



Parasitic Infections in One-Horned Rhinoceros

Why in News

Recently, the [World Wildlife Fund \(WWF\)](#) India has published reports titled '**Prevalence of Endoparasitic Infections in Free-Ranging Greater One-Horned Rhinoceros**' for Assam and West Bengal.



Key Points //

- **Poaching** is believed to be the **main cause of death** in rhinos, however, they also die of natural causes which have not been studied in great detail.
- Since **2017**, the **Rhino Task Force of Assam** and **WWF India** have been undertaking steps to study pathogens found in fresh rhino dung samples in Assam, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.
 - Before this, there was no systematic study on the prevalence of disease-causing parasites and diseases caused by these in the rhino population in India.
- According to the researchers, **habitat degradation** can lead to an **increased exposure to pathogens**.
 - Due to increasing livestock pressure on protected areas, there is a possible threat of pathogens getting transferred from domestic animals to wild animals.
- From the samples from Assam and West Bengal, the study concluded that **parasites from four genera were present in an estimated 68% of India's rhino population**.
 - The **overall prevalence of endoparasites** was **58.57%** in **Assam** and **88.46%** in **West Bengal**; results from UP are pending.
 - **Endoparasites** are **parasites that live in the tissues and organs of their hosts**, such as tapeworms, flukes, and protozoans of vertebrates.

Greater One-Horned Rhino

- There are **three species of rhino in Asia** — **Greater one-horned** (*Rhinoceros unicornis*), **Javan** and **Sumatran**.

- **Poaching** for the horns and **habitat loss** are the two greatest threats to the survival of Asia's rhinos.
- The **five rhino range nations** (**India, Bhutan, Nepal, Indonesia** and **Malaysia**) have signed a declaration 'The New Delhi Declaration on Asian Rhinos 2019' for the conservation and protection of the species.
- **Protection Status:**
 - **Javan** and **Sumatran** Rhino are **critically endangered** and the **Greater one-horned (or Indian)** rhino is **vulnerable** in **IUCN Red List**.
 - All three listed under **Appendix I (CITES)**.
 - **Greater one-horned rhino** is listed under the **Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.
- **Habitat of Greater One-Horned Rhino:**
 - The species is restricted to small habitats in Indo-Nepal terai and northern West Bengal and Assam.
 - In India, rhinos are mainly found in **Kaziranga NP**, **Pobitora WLS**, Orang NP, Manas NP in Assam, Jaldapara NP and Gorumara NP in West Bengal and **Dudhwa TR** in Uttar Pradesh.
- **Conservation Efforts by India:**
 - Recently, the **Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** has begun a project to create **DNA profiles of all rhinos** in the country.
 - **National Rhino Conservation Strategy:** It was launched in 2019 to conserve the greater one-horned rhinoceros.
 - **Indian Rhino Vision 2020:** Launched in 2005, it is an ambitious effort to attain a wild population of at least 3,000 greater one-horned rhinos spread over seven protected areas in the Indian state of Assam by the year 2020.

Source: IE

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