

Gharial

June 11, 2021

In news- The **Mahanadi Wildlife Division in Odisha** recently announced a cash reward of Rs 1,000 for rescuing gharials and informing wildlife personnel. The state forest department has launched an awareness drive to save the crocodiles in **five districts: Boudh, Angul, Cuttack, Sonepur and Nayagarh**.

About Gharials-

- Gharials, also called **gavials**, are a type of **Asian crocodilian** distinguished by their **long, thin snouts**.
- They live in **clear freshwater river systems**, congregating at river bends where the water is deeper.
- They are not well-suited for land.
- Gharials regulate their body temperature by basking in the sun to warm up or resting in shade or water to cool down.
- Once found from Pakistan to Myanmar, the reptile's range has shrunk to two countries – **India and Nepal**.
- In India, they are found in **Girwa** (Uttar Pradesh), **Son** (Madhya Pradesh), **Ramganga** (Uttarakhand), **Gandak** (Bihar), **Chambal** (Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan) **and Mahanadi** (Orissa) and along the **Narayani River of Nepal**.
- Male gharials sport a large growth on their snout called a **ghara**, the Hindi word for “mud pot”, which they use to vocalize and blow bubbles during mating displays.
- They are listed in **schedule 1 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** and also described as **critically endangered** on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.
- Their habitat is threatened because of human encroachment and fishing activities.
- Gharials do not stalk and lunge at prey like other crocodilians and their snouts contain sensory cells that can detect vibrations in the water.

- They are genetically weaker than salt water crocodiles and muggers.
- Protected areas of Gharial include- **National Chambal Sanctuary** – It is a tri-state protected area (Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh) for the protection of the Gharial and also the Endangered Ganges river dolphin and **Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, UP**.