

Wildlife Week, 2018 with the Theme, “Big Cats-Predators Under Threat”: A Need of hour to Protect them through Collective Action

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India is 7th largest country in the world which occupies approximately 2.5 % of the total global geographical area that supports 16% of the planet's population and 18% of the livestock population. It is to mention that India is one of the 17 mega- diverse countries of the World and stands 8th in the world ranking of mega – biodiversity countries and has 4 global biodiversity hotspots out of 34. Our country has near about 0.5 million plant species covering about 11 per cent of the world's biota and 6 percent of worlds known flowering plants (0.175 millions). Whereas, faunal diversity may be over 0.81 million which represents about 6.5 percent of world's fauna. As many as twenty nine various types of endangered species are found in India.

The big cats such as Lion, Tiger, Leopard and Jaguars and their small cousins globally are considered as symbol of power, majesty and physical prowess. Big cats - as an apex predator, by conserving these species, we can protect and save a whole complex web of life that exists below them on the food chain. The conservation of Big cat can also secure essential resources for people – for example, snow leopard habitat alone forms the headwaters of rivers that support more than 3 billion people. Big cats can also bring a wealth of benefits to local communities such as alternate livelihoods, water security and much more.

As per World Wide Fund report, a single tigress in India was responsible for bringing in over 100 million dollars of revenue in the first 10 years of tigress life, through providing tourism facility to tourist and various taxes such as park fees, lodging, taxes and services fees. Due to this over 0.03 million local people got employment. As per the report of the Global Tiger Initiative, tigers are indicators of the healthy ecosystem on the earth. Tigers are the dominant predators of the ecosystem; hence the population of the herbivores controlled ecologically by the dominant predator the tiger which helps to keep the balance of ecology. However, the

reduction in the tiger population could lead to a rise in herbivore population, which may potentially deplete the forest resources by felling of the trees and plants.

The forests are the home of the wildlife and potentially play important role in conservation and preservation of the earth, that we live in. However, worldwide these big cats are facing serious threats for their survival, most of which are caused by human activities from habitat loss, poaching, human –wildlife conflict and climate change. The population of these cats are declining at alarming rate, the world lost over 90% of its tigers in the 20th century, while lion population have fallen 40% in just last two decades. Now, it has become endangered and may become extinct in near future if not taken action. However, the natural population of these beautiful creatures is declining at alarming rate, which has huge implications for the ecosystem that we inhabit, as these cats have very important role to play in ecosystem. Action by humans may not be a better alternative for the large carnivores and the role played by them as, these large carnivores are an essential part of an ecosystem's biodiversity

Wildlife Week is celebrated throughout the country during 2 to 8 October every year by the government with a view to promote the conservation, protection and preservation of the wildlife especially wild animal life and to create awareness of wildlife conservation among people. Therefore, this year India is celebrating the Wildlife week, 2018 with the theme, “Big Cats-Predators under threat “and taken action towards global commitments. Wildlife Week was initiated in 1952 with the objective to create awareness among the people to carry on the long-term goal of conservation and protection of the lives of wildlife through significant action. Further, the Indian Government formed an Indian Board of Wild Life which aim is to increase the awareness with respect to the preservation of wildlife.

The apex of the food chain, the big cats are vanishing, and it is on the way to be extinct, there is immediate need to take collective action for the conservation and protection of Wildlife. Being citizen of India, it is our moral responsibility to participate in the government's mission and support government to save, protect and conserve our forest resources and wildlife resources as well, not only to think and act for a week but it should remain continuous collective action.

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