

**HIMALAYAN MUSK DEER *Moschus chrysogaster* Hodgson 1839**

Vernacular/other Names: *kasturi mrig*, *kastura*, *bina*,  
(local Names), *roos* (kashmiri)

**Taxonomy**

Family: *Moschidae*

**Conservation Status**

IUCN: Vulnerable  
CAMP: Critical  
IWPA: Schedule I  
CITES: Appendix - I  
U.S. ESA: Endangered



S. Sathyakumar

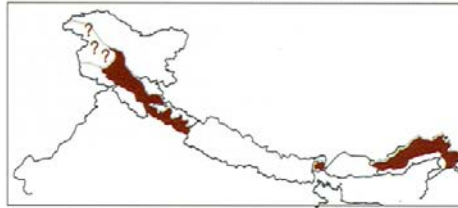
**Distribution & Habitat:** All along the southern side of the Greater Himalaya between 2,500m to 'treeline' in Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim & Arunachal Pradesh. Upper Temperate, Subalpine forests, alpine scrub and meadow habitats. Two sub species of Himalayan musk deer occur in India, *M.c.chrysogaster* distributed in western Himalaya and *M.c.leucogaster* distributed in eastern Himalaya. Two other species, the Black Musk deer *M.fuscus* and the Dwarf Musk deer *M.berevoskii* are also reported to occur in some parts of Arunachal Pradesh that are close to China and Myanmar borders, but needs confirmation.

**Description:** Not a true deer, but a primitive deer-like ruminant. Differs from other deer by not having antlers and facial glands. Has gall bladder, caudal gland and musk gland which no other deer possess. Canines are greatly developed especially in males. Stockily built animal with small head having hare-like long ears, arched back and bounding gait. Hind legs are 5 cm longer than the forelegs. Well-developed dew claws or lateral hooves. The general body colour is grey-brown to light-brownish yellow or dark yellow or dark brown with two white throat stripes. The colour of the ear tips range from dark brown to ivory-yellow or white. Rump and thigh are darker and the belly pale brown. Genital regions are white and the tail is naked except for a tuft of hair at the tip. Fur coat is thick and wavy giving it a deceptively heavy built appearance.

**Behaviour :** Musk deer is a Small Solitary Forest Ruminant (SSFR) that inhabits the upper temperate, subalpine and alpine habitats between 2,500 m and 'treeline'. It is a sedentary animal and is either nocturnal or crepuscular spending most of the day under dense undergrowth and come out of cover for feeding in open alpine grasslands during night but seldom stray far away from escape cover. Wild predators of musk deer include snow and common leopards, Himalayan yellow-throated marten, and possibly Red fox. It makes a non-vocal alarm call "Hiss" and stot on sensing danger. Man has persecuted this species for centuries for its musk. Being a SSFR, musk deer rely largely on communication by olfaction which is by means of scent marking behaviour and that includes defecating at defecation sites and by pasting with the secretions of the caudal gland by both sexes, and in case of males by the secretion of musk in urine. Musk deer has high-energy requirement per unit of body weight and it must select high quality food. It is called a "nibbler" rather than browser as it selectively feed on young leaves, buds, fruits, flowers of dicots, mosses and lichen.

**Size**

Body length: 70-100 cm  
Shoulder Height: 50 cm  
Weight: 13-15 kg  
Canine length: 10.5 cm record



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**Reproduction & Life cycle**

Gestation period: 180-200 days  
Rutting: winter  
Young per birth: one, twinning is also common  
Weaning: six weeks  
Sexual Maturity: 1.5 years  
Life Span: 8-10 years, 15 years in captivity

