

Kashmir stag

The biodiversity of Kashmir is shaped by its unique geography, which includes the Himalayan mountain range, high-altitude grasslands, and vast expanses of forests. The region’s forests are dominated by conifers such as fir, spruce, and pine, while the high-altitude grasslands provide an important habitat for several endangered species such as the Kashmir stag, black bear, and musk deer. The region is also home to a rich avifauna, with several species of migratory birds visiting the area every year. Despite its ecological significance, the biodiversity of Kashmir is under threat from several factors, including habitat loss, climate change, and over-exploitation of natural resources. Conservation efforts are underway to protect the region’s biodiversity, but much more needs to be done to ensure its long-term survival.

The Kashmir stag, also known as the hangul, is a critically endangered species of deer found only in the Kashmir Valley of India. It is one of the rarest and most endangered species of deer in the world, with only a few hundred individuals left in the wild. The species is threatened by habitat loss, poaching, and competition with domestic livestock. The hangul is a large and majestic animal, with a distinctive reddish-brown coat and impressive antlers that can grow up to 1.5 meters in length. Efforts are being made to conserve the hangul, including measures to protect its habitat and control poaching. Despite these efforts, the population of hangul continues to decline, making urgent action necessary to ensure its survival.

Sl NO	Characteristics	Description
1	Common Name	Kashmir stag
2	Scientific Name	Cervus hanglu
3	Length	1.5 to 1.8 metres

4	Colour	Dark brown to reddish brown with white spots on the back and rump
5	Height / girth (For animals and birds – height, for fishes / reptiles – girth of the body)	135 to 140 cm
6	Tail length (if its mammal	10 to 15 cm
7	Height till shoulder (If its mammal)	135 to 140 cm
8	Average weight	90 to 110 kg
9	Food habits	They are herbivorous feeding on variety of plants including grasses leaves and twigs
10	Habitat	The kashmir stag is native to the high valleys and mountains of kashmir and northern india
11	Any interesting facts about them	It is only surviving sub species of red deer family in india

Feature

The Kashmir stag, also known as the hangul, is a subspecies of elk that is native to the dense forests of the Kashmir Valley in India. The coat of hangul is typically reddish-brown or tan, with a darker brown mane on the neck and a white patch on the rump. Males are generally larger than females, weighing between 180-240 kg (400-530 lbs) and standing up to 1.2 metres (4 feet) at the shoulder. Females are smaller, weighing around 80-90 kg (180-200 lbs) and standing about 1 metre (3.3 feet)

at the shoulder. Males have impressive antlers that grow up to 1.2 metres (4 feet) in length and have a distinctive shape with multiple branches. The antlers are shed every year and regrow during the summer months. Hanguls are shy and solitary animals and are most active at dawn and dusk. During the breeding season, males will engage in displays of dominance to attract females, including vocalisations and antler displays. The hangul is found primarily in dense forests and can be found at altitudes ranging from 1,700 to 4,000 metres (5,600 to 13,100 feet) above sea level.

Food Habits

The hangul is a herbivore and feeds on a variety of vegetation, including grasses, leaves, and shrubs. In particular, they prefer to eat the leaves and shoots of various tree species, such as oak, willow, and chestnut. They are known to migrate to different parts of their range in search of food during different times of the year.

Habitats

The Kashmir stag, also known as the hangul, is primarily found in the dense forests of the Kashmir Valley in India. Specifically, they are found in the Dachigam National Park and Overa-Aru Wildlife Sanctuary, both located in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Vulnerable Species

Kashmir stag or hangul is considered a critically endangered species in India. According to the latest estimates from the Wildlife Institute of India, there are only about 200-220 individuals remaining in the wild in India.

The species faces several threats, including habitat loss and fragmentation, poaching, predation, and competition with

domestic livestock. Habitat loss and fragmentation occur due to human encroachment, developmental activities such as mining, dam construction, and road development, and illegal logging.

Poaching is a significant threat to the species, as it is hunted for its antlers, meat, and skin. Additionally, hanguls face predation by wild dogs and leopards, which have been known to attack and kill them. Competition with livestock is another challenge, as they compete with hanguls for food and habitat.

Protected Areas

The Kashmir stag or hangul is a subspecies of elk that is native to the dense forests of the Kashmir Valley in India. The species is primarily found in the Dachigam National Park and Overa-Aru Wildlife Sanctuary in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Dachigam National Park is located approximately 22 km from Srinagar and covers an area of 141 sq km. The park is home to a variety of wildlife, including the hangul, musk deer, Himalayan black bear, and leopard. It is one of the few remaining habitats of the Kashmir stag and is considered critical for its conservation.

Overa-Aru Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the Pahalgam region of Jammu and Kashmir and covers an area of 408 sq km. The sanctuary is home to a variety of wildlife, including the hangul, snow leopard, Himalayan brown bear, and musk deer.

Both Dachigam National Park and Overa-Aru Wildlife Sanctuary have been designated as protected areas to conserve the biodiversity of the region and provide a safe haven for endangered species like the hangul. These protected areas have restrictions on human activities and aim to maintain the natural habitat of the species, while also promoting tourism

and research activities.

Steps needed to protect the Himalayan wild animals

Protecting the Himalayan wildlife is crucial to ensure the survival of several endangered and unique species found in the region. Here are some steps that can be taken to protect Himalayan wild animals:

Establish protected areas: Setting up protected areas like national parks, wildlife reserves, and sanctuaries can provide safe havens for wild animals to thrive.

Enforce strict laws and regulations: The government can implement and enforce laws and regulations that prohibit poaching, hunting, and illegal trade of wildlife products. Such laws can act as a deterrent and help reduce the number of wildlife crimes.

Increase community involvement: Engaging local communities in wildlife conservation efforts can help to build a sense of ownership and responsibility towards protecting the wildlife. This can include education programs, awareness campaigns, and opportunities for sustainable livelihoods.

Promote responsible tourism: Responsible tourism can generate income for local communities and promote conservation efforts. However, it is important to ensure that tourism activities do not harm the natural habitat of wild animals.

Address climate change: Climate change is a significant threat to the Himalayan wildlife. Addressing climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting sustainable practices can help to protect the wildlife and their habitats.

Collaborate with international organizations: Collaborating with international organizations can provide additional

resources and expertise to help protect the Himalayan wildlife. This can include support for research, conservation programs, and policy advocacy.