

Goliath beetles

Why in News?

New research has found that one species of the enormous Goliath beetles faces extinction in West Africa.

- The Goliath beetles (genus Goliathus) are among the **world's biggest insects**.
- **Types** - Goliathus regius Klug, Goliathus cacicus Olivier, Goliathus cacicus, Goliathus goliatus, Goliathus albosignatus Boheman, Goliathus orientalis Moser.
- **Size** - They grow up to 110mm long, males have **Y-shaped horns** and females do not have horns.
- **Distribution** - Found in the rainforests of
 - Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda and South Sudan.
- **Diet** - Beetle larvae, or grubs, are omnivorous and likely scavenge on meat as well as debris of plants.
- The adult beetles feed only on the **sap of a few tree species** in mature rainforest areas.
- **Goliathus cacicus** - Smaller compared to Goliathus regius beetle species, it's up to 95mm long (normally 60-84mm) and lives only in mature rainforests.
- **Goliathus regius** - It can grow up to 105mm long (normally 75-95mm) and prefers to live in drier forests.
- Occasionally, they both live in the same patch of forest and even on a same tree and mate, giving birth to natural hybrids.
- **Significance to ecosystem** - They have an important role in moving nutrients throughout the forest ecosystem to nourish other plants and animals.
- Goliath beetle is an excellent indicator of forest health, if they are abundant in a forest, it means the forest is in a good enough condition to support other species.
- But when their populations decline, this is an early warning indicator of emptying forests and eroding ecosystems.

- **Threats** - *Goliathus regius* Klug and *Goliathus cacicus* Olivier, are threatened with extinction.
- *Goliathus cacicus* has had a catastrophic decline over the past 30 years.
- *Goliathus cacicus* seemed to have **gone extinct** in several areas of west Africa, like the Banco Forest National Park in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire.
- Forests in Nigeria, Cameroon, Uganda, South Sudan, Rwanda and Kenya offer valuable shelter to *Goliathus goliatus*.
- Gabon, the northern Republic of Congo and northern Democratic Republic of Congo have vast and largely pristine, inaccessible forests where *Goliathus goliatus* beetles are not under threat.
- Goliath beetles are **not currently evaluated** on the IUCN Red List.
- The beetles has been almost wiped out by the West African cocoa industry and, to a lesser extent, by the international trade in dried insects.



Reference

[The Hindu | Goliath beetles](#)

