

World Lion day, 2021

August 12, 2021

In news- World Lion Day is celebrated on August 10 of every year to raise awareness about lions and to mobilise support for their protection and conservation.

About World Lion Day

- In 2013, co-founders Dereck and Beverly Joubert the Big Cat Initiative, and National Geographic made a partnership to create World Lion Day.
- Since then, it has become a symbol in the fight to protect the majestic species.

Big Cat Initiative-National Geographic

- Explorers-at-Large Dereck and Beverly Joubert and the National Geographic Society founded the Big Cats Initiative in 2009 as an effort to halt the decline of big cats in the wild.
- The Jouberts are globally known conservationists and filmmakers who have been working to help save big cats, other key wildlife species, and their habitats for over 30 years.
- Since then, the National Geographic Society's Big Cats Initiative has supported more than 80 scientists, conservationists, storytellers, and educators working to protect big cats in the wild.

About Lion

- The lion is also known as *Panthera leo* and is considered the king of the jungle.
- The lions were once found throughout Africa, Asia and Europe but their numbers have dwindled over the years in these continents.
- These majestic cats that symbolise courage, ferocity,

and power are threatened by extensive habitat loss.

- The last remaining population of the Asiatic Lions can be found in Gujarat's Gir National Park
- Lions maintain ecological balance and ensure the protection of natural forests and help in the conservation of biodiversity.

Asiatic Lion population in India

- The Asiatic lion is surviving today only in India.
- Its range is restricted to Gir National Park and the surrounding areas in the Indian state of Gujarat.
- The number of Asiatic lions, who live primarily in the Gir forests, was estimated to be 674 in 2020, an increase of 29 per cent in five years.
- The last population estimation exercise was conducted in May 2015 which pegged the lion numbers at 523, a 27 per cent increase from the estimation of 2010.

Threats to Asiatic Lion

- These lions face significant threats of poaching.
- The Asiatic lion also faces the threat of genetic inbreeding arising from a single population inhabiting one place.

Conservation status: IUCN

- African Lion is currently classified as Vulnerable.
- Asiatic Lion is currently classified as Endangered.

Extra reading: <https://journalsofindia.com/gir-sanctuary/>