

LADAKH URIAL, *Ovis vignei vignei*, Blyth 1841

Vernacular Names: *Shapo* (male), *Shammo*, *Shanmar* (female) (Ladakhi)



Taxonomy
 Family: Bovidae
 Sub family: Caprinae
 Tribe: Caprini

Conservation Status
 IUCN: Endangered
 CAMP: Endangered
 IWPA: Schedule I
 CITES: Appendix I
 US ESA: Endangered



Y.V. Bhatnagar

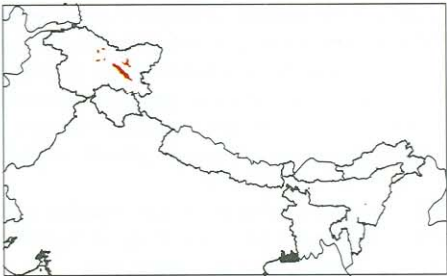
Distribution & Habitat : A subspecies endemic to the Ladakh region. Occurs in relatively less steep and rolling slopes usually below 4,200m - mainly along the Indus River and the Shyok River and their tributaries. Within India, occurs along the Indus almost continuously from Upshi in the east till Dha-Hanu; a side population also occurs in the Wanla-Lamayuru-Nindum area towards the south and in the Markha Valley. The Shyok population is mostly concentrated around Tirit-Sumur and some occur further upstream along the Nubra River and along the Diskit-Khalsar area. Distribution in India covers ca. 2,000km². Small populations also reported from the Shigar valley, Gilgit and Skardu regions of PoK. Other related subspecies are distributed in the Kirthar, Safed Koh and Hindu Kush ranges in Pakistan and in parts of eastern Afghanistan and Tajakistan.

Description : Smallest wild sheep species. Adult urial are grey-brown in winter coat, but are rufous grey or brown during the rest of the year. Adult rams sport a black or grizzled ruff, which grows from the side of the chin and meets below and extends down the throat. The ruff is more pronounced during winter and in males older than about 5 years. In adult rams, a dirty white and indistinct saddle patch is present. They have a dark spot under the foreleg that may extend on to a lateral stripe in some males. Females are similar, but lack the saddle patch and invariably have just a dark spot under their forelegs. Underparts and rump patch in all age-sex classes are white. Male horns curve up, back, downwards and in large males turn a bit inwards. Females have short, parallel horns and are not divergent as in bharal and argali. Grey patches on face from the eye till the chin is present in both sexes.

Size
 Body Length: 110-145 cm
 Shoulder Height: 67-100 cm
 Weight: 36-87kg
 Horn length: Male: 50-100cm, Female 15-20cm

Behaviour : Ladakh urial are primarily animals of the lower slopes, usually below 4,200m; rarely occur up to 4,800m as in the proposed Nindum Wildlife Sanctuary. Occur on gradual to moderate slopes, but have probably been pushed to use steeper and rockier gorges along the side valleys of Indus due to excessive anthropogenic pressures. Has long, lithe limbs that facilitate fast flight from potential danger. They are also known to retreat into cliffs or steep slopes to escape predators such as wolf and snow leopard. Usually occur in small groups of 5-12 animals, however, in certain areas and in seasons such as spring may occur in larger groups of ca. 80 animals. Sexual segregation is reported during much of the year barring the rutting period.

Is an intermediate forager, consuming grasses, forbs and shrubs in different seasons. During the rut, solitary males may travel vast distances in search of oestrous females. Contests between males are in the typical form of sheep, where two opposing rams clash into each other from some distance producing a loud clack. They may then involve in shoulder pushing and horn entwining.



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Reproduction & Life Cycle
 Gestation Period: 155-180 days.
 Rutting: Peaks for about 15 days in Nov to Jan (varies between years and regions)
 Young per Birth: 1 or 2
 Sexual Maturity: At 1.5-2 years, although males do not reach their full potential before age 5
 Life span: Up to 10-15 years. Males rarely survive beyond their 7-8th year