

**24– 09 – 2023**

- News: Tamil Nadu, Kerala to join hands to count endangered Nilgiri tahr
- After launching Project Nilgiri Tahr last year for the conservation of the State animal, Tamil Nadu is now working on a standardised protocol to count the endangered population of southern India's only mountain ungulate.
- The Tamil Nadu Forest Department will also propose to its Kerala counterpart to conduct a synchronised census, as the animal is only found in select habitats in the two States.
- For the first time, drones may be used in the census, as the Nilgiri tahr prefers montane grasslands, with steep and rocky terrains at an altitude between 300 metres and 2,600 metres above sea level.
- There are believed to be a little over 3,100 of the animals living in highly fragmented habitats in the Western Ghats in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, ranging between the Nilgiris in the north and the Kanniyakumari hills in the south, according to a 2015 study by WWF India.

## **Nilgiri Tahr**

- Nilgiri Tahr is also known as **Nilgiri Ibex**.
- It has been listed as “**Endangered**” by IUCN.

- It has been listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 which provides absolute protection and offences under these are prescribed the highest penalties
- The Adult males of Nilgiri Tahr species develop a light grey area or “saddle” on their backs and are hence called “Saddlebacks”.
- It is the state animal of Tamil Nadu.
- It is found in open montane grassland habitat of rain forests ecoregion.
- It is endemic to the Nilgiri Hills and the southern portion of the Western Ghats in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
- Threats faced by Nilgiri tahr include Habitat loss (mainly from domestic livestock and spread of invasive plants), poaching, populations of these animals are small and isolated, making them vulnerable to local extinction and Climate Change.