



GOBI ARGALI  
MONGOLIA, Dornogovi  
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GOLD AWARD  
213 3/8

Ovis ammon darwini

*Argali del Gobi* (Sp), *Gobi Argali* (G), *Argali du Gobi* (F). Sometimes called **Mongolian argali** or **Darwin argali**. Subspecific name is after British naturalist Charles R. Darwin.

**DESCRIPTION** Shoulder height 41-46 inches (104-117 cm). Weight 300 pounds (135 kg) or more.

One of the largest argalis, with horns similar to those of an Altai argali, being nearly as massive but a little shorter. Upper parts are a variegated yellowish-brown; the flanks and front of thighs are a more uniform darker brown. The sides are buff, the rump patch light buff and diffuse, the tail with a brown center line, the belly whitish, and the muzzle, sides of face and upper throat a grizzled grayish-brown. This subspecies does not grow a neck ruff.

**DISTRIBUTION** The Gobi Desert in southern Mongolia and northern China.

**TAXONOMIC NOTES** Includes the named races *darwini* (southern Gobi), *dauricus*, *intermedia* (central Gobi), *kozlovi* (Ala Shan mountains), *mongolica* (Mongolia) and *przewalskii* (Saylyugem Range), with *darwini* Przewalski, 1883 having priority.

The Mongolian gazelle is intermediate in characteristics between the goitered gazelle on one hand and the Tibetan and Przewalski gazelles on the other. It is the largest Asian gazelle, with a rather stocky build and a short, stumpy tail. It differs from typical gazelles by the absence of flank bands, pygal (rump) stripes, and the usual gazelle facial markings. The summer coat is light buff in color, paling on the neck, flanks, hindquarters and legs. The chin, upper throat, belly and inside of legs are white.

The stumpy tail is a dirty white except for a brownish patch on the middle of the upper surface. The rather large white rump patch extends above the base of tail, but is interrupted by a narrow line continuing the color of the back to the tail. The long muzzle is grayish-brown, reverting to buff on the forehead. Ears are buff at the base, paling to dirty white at the tips, and white inside. In winter, the coat becomes thick and close, its color more pinkish-buff and paler than in summer. The hindquarters turn almost white with a pinkish tinge, and the white rump patch is more sharply defined. As in the goitered gazelle, the male exhibits a swelling on the throat, especially during the breeding season, which is caused by inflation of the larynx.

Interestingly, its "goiter" is considerably larger than that of the goitered gazelle. The ears are of moderate size and pointed. The skull is long and narrow with rather elongated, pointed nose bones. There are small facial glands, large inguinal (groin) glands, small foot glands, and rudimentary hair tufts on the knees that may signify glands. Uniquely among gazelles, the male has a glandular musk sac located in the abdomen. The horns (males only) are lightly but closely ringed. They are relatively short and somewhat weak, rising almost parallel at first, then bending backward and diverging rather sharply before turning slightly inward at the tips.

Its range overlaps that of the Hillier goitered gazelle in the Gobi Desert and Inner Mongolia. It can be distinguished from the goitered gazelle by its larger size, different coloration, much shorter tail, and differently shaped horns. Normally the two species occupy different terrain and keep to themselves; however, they are sometimes found together.

**BEHAVIOR** Gregarious, living in large herds. (Herds as large as 6,000-8,000 were observed migrating in 1926.) Apparently, the young (usually twins) are born in June and July. Diurnal. A grazer that has been known to migrate seasonally in search of pasture. Eyesight and hearing are said to be excellent. A very good runner, able to outspeed wolves, its principal enemy.

**HABITAT** Grassy plains and semideserts.

**DISTRIBUTION** Mongolia, extending southward and eastward in China in the Nei Mongol autonomous region (Inner Mongolia) and in Gansu and Qinghai provinces.

