

Pygmy Hog

Origin

The Pygmy Hog (*Porcula salvania*) is a small, endangered wild pig found only in the grasslands and forests of the southern foothills of the Himalayas in India, Bhutan, and Nepal. The Pygmy Hog is believed to be the sole survivor of a group of primitive pigs that were widespread in Asia during the Pleistocene epoch, about 1.6 million to 10,000 years ago.

The Pygmy Hog is thought to have evolved from an ancestral group of pigs that migrated from Africa to Eurasia about 25 million years ago. These ancestral pigs were small and forest-dwelling, and over time they diversified into many different species, including the Pygmy Hog.

The Pygmy Hog's closest living relatives are other small pig species, such as the Visayan Warty Pig (*Sus cebifrons*) of the Philippines and the Javan Warty Pig (*Sus verrucosus*) of Indonesia.

It is unclear exactly how the Pygmy Hog arrived in India, but it is thought that they may have migrated there from Southeast Asia during a period of climate change around 10,000 years ago. The Pygmy Hog is now restricted to a few isolated populations in India, Bhutan, and Nepal, and conservation efforts are underway to protect and restore their habitat and population numbers.

Distribution and Population in India



The Pygmy Hog (*Porcula salvania*) is a small, critically endangered wild pig species that is native to India, specifically the northeastern region of the country. Pygmy Hogs are found in a few isolated pockets of tall grasslands, wetlands, and reed beds in the foothills of the Himalayas, in the states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

It is believed that Pygmy Hogs have been present in India for thousands of years. They are thought to have evolved from an ancestral group of pigs that were widespread in Asia during the Pleistocene epoch, about 1.6 million to 10,000 years ago. Pygmy Hogs are believed to be the only surviving member of this ancient group of pigs.

The distribution of Pygmy Hogs in India has become highly fragmented due to habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation, which have resulted from human activities such as agriculture, logging, and infrastructure development. As a result, Pygmy Hog populations are now found in only a few areas.

Features of Pygmy Hog

Appearance

The Pygmy Hog (*Porcula salvania*) is a small, stocky, and

critically endangered wild pig species that is typically only 25 to 30 centimetres tall at the shoulder, and weighs between 8 to 15 kilograms. They are roughly the size of a domestic cat, making them one of the smallest wild pigs in the world.

Pygmy Hogs have short, bristly hair that is dark brown to black in colour, with paler underparts. They have a distinctive white crest of hair along the spine, which is raised when the animal is agitated or alarmed. Males and females have similar physical appearances, with no significant differences in size or coloration.

Lifestyle

Pygmy Hogs are social animals, living in groups of up to 15 individuals. These groups are led by a dominant female, and consist of both males and females. They are diurnal, meaning that they are active during the day and sleep in burrows at night.

When Pygmy Hogs give birth, they typically have litters of three to six offspring, which are born after a gestation period of around 100 days. The young are weaned after about two months, and they reach adulthood at around one year of age. They become sexually mature at around two years of age.

Food Habits

Pygmy Hogs are omnivorous, feeding on a variety of foods including roots, tubers, insects, small mammals, and birds.

Habitats

They are typically found in tall grasslands, wetlands, and reed beds, and prefer areas with dense vegetation and ample water sources. As they are small animals, they prefer to be hiding in thick vegetation most of the time.

Vulnerable Species

The Pygmy Hog is a vulnerable species. It was first listed as vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 1986 and has remained on the vulnerable list in subsequent assessments.

Pygmy Hogs are vulnerable due to a number of factors, the primary ones being habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation. The grasslands and wetlands where they live are being destroyed and converted to agriculture and other human uses, which has resulted in a significant reduction in the area of suitable habitat available for Pygmy Hogs. As a result, their populations have become highly fragmented, isolated, and susceptible to local extinction.

Other threats to Pygmy Hogs include hunting by humans and predation by wild dogs and other predators. Pygmy Hogs are also vulnerable to diseases that are spread by domestic pigs, which can infect and decimate wild pig populations.

Protected Areas

In India, Pygmy Hogs are protected under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, which provides legal protection to all wildlife species in the country. The Pygmy Hog is also listed as a Schedule I species under the act, which offers the highest level of protection.

Pygmy Hogs are found in a few protected areas in India, which provide a safe haven for the species and its habitat.

Located in the northeastern state of Assam, Manas National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site that is home to a number of endangered species, including the Pygmy Hog. The park covers an area of 950 square kilometres and has a mix of grasslands, wetlands, and forests that provide suitable habitats for Pygmy Hogs.

Located in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, Nameri National Park covers an area of 200 square kilometres and is home to a number of endangered species, including the Pygmy Hog.

Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the state of Assam, covers an area of 220 square kilometres and is home to a number of endangered species, including the Pygmy Hog. The sanctuary has a mix of grasslands, wetlands, and forests that provide suitable habitats for Pygmy Hogs.

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