

Chinkara

Indian Gazelle
(*Gazella Bennettii*)



A small gazelle of slender, graceful build.

The Chinkara (*Gazella bennettii*) or Indian Gazelle is a species of gazelle found in south Asia. It lives in grasslands and desert areas in India, Bangladesh and parts of Iran and Pakistan. It is also known as the Indian Gazelle (*Gazella gazella bennetti*).

A small, gazelle of slender graceful build it stands at 65 centimetres and weighs about 23 kilograms. There is the usual white streak down each side of the face, so characteristic of all gazelles and a dusky patch above the nose. Its summer coat is a reddish-buff colour, with smooth, glossy fur. In winter the white belly and throat fur is in greater contrast. The sides of the face have dark chestnut stripes from the corner of the eye to the muzzle, bordered by white stripes. The horns of the male appear almost straight when seen from the front; in profile they take a lightly S-shaped curve with 15 to 25 rings and average 25-30 centimetres. Hornless females are not uncommon.

It is a shy animal and avoids human habitation. It can go without water for long periods and can get sufficient fluids from plants and dew. Although most individuals are seen alone, they can sometimes be spotted in groups of up to four animals.

Certain researchers consider the decline in the Chinkara population as the reason behind the extinction of the Asiatic Cheetah in India. Its population is on the decline due to it being hunted for game.

Distribution : Chinkar are less gregarious than Blackbuck and live in smaller herds. The average size of group is 3 but occasionally herds of up to 25 animals are seen. .Chinkara is widely distributed in India. It is mostly found in Rajasthan, north western and central parts of India. They could also be spotted in the Bandhavgarh and Ranthambore National Park.

Reproduction: Weaning: At about two months. Sexual Maturity: At two years of age. Life span: Unknown. Gestation Period: About five to five and a half months. Young per Birth: Generally 1, but twins have been reported quite frequently. The rut appears to occur in two seasons, one lasting from the end of monsoon up to early October and again in the late Spring from March to the end of April. The births occur mainly in April.

Social Behavior: In its wide roaming habits, tendency to keep to small groups of two to three individuals and its general alertness, the Chinkara is very similar to the Goitered Gazelle. The Chinkara is almost wholly nocturnal in foraging activity, though they will emerge to start feeding before sunset.

Diet: The food consists of grass, of various leaves, crops, and fruits such as pumpkins and melons and can go without water for days.

IUCN Data



Range map of Indian gazelle (IUCN)

Range covers much of western and central India, extending through Pakistan, south-western Afghanistan into north-central Iran. The Thar Desert of western India remains a stronghold. Distribution in Pakistan has been greatly reduced by overhunting and although still widespread, populations are scattered (Habibi 2001b). In Iran, distribution is also scattered extending to Kavir NP in Tehran Province (Hemami and Groves 2001

Population: Numbers in India have been estimated at more than 100,000 with 80,000 in the Tahr Desert (Rahmani 2001). Numbers in Pakistan have declined due to overhunting, but no current estimate is available (Habibi 2001b). Current status in Afghanistan is unknown but they are also believed to be very rare (Habibi 2001a). Around 1300 were estimated for Iran (Hemami and Groves 2001). **Population Trend:** Stable

Habitat and Ecology: Inhabits arid areas, including sand deserts, flat plains and hills, dry scrub and light forest. Ranges to 1,500 m in Pakistan (Habibi 2001b). They are facultative drinkers, and so can live in very arid areas. They sometimes raid fields cultivated with rape seed and sorghum in desert regions (Habibi 2001b). **Systems:** Terrestrial

Major Threat(s): Indiscriminate hunting has adversely affected gazelles in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan (hunted for meat and to a lesser degree for trophies). Habitat loss through overgrazing, conversion to agriculture and industrial development is also a factor.

Trouble for film stars

Aamir was accused of filming a Chinkara deer, a Schedule I animal under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, for commercial purposes without taking due permission, during the shooting of the movie Laagan, for which most of the shooting was held in Kutch in 2000.

The Bollywood actor Salman Khan was also accused of the alleged killing of chinkara gazelles in Kutch in 1998.

References: S. H. Prater " The Book of Indian Animals, Wikipedia, IUCN Red List