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# CURRENT AFFAIRS

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## HIMALAYAN WOLF

This article covers 'Daily Current Affairs' and the topic details of "Himalayan Wolf". This topic is relevant in the "Environment" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

**UPSC Mains GS3 Syllabus :** Conservation

### Why in the News?

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has evaluated the Himalayan Wolf (*Canis lupus chanco*), a notable lupine predator distributed throughout the Himalayas, for the first time and has categorised it as "vulnerable"

### About Himalayan Wolf

- The **Himalayan Wolf**, or **Canis lupus chanco**, is a well-known wolf predator that lives all across the Himalayas. It is also known as Tibetan wolves and are genetically different from grey wolves
- **Habitat:**
  1. The Himalayan wolf is found mostly in **alpine meadows, grasslands, and rough terrains of the trans-Himalayan region**. This species, which lives at heights ranging from 3,000 to 5,500 metres, has evolved specifically to meet the challenges of high-altitude existence.
  2. The Himalayan wolf ranges throughout numerous countries, namely **India, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Tibetan Plateau in China**. Within these locations, they pass through a variety of scenery, including snow-covered plateaus and steep mountain slopes.
  3. It can be found in northern India's Union Territory of **Ladakh** as well as the **Lahaul** and **Spiti** region in northeastern Himachal Pradesh.
- **Physical attributes:**
  1. **Unique Fur Coat:** The Himalayan wolf is distinguished by its thick, woolly fur coat, which it has evolved to protect it from the bitterly cold temperatures that are common in its natural habitat. The wolves' coats, which are frequently light earth tones, aid in their ability to blend in with the rocky and snowy surroundings.
  2. **Adaptations to High-Altitude Living:** A stocky physique and shorter legs help in navigating the difficult terrain and deep snow. At high elevations, when oxygen levels are lower, effective oxygen intake is made possible by a robust respiratory system.

- **Population Status:** 2,275–3,792 adult individuals are estimated to be in the population, with each subpopulation spanning the Tibetan Plateau, India, and Nepal's Himalayan region. There are 227–378 mature people in the Indian sector, mostly in Ladakh and the Spiti Valley.

### Conservation status of Himalayan Wolf

1. **CITES:** Appendix I
2. **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I
3. **IUCN:** Vulnerable

### Ecological Importance:

- **Role in Ecosystem Balance:** The Himalayan wolf plays a vital role in maintaining ecological balance by regulating prey populations, preventing overgrazing, and supporting biodiversity. Their presence influences the behavior of herbivores, which, in turn, affects plant communities and landscape structure.
- **Indicator of Ecosystem Health:** Monitoring the Himalayan wolf population serves as an indicator of the overall health of the high-altitude ecosystems. Their decline could signal imbalances in the delicate ecological relationships within these remote and challenging environments.

### Reason behind declining Population of Himalayan Wolf Continuously.

- **Habitat Destruction:** The area, extent, and quality of Himalayan wolf habitat are continuously decreasing, according to the IUCN Red List Assessment.
- **Illegal Hunting:** The wolf is also unlawfully hunted in order to sell its fur and various body parts, such as heads, tongues, and paws. Nevertheless, not all of the states where these wolves are found allow hunting.
- **Depredation Conflict:** Given a seasonal or ongoing high livestock abundance in wolf habitats, which frequently form summer pasture land for livestock grazing, depredation conflict is a major conservation concern. These disputes lead to a bad perception of wolf conservation and frequently result in reprisal killings.
- **Hybridization with Dogs:** The study noted that interbreeding between domestic dogs and Himalayan wolves in Ladakh and Spiti is becoming an increasingly significant issue for the wolves. Because there are more feral canines in these locations, this is getting harder. Increased competition between wolves and wolf-dog hybrids for resources, like territory and prey, can be attributed to hybridization.

### Actions which can be taken to preserve the Himalayan Wolves

- **Controlling the Populations of Feral Dogs:** The biological balance in wolf habitats can be maintained by controlling the number of government dogs.
- **Safeguard and Restore:** preserving and replenishing natural prey populations and ecosystems, as well as allocating areas for wildlife habitat preservation.
- **Transboundary Efforts:** Through concerted study and monitoring programmes, this transboundary connection is maintained, allowing wolves to roam freely and preserving their natural behaviours.
- **Enhance Security methods:** Wolf conservation will be improved by employing sustainable livestock herding techniques, such as lowered livestock loads, adapted herding, and the

development of innovative but historically grounded holistic management strategies. Other improvements to livestock guarding techniques include predator-proof corral cages.

### **Prelims practice questions**

**Q1) 'Invasive Species Specialist Group' (that develops Global Invasive Species Database) belongs to which one of the following organizations?(UPSC Prelims 2023)**

- (a) The International Union for Conservation of Nature
- (b) The United Nations Environment Programme
- (c) The United Nations World Commission for Environment and Development
- (d) The World Wide Fund for Nature

**Answer: A**

**Q2) Consider the following statements regarding IUCN**

- 1) Primary purpose of the IUCN Red List is to Identify endangered species
- 2) IUCN Red List get updated every 3 years

**Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?**

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 2
- d) None

**Answer: A**

### **Mains practice question**

**Q1) Discuss the significance of the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) in the global context of biodiversity conservation. Highlight some of its key initiatives and contributions to the protection of endangered species.**

**Q2) Assess the current state of biodiversity in India, considering factors such as habitat loss, species endangerment, and conservation efforts. What are the major challenges faced by India in preserving its rich biodiversity, and what strategies can be adopted to address these challenges?**

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