

The Blackbuck

The Blackbuck (*Antilope cervicapra*), or the Indian Antelope, is a species of antelope native to India and Nepal.

Once widespread throughout the Indian subcontinent, it has become extinct in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Only scattered herds are found in protected areas in India and Nepal.

The blackbuck is easily recognizable through the dark brown to black colour of the upper part of the coat of its males.

This article will further give details about the Indian Antelope within the context of the IAS Exam.

Characteristics of the Blackbuck

The blackbuck is a moderately sized antelope standing upto 74 to 84 cm. They are active during the day and form groups consisting of only females, males and bachelor herds.

The long corkscrew-shaped horns are present only in males, though the females may develop smaller horns. The horns are more longer and divergent in blackbucks from northern and western parts of India

The fur coats of males have two-tone colouration. Its upper parts and outside of the legs are dark brown to black while the underparts and insides of the legs are white.

Blackbuck resemble gazelles closely and they are distinguished through colouring. A gazelle is brown in its upper part while a blackbuck is dark brown or black at the same spot.

To know more about Biodiversity in general, visit the linked article.

Further characteristics of the Blackbuck is discussed in the table below:

Characteristics of a Blackbuck	
Head to Body Length	120 cm
Weight	Males: 20-57 Kg Females: 20-33 Kg
Horn length	35-75 cm
Latin Name	<i>Antilope cervicapra</i>

Habitat	Indian, Nepal, Argentina, United States
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Behaviour and Habitat of Blackbuck

The blackbuck is diurnal in nature, as in active during the day though it becomes less active at noon. It can run at a speed of 80 kms/hr.

They inhabit grassy plains and thin forest areas with easily available water resources.

The herd size largely depends on availability of forage and the type of habitat the blackbuck lives in. Large herds have an advantage over the smaller ones in the sense that threats can be detected faster although individual vigilance is significantly low.

Territories are marked by males as per distribution of female groups. And the presence of female herds itself is determined by the type of habitat.



Conservation Status of Blackbuck

The IUCN Red List designated the blackbuk as 'least concerned'. In India, hunting of blackbuck is prohibited under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. It inhabits several protected areas of India, including:

- Gir National Park, Gujarat
- Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary, Bihar
- Kanha National Park, Madhya Pradesh
- Ranthambore National Park, Rajasthan
- Ranebennur Blackbuck Sanctuary, Karnataka
- Vallanadu Wildlife Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu

In 2017, the Uttar Pradesh State Government approved the plan of setting up the Blackbuck Conservation Reserve in the trans-Yamuna belt near Prayagraj. It would be the first conservation reserve dedicated to the blackbuck

Blackbuck populations were also introduced in the United States and Argentina. In the United States their population numbered at 35,000 individuals in the early 2000s while in Argentina they numbered at 8600.

The blackbuck population in India stands at 25,000 in protected areas. The main threat to its population is illegal hunting and habitat destruction.