

Indian Gharial

By IASToppers | 2024-02-26 15:55:00



Key facts

Indian Gharial

After 75 years, Indian Gharial spotted in Greater Kaziranga.



[ref-wikipedia]

About Indian Gharial:

- The gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*), also known as gavial or fish-eating crocodile, is a crocodylian in the **family Gavialidae** and among the **longest of all living crocodylians**.
- **Diet:** Gharials are primarily piscivores, meaning they mainly feed on fish.

Characteristics:

- The gharial is **olive-coloured**, with adults being darker than young, which have dark brown cross

bands and speckles.

- Adult males have a **distinct boss at the end of the snout**, which resembles an **earthenware pot** known as a **ghara**, hence the name "**gharial**".
- The gharial has a **distinctive long, slender snout** that sets it apart from other crocodilian species.
 - The snout is **adapted for catching fish**.

Habitat:

- It is the most thoroughly aquatic crocodilian, and leaves the water only for basking and building nests on **moist sandbanks**.
- They prefer **deep, clear, fast-flowing waters with steep, sandy banks**.
- They historically ranged from rivers of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan.
- They are now mostly found in the **fresh waters of the Himalayan Rivers** of India and Nepal.
- The surviving population can be found within the **tributaries of the Ganges river system: Girwa** (Uttar Pradesh), Son (Madhya Pradesh), Ramganga (Uttarakhand), Gandak (Bihar), **Chambal** (Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan) and **Mahanadi** (Orissa).

Threats

- Gharial populations have declined by as much as 98% since the 1940s due to human activities like hunting, dam-making, and illegal sand mining from riverbanks.
- These activities **destroy their habitats and nests**, forcing them to abandon their basking sites.

Conservation:

- Gharial reserves in India are located in the states of **Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan**.
- **Conservation status:** IUCN (Critically Endangered), Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (Schedule I), and CITES (Appendix I).