



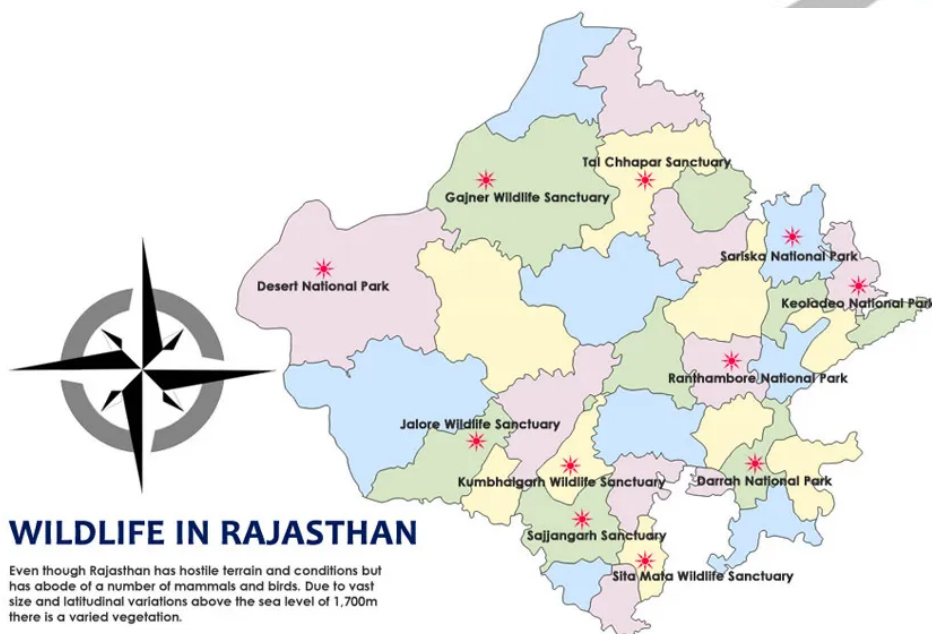
Tal Chhapar Sanctuary

Why in News?

Recently, the famous **Tal Chhapar Blackbuck Sanctuary in Churu, Rajasthan** received a **protective cover** against a proposed move of the State government to reduce the size of its **Eco Sensitive Zone (ESZ)**.

- The **World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF)** has also taken up a major project for the **conservation of raptors** in the sanctuary, spread in an area measuring 7.19 sq. Km.

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What are the Key Facts about Tal Chhapar Sanctuary?

- **About:**
 - The Tal Chhapar Sanctuary is situated on the **border of the Great Indian Thar Desert**.
 - Tal Chhapar is a **distinctive shelter** of the most graceful Antelope seen in India, “**the Blackbuck**”.
 - It was given the **status of a sanctuary in 1966**.
 - Tal Chhapar was a **hunting reserve of the erstwhile royal family of Bikaner**.
 - The “**Tal**” word is Rajasthani word **means plane land**.
 - This Sanctuary has **nearly flat territory and combined thin low-lying region**. It has got **open and wide grasslands** with spread **Acacia and Prosopis plants** that offer it a **look of a characteristic Savanna**.
- **Fauna:**
 - Tal Chhapar is an **ideal place to see Blackbucks** which are more than a thousand in number here. It is a **good place to see the desert animals and reptile species**.
 - The sanctuary is host to about **4,000 blackbucks, over 40 species of raptors and**

more than 300 species of resident and migratory birds.

- Migratory birds in the sanctuary are **harriers, eastern imperial eagle, tawny eagle, short-toed eagle**, sparrow, and little green bee-eaters, black ibis and demoiselle cranes. Other than that, skylarks, crested larks, ring doves, and brown doves can be seen throughout the year.

What are Blackbucks?

▪ About:

- The **Blackbuck (Antelope cervicapra), or the Indian Antelope**, is a species of antelope **native to India and Nepal**.
 - It is widespread in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, and other areas throughout peninsular India.
- It is **considered as the epitome of grassland**.
- The blackbuck is a **diurnal antelope (active mainly during the day)**.
- It has been **declared as the State Animal** of Punjab, Haryana, and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Cultural Importance:** It is a **symbol of purity for Hinduism** as its skin and horns are regarded as a sacred object. For **Buddhism**, it is a symbol of **good luck**.

▪ Protection Status:

- **Wildlife Protection Act 1972:** Schedule I
- **IUCN Status:** Least Concern
- **CITES:** Appendix III

▪ Threat:

- Habitat Fragmentation, Deforestation, Natural Calamities, Illegal Hunting.

▪ Related Protected Areas:

- Velavadar Blackbuck Sanctuary - Gujarat
- Point Calimere Wildlife Sanctuary - Tamil Nadu
- In 2017, the **Uttar Pradesh** State Government approved the plan of setting up the **Blackbuck Conservation Reserve** in the trans-Yamuna belt near Prayagraj. It would be the first conservation reserve dedicated to the blackbuck.

What are Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs)?

- ESZs are **areas notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (CC)**, under the **Environment Protection Act, 1986**.
- The basic aim is **to regulate certain activities around National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries** so as to minimise the negative impacts of such activities on the fragile ecosystem encompassing the protected areas.
- In June, 2022, the **Supreme Court directed** that every protected forest, national park and wildlife sanctuary across the country should **have a mandatory eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) of a minimum one km** starting from their demarcated boundaries.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q1. Which one of the following protected areas is well-known for the conservation of a sub-species of the Indian swamp deer (Barasingha) that thrives well on hard ground and is exclusively graminivorous? (2020)

- (a) Kanha National Park
- (b) Manas National Park
- (c) Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary
- (d) Tal Chhapar Wildlife Sanctuary

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- Hard ground swamp deer or Barasingha (*Rucervus duvaucelii*), the state animal of Madhya Pradesh, is seeing a revival in the Kanha National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR).
- Swamp Deer was close to extinction in the Kanha National Park. However, with the conservation efforts, the population currently numbers around 800.
- The deer is endemic to the Kanha National Park and Tiger Reserve on the Maikal Range of Satpura Hills. Measures like captive breeding and habitat improvement were used.
- **Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**

Q2. With reference to 'Eco-Sensitive Zones', which of the following statements is/are correct? (2014)

1. Eco-Sensitive Zones are the areas that are declared under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
2. The purpose of the declaration of Eco-Sensitive Zones is to prohibit all kinds of human activities in those zones except agriculture.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (d)

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