



In Case You Missed

Iranian Yellow Deer Reproduces in Ilam

Director-general of Ilam Environment Department said two newborn Iranian yellow deer calves have been added to the deer population in Mansh protected area of Qalarang in Ilam province.



Gholamhossein Kazemi said that six Iranian yellow deer, including three male and three female were transferred to Ilam's Qalarang region about seven months ago.

He noted that the yellow deer calves are in satisfactory physical conditions, reported Fars news agency.

Yellow deer is indigenous to Iran and hence cannot be found in other parts of the world.

Iranian yellow deer has managed to survive by adapting itself to climatic changes. Although this animal is still facing the risk of extinction, there are signs of hope that its number can considerably increase.

Two types of yellow deer are found in the world, one particular to Iran and another to Europe.

Although it was widely believed that the Iranian yellow deer had become extinct in 1958 and 1959, three deer were accidentally spotted in Dez and Karkheh (both in Khuzestan province) which are historical habitats of Iranian yellow deer.

Later two other Iranian yellow deer were added to them and all of them were transferred to Naz Plain in Sari (in Mazandaran province). The yellow deer were moved to Ashk Island where they found the chance to reproduce.

It has a yellow body with white spots. The average life span of yellow deer is 20 years and it feeds on corn and barley.

Yellow deer live in group and their activities are mainly from midnight to dawn.

Its calf can walk right after its birth.

29 Books on Persian Gulf Published

An Iranian official said 29 books have been published on the Persian Gulf so far.

Head of Iranology Foundation-Bushehr Branch said that the foundation was established in 1996, the Persian daily 'Iran' reported.



Abdolkarim Mashayekhi pointed out that the foundation has published a total of 49 books of which 29 books are on the Persian Gulf.

Mashayekhi asserted that the support of officials for holding national and international seminars and congresses on Persian Gulf is a necessity.

"The Persian Gulf has now become an issue of national unity and many researchers in many parts of Iran are presently dealing with the issue," he added.

Noting that Bushehr has a total of 625 square kilometers of common border with the Persian Gulf, this issue has added to the responsibility of the province toward safeguarding the waterway. "There is no doubt that the Persian Gulf has been recorded in history books. However, it should be noted that the UK is sowing the seed of discord concerning the Persian Gulf," he added.

Muggers a Vanishing Breed

By Sadeq Dehqan

Muggers (*Crocodylus palustris*), a species of crocodiles, are remnants of reptiles that lived about 265 years ago. The mugger can be found in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal and in the Indo-China region, apart from southern Iran.

Seeing a mugger in its habitat is attractive, hence we took the trouble of visiting Pishin Dam, which is some 150 km away from Chabahar. This long journey has become tougher because of gasoline rationing.

On the way to the dam, we passed through Merrikhi Mount, banana farms and bamboo huts where residents dressed in local costumes sought to escape from the hot and burning sun.

Pishin Dam is one of the main habitats of muggers in Sistan-Baluchestan province. The rivers of Bahou Kalat, Sarbaz and Kaju and the lagoons of Pir Sohrab, Azadi, Kalani, Dargaz, Gaz Manzel and Hoot Kat are other habitats of this rare species.

In the past, due to more favorable environmental conditions, more muggers were seen in these regions. However, in recent years, fewer muggers are found in these areas as their food resources have declined because of the province's drought conditions.

After two hours of driving, we reached the dam, but there were no traces of muggers in the river or its banks. A guard told us that muggers avoid the hot sun and do not come to the surface of the water until afternoon. So we had to wait for a while.

The main problems pertain to feeding the muggers and providing a suitable habitat for them, especially because of water shortage.



As the weather cooled, we saw a couple of muggers emerge from the waters at a distance. We moved close, but the muggers felt our presence and ducked back into the water.

Breeding Center

It is obviously more convenient to see muggers in a breeding center. Therefore, we drove toward Dargaz and its mugger breeding center.

Manager of the center, Dad Rahman Keshavarzpour, said the center was the only venue for breeding muggers in Iran.

"There are two mugger breeding centers in Iran. One of the centers is currently inactive due to the drought condition and water shortage in the region. Six muggers (three males and three females) are kept at the Dargaz center," he said.

The center launched its activities about a year ago, as the crocodile was on the verge of extinction in the region.

"The center aims at preserving muggers, which have become a vanishing breed, and conducting more research on their living conditions



Because of the difficulty involved in breeding this crocodile, the private sector has not yet entered this domain.

and reproduction. This center has the capacity to breed 100 to 200 muggers," he said.

Keshavarzpour said the main problems pertain to feeding the muggers and providing a suitable habitat for them, especially because of water shortage.

"We give muggers chicken and fish at the center, but muggers hunt reptiles and even dogs, monkeys and birds in their natural habitats," he said.

The center's manager pointed out that muggers are able to tolerate hunger for up to three months under special circumstances.

Characteristics

A mugger has 19 upper teeth and 15 lower teeth. Though its feet are short, it is highly mobile on land. It can travel considerable distances over land in search of food and a more suitable habitat. Its abdominal area is whitish yellow and over half of its length pertains to its tail.

Muggers lay eggs in late February. On average, a mugger lays 25 to 30 eggs. They conceal their eggs under soft soil at a depth of 20 cm to 30 cm. A baby mugger is 30 cm long upon birth.

It is estimated that 500 to 700 muggers live in Iran.

Iran's Department of Environment (DoE) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other environment-oriented institutions support muggers, which are on the verge of extinction.

The skin of mugger is softer than the skin of other types of crocodile. In the past, hunters trapped muggers and smuggled their skin to Pakistan to be sold in European and regional Arab markets at hefty prices.

A mugger's leather is used to make women's accessories like bags and shoes. Some tribes are known to eat its meat.

Attacks on humans are not unheard of. A child was killed by a mugger in Iran during early 2006.

Keshavarzpour said, "If a mugger is not hungry, it is harmless and lazy. But when it is hungry, it comes out of water and moves toward adjacent villages and houses to eat anything that comes its way."

Because of the difficulty involved in breeding this crocodile, the private sector has not yet entered this domain.

"The reptile can be a profit-making tourist attraction. During Norouz (Iranian New Year holidays), a large number of people from all over the country came to the area to see the muggers. We do not charge a ticket, but such centers can be expanded to provide better services to visitors and also boost tourism," he said.

Jiroft the Ancient City of Marhashi

Piotr Steinkeller, professor of Assyriology at the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations of Harvard University, believes that the prehistoric site of Jiroft is the lost ancient city of Marhashi.

He developed the theory in his paper during the first round of the International Conference on Jiroft Civilization, which was held in Tehran on May 5 and 6, reported MNA.

Marhashi, (in earlier sources Warahshe) was a 3rd millennium BC city situated in eastern Elam, on the Iranian plateau. It is known from Mesopotamian sources and its precise location has not been identified. An inscription of Lugal-Anne-Mundu, the most important king of the Adab city-state in Sumer, locates it, along with Elam, to the south of Gutium, an ancient city in upper Mesopotamia. The inscription also explains that Lugal-Anne-Mundu confronted the Warahshe king, Migir-Enlil. Jiroft is the lost ancient city of Marhashi

which had been located between Anshan and Meluhha, Steinkeller said.

Anshan was one of the early capitals of Elam, from the 3rd millennium BC, which is located 36 kilometers northwest of modern Shiraz in Fars Province, southwestern Iran.

The Indus Valley Civilization has been tentatively identified with the name Meluhha known from Sumerian records.

According to Steinkeller, Marhashi was a political and economic power in eastern Iran, which had been in a close contact with Babylonia. This relationship had been developed over two periods, which has influenced the political history of the region for at least a half century.

He said that Jiroft is the heart of the ancient city of Marhashi and hoped that upcoming excavations and studies would help archaeologists discover other parts of the city.

According to the secretary of the conference, Yousef Majidzadeh, over 700 ancient sites such

as hills and graves have been discovered in Jiroft over the past six seasons of excavation by a team of archaeologists led by Majidzadeh.

Located next to the Halil-Roud River in southern Kerman Province, Jiroft came into the spotlight in 2002 when extensive illegal excavations by local people who went on plundering priceless historical items came out.

