

Declining Megafauna species

Why in news?

A research published in the journal *Conservation Letters* showed that at least 200 species of “megafauna” are decreasing in number.

What is the background?

- The researchers were part of an international collaboration that built a list of megafauna based on body size and taxonomy.
- The species qualified for the list were species unusually large in comparison to other species in the same class.
- The mass thresholds were 100 kg for mammals, ray-finned fish and cartilaginous fish and 40 kg for amphibians, birds and reptiles.
- Megafauna species are more threatened and have a higher percentage of decreasing populations than all the rest of the vertebrate species together.

What does the research reveal?

- Over the past 500 years, humans’ ability to kill wildlife at a safe distance has become highly refined.
- Hence, 2% of megafauna species have gone extinct in the period.
- Humans’ meat-eating habits may be pushing at least 150 species of the planet’s largest animals towards the threat of extinction.
- e.g Chinese giant salamander is one of only three living species in an amphibian family that traces back 170 million years.