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Kanha National Park: Barasingha Comeback

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Kanha National Park: Barasingha Comeback

Practice: 6 MCQs
Kanha National Park in Madhya Pradesh saved the last hard-ground barasingha population. It remains a stronghold, though reintroduced herds now live elsewhere.

This page covers its location, its protection history, the barasingha recovery, the people moved out, and the Jungle Book link.

- **State:** Madhya Pradesh.
- **Area:** 940 sq km core, 1,067 sq km buffer.
- **National park:** 1955.
- **Project Tiger:** 1973.
- **Star species:** hard-ground barasingha.

Contents

1. Where Kanha stands
2. How it won protection
3. The hard-ground barasingha
4. How the herd recovered
5. Mascot and people
6. Tigers and a Jungle Book myth
7. Pressures today
8. 4 understanding checks
9. Related Articles
0. 6 practice MCQs

1. Where Kanha stands

1.1 Where is Kanha and how big is it?

Kanha lies in the Maikal range of the Satpura hills in Madhya Pradesh. It spreads across Mandla and Balaghat districts.

The core area is about 940 sq km. A buffer of 1,067 sq km surrounds it. Together they form the Kanha Tiger Reserve.

1.2 What does the land look like?

Kanha is a mosaic of sal forest, mixed forest with bamboo, and large open meadows called maidans. Sal is the main timber tree.

The park sits between about 450 and 950 metres. It spans the catchments of the Banjar and Halon rivers.

1.3 How is the reserve divided?

The reserve has six ranges: Kanha, Mukki, Kisli, Sarhi, Bhaisanghat and Supkhar. Kanha is the central tourism range.

Tourism is allowed in four ranges. The rest stay undisturbed core.



A tiger in Kanha National Park, Madhya Pradesh. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Sources:

- Anantam IAS: Kanha National Park
- Outlook Traveller: Heart of the jungle

2. How Kanha won protection

2.1 How did protection arrive step by step?

The Banjar Valley Reserve was formed in 1933. The Halon Valley Reserve followed in 1935.

The two were merged and notified as Kanha National Park in 1955. Kanha was once a hunting reserve for the region’s rulers.

2.2 What changed in 1973?

Kanha became one of the nine original Project Tiger reserves in 1973. Jim Corbett and the Sundarbans were also on that first list.

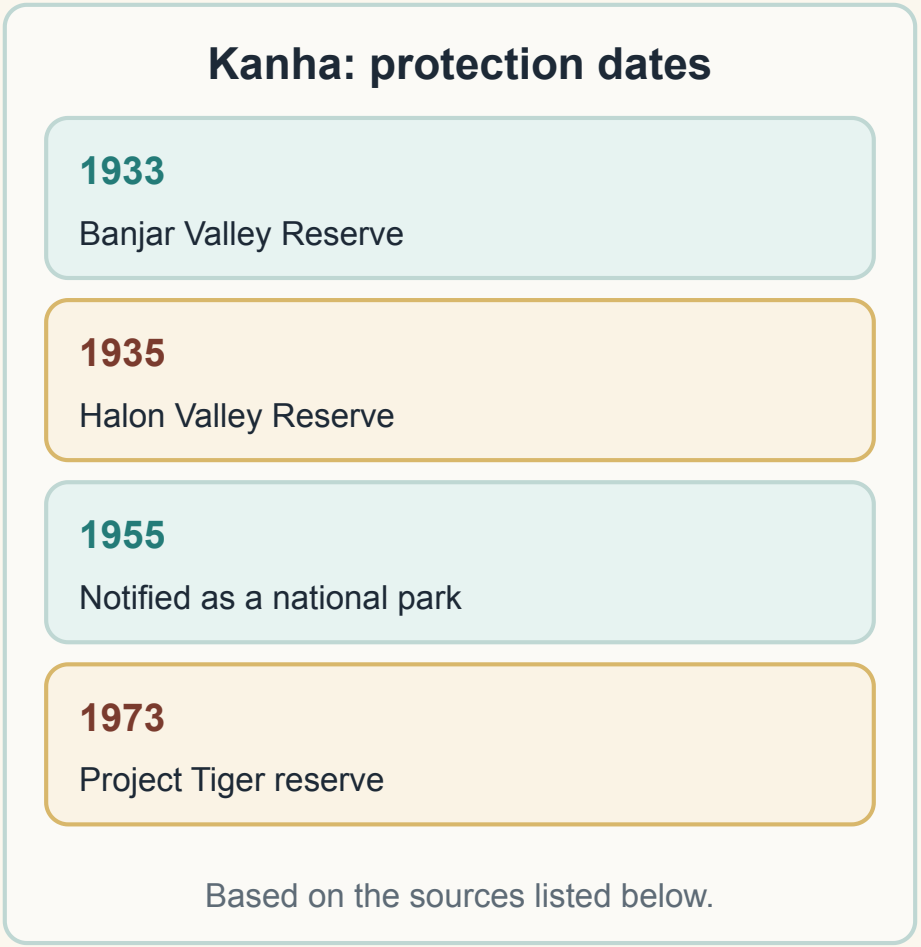
The Kanha Tiger Reserve was created the same year. It brought the buffer into one management unit.

2.3 Why does Madhya Pradesh call itself the Tiger State?

Madhya Pradesh recorded the highest tiger numbers of any state in the 2022 All-India Tiger Estimation. Kanha is its conservation flagship.



Mandla district, Madhya Pradesh. Kanha sits here, split with neighbouring Balaghat district. Map: Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.



Four dates to remember. Original explanatory diagram.

Sources:

- Anantam IAS: Kanha National Park (section 2)

True or false: Kanha was notified as a national park in 1955.

3. The hard-ground barasingha

3.1 Which deer was saved here, and how few were left?

The hard-ground barasingha is a swamp deer adapted to firm ground. Its scientific name is Rucervus duvaucelii branderi.

By 1970 only the Kanha group of this subspecies survived. Kanha is still a stronghold. Reintroduced herds now live elsewhere, including Satpura, where reintroduction began in 2015. The other two subspecies live in wet swamp habitats. In 1970 only 66 remained.

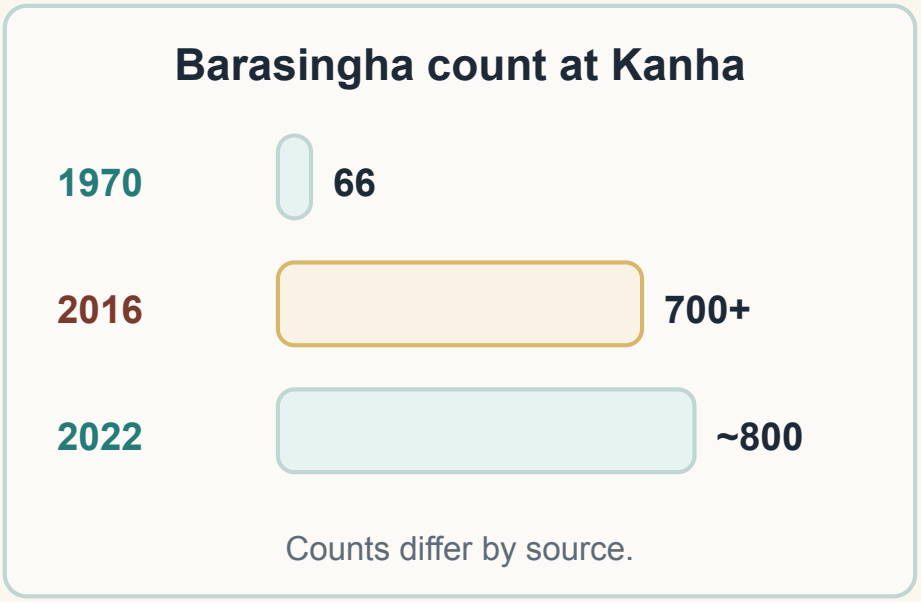
3.2 Why did the herd fall so low?

Habitat shrinkage, competition with livestock and disease drove the herd down. Down To Earth also names rampant hunting.

3.3 How do the three swamp-deer subspecies differ?

Swamp deer have three subspecies. One lives in the Terai and one in Assam. Both prefer wet swamps.

The third, the hard-ground type, lives on firm soil. Its hooves suit hard ground.



The hard-ground barasingha comeback. Original explanatory diagram.

Sources:

- Anantam IAS: Kanha National Park (section 3)
- Down To Earth: Near-extinct hard ground swamp deer see revival

True or false: the hard-ground barasingha also lives in wild swamps in Assam.

4. How the herd recovered

4.1 What steps brought the deer back?

Villages inside the core were moved out. Native grasslands reclaimed the land. Staff also kept the meadows open by prescribed burning and removing bamboo.

Disease checks and de-worming added to the effort.

4.2 How many are there now?

By 2016 the herd had passed 700. Counts today differ by source. Down To Earth gives 800. The Hitavada reports about 1,100 in 2026.

4.3 Why send some deer elsewhere?

One park is a risk. A single disease or fire could hit every animal. So surplus deer were moved to Satpura from 2015 and to Bandhavgarh from 2018.

4.4 Why do experts study this recovery?

Kanha became one of the earliest case studies of intensive species recovery inside a national park. It shows that a near-extinct subspecies can come back through steady management.

4.5 How did the herd grow over time?

Down To Earth gives a short timeline. About 551 deer lived at Kanha in 1953. The herd fell to 66 by 1967. Breeding and habitat work then lifted it to about 450 in 2015 and 800 in 2020.

The Hitavada reported in January 2026 that the herd was near 1,100. That makes Kanha the global stronghold of the hard-ground barasingha.

4.6 Where have the Kanha deer been sent?

Deer were first sent to Bandhavgarh in the early 2000s, but that attempt did not work out. Satpura received deer from 2016 and the herd there is growing.

By January 2026, seven deer had gone to Van Vihar in Bhopal, 115 to Satpura and 48 to Bandhavgarh. The latest batch had eight adult females and four fawns, caught by the boma method.

4.7 How were Kanha's open meadows made?

The big meadows are not natural. They are old village sites. Villages were moved out of the park from the 1960s.

Native grass then took over the cleared land. Kanha, Mukki, Sondhar and Bishanpura are the main meadows. They now feed most of the park's plant-eaters. Some meadows hold ponds that mark where villages once stood.

4.8 Why does the barasingha need the right grass?

The barasingha prefers a particular kind of native grass. Losing that habitat was a key cause of its fall.

Kanha's meadows hold more than 30 kinds of grass. Some of them matter most for the deer. Conservationists restored native grassland and removed weeds such as lantana. That helped bring the deer back.

Sources:

- Anantam IAS: Kanha National Park (section 4)
- Outlook Traveller: Heart of the jungle (section 4)
- Down To Earth: Near-extinct hard ground swamp deer see revival (section 4)
- The Hitavada: 12 Barasingha moved to Satpura

Think it through: why move some barasingha to other parks?

A herd in one park can be wiped out by one outbreak. A second herd in Satpura or Bandhavgarh gives the species a backup.

5. Mascot and people

5.1 Who is Bhoorsingh?

Bhoorsingh the Barasingha is the mascot of Kanha. The hard-ground barasingha is also Madhya Pradesh's state animal.

5.2 What did village relocation cost?

A relocation programme from the 1960s moved 28 villages out of the core. It created the meadows that now carry the most barasingha and chital. It also uprooted the families who lived there.

5.3 Which meadows came from the cleared villages?

The Kanha, Mukki, Sondhar and Bishanpura meadows are not natural. Village relocation made them. They now feed the park's grazing animals.

Sources:

- Anantam IAS: Kanha National Park (section 5)
- Down To Earth: Near-extinct hard ground swamp deer see revival (section 5)
- Outlook Traveller: Heart of the jungle (section 5)

True or false: moving villages out of the core helped create Kanha's meadows.

6. Tigers, corridors and a story set elsewhere

6.1 How is Kanha linked to Pench?

The Kanha-Pench corridor runs through reserve forests in Mandla, Seoni and Balaghat. NTCA documents list it as a critical tiger corridor. Dispersing tigers use it to settle new ground.

6.2 Is Kanha the Jungle Book forest?

The Jungle Book is widely linked to Kanha. Kipling never visited central India. The Seoni forests next door are a likelier model for the stories.

The link helps tourism. The real conservation value lies elsewhere.

6.3 Which other animals live here?

Kanha held over 100 tigers in the 2022 estimate. It also shelters leopard, dhole, sloth bear, gaur, sambar and chital.

More than 300 bird species are recorded. The Indian pitta, Indian roller and crested serpent eagle are among them.

6.4 What did Kanha do for the gaur?

Gaur had vanished from Bandhavgarh. From 2011, Kanha supplied animals to restore them there. Few large-bovid moves in Asia match its scale.

Sources:

- Anantam IAS: Kanha National Park (section 6)
- Outlook Traveller: Heart of the jungle (section 6)

True or false: Kipling visited central India before writing The Jungle Book.

Think it through: why does the Jungle Book link still matter to Kanha?

It brings visitors and funds. But the real value is the habitat. Kanha is a well-managed example of meadow, sal and bamboo forest.

7. Pressures today

7.1 What threatens Kanha?

Linear infrastructure cuts the Kanha-Pench corridor. The weed lantana spreads under the trees. Bamboo flowers and dies in cycles, which reshapes habitat.

Tourism and changing water supply add pressure. The 2024-25 plan stresses corridor care and grassland upkeep.

7.2 What rules protect Kanha?

Kanha is notified under the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972. The tiger reserve works under the NTCA framework added in 2006.

It has a clear core and buffer. Tourism is limited to 20 per cent of the core.

Sources:

- Anantam IAS: Kanha National Park (section 7)

Your understanding checks

Your 4 quick checks Answered 0 of 4 · Correct 0
This score resets when the page reloads.

Practice: 6 MCQs

Practice MCQs

1. In which year was Kanha notified as a national park?

A. 1955

B. 1933

C. 1973

D. 1935

See answer ↓

2. What is the scientific name of the hard-ground barasingha?

A. Axis axis

B. Rucervus duvaucelii branderi

C. Rucervus duvaucelii ranjitsinhi

D. Rucervus duvaucelii duvaucelii

See answer ↓

3. How many hard-ground barasingha were left at Kanha in 1970?

A. 551

B. 800

C. 66

D. 250

See answer ↓

4. Which two parks received barasingha moved from Kanha?

A. Corbett and Sundarbans

B. Pench and Gir

C. Bandipur and Mudumalai

D. Satpura and Bandhavgarh

See answer ↓

5. About how many villages were moved out of Kanha's core?

A. 200

B. 28

C. 5

D. 100

See answer ↓

6. Which corridor links Kanha to Pench?

A. Kanha-Satpura corridor

B. Kanha-Pench corridor

C. Kanha-Achanakmar corridor

D. Kanha-Bandhavgarh corridor

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **A.** The answer is **1955**. The Banjar and Halon valley reserves were merged then. Why the others fail: 1933 and 1935 are the dates of the two valley reserves. 1973 is Project Tiger. Memory hook: two reserves, then one park. ↑ Q1
2. **B.** The answer is **Rucervus duvaucelii branderi**. Only the Kanha herd survives. Why the others fail: ranjitsinhi lives in Assam and duvaucelii in the Terai. Both are wet-swamp deer. Axis axis is the chital. Memory hook: branderi, the hard-ground one. ↑ Q2
3. **C.** The answer is **66**. Habitat loss, livestock competition and disease did the harm. Why the others fail: 800 is a recent count. The other numbers are not 1970 figures. Memory hook: 66 to about 800. ↑ Q3
4. **D.** The answer is **Satpura and Bandhavgarh**. Moves began in 2015 and 2018. A second herd guards against one disaster. Why the others fail: those parks have no Kanha barasingha. Memory hook: backup herds. ↑ Q4
5. **B.** The answer is **28**. The cleared land turned into the meadows. Why the others fail: the sources give 28. Memory hook: villages out, meadows in. ↑ Q5
6. **B.** The answer is the **Kanha-Pench corridor**. It runs through Mandla, Seoni and Balaghat. NTCA lists it as critical. Why the others fail: those names are not the corridor the sources describe. Memory hook: Kanha to Pench. ↑ Q6

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