

## World Wildlife Day – UPSC Notes

Earth is home to countless species, and wildlife plays an important role in balancing the environment. It can be found in all ecosystems, deserts, rainforests, plains, and other areas.

World Wildlife Day is celebrated each year on March 3 to raise awareness of the world's wild animals and plants and discuss the threats they are facing. It calls for collective actions and the urgent need for governments, civil society, private sector actors, and individuals to add their voices, take actions to help conserve wildlife, and ensure its continued use is sustainable.

The day also highlights the issues such as urbanization, poaching, pollution, destruction of wildlife habitat, and how humans can contribute to conservation efforts.

### Why is World Wildlife Day in the news?

Recently, the United Nations has declared the theme for the year 2022 World Wildlife Day. Further, in times of pandemics, the threat of zoonotic diseases due to emerging climate change scenarios, wildlife protection has garnered renewed attention, the focus of the global community.

### What is the history of the day?

- The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on December 20, 2013, at its 68th session, proclaimed March 3, as World Wildlife Day.
- This day is significant, as on this occasion, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was signed on 3 March 1973.
- World Wildlife Day has become one of the most important global annual events dedicated to wildlife.

### What are the themes of wildlife day?

- Through its themes, the day emphasizes the urgent need to step up the fight against wildlife crime, which has wider economic, environmental, and social impacts.
- The themes conform with the UN Sustainable Development Goals 1, 12, 13 and 15, in areas such as alleviating poverty, ensuring sustainable use of resources, and conserving wildlife and land

- The themes for recent years are -
  1. 2022 - Recovering key species for ecosystem restoration
  2. 2021 - Forests and Livelihoods: Sustaining People and Planet
  3. 2020 - Sustaining all life on earth
  4. 2019 - Life below water: for people and planet
  5. 2018 - Big cats- predators under threat
  6. 2017 - Listen to the young voices.

## What is the significance of world wildlife day?

- A symbiotic relationship exists between the forest, forest-dwelling wildlife species, ecosystem services and people, especially the indigenous people.
- The indigenous forest dwellers, people at present, manage around 28% of the forest land.
- Biodiversity loss is an existential threat to human beings on the planet.
- The continued loss of wildlife species threatens to undermine entire ecosystems and puts into peril the well-being of all who rely on them.
- Yet, this is not inevitable: we have the power to change course and restore threatened species and their habitats.
- It can inspire collective action towards conservation, reversing the fate of key species of animals and plants.
- It can help chart a path towards a sustainable future, to live in harmony with nature.
- It acknowledges the need for collective political will and global leadership to adopt a robust post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and secure the common future.

## How is world wildlife day celebrated?

- Conducting various programs, awareness drives through different platforms.
- The programs focus on spreading the message, especially to children and youth.
- Encouraging individuals and groups to organize events and celebrations at their level, through various forms such as virtual discussions, film festivals, art shows, and talk shows.
- Presentation to friends, colleagues and members of the community, march or in-person performance provided the circumstances allow for it.

- Encouraging individuals to raise their voice and spread the word on social media by calling on citizens and institutions to step up all efforts to conserve vulnerable species nearby and around the world.
- Promoting efforts to spread awareness on species facing the most urgent threats in the locality, familiarisation with the efforts of the conservationists, and communities working in this sphere.

## What is sustainable wildlife management?

The Convention on Biological Diversity defines sustainable wildlife management as the sound management of wildlife species to sustain their populations and habitat over time, considering the socioeconomic needs of human populations.

It focuses on achieving the following -

- Sustainable management of wildlife used for food, or wild meat, bushmeat.
- Multidisciplinary approaches in sustainable wildlife management, including alternative livelihoods.
- Monitoring tools and databases.
- Subsistence use of wildlife.
- Wild meat and food security.

## Need of Sustainable Forest-habitat Management in Wildlife Conservation

- Forests are home to 80% of all terrestrial wildlife.
- The ecosystems they sustain are essential to global biodiversity, human livelihoods and the broader needs of societies and economies globally.
- Forest loss, degradation and fragmentation accelerate climate breakdown and biodiversity loss.
- This threatens global food and water security, and it imperils the safety and the livelihoods of millions of people.
- About half of the world's tropical forests are considered intact, but less than 7% of these forests are under some form of legal protection.
- Roughly 66% of the world's forest area lies within the territories of just 10 countries, India being one of them.
- Forests absorb nearly one-third of all CO<sub>2</sub> released from burning fossil fuels every year.

- Forest restoration could remove another 26 gigatons of Greenhouse Gases from the atmosphere.
- Need to address the quadruple planetary emergency: a climate crisis, a biodiversity-loss crisis, an inequality crisis, and a global health crisis.
- Forests and forest communities are at the centre of those challenges.

## Conclusion

The purpose of celebrating World Wildlife Day is not limited to one odd event, once a year, but emphasizes sustained efforts, in continuity throughout the year. It is well recognized that wildlife conservation is an issue that needs attention and action every day. Close interactions between innumerable species of flora and fauna for billions of years have shaped and sustained life.

Wildlife suffers from a two-fold threat - the first is due to the human conquest over nature which is posing a threat to its survival, while the second one flows from the first where the wilderness is facing a threat due to rampant human intrusion. Citizens must join hands, communities must come forward, governments and civil society must recognise the pressing need to act decisively, not only to protect the earth but for our collective survival.

The government of India through its various programs (Project Tiger) and legislation such as the Wildlife Act(Protection),1972, statutory bodies(Wildlife Crime Control Bureau) are working in tandem for the larger interest. However, it must be acknowledged that challenges do exist. Even small actions add up, which can make a difference for species and ecosystems. That is where the role of citizens is paramount, we must come forward, collaborate and participate to sustain life.