



Elephant Corridors in Odisha

Why in News

Recently, the [National Green Tribunal \(NGT\)](#) has directed the **Odisha government** to prepare an **action plan** for **14 identified elephant corridors**.

Key Points

▪ Background:

◦ NGT's Order in 2017:

- The **NGT** had **issued a prohibition order** directing that all such activities which are not permissible to be carried out in a highly [Eco Sensitive Zone \(ESZ\)](#), should not be undertaken.
- The **NGT** also **directed authorities to expedite demarcation of the corridors** within a specific time frame.

◦ Odisha government's Stand:

- The Odisha government **had proposed 14 corridors stretching over a total area of 870.61 sq.km. having a length of 420.8 km.** Even after several years, **no tangible progress had been made** on the government's proposal.

▪ Elephant Corridors:

- They are **narrow strips of land that connect two large habitats of elephants.**
- They are crucial to **reduce animal fatalities due to accidents and other reasons.**
- Fragmentation of forests makes it all the more important to **preserve migratory corridors.**
- This movement of Elephants helps in **enhancing the species survival and birth rate.**
- **88 elephant corridors** have been identified by the [wildlife trust of India](#) under the **National elephant Corridor project.**
- **Concern:** The all-round development like **human settlements, roads, railway line, electric lines, canal and mining are the main cause of corridor fragmentation.**
- **Reasons for Protecting the Corridors:**
 - The movement of elephants is essential to **ensure that their populations are genetically viable.** It also helps **to regenerate forests** on which other species, including tigers, depend.
 - Nearly 40% of **elephant reserves are vulnerable**, as they are not within protected parks and sanctuaries. Also, **migration corridors have no specific legal protection.**
 - Forests that have turned into farms and unchecked tourism are blocking animal paths. Animals are thus forced to seek **alternative routes resulting in increased elephant-human conflict.**
 - **Weak regulation** of ecotourism is severely impacting important habitats. It particularly affects animals that have large home ranges, like elephants.

Elephants

- Elephants are **keystone species**.
- There are three subspecies of **Asian elephant** - the **Indian, Sumatran, and Sri Lankan**.
- The Indian elephant has the widest range and accounts for the **majority of the remaining elephants on the continent**.
- **Conservation Status of Indian Elephants:**
 - [Wildlife Protection Act, 1972](#): **Schedule I**
 - [IUCN Red List](#): **Endangered**
 - [CITES](#): **Appendix I**
- India is home to **50% of the Asian Elephant population, and according to the 2017 elephant census, there are 27,312 elephants in the country, marking a decrease of nearly 3,000 elephants from the 2012 census.**
- **India's Initiatives for Conservation of Elephants:**
 - [Gaj Yatra](#): A nationwide campaign to protect elephants, was launched on the occasion of [World Elephant Day](#) in **2017**.
 - [Project Elephant](#): It is a **centrally sponsored scheme** which was launched in 1992.
- **Objectives:**
 - To protect elephants, their habitat & corridors
 - To address issues of man-animal conflict
 - Welfare of captive elephants
- **International Initiatives:**
- [Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants \(MIKE\) Programme](#): It is mandated by the [Conference Of Parties \(COP\)](#) resolution of **CITES**. It was **started in South Asia in 2003** with the following purpose –
 - To measure levels and trends in **illegal hunting** of elephants.
 - To determine changes in these trends over time.
 - To determine the factors causing or associated with these changes and to try and assess in particular to what extent observed trends are a result of any decisions taken by the Conference of the Parties to **CITES**.

Way Forward

- Efforts should be to **expand elephant corridors**, using the successful models within the country by **acquisition of lands using private funds** and their transfer to the government. Ending human interference in the pathways of elephants is more a conservation imperative.
- **Sensitization and awareness among people** at large is necessary to stop poaching and illegal trades.
- Technologies such as **Drones and satellites** could be used for better monitoring throughout the corridors.

Source: TH