



Forest Fires Threaten Rare Himalayan Fauna

Why in News?

According to the forest department, [Forest fires](#) that occur annually in Uttarakhand cause **significant damage** to the region's precious forest resources like **trees, plants, bushes, herbs and thick layers of soil**.

- It also **threatens rare Himalayan fauna** - wild animals, [reptiles](#), [mammals](#), [birds](#), [butterflies](#), [common flies](#), [honey bees](#) and **soil-enriching bacterias**.

Key Points

- Avian species like the **cheer pheasant, kalij pheasant, rufous-bellied woodpecker**, common rose, **chocolate pansy** and common crow have their breeding season from **March to June**, which is also the period when most fires occur in the region's forest area.
- According to a [Non-governmental Organisation \(NGO\)](#) working towards **preserving the Himalayan butterflies**, there are a **total 350 species of butterflies** found in the [Himalayan region](#), **120 are on the verge of getting endangered** as they breed in host plants that are destroyed in forest fires.
- The Dehradun-based **Forest Research Institute** is also researching the impact of forest fires on the [yellow-headed tortoise](#) that is found throughout the South Asian region.
 - It is listed in **schedule 4th of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972** and also appears in **appendix of the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(CITES\)](#)** due to its being endangered.
- According to the forest department, **Forest fires in Uttarakhand have affected more than 1,437 hectares of forests** since November 2023.

Cheer Pheasant



- The cheer pheasant (*Catreus wallichii*), also known as Wallich's pheasant is a vulnerable species of the pheasant family, Phasianidae.
- It is the only member in the **genus Catreus**.
- **IUCN Red List Status:** Vulnerable
- **CITES Status:** Appendix I
- **WPA:** Schedule I

Rufous-Bellied Woodpecker



- The rufous-bellied woodpecker (*Dendrocopos hyperythrus*) is a species of bird in the family **Picidae**.
- It is found along the **Himalayas** in the Indian subcontinent **and Southeast Asia**.
- Its natural habitats are **subtropical or tropical moist lowland forests and subtropical or tropical moist montane forests**.
- **IUCN Red List Status:** Least Concern
- **CITES Status:** Not Evaluated
- **WPA:** Schedule IV