25 Countries Back "Wildlife for Climate Declaration" at COP31

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Why in News?

25 across Africa, Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Pacific endorsed the Wildlife for Climate Declaration during the 31st UN Climate Change Conference (COP31) in Antalya, Türkiye in November 2026.

- It marks the first time a coalition of governments has jointly elevated the protection and restoration of wild animals as an integral part of global climate action at a UN climate summit.
- It aiming to bridge a major policy gap where climate frameworks focus predominantly on habitats, vegetation, and carbon stocks while overlooking the ecological functions of fauna.

Key Highlights

- **Closing a Climate Policy Blind Spot-** While wild animals' roles are recognized under biodiversity frameworks like the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), they have largely been absent from implementation under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- **Scientific Backing -** The declaration builds on the *Scientific Consensus on Wildlife and Climate* (backed by more than 350 scientists from 47 countries) and ecological research showing how fauna act as "ecosystem engineers" through seed dispersal, grazing, predation, nutrient cycling, and trophic cascades that regulate carbon capture and ecosystem resilience.
- **Illustrative Ecological Examples**
  - Congo Basin forests with elephants store roughly **7% more carbon** than those without them.
  - Kelp forests protected by sea otters—which keep herbivorous sea urchin populations in check—can absorb up to **12 times more** CO_2 than unprotected kelp beds.
- **Key Policy Calls-** The non-binding political commitment urges governments to integrate wildlife protection and restoration into national climate and biodiversity plans, curb overexploitation of wildlife, maintain habitat connectivity, and advance sustainable food systems that ease ecological pressures.
- **Notable Endorsing Nations-** The 25 signatories include **Brazil, Belize, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Fiji, Guatemala, Kenya, Madagascar, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Zambia, and Zimbabwe**, alongside European and other states such as Andorra, Armenia, and Monaco.

Reference

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