Himalayan Gray Langur [UPSC Notes]

A recent study has concluded that altitude plays an important role in deciding the food habits of the Himalayan Gray Langur. Important species found in India and around the world are important for the UPSC exam, especially the environment and ecology segment. In this article, you can read all about the Himalayan Gray Langur for the IAS exam.

Himalayan Gray Langur

Image source: Down To Earth

Himalayan Gray Langurs (*Semnopithecus ajax*) are also called the **Chamban Langurs or Chamba Sacred Langurs**. They are colobine i.e **they are leaf-eating animals.** They are also called the Kashmir gray langur.

- Their population is confined to **the Chamba district** of **western Himachal Pradesh.**
- These species live at an **elevation of 2200-4000 m above sea level.** Their population is mostly concentrated in the **subtropical, tropical moist, temperate, alpine, coniferous and broadleaf forests.**
- The Himalayan Grey Langur is present in a particular area only during some parts of the year. They change their locality during different seasons, depending upon the availability of food and environmental conditions.
- They are designated as an **endangered species** since their estimated population is less than 1,500 mature individuals in 15-20 groups. It is protected under Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
  - Langurs are an important species as they occupy a key position in the food chains of many forest ecosystems. In India, most langurs come under the genus Semnopithecus.
- Some of the characteristic features of this species include dark grey forearms and dark grey thighs absent in langurs from other Himalayan regions.

- The Gray Langur was once considered a sub-species of the *Semnopithecus entellus*, commonly known as the Bengal Sacred Langur or Hanuman Langur, but it was separated as a species in 2005.
- The two protected areas where the species is found are the Machiara National Park and the Dachigam National Park. The former is in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir and the latter is located 22 kilometres from Srinagar city in Jammu & Kashmir.

Get a [list of the national parks in India](#) in the linked article.

Threat

The Himalayan grey langur is facing threats from multiple factors such as:

- Fragmentation,
- Deforestation,
- Persecution and retaliatory killing due to crop destruction, and
- Commercial horticulture expansion.

There is a lack of empirical evidence on the habitat of the Himalayan langur, the human-langur relationship and a comprehensive study of the threat being faced by this animal. Of late, the species come into conflict with humans because of crop raids. They destroy crops on account of the lack of natural food resources and the destruction of their natural habitat.

Himalayan Gray Langur Conservation

The first step in this direction involves conducting a **baseline survey of the langur population** and **studying their distribution** across the region.

- The second step involves studying their **conservation threats**, and the **human-langur relationship.**
- These steps would help in designing a comprehensive model for the purpose of conserving this species.
- The **Himalayan langur project was started** by a Biological Anthropologist in 2014 Dr. Himani Nautiyal with the following objectives:
  - o Provide local people with knowledge of the Chamba Sacred Langur and its habitat.
  - o Develop positive attitudes towards the conservation of the species and nature.
  - o Encourage people to enact environment-friendly behaviours.

Way forward:

- These species can be **projected as 'Umbrella' or 'Flagship' species** for their better conservation and protection.
- The conservation process must **involve the local people** in order to get their input in the process.
- **Strict implementation of laws** related to animal conservation would help in better conservation activities.
- Conserving this species is very important for the ecosystem since primates perform vital ecological services such as that of seed dispersers, seed predators, pollinators and also serve as food for the top predator.