

Chital

Features

Chital, also known as spotted deer or axis deer, are a species of deer native to the Indian subcontinent. They are generally medium-sized, with males typically weighing between 50-75 kg (110-165 lbs) and females weighing between 30-45 kg (66-99 lbs).

The coat of a chital is reddish-brown with white spots, which are more prominent on the fawns and gradually fade as they grow older. The underside of the tail is white, and the throat and belly are cream-coloured. Males have antlers that are typically three-pronged and can grow up to 90 cm (35 inches) long.

One special characteristic of chital is that they are highly social animals and often form large herds. These herds can consist of both males and females, but the males are typically more solitary outside of the mating season. Chital are also known for their alarm calls, which are loud barks that they use to alert others in the herd of potential danger.

During the breeding season, males will compete for access to females. They will engage in displays of dominance, such as parallel walking, and use their antlers to spar with other males. The males also engage in a behaviour known as "rutting," which involves rubbing their antlers against trees to mark their territory and attract females.

Food Habits

Chital is herbivores and primarily feeds on a variety of grasses, herbs, and leaves. They are known to be adaptable and can adjust their diet according to the availability of food in

their habitat. In some areas, they also feed on agricultural crops such as wheat and rice.

Habitats

Chital or spotted deer are native to the Indian subcontinent and can be found in various habitats across the region. They are commonly found in forested areas, open grasslands, and riverine forests. They are also found in agricultural areas and other human-dominated landscapes.

Vulnerable Species

Although chital are considered a species of least concern on the IUCN Red List, they do face threats in some areas of India. Habitat loss and fragmentation due to human activities such as deforestation, agricultural expansion, and urbanisation are significant threats to chital populations.

Poaching and hunting for their meat and antlers also pose a threat to chital populations, particularly in areas where hunting is still practiced illegally. In addition, chital populations can be affected by diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease and parasitic infections.

Despite these threats, chital populations in India are generally stable, and their numbers are estimated to be around 1.7 million individuals. The largest populations of chital are found in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. Chital are also found in protected areas such as national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, which provide important habitat for them and other wildlife species.

Protected Areas

Chital, also known as spotted deer or axis deer, can be found in several national parks and wildlife sanctuaries across

India.

Located in Madhya Pradesh, Bandhavgarh is known for its high density of tigers and also supports a healthy population of chital. The park is spread over an area of 450 square kilometres and is home to other wildlife species such as leopards, sloth bears, and Indian bison.

Also located in Madhya Pradesh, Kanha is one of India's largest national parks and is known for its conservation efforts to protect the endangered Bengal tiger. The park is home to a significant population of chital as well as other wildlife such as gaur (Indian bison), sambar deer, and Indian wild dogs.

Another popular tiger reserve located in Rajasthan, Ranthambore is known for its beautiful landscapes and high density of Bengal tigers. The park is also home to a significant population of chital, as well as other wildlife species such as sloth bears, Indian jackals, and Indian palm civets.

Located in Uttarakhand, Jim Corbett is India's oldest national park and is known for its beautiful landscapes and rich biodiversity. The park is home to a significant population of chital, as well as other wildlife such as elephants, leopards, and Bengal tigers.