

Indian Gharial

Why in News?

Recently, scientists warned that Indian gharial and other 5 species might go extinct within the next 5 years unless drastic conservation measures are taken.

- **Indian Gharial** - It is the **only visibly sexually dimorphic crocodilian**, derives its name from Ghara, an Indian word for Pot.
- **Scientific Name** - *Gavialis gangeticus*.
- It is known as Gharial, Fish Eating Crocodile, Indian Gavial, Gavial and Long Nosed Crocodile.
- **Habitat** - River habitats with deep, clear, fast-flowing waters and steep, sandy banks.
- **Distribution** - Only in the waters of India and Nepal.

The surviving population found within the tributaries of the Ganges river system and less than 250 in the wild.

- **Morphology** - It has a thick skin covered with smooth epidermal scales that do not overlap.
- The snout of the gharial is uniquely the thinnest and most elongated among all the crocodilians.



- **Characteristics** - Its long narrow snout has very little resistance to water, allowing swiping motions to snap up fish in their mouth.
- **Diet** - Primarily fish eaters, some individuals known to scavenge dead animals.
- Feed on warm-blooded species, fish, insects, larvae and small frogs.
- **Threats** - Dam construction
 - Barrages and water abstraction
 - River bed cultivation
 - Pollution

- Loss of river habitats.
- **Conservation Status**
 - **IUCN** – Critically Endangered.
 - **CITES** – Appendix I.
 - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** – Schedule I.

5 Other Species on the Verge of Extinction		
Species	Location	Population
Eastern Lowland Gorilla (<i>Gorilla beringei graueri</i>)	Democratic Republic of Congo.	Declining rapidly.
Hawksbill Turtle (<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>)	Tropical oceans worldwide.	Rapid decline due to human activity.
Javan Rhinoceros (<i>Rhinoceros sondaicus</i>)	Ujung Kulon National Park, Indonesia.	Less than 80 in the wild.
Amur Leopard (<i>Panthera pardus orientalis</i>)	Russia and China.	Around 100 in the wild.
Yangtze Finless Porpoise (<i>Neophocaena asiaeorientalis</i>)	Yangtze River, China.	Fewer than 1,000.

References

1. [The Indian Express| Indian Gharial](#)
2. [WWF| Gharial](#)
3. [WII| Gharial's Characteristics, Diet & Habitat](#)