

Prelim Bits 28-03-2018

Turtle frog (*Myobatrachus gouldii*)

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- Turtle frog is unique to Western Australia, and it subsists on termites.
- It is mainly found in the semi-arid region in the southwest and central zones of west Australia.

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- It is very small and on average are around 2 inches (5cm) in length.
- It has short and muscular limbs which help them dig into the ground.
- It digs forward like turtles, rather than backwards which is characteristic of frogs.
- The turtle frog species does not have a tadpole stage; instead the frog develops fully inside the egg.

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Dead Zones

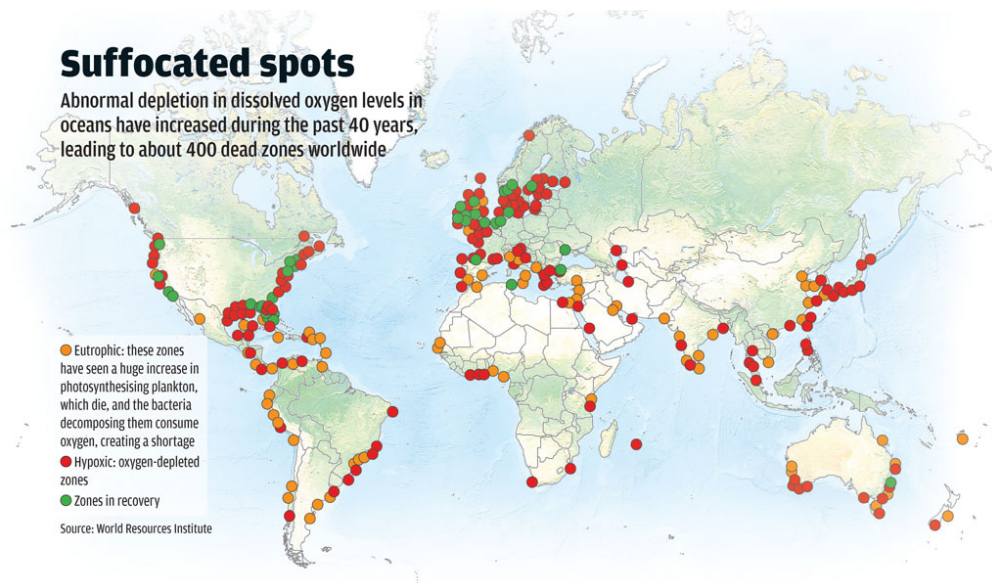
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- The Gulf of Mexico's annual "dead zone" will likely persist for decades.
- Hypoxic zones or Oxygen minimum zones (OMZ) are areas in the ocean of such low oxygen concentration that animal life suffocates and dies, and as a result are sometimes called "dead zones."

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- In dead zone area most marine life either dies, or, if they are mobile such as fish, leave the area.

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- Habitats that would normally be teeming with life become, essentially, **biological deserts**.

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- One of the largest dead zones forms in the Gulf of Mexico every spring.

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- Nutrients such as nitrogen flow from North America's Corn Belt through streams and rivers before ending up in the Gulf.

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- The dead zones or Oxygen Minimum Zones (OMZ) in the Arabian Sea have been growing in size.

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- It is the thickest and the most intense OMZ among the world's oceans and covers an area of around two million sq km.

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Integrated Management of Public Distribution System (IM-PDS)

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- IM-PDS is central sector scheme that has been approved for implementation during 2018-19 and 2019-20.

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- The key objectives of the scheme are

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1. To integrate PDS system/portals of States/UTs with Central System/portals,

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2. Introduction of National Portability

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3. De-duplication of ration cards/beneficiary

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- It will bring more transparency and efficiency in distribution of food grains.

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Drought Hit regions

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- The Kerala State government has decided to declare nine districts as drought hit recently.

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- According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), there was considerable shortfall in rain during the North East Monsoon and also predicted serious drinking water shortage in these districts.

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- The five categories of indices listed in the Manual for Drought Management released by Ministry of Agriculture and farmer's welfare include

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1. rainfall
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 2. agriculture
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 3. soil moisture
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 4. hydrology
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 5. remote sensing (health of crops)
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- State Government can declare drought in the State or parts thereof.
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 - Financial Assistance is provided through the Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) / State disaster response fund maintained by the state under the administrative jurisdiction of state disaster management departments.
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 - After drought is declared, if the funds available under CRF /SDRF are inadequate for meeting relief expenditures, the State Governments may consider submitting a Memorandum for assistance from the National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF) / National Disaster Response Fund.
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 - Moderate drought is no longer eligible for relief funds from the Centre.
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 - Only if the calamity is of “severe nature” can the state governments submit a memorandum for financial assistance under the National Disaster Response Fund.
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Mega fauna

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- The word 'mega fauna' means big (mega) animals (fauna).
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 - At present, there are only 101 species of big, land-dwelling wild animals in the world.
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 - Biologists warned that this modest number of species is sure to shrink to double digits, and could continue to diminish at an alarming rate.
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- Two-thirds of these iconic creatures are listed as threatened with extinction by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
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- The Saharan Addax antelope, Eastern Gorilla, orangutans of Borneo and Sumatra are some of the species which are in the path of extinction.
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- Over the course of the last century,
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1. Lions, rhino and cheetah populations have collapsed by more than 90 %
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2. Giraffes are down by 40 % in just three decades
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3. Polar bears are forecast to lose a third of their numbers by mid-century.
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- Scientists agree that Earth has entered a so-called “mass extinction event” in which species of all sizes and shapes are disappearing at 100 times the normal rate.
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Kaziranga National Park

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- The rhino census at the Kazaringa National Park has begun.
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- The Park lies partly in Golaghat District and partly in Nagaon District of Assam.
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- It is the oldest park in Assam along the river Brahmaputra on the North and the Karbi Anglong hills on the South.
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- It is UENSCO World Heritage Site, which is home to two-thirds of the world's population of the species.

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- The landscape of Kaziranga is of sheer forest, tall elephant grass, rugged reeds, marshes & shallow pools.

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- Along with the iconic Greater one-horned rhinoceros, the park is the breeding ground of elephants, wild water buffalo, and swamp deer.

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- The park is also a Tiger reserve.

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Map of the Day

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Asia Physical

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- Bo Hai, also called Gulf of Chihli, is the shallow northwestern arm of the Yellow Sea, off the northern coast of China.

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- Much of Caspian Depression area is below sea level at the north end of the Caspian Sea which is one of the largest such areas in Central Asia.

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- Both Ural and Volga drain through the depression into the Caspian Sea.

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Source: PIB, The Hindu, Business Standard

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