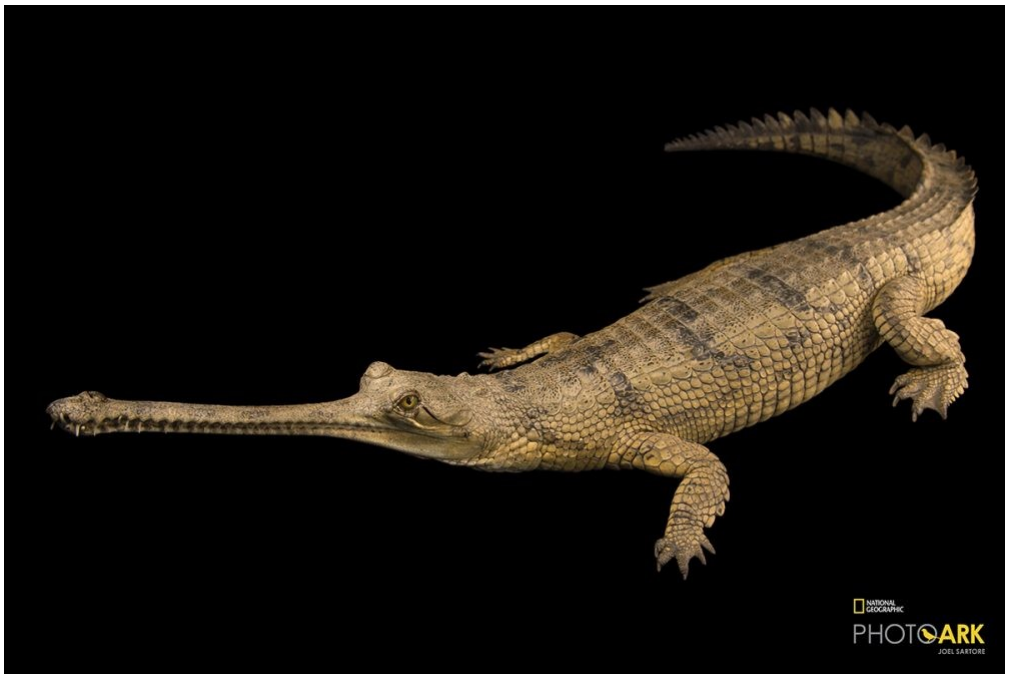
Gharial Crocodiles

Why in News?

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister recently released 10 gharials into Chambal River at the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary in Morena.

- It is a type of ***Asian crocodilian*** distinguished by their long, thin snouts.
- **Scientific Name** - Gavialis gangeticus.
- **Place in mythology** - Gharials hold sacred significance, often depicted as the divine mount of the goddess Ganga.
- The name 'gharial' comes from the Hindi word ghara, meaning ***pot or vessel,*** referring to the bulbous snout tip of adult males, resembles an inverted pot.
- **Appearance -** Their slender snouts, lined with numerous sharp, interlocking teeth, are adapted to trap fish, the mainstay of their diet.



- **Size -**Males grow from 3-6 meters, and females 2.6–4.5 meters.
- **Breeding -** Gharials mate during November, December, and January.
- **Habitat -** Sandbanks, sandbars, and islands are critical to their ecology, serving as preferred sites for basking and nesting.
- **Distribution –** India and Nepal.
- **Diet –** Fish eating (carnivores).
- Gharials do not stalk and lunge at prey like other crocodilians, their snouts contain ***sensory cells*** that can detect vibrations in the water.
- **Threats**
    - **Historical** - Overhunting for skins, trophies, eggs, and traditional medicine.

    - **Modern -** Dam construction, irrigation canals, siltation, river course changes, embankments, sand-mining, pollution, and fishing.
    - **Specific threat -** Gill nets kill gharials of all sizes, even in protected areas.

- **Conservation Efforts –** Captive breeding to rear and release hatchlings back into the river, monitoring populations, actively managing threats and engaging local communities in preservation.
- Today, the species survives primarily in **5 refuges**

Sanctuaries	Location	River
National Chambal Sanctuary (NCS)	Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan	Chambal River
Katerniaghat Sanctuary	Uttar Pradesh	Girwa River
Chitwan National Park	Nepal	Rapti River
Son River Sanctuary	Madhya Pradesh	Son River
Satkosia Gorge Sanctuary	Odisha	Mahanadi River

- **Conservation Status**
    - **IUCN** – Critically Endangered.
    - **WPA, 1972** - Schedule I.
    - **CITES -** Appendix I.

References

1. The Indian Express | Why gharials are endangered?
2. WII | Gavialis gangeticus
3. National Geographic | Gharial

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