Mugger Crocodile

Prelims – *Current events of national and international importance| General issues on Environmental ecology, Bio-diversity and Climate Change.*

Mains (GS III) – *Conservation.*

Why in news?

Recently, Tamil Nadu Forest Department has conducted survey to map the population of mugger crocodiles in the state.

- The mugger crocodile (Crocodylus palustris) is a medium-sized broad-snouted crocodile, also known *marsh crocodile*.
- **Scientific name** – Crocodylus palustris
- **Distribution** – India (15 states), Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Iran.
- **Habitat** – They are primarily found in *freshwater habitats* like rivers, lakes and marshes.
- **Appearance** – The Mugger crocodile has the broadest snout among living crocodiles and it has a powerful tail and webbed feet.
- **Key populations** – Middle Ganga, Chambal River, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu's Cauvery delta
- **Diet** – Muggers primarily eats fish, crabs, insects, small fish.
- Adults consume amphibians, reptiles (snakes, turtles), birds, monkeys, deer, buffalo.
- **Characteristics** – Crocodiles eat minimally during winters, it is only during their breeding season in summers they become opportunistic predators and use all available resources as food.
- **Threats** – Habitat destruction, fishing equipment entanglement, illegal poaching for skin and meat and the use of body parts in medicine and human conflict.
- **Conservation**
  - **IUCN** – Vulnerable
  - **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972** – Schedule I
  - **CITES** – Appendix I.
- Tamil Nadu to set up ***Crocodile Conservation Centre*** at Anaikarai near Kollidam River.

Survey by Tamil Nadu Government

- The Tamil Nadu Forest Department is conducting a study on mugger crocodiles in the Cauvery delta.
- To identify critical crocodile habitats in Tamil Nadu.
- To understand the crocodile-human conflict and propose long-term strategies for habitat conservation.

- Preliminary study has revealed that Tamil Nadu is home to a significant population of mugger crocodiles along Kollidam River.

References

1. The Hindu| Tamil Nadu Surveys Mugger Crocodile
2. World Wildlife Institute of India| Marsh Crocodile

