

Great Indian Bustard

July 23, 2021

In news- The Central government recently informed the Rajya Sabha that there were no Great Indian Bustards (GIB) in Kutch Bustard Sanctuary (KBS) in Gujarat as on January 1, 2021.

About Great Indian Bustard-

- GIBs are the **largest among the four bustard species** found in India – the other three being MacQueen's bustard, lesser florican and the Bengal florican.
- GIBs prefer **grasslands as their habitats**.
- Being **terrestrial birds**, they spend most of their time on the ground with occasional flights to go from one part of their habitat to the other.
- They feed on insects, lizards, grass seeds etc.
- GIBs are considered the **flagship bird species of grassland** and hence barometers of the health of grassland ecosystems.
- In February 2020, the Central government told at the 13th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) that the GIB population in India had fallen to just 150.
- Maximum numbers of GIBs are found in Jaisalmer and the Indian Army controlled field firing range near Pokhran, **Rajasthan**.
- Other areas where they are found in less than 10 in number are Kutch district in **Gujarat**, Nagpur and Solapur districts in **Maharashtra**, Bellary and Koppal districts in **Karnataka** and Kurnool district and Amravati in **Andhra Pradesh**.
- **Pakistan** is also believed to host a few GIBs.
- The GIB lays one egg every 1-2 years and the success rate of these eggs is 40-50 % due to predators like foxes and dogs.

- The IUCN has categorised GIBs as **critically endangered**.

Protected areas:

- Desert National Park Sanctuary in Rajasthan
- Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh
- Karera Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh

Threats:

- Collision/electrocution with power transmission lines – due to their poor frontal vision, the bustards can't detect power lines in time and their weight make in-flight quick manoeuvres difficult.
- Irrigation and farming technology
- Mining
- Wind turbines and Solar farms (photovoltaic power stations)
- Plantation of exotic shrub/tree species in deserts and grasslands in the name of afforestation

The government has started a project, titled '**Habitat Improvement and Conservation Breeding of Great Indian Bustard- An Integrated Approach**', for five years from the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) for conservation and breeding of the GIB. In 2015, the Central government launched the GIB species recovery programme under which the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and Rajasthan forest department have jointly set up conservation breeding centres where GIB eggs harvested from the wild are incubated artificially and hatchlings are raised in controlled environments.