

Guide for safe rescue of Ganges River Dolphins

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In news- Recently, the Ministry of Jal Shakti has released a guide for the safe rescue and release of stranded Ganges River Dolphins.

Guide to Safe Rescue and release of Stranded Gangetic Dolphins-

- The document is the **detailed description of the methods of a safe capture and translocation established to rescue stranded dolphins and return** them to their original habitats.
- It has been **prepared by the Turtle Survival Alliance, India Program and Environment, Forest and Climate Change Department (EFCCD), Uttar Pradesh.**

About Ganges River Dolphins (GRDs)

- These Dolphins have been designated the **National Aquatic Animal of India** since 2010.
- It can be found throughout 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.
- Its population is estimated at 4,000, and nearly 80% is found in the Indian subcontinent.

Threats-

- Wide-scale **habitat degradation from pollution,**

hydroelectric and development projects and industrial run-off,

- Accidental deaths via entanglement in fishing nets, opportunistic poaching for meat and oil in certain pockets of the country
- They often **accidentally enter canal channels in northern India and are often entrapped**, and die as they are unable to swim up against the gradient, eventually getting stressed and harassed by the locals.

Conservation status-

- '**Endangered**' under IUCN Red List.
- Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act (1972).
- Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

The Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA)-

- It was **formed in 2001 as an IUCN partnership** for sustainable captive management of freshwater turtles and tortoises.
- It arose in response to the rampant and unsustainable harvest of Asian turtle populations to supply Chinese markets, a situation known as the Asian Turtle Crisis.