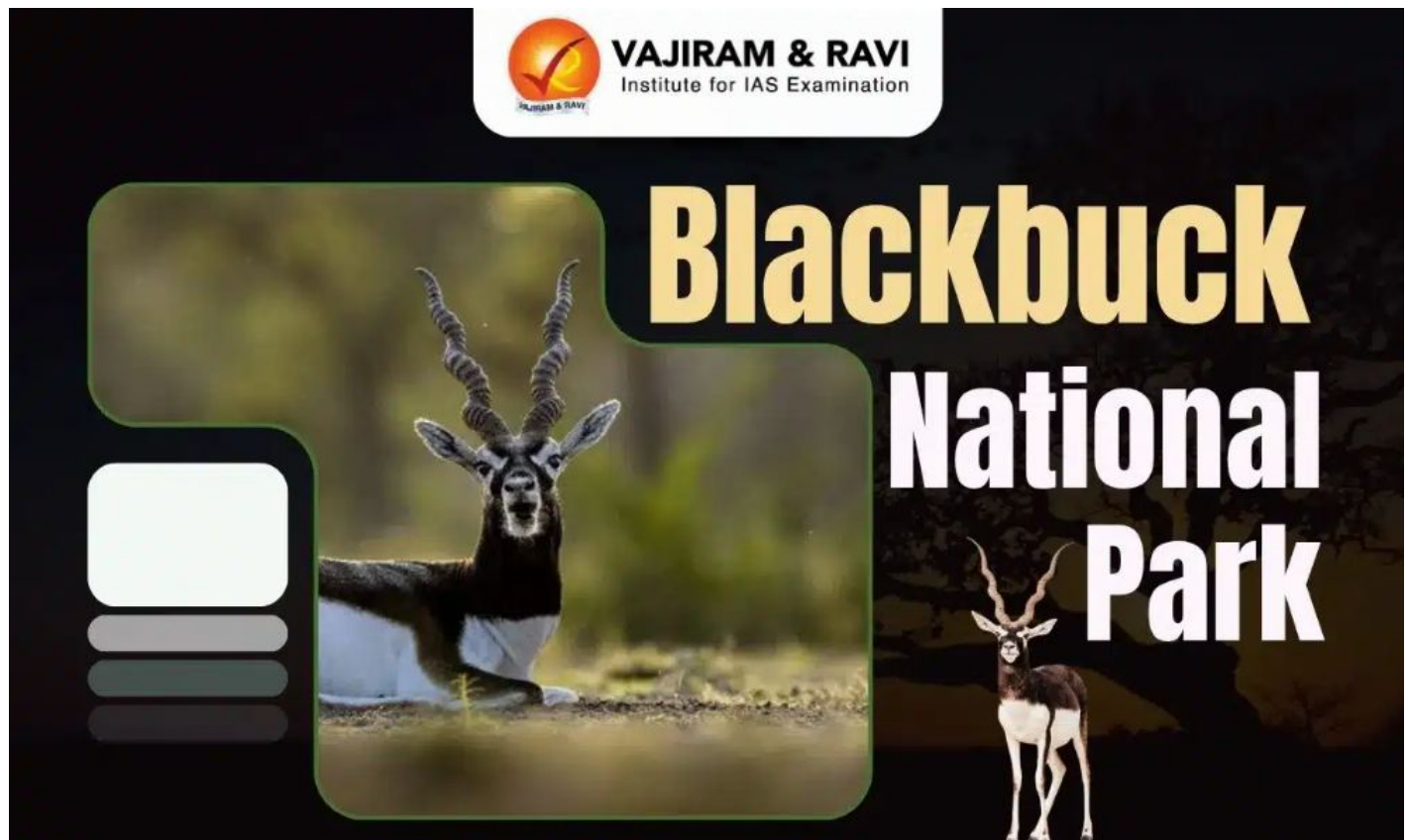


Blackbuck National Park, Location, Background, Geographical Features

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Blackbuck National Park, popularly known as Velavadar Blackbuck National Park, is one of India's most important grassland protected areas. It is globally recognized for its thriving blackbuck population, significant Indian wolf habitat, and one of the world's largest roosting sites for migratory harriers.

Blackbuck National Park Historical Background

The area was originally maintained as a royal grassland reserve by the **Maharaja of Bhavnagar**, who used it for hunting blackbucks with trained cheetahs. Recognising its ecological value, the **government declared it a wildlife sanctuary** and **later expanded it into a national park in July 1976**. Today, it is regarded as one of India's finest examples of grassland conservation.

Blackbuck National Park Location and Geographical Features

- Blackbuck National Park is situated at **Velavadar in Bhavnagar district of Gujarat, about 45 km from Bhavnagar city.**

- It lies in the **Bhal region of Saurashtra**, near the **Gulf of Khambhat (Cambay)**.
- The seasonal **Parvalia and Alang rivers** flow through the landscape, with the Alang River forming the southern boundary of the park.
- It falls within the **semi-arid biogeographic zone** and represents the **Gujarat-Rajwada biotic province**.
- The northern portion consists of **open grasslands**, while the southern region contains **thorn scrub, saline flats, and tidal mudflats**.

Blackbuck National Park Faunal Diversity

National Park is renowned for its rich wildlife diversity and serves as an important refuge for grassland mammals, carnivores, and migratory birds.

- **Blackbuck (Antelope cervicapra)**: The park supports one of the largest and healthiest blackbuck populations in India; the species can run at speeds of nearly 80 km/h and is **protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- **Indian Wolf**: Velavadar holds one of the most significant wolf populations among Indian protected areas, with the southern thorn-scrub region serving as an important breeding and denning habitat.
- **Lesser Florican**: This Critically Endangered grassland bird visits the park during the monsoon breeding season, making Velavadar one of its most important habitats in India.
- **Other Mammals**: Nilgai, Striped Hyena, Golden Jackal, Indian Fox, Jungle Cat and Wild Boar are commonly found in the park.
- **Avifauna**: Flamingoes, Pelicans, Painted Storks, White Storks and large numbers of migratory Harriers use the park and adjoining wetlands as feeding and roosting grounds.

Blackbuck National Park Floral Diversity

The flora of Blackbuck National Park reflects its unique semi-arid grassland ecosystem and plays a crucial role in sustaining the park's rich wildlife population.

- **Blackbuck National Park** is dominated by **tropical grasslands** that provide ideal habitat and food for blackbucks and other herbivores.
- The vegetation mainly consists of grasses such as **Dichanthium annulatum**, which forms an important part of the blackbuck's diet.
- **Tree species like Babul (Acacia), Karanj, Banyan, and Jambu** occur in scattered patches and provide shelter and nesting sites for wildlife.
- The southern part of the park contains **thorn-scrub vegetation**, which serves as an important habitat for **Indian wolves and other carnivores**.
- Due to the saline conditions influenced by the nearby Gulf of Khambhat, **salt-tolerant plant species** are also found in some areas.

This unique combination of grasslands, thorn scrub, and saline vegetation makes Velavadar one of India's finest natural grassland ecosystems.