## VEGETATION ASSESSMENT OF HAZARGANJI CHILTAN NATIONAL PARK QUETTA IN THE NATURAL HABITAT OF *CAPRA AEGAGRUS CHIALTANENSIS*

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**Abstract:** The present study has been conducted in Hazarganji Chiltan National Park to assess the existing vegetation in the natural habitat of the Chiltan Wild Goat (Capra aegagrus chiltanesis) by evaluating three basic requirements of wild animals i.e. shelter, food and water points. The park is important because of its diverse flora and fauna and recreational values. The study was carried out during the July 2022 using Braun Blanquet method of vegetation analysis. Data was collected for total number of species cover and abundance values of vegetation. For this purpose 40 quadrates were laid out and the listing of vegetation was done on comparatively homogenous sites. Two plant communities were recognized at different elevation slope, directions and on rocky sites. 1) Juniperus macropoda – Perovskia abrotanoides community and 2) Sophora griffithii – Artemisia maritima community. These communities constitute the best habitat in Hazarganji Chiltan from the aspect of shelter and food availability of Chiltan Wild Goat (Capra aegagrus chialtanensis) during summer and winter seasons. Out of these communities, Juniperus macropoda was found on the higher elevation between 2000 m to 2500 m. It was dominantly present on Northern, Southern and Western aspects on calcareous parent rocks. Vegetation cover and abundance percentage (%) of this community was high and more than 95% coverage and abundance values were noted. The density was also high and more than 40 plants were present in 100 m<sup>2</sup> quadrate. Sophora – Artemisia is dominating in the habitat from 1200 to 1900 m elevation and had the best coverage and abundance values. The soil under this community was quite deep with sand clay loam texture. The community exhibits

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almost 80% coverage and abundance. On the basis of these results, it is recommended that blank areas in the natural habitat of Chiltan Wild Goat may be planted with species such as *Pistacia cabulica*, *Fraxinus xanthoxyloides*, *Prunus eburnea*, *Lonicera quinquelocularis*, *Cotoneaster nummularia*.

**Keywords:** Chiltan Wild Goat, Hazarganji Chiltan National Park, Natural Habitat, Quetta, Vegetative Assessment.

**Introduction:** The dispersed populations of *Capra falconeri*, also known as Markhors and initially described by *Wagner in 1839*, is widespread throughout the western Himalayas' arid and steppe areas. Only Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have discontinuous distributions (*Huffman et al. 2004*).

There were seven generally recognised subspecies of Markhor: *C.f. jerdoni* (Suleiman or straight-horned Markhor), *C.f. megaceros* (Kabul or Kabal Markhor), *C.f. cashmirensis* (Pir Panjal or Kashmir markhor), *C.f. falconeri* (Astor Markhor), *Capra aegagrus chialtanensis* (Chiltan Markhor) when they were originally listed under the Protection Act in 1975 and just three subspecies of Markhor are currently recognised by the majority of authority (*Marshall P. Jones 1999*).

Pakistan is home to five different subspecies. The remaining four subspecies were reduced to just two, the straight and flare-horned markhor, and one subspecies, the so-called Chiltan Markhor, was discovered to be a wild goat (*Capra aegagrus* subspecies) (*Schaller et al. 2003*).

*Chaudhari and Barkati (2002)*, in their study of the ecology and status of the Chiltan wild goat concluded that HCNP is the most crucial habitat for the species since it is the sole surviving sanctuary for the animal, which the IUCN Red Book has listed as an endangered species.

According to Sharif-ud-Din Baloch's (2013) research 984 Chiltan wild goats were found, with 431 (44%) of them living in the Hazarganji area, 401 (41%) in the Chiltan area, and 152 (15%) in the Tal, Haider, and Surkho areas. His research also showed that, on average, the Chiltan wild goat population is significantly growing, with a population growth rate of 8.25% over the preceding ten years (1992-2012).

Additionally, the corresponding population growth rates for men, women, children, and yearlings were found to be 9.22%, 6.93%, 8.44%, and 9.91%. His research also showed a ten-year trend toward increasing male to female and child to female ratios.

Early assessments on the wild goat population in the Chiltan range were carried out in the early 1970s (*Shafique and Barkati 2002*). *Schaller and Mirza* estimated the wild goat population in the Chiltan range to be 200 animals in 1971 following a census. Actually, there were only 107 creatures reported during the study. Later, in 1975, *Mirza* undertook a fifteen-day census of the Chiltan wild goat on the Hazarganji and Chiltan mountains, counting 168 animals. The majority of the animals were restricted to the southern portion of the Chiltan range, and the mature males were held above 2800 m in the most challenging terrains (*Shafique and Barkati 2002*). Following the establishment of Hazarganji Chiltan National Park in 1980, the census of the Chiltan wild goat population was carried out by less experienced staff members from observational vantage points. The observations of animals made at the time were not supported by scientific research. But the results of earlier surveys demonstrate that the Chiltan wild goat population increased in its sole surviving sanctuary (*Shackleton, 1997; GoP et al., 2000*). The Chiltan wild goat's status is listed in the IUCN Red Data Book as being of "least concern" (*Sheikh and Molur, 2005*).

**Study Area:** Hazarganji Chiltan National Park, Qeutta Balochistan is the subject of the investigation. The names *Hazar* and *Ganji* translate to "*a thousand*" and "*treasures*," respectively, while *Chiltan* means "*forty bodies or saints*." One of Pakistan's most significant national parks, HCNP is classified as a "*Category V*" protected area on the IUCN protected area list. Moreover, T. Bibi et al., 2014 describes it as a hotspot in Balochistan, a province in Pakistan's southwest, and is situated mostly in Mastung district (30°7'N, 66°54'E). Part 8 of the Sulaiman Mountains encompasses the NP, which measures roughly 27,421 acres.



Figure: 1

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## Material & Method

**Selection Of Sampling Sites:** The sampling locations of study area included natural regions situated at various slopes and altitudes. Utilizing Braun Blanquet Method and phyto-sociological approaches, the fieldwork was completed in July 2022. Observations of vegetation like coverage abundance, dominance, density, life forms & phonological approaches were noted by using the quadrat method randomly but having comparatively homogenous vegetation. The study area, which is approximately 70 km, was divided into two sample sites on the basis of difference in elevation with 20 quadrats at each site. For the sake of quantitative analysis of vegetation, a total of 40 quadrats were used.

**Data Collection:** Quadrat method was used to sample the area while using quadrats of various sizes for herb  $(1m \times 1m)$ , shrub  $(2m \times 2m)$  and trees  $(10m \times 10m)$  and 40 quadrates were laid out homogenous vegetation sites at Two (02) different elevation ranges i.e. 2000m - 2500m & 1200m - 1900m (20 quadrates at each range). The vegetation data was recorded and the observations such as elevation (m) was determined by altimeter, direction and slope was determined by compass and clino meter respectively. The use of quadrat is the best method to assess vegetation analysis in the different landscapes (*Eversen & Clark 1987, Cox 1996 and Goldsmith et al., 1986*). During vegetation sampling following steps which were met sequentially:

- The whole study area was divided into 40 sites on the basis of difference in elevation for quantitative sampling.
- Through quadrats at each site i.e. Easily accessible, mature and disturbed; the vegetation was sampled.
- Simple rope, a rod, and inch tape were used to create quadrats. The common quadrat sizes employed in this study for herbs, shrubs, and trees were 1 m x 1 m, 5 m x 5 m, and 10 m x 10 m, respectively.
- Three quadrats were utilised to sample the flora in three layers—herbs, shrubs, and trees—at each location in order to gather floristic data. The entire woody flora was less than one metre tall in the first layer of shrubs, one to five metres tall in the second layer of shrubs, and more than five meters tall in the third layer of trees.

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All of the plant species were identified. The value of cover/abundance for herbs and shrubs was visually judged in the quadrats using the prescribed Braun-Blanquet scale that Daubenmire modified (*Braun Blanquet 1965 and Daubenmire 1968*). The following formulas were used to calculate the phyto-sociological parameters examined at the abundance/cover & frequency of the species:

Cover = 
$$\frac{\text{Total area covered by a species in quadrat}}{\text{Total area of quadrat}} \times 100$$
  
Frequency =  $\frac{\text{Number of quadrates in which a species occurred}}{\text{Total number of quadrates sampled}} \times 100$ 

- Plant collection was done from the study area and plant specimens were collected from the quadrate for identification in the herbarium.
- > The nomenclature was followed after *Stewart* (1921).

**Result & Discussion:** The study of the area revealed, following plant communities were recorded in the natural habitat of Chiltan Wild Goat:

1. Juniperus macropoda	_	Pervoskia abrotanoides Community
2. Sophora griffithii	_	Artemisia maritimea Community.

Juniperus macropoda – Pervoskia abrotanoides Community: This community was found on higher elevation. It was found between 2000 m to 2500 m elevation. Juniperus macropoda was dominantly present on Northern, Southern and Western aspect of calcareous parent rocks. The vegetation coverage and abundance percentages (%) of this community were high and more than 95% coverage and abundance value were noted. The density was also high and more than 40 plants were present in 100 m<sup>2</sup> quadrates. Some of the associated species in this plant community are as follows:

Species Habit	No. of Species Documented	Species Documented	Abundance (%)	Frequency (%)
Grasses	05	Brom us japonicas	5%	20%
		Saccharum griffithii	10%	50%
		Dichanthium annulatum	5%	30%
		Poa bulbosa	5%	50%
		Melica persica	10%	50%
Herbs	18	Pervoskia abrotanoides	15%	66%
		Salvia macrosiphon	15%	60%
		Ocimum Sanctum	15%	50%
		Onosma hookeri	10%	60%
		Asterllariakorschiti	10%	60%
		Scorzonera kigatha	10%	60%
		Astragalus trichocarpus	10%	50%
		Teucrium stocksianum	10%	40%
		Lactuca serriola	5%	20%
		Lepedium draba	15%	50%
		centaurea iberica	10%	50%
		Aquilegia vulgaris	10%	50%
		Achillea Anatolia	5%	40%
		Bupleurum falcatum	5%	40%
		Ferula ovina	5%	40%
		Polygala chinensis	5%	40%
		Lactuca serriola	5%	40%
		Calendula arvensis	5%	40%
Shrubs	19	Ephedra nebrodensis	80%	100%
		Daphaneoleioides	75%	80%
		Cotonea ster nummularia	70%	70%
		Lonicera quinquelocularis	50%	60%
		Caragana ambigua	15%	60%
		Berberis balochistanica	30%	60%
		Jasminum humile	15%	50%
		Primus ebianean	10%	50%
		Spirea brahuica	20%	50%
		Rum ex hastatus	15%	60%
		Thymus serpyllum	20%	60%
		Onobrychis trifolia	10%	50%
		Plectranthus rugosus	10%	50%
		Amaranthus hybridus	15%	50%
		Acantholimon munroanum	5%	20%
		Acantholimon stocksil	15%	60%
		Gaillonia eriantha	5%	40%
		Menthe serphyllum	10%	40%
		Prangos pabularia	5%	40%
Trees	04	Juniperus macropoda	90%	100%
		Pisticia Khinjuk	50%	30%

Table 2. Summary of Abundance & Frequency Percentage of Vegetation in Juniperus macropoda – Pervoskia abrotanoides Community













Figure: 5



Figure: 6

Sophora griffithii and Artemisia maritima Community : This community was found at an elevation ranging from 1200 m - 1900 m. The community was found on calcareous soil. It was present comparatively on gentle slopes. Vegetation, coverage and abundance were ranging from 80-90%. There were 34 species present per 100 sq.m. quadrats. The community is consisting some of the following associate and sub-ordinate spp:

pecies Habit	No. of Species Documented	Species Documented	Abundance (%)	Frequence (%)
Grasses	04	Saccharum griffithii	5%	20%
		Bromus japonicus	5%	20%
Herbs	36	Plantago ciliate	5%	50%
		Plantago ovate	5%	50%
		Artemisia maritima	5%	45%
		Bunleurum falcatum	5%	30%
		Heliotropium cabulicum	5%	30%
		Nepeta bracteata	5%	30%
		Ferula castata	5%	30%
		Descurainia sophia	5%	30%
		Scabiosa cana	5%	30%
		Stachys povirflora	5%	30%
		Lamium amplexicaula	5%	30%
		Polygala chinensis	5%	20%
		Sileve conoidea	5%	20%
		Calendula avensis	5%	20%
		Huosevanus nigar	50%	30%
		Nonea caspica	570	20%
		Companyla colorata	5 /0	20%
		Pulicavia membaladar	59/	20%
		Venhaser thanses	59/	20%
		verbascum inapsus	576	20%
		Bromus tectorium	5%	20%
		Heaysarum Wrighilanum	370	20%
		Scorzonera tuberose	5%	20%
		Echnops grunnanum	3%	20%
		Salvia macrosiphon	10%	20%
		Paracyrum purpureum	10%	30%
		Veronica biloba	10%	20%
		Lepearum araba	376	20%
		Astragalus tricnocarpus	5%	20%
		1 eucrium stockstamum	5%	20%
		Centurea Ibercia	5%	20%
		Phiommis stewarth	5%	20%
		Aquilegia vulgaris	5%	20%
		Ferula ovina	5%	20%
		Polygala chinensis	5%	20%
		Lactuca serriola	5%	20%
	2.0	Calenaula arvensis	5%	20%
Shrubs	19	Prumus eburnean	10%	50%
		Ephedra procera	10%	50%
		Plectranthus rogusos	5%	30%
		Verbascum erianthum	5%	30%
		Othonnopsis intermedia	5%	30%
		Ephedra nebrodensis	90%	100%
		Daphne of eordes	/0%	70%
		Lonicera quinquelocularis	40%	50%
		Caragana ambigua	30%	40%
		Berberis balochistanica	40%	40%
		Jasminum humile	/0%	30%
		Spirea brahuica	30%	30%
		Rumex hastatus	30%	40%
		Thymus serpyllian	20%	30%
		Perovskia abrotanoides	10%	40%
		Gaillonia eriantha	5%	20%
		Menthe serphyllum	5%	20%
		Prangos pabularia	5%	20%
		Acantholimon munroanum	5%	20%
Trees	04	Fraximis xanthoxyloides	10%	50%
		Sophora griffithii	40%	60%
		Prangos pabularia	5%	30%
		Pistacia Khiniuk	40%	100%













Figure: 10



**Distribution/Frequency of Occurrence of Plant Families Recorded in the Habitat of Chiltan Wild Goat at HCNP:** On accomplishment of habitat survey and after taxonomic identification of plants specimens; collected from all sampling sites in the habitat of Chiltan Wild Goat; from the herbarium of Pakistan Forest Institute and Flora of Pakistan, following 24 Plant Families named below were recorded :

 Table 4. Summary of Total No. of Families documented from all the sampling sites in the Habitat of Chiltan Wild Goat (Capra aegagrus chiltanensis)

Study Area	Elevation of Sampling Sites (m)	Total No. of Sampling Sites	No. of Families Documented	Species Documented
HCNP,	i. 1200 – 1900	40	24	Anacardiaceae
Quetta	ii. 2000 - 2500			Boraginaceae
	each elevation)			Berberidaceae
	53			Bryophyte
				Caryophyllaceae
				Companulaceae
				Chenopodiaceae
				Compositae
				Convolvulaceae
				Cruciferae
				Cupressaceae
				Dipsacaceae
				Euphorbiaceae
				Gramineae
				Gnetaceae
				Gentianaceae
				Geraniaceae
				Liliaceae
				Moraceae
				Oleaceae
				Orobanchaceae
				Papaveraceae
				Phumbaginaceae
				Polvgalaceae

The habitat further revealed that the Frequency of occurrence/distribution of Graminaea Family was maximum as compare to the other recorded families. The following frequency chart describe the detailed information regarding the distribution/frequency of different families recorded in all the sampling sites in the habitat of Chiltan Wild Goat at Hazarganji – Chiltan National Park Quetta, Balochistan:



Figure 12

**Feeding Habit & Preferred Diet of Chiltan Wild Goat:** Principal food of the Chiltan Wild Goat in winter was determined to be Juniper. During observation, a female goat was found climbing the juniper tree and feeding on it. However, in summers chiltan wild goat graze at night and take rest during day time hiding themselves under bushes and shady cliffs. The Chiltan Wild Goat is found indulged in browsing most of the time as more browsing vegetation is available compare to grasses in Hazarganji range.

The following 12-plant species are recorded to be preferred by animals. A detailed list of palatable species was also collected by Khan (1989):

Table 5. Summary of Vegetative species preferred by Chiltan Wild Goat (Capra aegagrus chiltanensis) in the study area.

Study Area	Species Habit	Species
HCNP, Quetta	Grasses	Melia persica
		Cymbopogon schoenanthus
		Chysopogon aucheri
		Oryzopsis spp
	Herbs	Bupleurum flacatum
	Shrubs	perovskia arbrotanoides
		Artemisia maritime
		othannopsis intermidia
		Ephedra spp
	Trees	Pistacia khinjak
		Fraxinus xanthoxyloides
		Alnus nitida





**Discussion:** In the present study Twenty Four (24) plant families were studied in the natural habitat of Chiltan Wild Goat at HCNP Quetta where the habitat under study was

bifurcated on basis of difference of elevation i.e. 1200 - 1900m & 2000 - 2500m during July 2022. The documented families showed characteristics in common as well as variances from the vegetation found in the rest of the country; for example, the most prevalent families were the *Gramineae* and *Compositeae* (*Abbas Z et al., 2016 and Abbasi et al., 2013*).

24 families and 109 plant species were identified in the current study. *Gramineae* and *Compositeae* were recorded as the two most prevalent families. The *Poaceae* family was the dominating family at this site, and several others were comparable across a number of places, according to recent research (*Iqbal MS et al., 2015, Ijaz F et al., 2016, Shaheen H et al., 2011 and Malik H et al., 2001).* A total of 38 shrubs, 54 herbs, 5 tree species, and 5 grass species were identified in the study area. Additionally, the recorded value is within the indicated range for other Pakistani regions (*Pielou EC, 1977*).

**Conclusion:** From the study of the area it seems that sufficient vegetation of palatable species is in existence for summer and winter habitats both in Chiltan and Hazarganji. The coverage and abundance values for shelter species such as *Juniperus macropoda*, *Pistacia khinjuk*, *Fraxinus xanthoxylolides*, *and Daphne oleoides*, range upto 80% while the density of the dominant species range from 50-60 plants in the sample plots of 100m<sup>2</sup>. One can safely conclude from the above data that the present species are sufficient to provide food and shelter to the animal in these areas. However, an improvement in vegetation for food and shelter is required with the increasing number of animals populations and grazing pressures on the palatable plant communities.

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