

Bihar to start conservation programme for endangered Blackbucks

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In news—Bihar is planning to launch a conservation drive for endangered blackbucks **in Buxar district**.

Key updates

- A 12-acre rescue centre for the antelopes has been envisioned in the district for the purpose.
- The move comes nearly a decade after a blackbuck safari project to attract tourists, generate revenue and create awareness for their conservation was scrapped by the state government before it could take off.
- Hundreds of blackbuck, **locally known as kala hiran or krishna mrig**, roam freely near forest and riverine belt of Buxar as well as the neighbouring Bhojpur and Kaimur districts.
- Now, blackbucks injured during wild encounters and poaching attempts will be brought to the rescue centre for treatment.

About Blackbuck

- The blackbuck (*Antilope cervicapra*) is also known as the Indian antelope.
- It inhabits grassy plains and lightly forested areas with perennial water sources.
- It is the sole living member of the genus *Antilope* and was scientifically described by Carl Linnaeus in 1758.
- Males have 35–75 cm long, ringed horns, though females may develop horns as well.
- The white fur on the chin and around the eyes is in sharp contrast with the black stripes on the face.

- The coats of males show a two-tone colouration – while the upper parts and outsides of the legs are dark brown to black, the underparts and the insides of the legs are white.
- Females and juveniles are yellowish fawn to tan.
- The blackbuck is extinct in Pakistan and Bangladesh.
- In Nepal, the last surviving blackbuck population inhabits the Blackbuck Conservation Area south of Bardia National Park.

Historical & Mythological significance

- It is routinely depicted in miniature paintings of the Mughal era.
- It is considered to be the vehicle of Vayu (the wind god), Soma (the divine drink) and Chandra (the moon god).
- In Tamil Nadu, the blackbuck is considered to be the vehicle of the Hindu goddess Korravai.
- In Rajasthan, the goddess Karni Mata is believed to protect the blackbuck.

Conservation status

- In 2008, they were declared 'Near Threatened' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), but in 2017 were moved to the category of 'Least Concern
- Blackbuck are an "extremely vulnerable species", on the "endangered list in India, and afforded the highest protection under the Schedule I of Wildlife Protection Act 1972".
- The blackbuck is listed under Appendix III of CITES.