

Wildlife Protection Act 1972

[UPSC Notes]

Wildlife Protection Act (WPA) was enacted by the Government of India in 1972 to safeguard wild animals, birds, and plants, with an aim to ensure the ecological and environmental security of India. Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 UPSC topic finds its relevance under the environment and ecology sections of the IAS Syllabus. In this post, we have covered all the facts, history, features, and related information to the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

Candidates preparing for the UPSC exam must go through this Wildlife Protection Act 1972 UPSC notes to get a better grasp on this particular act.

Wildlife Protection Act 1972 Constitutional Provisions

- Forests and Protection of Wild Animals and Birds was shifted from State to Concurrent List by the 42nd Amendment Act, 1976.
- Article 48A of the DPSP was also added by the 42nd Amendment Act which directs the State to improve and protect the environment and safeguard wildlife and forests.
- Under the Fundamental Duty, Article 51A imposes a duty on the citizens every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment.

Wildlife Protection Act 1972 in India

- Wildlife management has been seen in India for a long time as Vedas contain hymns in praise of animals and have linked animals with Gods or Goddess as a means of conservation of wildlife.
- The British administration in India brought about reforms in the wildlife conservation efforts in the wake of the large-scale elimination of wildlife due to hunting.
- Important legislations such as the Indian Forest Act of 1878, the Indian fisheries Act of 1897 and the Wild birds and Animals Protection Act 1912 were introduced by the British administration.
- The most comprehensive wildlife conservation law of India, the Wildlife Protection Act was passed only in 1972.

Wildlife Protection Act 1972 - Background

- After India became independent, the advent of automobiles and long-range rifles aggravated the decline of India's wildlife.
- The government with a view to protecting crops from the clutches of wild animals issued guns freely to farmers which resulted in large-scale destruction of wild animals.

- Between 1947 and 1951, there was large-scale destruction of wildlife in India in all the parts of the country as poachers indulged in the indiscriminate shooting of wild animals.
- As a result, the Cheetah became extinct in India in 1951.
- Also, there were only five national parks in the country before WPA was introduced, hence there was an urgent need for comprehensive legislation aimed at the protection of India's flora and fauna.

Salient Features of Wildlife Protection Act 1972

- The Act mandates the prohibition of hunting of wild animals in general while the hunting of wild animals would be permitted in certain cases for the purpose of education and scientific research.
- The Act also prohibits picking, uprooting, etc. of a specified plant species.
- The Act provided for the declaration and protection of protected areas such as Sanctuaries and National Parks.
- The Act prohibits the trade in trophies, animals, and animal articles from certain animals.
- The Act says that if an animal is hunted in a sanctuary or National Park, such animal or any animal article shall be the property of the Government.
- **Powers of State government:** State Government can declare an area as a Sanctuary or as a National Park for the purpose of protecting the wildlife and the environment in the region as the region is of ecological, faunal, floral, or zoological importance.
- **Powers of Central government:** If the State Government transfers any area under its control to the Central Government, then the centre can declare such areas as Sanctuary or National Park.

Important Bodies Established Through Wildlife Protection Act 1972

- **Central Zoo Authority (CZA)**
 - Central Zoo Authority was established in 1992 under the Ministry of Environment & Forests
 - Chairperson: Minister of Environment, Forest & Climate Change
 - The Authority recognises or derecognises zoos in India.
 - It mandates basic standards for animals in zoos and evaluates and assesses the functioning of zoos in India.
- **NATIONAL TIGER CONSERVATION AUTHORITY (NTCA)**
 - NTCA was established in December 2005 under the WPA, 1972.
 - Chairperson: Minister of Environment, Forest & Climate Change
 - NTCA has been mandated to strengthen tiger conservation in India by assessing various conservation programmes and providing recommendations

- **Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)**
 - WCCB is a statutory body established in 2006 under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
 - WCCB has its headquarters in New Delhi.
 - WCCB is tasked with the collection of intelligence related to organized wildlife crime activities and advise the Government on issues relating to wildlife crimes
- **National Board for Wild Life (NBWL)**
 - NBWL is the apex body for all wildlife-related matters in India.
 - Chairperson: Prime Minister
 - The board is tasked with framing policies and advising the Governments on means of promoting wildlife conservation and effectively controlling poaching and illegal trade of wildlife and carrying out an environmental impact assessment of various projects and activities on wildlife
 - NBWL also prepares and publishes a status report at least once in two years on wildlife in the country.

Wildlife Protection Act Schedules

Check all the 6 schedules under Wildlife Protection Act 1972.

Schedules	Description	Important Species
Schedule 1	Endangered species are included and are accorded the highest level of protection. Hunting of species under this Schedule is prohibited except under threat to human life.	Caracal, Cheetah, Clouded leopard, Golden langur, Indian lion, Lion-tailed macaque, Pygmy hog, Rhinoceros, Tiger, Gharial, Great Indian Hornbill, Great Indian Bustard, etc.
Schedule 2	Species in this list are given high protection. Their trade is prohibited. And cannot be hunted except under threat to human life.	Bison, Dolphins, Flying squirrels, Himalayan Brown bear, Indian Elephant, Dhole, Leopard, Nilgiri Thar, etc.
Schedule 3I	This list includes protected species but the penalty for any violation is less compared to the first two schedules.	Chinkara, Chital, Himalayan Ibex, Hyaena, Nilgai, Sambar, Sloth bear, etc.
Schedule 4	Species included are not endangered but hunting is prohibited.	Desert fox, Barbets, Otters, few Birds, etc.
Schedule 5	This list includes vermin species that can be hunted without any punishment	Mice, Fruit bats, Jackal, Common crow, Common fox, etc.

Schedule 6I	This schedule provides regulations for the cultivation of specific endemic plants and limits their possession, sale and transportation, which could be carried out only with prior permission.	Pitcher plant, Slipper orchids, Blue vanda, Red vanda, Kuth, etc.
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