

Typhloperipatus Williamsoni

Prelims - *Current events of national importance| General issues on Environmental ecology, Bio-diversity.*

Mains (GS III) - *Conservation.*

Why in News?

A group of scientists has announced the rediscovery of a long-forgotten species of velvet worms (phylum Onychophora), which are among the oldest living fossils on the planet, after a gap of 111 years.

- It is an **ancient velvet worm species** (phylum Onychophora), one of the oldest living fossils in the world.

Onychophora

- It has an ancient lineage that dates back over 350 million years.
- It comprises only two families and fewer than 200 species, indicating a limited diversity.
- These organisms evolved alongside dinosaurs, and it is likely that many were lost during the mass extinction event.

- **First discovered in** - December 1911 in Siang Valley.
 - After that there have been no documented records of it from India.
- The molecular analysis of *T. williamsoni* revealed that South Asian onychophoras diverged from their
 - Neotropical counterparts, those found in Central and South America, as well as
 - Southern Mexico and the Caribbean approximately 237 million years ago.
- Notably, it was discovered that **Asian onychophoras** lack any relatives among the Australian species.
- This finding is particularly striking, as invertebrates from Southeast Asia and India typically share connections with those in Australia.
- Asian onychophora stands out as one of the rare exceptions to this relationship.



Reference

[The Hindu | Typhloperipatus williamsoni](#)

