



# International Whale Shark Day

## Why in News?

Recently, Delhi-based non-profit, **Wildlife Trust of India (WTI)** launched '**Save the Whale Shark Campaign**' along Karnataka, Kerala and Lakshadweep in Mangaluru.

- August 30, 2022 is International Whale Shark Day, this year's **theme is "The Future of Sharks: Guardians of Our Seas."**



## What is the Save the Whale Campaign?

- The campaign will run **along coastal Karnataka, Kerala and the [Lakshadweep islands](#)** in collaboration with the Forest and Fisheries Departments of Karnataka, Kerala and the Lakshadweep administration.
  - Further, the campaign **aims to reduce accidental entanglements in fishing nets with fishermen releasing whale shark.**
  - A mobile application has been developed to record whale shark spotting and rescues for further conservation action

## What are the Key Points related to Whale Shark?

- **About:**
  - The **whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) is the largest fish on Earth and a keystone species in marine ecosystems.**
    - It can grow to a length of approximately 18 metres and weigh as much as 21 tonnes.
  - They are **ovoviviparous** - meaning they **give birth to live young rather than lay eggs**

- and can reach sexual maturity at around 10 years old.

▪ **Habitat:**

◦ Whale sharks are tropical ocean dwellers that feed on fish, squid and other small creatures.

◦ **India:**

• The whale shark is **distributed all along the Indian coast.**

• However, the **largest whale shark aggregation is along the Gujarat coast.**

• **Beyond Gujrat:**

• WTI, with the support of IUCN had conducted a survey along the west coast (excluding Gujarat) during 2012-13 and found that **the highest number of Whale Shark sightings (after Gujarat coast) were near the waters of Lakshadweep.**

• Also, the Whale shark landings and stranding are largely reported from Kerala.

◦ **Status:**

• [The Wild Life \(Protection\) Act, 1972: Schedule I](#)

• [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\) Red List: Endangered.](#)

• **IUCN Green Status Assessment: Largely Depleted.**

◦ **Threat:**

• **Accidental entanglement:**

• The main threat to these plankton feeders is accidental entanglement in fishing nets.

• Most fishers know that their nets can entrap a whale shark.

• Despite that they **trawl the ocean floor to intend to catch grouper, mackerel, shrimp and lobster.**

• There is always a possibility that they accidentally catch a whale shark too.

• **Rising Plastic Level:**

• The rising **level of plastic debris in oceans** is a large-scale environmental problem with widespread impact.

• Owing to their feeding strategies, this filter-feeding megafauna is particularly susceptible.

◦ **Protection:**

• To curb such mortality is to **ensure the release of the entangled whale sharks from the fishing net without any delay.**

• For this, the primary target group, which is the fishers needs to be sensitised.

◦ **Initiatives:**

• WTI has been running a **project in Gujarat for the last 20 years which has resulted in fisher folk releasing 852 whale sharks in the Arabian Sea.**

• **Goal:**

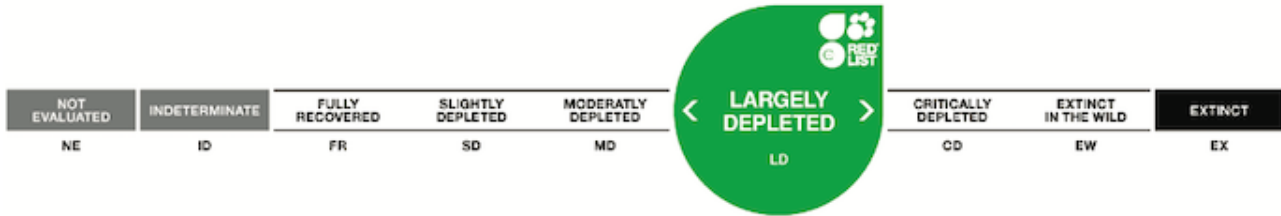
• The main goal of this project is to **reduce and eradicate whale shark death in the incidental catch in fishing nets by the voluntary release of the whale shark.**

• This initiative **targets the marine fishers along these two states and the island of Lakshadweep.**

## What is IUCN Green Status Assessment?

▪ The IUCN Green Status classifies species into **nine Species Recovery Categories**, indicating the extent to which species are depleted or recovered compared to their historical population levels.

◦ Each **Green Status assessment measures the impact of past conservation on a species, a species' dependence on continuing support**, how much a species stands to gain from conservation action within the next ten years, and the potential for it to recover over the next century.



## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### Prelims

**Q. Among the following, which one lays eggs and does not produce young ones directly? (2008)**

- (a) Echidna
- (b) Kangaroo
- (c) Porcupine
- (d) Whale

**Ans: (a)**

**Exp:**

- Echidnas, sometimes known as spiny anteaters, belong to the family Tachyglossidae in the monotreme order of egg-laying mammals.
- The four extant species of Echidnas and the platypus are the only living mammals that lay eggs and the only surviving members of the order Monotremata.
- Echidnas evolved between 20 and 50 million years ago, descending from a platypus-like monotreme, which was aquatic, but echidnas adapted to life on land. **Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer**

**Source: DTE**

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