

Species Recovery Programme

March 18, 2021

In news: Caracal, a medium-sized wildcat has been added to the list recovery programme for critically endangered species in India, the list includes 22 wildlife species

Key updates

The National Board for Wildlife and Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change last month included the caracal found in parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat, in the list of critically endangered species.

About the Caracal

- **Places it is found:** Besides India, the caracal is found in several dozen countries across Africa, the Middle East, Central and South Asia.
- **Appearance:** It has long legs, a short face, long canine teeth, and distinctive ears long and pointy, with tufts of black hair at their tips
- **Name:** Its iconic ears are what give the animal its name caracal comes from the Turkish karakulak, meaning 'black ears'. In India, it is called siya gosh, a Persian name that translates as 'black Ear'. A Sanskrit fable exists about a small wild cat named deergha-karn or 'long-eared'.
- **IUCN status:** Least concern
- Typically nocturnal, the caracal is highly secretive and difficult to observe
- **In India:** The caracal could be earlier found in arid and semi-arid scrub forest and ravines in Rajasthan, Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh. Today, its presence is restricted to Rajasthan, Kutch, and parts of MP.

Its association with Indian History

- **Earliest evidence:** The earliest evidence of the caracal in the subcontinent comes from a fossil dating back to the civilisation of the Indus Valley c. 3000-2000 BC, according to a reference in 'Historical and current extent of occurrence of the Caracal in India'
- **Medieval India:** The caracal has traditionally been valued for its litheness and extraordinary ability to catch birds in flight; it was a favourite coursing or hunting animal in medieval India.
- For example, Firuz Shah Tughlaq (1351-88) had siyah-goshdar khana, stables that housed large numbers of coursing caracal. It is mentioned in Abul Fazl's Akbarnama, as a hunting animal in the time of Akbar (1556-1605).
- **Medieval texts:** Descriptions and illustrations of the caracal can be found in medieval texts such as the Anvar-i-Suhayli, Tutinama, Khamsa-e-Nizami, and Shahnameh.
- **British time:** The East India Company's Robert Clive is said to have been presented with a caracal after he defeated Siraj-ud-daullah in the Battle of Plassey (1757).
- The caracal's use as a coursing animal is believed to have taken it far beyond its natural range to places like Ladakh in the north to Bengal in the east.
- The East India Company's Robert Clive is said to have been presented with a caracal after he defeated Siraj-ud-daullah in the Battle of Plassey (1757).

A brief note on Species Recovery Programme

- This programme is one of the components of 'Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats' (IDWH)
- The erstwhile Ministry of Environment and Forest scheme of 'Assistance for the Development of National Parks and Sanctuaries' was reformulated and renamed as 'Integrated

Development of Wildlife Habitats (IDWH)' during the 11th Plan period (2007-2012).

- The MoEF, in consultation with Wildlife Institute of India and other scientific institutions/ organizations, identified 16 terrestrial and 7 aquatic species with the objective of saving critically endangered species/ecosystems that to ensure their protection outside Protected Areas, across the wider landscape/seascape.
- Subsequently in 2015, the MoEFCC tasked WII to prepare Endangered Species Recovery Plans (ESRP) for identified nationally and globally important species such as Lion, Great Indian Bustard, Manipuri Deer- Sangai, Gangetic Dolphin and Dugong
- So far, 21 species have been identified under the recovery programme. These are the Snow Leopard, Bustard (including Floricans), Dolphin, Hangul, Nilgiri Tahr, Marine Turtles, Dugongs, Edible Nest Swiftlet, Asian Wild Buffalo, Nicobar Megapode, Manipur Brow-antlered Deer, Vultures, Malabar Civet, Indian Rhinoceros, Asiatic Lion, Swamp Deer, Jerdon's Courser, the Northern River Terrapin, Clouded Leopard, Arabian Sea Humpback Whale and Red Panda

Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats' (IDWH)

It is an on-going Centrally Sponsored Scheme which has been made operational by adding more components and activities to the erstwhile Centrally Sponsored Scheme – “Assistance for the Development of National Parks and Sanctuaries” during the 11th Plan Period. Under IDWH, the financial assistance is provided to State/UT Governments for protection and conservation of wildlife and its habitats in Protected Areas (PAs) as well as outside PAs and also for the recovery programmes of the critically endangered species

Components of the scheme

1. Support to Protected Areas (National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves)
2. Protection of Wildlife Outside Protected Areas
3. Recovery programmes for saving critically endangered species and habitats