

UPSC Civil Services Examination

UPSC Prelims

Topic – National Aquatic Animal of India

The Ganges River Dolphin or also called 'Susu,' is the National Aquatic Animal of India. It is one of the [National Symbols of India](#). Gangetic Dolphins are found in the river systems of Ganga, Brahmaputra, Meghna and Karnaphuli- Sangu in Nepal, India and Bangladesh.

It will be helpful to know about the National Aquatic Animal of India for the [IAS Exam](#). This article is going to answer a few questions related to the topic and will also provide some relevant facts about the Ganges River Dolphin.

National Aquatic Animal of India - Introduction

The Ganges River Dolphins (*Platanista Gangetica*) were officially discovered in 1801. The original stretches where the National Aquatic Animal of India are found:

- Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna River Systems and
- Karnaphuli-Sangu River Systems; of Nepal, India, and Bangladesh

Why is Ganges Dolphin National Aquatic Animal of India?

The reason to declare Ganges River Dolphin as the National Aquatic Animal of India was to save it from extinction. Also, the Ganges Dolphin is seen as the reflector of the health of the Ganga River. The declaration was made in 2009 in the National Ganga River Basin Authority's (NGRBA) first meeting.

Facts about National Aquatic Animal of India - Ganges River Dolphin

There are quite a few important and interesting facts about the Ganges River Dolphin which a [UPSC 2020](#) aspirant should know. The table below mentions the relevant facts about the National Aquatic Animal of India:

Interesting Facts about National Aquatic Animal of India - Ganges River Dolphin
Ganges River Dolphin is found only in freshwater
As the name goes, the Ganges Dolphin are endemic to the river Ganga
They are at the apex of the aquatic food chain
Ganges River Dolphin along with Indus River Dolphin is the sub-specie of South Asian River Dolphin.
It is the official animal of the Assam's capital Guwahati
There are also called Susu, Shushak, Side Swimming Dolphin & Blind Dolphin
Because of the sound they make in forms of whistles, these species of South Asian River Dolphin are also called Susu

It cannot breathe in water, it being a mammal. It surfaces above the water every 30-40 seconds to breathe

Deep pools, eddy counter-currents located downstream of the convergence of rivers and of sharp meanders, and upstream and downstream of mid-channel islands are favoured by the Ganges River Dolphins

There is a Ganges Dolphin Sanctuary called Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary in Bihar. Locals of Bihar called Gangetic Dolphin as 'Soons'

They use the way of 'Echolocation' to trap their prey

In mythology of India, Dolphin is considered as the vehicle of Goddess Ganga

The population of Ganges River Dolphin is less than 1800, as quoted by WWF-India

The babies of Dolphins are called calves and they are chocolate brownish when they are born and gradually the color changes to grey.

[IUCN Red List](#) of Threatened Species has given the status of 'Endangered' to the Ganges River Dolphin

The species is included in the [Wildlife Protection Act 1972](#) - Schedule I. It makes it prohibited to be hunted throughout India, except under threat to human life

Trade of Ganges Dolphin is prohibited

[World Wide Fund for Nature - WWF](#)-India also had started the Dolphin Conservation Programme to conserve the habitat of the Ganges river dolphin and secure a future for the endangered species. The stretches chosen by WWF-India are:

- Upper Ganga River (Brijghat to Narora) in the state of Uttar Pradesh (Proposed Ramsar Site)
- Chambal River (up to 10 km downstream of Chambal Wildlife Sanctuary) in the state of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh
- Ghagra and Gandak River, in the state of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar
- Ganga River, from Varanasi to Patna in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar respectively
- Son and Kosi River in Bihar
- Brahmaputra River from Sadia (foothills of Arunachal Pradesh) upto the Dhubri (Bangladesh Border)
- Kulsi River a tributary of Brahmaputra.

WWF-India in collaboration with Uttar Pradesh Forest Department started the Annual Gangetic River Dolphin Survey in October 2019.

- The method used for the survey was the Tandem Boat Method.
- The survey was conducted alongside a 250 km stretch of Ganga River between Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary and Narora Ramsar site.

Dolphins are considered to be the one of the most intelligent species

Threats to Gangetic Dolphin:

- Water Development Projects
- Toxicity of rivers
- Killing of them for their oil, by the local inhabitants around the river
- Accidental killings when the Gangetic Dolphins are trapped in fishermen gear