Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Biodiversity

Why in News?

The Forest Department has launched a comprehensive scientific wildlife census in the Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary (2026) to assess population dynamics and document movement corridors for key species, particularly focusing on large carnivores and under-recorded species like the red fox.

Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary

- **Location -** Situated in the Almora district (Kumaon region) of Uttarakhand. It lies atop a mountain in the Central Himalayan region.
- **Established -** 1988.
- **Objective -** Primarily established to conserve the shrinking broad-leaf oak (Quercus) forests of the Himalayas.
- **Historical Significance:**
    - **Chand Kings -** Served as the summer capital of the Chand rulers of Kumaon (11th–18th centuries).
    - **British Era -** Sir Henry Ramsay (Commissioner of Kumaon) established administrative centers here, including the **Khali Estate**.

Geographical Features

- **Topography -** Rugged terrain with deep gorges and ridges; altitude ranges from **900m to 2,500m**.
- **Zero Point (Jhandi Dhaar) -** The highest elevation point offering panoramic views of major Himalayan peaks: Nanda Devi, Kedarnath, Trisul, Panchachuli, and Shivling.
- **Flora -** Dominated by dense **Oak and Deodar** forests, along with **Rhododendrons** (which bloom ruby-red in spring). It hosts approximately 25 tree species and 24 bush species.

Biodiversity (Fauna)

- **Mammals -** Home to the Leopard (apex predator), **Himalayan Goral**, **Musk Deer** (State animal of Uttarakhand), Sumatran Serow, and Red Fox.
- **Avifauna -** An **Important Bird Area (IBA)** with over 200 species, including:
    - **Himalayan Monal** (State bird of Uttarakhand)
    - Kalij Pheasant
    - Koklass Pheasant
    - Eurasian Jay

Significance of the 2026 Census

- **Data Gap -** Aims to document "missing data" on smaller mammals like foxes and wild boars.

- **Corridor Mapping -** Identifying critical **movement corridors** for large carnivores (Leopards) to mitigate human-wildlife conflict.
- **Climate Indicator -** Monitoring high-altitude species helps in understanding the impact of climate change on the fragile Himalayan ecosystem.

Reference : Times of India | IAS Parliament