

## FORESTS NOTES AND OBSERVATION

### (I)

#### POSSIBLE OCCURRENCE OF RED DEER (*CERVUS CANADENSIS*) IN UTTARAKHAND

##### Introduction

The Red Deer *Cervus canadensis* is reported in several local names and sub species in the Indian subcontinent and Tibet including the Hangul deer or Kashmir Stag, Tibetan Red Deer, Bactrian wapiti, etc. and is also classified by some authors under the name *Cervus elaphus*. Some of the subspecies like the Tibetan Red Deer and Kashmir stag or Hangul was considered on the verge of extinction in the middle of the twentieth century. The Tibetan red deer was even announced to be extinct in 1990 (China Tebet online, 2012) but was rediscovered in Lokha prefecture of South Tibet (near Bhutan) in 1995. Now the population in this province has increased manifold (cctv.com, 2013). The Hangul has been well protected in the Dachigam National Park in Jammu and Kashmir. The IUCN red list categorises Red Deer under the 'Least Concern' category (IUCN, 2014) whereas the Tibetan Red Deer has been categorised as 'Data Deficient' (IUCN, 2014).

##### Observations

I first came across an account of sighting of the Red Deer from an officer of the Indo Tibetan Border Police Force in the year 2004 during my visit to the Lapthal region overlapping in Pithorgarh and Chamoli districts, is

a cold arid zone with an average altitude of 4500m bordering Tibet. According to the officer, he had seen "a group of large deer with large antlers having many branches near Shalshal La in Laptel". Having no idea of what the animal could be, I could not make any conclusion. However, during my recent visit to Kailas Mansarovar in Tibet in July 2014, I heard several accounts of a large deer with large antlers being a major threat to local cultivation in the region as they were reported to come in large numbers and raid the crops.

##### Conclusion and Remarks

The increasing greenery in Tibet due to higher precipitation, moisture content (Chinese Academy of Science, 2014) and also increase in cultivation, I think has helped this deer to increase its population and widen its distribution all along the southern boundary of the Tibetan plateau and along the Yarlung Tsangpo (River Brahmaputra) basin.

I am writing this account so that wildlife enthusiasts may go for further exploration to find out the exact species/sub species of the animal and its distribution in the Indian subcontinent and also find the genetic relationship of the various populations presently classified as different sub species.

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