

Concerns with Conservation Efforts in Gir Forest

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- Gujarat government has taken conservation efforts taken to protect the endangered Asiatic lion population in Gir forest.

\n

- In recent times, various policy stands of government in Gir forest has risen concern among wildlife conservationists.

\n

\n\n

What is the significance of Gir forest area?

\n\n

\n

- The Government notified the large geographical extent of Sasan Gir as wildlife sanctuary in 1965, to conserve the Asiatic Lion.

\n

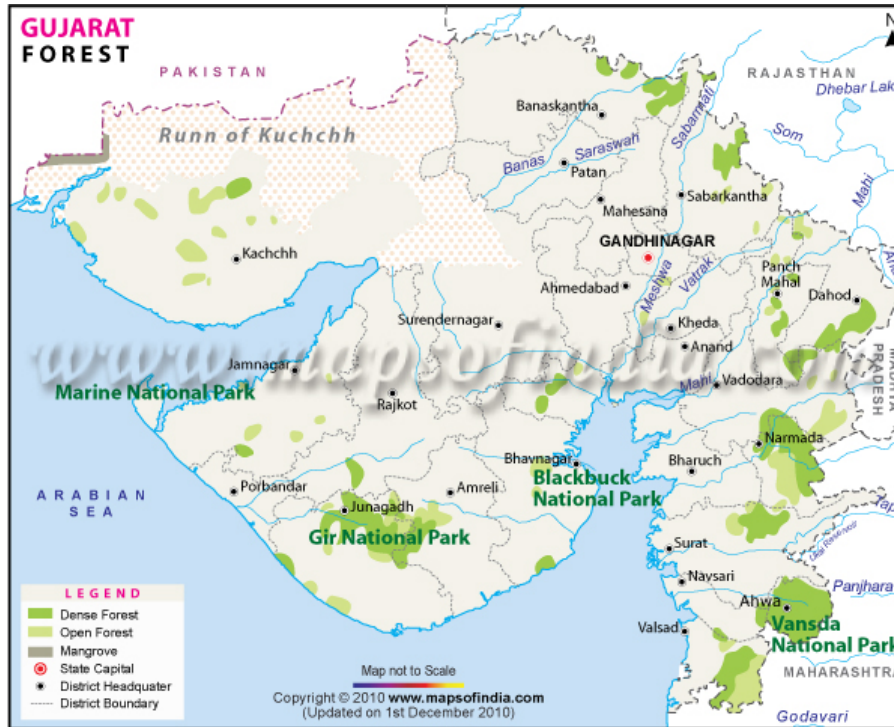
- It covers total area of 1412 square kilometres of which 258 Km forms the core area of the National Park.

\n

- Besides Africa, Gir National Park in Gujarat is the only place in the world where one can spot lions roaming free in the wild.

\n

\n\n



\n\n

\n

- The remarkable growth in the lion population in this landscape from about 300 in 1995 to over 500 in 2015 points to the success of conservation management over decades.

\n

\n\n

What are the recent policies being carried out in Gir forest?

\n\n

\n

- **Religious Tourism** - The state government in 2017 permitted night stays at a temple located in the core area of Gir National Park.
- This is severely affecting the landscape and altering the land-use pattern and profile of the forest region.
- **Reducing eco-sensitive zone** - According to the environment ministry guidelines, eco-sensitive zone can extend to min 10km around a Protected Area (PA), where certain development activities are prohibited.
- But for the Gir National Park, the government is taking measures to reduce the eco-sensitive zones to less than 1 km for mining and tourism.
- **Interpretation zone** - A safari park 15 km away from the PA has captive

\n

lions in enclosed natural environments.

\n

- Government is planning to clear this zone which will result in habitat loss, change in landscape, and degradation through roads, resorts, traffic and pollution.

\n

\n\n

What are the concerns of wildlife conservationists?

\n\n

\n

- Asiatic lions are venturing out of the Protected Area (PA) and are living in wide range of habitats such as hilly tracts, coasts, pastures and farmlands.

\n

- This is resulting in incidents of livestock depredation and of attacks on people by lions.

\n

- There are also various reports of lions dying due to unnatural causes like railway and road accidents, electrocution, drowning in open wells.

\n

- There is also an increasing distress due to the unregulated wildlife [tourism](#) around the Protected Area.

\n

- Tourists are ready to pay huge amounts to watch lions and videos of bikes and cars chasing lions at night are being widely shared on social media.

\n

\n\n

What measures are needed to conserve the Gir forest better?

\n\n

\n

- Decisions taken in the recent times relating to decreasing eco-sensitive zones, promoting tourism, etc. has to be rolled back.

\n

- Agro-pastoral landscape around the sanctuary is as important as dedicated management government should take measures in this regard.

\n

- Political will, people's tolerance and the lion's resilience is also required for the future of healthy lion population.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n

