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Elusive dancing frogs of Western Ghats a threatened species: Report

The alarming statistics were revealed in the second Global Amphibian Assessment, a comprehensive analysis of 8,011 species worldwide, conducted by over 1,000 experts, according to a press statement.

 **Mrityunjay Bose** | DHNS

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Image of a dancing frog of Western Ghats. Credit: Special Arrangement

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... from assessing a comprehensive list of 8,011 species on the
brink of extinction!

The alarming statistics were revealed in the second Global Amphibian Assessment, a comprehensive analysis of 8,011 species worldwide, conducted by over 1,000 experts, according to a press statement.

Led by Re:wild, Synchronicity Earth, and the IUCN SSC Amphibian Specialist Group, the study has indicated that climate change is one of the biggest and most direct threats to amphibians, alongside habitat loss, disease, fire, invasive species and over-exploitation.

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Of the 426 species assessed in India, 139 were found to be threatened (which includes Critically Endangered, Endangered, and Vulnerable as per IUCN Red List criteria in the sequence of them being closer to extinction).

The Western Ghats, a biodiversity hotspot spread across Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu is rich in amphibian diversity.

Among these three states, Kerala has 178 species of which 84 are threatened, Tamil Nadu is next with 128 species of which 54 are threatened and Karnataka is in third place with 100 species of which 30 are threatened.

Sixty-four species of amphibians found in the Western Ghats are on the list of endangered species.

Among these, the endemic family Micrixalidae having the dancing frog genus: *Micrixalus* is the most threatened frog genus in India.

Coming in a close second is the Nyctibatrachidae (night frogs) with 83.9 per cent of its species threatened across the southern states of Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.

"I am happy that this comprehensive assessment is now complete but it is concerning to see that amphibians are the second most declining taxa in the world

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to protect them is long, including their role in pest control, alerting us to environmental conditions, and making the planet more beautiful,” said Kelsey Neam, Re:wild, Species Priorities and Metrics Coordinator.

Dr. Gururaja K V, Batrachologist who contributed to this study said, “Endemic to the Western Ghats of India, the Micrixalus genus, commonly known as dancing frogs, have a curious habit of waving their hind legs to defend their territory from intruding males during the breeding season.

Among 24 species of dancing frogs assessed as part of the second global amphibian assessment, two are critically endangered and 15 are endangered making them the most threatened of all Indo- Malayan genera. It is the 5th most threatened genus in the world with 92 per cent of its species in the threatened category.”

Dr. Harikrishnan S, Head, Amphibian Recovery Project, WTI, said: “Wildlife Trust of India’s Amphibian Recovery Project in the Munnar Landscape of Kerala is actively working to recover the population of threatened amphibians by addressing the challenges that cause the risk of extinction, threat mitigation through strategically planned conservation action, capacity development and training, advocacy and information sharing implemented by a stakeholder network.”

Currently, the project is focussing on 5 species –Deccan Night Frog (Endangered), Resplendent shrub frog (Endangered), Kadalar Swamp Frog (Endangered), Anaimalai Flying Frog (Vulnerable), and Meowing Night Frog (Near Threatened).

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