Targeted Species-Specific Conservation

Why in News?

A global study published in **PLOS Biology** has found that **targeted conservation efforts** have helped prevent the extinction of numerous animal species, highlighting the effectiveness of **species-specific interventions** for conservation.

How Have Targeted Conservation Efforts Impacted Global Biodiversity?

- **Direct Impact**: Nearly **99.3%** of species that improved in the **IUCN Red List** category since 1980, benefitted from conservation measures. Out of **969 species** with increasing populations, **78.3%** had active **conservation interventions** in place.
- **Species-Specific Outcomes**:
    - **Iberian Lynx**: Grew from a **few hundred to several thousand individuals** through breeding and habitat management.
    - **Kākāpō**: A **New Zealand parrot** revived through intensive monitoring and predator control.
    - **European Bison**: **Reintroduced into wild areas in Eastern Europe** after complete extinction in the wild in the early 20th century.

What is India's Species-Specific Conservation Programme?

- The **Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (IDWH-2008)** approved for continuation during the **15th Finance Commission cycle (2021–26),** aims to strengthen wildlife **conservation of critically endangered species in India** through captive breeding, and habitat restoration with community participation.
    - Under the Species Recovery Programme, **22 species (16 terrestrial and 6 aquatic)** have been prioritised for focused conservation.
    - It includes subcomponents like **Project Tiger (1973), Project Elephant (1992),** Development of Wildlife Habitat (covering **Project Dolphin, Project Lion, and Project Cheetah)**.
- **Project Crocodile**, was initiated by the **United Nations** and the **Government of India,** (following the enactment of the **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**) to boost crocodile populations through **captive breeding** and to protect their natural habitats.
    - The **saltwater crocodile** population in **Bhitarkanika** has significantly increased from **95 individuals in 1975 to 1,811**.
- **Sea Turtle Conservation Project (1999)** for Olive Ridley & other sea turtles, especially in Odisha.
    - **Olive Ridley Turtle** listed as **vulnerable (IUCN)**; **WLPA Schedule I** & **CITES Appendix I.**
- **MoEFCC** launched a **Vulture Action Plan 2020-25** for the **conservation of vultures** in the country. It will ensure **minimum use of Diclofenac** and prevent the poisoning of the principal food of vultures, the cattle carcasses.

- A **Vulture Care Centre (VCC)** was established in **Pinjore, Haryana in 2001** to study vulture deaths in India.
  - In **2004**, it was upgraded to **India's first Vulture Conservation and Breeding Centre (VCBC)** to support captive breeding and conservation efforts.
- **Indian Rhino Vision 2020** launched in **2005** to increase the population of Greater One-Horned Rhinoceros in Assam. The Rhino population at **Kaziranga National Park** is now over 2,600 (as of 2022).
- The Maharashtra forest department is set to be the **first state in India** to have a **dedicated action plan for conservation of pangolins**.
  - Pangolins are listed in **Schedule I of India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972,** implying the highest degree of protection.
- **Project Cheetah** **(2022)** aims to reintroduce Cheetahs, extinct in India since 1952. Cheetahs from Namibia and South Africa were brought to **Kuno National Park.**
  - **First cheetah birth** in the wild in India after 75 years occurred in 2023.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Vultures which used to be very common in Indian countryside some years ago are rarely seen nowadays. This is attributed to (2012)

(a) the destruction of their nesting sites by new invasive species
(b) a drug used by cattle owners for treating their diseased cattle
(c) scarcity of food available to them
(d) a widespread, persistent and fatal disease among them.

Ans: (b)

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