Tokara Leaf Warbler

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Why in News?

Recently, Japan has officially identified a distinct bird species after 45 years, marking its first new bird discovery since the early 1980s.

- **Scientific Name** – *Phylloscopus amamiensis*.
- **Common Name** – Tokara Leaf Warbler.
- **Genus** – *Phylloscopus*.
- **Family** – Phylloscopidae (leaf warblers).
- **Habitat & Distribution –** Found exclusively in the Tokara Islands, Japan (endemic).

Features

- **Size** – Small songbird roughly 10–12 cm in length, weighing around 6–9 grams.
- **Appearance –** It is a "*cryptic species*," meaning it is nearly identical in appearance to Ijima's Leaf Warbler (by sight alone) but clearly distinct based on DNA analyses.
    - **Ijima's leaf warbler (**Phylloscopus ijimae) – A rare migratory songbird only found in the Izu Islands (endemic) south of Tokyo, Japan.
    - **IUCN –** Vulnerable.
- **Colouration –** Uniformly greyish crown (lacking darker or paler stripes), greener upperparts, and mainly whitish underparts with contrastingly pale yellow undertail-coverts.
- **Beak –** Pale orange lower mandible.
- **Wings & Tail –** Features narrow pale tips to the greater coverts, which form a thin, sometimes very indistinct, pale wing-bar.
- **Song** – Distinct vocalisation patterns; bird song analysis helped differentiate it from Ijima's leaf warbler.



- **Diet –** Insectivorous.
- **Nest Type** – Globular nests built from bamboo leaves, tree leaves, lined with feathers, roots, and pine needles.
- **Reproduction –** Oviparous (egg-laying).
- **Risk –** The bird is only known to breed on one island, making it vulnerable.
- **Threats** – Habitat loss, climate change and invasive species mean conservation is urgent.
- **Status –** Not yet formally assessed, but scientists recommend Vulnerable classification, like Ijima's Leaf Warbler.

Quick Fact

Tokara Islands
• **Location** – It is situated between Yakushima and Amami Oshima in southern Japan. • These islands are part of the *active Ryukyu Arc*, which is crucial for understanding subduction zones and the Pacific "Ring of Fire". • Active volcanoes like Mount Otake on Nakanoshima. • **Home to Tokara Horse/Pony** – A Japanese indigenous horse breed which is declared a *Natural Monument* under Japan's Cultural Properties Protection Law.

Reference

1. Indian Express | Tokara Leaf Warbler
2. Novataxa | Tokara Leaf Warbler

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