

# Blackbuck

Blackbuck (*Antilope cervicapra*) is a species of antelope found mainly in India, Nepal, and Pakistan. They are known for their striking appearance, with their shiny black coat contrasting with their white underbelly and facial markings. The males have long, twisted horns that can reach up to 75 cm in length.

Blackbuck primarily inhabit grasslands and open plains and are known for their incredible speed and agility, which helps them evade predators such as wolves and jackals. They are herbivorous, feeding on grasses, leaves, and fruits.

In India, blackbuck is considered a protected species under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, and are listed as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List. The species is threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation, poaching for its meat and skin, and hunting for sport. Blackbuck is also culturally significant in India, where they are revered by some communities and have been featured in traditional folklore and art.

Sl No	Characteristics	Description
1	Common Name	Blackbuck
2	Scientific Name	<i>Antilope cervicapra</i>
3	Length	3-4 feet
4	Colour	Sandy to yellowish-brown with white underbelly and inner legs
5	Height / girth	Male: up to 32 inches at the shoulder; Female: up to 28 inches at the shoulder
6	Tail length	10-14 inches

7	Height till shoulder	Male: up to 32 inches at the shoulder; Female: up to 28 inches at the shoulder
8	Average weight	Male: 90-110 lbs; Female: 60-75 lbs
9	Food habits	Herbivorous, feeds on grasses, herbs, and leaves
10	Habitat	Grasslands and open plains of India, Nepal, and Pakistan
11	Any interesting facts about them	The males have distinctive spiral horns that can grow up to 28 inches long, and they are known for their high-speed running and jumping abilities. They are also culturally significant in some regions of India, where they are considered sacred and protected.

## Appearance

Blackbucks (*Antilope cervicapra*) are a species of antelope native to the Indian subcontinent. They are small to medium-sized ungulates, with males being larger than females.

Males are known for their striking appearance, with a rich brownish-black coat and white markings on the face, neck, and underbelly. They also have long, spiral-shaped horns that can grow up to 28 inches in length. In contrast, females have a light tan to yellow-brown coat and lack horns.

Blackbucks are known for their agility and speed and can reach speeds of up to 80 km/h (50 mph). They are also capable of making impressive leaps of up to 6 metres (20 feet) in length.

One of the most unique characteristics of blackbucks is their ability to change their coat colour. During the breeding season, males' coats become darker and more vibrant in colour,

while females' coats become paler.

Blackbucks are primarily grazers, feeding on a variety of grasses and vegetation. They are also known to be very social animals, often forming herds of up to 30 individuals, with males establishing a dominant hierarchy during the breeding season.

## **Food Habits**

Blackbucks are primarily grazers and feed on a variety of grasses and other vegetation. Their diet may vary depending on the season and availability of food, but typically includes grasses such as *Cenchrus ciliaris*, *Dichanthium annulatum*, and *Sporobolus* species. They may also eat herbs, shrubs, and agricultural crops.

## **Habitats**

Blackbucks are native to the Indian subcontinent, where they are found in a variety of habitats including grasslands, savannas, and scrub forests. They are most commonly found in the Indian states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, and Haryana, but can also be found in other parts of the country such as Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka.

Blackbucks are well adapted to living in arid and semi-arid regions, and are able to survive without access to surface water for extended periods of time. However, they may still require access to water sources such as artificial waterholes, especially during the dry season.

## **Vulnerable Species**

Blackbucks are listed as Near Threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) due to their declining population and threats to their habitat. In India, blackbucks

are protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, which prohibits hunting and poaching of the species.

The population of blackbucks in India has declined over the years due to habitat loss and fragmentation, as well as hunting and poaching. However, conservation efforts, such as habitat protection, reintroduction programs, and community-based conservation initiatives, have helped stabilise some populations.

According to the latest estimate by the IUCN, the global population of blackbucks is currently around 50,000-70,000 individuals, with the majority of the population in India. However, precise population numbers are difficult to determine due to the secretive nature of the species and the fact that they occur in fragmented populations across their range.

## Protected Areas

Blackbucks are found in a number of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries in India, some of which have been specifically established for their conservation. Here are some of the national parks in India where blackbucks can be found:

Velavadar Blackbuck National Park is located in the Bhavnagar district of Gujarat and covers an area of 34.08 square kilometres. It was established in 1976 to protect the blackbuck and its grassland habitat. In addition to blackbucks, the park is also home to other species such as Indian wolves, hyenas, foxes, and a variety of birds.

Tal Chhapar Sanctuary is located in the Churu district of Rajasthan and covers an area of 7.19 square kilometres. It was established in 1961 to protect the blackbuck and its grassland habitat. In addition to blackbucks, the sanctuary is also home to other species such as Indian foxes, desert cats, and a variety of birds.

Sariska National Park is located in the Alwar district of Rajasthan and covers an area of 881 square kilometres. While blackbucks are not the main focus of conservation efforts here, they can still be found in the park, along with other species such as tigers, leopards, and sambar deer.

Bannerghatta National Park is located near Bangalore and covers an area of 260.51 square kilometres. It was established in 1971 to protect the region's wildlife and biodiversity. While blackbucks are not the main focus of conservation efforts here, they can still be found in the park, along with other species such as Indian elephants, tigers, and leopards.

Rehekuri Blackbuck Sanctuary is located in the Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra and covers an area of 2.17 square kilometres. It was established in 1988 to protect the blackbuck and its grassland habitat. In addition to blackbucks, the sanctuary is also home to other species such as Indian wolves, hyenas, and foxes.