

India's Wildlife Conservation Strategy

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Context

- India is one of the **17 megadiverse countries**, home to **over 7% of the world's biodiversity**. Wildlife conservation plays a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance and sustainable development.
 - The **National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)**, chaired by the Prime Minister, is the apex advisory body for conservation policies and projects.
 - On his visit to **Gir National Park, Gujarat**, **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** chaired the **7th meeting of the NBWL** and announced several key initiatives to enhance wildlife protection and habitat conservation.
 - These measures focus on **species conservation, habitat management, technological interventions, and community participation**.
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Major Announcements in Wildlife Conservation

1. First-Ever Riverine Dolphin Estimation

- PM Modi launched **India's first comprehensive report on riverine dolphin populations**.
- Key findings:
 - **Total dolphin population: 6,327**

- **Survey coverage: 8,500 km** across **28 rivers** in **8 states**
 - **State-wise ranking: Uttar Pradesh (highest), followed by Bihar, West Bengal, and Assam**
 - **Conservation measures:**
 - Promotion of **community participation** in dolphin protection
 - **Exposure visits for school children** to raise awareness
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2. Strengthening Asiatic Lion Conservation

- **16th Asiatic Lion Population Estimation** will be conducted in **2025** to monitor conservation progress.
 - **Barda Wildlife Sanctuary** will be developed for:
 - **Prey augmentation** to support lion dispersal
 - **Habitat restoration** to reduce human-wildlife conflicts
 - **Use of technology:**
 - **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and **digital documentation** to track population trends
 - Expansion of conservation strategies to other national parks
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3. Expansion of Cheetah Reintroduction Program

- India's **cheetah reintroduction project**, started in **Kuno National Park**, will now extend to:

- **Gandhisagar Sanctuary (Madhya Pradesh)**
 - **Banni Grasslands (Gujarat)**
 - Objectives:
 - Strengthen **biodiversity restoration efforts**
 - Establish a **sustainable cheetah population**
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4. New Wildlife Protection Measures

National Referral Centre for Wildlife

- Foundation stone laid in **Junagadh** for India's **first referral centre** focused on:
 - **Wildlife disease management**
 - **Health monitoring of endangered species**
 - **Advanced veterinary care research**

Centre of Excellence for Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation

- To be set up at **SACON, Coimbatore** to address:
 - **Rapid Response Team** deployment
 - **AI-driven surveillance** for wildlife movement tracking
 - **Community training programs** for conflict prevention

Use of Remote Sensing and AI

- **Geospatial mapping, AI, and machine learning** will be used for:

- **Forest fire detection and control**
 - **Wildlife movement monitoring**
 - **Human-animal conflict mitigation**
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5. Strengthening Conservation of Endangered Species

Gharial Conservation Project

- Aimed at **reviving declining gharial populations**, which have suffered due to **habitat loss and pollution**.

National Great Indian Bustard Conservation Action Plan

- Focus on **population recovery** and **habitat protection** for the **critically endangered** Great Indian Bustard.
- Measures include:
 - **Protection from power lines**
 - **Expansion of breeding programs**

Tiger Conservation Beyond Protected Areas

- Special initiative to support **tiger conservation outside protected reserves**.
 - Emphasis on:
 - **Mitigating human-wildlife conflict in buffer zones**
 - **Ensuring habitat connectivity for tiger dispersal**
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Leveraging Technology for Conservation

- **Remote sensing and AI** to monitor wildlife movement and manage conflicts.
 - **Collaboration between Forest Survey of India (FSI) and BISAG-N** for:
 - **Advanced forest fire detection** using space technology
 - **Real-time tracking of ecological changes**
 - **AI-driven documentation** of traditional conservation knowledge to preserve indigenous ecological practices.
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Role of Local Communities in Conservation

- PM Modi highlighted the **sixfold increase in community reserves** in the last decade.
 - Government aims to expand this model by:
 - **Empowering tribal and rural populations** in wildlife conservation
 - **Enhancing eco-tourism infrastructure** to balance conservation with economic development
 - **Improved accessibility to wildlife sanctuaries** to promote sustainable tourism and local livelihoods.
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Conclusion

- The announcements made by PM Modi represent a **significant step forward in India's wildlife conservation strategy**.
- Focus areas include:

- **Species protection and habitat restoration**
 - **Technology integration in conservation**
 - **Community-driven conservation initiatives**
 - These measures align with India's commitment to **biodiversity preservation and ecological sustainability**, reinforcing its position as a **global leader in wildlife conservation**.
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