

Hornbill Conservation Centre

Prelims - Current events of National & International importance | General issues on Environmental ecology, Bio-diversity & climate change.

Why in News?

The Tamil Nadu government has announced the establishment of India's first Centre of Excellence for Hornbill Conservation at the Anamalai Tiger Reserve (ATR) in Coimbatore district.

Hornbills

- Hornbills are birds, easily recognizable by their large, downward-curved bills, often brightly colored and featuring a unique bony structure called a casque on the upper mandible.
- The name "hornbill" itself stems from this prominent, horn-like projection.
- The keystone species often known as "farmers of the forest", play a crucial ecological role as seed dispersers, helping to regenerate native forests.
- **Habitat** - They inhabit the canopy of tall evergreen forests.
- **Distribution** - They are found in Sub-Saharan Africa, Indian-Subcontinent, Philippines, Indonesia and the Solomon Islands.
- **Diet** - Hornbills are omnivorous
- **Threats** - Deforestation, habitat fragmentation, and the impacts of climate change.

- **Reason behind selection** - Anamalai Tiger Reserve was selected for its ecological richness, existing conservation infrastructure, and for its track record in protecting endangered species, including
 - Tigers,
 - Elephants,
 - Lion-tailed macaques, and
 - Other endemic wildlife.
- **Focus** - Four hornbill species found in the Western Ghats
 - Great Indian Hornbill (IUCN -Vulnerable)
 - Malabar Grey Hornbill (IUCN -Vulnerable)
 - Malabar Pied Hornbill (IUCN - Near threatened)
 - Indian Grey Hornbill (IUCN - Least concern)
- **Funding** - Department of Environment, Climate Change and Forests has sanctioned funds under the **Endangered Species Conservation Corpus Fund** to establish the Centre.
- **Collaboration** - Tamil Nadu Forest Department will team up with leading national and international organisations, including
 - Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History,
 - Nature Conservation Foundation,
 - Wildlife Institute of India, and
 - International Union for Conservation of Nature's Hornbill Specialist Group.
- **Activities** - It include habitat mapping, nest monitoring, scientific research, climate impact assessments, and restoration of degraded forest areas by planting native trees such as fig and Canarium that support hornbill populations.

- **Community participation** - Residents will be involved in conservation efforts through nest adoption programmes, scholarships for students, and sustainable livelihoods such as seed collection.
- **Capacity-building programs** - Forest staff and host awareness activities, including field visits for school children and community outreach.
- **Similar hornbill conservation activities** - In other landscapes such as the Kalakkad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR), Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR), and parts of Kanyakumari district.

Quick facts

Keystone species

- A keystone species is a plant or animal that plays a unique and crucial role in the way an ecosystem functions.
- Without them, the ecosystem would be dramatically different or cease to exist altogether.
- Its disappearance could affect other species that rely on it for survival.

Reference

[The Hindu| TN's Hornbill Conservation Centre](#)

