



Sea Cucumber

Why in News

Recently, the [Indian Coast Guard \(ICG\)](#) has seized two tonnes of sea cucumber, a banned marine species, in the [Gulf of Mannar](#) and Palk Bay areas in Tamil Nadu.



Key Points

- **About:**

- Sea cucumbers are marine **invertebrates that live on the seafloor** found generally in **tropical regions**. They're named for their unusual oblong shape that **resembles a fat cucumber**.



- There are about 1,250 species of sea cucumber, all of which belong to the **taxonomic class Holothuroidea**.

- This class falls under the **Echinodermata phylum**, which also includes many other well-known marine invertebrates, such as sea stars, sea urchins and sand dollars.
- They are **crucial to maintain the balance of ocean habitats**.
- **Significance:**
 - They are an integral part of the **coral ecosystem** as **one of the main by-products** of the sea cucumbers digestion of sand is calcium carbonate and this is essential for the survival of the coral reefs.
 - They **act like garbage collectors of the ocean world**, and they recycle nutrients, thus playing an important role in keeping coral reefs in good condition.
- **Threats:**
 - Illegal Trading and smuggling since the species is high in demand across south-east Asia, mainly China, for food and traditional medicine.
- **Protection:**
 - **IUCN Red List:** Brown Sea Cucumber (Endangered), Blackspotted Sea Cucumber (Least Concern), Blue Sea Cucumber (Data Deficient), etc.
 - **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I.
- **Conservation Efforts:**
 - In 2020, the **Lakshadweep Islands administration** created the world's first conservation area - 239 sq. km - for sea cucumbers.

Source: PIB

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/sea-cucumber>

