MISSION X FOR UPSC

XTERRA
WEEKLY

Weekly Current Affairs Compilation · 6 - 12 October 2026 · 12 Topics

Dead calves on Patagonia's coast, cheetahs loosed in Veerangana Durgavati, a Critically Endangered vulture over Munsiyari, and WWF's grim new count of global wildlife loss. This week's compilation tracks twelve stories across whales, reserves, and conservation science.



"innovation in learning"

CONTENTS

12 topics, grouped by theme for faster revision

SPECIES & WILDLIFE WATCH

01 Southern Right Whale Calf Deaths in Patagonia 3
02 Rare Two-Headed Diamondback Terrapin Hatchling Found 4
03 Slaty Egret Breeding Shifts Signal Okavango Delta Stress 5
04 Critically Endangered Red-Headed Vulture Sighted in Munsiyari 6
05 Sikkim Releases Chocolate Mahseer into the Rangeet River 7

TIGER RESERVES & PROTECTED AREAS

06 Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary Set for Tiger Reserve Tag 8
07 Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve Becomes Cheetah Habitat 9
08 Nameri Tiger Reserve Records Fourfold Tiger Rise 10
09 IAF Responds to Forest Fire in Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve 11

CONSERVATION TOOLS & REPORTS

10 Nameri Gets CA|TS Accreditation, Spotlighting Tiger Standards 12
11 WWF's Living Planet Report 2026 Flags Steep Wildlife Decline 13
12 Plan Bee and AI Tools Help Save 255 Elephants on NFR Tracks 14

SPECIES & WILDLIFE WATCH

Southern Right Whale Calf Deaths in Patagonia

WHY IN NEWS

Dozens of Southern Right Whale calves were found dead along Argentina's Patagonian coast in an unusually deadly season. Scientists are investigating a possible bacterial infection as the cause, even as the species' annual breeding season continues at sites like Peninsula Valdes.

20-60°S Southern Hemisphere range

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Marine Mammal Conservation**
  Right whales are slow-moving, surface-feeding baleen whales historically targeted by whaling, now protected under IWC rules.
- **Bioindicators of Ocean Health**
  Unexplained calf mortality events signal possible ecosystem stress, disease, or pollution impacts.
- **Southern Hemisphere Breeding Grounds**
  Sheltered bays off Argentina and South Africa serve as critical calving habitat.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Scientific name	Eubalaena australis
IUCN status	Least Concern
Identifying feature	Callosities on head; no dorsal fin; broad back
Range	Southern Hemisphere, between 20°S and 60°S
Feeding method	Skim-feeds on copepods and plankton through baleen
Breeding season	Visits coastal bays May to November

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Southern Right Whales were named for being the right whale to hunt, as they swim slowly, float when killed, and yield large amounts of oil and baleen, a legacy that drove the species close to extinction before international protection.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Eubalaena australis | Least Concern | Patagonia calf deaths | Callosities on head | No dorsal fin

EXAM TRAP

Do not confuse the Southern Right Whale with the North Atlantic Right Whale (Eubalaena glacialis), which is Critically Endangered and found in the Northern Hemisphere. The two are separate species despite near-identical common names.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Consider the following statements about the Southern Right Whale:

1. It is classified as Least Concern by the IUCN.
2. It possesses a prominent dorsal fin.
3. It is found in the Southern Hemisphere between 20°S and 60°S.

A 1 and 3 only
B 1 and 2 only
C 2 and 3 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer: 1 and 3 only

APPROACH
The Southern Right Whale lacks a dorsal fin entirely, making statement 2 incorrect. Statements 1 and 3 correctly describe its conservation status and range.

SPECIES & WILDLIFE WATCH

Rare Two-Headed Diamondback Terrapin Hatchling Found

WHY IN NEWS

A rare two-headed Diamondback Terrapin hatchling was discovered on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, drawing attention to the species, which is found along the eastern United States coastline and is classified as Vulnerable.

1 Two-headed hatchling found

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Developmental Anomalies in Reptiles**
  Polycephaly in turtles is a rare congenital condition, relevant to broader discussions on wildlife genetic health.
- **Coastal and Estuarine Species**
  Terrapins occupy brackish habitats, making them indicators of coastal wetland health.
- **Species Range and Endemism**
  Comparative study of range-restricted coastal reptiles aids understanding of habitat specialisation.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Scientific name	Malaclemys terrapin
IUCN status	Vulnerable
Habitat	Saltwater and brackish marshes, estuaries, tidal flats
Range	Cape Cod, Massachusetts to the Florida Keys, and Bermuda
Distinguishing feature	Diamond-patterned shell; webbed feet; strong swimmer
Diet	Fish, marine snails, clams, mussels

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The Diamondback Terrapin is the only turtle in North America that lives exclusively in brackish water, a niche that makes it especially sensitive to changes in coastal salinity and development.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Malaclemys terrapin · Vulnerable · Cape Cod to Florida Keys · Brackish water specialist · Diamond shell pattern

EXAM TRAP

Do not confuse the Diamondback Terrapin, a brackish-water species, with sea turtles, which are fully marine, or with freshwater pond turtles. Its habitat niche is distinctly intermediate.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

The Diamondback Terrapin is best described as a species of which habitat?

1. Freshwater ponds
2. Brackish coastal waters
3. Open ocean

A Freshwater ponds
B Brackish coastal waters
C Open ocean
D Desert wetlands

Answer: Brackish coastal waters

APPROACH

The Diamondback Terrapin is unique among North American turtles for living exclusively in brackish, or saltwater and freshwater mixed, coastal environments.

SPECIES & WILDLIFE WATCH

Slaty Egret Breeding Shifts Signal Okavango Delta Stress

WHY IN NEWS

Observers reported shifts in the breeding, nesting, and foraging behaviour of the Slaty Egret in Botswana's Okavango Delta, with long-established breeding sites disappearing after reed bed fires and habitat disruption linked to elephant concentrations, a sign UNEP officials say reflects broader ecosystem instability.

3,000-5,000 Mature individuals worldwide

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Bioindicator Species**
  The Slaty Egret's sensitivity to water flow and vegetation makes it a key indicator of wetland ecosystem health.
- **Transboundary Wetland Conservation**
  The Okavango Delta spans Angola, Namibia, and Botswana, requiring coordinated conservation under frameworks like AEWA.
- **Human-Wildlife Interaction Effects**
  Elephant concentration impacts on reed beds show how one species' behaviour can indirectly threaten another's habitat.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Scientific name	Egretta vinaceigula
IUCN status	Vulnerable
Core population	80-85% in Botswana's Okavango Delta
Foraging technique	Foot-ruffling to flush prey from shallow water
Key threats	Reed bed fires, altered flood pulses, invasive weeds
Treaty protection	Agreement on Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA)

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The Slaty Egret's distinctive foot-ruffling technique, stirring riverbed mud with its feet to flush out prey, makes it one of the few herons that actively disturbs its hunting ground rather than waiting motionless for prey.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Egretta vinaceigula | Vulnerable | Okavango Delta, Botswana | Foot-ruffling forager | AEWA protected

EXAM TRAP

The Slaty Egret's population decline signal here is behavioural disruption of breeding sites, not a confirmed population crash. Do not overstate the news as evidence of outright population collapse.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

The Slaty Egret is most closely associated with which wetland ecosystem?

1. Sundarbans Delta
2. Okavango Delta
3. Pantanal Wetlands

A Sundarbans Delta
B Okavango Delta
C Pantanal Wetlands
D Everglades

Answer: Okavango Delta

APPROACH

About 80 to 85 percent of the global Slaty Egret population is concentrated in Botswana's Okavango Delta, making it the species' core habitat.

SPECIES & WILDLIFE WATCH

Critically Endangered Red-Headed Vulture Sighted in Munsiyari

WHY IN NEWS

A Red-Headed Vulture, also called the Asian King Vulture, was sighted in the Patalthod forest near Munsiyari, Uttarakhand, by bird watchers from the NGO Monal, a notable record for a species whose population has collapsed across South Asia.

2,650 m Elevation of sighting

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Vulture Decline and Diclofenac Ban**
  Veterinary diclofenac caused mass vulture deaths across South Asia; India banned its veterinary use in 2006.
- **Scavenger Ecosystem Services**
  Vultures remove carcasses rapidly, limiting disease spread, making their decline an ecological and public health concern.
- **High-Altitude Himalayan Biodiversity**
  Sightings at elevations like 2,650 metres highlight the Kumaon Himalaya's role as vulture habitat.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Scientific name	Sarcogyps calvus
IUCN status	Critically Endangered
Also known as	Asian King Vulture
Sighting location	Patalthod forest, Munsiyari, Pithoragarh district
Elevation	About 2,650 metres
Appearance	Bare red head and neck, dark plumage

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS
Veterinary diclofenac, a common anti-inflammatory drug given to cattle, proved lethal to vultures that fed on carcasses of treated animals, causing kidney failure and triggering one of the fastest wild bird population collapses ever recorded.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Sarcogyps calvus | Critically Endangered | Asian King Vulture | Munsiyari, Uttarakhand | Diclofenac ban 2006

EXAM TRAP
Do not confuse the Red-Headed Vulture with the Egyptian Vulture, which has white plumage and a yellow face. The Red-Headed Vulture is dark-bodied with a distinctive bare red head.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

India banned the veterinary use of which drug due to its lethal effect on vultures?

1. Ibuprofen
2. Diclofenac
3. Paracetamol

A Ibuprofen
B Diclofenac
C Paracetamol
D Aspirin

Answer: Diclofenac

APPROACH
Veterinary diclofenac caused kidney failure in vultures feeding on treated cattle carcasses, leading India to ban its veterinary use in 2006.

SPECIES & WILDLIFE WATCH

Sikkim Releases Chocolate Mahseer into the Rangeet River

WHY IN NEWS

Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang released Chocolate Mahseer into the Rangeet River near Jorethang during the Chirbirey River Fest, a fish ranching initiative organised with the Sikkim Anglers' Association to support indigenous fish conservation and freshwater biodiversity.

1 River fest release event

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Fish Ranching and Conservation**
  Releasing hatchery-reared native fish into rivers supplements wild populations and supports recreational fisheries sustainably.
- **Himalayan Freshwater Biodiversity**
  Mahseer species are flagship indicators of healthy, fast-flowing Himalayan river systems.
- **Community Participation in Conservation**
  Partnership with anglers' associations shows how recreational stakeholders can support conservation goals.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Scientific name	Neolissochilus hexagonolepis
Release river	Rangeet River, near Jorethang, Sikkim
Event	Chirbirey River Fest
Organised with	Sikkim Anglers' Association
Distribution	Himalayan region, parts of South and Southeast Asia
Focus areas	Indigenous fish conservation, aquatic biodiversity, freshwater resource protection

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The Chocolate Mahseer gets its name from its distinctive chocolate-brown body coloration, setting it apart from the more widely known golden-bodied Mahseer species found in peninsular Indian rivers.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Neolissochilus hexagonolepis | Rangeet River, Sikkim | Chirbirey River Fest | Fish ranching initiative | Sikkim Anglers' Association

EXAM TRAP

Do not confuse the Chocolate Mahseer with the Golden Mahseer (Tor putitora), a separate, more widely distributed species often called the tiger of Himalayan rivers.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Chocolate Mahseer was released into which river as part of a Sikkim conservation initiative?

1. Teesta River
2. Rangeet River
3. Mahananda River

A Teesta River
B Rangeet River
C Mahananda River
D Tista River

Answer: Rangeet River

APPROACH

The release took place in the Rangeet River near Jorethang during the Chirbirey River Fest, organised with the Sikkim Anglers' Association.

TIGER RESERVES & PROTECTED AREAS

Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary Set for Tiger Reserve Tag

WHY IN NEWS

Odisha has proposed upgrading Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary in Sambalpur, along with surrounding forests, into the state's third tiger reserve after Similipal and Satkosia. The National Tiger Conservation Authority's technical committee has reviewed the proposal.

804.51 km² Area of the sanctuary

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Project Tiger Expansion**
  New tiger reserves require NTCA technical approval followed by a state notification.
- **Prey Base and Carnivore Habitat**
  Sanctuaries with abundant prey species are prioritised for reserve upgrades.
- **Bat Conservation**
  Debrigarh is notable as one of the largest bat habitats globally, linking it to broader biodiversity value beyond big cats.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Location	Sambalpur district, Odisha
Area	804.51 sq km
Proposed status	Odisha's third tiger reserve
Existing reserves in Odisha	Similipal, Satkosia
Key fauna	Leopard, wild boar, bison, sambar, chital, chowsingha
Special feature	Among the world's largest bat habitats

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS
A Royal Bengal Tiger sighting by tourists at Debrigarh strengthened the case for its upgrade, offering direct evidence of a resident tiger population in the sanctuary.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary | Sambalpur, Odisha | Odisha's third tiger reserve | Similipal and Satkosia | Large bat habitat

EXAM TRAP
Do not confuse Debrigarh with Satkosia Tiger Reserve, which lies along the Mahanadi River gorge in a different part of Odisha. Debrigarh sits near the Hirakud reservoir in Sambalpur.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

If upgraded, Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary would become Odisha's:

1. First tiger reserve
2. Second tiger reserve
3. Third tiger reserve

A First tiger reserve
B Second tiger reserve
C Third tiger reserve
D Fourth tiger reserve

Answer: Third tiger reserve

APPROACH
Odisha already has Similipal and Satkosia as tiger reserves, so Debrigarh would become its third.

TIGER RESERVES & PROTECTED AREAS

Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve Becomes Cheetah Habitat

WHY IN NEWS

Two cheetahs, Vyom and Neera, were moved from Kuno National Park and released at Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh on 7 October 2026, making it the state's third cheetah habitat under Project Cheetah and extending the programme into the Bundelkhand region.

2,339 km² Area of the reserve

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Project Cheetah**
  India's cheetah reintroduction programme is expanding beyond Kuno to additional sites for population dispersal.
- **Tiger Reserve Multi-Species Use**
  A reserve notified for tigers can also support other large carnivores given suitable habitat and prey.
- **Bundelkhand Conservation Landscape**
  Extending wildlife programmes into Bundelkhand links central Indian forest patches for species movement.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Location	Sagar, Damoh, Narsinghpur districts, Madhya Pradesh
Area	2,339 sq km, MP's largest tiger reserve
Declared tiger reserve	20 September 2023
Formerly known as	Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary
Cheetah enclosure prepared	439 hectares with bomas and veterinary care
Other MP cheetah sites	Kuno National Park, Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The release coincided with the concluding programme of Wildlife Conservation Week, with Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav personally releasing the cheetahs into their new habitat.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Veerangana Durgavati TR | 2,339 sq km, MP's largest | Cheetahs Vyom and Neera | Third MP cheetah habitat | Formerly Nauradehi

EXAM TRAP

Do not assume all cheetahs in Madhya Pradesh remain only in Kuno National Park. Project Cheetah has now expanded to three sites in the state, a detail easy to miss if only Kuno is remembered.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve was formerly known by which name?

1. Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary
2. Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary
3. Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary

A Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary
B Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary
C Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary
D Panna Wildlife Sanctuary

Answer: Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary

APPROACH

The reserve was created by integrating and renaming the Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary, which received tiger reserve status in September 2023.

TIGER RESERVES & PROTECTED AREAS

Nameri Tiger Reserve Records Fourfold Tiger Rise

WHY IN NEWS

Nameri National Park and Tiger Reserve in Assam recorded a fourfold increase in its tiger population over three years, from 3 tigers in 2022 to 12 by the end of 2025, a rise validated by the Wildlife Institute of India and announced by the state forest minister.

4x Tiger population rise in 3 years

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Tiger Corridor Connectivity**
  Nameri's contiguous forest links with Pakke Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh, aiding dispersal and breeding.
- **Anti-Poaching and Monitoring Technology**
  Camera traps, drones, and habitat restoration are credited for the recovery.
- **Satellite Core Areas**
  Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary functions as Nameri's satellite core, now seeing tigers return after decades.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Location	Sonitpur district, Assam
Tiger count 2022	3
Tiger count end-2025	12
Notified as tiger reserve	2000, Assam's second after Manas
Core areas	Nameri National Park, Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary
Other fauna	Indian leopard, clouded leopard, marbled cat

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS
Two tigers returned to Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary after decades of absence, a development officials called as significant as the overall population rise itself.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Nameri Tiger Reserve | Assam's second tiger reserve | 3 to 12 tigers in 3 years | Sonai Rupai Sanctuary | Links to Pakke TR

EXAM TRAP
Do not confuse Nameri with Manas, Assam's first and oldest tiger reserve. Nameri was notified later, in 2000, as the state's second.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Nameri Tiger Reserve forms a connected landscape with which neighbouring reserve?

1. Manas Tiger Reserve
2. Pakke Tiger Reserve
3. Kaziranga Tiger Reserve

A Manas Tiger Reserve
B Pakke Tiger Reserve
C Kaziranga Tiger Reserve
D Orang Tiger Reserve

Answer: Pakke Tiger Reserve

APPROACH
Nameri's nearly 1,000 sq km contiguous forest joins with Pakke Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh, supporting tiger movement and breeding across the landscape.

TIGER RESERVES & PROTECTED AREAS

IAF Responds to Forest Fire in Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve

WHY IN NEWS

The Indian Air Force deployed a Mi-17 V5 helicopter in firefighting mode at Joshimath to tackle a forest fire in the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve area, at the request of the Uttarakhand government, highlighting both the fire risk to Himalayan forests and the IAF's disaster response role.

6,407 km² Area of the reserve

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **UNESCO Biosphere Reserves**
  Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve, including Valley of Flowers National Park, is on the UNESCO World Heritage List.
- **Disaster Response Coordination**
  IAF deployment for firefighting illustrates inter-agency coordination between state governments and defence forces.
- **Himalayan Forest Fire Vulnerability**
  High-altitude reserves face growing fire risk linked to dry conditions and climate variability.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Location	Chamoli, Pithoragarh, Bageshwar districts, Uttarakhand
Area	Over 6,407 sq km
Core zones	Nanda Devi National Park, Valley of Flowers National Park
UNESCO status	World Heritage Site
Key fauna	Snow leopard, Himalayan musk deer, Himalayan brown bear
Response asset	IAF Mi-17 V5 helicopter, Central Air Command

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS
The reserve lies in a transition zone between the Zanskar range and the Great Himalaya, giving it an unusually wide range of altitudinal habitats within a single protected area.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve | UNESCO World Heritage Site | Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers NPs | IAF Mi-17 V5 firefighting | Chamoli, Uttarakhand

EXAM TRAP
Nanda Devi National Park and Valley of Flowers National Park are the two core zones of the single Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve, not two separate biosphere reserves. Do not treat them as independently designated reserves.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

The Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve includes which two core zones?

1. Nanda Devi National Park and Valley of Flowers National Park
2. Gangotri National Park and Govind National Park
3. Corbett National Park and Rajaji National Park

A 1 only
B 2 only
C 3 only
D 1 and 2

Answer: 1 only

APPROACH
The reserve's two core zones are Nanda Devi National Park and Valley of Flowers National Park, both inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

CONSERVATION TOOLS & REPORTS

Nameri Gets CA|TS Accreditation, Spotlighting Tiger Standards

WHY IN NEWS

Nameri Tiger Reserve recently received Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards (CA|TS) approved status, joining 15 Indian tiger reserves certified under the global framework that benchmarks management effectiveness in tiger conservation areas.

15 India reserves CA|TS accredited

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Global Certification Frameworks**
  CA|TS sets an international benchmark for tiger reserve management, similar to quality certification systems in other sectors.
- **NTCA Implementation Partners**
  Global Tiger Forum and WWF India serve as CA|TS assessment partners in India.
- **Protected Area Management Effectiveness**
  CA|TS evaluation covers habitat, community involvement, monitoring, and governance, not just tiger numbers.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Launched	2013, at the 1st Asian Parks Congress, Japan
Framework structure	7 pillars, 17 elements
India implementing partners	Global Tiger Forum, WWF India
India reserves accredited	15, including Kaziranga, Nameri, Sundarbans, Kanha
Optional pillar	Tourism management
Overseeing authority	National Tiger Conservation Authority

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS
Of CA|TS's seven management pillars, five apply broadly to any protected area while only two are tiger-specific, meaning the standard essentially doubles as a general protected-area management benchmark.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

CA|TS | Launched 2013, Asian Parks Congress | 7 pillars, 17 elements | Global Tiger Forum and WWF India | 15 India reserves accredited

EXAM TRAP
CA|TS accreditation assesses management quality, not just tiger population size. A reserve can be accredited even with a modest tiger count if its management systems meet the standard.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

The CA|TS framework for tiger reserve management was launched at which event?

1. 1st Asian Parks Congress, Japan
2. COP on Biological Diversity
3. Global Tiger Summit, St. Petersburg

A 1st Asian Parks Congress, Japan
B COP on Biological Diversity
C Global Tiger Summit, St. Petersburg
D World Conservation Congress

Answer: 1st Asian Parks Congress, Japan

APPROACH
CA|TS was launched in 2013 at the 1st Asian Parks Congress held in Japan, not at the St. Petersburg Tiger Summit, which is a separate, earlier political commitment.

CONSERVATION TOOLS & REPORTS

WWF's Living Planet Report 2026 Flags Steep Wildlife Decline

WHY IN NEWS

WWF released the Living Planet Report 2026 on 7 October 2026, reporting a 73 percent average decline in monitored wildlife populations since 1970, with freshwater species showing the steepest fall, even as about half of tracked populations remain stable or growing.

73% Average wildlife decline since 1970

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Living Planet Index**
  Produced by the Zoological Society of London, it tracks average population trends across thousands of vertebrate species.
- **Ecosystem-Specific Decline Patterns**
  Freshwater, terrestrial, and marine systems show differing rates of biodiversity loss, guiding targeted conservation responses.
- **Drivers of Biodiversity Loss**
  The report links decline to energy, food, and finance systems, tying conservation policy to broader economic reform.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Publisher	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)
Index producer	Zoological Society of London (ZSL)
Overall decline	73% average, since 1970
Freshwater decline	85%, steepest among categories
Terrestrial decline	69%
Marine decline	59%

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Despite the grim headline figure, roughly half of all monitored wildlife populations are stable or growing, a detail the report uses to argue that recovery remains possible if the underlying drivers of nature loss are addressed.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Living Planet Report 2026 | 73% average decline | Freshwater worst hit, 85% | Published by WWF | Index by ZSL

EXAM TRAP

The Living Planet Index measures average decline in population abundance, not the number of species gone extinct. Do not conflate the 73 percent figure with an extinction rate.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

According to WWF's Living Planet Report 2026, which category of species showed the steepest average decline since 1970?

1. Marine species
2. Terrestrial species
3. Freshwater species

A Marine species
B Terrestrial species
C Freshwater species
D Avian species

Answer: Freshwater species

APPROACH
Freshwater species recorded an 85 percent decline, the steepest among the three ecosystem categories tracked by the report.

CONSERVATION TOOLS & REPORTS

Plan Bee and AI Tools Help Save 255 Elephants on NFR Tracks

WHY IN NEWS

The Northeast Frontier Railway reported saving 255 elephants from train collisions between January and September 2026 across its Alipurduar, Lumding, Tinsukia, and Rangiya divisions, using a combination of measures including the Plan Bee system, which plays amplified honeybee sounds to deter elephants from tracks.

255 Elephants saved, Jan-Sep 2026

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation**
  Technological deterrents like Plan Bee reduce train-elephant collisions without physical barriers.
- **AI in Wildlife Conservation**
  AI-based Intrusion Detection Systems complement bioacoustic deterrents for early warning along rail corridors.
- **Railway Infrastructure and Wildlife Corridors**
  Night speed restrictions, patrolling, and underpasses reflect a layered approach to reducing wildlife mortality.

PRELIMS MATRIX

System name	Plan Bee
Mechanism	Amplified honeybee sounds at vulnerable track locations
Railway zone	Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR)
Elephants saved	255, January to September 2026
Divisions covered	Alipurduar, Lumding, Tinsukia, Rangiya
Complementary measures	AI Intrusion Detection System, night speed limits, patrolling

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS
Plan Bee exploits a natural elephant behaviour, elephants are known to avoid areas with active beehives due to fear of bee stings around sensitive areas like the eyes and trunk, making amplified bee sounds alone an effective low-cost deterrent.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Plan Bee system | Northeast Frontier Railway | 255 elephants saved in 2026 | Honeybee sound deterrent | AI Intrusion Detection System

EXAM TRAP
Plan Bee works through elephants' natural fear of bees, not through any physical barrier or tranquilisation method. Do not confuse it with elephant corridors or underpasses, which are separate, complementary measures.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

The Plan Bee system used by Indian Railways to protect elephants works by:

1. Playing amplified honeybee sounds near tracks
2. Installing physical fencing along tracks
3. Using tranquilizer darts on approaching elephants

A 1 only
B 1 and 2 only
C 2 and 3 only
D 1, 2 and 3

Answer: 1 only

APPROACH
Plan Bee relies solely on amplified bee sounds to exploit elephants' natural aversion to bees. It does not involve fencing or tranquilisation, which are separate strategies.