

FUTURE TENSE

Perils for the dancing deer

Tucked in the North-eastern state of Manipur is Loktak lake, which is home to a curious herd of deer. These mammals earn their distinction not just because they are found nowhere else in the world, but also because their home and natural habitat is a floating mass of vegetation on the lake – the Keibul Lamjao National

Park (KLNPN), the world's only floating national park. But the deer are not happy anymore in their one-of-a-kind home. Natural calamities and man-made devastations are rapidly changing the composition of the critical biomass, leaving the deer with little to live on. Chances are, the deer as well as their unique home may sink into oblivion pretty soon. Sangai deer of Manipur are known by many names – Eld's deer, brow-antlered deer, and the scientific name *Cervus eldi eldi*. It is a critically endangered species, according to IUCN.

What about Kutch's flamingos?

Travel through the Rann of Kutch in the winter and the eyes see nothing but barren, white, cracked land with not a single patch of green to signal life and break the



STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL The dancing deer of Manipur is an endangered species. GETTY IMAGES

monotony. But come here during the monsoon and the extremity of the morphological changes can easily amaze and astound. As sea, river and rainwater floods the marshland, the whole area is transformed into a huge inland sea. It is to this unusual land that flamingos of cold countries migrate to each year to increase

their brood and spread their speck of flaming pink in the desolate salty marshlands. But with development plans underway it is the same congregation that may cease to exist in this still untarnished region on earth. The Gujarat State Public Works Department (GSPWD) has submitted a proposal to build a road across the inhospitable terrains of Kutch. Conservationists are a worried lot.

Western Ghats ecosystem

The Western Ghats region is the lifegiver environment for 1,146 species of fishes, molluscs, odonates and aquatic plants. However, in the tussle between economic progress and ecological sustenance, the conservation of this unique region is being overlooked. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) re-

ports that almost all freshwater species found in these parts are showing tendencies of extinction. The IUCN Global Species Programme's Freshwater Biodiversity Unit, in collaboration with the Zoo Outreach Organisation (ZOO), conducted the Western Ghats Freshwater Biodiversity Assessment to review the global conservation status and distributions of 1,146 freshwater species. Experts found that over 16 per cent of the fishes and other species found in the Western Ghats are threatened to become extinct.

Stinging reality

There are 20,000 butterfly species known in the world of which approximately 1,300 are found in India. According to IUCN, more than a hundred of these species are threatened and face extinction. World-

wide, a sudden decline in the population of honey bees too has been felt and conservationists still do not have any clues over the reason for the disappearance.

India's very own Red List

In Karnataka alone, as per IUCN, 183 plants and 40 animal species are on the brink of extinction. Unique species like the lion-tailed macaque have no trees to leap to with human beings eating into their turf. It is a similar story for 246 plant species and almost 172 species of animals in the rest of India. In a bid to strengthen its efforts at conservation of endangered plant and animal species, India has decided to initiate the country specific Red List of endangered species by the end of next year.

(Compiled by AG)