

# Himalayan Golden Eagle

## Origin

The Himalayan golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos daphanea*) is a subspecies of the golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) found in the Himalayan region, including parts of India.

The golden eagle lineage is believed to have originated in Eurasia around 2.5 million years ago. Fossil evidence suggests that the golden eagle first appeared in Europe during the Pleistocene era, about 100,000 years ago. From there, the species expanded its range to other parts of the world.

It is believed that the ancestors of the Himalayan golden eagle likely arrived in India during the Pleistocene era, when the climate was much cooler and drier than it is today. During this time, the Himalayan region was connected to the Central Asian steppes by a land bridge, allowing for the migration of various animal species, including eagles.

The Himalayan golden eagle is also closely related to the Altai golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos daphanea*), which is found in the Altai Mountains of Central Asia. The two subspecies are genetically similar and may have diverged relatively recently, perhaps within the last 100,000 years.

Today, the Himalayan golden eagle is found in the high-altitude regions of the Himalayas, including in India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet. It is a powerful bird of prey that feeds primarily on mammals, such as hares, marmots, and pikas, as well as birds and reptiles. Its large size and impressive wingspan make it an impressive sight in the wild.

# Distribution and Population

The Himalayan golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos daphanea*) is found in the high-altitude regions of the Himalayas in India. Its distribution in India is limited to the states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh.

The population of Himalayan golden eagles in India is not well documented, and estimates vary widely. The species is considered to be relatively rare in India and is listed as "Near Threatened" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

## Appearance

The Himalayan golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos daphanea*) is a large bird of prey with distinctive features. Himalayan golden eagles have a wingspan of around 2 meters (6.5 feet) and can weigh up to 7 kilograms (15.5 pounds). They have dark brown feathers on their backs, and lighter feathers on their undersides. They also have a distinctive golden crown and nape that contrasts with their dark feathers. Male and female Himalayan golden eagles are similar in appearance, but females tend to be slightly larger than males.

## Lifestyle

Himalayan golden eagles are typically monogamous and mate for life. They build their nests in rocky outcroppings or cliffs, usually in areas with good visibility and easy access to prey. The female lays 1-2 eggs, which both parents take turns incubating for around 45 days. The young eaglets fledge at around 80-90 days old and become independent a few months later. Himalayan golden eagles are known for their long lifespans, with some individuals living for up to 30 years.

Himalayan golden eagles are capable of reaching speeds of up to 200 km/h (124 mph) during a hunting dive, making them one of the fastest birds in the world.

## Food Habits

Himalayan golden eagles are carnivorous and feed on a variety of prey, including small mammals such as hares, marmots, and pikas, as well as birds, reptiles, and occasionally carrion. They are also known to occasionally hunt domestic livestock, which can bring them into conflict with humans.

## Habitat

Himalayan golden eagles are typically found in high-altitude regions of the Himalayas, including rugged mountainous terrain and open grasslands. They prefer open areas where they can hunt and soar freely.

## Near Threatened Species

The Himalayan golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos daphanea*) is currently listed as “Near Threatened” on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. It was categorized in 2003.

The species is considered to be at risk due to a number of threats to its population, including habitat loss and degradation, hunting and persecution by humans, and changes in climate and weather patterns.

Habitat loss and degradation is a major threat to Himalayan golden eagles, as their preferred habitats in high-altitude regions of the Himalayas are being destroyed or altered due to human activities such as logging, agriculture, and development.

Hunting and persecution by humans is another threat to the species, as eagles are often seen as competitors for game animals or as a threat to domestic livestock. Eagles are also sometimes killed for their feathers, which are highly valued in some cultures.

Finally, changes in climate and weather patterns, such as increased temperatures and altered precipitation patterns, can also affect the distribution and abundance of prey animals and therefore impact the survival of the Himalayan golden eagle.

## Protected Areas

There are several protected areas in the country that are important for the conservation of this species.

The Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP) is located in the Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh and covers an area of 754 square kilometers. The park is home to a wide range of wildlife species, including the Himalayan golden eagle, snow leopard, musk deer, and bharal. The park was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2014 and has strict conservation regulations in place to protect its unique biodiversity.

The Gangotri National Park is located in the Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand and covers an area of 2,390 square kilometers. The park is known for its high-altitude wildlife, including the Himalayan golden eagle, snow leopard, and Himalayan tahr. The park is also home to the Gangotri Glacier, the source of the Ganges River. The Nanda Devi National Park is located in the Chamoli district of Uttarakhand and covers an area of 630 square kilometers. The park is known for its spectacular high-altitude landscapes and is home to a wide range of wildlife species, including the Himalayan golden eagle, snow leopard, Himalayan black bear, and musk deer.

The Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the Rudrapur district of Uttarakhand and covers an area of 975 square

kilometers. The sanctuary is known for its high-altitude ecosystems and is home to a number of endangered species, including the Himalayan golden eagle, snow leopard, and Himalayan musk deer. The Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the Upper Dibang Valley district of Arunachal Pradesh and covers an area of 4,149 square kilometers. The sanctuary is known for its unique biodiversity and is home to a wide range of wildlife species, including the Himalayan golden eagle, clouded leopard, and Assam macaque. The Namdapha National Park is located in the Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh and covers an area of 1,985 square kilometers. The park is known for its tropical and subtropical forests and is home to a wide range of wildlife species, including the Himalayan golden eagle, Asiatic black bear, and Hoolock gibbon. These protected areas are important for the conservation of the Himalayan golden eagle and other important species, and efforts are underway to strengthen their protection and management.