

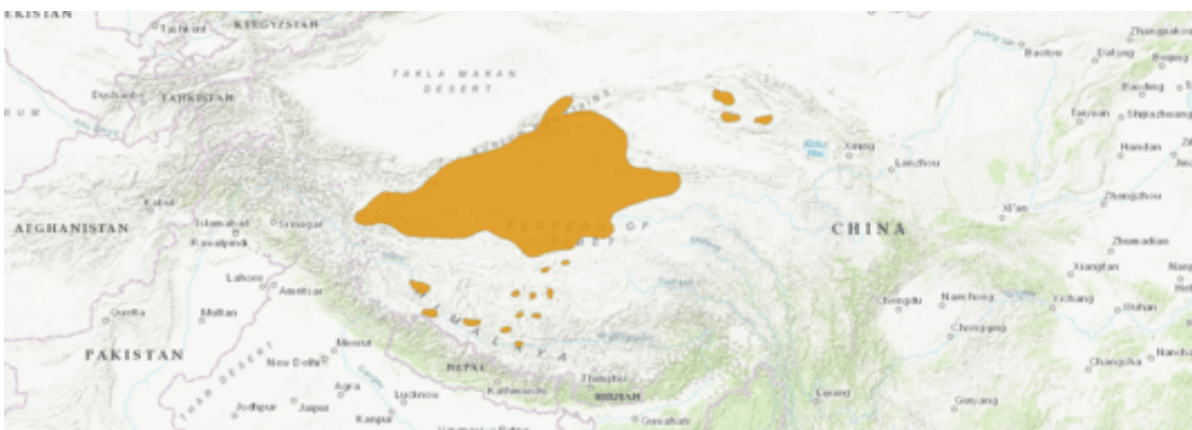
# Himalayan Wild Yak

## Origin

The Himalayan wild yak (*Bos mutus*) is believed to have evolved in the Tibetan Plateau around 1.8 million years ago, from a common ancestor of modern cattle. Over time, they adapted to the harsh environment of the high-altitude regions, developing features such as a thick, shaggy coat and large lungs to cope with the low oxygen levels.

It is not entirely clear how wild yaks reached India, but it is believed that they may have migrated southwards from Tibet, crossing the Himalayan mountain range through high-altitude passes. Some populations of wild yaks can still be found in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, where they are known as the “dong” or “dzos”.

## Distribution and Population in India



The Himalayan wild yak (*Bos mutus*) is primarily found in Tibet, with smaller populations also found in other parts of China, Nepal, Bhutan, and India. Within these regions, they inhabit high-altitude grasslands and alpine meadows at elevations ranging from 4,000 to over 6,000 meters.

It is difficult to estimate the exact population of wild yaks, as they are scattered across a vast and remote region. However, it is believed that there are roughly 10,000-15,000 individuals remaining in the wild, with the largest populations found in Tibet. Wild yaks are listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List due to habitat loss, hunting for meat and other body parts, and competition with domestic livestock for grazing resources. Conservation efforts are underway to protect wild yak populations, including habitat preservation and anti-poaching measures.

## **Features**

### **Appearance**

The Himalayan wild yak is a large bovine that can weigh up to 1,200 kg (2,600 lb) and stand up to 2 meters (6.6 ft) tall at the shoulder. They have shaggy, dark brown to black hair that can grow up to 60 cm (2 ft) long, with a dense undercoat for insulation in cold weather.

Males are generally larger and heavier than females, with thicker necks and more prominent horns. Females have shorter and less curved horns and may be slightly smaller in size.

### **Lifestyle**

When Himalayan wild yaks give birth, they typically have one calf per year. The young calves stay with their mothers for up to two years, and during this time they learn to forage for food and avoid predators. As they reach adulthood, they become more independent and may form small groups with other yaks.

### **Food Habits**

Himalayan wild yaks are herbivores and feed on a variety of plants, including grasses, sedges, and shrubs. They can also

dig through snow to find lichens and other vegetation.

## Habitats

They are well-adapted to the harsh climate of the Himalayas, and can survive in areas with little vegetation and extreme temperatures. Himalayan wild yaks are found in mountainous regions at elevations of 4,000 to 6,000 meters (13,000 to 20,000 ft). They prefer areas with rugged terrain and rocky slopes and are well-adapted to the cold, dry weather conditions of the high Himalayan plateau.

## Vulnerable Species



Himalayan wild yaks are vulnerable. They have been listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List since 2008 due to a declining population trend caused by various reasons. Hunting for meat and hides has been a significant threat to the population, as well as poaching for their horns, which are used in traditional medicine.

Habitat loss has also been a major issue, as human activities such as mining, road construction, and agricultural expansion have reduced the availability of suitable grazing areas. The competition with domestic livestock has also increased over time, with the number of domestic animals grazing in the same areas as wild yaks increasing. This can lead to overgrazing and further habitat degradation, affecting the food availability for wild yaks.

Climate change is another growing threat to the Himalayan wild

yak, as it can alter their habitat and reduce the availability of food and water. As temperatures rise, vegetation patterns are shifting, and water sources are becoming scarce. This can lead to habitat fragmentation and reduced genetic diversity, which can further impact the population.

## Protected Areas



There are several protected areas established to conserve the habitat and population of Himalayan wild yaks.

Changtang Wildlife Sanctuary located in the Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir, India, is home to a large population of wild yaks.

Sagarmatha National Park in Nepal is home to a population of wild yaks, as well as other iconic Himalayan species such as snow leopards and Himalayan black bears.

These protected areas help to safeguard the habitat and population of wild yaks by restricting hunting and other human activities that could harm them, and by preserving the fragile alpine ecosystems where they live.

# Conservation of the Species

Protecting the habitats of these species is critical to their survival. This can be achieved by establishing protected areas, promoting sustainable land use practices, and reducing human disturbance in their habitats.

Hunting and poaching are significant threats to these species. Implementing anti-poaching measures such as increasing patrols, imposing stricter penalties for poaching, and increasing public awareness about the importance of conservation can help reduce poaching.

Involving local communities in conservation efforts is essential. This can be achieved through awareness-raising campaigns, education programs, and supporting alternative livelihoods that do not harm these species or their habitats.

Regular monitoring of these species can help in understanding their population status, behaviour, and distribution. This information can be used to inform conservation strategies and ensure that they are effective. International cooperation is crucial in conserving these species, especially those that cross national borders.

Collaborating with other countries can help establish transboundary protected areas, monitor migration patterns, and share knowledge and best practices. Promoting sustainable tourism that supports conservation efforts can provide economic benefits to local communities while also raising awareness about the importance of conservation.

By implementing these solutions, we can help protect these iconic and unique species and ensure that they continue to thrive in their natural habitats.

# Conclusion



In conclusion, the Kiang is an iconic species that are facing significant threats to their survival. Protecting their habitats, implementing anti-poaching measures, involving local communities, conducting research and monitoring, international cooperation, and promoting sustainable tourism are all important solutions that can help conserve these species. It is essential that we take action to protect these species and their habitats to ensure that they continue to play their crucial role in their respective ecosystems and maintain their unique place in our planet's biodiversity.