



World Crocodile Day

For Prelims: World Crocodile Day, IUCN List of Threatened Species, CITES, Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

For Mains: Crocodilian Species in India and Conservation Efforts

Why in News?

World Crocodile Day is celebrated on 17th June. The day is a global awareness campaign to highlight the plight of endangered crocodiles and alligators around the world.

What are the Crocodilian Species in India?

- **Mugger or Marsh Crocodile:** //



- **Description:**
 - The **mugger** is an egg-laying and hole-nesting species.
 - The mugger is also known to be dangerous.
- **Habitat:**
 - It is mainly restricted to the Indian subcontinent where it may be found in a number of freshwater habitat types including rivers, lakes and marshes. However, it can even be found in coastal saltwater lagoons and estuaries.
 - It is already **extinct in Bhutan and Myanmar.**
- **Threats:**
 - Habitat destruction, fragmentation, and transformation, fishing activities and use of crocodile parts for medicinal purposes.
- **Protection Status:**
 - **IUCN List of Threatened Species:** Vulnerable
 - **CITES:** Appendix I

- [Wildlife Protection Act, 1972](#) : Schedule I

▪ **Estuarine or Saltwater Crocodile:**



- **Description:**
 - It is considered as the Earth's largest living crocodile species.
 - The [estuarine crocodile](#) is infamous globally as a known man-eater.
- **Habitat:**
 - It is found in Odisha's [Bhitarkanika National Park](#), the [Sundarbans](#) in West Bengal and the Andamans and Nicobar Islands.
 - It is also found across Southeast Asia and northern Australia.
- **Threats:**
 - Illegal hunting, habitat loss, and antipathy toward the species because of its reputation as a man-eater continue to put pressure on the population.
- **Protection Status:**
 - **IUCN List of Threatened Species:** Least Concern
 - **CITES** : Appendix I (except the populations of Australia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, which are included in Appendix II).
 - **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972** : Schedule I

▪ **Gharial:**



- **Description:**
 - [Gharials](#), sometimes called gavials, are a type of Asian crocodylian distinguished by their long, thin snouts which resembles a pot (ghara in Hindi).
 - The **population of Gharials are a good indicator of clean river water.**
 - The gharial is known to be a relatively harmless, fish-eating species.
- **Habitat:**
 - The gharials are **mostly found in fresh waters of the himalayan rivers.**
 - The chambal **river in the northern slopes of the Vindhya mountains** (Madhya

Pradesh) is known as the primary habitat of gharials.

- Other himalayan rivers like ghagra, gandak river, Girwa river, Ramganga river and the Sone river are secondary habitats for gharials.
- **Threats:**
 - Illegal sand mining, poaching, increased river pollution, dam construction, massive-scale fishing operations and floods.
- **Protection Status:**
 - **IUCN List of Threatened Species:** Critically Endangered
 - **CITES:** Appendix I
 - **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I

What are the Reasons and Solutions of Human-Crocodile Conflict?

- **Reasons:**
 - An **encroachment of humans on the river banks and marshy areas** with an increased urbanisation is one of the foremost reasons for increasing human-crocodile conflict in these areas.
- **Hotspots:**
 - Vadodara in Gujarat, Kota in Rajasthan, Bhitarkanika in Odisha and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are **considered as the human-crocodile conflict hotspots in India.**
- **Possible Solutions:**
 - Considering the importance of crocodiles **in maintaining the balance in the ecosystem**, raising awareness among local people with the possible relocation of crocodiles are some of the feasible options for the protection of the species.

What are the Crocodile Conservation Efforts?

- Odisha has announced a cash award of Rs. 1,000 to conserve gharials in [Mahanadi River Basin](#).
- The Crocodile Conservation Project was launched in 1975 in different States.

Way Forward

- Transboundary cooperation **is very much possible and needed in south Asia.**
- There should be **information exchange wherever there is transboundary movement of animals.**
- Crocodile exclusion enclosures should be installed at water bodies that they inhabit.
- Nuisance-causing crocodiles **should be identified and captured by training and equipping a 'crocodile squad'** for rapid response. A proper guide should be formulated for the **capture and translocation of large and problematic (nuisance) crocodiles.**
- There is a need to utilize manpower, modern technology and funds to conduct a proper survey to find the real time status of the crocodile population in the country.
- It can be done through geo-tagging the animals so that their movements can be monitored to prevent human-crocodile conflicts.

[Source: DTE](#)