



### **Soemmerring's Gazelle, *Gazella soemmerringii***

**Legal Status:** CITES lists Soemmerring's Gazelle as a Vulnerable species using Criteria C1. This species is currently not protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. The IUCN Antelope Specialist Group considers this species as a threatened species for extinction. The current estimated wild population is unknown.

**Description:** Nubian Soemmerring's Gazelle are a large gazelle with a short, smooth pelage. Their shoulder height ranges between 32 - 36 in. and weight between 77 - 100 lb. Body coloration consists of a light tawny-brown or fawn color. Their head and neck are gradually lighter. The underside, rump and tail are white. The tail is short and tapered with a tuft of black fringe at its terminal end. The different colors of the top and bottom sides meet to form a clear line of deviation. Facial pattern consists of a brown mask starting from above the nostrils extending to the forehead with a white or whitish-yellow supraorbital stripe from the muzzle to the horn base.



Facial pattern consists of a brown mask starting from above the nostrils extending to the forehead with a white or whitish-yellow supraorbital stripe from the muzzle to the horn base.

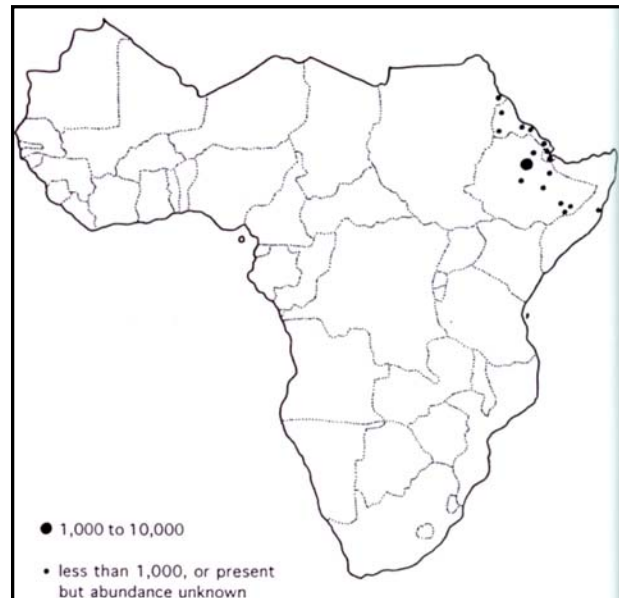
The horns are lyrate shaped inward pointed hooked tips and the lower 2/3 have ridges. Males are slightly larger and heavier than females, with thicker, more heavily ridged horns. Horns may grow to a length of 22 in. During initial courtship patterns, males approach females while making a nasal croak and carrying their head outstretched and low in carriage to direct the female. Once a receptive female is located, the male drives the receptive female at a walking pace with an upright head carriage. He will then perform a stiff-legged trot in place maneuver rather than demonstrating "laufs Schlag", the vigorous kicking of the foreleg typical of many antelope. This action provokes the female to flee. Therefore, copulation follows as they are walking. Mating peaks during September to November. Gestation is 199 days, resulting in a single calf. Birthing usually coincides with the rainy season in April. This insures ideal grazing conditions, moisture and cover for mother and offspring. After birth, mothers leave their young hidden in the grass returning periodically in an effort to avoid predation. Weaning occurs by the sixth month. Sexual maturity occurs around 12-18 months. Lifespan in captivity is up to 14 years.

**Range:** Once considered the most abundant and widespread of the gazelles, Soemmerring's Gazelles are endemic to the horn of Africa, westward to Sudan. They now occur only sporadically from the Chalbi desert in Rendille country eastward to Gallaland. They migrate annually in the Sudan, relocating to areas with vegetation and water. This migration appears to coincide with the seasonal rains. As the rainy season begins they will move out into the desert then travel southward into the valleys and foothills as the drought season takes hold. The largest populations are in Ethiopia, Somalia and Eritrea.

**Habitat:** They prefer to inhabit rough, hilly country with scattered evergreen thickets and thinly wooded steppe dominated by *Commiphora* and *Acacia*, but can also be found in open bush savannas.

**Diet:** Potential food plants include *Sericomopsis*, *Blepharis*, *Indigofera* and *Tephrosia*. The most widespread grass to be ingested is *Chrysopogon aucheri*. They are able to survive without drinking water by obtaining the water they need from food sources and other sources.

**Social Organization:** They have been observed with herds of oryx, hartebeest and domesticated camels. Formerly, this species was found in large groups by the hundreds, but today they only occur in scattered small herds of 5 - 20 individuals. A typical herd is of mixed sex. Males are territorial though this may be on a temporary basis. Although the males possess small slitted preorbital glands, they do not seem to play a role in territorial marking. Rather, defended ranges are staked out via dung middens. During an encounter with another male, each will scrape the ground with their horns in a display to assert dominance. Older males may be identified due to the excessive wear shown on their horns due to this activity.



**Threats to Survival:** The decline of this species is due partially to over hunting, but habitat loss and overgrazing by domestic stock has apparently played a larger role.

**Zoo Programs:** The North American population of Soemmerring's Gazelle descends from 3.5 founders received by Busch Gardens, Tampa, Florida between 1966-1970. All but one was wild caught. It is believed that this population has a small degree of kinship. 100 births resulted from the first importation to the United States. The current captive population is 24.43 (67) held in 6 institutions all of which are in the United States. A studbook is maintained to assist in the management of this species in captivity. The studbook is held at the Living Desert in Palm Desert, California. The AZA Antelope TAG has set a population goal of seventy-five animals within a few years. With captive breeding programs this species might survive to future generations.

**Conservation:** The Soemmerring's Gazelle faces an ongoing population decline as habitats are destroyed. Hunting will also lead to the same result. Much of this pressure comes as human population increases and expansion takes place. In order for this species to survive, we must assure protection in their native range and manage the population appropriately. This is made more challenging by the political instability in their range.



---

**Contacts:**

**North American Regional Studbook Keeper:**

Stacey Feige Konwiser

The Living Desert

47-900 Portola Ave.

Palm Desert, CA 92260

Tel: (760) 346-5694

Fax: (760) 568-9685

[sfeige@livingdesert.org](mailto:sfeige@livingdesert.org)

**Wild Status:**

Steve Shurter

International Programs Director- Gilman International Conservation Assistant Director

White Oak Conservation Center

581705 White Oak Road

Yulee, Florida, USA 32097

phone: 904 225 3290

<mailto:steves@wogilman.com>