

INDIAN LEOPARD

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Context:

The Indian leopard (*Panthera pardus fusca*) is suspected to have declined 24.5 per cent over the last three generations, according to the latest assessment by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Background:

The decline is suspected from range loss and inferred based on actual or potential levels of exploitation.

About Indian Leopard :

1. The Indian leopard (*Panthera pardus fusca*) is a subspecies of the leopard (*P. pardus*) widely distributed on the Indian subcontinent.
2. Nine subspecies of the leopard have been recognized, and they are distributed across Africa and Asia.
3. The leopard is the smallest of the big cats, and known for its ability to adapt in a variety of habitats.
4. Melanism is a common occurrence in leopards, wherein the entire skin of the animal is black in colour, including its spots. A melanistic leopard is often called black panther or jaguar, and mistakenly thought to be a different species.
5. A nocturnal animal, the leopard hunts by night. It feeds on smaller species of herbivores found in its range, such as the chital, hog deer and wild boar.
6. An extremely agile creature, it spends most of its resting time on top of trees, using land only to move locations, but rarely to rest or nap.
7. It is classified as Near Threatened by IUCN.
8. It is Listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and included in Appendix I of CITES.