

Procapra picticaudata

No image

Common name: Tibetan
Gazelle

Local names: Goa (Tibetan,
Ladakhi)

Classification:

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Mammalia

Order: Artiodactyla

Family: Bovidae

Genus: *Procapra*

Species: *picticaudata*

Profile:

The Tibetan gazelle is a stocky animal that inhabits the Tibetan plateau. Its barrel shaped body is sandy brown to grayish brown in summer and turns pale during winter. The neck and head are paler than the main body and the underparts are whitish in colour. It has a bulky head with long pointed ears, long neck, thin fine legs and a short black-tipped tail. The animal has a body length of 90-105 cm, a shoulder height of 55-65 cm and weighs about 15 kg. The females have no horns while the males have 30 cm long tapering, ridged horns. Juveniles have a slightly paler coat. A prominent feature is the large white heart shaped rump patch, surrounded by a rust-brown band. The animals have extremely well developed sense of smell, hearing and sight.

Lifespan: Unknown

Distribution: The species occurs across almost the entire Tibetan plateau (Chinese-controlled Territory) and a small part of India. Over 99% of its range lies in China. In India, it occurs in Ladakh and northern Sikkim. Presently, the Ladakhi population of the species is concentrated in the Hanle Valley and some neighbouring areas. The Tibetan gazelle inhabits high altitude hills and plains. It also grazes along wetland margins. In Ladakh, the population is found at high altitudes of 4500-5500 m. The animal has become locally extinct in some regions of Ladakh and Tibet.

Population: Around 1,00,000 (No accurate estimate exists)

Behaviour: The Tibetan gazelle usually occurs in small groups of 4-5 animals. During rut, males often hold small territories where they maintain small harems. They graze mainly in the mornings and afternoons. They are very shy animals and resort to quick flight on the slightest suspicion. Its common predators include the Tibetan wolf, the wild dog and the snow leopard.

- **Diet:** The Tibetan gazelle feeds on grass and herbs. Very rarely has it been observed to drink water.
- **Reproduction:** Mating season: December-January; Birthing season: May; Gestation period: 6 months; Litter size: 1; Weaning: Gradual, without a sharp cut-off; Sexual maturity: 1.5-2 years (both male and female)

Current status:

- **Status:**
 1. IUCN 2008: Near Threatened
 2. CITES 2008: Not listed
- **Threats:**
 1. Habitat loss due to rangeland development and increased domestic livestock population.
 2. Killed for meat and horns.
 3. Fencing of rangelands (it restricts movement and access to forage).

4. Killed by humans as they come into competition with domestic livestock for forage.
5. Lack of genetic diversity leading to increased susceptibility to diseases.

- **Conservation practices:**

1. The Tibetan gazelle is listed as a 'Schedule I' species in the Indian 'Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972.
2. Its range lies within a few protected areas such as Chang Tang, Kekexili, Arjin Shan, Qomolangma, and Sanjiangyuan nature reserves, China.