**Lal Suhanra National Park**

**📖 History:**

**Lal Suhanra National Park, located near Bahawalpur, Punjab, is one of the most diverse national parks in Pakistan. It was established in 1972 by the Government of Pakistan, primarily to conserve the unique ecosystems of the Cholistan Desert and protect endangered species that inhabit the region.**

**The idea of Lal Suhanra was inspired by the need to create a protected area where desert, forest, and wetland ecosystems could coexist under conservation management. Historically, the Bahawalpur region has been known for its vast desert stretches and riverine forests along the banks of the Sutlej River, but over the years, excessive hunting and habitat destruction endangered the wildlife population.**

**To address this, Lal Suhanra was developed as a biosphere reserve, and it later gained recognition as part of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme. The park became a symbol of Pakistan’s commitment to protecting its natural heritage, as it introduced wildlife breeding programs, especially for endangered species such as the Blackbuck antelope, which had become extinct in Pakistan by the early 20th century.**

**The park also holds historical significance due to its association with the princely state of Bahawalpur, where the Nawabs maintained hunting reserves. Over time, it shifted from a hunting ground to a globally recognized conservation area. Today, it is a place of ecological importance, tourism, and research.**

**📏 Area:**

**Lal Lal Suhanra National Park is spread over an area of 162,568 acres (about 656 square kilometers), making it one of the largest national parks in South Asia.**

**1. Desert area – "covering over 51,000 acres, part of the Cholistan Desert."**

**2. Green forest plantations – "around 20,000 acres, with irrigated forest reserves."**

**3. Wetland/lake area – "a man-made lake covering nearly 4,800 acres, providing habitat for migratory birds and aquatic life."**

**"This rare blend of desert, forest, and wetland ecosystems within a single protected area makes Lal Suhanra a globally significant ecological zone".**

**🏞 Facilities:**

**1. Lal. Wildlife Breeding Centers** – – Special breeding programs for endangered animals, especially the Blackbuck antelope and Chinkara gazelle.

**2. Safari & Game Viewing** – – Jeep safaris allow visitors to explore desert landscapes and spot animals such as Urial, Blue Bull (Nilgai), Wild Boar, and Deer.

**3. Bird Watching** – – The large wetland attracts migratory birds like flamingos, ducks, and cranes, making it a paradise for bird watchers.

**4. Visitor Rest Houses & Lodging** – – Managed by the Punjab Wildlife Department, rest houses and guest lodges are available for tourists..

**5. Educational Tours & Research** – – Universities and schools frequently visit for ecological studies, making it a hub for environmental education.

**6. Picnic & Family Spots** – – Designated green spaces for families, with shade, seating, and children’s recreational areas.

**7. Eco-Tourism Activities** – – Nature walks, desert camping, and photography tours are organized for tourists..

**8. Artificial Lake & Boating** – – A scenic lake offers boating and serves as a habitat for fish, reptiles, and aquatic birds.

**9. Guided Tours & Rangers** – – Professional wildlife guides and park rangers assist visitors to ensure safety and a rich experience.

**🐆 Animals:**

**Blackbuck: The Blackbuck, a graceful antelope with spiral, ringed horns, is the conservation icon of Lal Suhanra. Once extinct in Pakistan, it was reintroduced through a breeding program. Known for its incredible speed and elegant leaps, the Blackbuck thrives in the grasslands and open plains of the park.**

**Chinkara (Indian Gazelle): The Chinkara, also called the Indian Gazelle, is a small and agile antelope perfectly adapted to arid environments. With its slender build and light brown coat, it blends into the sandy terrain. Chinkaras are fast runners and feed on grasses, leaves, and desert shrubs.**

**Nilgai (Blue Bull): The Nilgai, often called the Blue Bull, is the largest antelope in Asia. It roams the open plains and forested areas of Lal Suhanra. Males have a bluish-gray coat, while females are more brownish. Nilgai feed on grasses, leaves, and shrubs, playing a vital role in maintaining the ecosystem’s balance.**

**Wild Boar: Wild Boars are common in the wetlands and forests of Lal Suhanra. Recognizable by their bristly hair and tusks, these omnivores forage for roots, fruits, and small animals. They are important scavengers, helping recycle nutrients in the ecosystem.**

**Asiatic Jackal: The Asiatic Jackal, also known as the Golden Jackal, is a cunning and adaptable predator. It survives in diverse habitats of the park—deserts, forests, and wetlands. Jackals feed on small mammals, birds, and carrion, and their howls are often heard at night.**

**Porcupine: The Indian Crested Porcupine is a nocturnal rodent with sharp quills for defense. It lives in burrows within the park’s desert and forest regions. Porcupines mainly feed on roots, tubers, and fruits, and their presence indicates a healthy ecosystem.**

**Desert Fox: The Desert Fox, also known as the Indian Fox, thrives in Lal Suhanra’s sandy desert regions. With its large ears and sharp senses, it is well adapted to nocturnal hunting. It preys on rodents, reptiles, and insects, and is an important predator in desert food chains.**

**Caracal: The Caracal is a rare and elusive wild cat with long tufted ears. Agile and powerful, it is known for its ability to leap several feet high to catch birds in flight. Caracals prey on hares, small deer, and ground-dwelling birds, making them one of Lal Suhanra’s top predators.**

**Indian Wolf: The Indian Wolf is a highly social predator, often seen in small packs in Lal Suhanra’s open terrains. They are intelligent hunters, preying on antelopes, hares, and livestock near villages. Once widespread, Indian Wolves are now considered a threatened species.**

**Indian Mongoose: The Indian Grey Mongoose is a small carnivore known for its fearlessness and agility. It preys on rodents, lizards, insects, and even snakes. Quick reflexes allow the mongoose to occasionally kill venomous snakes, making it a valuable species for ecological balance.**

**Desert Hare: The Indian Hare is a swift and elusive mammal found in Lal Suhanra’s grasslands and scrub areas. It feeds on grasses and crops, serving as prey for predators like jackals, wolves, and birds of prey. Its strong hind legs help it escape threats by running in a zig-zag pattern.**

**🐍 Reptiles of Lal Suhanra National Park:**

**Indian Cobra: The Indian Cobra is a venomous snake recognized by its hood, which it expands when threatened. Found near wetlands and agricultural fields, it feeds on rodents, frogs, and birds. Despite fear, cobras play a vital role in controlling pest populations.**

**Monitor Lizard: The Bengal Monitor Lizard is a large reptile seen basking in open areas of Lal Suhanra. It feeds on insects, smaller reptiles, and bird eggs. Though intimidating in appearance, monitor lizards are generally harmless to humans.**

**Russell’s Viper: The Russell’s Viper is a highly venomous snake found in grasslands and farmlands of Lal Suhanra. It hunts rodents and small mammals, but is dangerous to humans if provoked. Its loud hissing sound is a warning to stay away.**

**🐦 Birds:**

**Houbara Bustard: The Houbara Bustard is a rare and endangered migratory bird that travels thousands of kilometers from Central Asia to winter in Pakistan. It is considered a symbol of desert wildlife and conservation efforts. With its camouflaged sandy plumage, it blends seamlessly into desert landscapes, feeding on insects, plants, and small reptiles.**

**Black Partridge: The Black Partridge, locally known as “Kala Teetar,” is a ground-dwelling bird with striking black-and-white plumage and loud territorial calls. It is commonly found in scrub and grassland habitats of the park. Black Partridges feed on seeds, grains, and insects, and are culturally significant in rural Punjab.**

**Indian Peafowl (Peacock): The Indian Peafowl, or Peacock, is perhaps the most majestic bird of Lal Suhanra, famous for its dazzling tail feathers and elaborate courtship dances. Males display their colorful plumage to attract females, while peafowl also act as natural guards with their loud alarm calls when predators approach.**

**Eagles & Falcons: Several species of eagles and falcons soar high over Lal Suhanra’s open skies. Known for their razor-sharp eyesight and speed, they are skilled hunters preying on rodents, reptiles, and smaller birds. Steppe Eagles, Short-toed Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, and Kestrels are among the raptors spotted here.**

**Waterfowl: The wetlands and Patisar Lake of Lal Suhanra attract large numbers of migratory waterfowl every winter. Ducks, geese, teal, and swans make the wetlands lively and full of activity. These birds feed on aquatic plants, fish, and invertebrates, playing a key role in maintaining the lake’s ecosystem.**

**Sandgrouse: Sandgrouse are hardy desert birds, well adapted to dry and arid habitats. They fly in fast-moving flocks and are known for their long-distance flights in search of water. Their ability to soak up water in their belly feathers and carry it to their chicks makes them unique among birds.**

**Kingfishers: Brightly colored Kingfishers are often spotted near water bodies, especially Patisar Lake. With their sharp beaks and lightning-fast dives, they catch fish, frogs, and aquatic insects. Their vivid blue, green, and orange plumage adds vibrant color to the wetlands.**

**Owls: Owls are nocturnal predators found in the forests and open fields of Lal Suhanra. With silent wings and exceptional night vision, they play a vital role in controlling rodent populations. Barn Owls, Spotted Owlets, and Eagle Owls are some of the species recorded in the park.**

**Contact Info:**

**📍 Location: Bahawalpur, Punjab**

**☎️ Phone: +92 62 925 5080 (Punjab Wildlife Department – Bahawalpur)**

**📧 Email: info@punjabwildlife.gov.pk**