

The Four-horned Antelope (Chousingha)

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Introduction

The four-horned antelope commonly known as Chousingha (*Tetracerus quadricornis*) is a unique even toed hooved mammal, with males having four horns. This beautiful small animal is found only in the peninsular India. Once upon a time these unique creatures were distributed over a vast area of country but due to loss and degradation of habitat and hunting now they are confined to small areas of central India and have been placed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) act, 1972 of India.

Regarding historical background, Colonel Alexander, A. Kinloch had observed in his diary titled "Large Game Shooting" in Chotanagar, in 1883, "I saw several four horns but as I was hunting Gaur, I would not fire at them."

But for a very long time these little majestic animals have not been reported in Bihar and the Wildlifers have almost excluded Bihar from its distribution range.

A fawn of this species was caught in Rampura forest of Ranka West Range of Garhwa South Forest Division in Bihar in the month of March, 1996. This animal has been presently kept in the Ranchi Biological Park. Initially it was confused for a barking deer but the villagers of Rampura told that this animal is of different species. After that many literatures were consulted to identify that animal. Subsequently the need for describing the main identifying features or distinguishing characters of the animal to help the forest staff in field was thought of.

Objective of the article

The main objective of this article is to enlist the prominent distinctive features of Chousinghas (Four horned antelopes) and thereby drawing a conclusion about the identification of this species. Also this article tries to confirm that four horned Antelopes have not become extinct in Bihar as is widely believed. Since this animal resembles the barking deer (Muntjac) so the villagers and even the foresters confuse it with barking deer. Hence it has been described that how it can be distinguished here with barking deer.

Place from where the fawn was caught

The fawn was caught from the forest of Rampura Protected Forest, which is towards the north-east of the river Kanhar, which separates M.P and Bihar. This is a fairly dense mixed forest, mainly of Sal with many open patches. Dhardhari nala, a tributary of Kanhar, is a perennial source of water for animals. Topography is quite undulating. On the other side of the river, i.e., in the M.P., are the forests of Tula Protected Forest and Chhatwa Protected Forest, which are similar in composition to those in Bihar. The entire area both in Bihar as well as in M.P. is full with numerous seasonal streams with tracks in bed. Garhwa forest division has had the distinction of having too many Wildlife in pre-independence era and therefore numerous separate shooting blocks existed. The current working Plan of Garhwa North Forest Division enlists in its fauna, some of the endangered animals like Tiger, Panther, Wild dog, Chinkara, Gaur, Magar, Python, Indian Cobra, Sarus Crane and Red Crested Pochard (Migratory) etc. Garhwa South Division working plan does not contain the list of fauna but due to the

similarity of habitat and other environmental conditions, most of the animals occurring in Garhwa North Division are likely to occur in Garhwa South Division also.

In view of the richness in fauna, Working Plan of Garhwa South and Garhwa North Division propose for establishing a Wildlife sanctuary in each of them. But due to lackadaisical pursuence of the cause, not much have been done in this direction. As a result, the richness of fauna has already suffered to a great deal and is in danger of being lost for ever. This area need special attention of wild lifers.

Methodology

A number of books of references were studied and along with detailed examination of the creature caught and the barking deer. After careful analysis, it is concluded as follows:

Conclusion

From the basic distinctive character of Chousingha and those observed in the animals to be identified, it has been confirmed that the later is none other than a female Chousingha. (*Tetracerus quadricornis*).

To draw out distinctive characteristics of Chousinghas a comparison table has been made (next page).

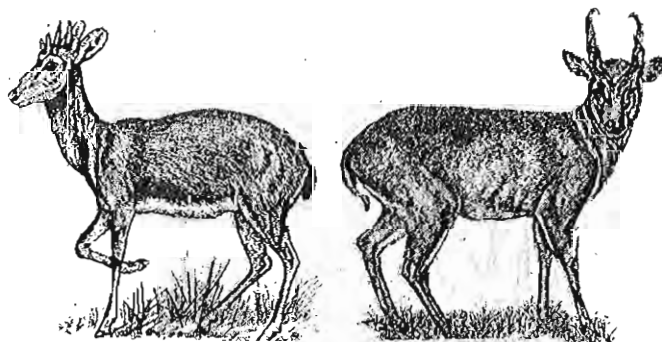
For field forest staff

When seen from distance Chousinghas resemble the barking deers in colour but by the jerky manner of walking or running of former and comparatively heavy built of the latter the two can be differentiated.

Field staffs in this region often confuse it with barking deer. So it is pertinent to point out the clear-cut difference between the two. Barking deer have two very prominent ribs in "V" form on their face and two long pedicles on which the antlers are borne in both male and female. There is sharp distinction between colours also. Barking deer are deep chestnut while chousinghas are light dull brown. Thus they can differentiate chousinghas.

References

1. Brander, A.A. Dunbar-Wild Animals In Central India.
2. Grzimek, B - Grzimek's Encyclopædia (Mammals) Vol. 5
3. Kinloch, A A - Large Game Shooting
4. Nair, S.M. - Endangered Animals of India and their Conservation



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Comparison between distinctive characters of Chausingha and the animals to be identified

Distinctive Characters of Chausingha

Animal to be identified

Native Names	Bhousingha, Chowka (Hindi) Bherki Bekra Jangli-Bakra, Bhir-Kura (male) Bhir (female in Gondi, Bhirul of (Bheels) Kotri (Bastar), Kond-guri, (Kannad), Konda-gori, Telugu (Jerdon), Doda (Hindi Kinloch), Narn Komboomarn (Tamil), Koondo Georee Poki (Kar.) Sterndale says he has also heard these names being given to barking deer (the Rib faced deer or <i>Muntiacus muntjac</i>)	Bhedra, Bhedri in region from where they have been caught.
Height	Male 25" (65 Cm.) (Prater) -24-26" (Sterndale) - Good buck 26" (Brander) - 60 Cm. (Nair) (Height at shoulder) - h-in: (Nair) - 40-42" (Sterndale) - tail length – 126 mm: (Nair)	Since the animal caught was infant, hence could not be compared.
Horn	Only males have horns, (Four in number) (Females Hornless) front pair – 1"/21" sometimes mere bony knobs inner pair – 3- 4" (Prater)	Female, horn less
Eyes	Bigger and bright as compared to deers of same size. Eye ball is very prominent and seems to be protruding out wards. There is a gland under the eye which outwardly takes the form of a vertical slit of black, nearly hairless skin.	Much bigger then those of a male barking deer of same Size. Eye balls are very prominent and look much similar to those of Nilgai kept in the same enclosure. There is a black vertical line of hairless skin originating from the eye.
Head	The skull has a convex aspect	Skull has a convex aspect.
Leg	There is a dark stripe down the front of each leg. It is broader and more defined on the fore legs. There is a pair of well developed glands between the false hooves of the hindlegs in both male and females.	There is a dark stripe down the front of each leg, which is broader and much prominent on the fore legs. There is a well developed gland of slightly pinkish colour. Hair around this gland are longer and whirling.
Colour	Dull red brown, brownish bay dull light brown above and whitish inside the limbs and in the middle of the belly muzzle, edges of ears and fetlocks are dark. Fetlocks some time ringed with light colour. Old bucks are yellowish.	Dull light brown above and whitish inside the limbs and in the middle of belly. Fetlocks, muzzle and edges of ears are dark.
Hair	Coarse and except in summer does not lie on to the skin.	Coarse and erect (not lying on the skin) as observed in the month of January, a cold month.
Group behaviour	Mostly occur singly, more than one are rarely seen, generally a mother with fawns. They are very shy and swift, dashing into dense cover at the first sign of danger walk and run in a jerky manner, Mating takes place generally in the rainy season and the young are born in the cold month (December – February in this region, Gestation period is about six months)	Caught lonely, no other animals were seen around. The animal was caught in very young age, much likely to be abandoned by its mother as they saw the presence of human beings at close range. The animal was caught in the month of March, so she might have been born in February end or first week of March.
Conclusion: From the basic distinctive character of Chausingha and those observed in the animals to be identified, it has been confirmed that the later is none other than a female Chausingha (<i>Tetracerous quadricornis</i>).		