

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/almost-60-of-indias-elephants-are-in-karnataka-assam-tamil-nadu/article70162848.ece>

Almost 60% of India's elephants are in Karnataka, Assam, Tamil Nadu

The Wildlife Institute of India released the first-ever DNA-based synchronous estimation of elephants across the country

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RAHUL KARMAKAR



Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala (2,785 elephants) together have 11,934 elephants, which is 53.17% of the all-India estimate. These southern Indian States are clubbed under the Western Ghats landscape. File | Photo Credit: The Hindu

GUWAHATI

Karnataka, Assam, and Tamil Nadu account for 59.29% of the estimated 22,466 elephants in India, a report released by the Wildlife Institute

of India (WII) in Dehradun on Tuesday (October 14, 2025) has revealed.

Seven northeastern States and a part of West Bengal support 6,559 elephants, underscoring the region's critical role as an elephant stronghold, the report titled 'Status of Elephants in India: DNA-based Synchronous All-India Population Estimation of Elephants', said.

WII officials said the estimation from 2021 to 2025 was conducted using the DNA-based mark-recapture method – similar to that used for the monitoring of tigers, co-predators, and prey – for the first time in the country.

“Given the methodological changes, it is not comparable to past figures and may be treated as a new monitoring baseline for further research, monitoring, and estimation,” the report read.

According to the findings, Karnataka leads with 6,013 elephants (range 4,792 to 7,235), followed by Assam with 4,159 (3,395 to 4,924), and Tamil Nadu with 3,136 (2,688 to 3,585) elephants. With 13,308 elephants, these three States have almost 60% of the country's total population.

Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala (2,785 elephants) together have 11,934 elephants, which is 53.17% of the all-India estimate. These southern Indian States are clubbed under the Western Ghats landscape.

The North Eastern Hills and Brahmaputra Flood Plains landscape, comprising Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland,

Tripura, and northern West Bengal, offers the second-best habitat for elephants. This landscape is home to 22.22% of India's elephants.

The two other landscapes – the Shivalik Hills and Gangetic Plains (Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar), and Central India and the Eastern Ghats, comprising seven States, including Andhra Pradesh and southern West Bengal – account for 9.18% and 8.42% of the country's total elephants.

Three phases

The study was divided into three phases. The first phase involved undertaking ground surveys in forested habitats across all tiger-bearing States to determine which grids have elephant presence and associated information.

Using a mobile application, carnivore and mega-herbivore sign encounters, ungulate (hoofed mammal) abundance, dung count of ungulates, vegetation status through habitat plots, and human disturbance were recorded. This information helped in modelling elephant occupancy.

Phase Two involved assessing habitat characteristics and anthropogenic impacts, such as vegetation cover, forest patch size, human footprint, distance to night lights, and night light intensity. Across the 6,66,977 km covered by the estimators on foot, 21,056 dung samples were collected for the third phase.

“After evaluating multiple covariates associated with elephant density—including distance to

water, terrain ruggedness, normalised difference vegetation index (April and November), proximity to nightlight sources, and human footprint metrics from ground surveys—the elephant encounter rate derived from Phases I to III data emerged as the most robust predictor for modelling elephant densities in the Western Ghats and the Shivalik Hills-Gangetic Plains landscape,” the status report said.

“In Central India and the Eastern Ghats, both encounter rate and distance to water were the most informative covariates. In the northeast, elephant encounter rate (encompassing signs, sightings, and dung) from Phase I data demonstrated strong predictive power for estimating elephant densities,” the report said.

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actor Pankaj
Dheer dies at 68



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cuts projectio...



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