

# Wild Water buffaloes

Wild Bubalus arnee, also known as the wild water buffalo, is a subspecies of water buffalo that is native to Southeast Asia, particularly in the Indomalayan region. Unlike domesticated water buffaloes, wild water buffaloes are much larger and heavier, with a stocky, robust build and large, curved horns. They have a dark brown to black coat with a thick hide that is covered with sparse hair.

Wild water buffaloes are mainly found in marshy areas, riverine forests, and grasslands in regions such as India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Southeast Asia. They are herbivorous and feed on a variety of vegetation, including grasses, leaves, and water plants.

Wild water buffaloes are considered endangered due to habitat loss, hunting, and hybridization with domesticated water buffaloes, which has resulted in a loss of genetic diversity. In India, the wild water buffalo is listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List and is protected under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. Conservation efforts are underway to protect and restore wild water buffalo populations in their natural habitats.

Sl. No.	Characteristics	Description
1	Common Name	Wild Water Buffalo
2	Scientific Name	Bubalus arnee
3	Length	2.4 to 3.4 metres (7.9 to 11.2 feet)
4	Colour	Dark brown or black with sparse hair

5	Height / girth (For animals – height, for fishes/reptiles – girth of the body)	1.5 to 1.9 metres (4.9 to 6.2 feet) at the shoulder
6	Tail length (if it's a mammal)	60 to 100 centimetres (24 to 39 inches)
7	Height till shoulder (if it's a mammal)	1.5 to 1.9 metres (4.9 to 6.2 feet)
8	Average weight	Males: 700 to 1200 kg (1500 to 2600 lbs); Females: 400 to 700 kg (880 to 1500 lbs)
9	Food habits	Grazers; feed on grasses, reeds, and aquatic plants
10	Habitat	Wetlands, swamps, and grasslands in South and Southeast Asia, including India, Nepal, Bhutan, Thailand, and Cambodia
11	Any interesting facts about them	Wild Water Buffaloes are considered one of the most dangerous animals in the world due to their unpredictable nature and aggressive behaviour; They are excellent swimmers and can often be found submerged in water to escape from predators

## Appearance

The wild water buffalo, also known as the Asian water buffalo (*Bubalus arnee*), is a large bovine species native to South and Southeast Asia.

Wild water buffaloes typically have dark grey to black coats, which are often lighter around the muzzle and eyes. They also have a distinctive “V” shape on their forehead, with a lighter

coloration in the centre.

Adult males (known as bulls) can weigh up to 1,200 kg (2,600 lb) and stand up to 1.8 metres (5.9 ft) tall at the shoulder. Adult females (known as cows) are slightly smaller, weighing up to 700 kg (1,500 lb) and standing up to 1.5 metres (4.9 ft) tall at the shoulder.

Wild water buffaloes have large, curved horns that can span up to 2 metres (6.6 ft) in length. They also have a massive, barrel-shaped body, short, powerful legs, and a wide, flattened head. Their thick, bristly fur helps protect them from insects and sun exposure.

Wild water buffaloes are well-adapted to aquatic environments and are excellent swimmers. They also have a reputation for being fiercely territorial and protective of their young. In addition, they are known for their remarkable strength, which has made them valuable for agricultural work and transportation in many parts of Asia. However, they are also considered endangered due to habitat loss and hunting.

## **Food Habits**

In terms of food habits, wild water buffaloes are primarily herbivores and feed on a variety of plants, including grasses, leaves, and aquatic vegetation. They also consume rice, sugarcane, and other crops that are grown in their habitats. They are known to spend a significant amount of time grazing and browsing on vegetation, particularly during the early morning and late afternoon hours. Due to their aquatic nature, they are also able to feed on aquatic plants and swim across rivers and lakes to reach new grazing areas.

## **Habitats**

Wild water buffaloes are native to South and Southeast Asia

and can be found in a variety of habitats, including grasslands, swamps, and forests. Wild water buffaloes are found in various parts of India, including Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Kerala. They are particularly common in the northeastern states of Assam and West Bengal, where they are often found in swamps and wetlands.

## **Vulnerable Species**

Wild water buffalo is classified as a vulnerable species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). In India, the population of wild water buffaloes has declined significantly due to habitat loss, hunting, and competition with domestic water buffaloes.

According to the latest estimates, there are around 4,000-5,000 wild water buffaloes in India. The majority of these individuals are found in the northeastern states of Assam and West Bengal, where they are protected in several national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.

The conversion of wetlands and grasslands into agricultural land and human settlements has significantly reduced the available habitat for wild water buffaloes.

Wild water buffaloes are hunted for their meat, hide, and horns, which are highly valued in some traditional medical practices. The introduction of domestic water buffaloes has resulted in competition for resources, leading to a decline in the wild water buffalo population.

As the human population grows in and around wild water buffalo habitats, conflicts between people and animals can occur, leading to injury or death of both humans and buffaloes.

# Protected Areas

Wild water buffaloes can be found in several national parks and wildlife sanctuaries in India. Here are some of the most notable ones:

Kaziranga National Park, Assam is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is one of the most important habitats for wild water buffaloes in India, with an estimated population of over 1,200 individuals. Kaziranga is also home to a variety of other wildlife, including Indian rhinoceroses, Asian elephants, and tigers.

Another important habitat for wild water buffaloes in Assam, Manas National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a biosphere reserve. The park is also home to several endangered species, including pygmy hogs and golden langurs.

Located in the Brahmaputra Valley, Dibru-Saikhowa National Park is a biodiversity hotspot that supports a variety of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, including wild water buffaloes, Gangetic river dolphins, and feral horses.

Buxa Tiger Reserve in West Bengal is home to a small population of wild water buffaloes, as well as several other endangered species such as clouded leopards and Chinese pangolins.