

Multi-taxon Global Freshwater Fauna Assessment

Why in News?

The recently published study of multi-taxon global freshwater fauna assessment has identified Western Ghats as a hotspot of threatened freshwater species.

- **Study by** - **IUCN** (International Union for Conservation of Nature).
- **Global assessment** - It evaluates the extinction risk and conservation status for diverse freshwater fauna groups.
- It is the 1st ever multi-taxon global freshwater fauna assessment for the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.
- It is a comprehensive assessments involving contributions from more than 1,000 species experts over 20 years.
- It underscores the historical underappreciation of freshwater ecosystems in global environmental governance
- **Coverage** - 23,496 Decapod crustaceans, Fishes and Odonates.
- **Findings** - It revealed that a staggering 1/4th of the freshwater fauna are threatened with extinction, and a record of 89 confirmed and 187 suspected extinctions since 1500 AD.
- **Hotspots of Threatened Freshwater Species**
 - **Lake Victoria** - Kenya, Tanzania & Uganda.
 - **Lake Titicaca** - Bolivia & Peru.
 - **Wet Zone** - Sri Lanka.
 - **Western Ghats** - India.
- **Threat in Western Ghats** - It harbours over 300 freshwater fish species of which more than 1/3rd face extinction.

Western Ghats is the only region in Asia with 2 endemic families of freshwater fishes which are exclusively found in groundwater and subterranean systems.

The iconic **Humpbacked mahseer**, a critically endangered megafish that can grow up to weigh 60 kg, was found in Western ghats.

- Among Indian States, Kerala has the highest number of threatened freshwater fishes, with 74 of its 188 fish species for which Red List assessments are available categorized as threatened.

Periyar River stands out as a critical conservation priority due to its high concentration of endemic and threatened freshwater fish species.

Threats	Impact on Freshwater Species (Decapods, Fishes and Odonates)
Pollution	54%
Dams and water extraction	39%
Land-use	37%
Invasive species and disease	28%
Habitat loss and degradation	84%
Threats	Impact on Tetrapods
Agricultural practices	74%
Logging	49%

Climate change and severe weather events pose a substantial risk, impacting nearly 1/5th of threatened freshwater species.

Reference

[The Hindu | 1st Multi-taxon Global Freshwater Fauna Assessment](#)

