

Future of Rare Jeypore Ground Gecko

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Environment

Why in News?

Recently, an open-cast bauxite mining project across the forest in the Nageswari Reserve Forest (Balda Hills) in Odisha's Koraput district posed an existential threat to the Jeypore ground gecko.

Jeypore Ground Gecko

- The Jeypore Ground Gecko (*Cyrtodactylus jeyporensis*) is a rare, endangered gecko endemic to India's Eastern Ghats, especially parts of southern Odisha and northern Andhra Pradesh.
- **Scientific name** - *Cyrtodactylus jeyporensis*
- **Common names**- Jeypore Ground Gecko / Patinghe Indian Gecko
- **Family** - Gekkonidae
- **Distribution** - Eastern Ghats of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Habitat** - Moist, high-elevation forest patches, often beneath rocks and boulders.
- **Elevation**- Around 1,100-1,400 metres in reported records.
- **Conservation Status**
 - **IUCN Red List**- Endangered (EN).
 - **CITES** - Listed in Appendix II in 2022 to regulate international trade.
 - **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972** - Schedule I (highest statutory protection under Indian law).
- **Protected Area Gap** - The species' known habitat falls almost entirely outside designated National Parks or Wildlife Sanctuaries, leaving it vulnerable to land-use conversion.
- **Key Threat** - Field surveys documented only 4 individual geckos in the Balda hills over the past year.
- The bauxite mining has triggered dual opposition from conservationists and local Bondo and Porja Adivasi communities who are protesting to protect their ancestral forest rights.
- **Historical Background**
 - Originally described in **1878** by British naturalist Richard Henry Beddome.
 - Presumed extinct for over 130 years, it was **rediscovered in 2010** by Indian herpetologists Ishan Agarwal and Aniruddha Datta-Roy in the high-elevation forests of Koraput.
- **Habitat Specialization**
 - Highly range-restricted, endemic strictly to high-elevation plateau edges (**900 to 1,400 metres**) in the northern **Eastern Ghats** (Odisha and Andhra Pradesh border).
 - Inhabits semi-evergreen and moist deciduous forest patches with rock-strewn leaf litter, making its survival completely dependent on undisturbed, cool micro-topography.
- **Evolutionary Significance**
 - Evolutionary studies show that its lineage diverged from its closest relatives **over 20 million years ago**, representing an ancient, biogeographically unique relict lineage of

Indian geckos.

Key Drivers of Extinction Risk

- Bauxite deposits in the Eastern Ghats form caps on high plateaus.
- Strip mining requires completely removing vegetation, rock boulders, and topsoil—permanently destroying the cool, shaded leaf-litter micro-habitats essential for ground-dwelling geckos.
- A similar bauxite extraction project by NALCO in nearby Potangi (Koraput) previously destroyed the gecko's micro-habitat, leading to local extinction of the species in that belt.
- The resident **Bondo and Porja Adivasi** tribes have conducted active protests for 2 years against the Nageswari forest land clearance, citing violations of the **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006**, and threat to perennial water sources.



Reference

[The Hindu | Rare Jeypore ground gecko](#)