

Caracal in Thar Desert

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Biodiversity

Why in News?

Recently, Officials have confirmed the sighting of rare caracals in the Shahgarh region of Rajasthan's Jaisalmer, near the India-Pakistan border, through camera traps and radio-collaring.

- **Common Name** - Caracal (locally known as Padang).
- **Scientific Name** - *Caracal caracal*.
- **Family** - Felidae.
- **Kingdom** - Animalia.
- **Habitat** - They inhabit savannas, semi-deserts, scrublands, and arid woodlands.
- **Distribution** - Plains of Africa, the Middle East, and central and southern Asia.
 - **India** - North western India (Rajasthan and Gujarat).

Caracal population now reduced to 50 individuals in India, more than 95% loss due to habitat loss and retaliatory killings. (Wildlife Institute of India (WII)).

- **Morphology**
 - **Coat** - A solid reddish-tan or sandy-brown (rufous) coat that provides stealth in arid scrublands and semi-deserts.
 - **Ear Tufts** - Their most iconic feature is 4.5-5 cm (1.8-2 in) long, black ear tufts (pencil ears).
 - **Lifespan** - Up to 19 years
 - **Weight** - 8-14 kg
 - **Length** - 62-82 cm
 - **Shoulder Height** - 40-50cm
 - **Tail Length** - 23-32 cm short
 - **Litter Size** - 1 - 6 kittens.



- **Behaviour** - It is generally solitary, highly secretive predators primarily active at night (nocturnal).
- **Diet** - Carnivorous.

Conservation Measures

- **Scientific Monitoring**
 - **Camera traps (motion Sensing Cameras)** - Weatherproof PIR (Passive Infrared) Sensor camera traps capture images instantly when animals with distinct heat signatures move across the sensor.
 - **Radio-collaring** - It is a wildlife tracking method where a soft neck collar with a tiny radio transmitter sends signals to help scientists monitor an animal's movement and behaviour.
- **Pilot Projects** - Wildlife Trust of India involving local communities in conservation efforts and reduce human-wildlife conflict.
- **Habitat Protection** - Identifying critical refuge zones in Thar Desert.
- **Community Participation** - **Goat Bank** model by WII compensates livestock loss with goats.
 - **Problem** - Caracals sometimes prey on villagers' goats.
 - **Solution** - Affected families receive replacement goats from a community-managed "goat bank" instead of harming the predator.
 - **Sustainability** - Families later return a kid goat to the bank, keeping the system self-replenishing and conflict-free.

Conservation Status	
Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972	Schedule I species (highest protection).
IUCN Red List	Least Concerned.
Cites	Appendix I (Asian population including India) Appendix II (African populations)

Reference

- [The Hindu | Caracals](#)

