



Press Brief

New Delhi, March 9, 2011

The Ministry of Environment and Forests in collaboration with the Zoological Survey of India, has released a comprehensive document on 'Critically Endangered Animal Species of India'. For the first time, information on these species has been brought out in a comprehensive and visually appealing format.

The current extinction crisis has placed many species in the “Critically Endangered” category. It is the highest risk category assigned by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, where all available evidence indicates an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild. The IUCN framework provides an objective evaluation that can be applied consistently by scientists and facilitates comparison across widely different groups of animals. This process has led to a better and more robust understanding of the level of endangerment of individual species.

There are three Centrally Sponsored Schemes – Project Tiger, Project Elephant and Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats. One of the components under the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats provides for recovery programmes to save critically endangered species and their habitats. The preparation of 'Recovery Plans' involves assessing the current status of species and preparation of a year-wise five year plan in collaboration with a reputed scientific institute. Out of the 57 critically endangered species, the Ministry of Environment and Forests has taken up interventions for nine species and their respective habitats. Recovery programmes are ongoing for the Leatherback turtles and marine ecosystems, Malabar Civet and low elevation moist forests of the west coast, Floricans and grasslands, four species of critically endangered Vultures, and the Jerdon's Courser. The first meeting of the National Tri-State Coordination Committee for the conservation of the Gharial was recently held on the 19th of February, and a recovery programme is being formulated by leading wildlife scientists from across the country.

There is an urgent need to better understand the ecological needs of the other critically endangered species in India, and design relevant scientific conservation interventions. For instance, after 135 years the Chalazodes Bubble-Nest Frog (*Raorchestes chalazodes*) was recently re-discovered in February 2011. In addition, there are many other species that have been assigned as data deficient and not listed in any of these categories. More studies are needed to obtain basic information to assess the status of these species.