

Rhinos to be re-introduced in Uttarakhand

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Recently the State Government of Uttarakhand (State Wildlife Board) has decided to re-introduce Rhinoceros in Corbett Tiger Reserve to increase the diversity of fauna in both the protected areas of the state

Key highlights

- Around 10 rhinos will be brought in CTR in the first phase and subsequently, 10 more would be added
- The geographical terrain and environmental conditions in CTR are suitable for rhinos.
- The ideal sites chosen in Corbett are **valley habitats bounded on either side by the lower Himalayas (north), Shivalik Hills (south) or the Ramganga Reservoir (east)**, which would also act as natural barriers to rhino movement outside these areas, thereby minimizing conflict with people.

Significance of the move

- There is minimum possibility of man-animal conflicts due to rhinos and its presence can also help other animals at the reserve
- reintroduction of rhinos at the reserve will also give a boost to tourism in the state
- According to wildlife experts, rhinos reduce the size of elephant grass by eating it. This would mean that species that thrive on lower-height grass – Hog Deer, Cheetal, Sambar and Swamp Deer, among others – would also be encouraged.

A brief note on Indian Rhinoceros

- The greater one-horned rhino is identified by a single black horn about 8-25 inches long and a grey-brown hide with skin folds, which gives it an armor-plated appearance.
- The greater one-horned rhino (or “Indian rhino”) is the largest of the rhino species.
- Once widespread across the entire northern part of the Indian subcontinent, rhino populations plummeted as they were hunted for sport or killed as agricultural pests.
- This pushed the rhinos to near extinction in the 20th century
- The recovery of the greater one-horned rhino is among the greatest conservation success stories in Asia.
- Today populations have increased to around 3,500 rhinos in northeastern India and the Terai grasslands of Nepal.

Indian Rhino Vision 2020

- Launched by the Assam Forest Department in partnership with WWF-India in 2005, Indian Rhino Vision 2020 is an ambitious effort to attain a wild population of at least 3,000 greater one-horned rhinos spread over seven protected areas in the Indian state of Assam by the year 2020.
- The programme aims at increasing the number and range of rhinos in Assam through wild-to-wild translocations from Kaziranga National Park and Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary to potential Protected Areas including Manas National Park, Burachapori Wildlife Sanctuary, Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary, and Dibru-Saikhowa National Park.