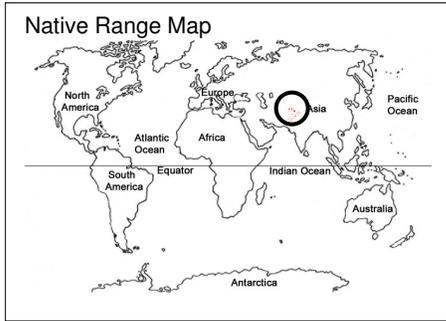


Markhor



Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Subphylum: Vertebrata
Class: Mammalia
Order: Artiodactyla
Family: Bovidae
Genus: *Capra*
Species: *falconeri*



Photo courtesy of Janet Wisneski

Habitat

- **In the Wild:** Markhors are found in Asia from Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and northern India. They are found in mountainous regions (½ mile to 2 miles in elevation), cliffs and grassy foothills. They are very agile and sure-footed. Some populations have seasonal migration, moving up into the mountains in spring and into lower levels in the fall, to avoid the deep winter snow.
- **Exhibit Location:** Wildlife Trails

Characteristics

- The markhor's body length is 4 ½ to 6 feet; tail length is 4 to 8 inches; shoulder height is 2 to 4 feet. The male's body weight is 176 to 242 lbs. and the female weighs 70 to 110 lbs.
- The *Capra falconeri* has a grizzled light brown to black coat that is smooth and short in the summer, growing longer and thicker in winter. Males have long hair on the chin, throat, chest and shanks, while females have smaller fringes. The lower legs have a black and white pattern.
- Both sexes have tightly curled corkscrew-like horns that start close together at the head, but spreading towards the tips. In males, they can grow up to 64 inches long and up to 10 inches in females.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** 12-13 years ; **In Captivity** 12 (males) to 20 (females) years

Behaviors

- The markhor travels in herds of about 9 individuals. Herd composition is primarily female, with the males temporarily joining during the rutting (period of mammalian sexual activity) season. The males compete for breeding rights by lunging and locking horns followed by twisting and pushing in an attempt to make the other lose his balance. Males are otherwise solitary.
- They are largely diurnal (active during daytime) but are mainly active in early morning and late afternoon. Markhors forage up to 12 or 14 hours a day, including a resting period to chew cud.
- *Capra falconeri* has intensively keen eyesight and an extremely developed sense of smell. Both of these senses are utilized in territory recognition and predator detection. They exhibit highly calculated and intense movements in response to predator detection. Their alarm call resembles the nasal "a" popularized by the common domestic goat.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** Boomer balls, branches, fresh browse in season

Reproduction

- Like most ungulates (having hooves), they do not mate monogamously. Markhors breed annually, beginning in late autumn (December) to the end of January.
- Pregnancy lasts 155 days. Each pregnancy can produce 1 or 2 offspring (kids). The young are usually born in the spring and summer months of May and June. The young are born in a shallow earthen hollow. They are able to walk soon after birth and can travel with the mother. Mothers provide nourishment (milk) and protection. Weaning occurs at the age of 5 or 6 months.
- The kids typically remain with their mother until breeding season. Reproductive maturity occurs at the age of 18 to 36 months, and is later in males than in females.

Diet

- **In the Wild:** In the spring and summer months they eat a variety of grasses and during the autumn and winter months they switch to leaves, twigs and shrubs.
- **At the Zoo:** hay, grain and browse (tree leaves and twigs).

Conservation Status

- **IUCN status:-** Endangered; **CITES:** Appendix I
- The markhor has been endangered since 1994.
- The reasons for the markhorns' decline include intensive hunting (for trophies, meat and the Asian medicine market), disturbance and loss of habitat due to expanded human settlement and competition from domestic livestock.
- Because the markhor is endangered, their trophy heads can no longer be imported to most countries. This has helped to curtail hunting activities. The countries where the markhor resides have established sanctuaries for markhor and other animals. A lot of work still needs to be done to make the sanctuaries effective.
- We can help by supporting local zoos that have made a home for the markhorns.
- Predators are wolves, leopards, lynx and humans.

Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- There are two theories of where the name "markhor" comes from. Some say it's from the Persian words *mar* = snake and *khora* = eater. Others say it comes from the Pushto words *mar* and *akhur* that translated means snake-horn.
- Markhorns can also climb trees in search of nutritious leaves. It has been reported that one was sighted on the branch of an oak tree 4-6 meters (13 to 19 feet) above the ground calmly munching on leaves.

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