



Open Natural Ecosystems of India



Illustrated by Sudarshan Shaw

Art by Sudarshan Shaw

2025



*To fall, and to get up,
to keep walking, no matter what,
is the way of a true herder.
Renewal, rebirth, resurgence,
the power that nourishes us,
in utter accord
with animals and birds and love itself.
We herders will stick around
till the day
we keep receiving nature's blessings
for what's so precious to us - our way of being.*

'Yahi hai Maldhari'
by Abdul Gani Sama



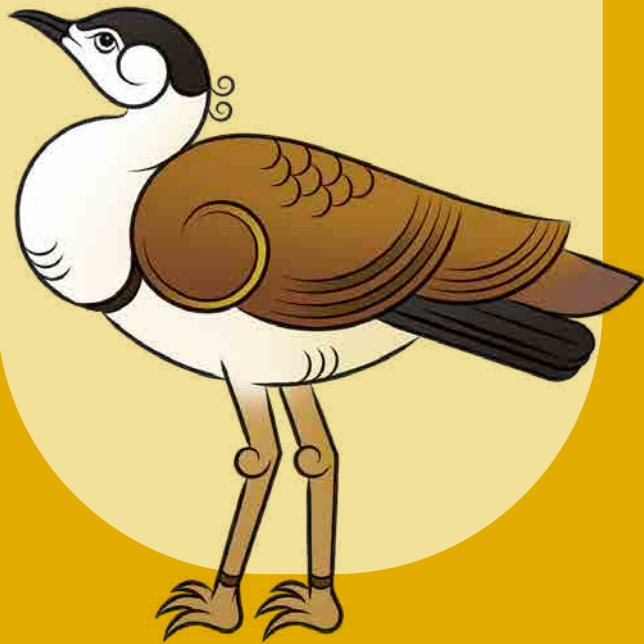
Open natural ecosystems (ONEs) are unique ecosystems that make up more than 10% of India's geographical area. They support a variety of flora and fauna that often get overlooked in India's biodiversity conservation plans. Grasslands are home to many threatened wildlife species, such as the great Indian bustard, Indian grey wolf, blackbuck and the lesser florican.

2025

January

Great Indian Bustard

The great Indian bustard is a Critically Endangered species, once present throughout open natural ecosystems in India. They typically lay one egg per year, but the chicks and eggs are vulnerable to predators. The last viable population is now found in western Rajasthan.



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1st New Year
26th Republic Day

2025

February



Striped Hyena

Found in dry and arid regions, the striped hyena is commonly encountered outside forest areas.

A scavenger with an undeservingly bad reputation, the hyena feeds on carcasses and helps check the spread of diseases. Hence, it is crucial to the health of the ecosystem.



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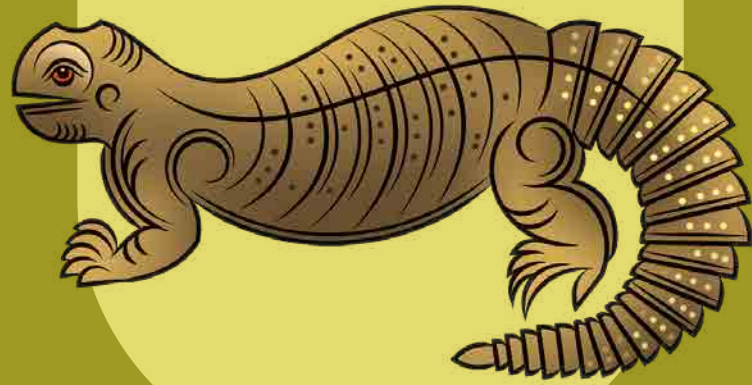
- 2nd World Wetlands Day
- 11th International Day of Women and Girls in Science
- 20th World Pangolin Day
- 26th Maha Shiv Ratri
- 28th National Science Day

2025

March

Spiny-Tailed Lizard

This herbivorous lizard has a broad head, a stout body and strong hind legs. Its tail has numerous protective spines that discourage most predators. The spiny-tailed lizard is found in the Great Thar Desert in India. It is illegally traded for its meat, blood, oil and skin.



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- 3rd World Wildlife Day
- 14th International Day of Action for Rivers / Holi
- 19th Taxonomists Appreciation Day
- 20th World Frog Day
- 21st International Day of Forests
- 22nd World Water Day
- 31st Ramzan



Chinkara

The chinkara is a shy and graceful resident of the semi-arid grasslands. It feeds on the Indian jujube and Acacia trees in the grasslands. The colour of its coat allows the animal to blend in with the grasslands and avoid detection by predators. It can go without water for many days, deriving fluids from the dew and plants it feeds on.



April 2025

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17th Bat Appreciation Day
22nd Earth Day

May 2025

Montagu's Harrier

They are long-distance migratory birds of prey that arrive in the Indian subcontinent in September to escape the harsh winter of Europe and Central Asia. They prefer open grasslands and feed primarily on grasshoppers, locusts and other insects, as well as reptiles and rodents.



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- 1st May Day
- 14th World Migratory Bird Day
- 20th World Bee Day
- 21st Endangered Species Day
- 22nd World Biodiversity Day
- 23rd World Turtle Day



Blackbuck

The blackbuck is native to the Indian subcontinent and is categorised as Endangered by the IUCN Red List. It lives in open grasslands and moves in herds. It has good eyesight and is a very fast runner, a defence against predators like wolves. Its population has declined due to poaching and loss of habitat.



June 2025

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5th World Environment Day
 8th World Ocean Day
 22nd World Rainforest Day

2025 July

Rock Agama

The rock agama is a lizard endemic to the peninsular India. It is often seen resting or basking on rocky boulders. The head and anterior part of the male turn red during breeding or when a rival male appears. In the breeding season, the female has tinges of orange and grey speckles on its body, helping it to blend in with the rocks. They consume ants and other insects.



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- 16th World Snake Day
- 20th National Moth Week
- 26th International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem
- 29th International Tiger Day

2025

August

Chestnut-Bellied Sandgrouse

A bird of arid and semi-arid grasslands, the chestnut-bellied sandgrouse feeds on grass seeds, flowers, small insects and fallen berries. The feathers on its belly are modified to act like a sponge. On hot days, adults soak their bellies in the water body and return to the nest to provide water to their chicks.



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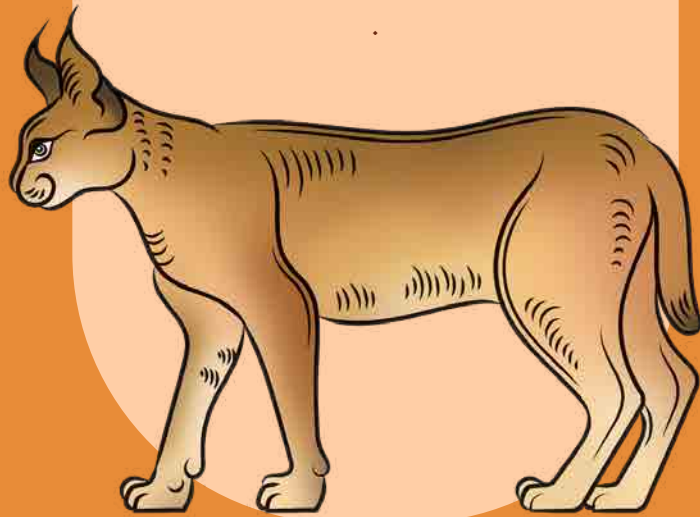
12th World Elephant Day
 13th Wolf Day
 15th Independence Day
 23rd World Water Week
 27th Ganesh Chaturthi
 28th International Bat Night

2025

September

Caracal

The caracal is a small wild cat with long-tufted ears and a sandy-brown coat. It has a keen sense of hearing and a lithe body built to leap and catch birds in flight. It has been listed as Near Threatened by the IUCN Red List. Like the cheetah, it used to be a favourite coursing or hunting animal in medieval India.



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1st International Primate Day
 17th International Red Panda Day
 24th World River Day

2025

October

Lesser Florican

The lesser florican is a bird of the open grasslands, endemic to the Indian subcontinent. The smallest in the bustard family, it is best known for its leaping breeding displays during monsoon. The males fold their legs to leap upward, reaching 2-3 m in height. The lesser florican is categorised as Critically Endangered by the IUCN Red List.



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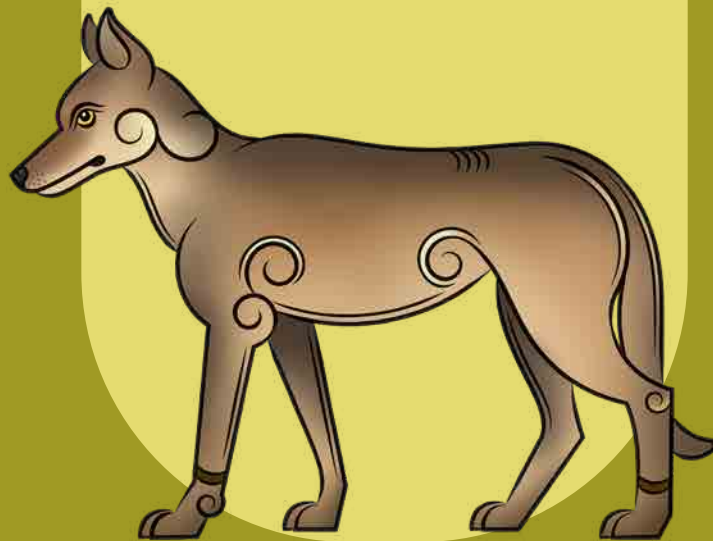
- 1st Ayudha Pooja/Mahanavami
- 2nd to 7th Wildlife Week
- 2nd Gandhi Jayanthi
- 3rd World Habitat Day
- 4th World Animal Day
- 22nd Deepavali
- 24th International Day of Climate action
- 26th Sustainability Day

2025

November

Indian Grey Wolf

Coming from an ancient lineage, the Indian grey wolf is a Schedule I species under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, categorised as Endangered according to the IUCN Red List. The Indian grey wolf is found in the savannah grasslands, village commons and agricultural lands, often sharing space with people and livestock.



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12th National Bird Day

2025

December

Short-Eared Owl

This migratory grassland bird visits the Indian subcontinent during winter. Unlike many other owl species, it is often active during the day. It is seen hovering when it hunts over open fields or marshes. It nests on the ground and consumes rodents, birds, insects and frogs.



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4th International Cheetah Day
5th World Soil Day
11th International Mountain Day
25th Christmas