Nilgiri Tahr

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

Why in news?

Recently, the Tamil Nadu State Forest Department has proposed hydroelectric project could cut through the heart of the Nilgiri Tahr's domain in the upper Nilgiris.

- **Scientific Name –** Nilgiritragus hylocrius
- It is the only mountain ungulate (large mammals with hooves) in southern India amongst the 12 species present in India.
- **State animal –** It is the *state animal of Tamil Nadu*, and also known as Varaiaadu in Tamil.
- **Historic mentions –** It has been richly mentioned in Tamil Sangam literature like Silappathigaaram and Seevagasinthamani.
- **Habitat –** It prefers high-altitude, open montane grasslands and rocky cliffs, and they avoid low-elevation forests.
- They are typically found between 1,200 and 2,600 meters above sea level.
- **Distribution –** It is *endemic* to small stretch of the Western Ghats in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, is primarily found in the highlands of southern India.
- **Diet –** Herbivores, primarily graze on grasses, shrubs, and other vegetation found in their high-altitude environment.
- **Largest population –** The Eravikulam National Park in Anamalai hills, Kerala.
- **Synchronized Nilgiri Tahr Survey 2025** – Recorded a total population of 2,668 tahrs across Tamil Nadu and Kerala, with 1,303 in Tamil Nadu and 1,365 in Kerala.
- **October 7 –** Niligiri Tahr Day (Tamil Nadu)
- **Conservation status –**
    - **IUCN** – Endangered.
    - **Wildlife (Protection) Act of India, 1972** – Schedule I.

Quick Fact

Upper Bhavani Pumped Storage Hydroelectricity Project
• **Proposed in –** Upper Bhavani reservoir and Avalanche reservoir in Nilgiris district Tamil Nadu. • **Undertaken by –** NTECL - a joint venture company between Tamil Nadu Power Distribution Corporation Limited (TNPDCL) and National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) • **Aim –** To generate electricity to help supply the State's energy grid.

References

1. The Hindu | Hydroelectric project in Nilgiri Tahr habitat
2. WWF | Nilgiri Tahr
3. TN Forest Department | Nilgiri Tahr

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