

Conserving India's Wildlife

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Conserving India's Wildlife: Challenges and Progress

Context:

In observance of **World Wildlife Conservation Day**, let's take a closer look at **India's rich wildlife** and the challenges it faces.

Background:

World Wildlife Conservation Day is celebrated annually on **December 4th** to raise awareness about the critical issues impacting wildlife populations, including **extinction, endangerment**, and the **illegal wildlife trade**.

Key Takeaways:

- **India** is home to a remarkable biodiversity. Despite occupying only **2.4%** of the world's land area, it accounts for **7-8%** of all recorded species, which includes **45,000 species of plants** and **91,000 species of animals**. This immense biodiversity is one of the reasons why India is considered a **megadiverse country**.
 - India boasts **10 biogeographic zones** and houses **8.58%** of all documented **mammalian species**. Additionally, India is home to:
 - **13.66%** of avian species
 - **7.91%** of reptiles
 - **4.66%** of amphibians
 - **11.72%** of fish
 - **11.8%** of plants
 - **Four of the world's 34 biodiversity hotspots** are located in India: the **Himalayas, Indo-Burma, Western Ghats-Sri Lanka**, and **Sundaland**.
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Risk of Extinction:

As of 2022, India is home to **73 critically endangered species**, according to the **Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change**. The **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** classifies species as critically endangered when they face the highest risk of extinction in the wild.

- The number of critically endangered species in India has increased from **47** in 2011, partly due to better data and monitoring, rather than just a higher rate of extinction.
- Of the **nine mammalian species** considered critically endangered, **eight are endemic** to India, meaning their habitat is limited to small geographic areas within the country. These include:
 - **Kashmir stag (Hangul)**
 - **Malabar large-spotted civet**
 - **Andaman shrew**
 - **Jenkin's shrew**
 - **Nicobar shrew**
 - **Namdapha flying squirrel**
 - **Large rock rat**
 - **Leafletted leaf-nosed bat**



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