



Blackbuck

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Thirty-one blackbucks died from a bacterial infection at Karnataka's Kittur Rani Chennamma Zoo in Belagavi, prompting a high-level probe ordered by the state Forest Minister.

Physical Characteristics

- **Sexual Dimorphism:** The species exhibits strong sexual dimorphism. Adult males have a striking dark brown to black coat on their upper parts and the outsides of their legs, contrasting sharply with white underparts and a white ring around their eyes. Females and juveniles are a yellowish or light tan color.
- **Horns:** Males possess long, ringed, corkscrew-shaped (spiralling) horns that can measure 35 to 75 cm (14 to 30 in). Females typically do not have horns, although some may develop small ones.
- **Speed:** Blackbucks are among the fastest land animals, capable of running at speeds of up to 80 km/h (50 mph). They rely on their excellent eyesight and speed to detect and escape predators like wolves and leopards.

Habitat and Diet

- **Habitat:** Native to the Indian subcontinent, blackbucks inhabit open habitats such as grassy plains, scrubland, and thinly forested areas. They require access to perennial water sources and may travel long distances to find them.
- **Diet:** They are herbivores that primarily graze on low grasses. When grasses are scarce, especially during the dry summer months, they also browse on leaves, pods, fruits, and flowers, and may forage on agricultural crops.

Behavior

- **Social Structure:** Blackbucks are gregarious animals that live in herds of 5 to 50 individuals, though larger aggregations have been observed in optimal conditions. Herd types typically include:
- **Female herds:** composed of females and their young.
- **Bachelor herds:** composed of all-male members.
- **Territorial males:** that defend specific areas, especially during the breeding season.
- **Communication:** They use a variety of communication methods, including scent marking with preorbital and interdigital glands, vocalizations like warning whistles, and body posturing.
- **Reproduction:** Mating occurs year-round, with peak rutting seasons. Dominant males establish and aggressively defend territories to secure mating opportunities with visiting females (a lek-based mating system). After a gestation period of approximately six months, females give birth to a single calf, which is precocial (mobile and relatively mature) soon after birth.