in about five years to the forests.

- **The Singalila National Park**, the highest protected area in West Bengal, will soon get new denizens.

What are the Key Points related to Red Panda?

▪ About:

- There are only two different panda species in the world, the **Giant Pandas** and the **Red Pandas**.
- It is also the state animal of **Sikkim**.
- Red Pandas are shy, solitary and arboreal animals and considered an indicator species for ecological change.
- India is home to both the (sub) species:
 - Himalayan red panda (*Ailurus fulgens*)
 - Chinese red panda (*Ailurus styani*)
 - **Siang river** in Arunachal Pradesh splits the two phylogenetic species.
- It is found in the forests of **India, Nepal, Bhutan and the northern mountains of Myanmar and southern China**.
- The number of Red Pandas has been declining in the wild, even in the **Singalila and Neora Valley National Parks**, the two protected areas where the endangered mammal is found in the wild in West Bengal.

▪ Protection Status:

- **Red Pandas:**
 - **IUCN Red List:** Endangered
 - **CITES:** Appendix I
 - **Wildlife Protection Act 1972:** Schedule I
- **Giant Pandas:**
 - **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
 - **CITES:** Appendix I

What do we know about the Red Panda Release Programme?

- **Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park** has started an ambitious programme to release 20 of these furry mammals in about five years to the forests.
 - The Padmaja Naidu park, Darjeeling is one of the high-altitude zoos in the country and has been quite successful in captive breeding of the furry mammals.
- The Pandas will be released in the **Singalila National Park**, the highest protected area in West Bengal.
 - Singalila National Park is located at the **Singalila Ridge in the Darjeeling** district.
 - It is the **highest altitude park** in the state of West Bengal.
 - It was initially a **wildlife sanctuary** and made into a National Park in 1992.
 - Other national parks of West Bengal are:

- Jalda Para National Park
- Neora Valley National Park
- **Sundarbans National Park**
- Gorumara National Park
- Buxa National Park and Tiger Reserve

What are India's Conservation Efforts for Red Panda?

- **Securing the red panda habitat:**
 - **WWF**-India works with local communities to reduce their dependence on fuelwood by introducing them to innovative techniques to meet their energy demands.
 - In Sikkim, more than 200 individuals have been trained in manufacturing bio-briquettes.
- **Garnering local support:**
 - Local communities are **involved in alternate livelihood activities** that draw benefits for them, while also supporting conservation initiatives.
 - In Arunachal Pradesh, community-based tourism enables the locals to earn additional income from the tourists coming to see red pandas.
- **Mitigating threats to red panda populations:**
 - **Working with local communities to reduce forest dependence** and involving them in conservation measures addresses the threat of habitat degradation and fragmentation.
 - WWF-India has also collaborated with the **Sikkim Anti-Rabies and Animal Health (SARAH)** and launched a programme to sterilize feral dogs in order to control their growing population around critical wildlife areas.

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