

Great Indian Bustard - Rewilding Programme

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

Why in News?

India has initiated the rewilding of captive-bred Great Indian Bustards (GIBs) in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan. Two captive-bred birds are planned to be released from a soft-release facility into the Desert National Park.

Conservation Breeding Programme

- **Implemented by** - MoEFCC, Rajasthan Forest Department and Wildlife Institute of India (WII).
- Conservation-breeding centres are located at Ramdevra and Sam in Rajasthan. A soft-release facility has also been established at Naliya, Gujarat.
 - The centres currently house 97 birds. 24 chicks were produced in 2025 and 29 in 2026.
- **Rewilding Aviary** - A new aviary at Ramdevra provides large, unobstructed flying space.
- It helps birds strengthen flight muscles and develop natural behaviours before release.
- **'Jumpstart' Approach** - Captive-laid eggs are placed in wild GIB nests for incubation by wild females.
 - This has produced 8 chicks — 6 in Rajasthan and 2 in Gujarat.
- **Habitat Conservation** - Around 200 sq. km of fenced grassland has been developed inside the Desert National Park.
- WII telemetry studies identified these areas as important breeding habitats.

Key Facts about GIB

- **Scientific name** - *Ardeotis nigriceps*
- **IUCN Status** - Critically Endangered.
- **State Bird** - Rajasthan.
- **Major habitats** - grasslands and semi-arid regions of Rajasthan and Gujarat.
- It is an important umbrella species of the Thar ecosystem.



GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD (*Ardeotis nigriceps*)

India's iconic grassland bird, now on the brink of extinction

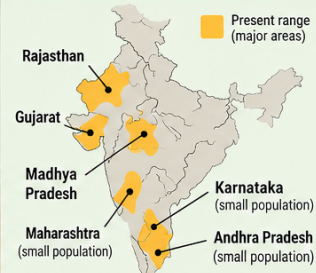
Key Facts

- Largest flying bird in India**
- Height:** 90–120 cm
- Weight:** 6–15 kg (males heavier)
- Diet:** Omnivorous (seeds, shoots, insects, small reptiles)
- Habitat:** Arid and semi-arid grasslands, scrublands

Identification Features



Distribution in India



Ecological Importance

- Indicator species of healthy grassland ecosystems
- Helps in seed dispersal
- Its conservation ensures protection of the wider grassland biodiversity

Current Status

- IUCN Red List**
CR **Critically Endangered**
- **Population:** Less than 150 individuals in the wild (estimated)
 - Severely fragmented populations
 - One of the most threatened bird species in the world

Major Threats

- Habitat loss** due to agriculture, industrialisation and infrastructure (power lines, roads, renewable energy projects)
- Disturbance** during breeding
- Predation** (feral dogs, etc.)
- Grassland conversion and degradation**
- Human-induced threats** (poaching, collision with power lines)

Conservation Measures

Protected Areas
Desert National Park (Rajasthan) – key refuge

GIB Conservation Breeding Programme
At Jaisalmer (Rajasthan)

Habitat Management
Grassland restoration, regulation of power infrastructure

Legal Protection
Included in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972

Project GREAT
(Grassland Restoration And Bustard Recovery Action for Tomorrow)

Guidelines for Renewable Energy Projects
To minimise impact on GIB habitats

Significance for UPSC

- ✓ Example of grassland ecosystem conservation
- ✓ Conflict between development and biodiversity
- ✓ India's flagship species for grassland conservation
- ✓ Link to climate change, land-use change and renewable energy expansion
- ✓ Relevant for Environment, Biodiversity, Conservation Policy and Sustainable Development

Reference

[DD News| India begins process to rewild captive-bred Great Indian Bustards](#)

