

Ladakh's Himalayan Blue Sheep


While driving through the wintery white wonderland of Leh, through the mist hopped a little Himalayan Bharal *Pseudois nayaur*. The first glimpse of the caprid, over sheets of ice, was a moment indeed.

The slate grey and the blue sheen skin shimmered in the morning light. Commonly called the Blue Sheep, it is medium-sized one, grows to 69-91 cm tall; males are slightly larger than the female.

Bharals are found together in families. Their typical day switches between graze, stroll, and laze. They are incredibly active during the daytime, and towards the dusk, they generally disappear to rest.

They graze on grasses, however, occasionally browse on shrubs and herbs too. Though they seem friendly from a distance, they do shy away. Highly camouflaged, they make use of the rocks to hide away and freeze.



A photograph of two Bharal goats (Capra tibetana) perched on a rocky ridge. The goat on the left is a young kid, looking towards the camera. The goat on the right is an adult with small, curved horns, also looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred, high-altitude landscape with reddish-brown soil and sparse vegetation under a clear blue sky.

Beginning November until January is the rut season when the males rub their horns on trees or shrubs. The males undergo physiological changes and extend a variety of stunts to grab the attention of female bharals. The young ones arrive during the months of June/July.

Snow Leopards are their only threat. Most monasteries in the highland protect and conserve the Bharals found around them.

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