

Kelp Forests

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Why in news?

According to research, Underwater Arctic Forests (Kelps) are expanding.

What are Kelp Forests?

- Kelps are **large brown algae seaweeds attached to the seafloor** and eventually grow to the water's surface and rely on sunlight to generate food and energy.
- They are underwater forests that **thrive well in cold, nutrient rich waters.**
- They are **always coastal and require shallow, relatively clear water.**
- Kelp forests have been observed throughout the Arctic and the **Canadian Arctic alone represents 10 percent of the world's coastlines.**
- **They even grow under sea ice.**
- Many fish species use kelp forests as **nurseries for their young.**
- Seabirds and marine mammals like sea lions, sea otters and even grey whales use them as **shelter from predators and storms.**
- Destructive fishing practices, coastal pollution and accidental damage caused by boat entanglement are known to negatively affect kelp forests.
- **Sea urchins can destroy entire kelp forests by moving in herds** whereas Sea otters play a key role in stabilizing Sea urchin populations so that kelp forests may thrive.