

Ganga Dolphin

April 7, 2020

Why in news?

The annual Ganges river Dolphin census was undertaken by the World Wide Fund for Nature- India in collaboration with the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department recently.

About it:

- The Ganges river dolphin was officially discovered in 1801.
- They are **found in the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems of Nepal, India, and Bangladesh.**
- The Ganges river dolphin can only live in freshwater and is **essentially blind.**
- They **hunt by emitting ultrasonic sounds**, which bounces off of fish and other prey, enabling them to “see” an image in their mind (**Echolocation**).
- Females are larger than males and give birth once every two to three years to only one calf.
- The Gangetic river dolphin is **India’s national aquatic animal** and is popularly known as ‘Susu’.
- **Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary (VGDS) in Bihar’s Bhagalpur district** is India’s only sanctuary for it.
- It is **among the four freshwater dolphins in the world**—the other three are:
 - The ‘**Baiji**’ now likely extinct from the Yangtze River in China,
 - The ‘**Bhulan**’ of the Indus in Pakistan,
 - The ‘**Boto**’ of the Amazon River in Latin America.
- These four species **live only in rivers and lakes** and its presence indicates the health of the riverine ecosystem.
- **Threats to them** include pollution, poaching, construction of dams and barrages and noise pollution

created by large ship propellers and by dredging.

- IUCN Status – **Endangered**