MISSION X FOR UPSC

XTERRA
WEEKLY

Weekly Current Affairs Compilation · 13 - 19 October 2026 · 12 Topics

An elephant returns to Namdapha after twelve years, two new Ramsar wetlands join the list, a mining proposal threatens a rare Odisha gecko, and Kerala launches India's first ecosystem Red List. This week's compilation tracks twelve stories across reserves, species, and conservation science.



"innovation in learning"

CONTENTS

12 topics, grouped by theme for faster revision

TIGER RESERVES & PROTECTED AREAS

01 Male Elephant Returns to Namdapha After 12 Years 3

02 Kanha Among Reserves in MP's Tiger Translocation Plan 4

03 Camera Traps Reveal Rich Wildlife at Lankamalleswara Sanctuary 5

04 Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary, Ranthambore's Northern Extension 6

SPECIES & WILDLIFE WATCH

05 BNHS Launches All-India Sarus Crane Survey 7

06 New Plant Species Ceropegia tamilnaduensis Described 8

07 Mining Proposal Threatens Jeypore Ground Gecko 9

08 Alpine Musk Deer's Captive Population Raises Alarm 10

09 Spot-Bellied Eagle-Owl, the Forest's Ghost, Sighted in Corbett 11

ECOSYSTEMS & CONSERVATION TOOLS

10 Invasive Species Flagged as Underestimated Threat at AAD 2026 12

11 Sukhna Wetland and Sauj Jheel Added as New Ramsar Sites 13

12 Kerala Launches India's First Ecosystem Red List Assessment 14

TIGER RESERVES & PROTECTED AREAS

Male Elephant Returns to Namdapha After 12 Years

WHY IN NEWS

A camera trap recorded an adult male elephant in the Kathan region of Namdapha National Park and Tiger Reserve, the first confirmed sighting there since 2013. Officials called the sighting significant for studying elephant movement and highlighted the need for stronger patrolling in vulnerable corridor areas.

12 yrs Gap since last sighting

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Wildlife Corridor Fragmentation**
  Elephant corridors near Namdapha have been blocked since 1996 by encroachment, confining herds and raising human-elephant conflict.
- **Eco-Sensitive Zone Notification**
  Namdapha was declared an Eco-Sensitive Zone in 2024, aimed at regulating activity around the reserve's boundary.
- **Northeast Biodiversity Hotspots**
  Namdapha spans an unusually wide elevation range, supporting one of India's richest concentrations of plant and animal species.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Location	Changlang district, Arunachal Pradesh
Area	1,985 sq km
Status history	Sanctuary 1972, National Park and Tiger Reserve 1983
Elevation range	200 to 4,571 metres
Species count	Over 1,000 plant species, nearly 1,400 animal species
Key fauna	Tiger, red panda, clouded leopard, elephant

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Namdapha is one of the few protected areas in the world where all four big cats, the tiger, leopard, snow leopard, and clouded leopard, have historically been reported, though snow leopard records remain unconfirmed in recent surveys.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Namdapha TR | Changlang, Arunachal Pradesh | Elephant corridor blocked since 1996 | Eco-Sensitive Zone 2024 | 1,985 sq km

EXAM TRAP

Do not confuse Namdapha with Pakke Tiger Reserve, another Arunachal Pradesh reserve. Namdapha is distinguished by its extreme elevation range and proximity to the Myanmar border.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Namdapha National Park and Tiger Reserve is located in which state?

1. Assam
2. Arunachal Pradesh
3. Nagaland

A Assam
B Arunachal Pradesh
C Nagaland
D Manipur

Answer: Arunachal Pradesh

APPROACH

Namdapha lies in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh, bordering Myanmar, and spans an elevation range from 200 to 4,571 metres.

TIGER RESERVES & PROTECTED AREAS

Kanha Among Reserves in MP's Tiger Translocation Plan

WHY IN NEWS

Madhya Pradesh's tiger translocation plan, pending central government approval, proposes moving 15 tigers, 12 tigresses and 3 tigers, from Bandhavgarh, Pench, and Kanha Tiger Reserves to Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha, part of a broader source-to-sink strategy for tiger population management.

15 Tigers proposed for translocation

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Source-Sink Tiger Management**
  Reserves with surplus tiger populations like Kanha can supply individuals to reserves with low or recovering numbers elsewhere.
- **Inter-State Wildlife Translocation**
  Moving tigers across state boundaries requires central government and NTCA approval, reflecting coordinated national-level management.
- **Tiger Reserve Carrying Capacity**
  Reserves exceeding sustainable tiger density prompt translocation planning to ease territorial pressure and reduce conflict.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Source reserves	Bandhavgarh, Pench, Kanha (Madhya Pradesh)
Destination states	Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Odisha
Proposed numbers	12 tigresses, 3 tigers
Approval needed	Central Government clearance
Kanha location	Mandla and Balaghat districts, Madhya Pradesh
Kanha significance	Inspiration for Rudyard Kipling's The Jungle Book setting

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Kanha Tiger Reserve is credited with saving the barasingha, or swamp deer, from near extinction in central India through a dedicated captive breeding and habitat management programme.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Kanha Tiger Reserve | Mandla and Balaghat, MP | 15 tigers proposed for translocation | Jungle Book setting | Barasingha conservation success

EXAM TRAP

Do not confuse Kanha's barasingha conservation success with the species' overall IUCN status; the central Indian subspecies remains Vulnerable despite Kanha's localised recovery.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Which species' recovery is most closely associated with conservation efforts at Kanha Tiger Reserve?

1. Barasingha (swamp deer)
2. Great Indian Bustard
3. Asiatic Lion

A Barasingha (swamp deer)
B Great Indian Bustard
C Asiatic Lion
D Snow Leopard

Answer: Barasingha (swamp deer)

APPROACH

Kanha Tiger Reserve is well known for its successful captive breeding and habitat management programme that saved the central Indian barasingha from near extinction.

TIGER RESERVES & PROTECTED AREAS

Camera Traps Reveal Rich Wildlife at Lankamalleswara Sanctuary

WHY IN NEWS

A recent camera-trap survey at Lankamalleswara Wildlife Sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh recorded a rich variety of wildlife, including bears, leopards, mountain goats, and wild boars, reaffirming the sanctuary's status as the only known home of the endangered Jerdon's Courser.

1 Only known home of Jerdon's Courser

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Camera Trap Survey Methodology**
  Camera traps provide non-invasive population and biodiversity data, increasingly standard for sanctuary management.
- **Single-Site Endemic Species Risk**
  Jerdon's Courser's confinement to one sanctuary makes Lankamalleswara's protection existential for the species' survival.
- **Pennar River Catchment Ecology**
  The sanctuary forms part of the Pennar River catchment, linking its conservation to downstream water security.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Location	Andhra Pradesh
Key endemic species	Jerdon's Courser, only known home
Recent survey finding	Bears, leopards, mountain goats, wild boars recorded
Notable flora	Red sanders, sandalwood
Catchment role	Forms catchment of the Pennar River
Forest types	Dry deciduous, scrub, tropical thorn, dry evergreen

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Jerdon's Courser was believed extinct for nearly 86 years after its last sighting in 1900, until its dramatic rediscovery in 1986 near the same Andhra Pradesh landscape that includes Lankamalleswara.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Lankamalleswara Wildlife Sanctuary | Andhra Pradesh | Jerdon's Courser, only known home | Pennar River catchment | Red sanders and sandalwood

EXAM TRAP

Do not confuse Lankamalleswara with Sri Venkateswara Wildlife Sanctuary, another Andhra Pradesh sanctuary with overlapping red sanders habitat but a different primary flagship species.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Lankamalleswara Wildlife Sanctuary is notable as the only known home of which species?

1. Great Indian Bustard
2. Jerdon's Courser
3. Forest Owlet

A Great Indian Bustard
B Jerdon's Courser
C Forest Owlet
D Lesser Florican

Answer: Jerdon's Courser

APPROACH

Lankamalleswara Wildlife Sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh is the only known home of the endangered Jerdon's Courser, a nocturnal ground-dwelling bird.

TIGER RESERVES & PROTECTED AREAS

Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary, Ranthambore's Northern Extension

WHY IN NEWS

Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary in Rajasthan's Karauli district, declared in 1984 and later folded into the enlarged Ranthambore Tiger Reserve buffer in 1991, continues to draw attention for its community-led forest protection model and its role as a key northern extension of tiger habitat.

1984 Year declared a sanctuary

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Tiger Reserve Buffer Expansion**
  Kailadevi's inclusion in Ranthambore's enlarged buffer in 1991 shows how satellite sanctuaries extend core tiger habitat.
- **Community Forest Protection**
  Kulhadi bandh panchayats, or axe-ban councils, demonstrate grassroots conservation models within India's protected area network.
- **River-Bounded Protected Areas**
  Natural boundaries like the Banas and Chambal rivers shape the sanctuary's ecological and administrative limits.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Location	Karauli district, Rajasthan
Declared sanctuary	1984
River boundaries	Banas River (south-west), Chambal River (east)
Relation to Ranthambore	Northern extension, included in enlarged buffer 1991
Vegetation	Dry deciduous, dominated by dhok (Anogeissus pendula)
Key fauna	Sloth bear, nilgai, sambar, chital, striped hyena

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Kailadevi's valleys and river gorges, locally called khos, retain moisture even in the dry season and are considered the richest biodiversity pockets within the sanctuary.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary | Karauli district, Rajasthan | Ranthambore's northern extension | Kulhadi bandh panchayats | Banas and Chambal rivers

EXAM TRAP

Do not confuse Kailadevi with Sawai Man Singh Wildlife Sanctuary, which was declared the same year, 1984, and was also folded into Ranthambore's enlarged buffer in 1991, but lies on a different side of the core reserve.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary is considered the northern extension of which tiger reserve?

1. Sariska Tiger Reserve
2. Ranthambore Tiger Reserve
3. Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve

A Sariska Tiger Reserve

B Ranthambore Tiger Reserve

C Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve

D Bhairamgarh Tiger Reserve

Answer: Ranthambore Tiger Reserve

APPROACH

Kailadevi forms the northern extension of Ranthambore National Park and was included in the Ranthambore Tiger Reserve's enlarged buffer zone in 1991.

SPECIES & WILDLIFE WATCH

BNHS Launches All-India Sarus Crane Survey

WHY IN NEWS

The Bombay Natural History Society announced a nationwide survey to estimate the Sarus Crane population, set a baseline, map breeding and feeding sites, and flag power-line collision risks, drawing on citizen scientists, farmers, and forest departments across the bird's range.

5+ Stronghold states

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Citizen Science in Conservation**
  The survey relies on birders, farmers, and local communities submitting counts, broadening monitoring beyond official agencies.
- **Agricultural Wetland Species**
  Sarus Cranes depend on wetlands amid farmland, linking their survival to sustainable agricultural practices.
- **Species Protection Frameworks**
  The crane's listing under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act and CITES Appendix II shows layered legal protection.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Scientific name	Antigone antigone
IUCN status	Vulnerable
Other protections	CITES Appendix II, WPA 1972 Schedule I
Current strongholds	Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana
Declining range	Bihar, West Bengal, Assam
Survey organiser	Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The Sarus Crane is the world's tallest flying bird, and it is known for forming lifelong pair bonds, a trait that has made it a cultural symbol of marital fidelity in parts of India.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Antigone antigone | Vulnerable | World's tallest flying bird | BNHS nationwide survey | Schedule I, WPA 1972

EXAM TRAP

Do not confuse the Sarus Crane with the Demoiselle Crane, a smaller migratory crane that winters in India but does not breed here, unlike the resident Sarus Crane.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Consider the following statements about the Sarus Crane:

1. It is classified as Vulnerable by the IUCN.
2. It is listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
3. It is a migratory species that does not breed in India.

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

Answer: 1 and 2 only

APPROACH

The Sarus Crane is a resident species that breeds in India, making statement 3 incorrect. Statements 1 and 2 correctly describe its IUCN status and legal protection.

SPECIES & WILDLIFE WATCH

New Plant Species Ceropegia tamilnaduensis Described

WHY IN NEWS

Botanists from the Botanical Survey of India described a new perennial herb, Ceropegia tamilnaduensis, found on hill slopes of the Nellai Wildlife Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu, notable for its unusually large seeds and flowers resembling related Ceropegia species.

14 mm Seed length, unusually large

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Western Ghats Plant Endemism**
  New Ceropegia species descriptions continue to emerge from the Western Ghats, underscoring its status as a global biodiversity hotspot.
- **Taxonomic Survey Institutions**
  The Botanical Survey of India leads systematic documentation of India's flora, including newly discovered species.
- **Protected Area Botanical Value**
  Wildlife sanctuaries like Nellai serve as refuges for undiscovered or narrow-range plant species.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Discovery site	Nellai Wildlife Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu
Elevation	About 380 metres
Described by	Botanical Survey of India
Distinguishing feature	Solitary axillary flowers on drooping stems
Seed size	Up to 14 mm, unusually large for the genus
Related species	Resembles Ceropegia annamacharyae and Ceropegia swarupa

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS
The plant's unusually large seeds, among the biggest recorded in its genus, set it apart within Ceropegia, a group otherwise known for small, wind-dispersed seeds.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Ceropegia tamilnaduensis | Nellai Wildlife Sanctuary | Botanical Survey of India | Large seeds, up to 14mm | Western Ghats endemic

EXAM TRAP
Do not assume every new Ceropegia species is automatically classified as threatened. IUCN assessment is a separate step that follows formal species description and is not implied by discovery alone.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Ceropegia tamilnaduensis, a newly described plant species, was found in which protected area?

1. Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary
2. Nellai Wildlife Sanctuary
3. Anamalai Tiger Reserve

A Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary
B Nellai Wildlife Sanctuary
C Anamalai Tiger Reserve
D Mukurthi National Park

Answer: Nellai Wildlife Sanctuary

APPROACH
The species was described from hill slopes within the Nellai Wildlife Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu, at about 380 metres elevation.

SPECIES & WILDLIFE WATCH

Mining Proposal Threatens Jeypore Ground Gecko

WHY IN NEWS

A proposed opencast bauxite mine covering 147 hectares of forest in the Nageswari reserve forest, Koraput district, Odisha, threatens the Balda hills, the last known habitat of the Endangered Jeypore ground gecko, after the species was already lost from its former Potangi habitat to earlier mining.

4 **Individuals documented at Balda hills**

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Mining versus Biodiversity Conflicts**
  Bauxite mining proposals in the Eastern Ghats repeatedly clash with narrow-range endemic species habitats.
- **Range-Restricted Reptile Conservation**
  Species confined to single rocky outcrops, like this gecko, face existential risk from any habitat loss at that one site.
- **Environmental Clearance Process**
  Forest diversion for mining requires environmental and forest clearance, a process where endemic species presence is a key consideration.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Scientific name	Cyrtodactylus jeyporensis
IUCN status	Endangered
Remaining habitat	Balda hills, Koraput district, Odisha
Lost habitat	Potangi, due to NALCO bauxite mining
Proposed mining threat	147 hectares, Kalinga Alumina Ltd (Adani-linked)
Population recorded	Only 4 individuals documented in the past year

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS
With only four individuals documented at its last known site, the Jeypore ground gecko illustrates how a single mining clearance decision can determine whether an entire species survives or goes extinct.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Cyrtodactylus jeyporensis | Endangered | Balda hills, Koraput | Lost Potangi habitat to NALCO mining | 147 hectare mining threat

EXAM TRAP
Do not confuse the Jeypore ground gecko's threat source; it is endangered by habitat loss from mining, not by climate change or invasive species, which are unrelated pressures affecting other reptiles.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

The Jeypore Ground Gecko's last known habitat, the Balda hills, is located in which state?

1. Odisha
2. Andhra Pradesh
3. Chhattisgarh

A Odisha
B Andhra Pradesh
C Chhattisgarh
D Jharkhand

Answer: Odisha

APPROACH
The Balda hills lie within the Nageswari reserve forest in Koraput district, Odisha, the species' last remaining known habitat.

SPECIES & WILDLIFE WATCH

Alpine Musk Deer's Captive Population Raises Alarm

WHY IN NEWS

A recent report flagged conservation concerns for the Endangered Alpine Musk Deer after it emerged that India's recognised zoos hold just two living captive individuals, both male, with no females, undermining any prospect of a captive breeding safety net for the species.

3,000-5,000 m Elevation range

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Ex-Situ Conservation Gaps**
  A captive population with no breeding-capable pair cannot serve as a genetic backup, a key weakness this case exposes.
- **Poaching for Wildlife Products**
  Musk deer poaching for the musk gland used in cosmetics exemplifies demand-driven wildlife crime distinct from habitat loss threats.
- **High-Altitude Species Protection**
  Musk deer habitat overlaps with other Himalayan species, so protecting alpine meadows benefits multiple threatened taxa together.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Scientific name	Moschus chrysogaster
IUCN status	Endangered
Legal protections	CITES Appendix I, WPA 1972 Schedule I
Habitat	Coniferous and deciduous mountain forests, 3,000-5,000 m
Range	India, Nepal, Bhutan, China
Captive population in India	2 living individuals, both male

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Unlike true deer, the Alpine Musk Deer lacks antlers and instead grows visible fangs during mating season, which males use to spar with rivals, a trait that places it taxonomically closer to Bovidae than to true deer.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Moschus chrysogaster | Endangered | CITES Appendix I | No captive breeding pair in India | Fangs, not antlers

EXAM TRAP

Do not confuse the Alpine Musk Deer with the Himalayan Musk Deer (Moschus leucogaster), a related but taxonomically distinct species with an overlapping but not identical range.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Which feature distinguishes the Alpine Musk Deer from true deer species?

1. It lacks antlers and has visible fangs instead.
2. It is a strict carnivore.
3. It is active only during midday.

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

Answer: 1 only

APPROACH

The Alpine Musk Deer lacks antlers, unlike true deer, and instead grows fangs used for mating-season sparring. It is a herbivorous browser, not a carnivore, and is crepuscular, active at dawn and dusk, not midday.

SPECIES & WILDLIFE WATCH

Spot-Bellied Eagle-Owl, the Forest's Ghost, Sighted in Corbett

WHY IN NEWS

A Spot-Bellied Eagle-Owl, nicknamed the Ghost of the Forest for its eerie night call and glowing orange eyes, was photographed in the Sitavani and Ringora areas of Corbett's Ramnagar Forest Division, a notable record for one of the region's largest and most elusive owls.

2 kg Approximate body weight

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Apex Nocturnal Predators**
  Large owls like this species sit atop the nocturnal food chain, and their presence signals a healthy, prey-rich forest.
- **Folklore and Wildlife Conservation**
  Local folk beliefs around the owl's eerie call show how cultural narratives can shape, for better or worse, attitudes toward wildlife.
- **Protected Forest Divisions Beyond Core Reserves**
  Sightings in buffer divisions like Ramnagar highlight the conservation value of forest areas surrounding core tiger reserves.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Sighting location	Sitavani and Ringora, Ramnagar Forest Division, Corbett, Uttarakhand
Size	About 20 to 25 inches, roughly 2 kg
Appearance	Fiery orange eyes, large ear tufts
Behaviour	Nocturnal, rests in dense trees by day, hunts at night
Prey	Peacock chicks, rabbits, lizards, small animals
Nickname	Ghost of the Forest, also Witch of the Forest

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

The Spot-Bellied Eagle-Owl's eerie, almost human-like call has fueled local folktales of a crying woman in the forest, once causing villagers to stay indoors after dark out of fear of the bird.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Spot-Bellied Eagle-Owl | Corbett, Uttarakhand | Ghost of the Forest | Fiery orange eyes | Nocturnal apex predator

EXAM TRAP

Do not confuse the Spot-Bellied Eagle-Owl with the smaller Indian Eagle-Owl (Bubo bengalensis). The Spot-Bellied species is notably larger and is distinguished by the spotted pattern on its underside.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

The Spot-Bellied Eagle-Owl, nicknamed the Ghost of the Forest, was recently sighted in which protected area?

1. Rajaji National Park
2. Corbett Tiger Reserve
3. Valley of Flowers National Park

A Rajaji National Park

B Corbett Tiger Reserve

C Valley of Flowers National Park

D Govind National Park

Answer: Corbett Tiger Reserve

APPROACH

The owl was photographed in the Sitavani and Ringora areas of the Ramnagar Forest Division, part of the Corbett Tiger Reserve landscape in Uttarakhand.

ECOSYSTEMS & CONSERVATION TOOLS

Invasive Species Flagged as Underestimated Threat at AAD 2026

WHY IN NEWS

A keynote at the Annual Conference on Applied Biodiversity for Development (AAD 2026) described invasive alien species, especially Lantana camara and Prosopis juliflora, as the single most underestimated driver of biodiversity loss in India's forests, grasslands, and wetlands.

40% Tiger reserves with Lantana infestation

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Invasive Alien Species Policy**
  India's 2024 NBSAP lists invasive alien species as a standalone strategic target, aligned with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework's Target 6.
- **Grassland Ecosystem Degradation**
  Prosopis juliflora's spread in the Banni grasslands illustrates how invasive trees convert open grassland into thorn scrub, harming pastoral livelihoods.
- **Fire Ecology Interactions**
  Lantana's faster post-fire resprouting compared to native saplings shows how invasive species can exploit disturbance regimes to spread further.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Conference	AAD 2026, keynote by Jagdish Krishnaswamy (IIHS, ATREE)
Top invasive threats	Lantana camara, Prosopis juliflora
Lantana spread	Infests parts of about 40% of India's 58 tiger reserves
Prosopis in Banni grasslands	Thorn scrub cover rose from under 5% (1980s) to over 50% recently
Policy framework	India's NBSAP 2024, Target 6 of Kunming-Montreal GBF
Other invasive species flagged	African catfish, Nile tilapia, apple snail

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Both Lantana camara and Prosopis juliflora were originally introduced to India deliberately, Lantana as a colonial-era ornamental plant and Prosopis for afforestation and fuelwood, illustrating how well-intentioned introductions can become major ecological liabilities.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Lantana camara and Prosopis juliflora | **AAD 2026 keynote** | **40% of tiger reserves affected** | **Banni grasslands, Kachchh** | **NBSAP 2024 Target 6**

EXAM TRAP

Do not treat all introduced species as automatically invasive. An introduced species becomes invasive only when it spreads aggressively and causes ecological or economic harm, a distinction frequently tested in prelims.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Prosopis juliflora has most significantly altered which grassland ecosystem, as highlighted at AAD 2026?

1. Banni grasslands, Kachchh
2. Velavadar grasslands, Gujarat
3. Kaziranga grasslands, Assam

A Banni grasslands, Kachchh
B Velavadar grasslands, Gujarat
C Kaziranga grasslands, Assam
D Desert National Park grasslands

Answer: Banni grasslands, Kachchh

APPROACH
Satellite data presented at AAD 2026 showed thorn scrub cover in Kachchh's Banni grasslands rising from under 5 percent to over 50 percent, driven by Prosopis juliflora invasion.

ECOSYSTEMS & CONSERVATION TOOLS

Sukhna Wetland and Sauj Jheel Added as New Ramsar Sites

WHY IN NEWS

The Union Environment Minister announced that Sukhna Wetland in Chandigarh and Sauj Jheel in Uttar Pradesh have been designated Ramsar sites, taking India's total count of Wetlands of International Importance to 103.

103 Total India Ramsar sites

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **Ramsar Convention Framework**
  The 1971 Ramsar Convention designates Wetlands of International Importance, bringing global scientific attention and technical support.
- **Urban Wetland Conservation**
  Sukhna's peri-urban setting shows how wetlands near cities can still serve critical migratory bird functions if protected.
- **Central Asian Flyway**
  Sukhna Wetland is an important stopover and wintering site for migratory birds using this flyway.

PRELIMS MATRIX

New Ramsar sites	Sukhna Wetland (Chandigarh), Sauj Jheel (Uttar Pradesh)
India's total Ramsar count	103
Sukhna notable species	Common pochard (Vulnerable), Pallas's fish eagle (Endangered), black pond turtle (Endangered)
Sukhna's flyway role	Stopover and wintering site, Central Asian Flyway
Adjoining protected area	Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary
Expected benefits	Technical assistance, eco-tourism, environmental education

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS

Sukhna Wetland sits in a peri-urban setting adjoining a major city, Chandigarh, making it one of the relatively few Ramsar sites in India located so close to dense urban development.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Sukhna Wetland, Chandigarh | Sauj Jheel, Uttar Pradesh | India's 103rd Ramsar site mark | Central Asian Flyway | Ramsar Convention 1971

EXAM TRAP

Do not assume Ramsar designation alone guarantees legal protection equivalent to a wildlife sanctuary; it brings international recognition and technical support, while actual on-ground protection still depends on domestic wildlife law.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

The designation of Sukhna Wetland and Sauj Jheel as Ramsar sites brought India's total count to:

1. 99
2. 103
3. 110

A 99
B 103
C 110
D 115

Answer: 103

APPROACH

The Union Environment Minister confirmed that these two additions brought India's total Ramsar site count to 103.

ECOSYSTEMS & CONSERVATION TOOLS

Kerala Launches India's First Ecosystem Red List Assessment

WHY IN NEWS

The Kerala State Biodiversity Board launched India's first statewide Red List Assessment of Ecosystems, a one-year project covering forests, rivers, and coastal habitats across all 14 districts to evaluate the risk of ecosystem collapse using the IUCN's standardized framework.

83% Riparian forest loss in a century

CONNECT TO STATIC SYLLABUS

- **IUCN Red List of Ecosystems**
  A standardized framework assessing ecosystem collapse risk, distinct from the IUCN Red List of Species, using criteria like historical loss and fragmentation.
- **State Biodiversity Boards**
  Established under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, state boards like Kerala's can commission original ecosystem-level assessments.
- **Evidence-Based Land Use Planning**
  Outputs like Risk Registers and restoration priority maps are designed to feed directly into local and state planning processes.

PRELIMS MATRIX

Launched by	Kerala State Biodiversity Board (KSBB)
Duration	One year, launched 14 October 2026
Implementing institutions	Kerala Forest Research Institute, MES Asmabi College
Scope	Forests, rivers, coastal habitats across all 14 districts
Most at-risk ecosystem	Riparian evergreen forests, 83% lost over a century, Critically Endangered
Expected outputs	Risk Register, Ecosystem Typology Atlas, restoration priority maps

UNIQUE FACT FOR PRELIMS
Kerala's southern Western Ghats riparian evergreen forests are projected to face potential ecosystem collapse within 20 to 40 years if current pressures from dams, plantations, and climate extremes continue unchecked.

PRELIMS MEMORY BANK

Kerala Ecosystem Red List Assessment | KSBB, launched Oct 2026 | IUCN Red List of Ecosystems framework | Riparian forests 83% lost | India's first statewide assessment

EXAM TRAP
Do not confuse the IUCN Red List of Ecosystems with the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. The former assesses whole ecosystems for collapse risk, while the latter assesses individual species for extinction risk.

PRELIMS MODEL MCQ

Kerala's Ecosystem Red List Assessment project uses which framework to evaluate ecosystem collapse risk?

1. IUCN Red List of Ecosystems
2. Living Planet Index
3. Ecological Footprint Framework

A IUCN Red List of Ecosystems
B Living Planet Index
C Ecological Footprint Framework
D Biodiversity Intactness Index

Answer: IUCN Red List of Ecosystems

APPROACH
The project applies the IUCN Red List of Ecosystems framework, which uses five standardized criteria to assess the risk of ecosystem collapse.