

ZOOLOGICAL TOUR REPORT

VENUE: DACHIGAM NATIONAL PARK

On 22nd April, 2026, Department of Zoology, Govt. Degree College Sumbal visited Dachigam National Park, situated approximately 23 km from city Centre Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir. The tour aimed to explore the park's rich biodiversity, witness its scenic beauty, and understand its importance in conserving endangered species, particularly the Critically Endangered Kashmir stag (*Cervus hanglu hanglu*).

Dachigam National Park, spread over 141 sq. km, is divided into two zones; Lower Dachigam: known for easier access and housing diverse wildlife and Upper Dachigam: Rugged terrain with alpine meadows, suitable for adventurous treks. The park ranges in altitude from 1,700 m to 4,300 m, offering a unique gradient that supports a variety of ecosystems, from coniferous forests to alpine vegetation.

This report outlines the key activities, educational takeaways that were demonstrated to the students during the trip.

Observations

The first spot was the Laribal Trout Rearing Unit situated inside the NP, the students were led by the college faculty to the hatchery. The hatchery has a number of raceways and cultivated the exotic Rainbow trout *Oncorhynchus mykiss* an economically important fish of the Kashmir. The students were given insights into the start of the trout culture and the successful establishment of the fish in waters of Kashmir. The staff also demonstrated about the key morphological features for the identification of the fish some of the challenges faced by the fish in culture conditions.

The college staff led the students through the National Park and shared valuable insights on the importance of the park and its historical background. The group also learned, Dachigam was initially established to ensure the supply of clean drinking water to Srinagar city. As such 10 villages were relocated in 1910 to create the park and was declared as a national park in 1981.

The students were also given a fair knowledge of the critically endangered Hangul that has recently been renamed from *Cervus elaphus hanglu* to *Cervus hanglu hanglu* based on the mitochondrial genomic studies of the species.

The second stop was observing the behavior and other activities of the animals in the enclosure only few meters from the entrance of the Park. The enclosures included the rehabilitated common leopard *Panthera pardus* (03 individuals), Himalayan brown bear *Ursus arctos isabellinus* (01 individual), and Asiatic Black bear *Ursus thibetanus* (03 individuals).

Key Learning:

Conservation programs at Dachigam National Park are focused on reforestation, habitat restoration, and anti-poaching measures to save the important species dwelling in the area.

The park is home to a variety of trees, shrubs, and medicinal plants, including conifers and alpine herbs. The region's heterogeneous microclimatic conditions foster a diverse array of flora, many of which have been utilized in ethnobotanical practices for centuries. During our exploration of the national park, we encountered a broad spectrum of plant species, each fulfilling a distinct ecological function within the local ecosystem. The exceptional environmental context provided an optimal setting for examining the ecological importance and cultural relevance of the area's biodiversity.

Furthermore, the park hosts a rich diversity of avifauna, including species like: *Enicurus maculatus* (Spotted forktail), *Urocissa flavirostris* (yellow billed blue magpie), and Large billed crow.

Interaction with Officials

The students also interacted with park rangers and guides who explained conservation strategies and eco-tourism initiatives. They shared insights about efforts to sustain the Hangul population and maintain the park's biodiversity.

Conservation Message

Dachigam National Park serves as a reminder of nature's fragility and the need for collective action to protect endangered species. Visitors must adhere to guidelines, avoid littering, and respect the park's ecosystem to ensure the preservation of the ecosystem and the important species sustained.

Conclusion

The visit to Dachigam National Park was both educational and inspiring. It underscored the importance of wildlife conservation and the role we play in sustaining the environment. Such experiences not only raise awareness but also instill a sense of responsibility toward protecting our natural heritage.

Acknowledgement

The department wants to extend sincere gratitude to the worthy principal Prof. Shabeena Shawl, for the tour consent and support. Further The Department of Zoology is also highly thankful to the department of wildlife protection, Jammu & Kashmir for permission and support.



Common leopard



Trout in the Raceways



Birds found in Dachigam