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Blue-finned Mahseer and the Cauvery: Wildlife–Habitat Pairs

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Blue-finned Mahseer and the Cauvery: Wildlife–Habitat Pairs

A fish can live in a river without being native to it. A dolphin can be famous in one place and absent from another. **UPSC 2019 tested three wildlife–habitat pairs.**



Blue-finned mahseer (*Tor khudree*) at Harangi hatchery. Photo: A. J. T. Johnsingh, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

At a Glance

Four facts to hold on to.

01
Mahseer

Occurs in the Cauvery, but stocked there.

02
Irrawaddy dolphin

Chilika, not Chambal.

03
Chambal dolphin

Gangetic river dolphin.

04
UPSC 2019

Pairs 1 and 3 correct.

MahseerLarge freshwater fish in the carp family.
IntroducedBrought to a place by people; not native.
Endemic vs occurs Occurring somewhere is not the same as being native.
Red ListIUCN's global extinction-risk scale.

Three Species, Three Real Homes

Must Know

What is a mahseer?

- Mahseers are large freshwater fish in the carp family.
- This lesson's blue-finned mahseer is *Tor khudree*.
- It has been recorded in the Cauvery River. That makes the UPSC 2019 pairing correct.
- Living there does not mean native there.
- Research identifies the Cauvery blue-finned population as **introduced through stocking**.
- The native Cauvery fish is the hump-backed mahseer, *Tor remadevii*. Its decline is a conservation concern.

Why this matters

- Moving fish between rivers can alter local populations.
- Conservation must identify the species before any breeding or release programme.
- Sources: Cauvery mahseer study (Wiley, bot-blocked) and original taxonomic research.

> **Quick check 1.** The Irrawaddy dolphin is the dolphin linked with the Chambal sanctuary. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Compare the Two Dolphins

Good to Know

Irrawaddy dolphin: Chilika, not Chambal

- *Orcaella brevirostris* has a rounded head and no long beak.
- India's best-known population lives in Odisha's Chilika lagoon.

- The Chilika Development Authority surveys it and manages dolphin-watching.
- Its global Red List category is Endangered. That describes extinction risk, not location.

Gangetic dolphin: the Chambal link

- The National Chambal Sanctuary supports the **Gangetic river dolphin**, gharial and mugger crocodile.
- The sanctuary crosses Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.
- Do not swap the two dolphins just because both are dolphins.
- Sources: Chilika Development Authority, IUCN Red List announcement and Wildlife Institute of India.

> **Quick check 2.** The National Chambal Sanctuary protects river wildlife across three states. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Exam Edge

Previous Year Questions

UPSC 2019 asked which wildlife–habitat pairs are correct.

> **Quick check 3.** In UPSC 2019, the mahseer–Cauvery and rusty-spotted-cat–Eastern-Ghats pairs were correct. *(True or False?)*
>
> See answer ↓

The Cauvery's Hidden Twist, and the Chambal

Great to Know

The full exam comparison

Animal	Place in question	Verdict	Reason
Blue-finned mahseer	Cauvery River	Correct	It occurs there, though the stocked population is introduced
Irrawaddy dolphin	Chambal River	Wrong	Chilika is the key Indian site; Chambal has the Gangetic dolphin
Rusty-spotted cat	Eastern Ghats	Correct	This small wild cat occurs in that landscape

The land-animal comparison

- The rusty-spotted cat is a small wild cat, not a river animal.
- India's 2025 small-cat report records it across several landscapes, including the Eastern Ghats.
- Its global Red List category is Near Threatened.
- Source: NTCA small-cat report.

What protects Chambal?

- River flow, fishing pressure and riverbank use all affect its wildlife.
- A single unsourced gharial count can become outdated.
- For wider causes and tools, read the India river biodiversity guide.

Think it through: how can "mahseer–Cauvery" be correct if that fish was introduced?

The exam pair asks whether the fish occurs in the river. It does. Research separately asks whether it belongs to the river's native fauna. For the blue-finned population, the answer is no.

Quick check 4. A blue-finned mahseer can occur in the Cauvery even if that population was introduced. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick check 5. Irrawaddy and Gangetic river dolphins are the same species under different local names. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick check 6. An IUCN Red List category alone tells you a species' exact Indian river or reserve. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick check 7. The rusty-spotted cat occurs in the Eastern Ghats landscape. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick Q&A

Which pairs were correct?

1 and 3.

Dolphin in Chambal?

Gangetic river dolphin.

Key Irrawaddy site in India?

Chilika.

Native Cauvery mahseer?

Hump-backed mahseer.

States on Chambal?

Rajasthan, MP, UP.

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Practice MCQs

1. Consider the following pairs (Wildlife -- Naturally found in):

1. Blue-finned Mahseer -- Cauvery River

2. Irrawaddy Dolphin -- Chambal River

3. Rusty-spotted Cat -- Eastern Ghats.

Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

A. 1 and 2 only

B. 2 and 3 only

C. 1 and 3 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

See answer ↓

2. Which pair of species is genuinely found together in the National Chambal Sanctuary?

A. Gharial and Gangetic River Dolphin

B. Blue-finned Mahseer and Mugger Crocodile

C. Irrawaddy Dolphin and Saltwater Crocodile

D. Rusty-spotted Cat and Indian Skimmer

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **C.** The correct answer is 1 and 3 only. The Blue-finned Mahseer genuinely lives in the Cauvery River, and the Rusty-spotted Cat genuinely occurs in the Eastern Ghats. The Irrawaddy Dolphin is not found in the Chambal River; its main Indian population lives in Chilika Lake, Odisha. ↑ Q1
2. **A.** The National Chambal Sanctuary is genuinely home to the Gharial and the Gangetic River Dolphin, along with the Mugger crocodile, smooth-coated otters, and several freshwater turtle species. It does not host the Irrawaddy Dolphin, which lives in Chilika Lake and Southeast Asian rivers instead. ↑ Q2

Quick-check answers

1. **False.** ↑ 1
2. **True.** ↑ 2
3. **True.** ↑ 3
4. **True.** ↑ 4
5. **False.** ↑ 5
6. **False.** ↑ 6
7. **True.** ↑ 7

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