Indian Pangolin

January 3, 2022

In news—Recently, the Odisha Forest and Environment Department has completed its first-ever radio-tagging of the Indian pangolin.

About Indian pangolin-

- The Indian pangolin (Manis crassicaudata), also called thick-tailed pangolin is native to the Indian subcontinent.
- It is a large anteater covered horizontally by 11-13 rows of scales.
- The Indian pangolin is a solitary, shy, slow-moving, nocturnal mammal.
- Of the eight extant species of pangolin, the Indian Pangolin Manis crassicaudata and Chinese Pangolin M. pentadactyla occur in India.
- A terminal scale is also present on the ventral side of the tail of the Indian Pangolin, which is absent in the Chinese Pangolin.
- Its sticky tongue, which is longer than its body, is specially adapted.
- It can also curl itself into a ball (volvation) as self-defence against predators such as the tiger.
- The colour of its scales varies depending on the colour of the earth in its surroundings.
- It is an insectivore, feeding on ants and termites, digging them out of mounds and logs using its long claws, which are as long as its forelimbs.
- It is nocturnal and rests in deep burrows during the day.
- It inhabits grasslands and secondary forests, and is well adapted to dry areas and desert regions, but prefers more barren, hilly regions.
- Major threats to pangolins in India are hunting and
poaching for local consumptive use (e.g. as a protein source and traditional medicine) and international trade, for its meat and scales in East and South East Asian countries, particularly China and Vietnam.

- Within its range it is known as ‘khawlyaa manjar’, in Marathi; saal khapri in Chhattisgarhi, bon-rou in Assamese; eenampechi in Malayalam, azhungu or alangu in Tamil, bajrakapta in Odia; kaballewa in Sinhala; chippu handi in Kannada.

- **IUCN status:** Endangered.
- It has been listed on CITES Appendix I since January 2017 and is protected in all countries.
- It is also protected and listed under the Schedule I Part I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

**Eight species of pangolins—**

- Eight species of pangolins are found on two continents. They range from Vulnerable to Critically Endangered.
- Four species live in Africa: Black-bellied pangolin (Phataginus tetradactyla), White-bellied pangolin (Phataginus tricuspis), Giant Ground pangolin (Smutsia gigantea) and Temminck’s Ground pangolin (Smutsia temminckii).
- The four species found in Asia: Indian pangolin (Manis crassicaudata), Philippine pangolin (Manis culionensis), Sunda pangolin (Manis javanica) and the Chinese pangolin (Manis pentadactyla).