

New cicada species in Nagaland needs conservation

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In news-A professor of zoology at the North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong has stressed on the need for the conservation of a newly found cicada species *Platyomia kohimaensis*.

About the new cicada species

- It was found in the Naga Hills, Nagaland.
- **The species was found near the village of Mitelphe within the Kohima district.** □
- Naga hills, which lie within the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot.
- The emergence of this cicada occurs more in areas around **undisturbed bamboo groves.**
- The **collection site of *Platyomia kohimaensis* was a semi-disturbed forest patch**, with human activities as evident nearby in the form of farming and agriculture land.
- The newly discovered cicada **sings only in the dusk for a few hours.**
- The sound is like a continuous cackling...like kok..kok..kok..kok.
- **Most cicadas call during the day.** But this one calls only for a few hours' window around dusk.
- No new cicada was discovered after those found by British entomologists in the Naga hills in the early 1900s.
- As of now, it's **not recognised as a taxa of significance.**

About Cicada

- Cicadas are **hemipteran insects known for their loud, complex and species-specific acoustic signals or songs.**

- The **generic diversity of cicadas in India and Bangladesh ranks the highest in the world**, followed by China.
- Most cicadas are **canopy dwellers and are found in natural forests with large trees**.
- Cicadas, with their acoustic signatures, act as **indicators of a healthy forest ecosystem**.
- They are in the suborder Auchenorrhyncha, along with smaller jumping bugs such as leafhoppers and froghoppers.

Distribution in India

- Some cicadas like **Savazana mirabilis and Salvazana imperialis** they discovered in Meghalaya prefer only certain tree species found in undisturbed forests.
- **The periodical cicada Chremistica ribhoi** (locally called niangtaser and popular as 'world cup cicada') described in 2013 is confined to areas surrounding the Nongkhylllem Wildlife Sanctuary in Meghalaya, extending north up to Jirang block in Ri Bhoi district bordering Assam.
- Earlier, the species had a much wider range, up to areas near Byrnihat and Orlong Hada in the east, bordering Assam.
- However their emergence is now confined to only areas adjoining Nongkyllem Wildlife Sanctuary.

Threats

- The main threat to many cicada species is their rapidly diminishing natural habitat, where they live and breed.
- In the North East, **clearing of forest land and wildfires** kill many nymphs underground.
- **Large-scale clearing of natural forest land into human settlement and agricultural** fields, along with burning of forests are other threats.
- **Unabated capturing and killing of this cicada species** during its mass emergence also poses a threat to its survival.