

50 Years of Crocodile Conservation Project and World Crocodile Day

Source: TH

On <u>World Crocodile Day (17th June)</u>, India commemorates 50 years of its **Crocodile Conservation Project (CCP) (1975–2025),** with Odisha emerging as the epicentre of this pioneering ecological effort.

- Odisha is the only Indian state to host wild populations of all three native crocodilian species (Gharial (Gavialis gangeticus), Mugger crocodile (Crocodylus palustris) and Saltwater crocodile (Crocodylus porosus)).
- Crocodile Conservation Project: India launched its CCP at Odisha's <u>Bhitarkanika National</u>
 Park with support from <u>United Nations Development Programme</u> and the <u>Food and</u>
 Agriculture Organisation.
 - It adopted the "rear and release" method, created protected habitats like Bhitarkanika and <u>Satkosia Tiger Reserve</u>, and promoted <u>captive</u> breeding and community awareness, making it a national model for crocodilian <u>conservation</u>.
- **Crocodiles**: They are the **largest surviving reptiles**, primarily inhabit freshwater swamps, lakes, and rivers, with one saltwater species.
 - They are nocturnal and poikilothermic (also known as ectotherms or cold-blooded animals, are characterized by their body temperature fluctuating with the surrounding environment).
 - Their survival is threatened by habitat destruction, egg predation, poaching, dam construction, and sand mining.
- Population: India hosts nearly 80% of the global wild gharial population, with around 3,000 individuals across sites like <u>National Chambal Sanctuary</u>, Katarnia Ghat, and Son Gharial Sanctuary.
 - The saltwater crocodile population has recovered to about 2,500, mainly in Bhitarkanika,
 Andaman & Nicobar Islands, and the Sundarbans.

CROCODILE SPECIES IN INDIA

India harbours three diverse crocodile species—Mugger, Saltwater, and Gharialfound in distinct habitats nationwide.

Aspects	Gharial	Mugger/Indian Crocodile	Saltwater Crocodile
Scientific Name	Gavialis Gangeticus	Crocodylus Palustris	Crocodylus Porosus
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Distribution: India	Viable Population: National Chambal Sanctuary (U.P, Raj, M.P)	Throughout India	East Coast (Odisha's
Driehi IAS	Small Non-Breeding Population: Son, Gandak, Hooghly, Ghagra & Satkosia WLS (Odisha)	HILE DIE	Bhitarkarnika WLS, Andaman & Nicobar Islands coast & Sundarbans
Distribution: Neigh bourhood	Brahmaputra of Bhutan & Bangladesh& Irrawaddy River	Extinct in Bhutan and Myanmar	Across Southeast Asia
Special Feature	Longest of all Crocodile, Long and thin Snout	Egg-laying, Hole-nesting, Wide & U-shaped Snout	Largest living reptile, Pointed & V-shaped Snout
Habitat	Freshwater	Freshwater	Saltwater, Brackish & Wetlands
IUCN Status	CR	VU	LC
CITES Status	Appendix I	Appendix I	Appendix I
CMS Status	Appendix I	11 P	Appendix II
WPA,1972 Status	Schedule I	Schedule I	Schedule I
Threats	Dams, Pollution, Sand mining	Habitat Destruction	Hunted for its skin and Habitat loss
Government Initiatives	Odisha: Rs. 1000 award to conserve Gharial in Mahanadi River Basin Indian Crocodile Conservation Project,1975	 Indian Crocodile Conservation Project,1975 Mugger Conservation Programme Madras Crocodile Bank Trust 	Indian Crocodile Conservation Project,1975

MISCELLANEOUS FACTS

(9) 17th June: World Crocodile Day

(9) Annual Reptile Census, 2023: Marginal Increases in number of saltwater crocodiles (Bhitarkanika National Park and its nearby areas)

(9) Odisha's Kendrapara District: Only district in India where all three species of crocodiles found





Read more: World Crocodile Day

