Tsarap Chu Conservation Reserve

***Prelims**: Current events of national and international importance | Environmental ecology | Bio-diversity*

Why in News?

Recently, the state government of Himachal Pradesh notified the Tsarap Chu Conservation Reserve under Section 36A(1) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

- The remote and cold *Spiti Valley of Himachal Pradesh* is now home to India's largest protected area.
- **Geographical spread** – It spreads over 1,585 square kilometres.
- It is bounded by important protection sites
  - **North** - Union Territory of Ladakh
  - **East** – The Kibber Wildlife Sanctuary extending up to Malang Nala and Lungar Lungpa
  - **South** - Kabjima Nala
  - **West** - Chandratal Wildlife Sanctuary
- It is also located at the ***confluence of the Unam River and Charap Nala*** and thus is the catchment area of the Charap Nala.
- **Ecological importance** – It is an important ***wildlife corridor*** connecting the Kibber and Chandratal sanctuaries, which is extremely important for biodiversity.

  *Tsarap Chu joins Darlaghat, Naina Devi, Potter Hill, and Shilli as **Himachal Pradesh's 5th conservation reserve**.*

- It is also *prime snow leopard habitat*, with a high density of snow leopards.

  *The snow leopard is often called the '**ghost of the mountains**'. It is a stealthy predator, found in snowy and rocky terrain at an altitude of 3,000 to 5,000 metres. The species is found in relatively high numbers in the Spiti Valley, and its presence reflects the health of the entire ecosystem.*

- Tibetan wolf, bharal (blue sheep), Himalayan ibex, kiang (wild ass), and the Tibetan argali are also found in the region.
- Rare bird species such as Rose Finch, Tibetan Raven, and Yellow-billed Chough enrich the ecology of the region.
- **Regulation** – It will be managed through a ***Conservation Reserve Management Committee***, which will also include representatives from local Panchayats.

- The committee will manage the area while balancing the needs of local communities and wildlife conservation priorities.
- **Significance** – Declaring this area as a conservation reserve will encourage activities such as wildlife conservation and research, trekking, eco-tourism, and photography, thereby providing a new *base for the livelihood of the local communities*.

Reference

Down To Earth| Notification of Tsarap Chu Conservation Reserve

