

# CSB IAS ACADEMY

## TOPIC OF THE DAY (DATE: 01.03.2024)

### Status of Leopards in India - 2024

#### WHY IN NEWS?

Recently, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav released the report on Status of Leopards in India - 2024 at New Delhi.

#### About Report on Status of Leopards in India

- The fifth cycle leopard population estimation was carried out by the National Tiger Conservation Authority and Wildlife Institute of India, in collaboration with State Forest Departments, as part of the quadrennial “Monitoring of Tiger, Co-predators, prey and their habitat” exercise in tiger range States. This exercise has proved invaluable to the conservation efforts of the country.

#### About Leopard

- Leopards, is an enigmatic animal which evoke reverence and dislike and is facing escalating threats across their range in India. Amidst habitat loss, human-wildlife conflict, and poaching, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) spearheaded the fifth cycle of leopard population estimation, shedding light on the status and trends of these elusive big cats.
- Spanning tiger range States and encompassing diverse landscapes, the comprehensive survey employed robust scientific methodologies using technology to assess leopard abundance. Through a meticulous process combining camera trapping, habitat analysis, and population modeling, the study revealed crucial insights into leopard distribution and conservation challenges.

#### Protection Status:

- IUCN Red List: Vulnerable
- CITES: Appendix I.
- Wildlife Protection Act 1972: Schedule I

#### Key Highlights of the Report:

- The fifth cycle of leopard population estimation (2022) in India focused on forested habitats within 18 tiger states, covering four major tiger conservation landscapes. Non-forested habitats, arid, and high Himalayas above 2000 msl (~ 30% area) were not sampled for leopard. This cycle conducted a foot survey spanning 6,41,449 km to estimate carnivore signs and prey abundance. Camera traps were strategically placed at 32,803 locations, resulting in a total of 4,70,81,881 photographs, resulting in 85,488 photo-captures of leopard.
- **India's leopard population is estimated at 13,874 (Range: 12,616 – 15,132) individuals, representing stable population** in comparison to the similar area being sampled in 2018 with 12852 (12,172-13,535) individuals. This estimate represent population of 70% of leopard habitat, the Himalayas and semi arid **parts of country which are not tiger habitat were not sampled.**
- Central India shows a stable or slightly growing population of leopards (2018: 8071, 2022: 8820), Shivalik hills and Gangetic plains experienced decline (2018: 1253, 2022: 1109). **If we look at the area which was sampled both in 2018 and 2022 across India, there is a 1.08% per annum**

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**growth.** In Shivalik hills and Gangetic plains, there is a -3.4% decline per annum, while the largest growth rate was in Central India and Eastern Ghats of 1.5%.

- **Madhya Pradesh houses the largest population of leopards in the country – 3907 (2018: 3421), followed by Maharashtra (2022: 1985; 2018: 1,690), Karnataka (2022: 1,879 ; 2018: 1,783) and Tamil Nadu (2022: 1,070; 2018: 868).** Tiger Reserves or sites with highest leopard population are, Nagarajunasagar Srisailam (Andhra Pradesh), followed by Panna (Madhya Pradesh), and Satpura (Madhya Pradesh).

## **Key Recommendations of the Report**

### **Mitigate Human-Leopard Conflicts:**

- Implement community-based initiatives to raise awareness about leopard behavior and promote coexistence.
- Develop and disseminate guidelines for livestock protection to minimize conflicts and losses.
- Introduce and promote secure livestock housing practices to reduce depredation and retaliatory killings.

### **Secure Habitats Outside Protected Areas:**

- Establish and strengthen community-managed conservation areas to enhance protection in unsecured habitats.
- Implement sustainable land-use planning to minimize habitat fragmentation and promote wildlife corridors. Engage local communities in habitat restoration projects to create interconnected landscapes.

### **Combat Illegal Activities:**

- Strengthen anti-poaching efforts through increased patrols, use of technology (e.g., camera traps, drones), and training of local law enforcement.
- Enhance intelligence networks to combat illegal wildlife trade, focusing on leopard parts and products.
- Implement stricter penalties for poaching and illegal trade to deter potential offenders.

### **Adapt to Climate Change:**

- Conduct vulnerability assessments to understand the specific impacts of climate change on leopard habitats and prey.
- Develop climate-resilient conservation strategies and habitat restoration plans to mitigate the effects of climate change.

### **Government-Community Partnerships:**

- Establish collaborative initiatives involving local communities, government agencies, and NGOs for shared decision-making in conservation efforts.
- Provide economic incentives to local communities for actively participating in leopard conservation, such as revenue-sharing from tourism activities.

### **Rapid Response Protocols:**

- Develop and implement protocols for rapid response to emergency situations, including human-leopard conflicts and injured or orphaned leopards.
- Train and equip wildlife rescue teams to handle conflict situations and provide medical care to injured leopards.