Characteristics fauna of Himalaya

.**Animal life**

The fauna of the eastern Himalayas is similar to that of the southern Chinese and Southeast Asian region. Many of those species are primarily found in tropical forests and are only secondarily adapted to the subtropical, mountain, and temperate conditions prevailing at higher elevations and in the drier western areas. The animal life of the [western Himalayas](https://www.britannica.com/place/western-Himalayas), however, has more [affinities](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/affinities) with that of the Mediterranean, Ethiopian, and Turkmenian regions. The past presence in the region of some African animals, such as giraffes and the hippopotamuses, can be inferred from fossil remains in deposits found in the [Siwalik Range](https://www.britannica.com/place/Siwalik-Range). The animal life at elevations above the tree line consists almost exclusively of cold-tolerant [endemic](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/endemic) species that evolved from the wildlife of the steppes after the uplift of the Himalayas. Elephants and rhinoceroses are restricted to parts of the forested [Tarai](https://www.britannica.com/place/Tarai) region—moist or marshy areas, now largely drained—at the base of the low hills in southern [Nepal](https://www.britannica.com/place/Nepal). [Asiatic black bears](https://www.britannica.com/animal/Asiatic-black-bear), [clouded leopards](https://www.britannica.com/animal/clouded-leopard), [langurs](https://www.britannica.com/animal/langur) (a long-tailed Asian monkey), and Himalayan [goat antelopes](https://www.britannica.com/animal/goat-antelope) (e.g., the [tahr](https://www.britannica.com/animal/tahr)) are some of the [denizens](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/denizens) of the Himalayan forests. The [Indian rhinoceros](https://www.britannica.com/animal/Indian-rhinoceros) was once abundant throughout the foothill zone of the Himalayas but is now endangered, as is the [musk deer](https://www.britannica.com/animal/musk-deer); both species are dwindling, and few live, other than those in a handful of reserves set up to protect them. The Kashmir stag, or *hangul*, is near extinction.

[](https://cdn.britannica.com/61/4561-004-8F878B48/Himalayan-tahr.jpg)

[**Himalayan tahr**](https://cdn.britannica.com/61/4561-004-8F878B48/Himalayan-tahr.jpg)

Himalayan tahr (*Hemitragus jemlahicus*)

*Arthur W. Ambler—The National Audubon Society Collection/Photo Researchers*

In remote sections of the Himalayas, at higher elevations, [snow leopards](https://www.britannica.com/animal/snow-leopard), [brown bears](https://www.britannica.com/animal/brown-bear), [lesser pandas](https://www.britannica.com/animal/red-panda), and Tibetan [yak](https://www.britannica.com/animal/yak)s have limited populations. The yak has been domesticated and is used as a [beast of burden](https://www.britannica.com/technology/pack-animal) in [Ladakh](https://www.britannica.com/place/Ladakh). Above the tree line the most numerous animals, however, are [diverse](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diverse) types of [insects](https://www.britannica.com/animal/insect), [spiders](https://www.britannica.com/animal/spider-arachnid), and [mites](https://www.britannica.com/animal/mite), which are the only animal forms that can live as high up as 20,700 feet (6,300 metres).

[](https://cdn.britannica.com/41/162641-050-4D61605C/yak-Himalayas-Nepal.jpg)

[**Himalayas: yak**](https://cdn.britannica.com/41/162641-050-4D61605C/yak-Himalayas-Nepal.jpg)

A yak in the Himalayas, Nepal.

*© Galyna Andrushko/Fotolia*

Fish of the genus *Glyptothorax* live in most of the Himalayan streams, and the Himalayan [water shrew](https://www.britannica.com/animal/water-shrew) inhabits stream banks. [Lizards](https://www.britannica.com/animal/lizard) of the genus *Japalura* are widely distributed. *Typhlops*, a genus of [blind snake](https://www.britannica.com/animal/blind-snake), is common in the eastern Himalayas. The [butterflies](https://www.britannica.com/animal/butterfly-insect) of the Himalayas are extremely varied and beautiful, especially those in the genus *Troides*.

Bird life in the Himalayas is equally rich but is more [abundant](https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/abundant) in the east than in the west. In Nepal alone almost 800 species have been observed. Among some of the common Himalayan birds are different species of [magpies](https://www.britannica.com/animal/magpie) (including the black-rumped, the blue, and the racket-tailed), titmice, [choughs](https://www.britannica.com/animal/chough) (related to the jackdaw), whistling thrushes, and [redstarts](https://www.britannica.com/animal/redstart-bird-group). A few strong fliers, such as the [lammergeier](https://www.britannica.com/animal/lammergeier) (bearded vulture), the black-eared kite, and the Himalayan griffon (an Old World vulture), also can be seen. Snow partridges and Cornish choughs are found at elevations of 18,600 feet (5,700 metres).