Lion-tailed Macaque

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

Why in News?

A 40-year study in the Anamalai Hills found that lion-tailed macaques increased near human areas due to easy access to food but faced higher mortality risks.

- **Scientific name –** Macaca Silenus.
- **Genus** – Macaca.
- **Habitat –** Tropical evergreen, semi-evergreen rainforests & monsoon forests.
- **Distribution –** ***Endemic to the Western Ghats***, being found only in Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.
- **Key Locations –** Anamalai Hills, Nelliyampathy, Silent Valley National Park (largest population), Nilambur, Sholayar, Gavi, Sabarimala, Vallimalai, Valparai, and Agumbe.
- **Appearance –** Black body, silver-white mane (lion-like), long tail with tuft.
- **Reproduction –** Low birth rate, long gestation.
- **Behaviour –** It is ***Arboreal (lives in tree canopies) and Diurnal (active during the day).***
- It is a social animal, living in groups of 30-40 animals.
- It is **polygynous** (Mating system or marriage practice where one male mates with or marries multiple females simultaneously) in nature.
- **Uniqueness** – The only macaque species in which males use loud calls to ***mark territorial boundaries.***
- **Diet –** Omnivorous with a fruit-based diet; also feeds on seeds, flowers, insects, and small vertebrates.
- **Threats –**
    - **Fragmentation** – Habitat loss due to plantations, roads, and dams.
    - **Poaching** – Illegal hunting and pet trade.
    - **Conflict** – Human–wildlife interaction in fragmented forests.
- **Conservation status –**
    - **IUCN Status –** Endangered (as of IUCN Redlist 2023)
    - **CITES –** Appendix I.
    - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 –** Schedule I.
- **Ecological significance –** Key *seed disperser* that sustains forest regeneration and ecosystem stability in Western Ghats.



Reference

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