



World Crocodile Day

Why in News

World Crocodile Day is celebrated on **17th June**. The day is a **global awareness campaign** to highlight the plight of endangered crocodiles and alligators around the world.

Crocodylian Species in India

▪ **Mugger or Marsh Crocodile:**



◦ **Description:**

- The **mugger** is an egg-laying and hole-nesting species.
- The mugger is also known to be dangerous.

◦ **Habitat:**

- It is mainly restricted to the Indian subcontinent where it may be found in a number of freshwater habitat types including rivers, lakes and marshes. However, it can even be found in coastal saltwater lagoons and estuaries.
- It is already **extinct in Bhutan and Myanmar**.

◦ **Threats:**

- Habitat destruction, fragmentation, and transformation, fishing activities and use of crocodile parts for medicinal purposes.

◦ **Protection Status:**

- IUCN List of Threatened Species: **Vulnerable**
- CITES : **Appendix I**
- Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 : **Schedule I**

▪ **Estuarine or Saltwater Crocodile:**



- **Description:**

- It is considered as the Earth's largest living crocodile species.
- The **estuarine crocodile** is infamous globally as a known **maneater**.

- **Habitat:**

- It is found in Odisha's **Bhitarkanika National Park**, the **Sundarbans** in West Bengal and the Andamans and Nicobar Islands.
- It is also found across Southeast Asia and northern Australia.

- **Threats:**

- Illegal hunting, habitat loss, and antipathy toward the species because of its reputation as a man-eater continue to put pressure on the population.

- **Protection Status:**

- IUCN List of Threatened Species: **Least Concern**
- CITES : **Appendix I** (except the populations of Australia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, which are included in Appendix II).
- Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 : **Schedule I**

- **Gharial**



- **Description:**

- **Gharials**, sometimes called gavials, are a type of Asian crocodylian distinguished by their long, thin snouts which resembles a pot (ghara in Hindi).
- Gharials are a type of Crocodylians that also includes crocodiles, alligators, caimans, etc.
- The population of Gharials are a good indicator of clean river water.
- The gharial is known to be a relatively harmless, fish-eating species.

- **Habitat:**

- The gharials are mostly found in fresh waters of the himalayan rivers.
- The **chambal river** in the northern slopes of the Vindhya mountains (Madhya

Pradesh) is known as the primary habitat of gharials.

- Other himalayan rivers like ghagra, gandak river, Girwa river, Ramganga river and the Sone river are secondary habitats for gharials.
- **Threats:**
 - Illegal sand mining, poaching, increased river pollution, dam construction, massive-scale fishing operations and floods.
- **Protection Status:**
 - IUCN List of Threatened Species: **Critically Endangered**
 - CITES : **Appendix I**
 - Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 : **Schedule I**

Human-Crocodile Conflict

- **Reasons:**
 - An encroachment of humans on the river banks and marshy areas with an increased urbanisation is one of the foremost reasons for increasing human-crocodile conflict in these areas.
- **Hotspots:**
 - Vadodara in Gujarat, Kota in Rajasthan, Bhitarkanika in Odisha and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are considered as the human-crocodile conflict hotspots in India.
- **Possible Solutions:**
 - Considering the importance of crocodiles in maintaining the balance in the ecosystem, **raising awareness among local people** with the **possible relocation** of crocodiles are some of the feasible options for the protection of the species.

Indian Crocodile Conservation Project

- The Crocodile Conservation Project was launched in **1975** in different States.
- The Gharial and Saltwater crocodile conservation programme was first implemented in Odisha in early 1975 and subsequently the Mugger conservation programme was initiated.
- As a result of the programme, the estimated number of the saltwater crocodiles **increased from 96 in 1976 to 1,640 in 2012** in India.

Way Forward

- There is a need to utilise manpower, modern technology and funds to conduct a proper survey to find the real time status of the crocodile population in the country.
- It can be done through geo-tagging the animals so that their movements can be monitored to prevent human-crocodile conflicts.

[Source:DTE](#)