# NATIONAL STUDBOOK Blue Sheep (*Pseudois nayaur*)

Published as a part of the Central Zoo Authority sponsored project titled "Development and maintenance of studbooks for selected endangered species in Indian zoos"

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#### **FOREWORD**

For species threatened with extinction in their natural habitats, ex-situ conservation offers an opportunity for ensuring their long-term survival. Maintaining genetically viable and demographically stable populations in captivity can ensure their sustained survival. This can be ensured by using pedigree information contained in studbooks that form the key to understanding the demographic and genetic structure of populations and taking corrective actions as required for effective management of captive populations. Studbooks also provide an insight into the mating choices that can be exercised to maximize retention of genetic diversity.

The Central Zoo Authority (CZA) has initiated a conservation breeding program for threatened species in Indian zoos. As a part of this endeavor a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with the Wildlife Institute of India for compilation and update of studbooks of identified species in Indian zoos.

As part of the project outcomes the WII has developed the 'National Studbook of Blue sheep (*Pseudois nayaur*)' in Indian zoos. It is hoped that the zoos will adopt the recommendations and keep the WII informed of changes in their populations on a regular basis to enable the timely update of the studbook.

(B.S. Bonal, I.F.S.) Member Secretary Central Zoo Authority

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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We acknowledge the support from zoo directors, biologists, curators and veterinarians from the following contributing zoos for providing pedigree information that led to the successful establishment of the studbook.

Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, Darjeeling Himalayan Zoological Park, Gangtok Pandit Goving Ballabh Pant Himalayan Zoological Park, Nainital

**Authors** 

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# Blue Sheep (Pseudois nayaur): Biology and Status

Blue sheep are a medium sized caprid inhabiting steep slopes in the trans-Himalayas. The species is characterized by a short stocky body (Wang and Hoffman 1987) specifically adapted for survival in the rugged trans-Himalayan terrain. The pelage consists of short hair ranging in colour from brown to slate blue (Schaller 1998). Their body colour enables them to camouflage themselves against the back ground of blue-grayish rock typical to their habitat (Wang and Hoffman 1987).

# **Taxonomy**

Kingdom Animalia
Phylum Chordata
Class Mammalia

Order Cetartiodactyla

Family Bovidae
Sub-family Caprinae
Genus Pseudois
Species nayaur

Species Authority Hodgson, 1833

Common Name Blue Sheep, Bharal, Naur



Initially believed to be a monotypic species (Allen 1940; Ellerman and Morrison-Scott 1951); recent studies on morphological traits and molecular genetics, suggests the presence of two subspecies: Tibetan blue sheep (*P. n. nayaur*), and Sichuan blue sheep (*P. n. szechuanensis*/ schaeferi) or two distinct species *P. nayaur* and *P. szechuanensis* (Feng et al. 1986; Groves 1978; Wang and Hoffmann 1987; Wu et al. 1990; Feng et al. 2001). The two differ in size and range occupied by them with *P. nayaur* being larger in size and occupying ranges at altitudes between 2,500 and 5,500 m asl (Schaller 1977) in Tibet, Karakoram and Pamir (Schaller et al. 1987) while *P. schaeferi* are restricted to ranges below 1000 m asl in central-Sichuan province of China.

# **Biology**

#### **General Characteristics**

Females and males are similar in appearance; with differences only in the dorsal stripe, that is black in males and gray in females and shorter horns of females (Schaller 1998). The species has unique adaptations including a stocky body, well developed pectoral region, stout legs and feeding habits that allow it to exploit the rugged terrain of the trans-Himalayan region. Local altitudinal movements enable it utilize the seasonal changes in vegetation structure and density.

The males have grayish-buff with a tinge of slaty-blue on the back and lateral parts; while the belly, rump, inside and back of limbs, knees and base of the tail, are white (Sowerby, 1923). Similar white bands are also present on the sides of the face. The face between the white bands, the throat, and the whole front of the legs are black. A black band along the lower part of the flanks borders the white of the under-parts and about two-thirds of the tail is black. Ewes are light brown coloured. Adult rams lack beard or long hair on the neck. In summer, the underwool is shed in ragged patches and the faded reddish-gray pelage feels harsh and springy, but in winter, the bharal grows thick underwool (Roberts, 1977). Horns are present in both sexes, and have small ridges on the upper surface. In males, they grow upwards, then turn sideways and curve backwards, ewes however have small horns, usually diverging at the top (Wang and Hoffmann 1987).

Table 1: Key physical and reproductive parameter of Blue sheep\*

Parameters	Males	Females		
Weight	60 – 75 kg	35 – 55 kg		
Shoulder height	80 – 91 cm	75 – 90 cm		
Range age at sexual or reproductive maturity (male)	2 years – 7 years	2 years – 7 years		
Breeding season	Late November – February			
Range gestation period	4 to 5.33 months			
Average number of offspring	1.5			
Range number of offspring	1 to 2			
Parental care	female based			

<sup>\*</sup> Based on various sources

#### Reproduction and growth

Estrus has been reported to take place between late November to January (Schaller 1973, 1977; Wilson 1984) depending on location specific habitat and climatic conditions. Ewes give birth to a single lamb after a gestation period of 150 - 160 days (Crandall 1964; Roberts 1977; Wilson 1984) between May to early July. This coincides with the new growth of grasses during the summers. Yearling males (almost 2 years old) are approximately two-thirds the size of adult females, have horns measuring upto 15 cm and lack stripes on the flanks. Sub-adult males (almost 3 years old) are about the size of adult females, have horns about 25 cm long and still lack a flank stripe. As 4-year-olds, males begin to show the flank stripe; their horns are about 35 cm long. In the fifth to seventh years, males approach full growth, but are slightly less heavy in build than a full-grown ram; their horns are about 45 to 55 cm long. Similar information on growth patterns of females is lacking in literature.





#### **Habitat**

Blue Sheep inhabit open grass covered slopes in mountains from 2,500 – 5,500 m asl near cliffs and areas that provide easy escape from predators (Schaller 1977). The species successfully utilize resource poor habitats that are inhospitable for other wild species. The habitat of the species is characterized by low temperature and rainfall and poor vegetation growth. The species prefers open grasslands interspersed with shrubs and avoid patches with dense vegetation (Schaller 1998). During winters the species descends into valleys or



use the southern aspects of their habitats along ridgelines with lesser snow (Schaller 1998).

#### Feeding ecology and behaviour

Roberts (1977) reported the food preferences from Karakoram Mountains and suggested that during summers alpine grasses (*Poa alpina* and *Poa pratensis*) probably constitute an important part of their diet. While during winter they browse on the thorny clumps of *Astragalus* sp. and may supplement their diet with Alpine willow, lichens and mosses. Zhensheng (2007) commented on the differences in the diet of the species at Helan Mountains and ascribed them to adaptations for geographical range, vegetation, and other factors. Blue sheep consumed 41 plant species that contributed >0.01% to the diets. During autumn, winter, and spring, primary species consumed were Stipa spp., Ulmus pumila, and Poa spp. Blue sheep

also showed the different preference for these plant species. Graminoids were the largest proportion of the diet (36.7–58.8%) throughout the year, followed by the tree and shrub Sedges smallest categories. were the proportion of the diet (0.7–7.1%). Among the four habitat types, blue sheep showed pronounced preference for montane woodland steppe. Blue Sheep are active throughout the day, feeding on lichens, herbaceous plants, and mosses. The species can be termed as an intermediate forager, with diet consisting primarily of grasses, hardy herbaceous plants, also some shrubs.



Bharal feed during the day; in the Kang Chu valley, eastern Nepal, and they had no diurnal schedule with a large proportion moving or feeding between 6:30 am and 5:30 pm," with activity concentrated before 0930,

between 1130 and 1300, and after 1430 (Schaller 1973). However, according to local hunters in Chaidamu Pendi (Basin), Qinghai Province, China, the species descend twice a day, once early in the morning, and again after midday, to feed in grasslands, and spend the rest of the day resting at higher elevations, on rocky mountain slopes (Wang et al., 1963).

#### Social organization and behaviour

The species is gregarious with groups consisting of about 10 to 40 individuals (Qian et al., 1974; Roberts, 1977; Schaller, 1973); however, occasionally larger groups of up to 400 individuals (Schaller, 1980; Stockley, 1928); and solitary individuals (Schafer, 1937) are encountered. Schaller (1973) commented that herd composition changes constantly as single individuals and groups join and part. Groups consist either of adult and subadult males; or adult females, young, and yearlings (Schaller, 1973). Wilson (1984) suggested that resource availability and habitat quality may affect social organization. Wilson (1981) reported a yearling sex ratio of 1:1.05 adult sex ratio of 1:1.45 in favor of females caused by selective hunting by trophy hunters and village poachers. In remote areas where populations are not significantly affected by human activities, a higher ratio of adult males to adult females was observed.

Adult males and adult females form separate groups except during the rutting season with mature rams living in small groups of five to six individuals close to the snowline (Roberts, 1977; Stockley, 1936) this segregation being more pronounced during summers. Schaller (1977) commented that there may be seasonal and geographic variation in social behavior and herd composition also varies with population density and range condition. Male and female groups associate during the rutting season (Schaller 1977).

Rams exhibit typical ungulate behaviours such as lip-curl, low-stretch twist, kick, penis mouthing, flehmen and mount. Other aggressive caprine behaviors such as broadside display, horning vegetation, jerk and lunge, head-shake, jump, butt, and clash are also shown (Wang and Hoffman 1987). Female aggression is also observed, being the only species of caprine in which females bit one another (Schaller 1977). Wilson (1984) also reported horn-pull and neck-fight.

#### Distribution

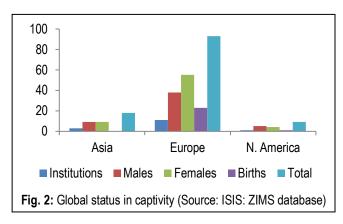
The species has a large distribution range across the central Asian mountains from Kunjereb in Pakistan in the west, to the Sichuan and Gansu provinces of China in the east, of through bulk the Tibetan plateau. Southern limit of



distribution is along the Greater Himalayan chain in India, Nepal and Bhutan. Northern flank covers the Altai Shan, and parts of the Tien Shan. In India, the species is found in Ladakh, high alpine meadows of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and the western Tawang region of Arunachal Pradesh covering ca. 30,000km² (Harris 2014).

#### Threats and status

The species does not currently face any serious threats to its long term survival in its natural habitat; however, it is vulnerable to competition from livestock, disease threats trophy hunting and poaching (Harris 2014). In India the major threats are localized over-hunting and excessive competition from livestock grazing that can lead to habitat degradation across its natural range (Harris 2014). Accurate population estimates are currently not available; however it is believed to



be abundant across most of its range (Harris 2014). Accordingly the species is listed as a species of least concern in the IUCN Redlist 2014, while local concerns have caused it to be listed as a Schedule I species in the Wildlife Protection Act (1972) of India.

#### Global Status in captivity

The species is presently housed in three institutions in Asia, 11 in Europe and one Institution in North America with nine, 93 and nine specimens respectively in the regions mentioned. The species is included in a conservation breeding programme only ion India due to local threat perceptions.

# Methodology

Data on individual history was collected by means of mailed questionnaires, and from the websites of CZA and ZIMS (Zoological Information Management System). Questionnaires were sent to the institutions housing Blue sheep in India, requesting information for each captive specimen. Data was entered in the Single Population Analysis and Records Keeping System (SPARKS *v* 1.66) (ISIS 2004). Further analysis was not performed due to the small size of the population [12.7.0 (19)].

# Scope of the studbook and data quality

The current edition of the Clouded leopard national studbook represents the history of the species (*Pseudois nayur*) in Indian zoos and is current through October 2014. A total of 19 individuals at two institutions are registered in the Studbook as per records provided by holding zoos.

# **Analysis**

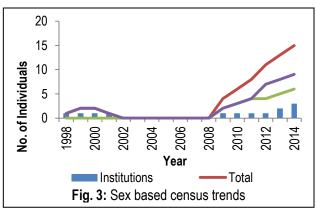
The captive population of Blue sheep in Indian zoos was initiated at Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, Darjeeling with receipt of a male from Bhutan, subsequently another male was added in 1999 from the same source. The details of individual specimens are provided in Annexure I. Absence of mates and the death of both animals during the period 2001 – 2002 resulted in the exterpitation of the captive population. In 2009 the population was re-established with the acquisition of a pair of animals from Okinawa Zoo, Japan. Since then captive births have led to the population increasing to its current size of 15 specimens in captivity. The number of institutions housing the species in Indian has increased to three with a pair of animals being transferred to Himalayan Zoological Park, Gangtok and Pandit Gobind Ballabh Pant Himalayan Zoological Park, Nainital. The details of the living population are listed in Annexure II.

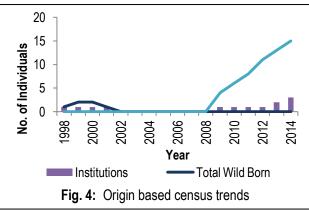
#### **Demographic Analysis**

#### Census trends

Census trends of the population show that the population has remained small since its inception in 1998. Analysis of sex based census trends depicted in Fig. 3 suggests of a lower female recruitment rate though it was re-established with an equitable sex ratio. The population since 2009 has been showing a growth leading to its increase from four (2.2) to 15 (9.6) specimens. The population received two wild origin males in 1998; however in the absence of mates and their death in 2001 – 2002 the captive population includes individuals born in captivity only.

The small sample size of the population limits further demographic and genetic analysis and makes pairing choices and population planning redundant. An understanding of the relationships between individuals can be obtained from the Pedigree charts in Annexure III.





# **Conclusions**

The current population of Blue sheep in Indian zoos includes 15 (9.6.0) specimens at three institutions. The population currently does not include any wild origin animals and is founded from captive origin individuals. Detailed demographic and genetic analysis of the population was limited by the small size of the captive population. The population currently is derived from two pairs acquired from Okinawa Zoo, Japan. The species is currently listed as a species of least concern by the IUCN Redlist (2014) however local considerations have led to its inclusion in Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act (1972).

The population has increased from two pairs in 2009 at one location to 15 specimens at three locations. Census trends suggest that it is increasing at a steady rate with a male sex bias. The long term ex-situ management of the species would however require the inclusion of additional animals and a much larger population size with the current population being used to standardize husbandry techniques before the acquisition of fresh founder animals.

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# Appendix I

# Historical Population of Blue sheep (*Pseudois nayur*) in Indian Zoos

National Stud#	Sex	Birth Date	Sire	Dam	Location	Date	Local ID	Event	Tag/Band	House Name
00001	М	????	WILD	WILD	BHUTAN DARJEELIN	???? 5-Dec-98 6-Jun-02	ZASKAR ZASKAR	Capture Transfer Death		ZASKAR
00002	M	????	WILD	WILD	BHUTAN DARJEELIN	???? 14-May-99 16-Jun-01	TASHI TASHI	Capture Transfer Death		TASHI
00003	М	????	UNK	UNK	OKINAWA C DARJEELIN	???? 23-Nov-09 21-Oct-13	BUNTY BUNTY	Birth Transfer Death		BUNTY
00004	М	????	UNK	UNK	OKINAWA C DARJEELIN	???? 23-Nov-09	NEEL NEEL	Birth Transfer	PNHZPDARJ AO16	NEEL
00005	F	????	UNK	UNK	OKINAWA C DARJEELIN	???? 23-Nov-09	BUBBLY BUBBLY	Birth Transfer	PNHZPDARJ AO14	BUBBLY
00006	F	????	UNK	UNK	OKINAWA C DARJEELIN	???? 23-Nov-09 18-Oct-13	NIKKI NIKKI	Birth Transfer Death	PNHZPDARJ A017	NIKKI
00007	М	21-May-10	00003	00005	DARJEELIN	21-May-10	MOON	Birth	PNHZPDARJ AO26	MOON
80000	F	3-Jun-10	00004	00006	DARJEELIN	3-Jun-10	VENUS	Birth	PNHZPDARJ AO28	VENUS
00009	M	29-May-11	00004	00006	DARJEELIN GANGTOK	29-May-11 29-Oct-13	BONEY BONEY	Birth Transfer	PNHZPDARJ AO20	BONEY

National	Sex	Birth Date	Sire	Dam	Location	Date	Local ID	Event	Tag/Band	House Name
Stud#										
00010	F	25-May-11	00003	00005	DARJEELIN	25-May-11	NILU	Birth	PNHZPDARJ AO19	NILU
					GANGTOK	29-Oct-13	NILU	Transfer		
00011	М	30-May-12	00003	00005	DARJEELIN	30-May-12	KUSHRO	Birth	PNHZPDARJ AO15	KUSHRO
00012	М	23-May-12	00004	00006	DARJEELIN	23-May-12	MIKKI	Birth	PNHZPDARJ AO18	MIKKI
					NAINITAL	6-Mar-14	MIKKI	Transfer		
00013	М	8-Jun-12	00007	80000	DARJEELIN	8-Jun-12	MARS	Birth	PNHZPDARJ AO27	MARS
00014	М	23-May-13	00004	00006	DARJEELIN	23-May-13	BRAD	Birth	PNHZPDARJ AO33	BRAD
00015	F	27-May-13	00003	00005	DARJEELIN	27-May-13	NUTAN	Birth	PNHZPDARJ AO43	NUTAN
					NAINITAL	6-Mar-14	NUTAN	Transfer		
00016	F	27-May-13	00007	80000	DARJEELIN	27-May-13	ANGELI	Birth	PNHZP DARJ AO47	ANGELINA
00017	М	7-Jul-13	00009	00010	DARJEELIN	7-Jul-13	SUNNY	Birth	PNHZPDARJ AO48	SUNNY
00018	F	24-May-14	00004	00005	DARJEELIN	24-May-14		Birth		
00019	М	26-May-14	00007	00008	DARJEELIN	26-May-14		Birth		

TOTALS: 12.7.0 (19)

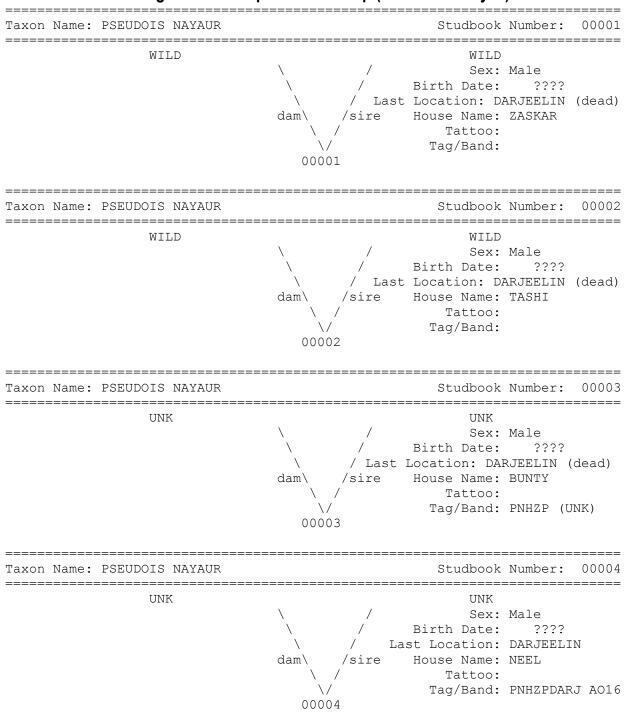
# Appendix II

# Living Population of Blue sheep (Pseudois nayur) in Indian Zoos

National Stud#	Sex	Birth Date	Sire	Dam	Location	Date	Local ID	Event	Tag/Band	House Name
Padmaja Na	idu Hima	layan Zoologica	al Park, Da	rjeeling		I .			l	
00004	M	????	UNK	UNK	OKINAWA C DARJEELIN	???? 23-Nov-09	NEEL NEEL	Birth Transfer	PNHZPDARJ AO16	NEEL
00005	F	????	UNK	UNK	OKINAWA C DARJEELIN	???? 23-Nov-09	BUBBLY BUBBLY	Birth Transfer	PNHZPDARJ AO14	BUBBLY
00007	М	21-May-10	00003	00005	DARJEELIN	21-May-10	MOON	Birth	PNHZPDARJ AO26	MOON
80000	F	3-Jun-10	00004	00006	DARJEELIN	3-Jun-10	VENUS	Birth	PNHZPDARJ AO28	VENUS
00011	М	30-May-12	00003	00005	DARJEELIN	30-May-12	KUSHRO	Birth	PNHZPDARJ AO15	KUSHRO
00013	М	8-Jun-12	00007	80000	DARJEELIN	8-Jun-12	MARS	Birth	PNHZPDARJ AO27	MARS
00014	М	23-May-13	00004	00006	DARJEELIN	23-May-13	BRAD	Birth	PNHZPDARJ AO33	BRAD
00016	F	27-May-13	00007	80000	DARJEELIN	27-May-13	ANGELI	Birth	PNHZP DARJ AO47	ANGELINA
00017	М	7-Jul-13	00009	00010	DARJEELIN	7-Jul-13	SUNNY	Birth	PNHZPDARJ AO48	SUNNY
00018	F	24-May-14	00004	00005	DARJEELIN	24-May-14		Birth		
00019	М	26-May-14	00007	80000	DARJEELIN	26-May-14		Birth		
Himalayan 2	Zoologica	l Park, Gangtol	(	•		•	<u>'</u>	1		•
00009	М	29-May-11	00004	00006	DARJEELIN GANGTOK	29-May-11 29-Oct-13	BONEY BONEY	Birth Transfer	PNHZPDARJ AO20	BONEY
00010	F	25-May-11	00003	00005	DARJEELIN GANGTOK	25-May-11 29-Oct-13	NILU NILU	Birth Transfer	PNHZPDARJ AO19	NILU
Pandit Govi	ng Ballab	h Pant Himalay	an Zoolog	ical Park, N	lainital	1		·	1	-
00012	M	23-May-12	00004	00006	DARJEELIN NAINITAL	23-May-12 6-Mar-14	MIKKI MIKKI	Birth Transfer	PNHZPDARJ AO18	MIKKI
00015	F	27-May-13	00003	00005	DARJEELIN NAINITAL	27-May-13 6-Mar-14	NUTAN NUTAN	Birth Transfer	PNHZPDARJ AO43	NUTAN

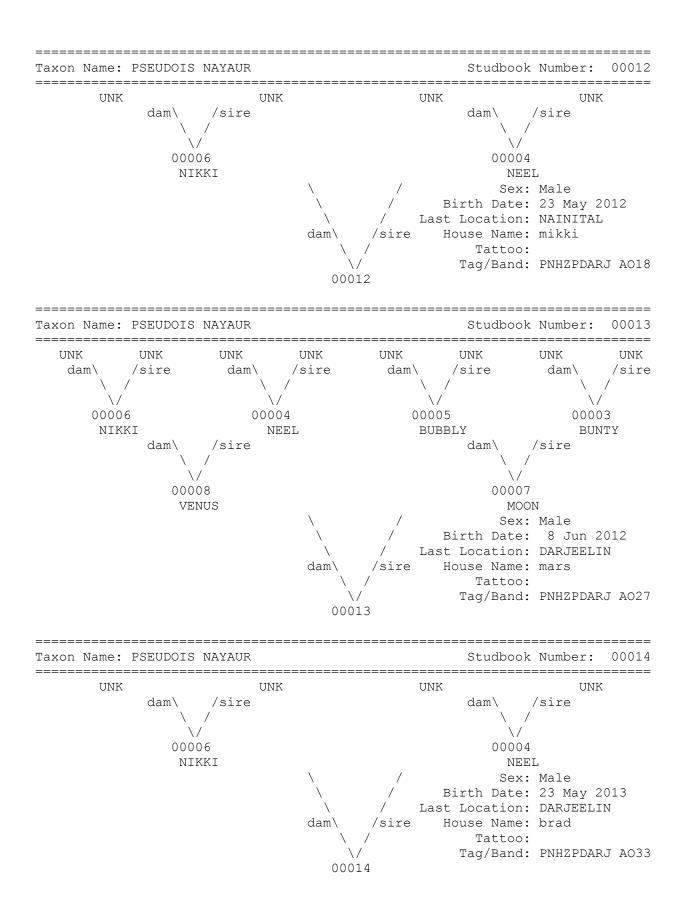
# **Appendix III**

# Pedigree Chart Report Blue sheep (Pseudoois nayur)

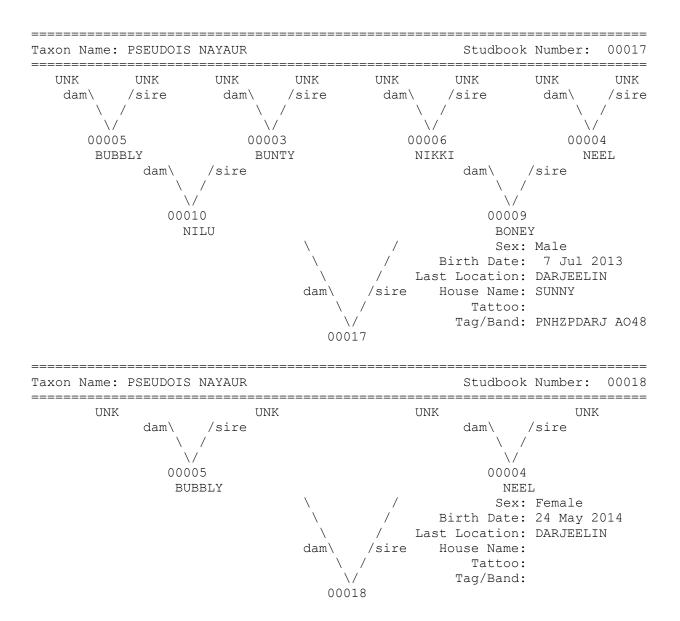


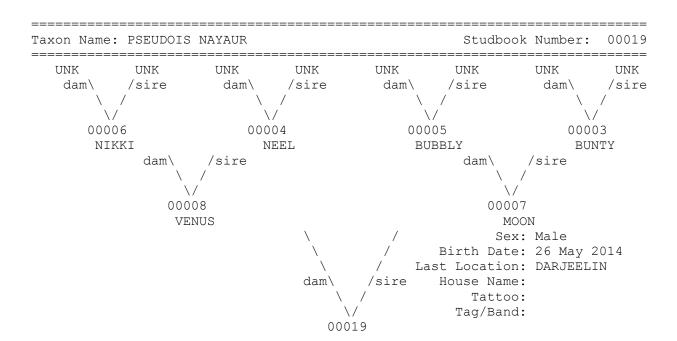
\_\_\_\_\_\_ Studbook Number: 00005 Taxon Name: PSEUDOIS NAYAUR UNK Sex: Female / Sex: Female / Birth Date: ???? / Last Location: DARJEELIN /sire House Name: BUBBLY Tattoo: Tag/Band: PNHZPDARJ A014 00005 \_\_\_\_\_\_ Taxon Name: PSEUDOIS NAYAUR Studbook Number: 00006 \_\_\_\_\_\_ UNK / Sex: Female
/ Birth Date: ????
/ Last Location: DARJEELIN (dead) /sire House Name: NIKKI Tattoo: Tag/Band: PNHZPDARJ A017 00006 \_\_\_\_\_\_ Taxon Name: PSEUDOIS NAYAUR Studbook Number: 00007 \_\_\_\_\_\_ UNK UNK dam\ /sire /sire dam\ \/ 00005 00003 BUBBLY BUNTY Sex: Male Birth Date: 21 May 2010 Last Location: DARJEELIN /sire House Name: MOON Tattoo: \/ Tag/Band: PNHZPDARJ A026 00007 Studbook Number: 00008 Taxon Name: PSEUDOIS NAYAUR \_\_\_\_\_\_ UNK UNK dam\ /sire / \/ 00006 00004 NEEL NIKKI Sex: Female Birth Date: 3 Jun 2010 / Last Location: DARJEELIN /sire House Name: venus Tattoo: Tag/Band: PNHZPDARJ A028 \/ 80000

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Studbook Number: 00009 Taxon Name: PSEUDOIS NAYAUR \_\_\_\_\_\_ UNK UNK UNK UNK dam\ /sire dam\ /sire \ / \ / \/ \ / 00006 00004 NIKKI NEEL Sex: Male Birth Date: 29 May 2011 / Last Location: GANGTOK /sire House Name: boney Tattoo: Tag/Band: PNHZPDARJ AO20 00009 \_\_\_\_\_\_ Taxon Name: PSEUDOIS NAYAUR Studbook Number: 00010 \_\_\_\_\_\_ UNK UNK dam\ /sire dam\ /sire \ / \ / \ / \ / 00005 00003 BUBBLY BUNTY Sex: Female Birth Date: 25 May 2011 / Last Location: GANGTOK /sire House Name: nilu dam\ Tattoo: Tag/Band: PNHZPDARJ A019 00010 \_\_\_\_\_\_ Taxon Name: PSEUDOIS NAYAUR Studbook Number: 00011 \_\_\_\_\_\_ UNK UNK dam\ /sire /sire dam\ \/ \/ 00005 00003 BUBBLY BUNTY Sex: Male / Birth Date: 30 May 2012 / Last Location: DARJEELIN /sire House Name: Kushro Tattoo: \/ Tag/Band: PNHZPDARJ A015 00011



\_\_\_\_\_\_ Studbook Number: 00015 Taxon Name: PSEUDOIS NAYAUR UNK UNK UNK UNK dam\ /sire / dam\ /sire \ / \ / \ / 00005 00003 BUBBLY BUNTY Sex: Female Birth Date: 27 May 2013 / Last Location: NAINITAL /sire House Name: nutan Tattoo: Tag/Band: PNHZPDARJ AO43 00015 \_\_\_\_\_\_ Studbook Number: 00016 Taxon Name: PSEUDOIS NAYAUR \_\_\_\_\_\_ 
 UNK
 UNK</th UNK UNK 00005 00004 00006 00003 UUUU3 BUNTY NEEL BUBBLY NIKKI dam\ /sire dam\ /sire \/ \/ 00008 00007 VENUS MOON / Sex: Female / Birth Date: 27 May 2013 Last Location: DARJEELIN /sire House Name: Angelina dam\ Tattoo: Tag/Band: PNHZP DARJA047 \/ 00016





Compiled by: Nilofer Begum thru Wildlife Institute of India Data current thru: 30 Jun 2014 - Regional

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