



The  
Dawood  
Foundation

NATURE SERIES

# The Wild North

Creatures of the Northern Highlands  
and Himalayan Forests

Education Inspiring Social Change

## NORTHERN HIGHLANDS AND HIMALAYAN FORESTS

The northern highlands include lower elevation areas of Potohar and Kashmir regions and higher elevation areas embracing the foothills of Himalayan, Karakorum and Hindukush mountain ranges.

These areas provide an excellent habitat for wildlife in the form of alpine grazing lands, sub-alpine scrub and temperate forests. The areas are difficult for human beings to access, hence, most wildlife is present in reasonable numbers though some are endangered for other reasons. The northern highlands of Pakistan are covered with conifer and scrub forests, which have been reduced to scanty growth in most places.



## SNOW LEOPARD

It prefers living in ridges, cliffs and rock outcrops as these provide, camouflage for stalking and sneaking upon prey. Feeding on a variety of herbivores that are found in their mountain range habitats; the snow leopards are the only known opportunistic predators among big cats.

Conservation status: **Vulnerable**

The snow leopard's fur is whitish to grey with black spots on head and neck.

# HIMALAYAN BROWN BEAR

The Himalayan brown bear is an omnivore and eats grasses, roots and other plants as well as insects and small mammals. It also likes fruits and berries.. It may also prey on large mammals, including sheep and goats. You can usually discover these extremely interesting creatures between the main Himalaya and the cold desert as well as the foothills of the Pakistani Himalaya in northern Pakistan, especially Deosai National Park.

Conservation status: **Least concerned globally but in Pakistan, small and scattered populations exist.**

## FUN FACT

The bears are extremely fast and can run up to 35mph!



# INDIAN WOLF

The Indian wolf is a subspecies of the grey wolf that ranges from Southwest Asia to the Indian Subcontinent. It is a very small wolf, 3 feet in length. It belongs to the family of dogs and lives and hunts in packs, led by an alpha male. The diet is composed of small wild animals. This includes rodents, rabbits, and racoons.

Conservation status: **Least Concern**



## FUN FACT

Wolves are excellent hunters and have been found to be living in more places in the world than any other mammal except humans.

A photograph of a rhesus monkey sitting on a tree branch. The monkey has brown and grey fur, a pink face, and is looking directly at the camera. The background is a blurred green forest.

# RHESUS MONKEY

The rhesus monkey is one of the best-known species of old world monkeys. Rhesus monkey is native to India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Burma, Thailand, Afghanistan, Vietnam, southern China, and some neighbouring areas.

The rhesus monkey is brown or grey in colour and has a pink face, which is bereft of fur. It is mostly herbivorous; feeding mainly on fruit, but also eats seeds, roots, buds, bark, and cereals.

Conservation Status: **Least Concern**

## FUN FACT

Rhesus monkeys interact using a variety of facial expressions, vocalizations, body postures, and gestures. Perhaps the most common facial expression the macaque makes is the "silent bared teeth" face. Rhesus monkey was also the first primate to go into space.

A photograph of a markhor goat standing on a rocky ledge. The goat has thick, light brown fur and large, dark, spiraling horns that curve backwards and then forwards. The background is a blurred green forest.

## MARKHOR

The markhor is the national animal of Pakistan and belongs to the family of goats. There are two types of markhors in Pakistan; flared horned markhor in KP, Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu Kashmir with an estimated population of 5000 and the Straight horned markhor in Balochistan and a small population in KP with about 3000 animals. Markhor lives in the mountainous regions. Its diet is based on the grass during the spring and summer, while leaves, flowers, herbs, twigs, and shrubs are mostly consumed during the autumn and winter.

Markhors are found in northeastern Afghanistan, northern and central Pakistan, Northern India, southern Tajikistan, southern Uzbekistan and in the Himalayas.

Conservation status: **Near Threatened**

### FUN FACT

Word "markhor" means "snake" in Persian language and it probably refers to the shape of the horns (that look like a coiled snake) or the ability of this animal to kill a snake.

# KASHMIR MUSK DEER



The Kashmir musk deer species resides in Afghanistan, India and Pakistan. In Pakistan, the musk deer is found in the remote higher mountain regions of Gilgit, Baltistan, Azad Jammu Kashmir, Upper Swat, and Hazara. The musk deer is also found in Deosai National Park. They eat grass, moss and tender shoots and in winter, twigs, buds, and lichens.

Conservation Status: **Endangered**

## FUN FACT

The male has tusk-like teeth called fangs which help in fighting.

Male musk deer have a gland that produces musk. Musk is used to make perfumes and soaps. It is also used in Traditional Chinese medicine. One musk gland has about 25 to 30 grams of musk. Musk deer have been hunted and killed for its musk.



## WESTERN TRAGOPAN

The western tragopan is found along the Himalayas from north-eastern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in northern Pakistan as well as in the west to Uttarakhand within India to the east. They feed mostly on leaves, shoots and seeds, but also consume insects and other invertebrates. Like most pheasants, it roosts in trees singly or in pairs except during nesting. Deforestation has had a serious impact on its habitat in Pakistan along with hunting, trapping and disturbance due to livestock and humans. The largest population of the western tragopan is in Palas Valley.

Conservation status: **Vulnerable**



## CHAKOOR OR CHUKAR

The chukar partridge, chakoor or Chukor has well marked black and white bars on the flanks and a black band running from the forehead across the eye and running down the head to form a necklace that encloses a white throat. This bird can be found in parts of the Middle East and South Asia including, Palestine, Lebanon, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, along with the inner ranges of the Western Himalayas to Nepal.

Conservation status: **Least Concern**

### FUN FACT

The chukar is the national bird of Iraq and Pakistan.

Chukars are ground foragers and are predominantly vegetarian as adults; chicks are fed mainly insects. Chukars' preferred food are the leaves and seeds of annual and perennial grasses. Chukars also eat seeds from pinyon pine, sunflower, rough fiddleneck, and tansy mustard.

# PEREGRINE FALCON

The peregrine falcon is known as the peregrine, and historically as the duck hawk in North America. It is a widespread bird of prey in the family Falconidae. A large, crow-sized falcon, has a blue-grey back, barred white underparts, and a black head.

The peregrine falcon feeds almost exclusively on medium-sized birds such as pigeons and doves, waterfowl, songbirds, and waders. It is extensively used in falconry (keeping and training falcons) and that is the foremost threat to its population in Pakistan.

Conservation status: **Least Concern**

## FUN FACT

The peregrine is renowned for its speed, reaching over 320 km/h making it the fastest member of the animal kingdom.

# MARCO POLO SHEEP



The Marco Polo sheep is a subspecies of argali sheep, named after Marco Polo. Their habitat is the mountainous regions of Central Asia. Marco Polo sheep are distinguishable mostly by their large size and spiralling horns.

Conservation status: **Near Threatened**

The vegetation preferred by the species varies based on elevation and area. In higher elevations, they predominantly eat cereals, sedges and forbs. At mid-elevation habitats, they regularly feed on bushes and mesophyte grasses.

## FUN FACT

Number of rings on the horns indicates the age of male sheep.



## RED FOX

The red fox is the largest of the true foxes and one of the most widely distributed members of the order Carnivora, being present across the entire Northern Hemisphere from the Arctic Circle to North Africa, North America, and Eurasia. The species primarily feeds on small rodents, though it may also target rabbits, game birds, reptiles, invertebrates and young ungulates. Fruit and vegetable matter is also eaten sometimes.

Conservation Status:  
**Least Concern**

### FUN FACT

Foxes have whiskers on their legs and face, which help them to navigate.

## PUNJAB URIAL

The urial, arkars or shapo, is a subspecies group of the wild sheep *Ovis orientalis*. It is found in western central Asia from northeastern Iran and western Kazakhstan to Pakistan's Balochistan and Chitral, as well as being found in Ladakh, India.

Noticeable features are the reddish-brown long fur that fades during winter; males are characterized by a black ruff stretching from the neck to the chest and large horns.

Conservation Status: **Vulnerable**



A close-up photograph of two Indian flying foxes hanging upside down from a tree branch. The bats have brown and orange fur on their bodies and dark, leathery wings. They are positioned diagonally across the frame, with one bat in the foreground and another slightly behind it. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting a forest environment.

## INDIAN FLYING FOX

Commonly known as a fruit bat, the Indian flying fox is well-known of the four fruit bat species in Pakistan. Bats are the only mammals that are capable of flight. Compared to insectivorous bats, fruit bats are relatively large and with some exceptions, do not navigate by echolocation.

They are herbivores and rely on their keen senses of sight and smell to locate food.

Fruit bats play an important ecological function by spreading the seeds of plants.

Generally, bad publicity is attached to bats, but these are harmless animals.

Conservation Status: **Least Concern**

### FUN FACT

They use both vision and smell to find food.



## BLACK KITE

Black kite's angled wing and distinctive forked tail make them easy to identify. It is also vociferous with a shrill whinnying call. This kite is widely distributed through the temperate and tropical parts of Eurasia and parts of Australasia and Oceania, with the temperate region populations tending to be migratory.

Conservation Status: **Least Concern**

### FUN FACT

They eat almost anything: lizards, birds, small mammals, and insects. They even scavenge at garbage dumps.

A close-up photograph of a dhole, a canid native to Central, South, and Southeast Asia. The dhole has reddish-brown fur, a white underbelly, and striking yellow eyes. It is standing on a thick, gnarled tree branch, looking directly at the camera with a calm expression. The background is a soft-focus green forest.

## DHOLES

The dhole is a canid native to Central, South and Southeast Asia. Other English names for the species include an Asiatic wild dog, Indian wild dog, whistling dog, red dog, and mountain wolf. The dhole is a highly social animal, living in large clans without rigid dominance hierarchies and containing multiple breeding females. Such clans usually consist of 12 individuals, but groups of over 40 are also known.

In tropical forests, the dhole competes with tigers and leopards, targeting somewhat different prey species, but still with substantial dietary overlap.

Conservation status:  
**Endangered**

## INDIAN CRESTED PORCUPINE

The Indian crested porcupine or Indian porcupine is native to southwest and central Asia and in parts of the Middle East. Indian crested porcupines have a very broad and mostly herbivorous diet. They consume a variety of natural and agricultural plant material, including roots, bulbs, fruits, grains, drupe and tubers. They gnaw at bones to supplement their herbivore diet. The spikes on the body are called quills that offer a powerful defence mechanism. They also rattle their quills to make a loud noise to warn other predators or to communicate with each other. They live in burrows.

Conservation Status: **Least Concern**



## HARES

Hares are classified into the same family as rabbits. They are similar in size and form to rabbits and eat the same diet. They are generally herbivorous and long-eared, they are fast runners, and they typically live solitarily or in pairs.

Conservation Status:  
**Least Concern**

### FUN FACT

Hares are usually larger than rabbits and have longer ears.

## LONG-EARED HEDGEHOG

The long-eared hedgehog is a species of hedgehog native to Central Asian countries and some countries of the Middle East. This hedgehog is insectivorous but may also feed on small vertebrates and plants. The long-eared hedgehog lives in burrows that it either makes or finds and is distinguished by its long ears. It is considered one of the smallest middle eastern hedgehogs.

Conservation Status: **Least Concern**

### FUN FACT

Newborns look like chubby white caterpillars.



## RATEL OR HONEY BADGER

The honey badger is also known as the ratel is native to Africa, Southwest Asia, and the Indian subcontinent. The honey badger has a long body but is distinctly thick-set and broad across the back. Its skin is remarkably loose and allows it to turn and twist freely within it. Honey badgers favour bee honey, and will often search for beehives to get it, which earns them their name. They are also carnivorous and will eat insects, frogs, tortoises, rodents, turtles, lizards, snakes, eggs, and birds. Honey badgers have even been known to chase away young lions and take their kills.

Conservation Status: **Least Concern**

### FUN FACT

It has few natural predators because of its thick skin and ferocious defensive abilities.

## STRIPED HYENA

The striped hyena is a species of hyena native to North and East Africa, the Middle East, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. The striped hyena is primarily a scavenger which feeds mainly on ungulate carcasses in different stages of decomposition, fresh bones, cartilages, ligaments and bone marrow. It has very powerful jaws and crushes long bones into fine particles and swallows them, though sometimes entire bones are eaten whole.

Conservation Status: **Least Concern**



## LEOPARD GECKO

The leopard gecko is a cathemeral, ground-dwelling lizard naturally found in the highlands of Asia.

Unlike most geckos, all species in the genus possess movable eyelids, and cannot climb up smooth surfaces.

Conservation Status: **Least Concern**

## FUN FACT

It has become a well-established and popular pet in captivity.

