DATE: 28 JUNE 2026

1 Green Sea Turtles (Source: The Hindu)

Distribution:

- Found in tropical and subtropical waters across the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans.
- Commonly nests on sandy beaches and feeds in shallow coastal waters, lagoons, and seagrass meadows.

Ecological Importance:

- Acts as a keystone species by maintaining seagrass bed productivity, ensuring the stability of marine ecosystems.
- Supports nutrient cycling between marine and coastal ecosystems.

Threats Faced:

- Coastal development, pollution, fishing net entanglement, climate change, and illegal egg collection.
- Rising sea surface temperatures.

Conservation Status:

- **IUCN Red List**: Least Concern
- **CITES**: Appendix I – International trade prohibited.
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**: Schedule I

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2 Elephants and Ecological Significance of Elephants (Source: The Hindu)

ELEPHANTS

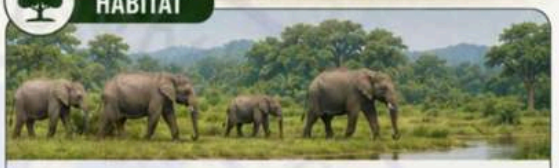
GIANTS OF THE EARTH

Elephants are the largest land mammals on Earth. They are highly intelligent, emotional and social animals living in matriarchal herds.

GENERAL MATTER

- Elephants are the largest land mammals on Earth.
- **Two types:**
  1. **African Elephant** *(Loxodonta africana)*
  2. **Asian Elephant** *(Elephas maximus)*
- Led by a **matriarch**: the oldest and most experienced female guides and makes decisions for the herd.

HABITAT



- Inhabit tropical and subtropical regions.
- Found in forests, grasslands, scrublands and wetlands.
- Require large areas, access to water and movement corridors for seasonal migrations.

DISTRIBUTION IN INDIA (ASIAN ELEPHANT)

Elephants are found in several states, mainly in the forests of the Eastern, Northeastern and Southern India.

Elephant Distribution

STATE-WISE ESTIMATED ELEPHANT POPULATION
(As per All India Elephant Estimation 2022)

State	Estimated Population
Karnataka	6,604
Assam	5,719
Kerala	3,054
Tamil Nadu	2,806
Arunachal Pradesh	2,679
West Bengal	1,971
Odisha	1,694
Jharkhand	1,227
Chhattisgarh	1,116
Andhra Pradesh	1,014
Telangana	890
Nagaland	333
Others (Sikkim, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura, etc.)	266
TOTAL INDIA: 27,312	

(Source: MoEFCC – All India Elephant Estimation 2022)

HIGHEST DISTRIBUTION
KARNATAKA
6,604 Elephants
(24.17% of India's total)

THREATS

- **Habitat Loss and Fragmentation**
  Deforestation, agriculture expansion, mining and infrastructure development reduce habitat and block movement.
- **Human–Elephant Conflict**
  Crop raiding, property damage and human casualties lead to retaliatory killings.
- **Poaching and Illegal Trade**
  Hunting for ivory and other body parts continues in some regions.
- **Infrastructure Hazards**
  Electrocution, train/road collisions and falling into open wells.
- **Climate Change**
  Altered rainfall patterns and extreme events affect habitat, water availability and food.

CONSERVATION STATUS

IUCN Red List
EN
Endangered
(Asian Elephant)

National Heritage Animal of India

- Protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 – Schedule I
- Project Elephant launched in 1992 for protection and conservation.
- Elephant Corridors identified to ensure safe movement between habitats.
- Community participation, early warning systems and conflict mitigation are key strategies.

CITES STATUS

CITES
Appendix I

- All populations of both African and Asian elephants are listed in Appendix I of CITES.
- International trade in wild-caught elephants or their parts and derivatives is prohibited, except in exceptional circumstances.
- Trade in items from captive-bred elephants is also strictly regulated.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Elephants have excellent memory and can remember people, places and routes for years.
- They show strong family bonds, empathy and cooperation.
- Elephants are among the most intelligent animals on Earth.
- They can drink 100–200 litres of water in a day.
- Elephants can travel 50–100 km in search of food, water and mates.

LET US PROTECT THESE MAGNIFICENT BEINGS AND THEIR HABITATS FOR A BETTER FUTURE.

DATE: 28 JUNE 2026

Ecological Significance of Elephant Population

- **Keystone Species**: Elephants are considered keystone species because their activities have a disproportionately large impact on maintaining ecosystem structure and biodiversity.
- **Ecosystem Engineers**: By uprooting trees, breaking branches, and clearing vegetation, elephants create grasslands, open forest patches, and diverse habitats for many other species.
- **Seed Dispersal**: They consume fruits and disperse seeds over long distances through dung, aiding forest regeneration and maintaining plant diversity.
- **Nutrient Cycling**: Elephant dung enriches soil with nutrients, supports insects, fungi, and microorganisms, and improves soil fertility.
- **Water Resource Creation**: During dry seasons, elephants dig for underground water, creating waterholes that become vital sources for many animals.
- **Habitat Connectivity**: Their regular movement creates trails through dense forests, facilitating the movement of smaller mammals and enhancing ecological connectivity.
- **Maintaining Forest Structure**: By feeding selectively on woody vegetation, elephants regulate tree density, prevent excessive forest thickening, and maintain a balance between forests and grasslands.
- **Support for Biodiversity**: The habitats modified by elephants provide food, shelter, and breeding grounds for birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects, and mammals.
- **Carbon Sequestration**: By promoting the growth and regeneration of large, carbon-rich tree species through seed dispersal, elephants contribute indirectly to carbon storage and climate regulation.
- **Indicator of Ecosystem Health**: Healthy elephant populations indicate well-connected forests with sufficient food, water, and habitat, reflecting the overall health of the ecosystem.