

## WHITE BLACKBUCK (WHITE VARIANT OF *ANTILOPE CERVICAPRA*)

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### Introduction

White coloured *Antelope cervicapra* is normally called White blackbuck instead of whitebuck. White individual of the blackbuck is neither a different sub-species nor true albino, but this is a white variant of the blackbuck. Status of whitebuck in Gujarat is similar to the white Tiger recorded in Madhya Pradesh in the past. This paper does not deal with biology and genetics of white blackbuck but intend to put on record about existence of this variant in Gujarat State. The adult male has a blackish brown to black coat with white underparts and a white patch around the eyes. The female has a yellowish brown coat with white underpart. The immature males also exhibit same colouration as adult females. In case of white blackbuck, both male and female are complete white in colour with light coloured hooves. The male possesses light coloured pair of spiral horns.

Whitebucks were frequently recorded in Saurashtra and North Gujarat. "*Tuzuk-i-Jehangiri*" written during the period of Moghul Emperor Jehangir also mentioned about a whitebuck. Four whitebuck were observed near Wankaner in Rajkot District between 1945 to 1958 (M.K. Ranjitsinh, 1989). Whitebuck were recorded in Bhal region of Gujarat State and late Maharaja of Bhavnagar and his brother Dr. M.K.

Dharam Kumar Sinhji caught whitebucks from the area. They carried out breeding programme of white variant with blackbucks in captivity and sent white animal to private zoos and released a few in the Guindy Park of Madras City when he was Governor of Tamil Nadu.

A healthy whitebuck male was seen in the Velavadar National Park in 1973 and a female whitebuck in a herd of 140 blackbuck was observed in Dhankania vidi in 1981. Similarly, two white males were also seen near Botad in Bhavnagar District. Author also observed three whitebucks (1 adult, 1 female and 1 fawn) in Khageshri vidi in Junagadh District during November 1994.

Census of the Blackbuck in Gujarat State was conducted in December 1994 after five years. Population of the Antelope has increased from 7342 in 1989 to 13246 in December 1994. As per this census, the Antelope exist in 9 districts out of 19 districts of the State. For conducting the census, elaborate arrangements were made in all the districts involving forest staff, NGOs, nature lovers and students in counting of blackbucks. This census also covered counting of whitebuck to find out information regarding their existence in different sites. Figures obtained about whitebucks were verified by the experts. It was surprising to every one that whitebuck's

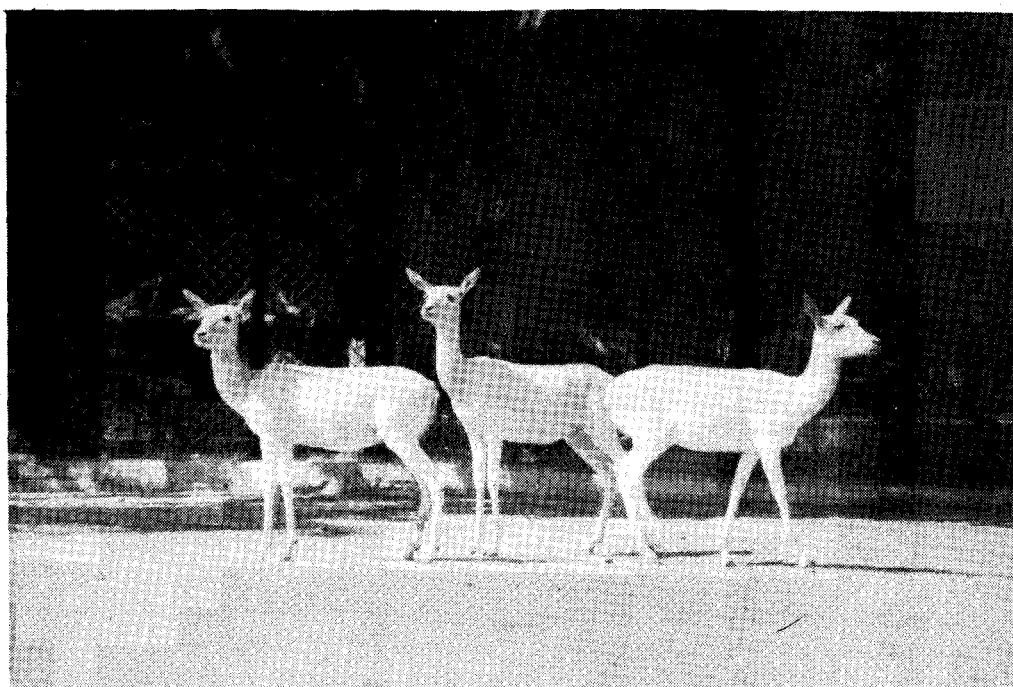
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*Population of White-buck in natural habitat and captivity recorded during December 1994.*

District	Site	Male	Female	Fawn	Total
<b>Natural habitat :</b>					
Vadodara	Sunderpur	7	4	3	14
Mehsana	Kadi	NA	NA	NA	13
Junagadh	Khageshri	1	1	1	3
Amreli	Timbla	1	-	-	1
				Total	31
<b>Number in captivity</b>					
Sayajibag Zoo,	Vadodara	13	5	2	20
Sakkarbaugh Zoo,	Junagadh	-	4	-	4
Kankaria Zoo,	Ahmedabad	4	3	1	8
				Total	32

**Fig. 1**



number is more than anybody expected.

There are more than a dozen whitebuck population in private zoo of Shri Shatrushalyasinhji, Jamsaheb of Jamnagar but exact number could not be obtained due to some reasons. From the figures cited above, it is thus apparent that the present population of whitebuck in the State is over 70. There is possibility of its existence in natural habitat as well as zoos in the other States of the country, which needs to be verified to ascertain the population of whitebucks in the country. Knowledge about limited genetic resource of the variant would be of immense use in conservation of the Antelope.

A normal occurrence of mating between black and whitebucks has been observed in natural habitat as well as in captivity. There

is no social differentiation or isolation among the newly born or adult individuals. Most of the whitebucks in Kankaria Zoo have been obtained from crossing between male blackbuck and female whitebuck.

Only one white Tiger was recorded in forests of Madhya Pradesh, which was shifted in Zoo to carry on breeding programme but whitebuck population is a reality in Gujarat State and their existence in nature would continue if adequate protection measures are taken in future. Whitebuck is not an albino but a different individual of same species. There are a few whitebuck in natural population and they are to be preserved in the interest of the Antelope's conservation. There is need to examine the release of whitebuck population from captivity to natural habitat to maintain the viable number for its existence.

### SUMMARY

The existence of *Antelope cervicapra* (White-blackbuck) in Gujarat and their release from captivity to natural habitat to maintain viable numbers is discussed.

श्वेत कृष्णसार (एण्टिलोप सर्विकाप्रा का श्वेत विभेदक)

एच०एस० सिंह

सारांश

गुजरात में एण्टिलोप सर्विकाप्रा (श्वेत कृष्णसार) होने और जीवनक्षम संख्या में बने रहने के लिए बंदी अवस्था में प्राकृतिक आवस में छोड़े जाने का विवेचन किया गया है ।

### Reference

M.K. Ranjitsinh (1989). *The Indian Blackbuck*.