# World Crocodile Day

***Prelims: Current events of National Importance and International Importance | Conservation***

## Why in News?

*World Crocodile Day, celebrated recently, commemorated the 50th anniversary of India's Crocodile conservation project.*

- World Crocodile Day is celebrated annually on ***June 17th*** to raise awareness about the conservation of crocodiles and alligators.
- It is an initiative of the Belize-based Crocodile Research Alliance.

## India's Crocodile Conservation Project

- **Started in -** 1975 in Odisha's Bhitarkanika National Park.
- **Species in India -** The 3 main species of crocodiles are found in India,
  - Saltwater crocodile (Crocodylus porosus),
  - Mugger crocodile (Crocodylus palustris), and
  - Gharial (Gavialis gangeticus).
- **Role of Odisha in Conservation -** Odisha is the ***only State*** to host the wild populations of all three native species gharial, saltwater crocodile and mugger.
- Incubation and rearing centres were immediately established in Odisha for gharials at Tikarpada on the Mahanadi River and saltwater crocodiles at Dangamal in Bhitarkanika.
- Uttar Pradesh followed with centres at Kukrail (Lucknow) and Katarnia Ghat along the Girwa River.
- India holds nearly ***80% of the global wild gharial*** population.
- **Nesting sites -** National Chambal Sanctuary (spanning three States), Katarnia Ghat Wildlife Sanctuary, Gandak River, Corbett Tiger Reserve, and Son Gharial Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh.
- The saltwater crocodile population has recovered in the wild, with Bhitarkanika in Odisha holding the largest share, followed by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Sundarbans.
- The mugger crocodile, once severely depleted in numbers, has now reclaimed most of its historical range.

**Reference**

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