



Survival Threat to Markhor

Why in News?

Markhor, the largest [wild goat](#) in the world, is **battling for survival** in **Jammu and Kashmir**. It is known for its **thick fur, flowing beard and corkscrew horns**.



Key Points

- **Legal Protection and Species Status:**
 - Markhor, scientifically known as *Capra falconeri*, is classified as "Near Threatened" by the [IUCN](#) and protected under Schedule I of India's [Wildlife Protection Act, 1972](#).
- **Threats to Survival:**
 - Primary threats include habitat loss from fencing, illegal grazing, [poaching](#), and [encroachment](#). [Climate change](#) is also affecting food resources, driving Markhor closer to human settlements.
- **Global Recognition and Initiatives:**
 - Recognizing its ecological importance, the [UN General Assembly](#) designated **24th May as the International Day of the Markhor** to encourage conservation efforts.
- **Significance as a Flagship Species:**
 - Markhor serves as a flagship species for conservation in J&K, helping protect other regional wildlife, such as [Musk Deer](#) and [Brown Bear](#).
- **Distribution and Habitat:**
 - The **endangered** Markhor inhabits **moist to semi-arid mountain regions** across **Pakistan, India (Jammu & Kashmir), Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan**.
 - In J&K, it's found in areas like **Shopian, the Pir Panjal range, and Kazinag Uri**, but its population is fragmented due to human interference and habitat loss from projects like the **Mughal Road**.
- **Impact of Mughal Road and Conservation Measures:**
 - The construction of Mughal Road, despite wildlife department opposition, disrupted Markhor habitats.
 - Following a Supreme Court directive, **5% of the road's project cost was allocated for Markhor habitat restoration**.
- **Markhor Recovery Program:**

- **Initiated in 2004** by the [Wildlife Trust of India \(WTI\)](#) and the Wildlife Department, the program focuses on fencing sanctuaries, tracking habitat usage, and studying competition between Markhor and livestock.
- **Community Involvement and Awareness:**
 - The Wildlife Department **collaborates with Gujjar and Bakerwal herders** to educate them on conservation practices, especially in areas with livestock that compete with Markhor for space and resources.
- **Government Support and Directives:**
 - The Forest and Environment Minister recently urged the Wildlife Department to assess the impact of human activities on Markhor habitats, emphasizing soil conservation and afforestation efforts.
- **Need for Global Collaboration:**
 - Conservation efforts call for international expertise and local engagement to boost Markhor populations and preserve this unique species for future generations.

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