Nilgiri Tahr

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

Why in News?

Tamil Nadu's Nilgiri Tahr population has recorded a steady rise with the third synchronised population estimation conducted in April 2026.

- **Scientific Name –** Nilgiritragus hylocrius
- It is the *only mountain ungulate or hoofed animal* found exclusively in the Southern Western Ghats, 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, sub-alpine, open montane grasslands and rocky cliffs, and they avoid low-elevation forests.
- It plays a vital role in nutrient cycling in the high-altitude mountain ecosystem.
- They are typically found between 1,200 and 2,600 meters above sea level.
- **Distribution –** It is primarily found in Tamil Nadu and Kerala (*endemic* to Western Ghats) with its distribution stretching from the southern tip of Kanyakumari to the Nilgiri Hills in the north.
- **Fragmented Distribution** - The species no longer exists in a continuous range, instead, it survives in scattered populations across suitable habitats, as per the third estimation report.
- **Diet –** Herbivores primarily graze on grasses, shrubs, and other vegetation found in their high-altitude environment.
- **October 7 –** Niligiri Tahr Day (Tamil Nadu)



- **Conservation status –**
  - **IUCN** – Endangered.
  - **Wildlife (Protection) Act of India, 1972** – Schedule I.

Quick Fact

Nilgiri Tahr Synchronised Population Estimation
• **Conducted by** - Tamil Nadu Forest Department under Project Nilgiri Tahr, from April 24-27, 2026, and it covered 14 forest divisions. • **Population Trend -** The state had recorded 1,303 (2025) and 1,031 (2024) & 1, 364 individuals in 2026, thus signalling a positive recovery trend. • The results carry a 95% confidence interval of 869 to 2,465 individuals. • **Growth Rate** - 4.68% increase over 2025 & 32% rise since 2024. • **Geographic Distribution -** The Anamalai Hills hold 44.87% of the total population of Nilgiri Tahr in Tamil Nadu, whereas the Nilgiris landscape holds 29.25% of the population. • **Age & Sex Composition** - Adult females - 38.4% - Adult males - 34.6% (ratio 55:100) - Yearlings - 15.5% - Young animals - 11.5%

Reference

Indian Express | Nilgiri Tahr population rises in TN



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