Private Participation in Wildlife Management

Why in the news?

Recently Prime Minister has inaugurated Vantara wildlife rescue and conservation center, a private project.

What are the objectives of wildlife management?

- **Wildlife management** – It involves using scientific principles and local knowledge to oversee wild animal populations, their habitats in a way that benefits both the environment and society.
- **Objectives**
  - **Population control** - Manage populations to avoid over-harvesting and over-population
  - **Ecosystem management** - Support ecosystem processes and resilience
  - **Habitat management** - Improve and conserve habitats
  - **Biodiversity conservation** - Halt the loss of biodiversity
  - **Endangered species** - Increase the survival probability of endangered species

Protected areas of India	As of 27th November, 2023 India has a network of 1014 Protected Areas covering a total of 1,75,169.42 km2 of geographical area of the country which is approximately 5.32%.
National Parks	106
Wildlife Sanctuaries	573
Conservation Reserves	115
Community Reserves	220
Total	1014

What are the wildlife management statues in India?

- **The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**- Protects wild animals, birds, and plants and establishes protected areas like national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.
- **The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980**- Regulates the diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes, ensuring conservation.
- **The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**- Provides a framework for environmental protection, including wildlife conservation.
- **The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA)** – Recognizes the rights of forest dwellers while ensuring conservation.

- **The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960**- Prevents cruelty to animals, which has implications for wildlife protection.
- **The National Green Tribunal (NGT) Act, 2010**- Establishes the NGT to address environmental and wildlife-related legal cases.

Global Conventions on Wildlife Management
• **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), 1973** – Regulates the international trade of endangered species. • **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), 1992** – Promotes conservation, sustainable use, and fair sharing of genetic resources. • **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, 1971** – Protects wetlands that are crucial for wildlife, especially migratory birds. • **Bonn Convention (Convention on Migratory Species), 1979** – Focuses on conserving migratory species and their habitats.

What are the challenges in wildlife conservation?

- **Low success rate in relocation** - Relocation efforts such as the recent cheetah relocation exercise, where eight cheetahs and three cubs died , have a 50 % of success.
- **Increase in endangered species** - As per the latest estimates of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, there are currently 73 “critically endangered” species of animals in the country, a sharp rise from 47 in 2011.
- **Reduction in budgetary allocations** - Project Tiger and Elephant, which were given separate funding earlier, have now been clubbed together.
- Funding for these projects declined by 23 % between 2019 and 2023.
- Development of Wildlife Habitats, saw a 20 % reduction in funding during the same period.
- **Human-animal conflict** - It causes harm to both humans and animals across the country.
- Between 2019 and 2023, elephant attacks caused nearly 2,800 deaths and human-tiger conflicts resulted in nearly 300 deaths.
- **Illegal wildlife trade** – Poaching and exotic pet trade poses significant challenges to wildlife management, including biodiversity loss, potential disease transmission, and ecosystem disruption.
- **Invasive Species** -The introduction of non-native species can disrupt ecosystems, outcompete native species, and spread diseases.

What are the prospects of private participation in wildlife management?

- **Increased Funding & Resources**- Private investments can provide better infrastructure, anti-poaching measures, and habitat restoration.
- **Efficient Management**- Private organizations may bring better technology, skilled workforce, and modern conservation methods.
- **Revenue Generation through Eco-Tourism**- Sustainable wildlife tourism can create jobs, boost the economy, and fund conservation efforts.

- **Reduced Government Burden**- Shifts financial and operational responsibilities from the government to private stakeholders.
- **Better Protection Against Poaching**- Private reserves often have stricter security measures and better enforcement against illegal activities.

What are the challenges?

- **Profit-Driven Exploitation**—Conservation may be prioritized over profit-making (hunting, tourism, or resource extraction).
- **Exclusion of Local Communities**- Indigenous and local communities may lose access to traditional lands, affecting their livelihoods.
- **Loss of Biodiversity Ethics**- Some private players may focus on commercially valuable species, ignoring overall ecosystem balance.
- **Limited Public Accountability**- Private firms may not be transparent in their operations, leading to unregulated exploitation.
- **Privatization of a Public Resource**- Wildlife is a shared national heritage, and private ownership may lead to restricted access and conflicts over land use.

What lies ahead?

- **Community Participation** – Involvement of local communities through eco-tourism and sustainable livelihoods can be encouraged.
- **Technology Integration** – Use AI, satellite tracking, and GIS mapping for monitoring and conflict prevention will help strengthen conservation measures.
- **Public Private Partnership** - Private philanthropy shall conserve, support research with the ultimate goal of strengthening state institutions and not just creating a private enterprise with little or no public accountability.

Reference

Indian Express | Wildlife management

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