



Study to Revive Bison Population

Why in News?

Recently, the **Jharkhand** Forest Department launched a **study to revive the declining population of Bison**, commonly known as Gaur, at [Palamu Tiger Reserve \(PTR\)](#).

Key Points

- **Bison Population Status in Jharkhand:**
 - Bison, an important food source for big cats, has **gone extinct across Jharkhand**, except in the Palamu Tiger Reserve (PTR).
 - The **current bison population in PTR is between 50 and 70**, a significant decline from the 1970s, when it stood at around 150.
- **Reasons for Decline:**
 - Major factors include **poaching, infections, and habitat disturbances** caused by local cattle.
 - Domestic cattle, numbering over 1.5 lakh, occupy the bison's habitat, consuming their food and spreading infections like **mouth and foot disease**.
- **Current Conservation Efforts:**
 - The PTR authority has **initiated a study to assess factors affecting bison survival**, including habitat improvement and grass species preferences.
 - A comprehensive revival plan will be created after the study.
 - To curb the spread of diseases, a **vaccination drive is underway to vaccinate 1.5 lakh domestic cattle** from 190 surrounding villages.
 - Grassland improvement and anti-poaching measures are also being strengthened.
- **Core and Buffer Zone Management:**
 - PTR spans 1,129.93 sq km, with 414.08 sq km designated as core (critical **tiger** habitat) and 715.85 sq km as a buffer zone.
 - **Betla National Park** occupies 226.32 sq km of PTR, with 53 sq km in the buffer zone open to tourists.
 - Efforts are underway to **relocate eight of the 34 villages within PTR limits to protect core habitats**.

The Bison

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▪ **About:**

- The **Indian Bison or Gaur (*Bos gaurus*)** is the **tallest species of wild cattle** found in **India and largest extant bovine**.
- There are about **13,000 to 30,000 gaurs in the world** with approximately **85% of the population present in India**.
 - The **first-ever population estimation exercise** of the Indian gaur carried out in **the Nilgiris Forest Division** in February 2020 estimated around **2,000 Indian gaurs to be inhabiting the division**.

▪ **Geography:**

- It is native to **South and Southeast Asia**.
- In **India**, they are very much **prevalent in the Western Ghats**.
 - They are primarily found in **Nagarhole National Park**, **Bandipur National Park**, **Masinagudi National Park** and **Biligirirangana Hills (BR Hills)**.
- It is also found in **Burma and Thailand**.

▪ **Habitat:**

- They prefer **evergreen forests and moist deciduous forests**.
- They are **not found in the Himalayas** with an altitude greater than 6,000 ft.

▪ **Conservation Status:**

- **Vulnerable** in **IUCN Red List**.
- Included in the **Schedule I** of the **Wild Life Protection Act, 1972**.