

## **Pallid Harrier**

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

### Why in News?

The Pallid Harrier, a bird that migrates from Central Asia, has reached its roosting ground in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu.

- Scientific name Circus macrourus
- **Habitat** It prefers open habitats such as natural grasslands, dry steppes, bogs, and agricultural areas.
  - In India, it prefers grasslands and thin scrub in semi-arid and arid regions and is also found in the high elevation shola grasslands of the Western Ghats.
- **Distribution** It breeds in southern Europe, Central Asia, and Iran, and winters mainly in Africa, India, and Southeast Asia.
- Appearance -
  - Size A <u>medium-sized raptor</u>, measuring 40-48 cm in length with a wingspan of 95-120 cm and weights around 235-550 g.
  - It exhibits sexual <u>dimorphism</u>, meaning males and females have distinct plumages.
  - Males Pale or "ghostly" grey above and white below, with narrow black wedges at the wingtips.
  - **Females** Brown above with white upper tail coverts (earning them the nickname "ringtails") and buff underparts streaked with brown. They have a well-defined facial pattern.
  - Juveniles Rufous (reddish-brown) and have a distinct whitish collar or "boa" around the neck.



- **Prey** It feeds on rodents, such as mice, voles, lemmings, ground squirrels, small terrestrial birds, also consume lizards, other small reptiles, frogs, and insects, such as locusts and dragonflies.
- Conservation Statius -
  - IUCN Near Threatened
  - Wild Life Protection Act, 1972 Schedule IV
- **Threats** Habitat destruction due to burning (natural and man-caused), conversion into farming lands, or over grazing.

### **Quick Fact**

# **Harrier Watch Project**

- It is primarily a *scientific and citizen science initiative* for monitoring raptor birds in India.
- Objective To monitor the wintering populations of harriers, map their roosting sites, and assess the impact of grassland loss on these species.
- Organization Housed at the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) in Bengaluru, India.
- Focuses on the conservation of *6 species of migratory harrier raptors* that visit the Indian subcontinent during winter -
- **6 species -** Western Marsh Harriers, Montagu's Harrier, Pallid Harrier, Hen Harrier, Pied Harrier, and Eastern Marsh Harriers
- **Findings** Indicates that the number of harriers is declining due to changing land use patterns and habitat loss.

#### References

- 1. The Hindu | Pallid Harrier
- 2. <u>Peregrine fund | Pallid Harrier</u>

