

Saiga Spotlight



The newsletter of the Saiga Conservation Alliance Fall 2013



Photo © Navinder Singh

Saiga Conservation success in Kazakhstan

Saigas are living proof that together we can turn around the fortunes of a critically endangered species! Your donations and support, combined with the concerted efforts of dedicated conservationists and local people, made all the difference.

The combined work of the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan, those in local government and at the Convention on Migratory Species, and the SCA has paid off! The SCA was instrumental in formulating and implementing the 'Memorandum of Understanding' for saiga conservation action in Kazakhstan.

This work has led to the fate of the saiga population in Kazakhstan turning around sharply. The healthy population of 976,500 individuals in 1992 plummeted to fewer than 21,100 by 2003. However, with the support of individual donors like you and the Wildlife Conservation Network, their population is once more on the rise, with a total of 187,500 recorded saigas in 2012.

We are sad to announce a recent mass die-off of nearly 500 saigas in Kazakhstan. Government scientists are currently investigating the causes of this tragedy. This highlights the fragility of the saiga's

situation and the importance of the hard work of our teams and continued support of our donors.



Children in rural villages benefit from environmental "Wildlife Clubs"

Although saigas used to roam in the thousands in their parents' lifetimes, many children living in the saigas' range have never seen one. Entire communities risk losing their historic tie with the species.

Unfortunately, rural children don't tend to go out onto the steppe to experience the beauty of their own landscape. They are taught about creatures from far away,

and environmental problems that are unrelated to them.

Our new initiative, to establish a network of Wildlife Clubs in villages that are associated with saiga poaching, covers the saigas' entire range; from Kazakhstan across Uzbekistan, Russia and into Mongolia.

This network of clubs will provide children with a new appreciation for their local environment – particularly teenage boys. They are key to our outreach, as they will become the next generation of conservationists, or of poachers.



Support us in allowing these isolated children to

have fun while learning to value their own natural heritage, and to feel that they are doing something positive for their environment.



JOIN US!

Visit www.saiga-conservation.com and become a member



Children help produce award-winning saiga cartoon

At the SCA we love nothing more than for our supporters to get involved in saiga conservation however they can.

Recently, we teamed up with some talented children in Uzbekistan to create an animated cartoon about a

baby saiga that lags behind the herd, almost becoming easy game for a hunter.

To make the cartoon memorable, the children were very involved in its creation. The film became both an animated feature and a play.

Tashkent, while the young actors all come from schools in the saiga's range. The cartoon has been released in Uzbek, Russian and English, with children from the International School in Tashkent excited to be playing their part by carrying out the voice-overs.

Thanks also go to our kind sponsors, Disney Club Penguin, the UNDP-GEF and the State Committee for Nature of the Republic of Uzbekistan, without whose support this exciting project, and the opportunity for children to get involved in conservation, would not have been possible.



All the drawings for 'The Steppe Tale' animation were produced by children from schools in

Watch 'The Steppe Tale' at <http://www.youtube.com/user/SaigaConservation>



The first line of defense: Park Rangers!

Poaching of saiga for their horns is a very real threat to their continued existence. Sadly, the horns of 2,235 male saigas were seized at the Chinese border in September. While seizures like this do much to discourage international trade, it's the brave park rangers who are the first line of defense against this kind of illegal poaching. Their presence alone discourages poachers from entering reserves, but they are also active in local communities, spreading the word that saigas are endangered and need help.

Unfortunately, government support is extremely limited so we've found creative ways to support rangers across all the saiga range states. One way is to provide money for fuel, so they can get around the vast steppe grasslands. See Page 4 for ways that you can join



the fight and help rangers do their valuable work.

Saiga Ecotour 2014

We are very pleased to announce the second international saiga ecotour to southern Russia. In 2011 the SCA crafted a unique tour of the steppes of southern Russia – and it was a fantastic success! We're now organizing another tour for September 2014 – and you can be part of it!

The tour includes visits to key SCA project sites and offers the opportunity to view saiga in their natural environment. Proceeds support the work of our passionate, in-country conservationists.

We'll be exploring the thriving grasslands of the Southern Russian Steppe,

the arid Caspian region and the lush, bird-rich wetlands of the Volga Delta, while also getting to know the welcoming people of Kalmykia - the only official Tibetan Buddhist state in Europe.

To find out more email us at mail@saiga-conservation.com.

GET INVOLVED!

**Your support is crucial for the saiga!
Visit www.saiga-conservation.com to see how you can help!**

Traditional handicrafts trump poaching

Limited employment opportunities on the Ustyurt plateau in Uzbekistan can make illegal saiga hunting attractive to poor individuals, while the low cost of saiga meat encourages local women to purchase it for their families.

You have made it possible for us to open embroidery centers for women in rural villages, giving them the ability to earn a wage. The 'Kuralai' (baby saiga) centers teach business and traditional embroidery skills to women and educate local people about saiga conservation.



Thanks to our donors we can provide this valuable training to women, and supply critical items such as sewing machines and materials.

If you're at the Wildlife Conservation Expo this year come and support our ladies and purchase some of their unique embroidered items from our stand. Learn about how each embroidered symbol has a unique meaning, and how each handcrafted item tells its own story, portraying traditional nomadic life on the steppe.

For more information about this project and to visit the on-line shop please visit www.saigacraft.com



An ancient saiga fairy tale

Roy Freeman discovered saiga through this work and instantly became a supporter of our cause.

Roy recalls "I was translating a fairy tale from 1892 for my work, and in doing so came across a word I'd never seen before, 'saiga'. In searching for an English translation, I learned that the saiga was tragically nearing extinction, and so discovered the SCA. Taken by the description and photographs of this wonderful animal, I was then impressed by the collaboration with local people and their efforts to save the saiga from extinction.

"This story exudes a wonderful mixture, a paradoxical wholeness, combining masculinity and femininity, hero and heroine, good and evil, fate and will. Perhaps a renewed appreciation of the saiga can lead all of us into a better world with more respect for different cultures, development of personal and cultural values, and a deeper respect for our natural heritage.



"This translation is my small contribution to this cause with hopes that adults and children alike can take this tale with its ancestral traditions and create their own work, theatre, or telling, or perhaps even a modern version of this wonderful story!"

To read the full story of 'The Beautiful Dunyo' please visit www.?????LINKTBC



What are saigas?



The saiga antelope is a unique inhabitant of the vast plains of Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Russia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. It is a relic of the ice age fauna that included mammoths and sabre tooth cats, and is evolutionarily distinct from other antelopes. It is a symbol of the steppe for the nomadic people it shares its habitat with, and has been an important source of food and inspiration for centuries.

DONATE! Your support is crucial for the saiga!



YOU can make a difference!

Support Wildlife Clubs – Environmental education for children

Establishing Wildlife Clubs in villages associated with saiga poaching allows children to have fun while learning to value their own natural heritage.

- a. **\$70** provides a child with everything they need to take part in club activities for a year, including notebooks, pens and a uniform.
- b. **\$170** buys a refurbished laptop so children can take part in international environmental competitions and on-line training.
- c. **\$1500** buys essential field equipment (tents, binoculars, cameras, transportation), so children can take part in eco-camps and engage with their natural environment.

Support Traditional Embroidery and women’s enterprise

This project gives women the opportunity to learn sewing and business skills. The potential to earn a wage and provide a consistent income for their family enables women to afford alternative meat such as mutton, helping to reduce the hunting of saigas.

- a. **\$100** helps a woman in rural Uzbekistan to buy materials and equipment to join an embroidery enterprise.
- b. **\$250** buys a sewing machine. Allowing women to incorporate their beautiful hand-embroidered designs into purses, bags and other desirable items.
- c. **\$2800** to create posters, print catalogs and launch a website to help the women publicize and sell their products overseas.

Support Saiga monitoring and protection

This project engages local communities in saiga conservation through their participation in assessing the status and trends of their saiga population, while also receiving an income from their involvement.

- a. **\$60** buys enough gasoline for rangers to run motorbike patrols for a season.
- b. **\$200** buys a pair of binoculars to help monitors and rangers spot saiga from a distance.
- c. **\$250** buys an infra-red camera, to help combat illegal saiga poaching activity by hunters.
- d. **\$700** to train and equip ex-hunters and unemployed men in rural villages with technical equipment to monitor and protect saiga.

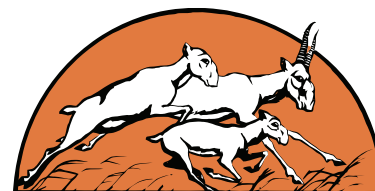
To make a donation to support Saiga Conservation:

- Visit www.wildnet.org [put “Saigas” in the “Designation (Optional)” box]
- Make check payable to ‘Wildlife Conservation Network’ and send to:
WCN. 25745 Bassett Lane. Los Altos CA, 94022
(Be sure to write on the check that the donation is for Saigas.)
- Visit us at www.saiga-conservation.com

Wildlife Conservation
Network



Saiga Conservation
Alliance



Saiga Conservation Alliance

The Saiga Conservation Alliance is a collaborative network of scientists and conservationists who work within saiga range states and internationally. Committed to restoring saiga antelope populations to levels which enable it to play its full role in the ecological and human landscape, we promote and support the species’ intrinsic, cultural and economic value by carrying out research, conservation actions and capacity building.

We are a registered charity in England and Wales (1135851)



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