Indian Gharial

Why in News?

Recently, scientists warned that Indian gharial and other 5 species might go extinct within the next 5 years unless drastic conservation measures are taken.

- **Indian Gharial** – It is the ***only visibly sexually dimorphic crocodilian***, derives its name from Ghara, an Indian word for Pot.
- **Scientific Name** – Gavialis gangeticus.
- It is known as Gharial, Fish Eating Crocodile, Indian Gavial, Gavial and Long Nosed Crocodile.
- **Habitat –** River habitats with deep, clear, fast-flowing waters and steep, sandy banks.
- **Distribution –** Only in the waters of *India and Nepal*.

  The surviving population found within the tributaries of the Ganges river system and less than 250 in the wild.

- **Morphology –** It has a thick skin covered with smooth epidermal scales that do not overlap.
- The snout of the gharial is uniquely the thinnest and most elongated among all the crocodilians.



- **Characteristics –** Its long narrow snout has very little resistance to water, allowing swiping motions to snap up fish in their mouth.
- **Diet –** Primarily fish eaters, some individuals known to scavenge dead animals.
- Feed on warm-blooded species, fish, insects, larvae and small frogs.
- **Threats –** Dam construction
  - Barrages and water abstraction
  - River bed cultivation
  - Pollution

    - Loss of river habitats.
- **Conservation Status**
    - **IUCN** – Critically Endangered.
    - **CITES** – Appendix I.
    - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** – Schedule I.

5 Other Species on the Verge of Extinction		
Species	**Location**	**Population**
Eastern Lowland Gorilla (Gorilla beringei graueri)	Democratic Republic of Congo.	Declining rapidly.
Hawksbill Turtle (Eretmochelys imbricata)	Tropical oceans worldwide.	Rapid decline due to human activity.
Javan Rhinoceros (Rhinoceros sondaicus)	Ujung Kulon National Park, Indonesia.	Less than 80 in the wild.
Amur Leopard (Panthera pardus orientalis)	Russia and China.	Around 100 in the wild.
Yangtze Finless Porpoise (Neophocaena asiaeorientalis)	Yangtze River, China.	Fewer than 1,000.

References

1. The Indian Express| Indian Gharial
2. WWF| Gharial
3. WII| Gharial's Characteristics, Diet & Habitat

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