Saltwater crocodiles

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

Why in News?

Recently, Odisha's saltwater crocodile population increased as per the 2026 annual census conducted in and around Bhitarkanika National Park.

- Saltwater (Estuarine) Crocodile is the ***largest of all crocodilians, and the largest reptile in the world.***
- **Scientific name –** Crocodylus porosus.
- **Habitat –** It shows a high tolerance for salinity, being found mostly in coastal waters or around rivers.
- It may also be found in freshwater rivers, and swamps.
- **Distribution –** Its largest population occurs in Odisha, especially the Bhitarkanika National Park & Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Major concentration in Kanika Wildlife Range, followed by Rajnagar, Mahakalpada (Mahanadi delta), and Gahirmatha ranges.
- It is also found in mangrove forests and coastal areas of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- **Characteristics–** Largest living reptile with adults exceeding 8 feet.
- Crocodiles measuring more than 6 feet were categorized as sub-adults and adults.
- **Diet –** Carnivorous in nature, as it feeds on fish and other aquatic and terrestrial animals.
- **Conservation Status –**
    - **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 –** Schedule I.
    - **IUCN Red List –** Least Concern
- **Threats –** Illegal hunting for its meat and eggs, as well as for its commercially valuable skin.
- Habitat loss and habitat alterations.
- Negative attitude towards the species makes conservation measures difficult to implement.



Quick Facts
• **World Crocodile Day** is celebrated on June 17. • The Government of India launched the Crocodile Conservation Project on April 1, 1975, to save ***all 3 of the India's native species of crocodilians*** - The gharial (gavialis gangeticus), - The saltwater crocodile (crocodylus porosus), - The mugger (crocodylus palustris)

References

1. The Hindu | Odisha's saltwater crocodile
2. The Times of India | Saltwater Crocodile

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