



Coelacanth

Why in News

Recently, a group of palaeontologists have **discovered fossils of coelacanth, a giant fish regarded as an iconic example of a “living fossil.”**

- The **discovered fossil** of Coelacanth is **believed to be 66 million years old** belonging to the **Cretaceous era**.

Key Points



▪ About:

- Coelacanths are **elusive, deep-sea creatures**, living in depths up to 2,300 feet below the surface.
- These were **thought to have gone extinct with the dinosaurs 65 million years ago**. But its **discovery in 1938** started a debate about how this lobe-finned fish fits into the evolution of land animals.

▪ Two Species:

- There are only two known species of coelacanths: one that lives near the **Comoros Islands** off the east coast of Africa, and one found in the waters off **Sulawesi**, Indonesia.

▪ Living Fossil:

- Living Fossil is an organism that has remained unchanged from earlier geologic times and whose close relatives are usually extinct. Other than Coelacanth, **Horseshoe crab** and **ginkgo trees** are examples of living **fossils**.
- However, in their new study, palaeontologists have found that Coelacanths gained 62 new

genes through encounters with other species 10 million years ago. This suggests that they are actually evolving, albeit slowly.

▪ **Protection Status:**

- **IUCN Status:** Critically Endangered
 - **Sulawesi Coelacanth** is listed as '**vulnerable**'.
- **CITES Status:** Appendix I

Source:DTE

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