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## **The Benefits Of Markhor Hunting In Pakistan**

**By Anchan Ali Mirza**

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The northern areas of Pakistan contain the highest concentration of peaks and longest glaciers outside the polar region. This is where the worlds 3 greatest mountain chains collide the Karakorams, Hindukush and the Himalayas. Emanating out of these rugged mountains flow rivers, their tributaries and melted glacial water thus creating a rich source of inhabitation for some of the worlds rarest wild life species the Astor , Pir Panjal markhor, Laddakh Urial, Himalayan Ibex and Blue sheep.

Heavy poaching by locals as well as outsiders had led to an alarming decline in population of these important species until when foreign and local NGOs arrived to their rescue and initiated a programme for the sustainable trophy hunting of these game species and its use. The importance to perpetuate the population of the Markhor at community level and the local inhabitants direct involvement through interest in conservation has led to satisfactory results in achieving this objective. The social benefits derived through income generation from hunting

Licence fees has played an instrumental role in successful conservation. Those

Communities who earlier did ,not have the resources to run educational, health and other social endeavours were now able to undertake these projects.

Hunting the markhor as has been for many was one of my great desire. I was able to fulfill this pursuit and dream with the help of my friend Renaud Desgrees du Lou who happened to know Anchan Ali Mirza from the Karakroams – Pakistan and they were able to organize a successful hunt for me in the Karakorams – Pakistan. Although I had an option of hunting either of the northern population of the markhor I opted for the Astor since not many hunters that I have known had ventured into the heart of the mighty Karakorams where this animal survived.

We flew Into Islamabad where we were swiftly checked through customs and then embarked on a long journey along the Karakoram Highway. Driving on the Karakoram Highway is a journey in itself, It is a

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once in lifetime adventure with breath taking views of Nanga Parbat, the second highest peak in Pakistan (8125 metres). Today Silk is found in all the worlds markets. It travels easily and cheaply by sea and air freight. This was not always so. The early trade in silk was carried on against incredible odds by great caravans of merchants and animals traveling at a snails pace over some of the most inhospitable territory on the face of the earth searing, waterless deserts and snowbound mountain passes. It was through this Silk road whereby traders of ancient times carried silk from Kasghar over Taklamakan desert and Karakoram Highway into India.

Our first halt was at the bustling town of Gilgit, we continued driving further up to the valley of Bunji. The inhabitants of Bunji were expecting a foreign hunter for the first time. It was the first year that their community was in operation and all were hoping and praying for a successful hunt as this would mean considerable foreign exchange for their development schemes. I was advised by our friend Anchan Ali Mirza who is a son of the soil to pioneer the Astor markhor hunt in this virgin land. It was a new area and a test case for all. We crossed the mighty river Indus on a local traditional raft known as Zakh.

This form of transportation on rivers is even used until today. Earlier the floats of Zakh were made of goat skin but now days a more modern form of tyre tube is being used. Although a safe form to cross but a hair raising experience.

It is a traditional belief that a good male buck has 19 times the wisdom of a human being and hence we were to show some great strength, intelligence, courage and patience in the days ahead. The walk in the rugged mountains of the Karakorams is challenging and demanding and only those souls with the spirit of adventure are likely to succeed. At certain points we used safety ropes for crossing cliffs and falls. Fortunately we spotted a good male buck from a distance on the very first of our arrival and I was able to take a shot successfully. It was not until the next morning that we were able to bring down the animal due to poor visibility. As it had turned out it was a mature buck of about 34 inches although we were expecting a larger trophy. After all the hours of continuous driving and arduous walking I could not have been a more satisfied man. Amongst all of us there existed a great sense of pride and achievement.

We then drove towards our next goal which was the Himalayan Ibex near the town of Skardu. Interestingly when we arrived in this area we were surprised to spot a few exceptional size trophies of Astor markhor. . Anchan Ali Mirza had already taken a Hungarian hunter there earlier and therefore, It was not possible to hunt markhor again as the only licence had been utilized. The Himalayan Ibex survive here in good numbers and we were successful in bagging a male buck of 40. I am told that if you were to drive further onwards into deep valleys of the Karakorams there is a very strong population of Himalayan Ibex. But for now I thought these 2 trophies are enough. I have been fortunate enough to be able to hunt successfully in a trip that normally would have entailed a few more days. I wished I had the pleasure of flying back from Skardu but un-conducive weather conditions did not permit us and hence we hastily drove back to Islamabad. We bid farewell and returned.

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## **U.S FUELLING ARMS RACE IN SOUTH ASIA**

**By Lalith**

### **U.S FUELLING ARMS RACE IN SOUTH ASIA by Lalith**

Article Resource [www.himalayanaffairs.org](http://www.himalayanaffairs.org)

The increasing military assistance by US for Pakistan is raising concerns for India and other South Asian countries. Pakistan the joint ally of US in the "war against terror" is reaping benefits in the form of military assistance.

According to official reports US has massive plans of military supplies worth more than \$1.5 billion to Pakistan in the next five years. As quoted in "Times of India", "According to details available in the Mission Performance Plan for financial year 2004 of the US embassy in Islamabad, and updated on the US State Department website, the Americans persuaded Pakistan government to establish an Interior Air Wing in Quetta with five American helicopters".

Full Article you can read from the bellow link

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