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

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering