



# Indian Grey Wolf

## Why in News?

In the **Kadbanwadi grassland** of the Deccan Plateau in **Pune, Maharashtra**, [Indian grey wolves](#)—apex predators crucial to the health of grassland ecosystems—are **facing a sharp decline**, driven by habitat disruption from expanding agriculture and the growing menace of feral dogs.



## Key Points

- **Indian Grey Wolf:**
  - **About:**
    - Indian grey wolf (***Canis lupus pallipes***) is a subspecies of grey wolf found across Southwest Asia and the Indian subcontinent.
      - It lives in **smaller packs and is less vocal** compared to other wolf subspecies.
      - It is **primarily nocturnal**, hunting from dusk to dawn.
    - These wolves are distinguishable by **brown coats with black-and-white markings** on their backs.
  - **Habitat:**
    - It is an apex predator in India's **scrublands, grasslands and [semi-arid agro-ecosystems](#)**. Thrives in regions with warmer temperatures.
  - **Conservation Status:**
    - **IUCN: Endangered** (population in India: 2,000 - 3,000 individuals).
    - **CITES: Appendix I.**
    - **[Wildlife Protection Act, 1972](#): Schedule I.**

#### ▪ Kadbanwadi Grassland:

- It spans approximately **2,000 hectares** and **surrounds Kadbanwadi village**, located about 276 km from Mumbai atop a hill in Indapur tehsil.
- The **Shegar Dhangar**, a pastoralist community, has long coexisted with local wildlife.
- Key species include the **Bengal fox**, **striped hyena**, and **Brahminy kite**.
- The Indian grey wolf is seen as the “**guardian**” of the grassland, playing a vital role in **maintaining ecological balance**.

#### ▪ Rising Threats to the Wolf Population:

- **Habitat loss** due to agriculture and semi-urban expansion.
- **Free-ranging dogs**, which **spread diseases** and cause **genetic hybridisation**.
- **Disease Transmission from Dogs:**
  - **Canine Distemper Virus (CDV)** is a highly contagious and fatal disease for wolves, transmitted through direct contact or contaminated surfaces.
  - **Canine Parvovirus** and **Rabies** pose serious threats to wolves, spreading through bites, saliva, or scratches.
- **Genetic and Behavioural Risks:**
  - Cross-breeding between stray dogs and wolves leads to **genetic dilution**, **disrupts wolf pack dynamics**, and creates hybrids with **unpredictable behaviour and health problems**.

#### ▪ Rapid Decline in Wolf Numbers:

- In 2016, Kadbanwadi had around 70 adult wolves.
- By December 2024, the count had fallen to 11.
- The most recent tally recorded just **six wolves in the region**.

#### ▪ Challenges:

- Officials can remove or kill stray dogs in protected areas like **Kadbanwadi grassland**, a reserve forest, under **Maharashtra Forest Rules (2014)**.
- However, officials hesitate to act due to potential backlash from animal rights groups.
- Vaccination of dogs is under consideration, but capturing them remains a challenge.



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## Dhangar Community

#### ▪ About:

- The Dhangars are a **traditional shepherd community** spread across several Indian states.
- Besides **Maharashtra**, they also reside in **Gujarat, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh**.

#### ▪ Legal and Social Status:

- In Maharashtra, the Dhangars are listed under the **Vimukta Jati and Nomadic Tribes (VJNT) category**.
- They typically lead a secluded life, migrating through forests, hills, and mountainous regions.

#### ▪ Population:

- Dhangar households are **small, tightly-knit, and family-centric**.
- The community's estimated population is around 1 crore, making up approximately 9% of

Maharashtra's total population.

- The tribe includes nearly **20 sub-castes and clusters**, each with unique customs and cultural practices.

▪ **Livelihood and Lifestyle:**

- Their primary **occupation is sheep and goat herding**.
- They follow a mix of **nomadic pastoralism, semi-nomadic living, and agriculture-based livelihoods** in rural landscapes.

▪ **Seasonal Migration:**

- Every year, after the bajra harvest ends in October, Dhangars begin their **seasonal migration to find new grazing grounds** for their livestock.

▪ **Cultural Practices:**

- They honour their ancestors through rituals conducted during their migratory journeys.
- Singing traditional songs, especially at night, is a key aspect of their culture.
- These songs, known as **Sumbaran**, **form a rich oral tradition** that preserves the history, values, and identity of the Dhangar community.

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