

Gazella leptoceros

1. TAXONOMY AND NOMENCLATURE



Gazella leptoceros. Sidi Toui National Parks. Tunisia.
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1.1. Taxonomy.

Gazella leptoceros belongs to the tribe Antilopini, sub-family Antilopinae, family Bovidae, which comprises about twenty species in genera *Gazella*, *Antilope*, *Procapra*, *Antidorcas*, *Litocranius*, and *Ammodorcas* (O'Reagan, 1984; Corbet and Hill, 1986; Groves, 1988). Genus *Gazella* comprises one extinct species, and from 10 to 15 surviving species, usually divided into three sub-genera, *Nanger*, *Gazella*, and *Trachelocele* (Corbet, 1978; O'Reagan, 1984; Corbet and Hill, 1986; Groves, 1988). *Gazella leptoceros* is either included in the sub-genus *Gazella* (Groves, 1969; O'Reagan, 1984), or considered as forming, along with the Asian gazelle *Gazella subgutturosa*, the sub-genus *Trachelocele* (Groves, 1988). The species comprises two sub-species, *Gazella leptoceros leptoceros* of the Western Desert of Lower Egypt and northeastern Libya, and *Gazella leptoceros loderi* of the western and middle Sahara. These

two forms seem geographically isolated from each other and ecologically distinct, so that they must, from a conservation point of view, be treated separately.

1.2. Nomenclature.

1.2.1. Scientific name.

Gazella leptoceros (Cuvier, 1842)
Gazella leptoceros leptoceros (Cuvier, 1842)
Gazella leptoceros loderi (Thomas, 1894)

1.2.2. Synonyms.

Antilope leptoceros, *Leptoceros abuharab*, *Leptoceros cuvieri*, *Gazella loderi*, *Gazella subgutturosa loderi*, *Gazella dorcas*, var. 4

1.2.3. Common names.

English: Slender-horned Gazelle, Loder's Gazelle, Sand Gazelle, Algerian Sand Gazelle, Rhim
French: Gazelle leptocère, Gazelle des sables, Gazelle des dunes, Gazelle blanche, Rhim, Gazelle à longues cornes
German: Dünengazelle
Arabic: Rhim
Tamacheq: Hankut, Edemi

1.2.4. Description

A medium-sized gazelle with a very pale yellowish beige back, separated from the white belly by a slightly darker band on the flank. The face and neck are concolourous with the back. Facial markings are faint. The ears are long and narrow. Horns are long, erect, divergent and nearly straight in both sexes. (Groves, 1988), with 20-25 well-defined rings. They are appreciably thicker and longer in males, up to 350-400mm. Outer hooves are broader than the inner ones. (Kingdon, 1997), the widening of the surface facilitating movements on sand (LeBerre, 1990). The rump patch is white with very little outline. The tail is short, terminated by a tuft of black hair.

The Slender-horned Gazelle is a poorly known species, compared with the other gazelles.

TL (male and female): 100 (90-110) cm
T (male and female): 15-20 cm
Height: 65-72 cm



Mass (male): 24 (20-27) kilos
Mass (female): 16 (14-18) kilos
Horns : (Groves, 1969)
G.l.leptoceros M 337.3 ± 28.3 (n=6); F: 273 (n=2)
G.l.loderi M 297.5 ± 15.8 (n=6); F: 248.4 ± 19.0 (n=5)

2. BIOLOGY OF THE SPECIES

2.1. General Biology

2.1.1. Habitat.

Gazella leptoceros leptoceros occupies *Acacia raddiana* woodlands, sandy outskirts of oases supporting *Nitraria retusa*, and interdunal depressions with *Cornulaca monacantha* (Osborn and Helmy, 1980). It consumes a significant amount of foliage (Saleh, 1997). *Nitraria retusa*, a halophyte plant, *Pituranthos tortuosus*, *Acacia raddiana*, *Cornulaca monacantha*, *Launaea capitata*, and *Calligonum comosum* are part of its diet (Osborn and Helmy, 1980). The Slender-horned Gazelles are mostly twilight and nocturnal animals, eating and moving during these periods of the day, and resting during the hot hours in the shade or in hollowed-out depressions (Osborn and Helmy, 1980).

Gazella leptoceros loderi is principally linked to ergs (Schnell, 1977; White, 1983, units 69, 70, 71; Ozenda, 1991) which seem to constitute its only habitat, at least in the central Sahara (Sclater and Thomas, 1898; Lavauden, 1926; Heim de Balsac, 1936; Dupuy, 1967). It mainly grazes on *Aristida pungens* (Heim de Balsac, 1936) but it also uses plants with a high hydric content, such as *Anabasis articulata*, *Arthrophytum schmittianum*, *Helianthemum kahiricum*, and the fruits of *Colocynthis vulgaris*, to meet its water needs (Kacem *et al.*, 1994).

2.1.2. Social behaviour.

Gazella leptoceros lives in small groups of 3-4 individuals, consisting generally in an adult male, several adult females and their offsprings. Solitary individuals, couples, and clubs of young males are also observed. Gestation lasts 165 days. Twin births are common.

