



## Shrinking Lion Numbers in Africa

**For Prelims:** Lion Conservation, African and Asian Lions

**For Mains:** Initiatives related to Conservation of Lions

**Source:** [DTE](#)

### Why in News?

The Study by Journal Nature Communications **highlighted the concerns with respect to the population of [Lions](#) lying well below the carrying capacity** across 62 geographic locations of African countries which also have socio-economic connotation to that.

- The **Lion Population were estimated to be between 20,000 and 25,000 in number** and may be declining, as per the study.

### What are the Key Highlights of the Study?

- Across 62 geographic locations of Africa, around **41.9% of the regions had less than 50 lions** and 10 of them reported to have around 50-100 population of Lions.
- Only seven geographic locations across Africa were reported to have more than 1000 lion populations.
- The lions face other threats such as **poaching for prey, indiscriminate killing due to human-lion conflict**, bushmeat and others, which are evidently found in eastern and southern Africa
- Bushmeat poaching with snares led to **local extinction of lions in Nsumbu National Park in Zambia and Limpopo National Park in Mozambique**, which are two major national parks related to conservation of lions.
- The research observed that southern African countries such as **Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia have recorded an increase of population by 12%** between 1993 and 2014.
  - But the remaining lion habitats have seen **a decline by 60%**, especially in west and central Africa.

### What are the Key Points Related to Lion?

- **Scientific Name:** *Panthera leo*
- **About:**
  - The lion is divided into **two subspecies**: the African lion (*Panthera leo leo*) and the [Asiatic lion \(\*Panthera leo persica\*\)](#).
  - **Asiatic lions are slightly smaller than African lions.**
  - The most striking morphological character, which is always seen in Asiatic lions, and rarely in African lions, is a longitudinal fold of skin running along its belly.
- **Role in the Animal Kingdom:**
  - Lions hold an **indispensable place in the ecosystem**, they are an apex predator of their

habitat, responsible for checking the population of grazers, thus helping in maintaining the ecological balance.

- Lions also **contribute to keeping the population of their prey healthy and resilient as they target the weakest members** of the herd. Thus, indirectly helping in disease control in the prey population.

▪ **Threats:**

- Poaching, genetic inbreeding arising from a single population inhabiting one place, diseases such as plague, canine distemper or a natural disaster.

▪ **Protection Status:**

- **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
  - Asiatic Lion - **Endangered.**
- **CITES:** Appendix I for populations of India, all other populations are included in Appendix II.
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972:** Schedule I

▪ **Status in India:**

- India is home to the majestic Asiatic Lion, who inhabit the protected territory of [Sasan-Gir National Park \(Gujarat\)](#).
- The lion population escalated from 523 to 674 individuals between the years 2015 and 2020.

▪ **Population of Lion in the World:**

- As per the estimates by IUCN, the population of lions is estimated to be around 23000 to 39000 overall, mostly spread across the Saharan Countries.

## What are Conservation Efforts in India for Lions?

- **Project Lion:** The programme has been launched for the conservation of the Asiatic Lion, whose last remaining wild population is in Gujarat's Asiatic Lion Landscape.
- **Asiatic Lion Conservation Project:** The project envisages scientific management with the involvement of communities in coordination with multi-sectoral agencies for disease control and veterinary care for overall conservation of Asiatic lion.

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

### Q. Consider the following statements: (2019)

1. Asiatic lion is naturally found in India only.
2. Double-humped camel is naturally found in India only.
3. One-horned rhinoceros is naturally found in India only.

### Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (a)**