

Species in News 2025-2026, Flora and Fauna of India & World

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Species in News 2025-2026 remained an important biodiversity theme because conservation, climate change, habitat loss and wildlife protection continued to attract global attention. Many plant and animal species were discussed due to ecological significance, declining populations, scientific discoveries, invasive behaviour and conservation programmes. These species are important for understanding biodiversity, ecosystems, environmental governance and wildlife protection measures across India and the world.

What are Species?

A Species is a group of living organisms that can naturally interbreed and produce fertile offspring. India protects important species through the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, which provides legal safeguards under different schedules. Threatened species are also protected through biodiversity conservation programmes, protected areas, Project Elephant, Project Dolphin and international agreements like CITES and the **IUCN Red List** framework.

List of Species in News 2025-2026

Several flora and fauna species remained in the news during 2025-2026 because of conservation concerns, scientific studies, habitat threats, ecological importance and biodiversity protection efforts. These species covered mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, marine organisms, fungi and rare plants found in India and different parts of the world.

Kakapo

- **Kakapo** is native to New Zealand and is the world's only flightless parrot.
- It is also the heaviest parrot species and may weigh up to four kilograms.
- Kakapos are nocturnal and remain hidden in forests during daytime.
- Their diet includes leaves, bark, seeds and fruits.
- The species is popularly called "moss chicken" because of its fluffy appearance.

Cycads

- Cycads are ancient plants often described as "living fossils".
- These plants existed on Earth since the dinosaur age.
- Cycads can raise their own temperature to attract pollinating insects.
- Beetles are the main pollinators instead of bees and butterflies.
- Their translucent heat signals help insects locate them in darkness.

Seagrass

- Seagrasses are marine flowering plants forming underwater meadows in shallow waters.
- They provide habitat and shelter to turtles, seahorses and thousands of fish species.
- Seagrass meadows improve water quality by filtering nutrients and pollutants.
- They reduce wave energy and protect coastal areas from storms and floods.
- The **United Nations** declared 1 March as World Seagrass Day in 2022.

Bat Species in India

- India has around 135 bat species according to the State of India's Bats 2024-25 report.
- Bats help in pollination, seed dispersal, pest control and soil nutrient enrichment.
- Urbanisation, climate change, land use changes and deforestation threaten bat populations.
- West Bengal recorded the highest diversity with 68 bat species.
- Meghalaya reported 66 species, while Uttarakhand recorded 52 species.

Indian Tent Turtle

- Indian Tent Turtle (*Pangshura tentoria*) is mainly a riverine turtle species.
- It is protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- The species is included under CITES Appendix II.
- Adult females are mainly herbivorous, while males and juveniles are carnivorous.

- The IUCN Red List categorises it as Least Concern (LC).

White bellied Heron

- White bellied Heron is a critically endangered bird species under the IUCN Red List.
- It receives highest legal protection under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act.
- In India, the species survives mainly in Arunachal Pradesh.
- Less than 250 birds are estimated to survive in the wild globally.
- Kamlang and Namdapha **Tiger Reserves** are important habitats for this species.

Cocaine Hippos

- Cocaine hippos are invasive species spreading in Colombia's Magdalena River region.
- They have no natural predators in Colombia unlike Africa.
- Growing populations threaten West Indian manatee, turtles, otters and spectacled caiman.
- Rising numbers may damage indigenous flora and fauna ecosystems.
- Human wildlife conflict risks are also increasing due to feral hippo expansion.

Peacock Tarantula

- Peacock Tarantula (*Poecilotheria metallica*) is endemic to the Eastern Ghats of India.
- It is recognised by its distinct metallic blue colour that darkens with age.
- The species mainly occurs in deciduous forests of central and southern India.
- It helps maintain insect population balance as an important predator species.
- It is critically endangered because of habitat loss and illegal exotic pet trade.

Galaxy Frogs

- Galaxy Frogs (*Melanobatrachus indicus*) occur in Kerala's **Western Ghats** region.
- They survive under rotten logs inside forest ecosystems.
- The IUCN classifies the species as Vulnerable.
- Habitat conversion, landslides and firewood collection threaten their survival.
- Photo tourism emerged as a recent threat after their flagship species designation.

Rheum nobile

- Rheum nobile is a Himalayan "glasshouse plant" found between 4,000-4,800 metres altitude.
- Its translucent bracts trap heat and protect flowers from UV radiation and winds.
- The species is monocarpic and flowers only once during its lifetime.
- It may remain in rosette form for 7-30 years before flowering.
- The plant is commonly found in North Sikkim alpine trekking regions.

Vultures in India

- India has nine vulture species found in the wild.
- White backed, Slender billed and Long billed vultures are critically endangered.
- Diclofenac veterinary drug caused drastic vulture population decline in India.
- Diclofenac was banned in 2006 to support vulture conservation.
- Vultures play an essential role in carcass disposal and ecosystem sanitation.

Jellyfish

- Jellyfish blooms disrupted cooling systems of France's largest **nuclear power plant**.
- Large jellyfish populations can clog intake pipes within minutes.
- **Climate change** and rising ocean temperatures increase jellyfish populations.
- Overfishing removed predators like tuna and sea turtles from marine ecosystems.
- Jellyfish tolerate low oxygen conditions better than many marine species.

Sea Cows (Dugongs)

- Dugongs are marine mammals commonly called sea cows.
- In India, they are found in Gulf of Kutch, Gulf of Mannar and Andaman Islands.
- Dugongs are listed as Vulnerable under the IUCN Red List.
- They receive highest legal protection under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act.
- Seagrass meadows are their main food source.

Gharial and Crocodile

- **Gharials and crocodiles** are protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act.
- National Chambal Sanctuary supports over 80% of India's gharial population.
- Bhitarkanika in Odisha is famous for saltwater crocodiles.
- Madhya Pradesh released 10 gharials into the Chambal River during 2025.
- Crocodile census in Bhitarkanika recorded 1,826 saltwater crocodiles in 2025.

Asian Elephant

- Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*) is classified as Endangered by the IUCN.
- India supports over 60% of the global Asian elephant population.
- Karnataka has the highest elephant population with 6,013 elephants.
- Western Ghats recorded the highest regional elephant concentration with 11,934 elephants.
- Elephant numbers are monitored every five years under Project Elephant.

Bactrian Camels

- Bactrian camels are double humped camels found in Ladakh's cold desert region.
- They are adapted to altitudes above 15,000 feet and extreme cold conditions.
- These camels can carry loads up to 250 kilograms in mountainous terrain.
- They support logistics and patrolling activities along the Line of Actual Control.

- Bactrian camels are native to Mongolia, China, Kazakhstan and Central Asia.

Octopuses

- Octopuses are cold blooded marine animals that thrive in warm waters.
- Higher temperatures accelerate embryonic development and egg hatching rates.
- Deep sea octopus eggs may take four and a half years to hatch in colder waters.
- About 70% of an octopus brain is dedicated to vision functions.
- Their blood is blue because it contains copper based hemocyanin instead of hemoglobin.

Ghost Flowers

- Ghost flower is scientifically called *Monotropa uniflora*.
- These plants lack chlorophyll and therefore cannot perform photosynthesis.
- They depend on underground fungi connected with tree roots for nutrition.
- Ghost flowers are usually pale white or pinkish white in colour.
- Bumblebees are their major pollinators in forest ecosystems.

Great Indian Bustard

- Great Indian Bustard (GIB) is a critically endangered grassland bird species.
- Its population declined from over 700 individuals to less than 150.
- It is considered an indicator species of grassland ecosystem health.
- Habitat loss and power line collisions are major threats.
- Rajasthan's Desert National Park supports the largest surviving population.

Morels (Morchella)

- Morels are highly valued gourmet mushrooms known for medicinal and nutritional properties.
- They naturally grow in high elevation forest ecosystems during rainy seasons.
- Prices range between Rs 15,000 and Rs 40,000 per kilogram.
- Artificial cultivation remains difficult due to complex ecological requirements.
- Controlled cultivation may boost Jammu and Kashmir's high value bioeconomy.

Gangetic Dolphins

- Gangetic dolphin is India's National Aquatic Animal.
- It inhabits the Ganga-Brahmaputra river system and connected tributaries.
- The species is classified as Endangered by the IUCN.
- Adults can grow up to 10 feet in length.
- Dolphins use side swimming techniques while hunting fish, shrimp and molluscs.

Polar Bears

- Polar bears possess black skin beneath transparent fur layers.
- Their fur lacks white pigment and reflects light to appear white.
- Thick fat layers help them survive Arctic climatic conditions.
- Polar bears are skilled swimmers moving up to six miles per hour.
- They mainly feed on fatty seals for energy and survival.

Indian Grey Wolf

- Indian grey wolf populations faced threats from dog attacks in Maharashtra grasslands.
- Bankapur Wolf Sanctuary in Karnataka reported birth of eight wolf pups.
- Grassland degradation remains a major challenge for wolf conservation.
- Wolves play an important role in maintaining ecological balance in grassland ecosystems.
- Human disturbance increasingly affects wolf habitats across India.

Musk Deer

- Musk deer conservation gained attention after Central Zoo Authority findings.
- Indian zoos currently do not have active breeding programmes for musk deer.
- Musk deer are important Himalayan mammals known for musk gland value.
- Illegal hunting remains a major conservation challenge for the species.
- Himalayan habitat protection is essential for long term survival.

Seaweed

- India's seaweed farming sector is valued at around Rs 200 crore.
- The sector may grow to Rs 3,277 crore over the next decade.
- Seaweed cultivation supports coastal livelihoods and marine economy growth.
- Seaweeds are important for **pharmaceuticals**, food and industrial applications.
- Marine farming expansion is receiving increasing policy attention in India.

Great White Shark

- A South African study examined Great White Sharks over 20 years.
- Declining shark populations disrupted marine ecosystem balance significantly.
- Great White Sharks are apex predators in ocean ecosystems.
- Predator decline affects prey populations and marine biodiversity stability.
- Climate and ecological pressures continue to threaten shark populations.

Anthurium

- Anthurium flower exports from Mizoram to Singapore gained attention during 2025.
- APEDA facilitated the first export consignment of Anthurium flowers.
- Anthurium is an important floriculture crop with export potential.
- Floriculture supports income diversification in northeastern states.

- Export oriented cultivation is increasing in India's horticulture sector.

Caracal

- First photographic evidence of Caracal was reported from Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve.
- Caracal is a medium sized wild cat adapted to dry habitats.
- Habitat fragmentation threatens Caracal populations in India.
- Rajasthan remains an important region for Caracal sightings.
- The species is known for its distinctive black ear tufts.

Mangroves

- Tamil Nadu's mangrove cover increased to 9,039 hectares in 2024.
- Mangroves store significant carbon and support coastal biodiversity.
- They protect coastlines against cyclones and coastal erosion.
- Mangrove ecosystems support fisheries and marine breeding grounds.
- Conservation efforts are improving mangrove restoration in India.

Narwhals

- Scientists documented narwhals using tusks for hunting and foraging activities.
- Narwhals inhabit Arctic marine ecosystems.
- Their tusks are specialised elongated teeth.
- Climate change threatens Arctic habitats and narwhal survival.
- The study improved understanding of narwhal behavioural adaptation.

Olive Ridley Turtle

- Around 6.5 lakh Olive Ridley turtles arrived at Odisha's Rushikulya beach.
- Olive Ridley turtles are famous for mass nesting called arribada.
- The species is classified as Vulnerable under the IUCN Red List.
- Odisha coast remains globally important for turtle nesting.
- Coastal conservation is essential for protecting nesting habitats.

Humpback Whales

- Humpback whales remained in news after a kayaking incident in the Strait of Magellan.
- These whales are among the largest marine mammals globally.
- Humpback whales are known for long migrations across oceans.
- Marine ecosystem conservation is essential for whale survival.
- Ocean pollution and shipping activities threaten whale habitats.

Eurasian Otter

- Eurasian otters were documented in Kashmir's Gurez Valley after 25 years.
- Otters are indicators of healthy freshwater ecosystems.
- River pollution and habitat destruction threaten otter populations.
- Their return highlighted improving ecological conditions in the region.
- Wetland conservation supports otter habitat protection.

Rhododendron wattii

- Rhododendron wattii faces habitat related threats in Nagaland.
- Rhododendrons are important flowering plants of Himalayan ecosystems.
- Habitat degradation threatens their long term survival.
- Mountain biodiversity conservation is essential for these species.
- Climate change increasingly affects alpine plant ecosystems.

Bar headed Geese

- Pong Dam Lake Wildlife Sanctuary recorded increased waterfowl populations during 2025 bird count.
- Bar headed geese are famous for high altitude Himalayan migration.
- Wetlands provide important wintering habitats for migratory birds.
- Pong Dam is an important wetland ecosystem in northern India.
- Migratory birds reflect ecological health of wetland habitats.

Hoolock Gibbon

- Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary gained attention due to proposed oil exploration activities.
- Hoolock gibbons are India's only ape species.
- Habitat fragmentation threatens gibbon populations in Northeast India.
- Eco sensitive zones help protect fragile forest ecosystems.
- Forest connectivity is important for arboreal primates like gibbons.

Golden Langur

- Golden langur is an endangered primate species found mainly in Assam and Bhutan.
- A recent killing in Bongaigaon triggered protests demanding stronger protection.
- Habitat fragmentation threatens long term survival of the species.
- Golden langurs are known for their striking golden fur.
- Forest conservation remains critical for their survival.

Fishing Cat

- India's first Fishing Cat Collaring Project began at Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Fishing cats are wetland dependent wild cats.
- Wetland destruction threatens fishing cat populations.
- The species is adapted for hunting fish in aquatic habitats.

- Scientific tracking will help understand movement and habitat use.

Utricularia

- Utricularia was reported in large numbers from Keoladeo National Park.
- Utricularia belongs to carnivorous plant species.
- These plants trap tiny organisms for nutrient intake.
- Wetland ecosystems support their growth and survival.
- Keoladeo remains important for aquatic biodiversity conservation.

Flamingos

- Flamingo Festival 2025 was organised near Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh.
- The sanctuary attracts over 200 bird species annually.
- Grey pelicans and spoonbill storks are also major attractions there.
- Wetland ecosystems are critical for migratory flamingo populations.
- Bird festivals support awareness about wetland conservation.

Phytoplankton

- Phytoplankton are microscopic marine organisms forming the base of ocean food chains.
- Excess iron stimulates rapid phytoplankton blooms in oceans.
- Increased blooms accelerate nutrient consumption in marine ecosystems.
- Nutrient depletion can create nutrient poor ocean conditions faster.
- Phytoplankton are important for global carbon cycling and oxygen production.

Indian Long billed Vulture

- Indian Long billed Vulture was sighted at Ramadevara Betta Vulture Sanctuary during 2025.
- It is one of India's critically endangered vulture species.
- Diclofenac poisoning caused severe population decline in the species.
- Vulture sanctuaries are important for conservation and breeding support.
- Vultures play a major ecological role in carcass disposal.

Sambar Deer

- Sambar deer population studies were conducted in Sagarshwar Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Researchers used line transect and camera trap methods for estimation.
- Sambar deer are among the largest deer species found in India.
- They are important prey species in forest ecosystems.
- Habitat conservation is important for sustaining deer populations.

Bull Ants

- Bull ants use polarised moonlight for night time navigation.
- *Myrmecia pyriformis* and *Myrmecia midas* were studied during 2025 research.
- Earlier, dung beetles were the only known animals with this ability.
- Moonlight navigation helps ants locate paths in darkness.
- The discovery improved understanding of insect behavioural adaptation.

Mugger Crocodiles

- Gujarat conducted crocodile census in the Vishwamitri River during 2025.
- Mugger crocodiles are freshwater crocodiles found in rivers and wetlands.
- They are protected under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- Wetland ecosystems are important for mugger crocodile survival.
- Human encroachment threatens crocodile habitats in urban river systems.

Marsupials

- Scientists successfully produced the first kangaroo embryos using IVF technology.
- The breakthrough may help conservation of threatened marsupial species.
- Marsupials mainly occur in Australia and nearby regions.
- Kangaroos are among the best known marsupial mammals.
- Advanced reproductive technologies are increasingly used in wildlife conservation.

Golden headed Cisticola

- Golden headed Cisticola was reported from Mathikettan Shola National Park.
- It is a grassland and wetland associated bird species.
- Protected habitats support survival of rare bird populations.
- Western Ghats ecosystems are rich in avian biodiversity.
- Bird sightings help improve biodiversity documentation efforts.

Melanistic Tiger

- Poachers illegally hunted a melanistic tiger in Similipal Tiger Reserve during 2025.
- Melanistic tigers possess unusually dark stripe patterns.
- Similipal Tiger Reserve is known for melanistic tiger occurrences.
- Illegal wildlife hunting remains a major conservation challenge.
- Tigers are protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act.

Oysters

- Oyster hemolymph contains antimicrobial proteins according to recent research.
- These proteins can kill certain drug resistant bacteria.
- Oysters are important marine organisms in coastal ecosystems.
- Scientific studies are exploring medicinal applications of marine species.

- Marine biodiversity supports biotechnology and pharmaceutical research.

Indian Bison

- Jharkhand initiated studies to revive Indian Bison populations in Palamau Tiger Reserve.
- Indian bison is also called gaur, the world's largest wild cattle species.
- Habitat degradation threatens gaur populations in some regions.
- Protected forests support herbivore conservation in India.
- Gaur populations are important for maintaining ecological balance.

Spotted Deer

- Nagarhole Tiger Reserve reported increasing spotted deer density during 2025.
- The reserve recorded 28 spotted deer per square kilometre.
- Spotted deer are important herbivores in forest food chains.
- They form major prey for predators like tigers and leopards.
- Healthy deer populations indicate productive forest ecosystems.

Red Sanders

- Ancient rock art and inscriptions were discovered inside Sri Lankamalleswara Sanctuary.
- The sanctuary is associated with Red Sanders vegetation.
- Red Sanders is a valuable endemic tree species of India.
- Illegal smuggling threatens Red Sanders populations.
- Protected forest regions are important for species conservation.

Georissa Mawsmiensis

- **Georissa mawsmiensis** is a newly discovered micro snail species from Meghalaya's **Mawmai Cave**.
- It is the first Georissa species discovery in India since 1851.
- It measures less than 2 millimetres in length.
- It survives on moist limestone cave surfaces rich in calcium.
- The genus Georissa is distributed across tropical karst and limestone regions globally.

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