

Markhor

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.

Sl NO	Characteristics	Description
1	Common Name	Markhor
2	Scientific Name	<i>Capra falconeri</i>
3	Length	1.6 metres
4	Colour	Brown with white under parts
5	Height / girth (For animals and birds – height, for fishes / reptiles – girth of the body)	0.9 to 1.1 metres
6	Tail length (if its mammal	25-35 cm
7	Height till shoulder (If its mammal)	0.9 to 1.1 metres
8	Average weight	45-110 kg

9	Food habits	Herbivorous and typically feed on grass leaves and vegetation
10	Habitat	Markhor are found in mountain region of central asia
11	Any interesting facts about them	They have spiral shaped horn that can grow upto 1.5 metres

Features

Markhor is a wild goat species native to the mountainous regions of Central Asia, including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. There are two recognized subspecies of Markhor: the Astor Markhor and the Bukharan Markhor.

Males and females of the Markhor species have different physical characteristics. Males are typically larger and heavier than females, with a body length ranging from 132 to 186 cm and a height at the shoulder ranging from 65 to 115 cm. Females are smaller, with a body length ranging from 95 to 140 cm and a height at the shoulder ranging from 60 to 70 cm.

The coat colour of Markhor varies depending on the subspecies and age of the animal. The Astor Markhor has a reddish-brown coat with white underparts, while the Bukharan Markhor has a grey-brown coat. Both subspecies have a distinctive white ruff of hair around their necks, which is more pronounced in males.

Males of both subspecies have long, spiralling horns that can grow up to 160 cm in length and weigh up to 25 kg. The horns are used in fights between males during mating season to establish dominance and access to females. Female Markhors also have horns, but they are shorter and straighter than those of males.

Markhors are known for their agility and ability to climb steep and rocky terrain. They are also able to jump up to 12 feet (3.7 meters) in a single bound, making them one of the most agile wild goats.

In addition to their impressive physical abilities, Markhors are also known for their unique vocalisations. Males produce a distinctive call during mating season that sounds like a combination of a bleat and a roar, while females make a more subdued bleating sound.

Food Habits

Markhors are herbivores, and their diet consists of grasses, leaves, and other vegetation found in their habitat. During the winter months, when food is scarce, they may resort to eating twigs and branches. They are well adapted to living in areas with limited vegetation and can survive for long periods without water.

Habitats

Markhor is a species of wild goat that is found in the mountainous regions of Central Asia, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. They are adapted to living in steep and rocky habitats at elevations ranging from 600 to 3,600 metres above sea level.

In India, the markhor is found in the Kargil region of Jammu and Kashmir, where it inhabits the high-altitude mountains and rocky terrain of the Himalayas. The Indian markhor population is estimated to be around 200 individuals.

Vulnerable Species

The markhor population in India is estimated to be around 200 individuals, which is a very small population and puts the

species at risk of extinction. The Indian markhor is classified as an endangered species under the Wildlife Protection Act of India, 1972.

The main threats to the Indian markhor include habitat loss and degradation, hunting, and competition with domestic livestock for resources. The expansion of human settlements and agriculture into the markhor's natural habitat has led to a loss of suitable feeding and breeding grounds. Hunting for meat, trophies, and traditional medicine also remains a significant threat, despite being illegal under Indian law.

Conservation efforts to protect the Indian markhor include habitat restoration, anti-poaching patrols, and community education programs. In 2014, the Wildlife Trust of India launched a project aimed at conserving the markhor population in the Kargil region. The project involves working with local communities to raise awareness about the importance of conserving the species and implementing measures to reduce human-wildlife conflicts.

While the exact number of Indian markhor individuals is not known, the species' population is small and threatened. Continued conservation efforts will be necessary to ensure the survival of the Indian markhor in the wild.

Protected Areas

Markhor is a species of wild goat that is found in the mountainous regions of Central Asia, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. In India, markhor is primarily found in the Kargil region of Jammu and Kashmir, where it inhabits the high-altitude mountains and rocky terrain of the Himalayas.

There are several national parks and wildlife sanctuaries in India that are known to be the natural habitats of markhor.

Hemis National Park in Ladakh, Jammu, and Kashmir, is the largest national park in India and is home to several species of mammals, including markhor.

Kishtwar National Park in the Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir is known for its diverse flora and fauna, including the markhor.

Dachigam National Park near Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir is known for its population of endangered Himalayan species, including markhor.

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.