

India's Dugong Conservation Reserve

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India's Dugong Conservation Reserve Latest News

Recently, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has formally adopted a motion recognising India's first Dugong Conservation Reserve in Palk Bay.

About India's Dugong Conservation Reserve

- It is India's first **Dugong Conservation Reserve**.
- It was established on September 21, 2022, by the **Tamil Nadu government** under **the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**,
- It covers 448.34 sq. km. in **northern Palk Bay**.
- The region is home to over 12,250 hectares of **seagrass meadows**, vital feeding grounds for dugongs (Dugong dugon).
- Seagrasses also support a host of other marine species, making the **reserve ecologically significant**.

Key Facts about Dugong

- Dugongs (*Dugong dugon*) are the **only herbivorous mammals** found in India's marine ecosystems.
- **Appearance:** It is **known as the sea cow**, but resembles a cross between a seal and a whale, and is distributed through the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Distribution:** They are found along the Indian coastline, primarily inhabiting **warm waters** around **the Andaman and Nicobar Islands**, the **Gulf of Mannar**, **Palk Bay**, and the **Gulf of Kutch**. The dugong is a long-lived species, able to live up to 70 years.
- **Habitat:** Dugongs are restricted to **shallow waters**, where they spend the day feeding on seagrasses of the genera *Cymodocea*, *Halophila*, *Thalassia*, and *Halodule*.
- **Reproduction of Dugong**
 - Individuals reach **reproductive maturity after only nine or ten years** and can give birth at intervals of **around three to five years**.
 - Due to its slow reproductive cycle, extended time to maturity, and infrequent calving, a dugong population's maximum potential growth rate is estimated to be just about 5% per year.
- **Conservation status of Dugong**
 - **IUCN:** Vulnerable
 - **CITES:** Appendix I
 - **Wildlife Protection Act 1972:** Schedule I

Source: **TH**

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