

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](#)