

Dugong Conservation Reserve

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Conservation

Why in news?

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress 2025 in Abu Dhabi, has formally adopted a motion recognizing India's first Dugong Conservation Reserve in Palk Bay, India.

- It is **India's 1st conservation reserve** for Dugong.
- **Situated in** - Palk Bay region covering the coastal waters of Thanjavur and Pudukottai districts of Tamil Nadu.
- **Established in** - 2022 under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- The region is home to **seagrass meadows**, vital feeding grounds for dugongs.
- **Global Recognition** - It recently got International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recognition for its marine conservation efforts.
- **Key highlights in conservation congress, 2025** - IUCN members highlighted the innovative restoration techniques pioneered in the reserve, including the **use of bamboo and coconut rope frames** to rehabilitate seagrass meadows.
- The initiative was praised for integrating scientific methods with community participation, setting a model for conservation across South Asia.

Dugong (Sea Cow)

- Dugong is a large **marine herbivorous mammal**.
- **Scientific name** - Dugong dugon.
- **Family** - Dugongidae.
- **Size** - Dugongs can grow to a size of over 300 kilograms measuring 3.0 to 3.5 metre in length.
- **Habitat** - Dugong are usually found in calm sheltered, nutrient-rich

shallow waters.

- It lives within 10 metre depth not far from the shore, usually in groups limited to 5 to 7 individuals among the seagrass beds.
- **Distribution** - Dugongs only occur in tropical and sub-tropical waters of the Indo-Pacific region, with their range is extensive, spanning 37 countries and territories ***from East Africa to Vanuatu***.
 - **In India** - Gulf of Mannar, Palk Bay, Gulf of Kutch and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
 - The dugongs that inhabited waters off the Odisha, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh coasts two centuries back ***became extinct now***.
- **Population** - There were just 250 dugongs in the Gulf of Mannar (Tamil Nadu), Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and the Gulf of Kutch (Gujarat).
- **Diet** - Each dugong consumes 30 to 40kg of seagrass a day.
- **Conservation Status** -
 - **IUCN** - Vulnerable.
 - **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972** - Schedule 1.
 - **CITES** - Appendix I.



- **Threats** - Habitat degradation, destructive fishing practices, and the impacts of climate change.

References

1. [The Hindu | Recognition to dugong reserve](#)
2. [The Hindu | Dugong Conservation Reserve](#)
3. [Dugong & Seagrass Hub | National Action Plan for Dugong in India](#)