Galaxy frogs

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Species*

Why in News?

According to the study, a group of seven galaxy frogs vanished, all likely to be dead, after multiple photographers descended on their habitat, causing disturbances and behavioural changes.

- **Scientific Name** – Melanobatrachus indicus
- **Family –** Microhylidae
- It is a ***rare, tiny, and most dazzling amphibious*** creature in the world that lives exclusively under rotten logs in Kerala's Western Ghats.
- **1st discovered in** – Although they were first discovered in 1878, not much is known about them since they are difficult to find.
- **Distribution –** It is ***endemic to the Western Ghats, Kerala*** (India).
- **Habitat –** It is found primarily under rotting logs, leaf litter, rocks, and other moist ground cover within 10 m of streams or in swampy areas.
- It is found in moist evergreen forests at elevations around 1,000–1,500 m, restricted to small forest patches in the southern Western Ghats.
- **Ecological Needs –** It requires precise temperature & humidity (cold-blooded, highly sensitive) to survive, because they are cold-blooded animals.
- **Size –** Each the size of a fingertip, measures just 2-3.5 centimetres (0.8-1.4 inches).
- **Appearance –** Glossy black skin with blue-white speckles (galaxy-like), orange streaks on limbs, giving supernova effect.



- **Unique Trait –** They use their spots to communicate, making existing data about their population and breeding behaviour deficient.
- **Behaviour –** They are primarily nocturnal and do not produce calls, making them incredibly difficult to find.
- When threatened, they exhibit a "contraction" behaviour, arching their backs and keeping their limbs close to their bodies.
- **EDGE species –** These frogs are the only species in their genus, which makes them evolutionarily unique.
- Because of this, they are listed as ***Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered (EDGE) species***—one of the world's most rare and threatened animals.
- **Conservation Status**
  - **IUCN** - Vulnerable
- **Threats –** Habitat loss due to deforestation and agriculture, disturbance from photo tourism, and extremely limited distribution make it highly sensitive.

References

1. Indian Express | 7 of world's rarest frogs presumed dead
2. Amphibia web | Melanobatrachus indicus

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