

Striped Hyenas and India's Clean

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Environment

Why in News?

A recent report underscores the ecological service provided by the striped hyena in removing livestock and wildlife carcasses across India's open grasslands and human-dominated rural landscapes.

Key Highlights of the Species

- **Sanitation & Disease Vector Control** - Striped hyenas act as primary scavengers, clearing decaying carcasses and organic waste that would otherwise harbor pathogens causing diseases like anthrax, rabies, and bovine tuberculosis.
- **Bone-Cracking Adaptation** - Powerful jaws and specialized dentition enable them to crack and consume heavy bones, recycling essential minerals (like calcium and phosphorus) back into the soil matrix.
- **High Gastric Acidity** - Highly acidic stomach juices (elevated levels of hydrochloric acid) allow hyenas to digest putrid, microbe-laden flesh without contracting infections.
- **Generational Denning Behavior** - Unlike many sympatric carnivores, hyenas utilize long-term, multi-generational subterranean burrows, caves, and rock crevices for raising cubs and sheltering during daylight hours.

Threats

- **Cultural Myths & Superstitions** - Frequently demonized in rural folklore as evil omens, "steeds of witches," or grave robbers, leading to deliberate persecution and retaliatory poisoning.
- **Loss of "Wasteland" Grasslands** - Open natural ecosystems (ONEs) and semi-arid scrublands are frequently classified as "wastelands," leading to rapid land diversion for real estate, solar parks, and industrial corridors.
- **Persecution & Linear Infrastructure** - High mortality rates from vehicle collisions on highways traversing scrubland habitats, open agricultural wells, and stray dog pack aggression.

STRIPED HYENAS and INDIA'S CLEAN-UP CREW

Nature's silent sanitation workers keeping ecosystems healthy. 



KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SPECIES



1. SANITATION & DISEASE VECTOR CONTROL

Striped hyenas act as primary scavengers, clearing decaying carcasses and organic waste that would otherwise harbor pathogens causing diseases like anthrax, rabies, and bovine tuberculosis.



2. BONE-CRACKING ADAPTATION

Powerful jaws and specialized dentition enable them to crack and consume heavy bones, recycling essential minerals (like calcium and phosphorus) back into the soil matrix.



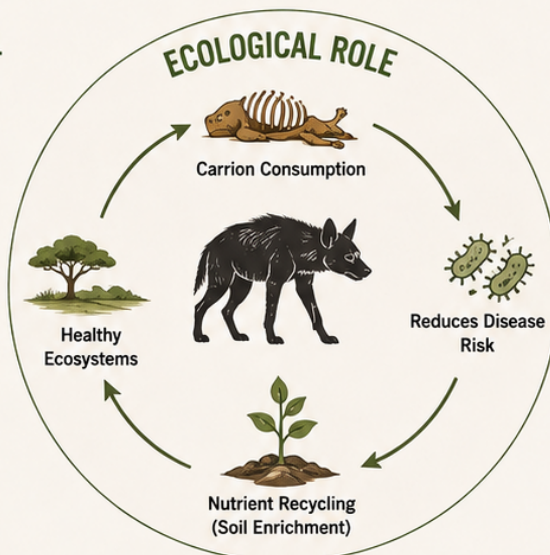
3. HIGH GASTRIC ACIDITY

Highly acidic stomach juices (elevated levels of hydrochloric acid) allow hyenas to digest putrid, microbe-laden flesh without contracting infections.



4. GENERATIONAL DENNING BEHAVIOR

Unlike many **sympatric** carnivores, hyenas utilize long-term, multi-generational subterranean burrows, caves, and rock crevices for raising cubs and sheltering during daylight hours.



Striped hyenas are nature's health workers—keeping our landscapes clean, safe and balanced.

THREATS TO THEIR SURVIVAL

1 CULTURAL MYTHS & SUPERSTITIONS



Frequently demonized in rural folklore as evil omens, "steeds of witches," or grave robbers, leading to deliberate persecution and retaliatory poisoning.

2 LOSS OF "WASTELAND" GRASSLANDS



Open natural ecosystems (ONEs) and semi-arid scrublands are frequently classified as "wastelands," leading to rapid land diversion for real estate, solar parks, and industrial corridors.

3 PERSECUTION & LINEAR INFRASTRUCTURE



High mortality rates from vehicle collisions on highways traversing scrubland habitats, open agricultural wells, and stray dog pack aggression.



Protect the hyena, protect the balance. Their survival ensures cleaner landscapes, healthier livestock, and safer communities.



Striped Hyena

Parameter	Details
Scientific Name	<i>Hyaena hyaena</i>
IUCN Red List Status	Near Threatened (NT)
Wildlife Protection Act, 1972	Protected under Schedule III
Primary Diet	Scavenger (carcasses, bones, offal), supplemented by fruits/vegetables

Scent Marking	Uses "hyena butter" (anal pouch secretion) for territorial communication
Key Habitats in India	Deccan Plateau (e.g., Saswad), Thar Desert, Gir, Velavadar, Pench

Reference

[The Hindu | Striped hyenas help keep India clean](#)

