

Wildlife Protection Act Passed - [August 21, 1972]

This Day in History

The Indian Parliament passed the Wildlife Protection Act for the protection and preservation of different species of flora and fauna. This Act was implemented on 9th September 1972. In this edition of This Day in History, you can read all about the Wildlife Protection Act, its background, and other details for the IAS exam.

Background of the Wildlife Protection Act



- The first law for the protection of wildlife was passed in 1887 by the British Indian government. This act was known as the Wild Birds Protection Act 1887. This law made it illegal to possess and sell wild birds which were either killed or captured.
- A second new law was enacted in 1912 called the Wild Birds and Animals Protection Act.
- This act was amended in 1935 when the Wild Birds and Animals Protection (Amendment) Act 1935 was passed.
- During the pre-independence era, wildlife protection was not a priority.
- It was only in 1960 that the issue of protection of wildlife and the prevention of certain species from becoming extinct came into the fore.
- Finally, the Wildlife Protection Act was passed in 1972. Before this law came into force, there were only five national parks in India.
- This law applies to the whole country except the state of Jammu & Kashmir which has its own act for the same purpose.
- The act has 6 schedules and each schedule guarantees varied degrees of protection to animals and plants. Animals include insects, reptiles, fishes, birds and mammals.
- Schedule 1 & 2: Complete protection to the species and violation incurs highest penalty and punishment. This includes species like the tiger, Asiatic lion, Snow Leopard, deer, sloth bear, Tibetan fox, langurs, Macaques, Asian elephant, snakes, etc.

- Schedule 3 & 4 includes protected species but the punishment awarded for any violation is lesser. E.g. Hyena, hog deer, wild pig, hares, porcupine, bats, flying fox, tortoise, Himalayan rat, etc.
- Schedule 5 includes animals which may be hunted like the common crow, mice, rates, fruit bats, etc.
- Schedule 6 contains a list of plants that are forbidden from cultivation. E.g. Beddomes' cycad, Blue Vanda, Pitcher plant, etc.
- This Act prohibits the killing, capturing, poisoning and trapping of wild animals. This act also forbids injuring or removing body parts of the animals. The eggs of wild birds and reptiles are also protected under this act.
- Taxidermy is also prohibited under this act. Taxidermy is the preservation of a dead animal as a trophy. This includes making rugs, preserving skin, teeth, horns, eggs, etc.
- The act also has provisions under which encroachments in protected areas may be dealt with through eviction.
- The cases under this act are usually taken care of by the Forest Department.
- An amendment to this act was enacted in 2002. This amendment made the penalties for violation even harsher.