

Nilgiri tahr

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Tamil Nadu recently started working on a standardised protocol to count **Nilgiri tahr**.

- Tamil Nadu has earlier launched **Project Nilgiri Tahr** for its protection.



NATURE'S SKYSCRAPERS

- The **Nilgiri tahr** is **South India's only mountain ungulate** or hoofed mammal. Tamil Nadu's state animal, it once thrived across the Western Ghats — **now endangered**, it exists in fragments of its range, threatened by habitat loss and poachers. With stylish **curved horns**, the reclusive tahr **live at 8,000 feet**, hiding in cliff faces. While a herd rests, one stays alert — with **great eyesight**, the tahr can spot danger afar, producing a whistle-like alarm



- The beautiful **Himalayan monal** is Nepal's national bird and Uttarakhand's state bird — but despite its credentials, it is a **very shy being**. Like other pheasants, **the male is gorgeously coloured, females being more sober**. Found at **14,000 feet above sea level**, the monal inhabit **oak, conifer and pine trees** — with good looks, they have good sense too, **descending in winter to 6,000 feet so their chicks survive** while the parents dig snow for shoots

- The **marmot** lives at **16,000 feet above sea level** — creating dens 30 feet deep in the ground, marmots **burrow for six months a year**. Their toes have concave claws that let them burrow efficiently. **This is a social animal, helpful as it lives with relatives**, each keeping the other warm. Females often burrow longer with their young — **any danger elicits low-pitched alarm calls repeated by watchful marmots**



Research: National Geographic, WWF, IUCN

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About the Nilgiri tahr:

- **Nilgiri tahr** is southern India's **only mountain ungulate** (state animal of **Tamil Nadu**) and one of the few species of **mountain Caprinae**.
 - **12 mountain ungulate** species are present in **India**.
- It is a **congener** of the **Himalayan tahr**, found in **Kashmir** and **Bhutan**.
- **Endemic** to the southern part of the **Western Ghats**, it is found mainly in **Kerala** and **Tamil Nadu** between **Nilgiris** in the **north** and **Kanyakumari hills** in the **south** of the region.
 - The **Anamalai hills** and the **Nilgiris**, mainly the **Mukurthi National Park**, are home to the **highest** number of Nilgiri tahr.
- **Threats**: invasive plants such as **wattles**, **pines**, and **eucalyptus** in the grasslands.

About the census of Nilgiri tahr:

- **First time, drones** may be used in the census, as the **Nilgiri tahr** prefers **montane grasslands**, with **steep** and **rocky terrains** at an **altitude** between **300** and **2,600 metres** above sea level.
- Survey of **habitats**- the Nilgiris hills; Siruvani hills; Anamalais, high ranges and Palani hills; Srivillipudur, Theni and Tirunelveli hills; and the **Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve** and Ashambu hills.
- **Significance:** to understand the **dynamics** of **population density** of the **ungulate spread** across the **different landscapes**, and its range of **habitats**.

Conservation status:

- **IUCN:** Endangered
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972:** Schedule-I

Other key facts:

- A component of the **Project Nilgiri Tahrs** aims to study the possible causes of the [lumpy skin disease](#) that has been observed in the animal, and suggest a remedy for it.