



Musk Deer

Why in News?

According to a [Central Zoo Authority \(CZA\) report](#), Indian zoos have not yet started any breeding programme for the conservation of the [Musk Deer](#).

Key Points

- **Lack of Population Data for Musk Deer:**
 - The report reveals **no updated population information** for the alpine musk deer (*Moschus chrysogaster*).
 - No recent estimates exist regarding the species' numbers in the wild.
- **Ineffective Conservation Response:**
 - In response to an RTI, the [Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change](#) said that **conservation is a state responsibility** and did not provide details about the **Himalayan Musk Project started in 1982**.
 - The 1982 Himalayan Musk Project aimed to promote in-situ conservation and animal welfare.
 - Over time, **focus shifted to high-profile species** like the [tiger](#), neglecting musk deer conservation.
- **History of Captive Breeding Attempts:**
 - **Captive breeding began in 1965 and intensified post-1975** under government schemes.
 - Breeding centres at Kufri, Almora, and Chamoli failed to achieve goals of rewilding and musk extraction.
 - All deer at [Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary](#)'s breeding centre eventually died, leading to closure in 2006.
- **Confusion in Species Identification:**
 - The CZA report highlights that **zoos often misidentified alpine musk deer (*Moschus chrysogaster*) and Himalayan musk deer (*Moschus leucogaster*)**.
 - This confusion has **hampered** captive breeding efforts and proper species management.
- **Poor Management of Captive Breeding Programmes:**
 - Although breeding plans exist for various endangered species, many are either non-functional or poorly managed.
 - Issues such as poor record-keeping, species misidentification, and lack of systematic tracking have weakened conservation outcomes.
- **Other Species Facing Similar Challenges:**
 - Endangered species like the [Tibetan antelope](#), [Nilgiri tahr](#), [Ganges river dolphin](#), and [Hangul](#) also lack proper captive breeding programmes.
 - [Wild water buffalo](#) and [pygmy hog](#) conservation efforts show some promise but remain fragile and underfunded.
- **Gaps in Genetic Monitoring and Research:**
 - Breeding efforts suffer due to insufficient founder stock and lack of genetic monitoring.
 - **India still lacks genome information** for many endangered species.
 - **Research is constrained by forest regulations** that restrict the collection of animal tissue and blood samples.
- **Need for Improved Scientific Investment:**

- India needs significant investment in **de-extinction sciences, conservation genomics, and wildlife research infrastructure.**
- Existing facilities like **Hyderabad's Laboratory for the Conservation of Endangered Species** require better integration with zoo networks.

Central Zoo Authority

- The Central Zoo Authority (CZA) is a **statutory body** under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, **established in 1992 under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.**
- It is chaired by the Environment Minister and has 10 members and a member-secretary.
- Its objective is to complement and strengthen the national effort in conservation of rich biodiversity.

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/musk-deer>

