

Blackbuck

May 29, 2021

In news– According to the latest population census released recently by the Chief conservator of forest (wildlife), Odisha's blackbuck population has doubled in the last six years.

More information-

- The census was carried out by the state forest department in February, 2021 in Ganjam district only where Blackbucks are found in Odisha.
- It used to be sighted in the Balukhand-Konark Wildlife Sanctuary in Puri district till 2012-13, but now has vanished from the area.
- The antelopes numbered 7,358, out of which 4,196 are females, 1,712 are males and 1,450 young.
- The numbers were 6,875 in 2020, 4,082 in 2018, 3,806 in 2015 and 2,194 in 2011.
- The blackbuck is known in Odisha as Krushnasara Mruga.
- Improvement of habitats, protection given by the local people and forest staff are said to be some of the reasons for the increase of the population of the blackbuck.

About the Blackbuck-

- The blackbuck (*Antelope cervicapra*) is also known as the Indian antelope.
- It is a Schedule-1 animal according to the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 and is considered as 'Vulnerable' according to the IUCN Red Data Book.
- It inhabits grassy plains and lightly forested areas with perennial water sources.
- It is the sole living member of the genus *Antelope* 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 active mainly during the day.
- It is a herbivore and grazes on low grasses.
- In India, hunting of blackbuck is prohibited under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972.
- The antelope is native to and found mainly in India, while it is extinct in Pakistan and Bangladesh.
- In Nepal, the last surviving blackbuck population inhabits the Blackbuck Conservation Area south of Bardia National Park.
- A few blackbucks are present in the Indian Institute of Technology Madras campus.
- It might have been a source of food in the Indus Valley civilization, whose bone remains have been discovered in sites such as Dholavira and Mehrgarh.
- 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.

In the Yajnavalkya Smṛiti, Sage Yagyavalkya has quoted that – “in what country there is black antelope, in that Dharma must be known”.