

'Re-wilding' of wild animals

July 15, 2021

In news- Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR) recently reintroduced into the wild an abandoned nine-month-old tiger cub named Mangala after rearing it in 'captivity' for two years.

Key updates-

- Rewilding refers to **reintroducing lost animal species to natural environments.**
- It is a conservation strategy aimed at restoring natural processes and wilderness areas, providing connectivity between such areas (corridors), and reintroducing **large herbivores, predators and/or keystone species.**
- It was **first academically defined in 1998 by American conservation biologists Michael Soule and Reed Noss.**
- As per the Standard Operating Procedures laid down by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) under **The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**, there are three ways to deal with orphaned or abandoned tiger cubs.
- To make an effort to reunite the abandoned cubs with their mother.
- If a reunion of the cub with its mother is not possible, then shift the cub to a suitable zoo.
- Release the cub into the wild after a certain time when it appears that the cub is capable of surviving in the wild independently.
- NTCA stresses that the **tiger cub should be reared in an in situ enclosure for a minimum of two years**, and during this time, each cub should have a successful record of at least 50 'kills'.
- At the time of releasing the cub in the wild, they should be in prime health, and of dispersing age (three/four years).
- There should be no abnormality/incapacitation.

Previous attempts at re-wilding of carnivores in India-

- Three leopards – a male named Prince and two females, Harriet and Juliette and a Siberian tigress cub named Tara were reintroduced in Dudhwa forest area in the 1970s.
- The rewilding in Panna Tiger Reserve of two abandoned tigress cubs, named T4 and T5, that were brought up at Kanha Tiger Reserve, is considered to be a success in tiger conservation.
- In March 2021, a three-year-old tigress, PTRF-84, the daughter of the 'man-eater' tigress T1, was released in the Pench Tiger Reserve after two years of a rewilding programme.
- Just eight days after being released, PTRF-84 died of injuries sustained during a territorial clash in the jungle.

Rewilding is not limited to cats. The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) in collaboration with the Haryana Forest and Wildlife Department has been running a vulture conservation centre named 'Jatayu' near Pinjore for the last 17 years. An Elephant Rehabilitation Centre (ERC) has been running in Yamunanagar, Haryana.