

# The Need for Conservation Laws Coherent with Communities for Success

The **Chiru**, an antelope native to the open alpine and cold steppe environments of Jammu & Kashmir in India, is a remarkable sight in the wild. However, human practices threaten its survival, raising the risk that future generations may never witness this magnificent creature.

The Chiru's fur is distinctive, consisting of long guard hairs and a silky undercoat of shorter fibers. Its fur is exceptionally soft and warm, making it highly sought after for the production of Shahtoosh shawls. Unfortunately, this demand has driven the species to the brink of extinction. Recognizing this threat, the Indian government, under the Wildlife (Protection) Act [WPA] of 1972, banned the trade of shahtoosh in 2002. The WPA is an act to protect species which are placed under different schedules. While this was a positive step for conservationists, it disrupted the livelihoods of many locals, as tourism and handicrafts are critical sources of income in the region.

The trade in shahtoosh is fraught with challenges and bitter truths:

1. Many members of the public are unaware of the origins of shahtoosh wool, often misled by false propaganda.
2. Weavers are grossly exploited by a handful of powerful traders.
3. The chiru wool trade frequently operates on a barter system, bypassing fair economic practices.

Despite the ban, illegal trade in shahtoosh continues and this persistence highlights the failure of conservation efforts to consider the intricacies of regional politics and the exclusion of local communities in policy implementation.

To address these issues, the concept of Joint Forest Management (JFM) was introduced. This initiative aimed to involve diverse stakeholders, including forest officials, local communities, and politicians, in conservation efforts. While the shahtoosh ban disrupted the local economy, JFM sought to provide alternative livelihoods but unfortunately, both initiatives fell short of their goals due to various implementation challenges.

These experiences serve as a critical lesson for conservationists: sustainable conservation policies must be grounded in local realities, ensuring long-term success by balancing ecological needs with the socio-economic well-being of affected communities.

Disclaimer- This content has been written by referring to a scientific article titled "The need of conservation laws coherent with communities for complete success" by Ramanan & Upadhyay (2018).

## Reference

**Ramanan, S.S. & L. Upadhyay (2018).** The need of conservation laws coherent with communities for complete success. *Journal of Threatened Taxa* 10(8): 12144–12145. <https://doi.org/10.11609/jott.4262.10.8.12144-12145>

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