Rhododendron Wattii

Why in News?

Researchers have identified the last tree which is standing in a popular trekking destination in Nagaland.

- **Rhododendron Wattii** – It is a ***small tree*** attaining a maximum height of 25 feet.

  Rhododendron *has more than 1,000 species of worldwide and the northeastern region has 129 of the 132 taxa recorded in India.*

- It is an *evergreen plant*, and leaf renewal occurs throughout the year.
- **1st identified by** – Sir George Watt from Nagaland's Japfu Hill range during his 1882-85 survey.
- **Located in** – Dzukou Valley, Nagpur which extends into the adjoining Manipur.
- **Habitat** – It grows on ***rocky hill slopes*** with other Rhododendron species, dwarf bamboo, mosses, and ferns.
- **Distribution** – Endemic to Manipur and Nagaland.



- **Seed** – They are fusiform and winged, which retain viability for about one year when stored at normal temperature and humidity.
- No seedlings were observed in its natural habitat.
- **Seeding capacity** – It produces numerous seeds after the flowers are pollinated mainly by the fire-tailed sunbird and bumble bees.
- **Leaves** – They are obovate to oblong, apex rounded, apiculate, base rounded, glabrous above, with a sparse whitish felted indumentum beneath.
- **Flowers** – It present in trusses of 18-25 flowers are tubular-campanulate, corolla 6-lobed, pink with darker flecks and purplish basal patches.

- **Flowering period** – End of February to April.
- **Fruit** – It is a capsule that is oblong, grooved, and dehisce from the top by longitudinal slits.
- **Fruiting period** – April to December.
- **Factors responsible for disappearance**
    - Poor seedling survivability
    - Anthropogenic activities
    - Wildfires in a Dzukou valley burnt for 2 weeks in 2020-21.
- **Conservation status – IUCN status** – *Vulnerable*.

References

1. The Hindu| Rhododendron Wattii Tree in Nagaland
2. Threatened Taxa| Rhododendron Wattii

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