

Himalayan Pangolin

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Species

Why in News?

Researchers have revalidated and concluded that the Himalayan pangolin is a distinct extant species, separate from the Chinese pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*).

- **Scientific Name** - *Manis aurita*.
- **Family** - All Pangolins belong to Family Manidae.
- It is a cryptic, nocturnal, scaly ant-eating mammal.

Key Findings of the Study

- **Distinct Species** - Extensive genomic and morphological evidence suggests that the Himalayan pangolins are a distinct species, previously classified as a subspecies of the Chinese pangolin.
- It provides a vital baseline for the conservation of one of the world's most endangered and heavily trafficked animals.
- **Distribution** - It is restricted to the southern Himalayan foothills, with confirmed populations in Nepal, South Tibet, and Northeast India, including the state of Assam.
- **Comparison** - *M. aurita* is significantly larger in body size and skull & larger on average (95.2 cm in size) compared to 71.2 cm for the Chinese pangolin, and has smaller ears, shorter and broader nasal bone.



- **Reason for conferring distinctive species**
- **Climate change** - It played a key role in diverging the two lineages approximately 1.8 million years ago during the early Pleistocene Epoch.
- **Demographic Collapse** - Around the 14th century, *M. aurita* underwent a sharp demographic collapse due to intense cooling and aridification.

- Unlike the Chinese pangolin, which benefited from stable maritime-influenced forests in southern China, *M. aurita* lacked climatic buffering, habitat instability and faced long-term decline.
- **Conservation Status**
 - **IUCN** - Not been separately assessed by the IUCN.
 - **CITES** - Appendix I
 - **WPA, 1972** - Schedule I
- **Threats** - Illegal wildlife trade for meat, organs, skin, scales, and other parts of the body are valued for their use in traditional medicine and internal threat of inbreeding.

Reference

[Down to Earth | Himalayan pangolin confirmed as a distinct species](#)

