Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972

Why in news?

Recently a man booked under the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 for “illegally” keeping and nursing an injured Sarus crane (Grus Antigone).

What is Sarus crane?

- The Sarus crane is a large non migratory crane found in parts of the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia and Australia.
- Sarus crane is also found in wetlands.
- Sarus crane is the state bird of Uttar Pradesh.
- Sarus crane is the world’s tallest flying bird.

Sarus Crane
• **IUCN Red List** - Vulnerable • **CITES -** Appendix I • **WPA, 1972 -** Schedule I • **Population** - 15,000-20,000 in India

What is the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972?

- **Aim** - It aims to conserve protected species in 2 ways
  - By prohibiting hunting
  - By protecting habitat through the creation and regulation of sanctuaries, national parks, reserves, etc.
- **Hunting** – It includes not just the act of killing or poisoning a wild or captive animal, but even an attempt to do so.
- Even injuring or destroying any part of the animal or its eggs or nests is an offence punishable under the Act.
- List includes capturing, coursing, snaring, trapping, driving or baiting any wild or captive animal.
- **Captive animal** -Any animal specified in Schedule I-IV which is captured or kept or bred in captivity.
- The Act prohibits capturing or hunting any species of animals listed under Schedules I-IV.

Schedules in WPA	Provisions

<table>
<tr><td>Schedule I and II</td><td>• Provides absolute protection and higher penalties for violations<table><tr><th>Schedule I</th><th>Schedule II</th></tr><tr><td>• Black Buck,
• Black-Necked Crane,
• Hooded Crane,
• Siberian White Crane,
• Wild Yak, and
• Andaman Wild Pig</td><td>• Common Langur
• Chameleon
• King Cobra</td></tr></table></td></tr>
<tr><td>Schedule III and IV</td><td><table><tr><th>Schedule III & IV</th></tr><tr><td>• Chital (spotted deer)
• Bharal (blue sheep)
• Hyena,
• Nilgai,
• Sambhar (deer),
• Sponges</td></tr></table>• Protected but the penalties are lower</td></tr>
<tr><td>Schedule V</td><td>• Animals listed under are legally considered vermin and may be hunted freely</td></tr>
<tr><td>Schedule VI</td><td>• The specified endemic plants in Schedule VI are prohibited from cultivation and planting.</td></tr>
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- **Offences** -Under the Act offences are considered as
  - Hunting, unauthorized possession, transport and trade.
  - Offences related to protected areas or habitat destruction.
- **Powers of the state government -** This act allows the State government to appoint a ***Chief Wildlife Warden*** alongside wildlife wardens, honorary wildlife wardens, and other officers and employees.
- The act empowers the State to constitute a ***State Board for Wild Life*** consisting of
  - The Chief Minister as Chairperson,
  - The Minister in charge of Forests and Wildlife as the Vice Chairperson
  - At least 3 members of the State legislature.
- **Penalties** – Any person who contravenes any provision of the Act shall be punished with up to 3 years imprisonment or fine up to Rs. 25,000 rupees or both.

In 42nd Amendment Act, the subject of "Forests and Protection of Wild Animals and Birds" was transferred from State to Concurrent List.

What is the 2022 Amendment to the WPA?

- **Schedules and increasing penalties** – It brings changes in reducing the number of Schedules and increasing penalties.
- **CITES** – It seeks to implement the provisions of "Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora" (CITES).
- **Rationalizing schedules** – It seeks to reduce the number of schedules from VI to IV whereby Schedule V for vermin or animals that destroy food crops will be done away

with.

- **More powers to Center** - It accords greater powers to the Centre concerning the export, import, regulation, prohibition, and trade of plant or animal species, through a designated Management Authority.
- **Conservation reserves -** Central government may declare areas adjacent to national parks and sanctuaries as a conservation reserve
- **Invasive alien species** -The central government may authorise an officer to seize and dispose the invasive species.

To know about *Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill 2021*

References

The Indian Express | Sarus Crane

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