

Spot Bellied Eagle Owl

January 20, 2023

In news— A wildlife team recently found a 'Spot Bellied Eagle Owl' (Bubo Nipalensis) for the first time in Seshachalam forest, and for the third time in Andhra Pradesh.

About Spot Bellied Eagle Owl-

- The spot-bellied eagle-owl (*Bubo nipalensis*), **also known as the forest eagle-owl** is a large bird of prey with a formidable appearance.
- It is a **forest-inhabiting species found on large trees in thick forests in the Indian Subcontinent and Southeast Asia.**
- It is the **sixth longest owl in the world** on average and has the ninth longest wings of any living owl.
- The spot-bellied eagle-owl is overall **a stark, grayish-brown bird, with dark, coarse brown coloration over the back and upper wings.**
- The throat and underparts are mainly pale fulvous in color with black and white horizontal stripes along the flanks of the body that become broad spots on the abdomen and undertail coverts.
- On the wings, the primaries are dark brown with lighter brown stripes and the secondaries are more heavily barred with buff-brown coloration.
- The lores are covered in bristly feathers and the cheeks are brownish-white with black feather shafts. The large ear-tufts slant off to the sides.
- Juvenile birds are distinct from adult birds, being a much paler grayish-cream overall with fairly heavy brownish barring.
- Distinguishing the spot-bellied eagle-owl is relatively straightforward, since other Indian and southeast Asian eagle owls do not generally dwell in deep forests as does this species.
- It is **nocturnal** and often spends its day hidden in the

dense foliage of large forest trees. However, they have been observed on the move and even hunting during the day, especially in forests with minimal human disturbance.

- This species is **considered part of a superspecies with the barred eagle-owl** (*Bubo sumatranus*), which looks quite similar but is allopatric in distribution.
- **This owl is noted for its strange, human-sounding call**, and it has been suggested that it is the same as the cryptid known as ulama or “Devil Bird” in Sri Lanka. A local name is Maha Bakamuna (“large horned owl”).
- Despite its unknown and probably declining population size, the spot-bellied eagle-owl is evaluated as **least concern on the IUCN Red List**.

Note:

- It was also sighted only twice in the State earlier, and both the times it was at Nagarjunasagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve (NSTR).
- ‘Mottled Wood Owl’ (*Strix Ocellata*) was also spotted recently in the fields abutting Chamala forest on the Tirupati-Annamayya inter-district border.