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FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Far East
Maliwan Mansion, Phra Atit Road
Bangkok 2, Thailand

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EDITORIAL

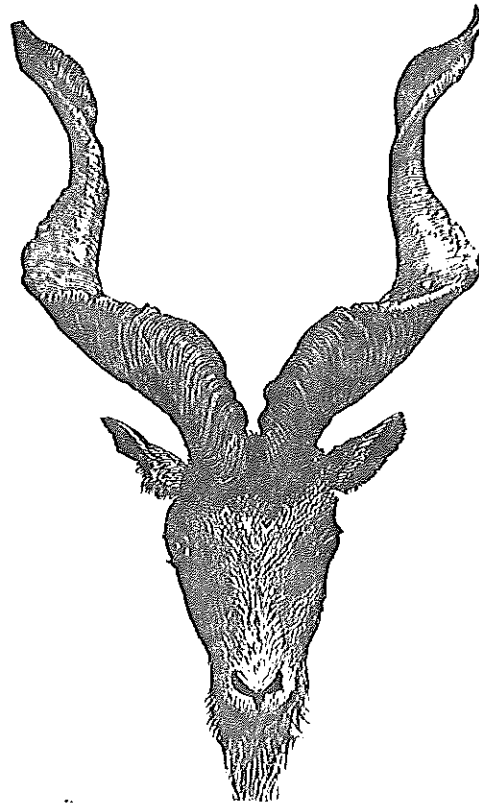
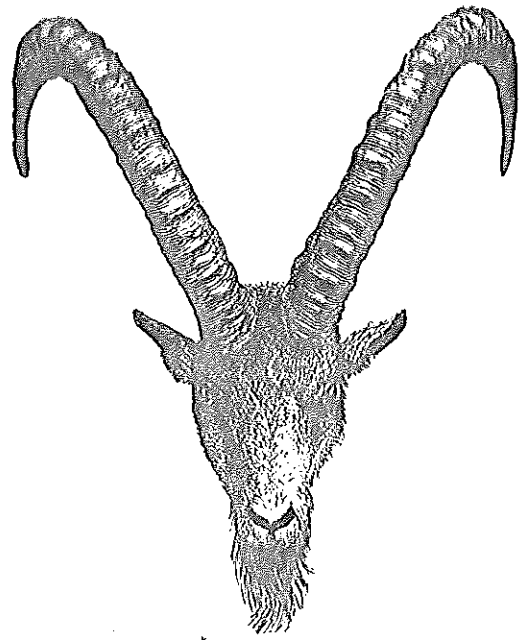


I've written something for TIGERPAPER, how about you?

ments include cliffs onto which they can escape in times of danger, and some suitable terrain below 2,200 m. where the temperature remains moderate in the winter. Although in the summer they may go as high as 4,000 m., their low tolerance of cold has restricted them to low-lying valleys such as the Indus. Otherwise they are ecologically quite tolerant, existing both on treeless slopes and among evergreen oak whose leathery leaves provide one of their main winter foods.

The Kashmir markhor survives in several small populations in eastern Afghanistan, in the Chitral, Dir, and Swat districts of Pakistan, and then again far to the south-east, in the Pir Panjal Range of India. Chitral was once famous for this markhor, and many small valleys such as the Drosch Gol contained 500 and more animals. Today most of these populations have been exterminated or reduced to tiny remnants. Exceptions are the Chitral Gol and Tushi, both private reserves belonging to the royal family of Chitral, each of which contain about 125 markhor. Probably fewer than 1,500 Kashmir markhor remain in the western part of their range; of these perhaps a third occur in Chitral.

Astor markhor frequent the scattered cliffs bordering the Indus and its tributaries. The new roads along all the major valleys have opened up once remote terrain to motorised hunters who can now shoot markhor with ease when the animals descend to their winter ranges, and their decline has been drastic, whole populations having disappeared along the upper Gilgit River. Several years ago Roberts estimated "not less than 500 to 600" markhor in the Kargah Valley; today only about 50 survive. I cannot estimate the number of Astor markhor, but would guess that they are still at least twice as abundant as the Kashmir markhor.



Markhor

Asiatic Ibex. The ibex (*Capra ibex sibirica*) is the most widespread and abundant wild-ungulate in the mountains. Essentially confined to the alpine zone between 3,500 and 5,000 m., the animals have been able, by virtue of their habitat, to elude the casual shooter. Yet densities are generally low, partly due to the fragmented habitat, the tiny cases of green hidden in the haggard waste of rock and snow, and partly to persistent persecution by meat hunters. In the valleys around Killik Pass in Hunza, where a local military unit had shot at least 60 in the winter of 1972 - 73, I tallied only 59 ibex, about 0.4 animals per sq. km. Around the Dorah Pass area of Chitral, once famous for ibex, a week-long search revealed only 10 animals in 50 sq. km. However, in the privately protected Besti region of Chitral, 72 ibex were found in 40 sq. km. Not included in such tallies are the vast expanses of sterile uplands which are almost devoid of wildlife. For example, along 30 km. of north-facing slopes along and near the Baltoro glacier 40 ibex were spotted. At that season perhaps only 100 animals existed there in at least 1,400 sq. km. of glaciers and bare cliffs. By way of contrast, in the eastern Pamir, Heptner et al. reported 600 ibex in 100 sq. km.

Shapu. Like all urials, the shapu or Ladak urial (*Ovis orientalis nigeri*) prefers rolling but not precipitous terrain at low altitudes. This sheep penetrated the mountains by following major rivers, as the markhor did. In 1841 Blyth wrote, "Vast numbers of