



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
Only IAS Academy by Grandson of "Perunthalaivar Kamarajar"

Dugong

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Why is in news? Taking the lead in saving the sea cows that battle for survival

Tamil Nadu has taken the lead in saving the dugongs by **setting up the nation's first Dugong Conservation Reserve**.

According to the estimates, there are only 240 dugongs left in the whole country, and the majority of them are in the Palk Bay, especially off the coast off Thanjavur and Pudukkottai districts.

The State Government has notified 448 square kilometres as the conservation reserve for dugongs.

Dugong or the sea cow is the **State animal of Andaman & Nicobar Islands**.

This **endangered marine species** survive on **sea grass and other aquatic vegetation** found in the area.

It is the **only herbivorous mammal that is strictly marine** and is the only extant species in the family Dugongidae.

Dugongs are usually about three-meter long and weigh about 400 kg.

Elephants are considered to be their closest relatives. However, unlike dolphins and other cetaceans, sea cows have two nostrils and no dorsal fin.

Distributed in shallow tropical waters in the Indo-Pacific region, in India, they are found in the Gulf of Kutch, Gulf of Mannar, Palk Bay, and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Dugongs are long-living animals, that have a low reproductive rate, long generation time, and high investment in each offspring.

Causes of extinction: Having being declared vulnerable, the marine animal calls for conserving efforts.

Studies have suggested the reasons for the extinction of the animal such as **slow breeding rate, fishing, and the loss of habitat**. They are also known to suffer due to **accidental entanglement and drowning in gill-nets**.

Dugongs are protected in India under **Schedule 1 of the Indian Wildlife Act 1972** which bans the killing and purchasing of dugong meat.

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