



World Elephant Day

For Prelims: World Elephant Day, Convention of the Migratory species (CMS), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Elephant Reserves (ERs), Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) Programme.

For Mains: Significance of Conserving Elephants and issues Related to the Elephant Species.

Why in News?

The [World Elephant Day](#) is celebrated every year on **12th of August**, with the aim to acknowledge Elephants' significance in our ecosystem.

- It emphasizes on **raising the awareness of the threats that elephants face in their daily lives**. Whether **poaching, mistreatment in captivity, or habitat loss**, every single factor plays a role in animal abuse.

What is the Significance of Celebrating Elephant Day?

▪ About:

- Elephants are considered sacred in many cultures and are essential for maintaining a healthy ecosystem.
 - Elephants also encourage biodiversity.
 - They are an **intelligent species**, they have the **biggest brain of any land animal**.

▪ Population:

- The **elephant population has reduced by 50% over the past 75 years**.
 - The current population estimates indicate that there are about 50,000 -60000 Asian elephants in the world.
 - More than 60% of the population is held in India.

▪ Historical perspective:

- The campaign World Elephant Day was **initiated in 2012 to bring awareness to the disturbing situations of African and Asian elephants**.
 - The objective of this campaign is to **create a sustainable environment where animals are not exploited and taken care of**.
- It was first observed by Canadian filmmakers Michael Clark and Patricia Sims with the Thailand-based Elephant Reintroduction Foundation.
 - In 2012, Patricia Sims **founded an organization called the World Elephant Society**.
 - The organization has succeeded to create awareness about the dangers confronted by the elephants and the inevitability to protect them globally.

▪ Conservation Status:

- [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#) Red List of threatened species:
 - African Forest Elephant- **Critically Endangered**

- African Savanna Elephant- **Endangered**
- Asian Elephant- **Endangered**
- [Convention of the Migratory species \(CMS\)](#): **Appendix I**
- [Wildlife \(Protection\) Act, 1972](#): **Schedule I**

What are the Issues Related to Elephants in India?

- India has the **largest number of wild Asian Elephants**, estimated at 29,964 according to 2017 census by **Project Elephant**, i.e., about **60% of the species' global population**.
 - **Human -Elephant conflict:**
 - The friction between humans and elephants termed **Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC)** which **occurs mainly over space** and is a major concern across the country for governments, conservationists and people living close to the wild animals.
 - **Habitat loss:**
 - Loss of natural habitat and fragmentation have been bringing wild elephants closer to human habitations, sparking these conflicts.
 - Over 500 humans are killed in encounters with elephants annually, and crops and property worth millions are also damaged.
 - Many elephants are also killed in retaliation due to conflict.

What are the Initiatives taken by the Government?

- **Project Elephant:** Project Elephant was launched in 1991-92 as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Ministry of Environment and Forests**.
 - Estimation of wild elephant population in the year 2007, 2012 and 2017. **Karnataka** has the highest number of elephants followed by Assam and Kerala.
- **Elephant Reserves:** Elephant Reserve is a management entity notified by the State Governments as per recommendation of Government of India.
 - It includes Protected Areas, forest areas, corridors and private/reserve lands.
 - Agasthiyamalai (Tamil Nadu) will be the country's 32nd elephant reserve.
- **Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) Programme** - Mandated by **Conference of Parties (COP)** resolution of **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)**.
 - The MIKE program **started in South Asia in the year 2003 with the following purpose:**
 - To provide information needed for elephant range States to make appropriate management and enforcement decisions, and to **build institutional capacity within the range States for the long-term management of their elephant populations**.
 - **Mike Sites in India:**
 - Chirang-Ripu Elephant Reserve (Assam)
 - Deomali Elephant Reserve (Arunachal Pradesh)
 - Dihing Patkai Elephant Reserve (Assam)
 - Garo Hills Elephant Reserve (Meghalaya)
 - Eastern Dooars Elephant Reserve (West Bengal)
 - Mayurbhanj Elephant Reserve (Odisha)
 - Shivalik Elephant Reserve (Uttarakhand)
 - Mysore Elephant Reserve (Karnataka)
 - Nilgiri Elephant Reserve (Tamil Nadu)
 - Wayanad Elephant Reserve (Kerala)

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. With reference to Indian elephants, consider the following statements: (2020)

1. The leader of an elephant group is a female.
2. The maximum gestation period can be 22 months.

3. An elephant can normally go on calving till the age of 40 years only.
4. Among the States in India, the highest elephant population is in Kerala.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 4 only
(c) 3 only
(d) 1, 3 and 4 only

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- The elephant herd is led by the oldest and largest female member (known as the matriarch). This herd includes the daughters of the matriarch and their offspring. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Elephants have the longest-known gestational (pregnancy) period of all mammals, lasting up to 680 days (22 months). Hence, statement 2 is correct. Females between 14 - 45 years may give birth to calves approximately every four years with the mean interbirth intervals increasing to five years by age 52 and six years by age 60. **Hence, statement 3 is not correct.**
- As per Elephant Census (2017), Karnataka has the highest number of elephants (6,049), followed by Assam (5,719) and Kerala (3,054). Hence, statement 4 is not correct.
- **Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**

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