

Saiga Spotlight

The newsletter of the Saiga Conservation Alliance Fall 2015

Photo by
Navinder Singh



Saiga antelope tragedy in Kazakhstan

Over the span of about one month (May 9 to June 3), large herds of saigas at calving sites in Kazakhstan died suddenly. Almost 150,000 carcasses were counted at burial sites by government rangers, but our latest expedition to the migration area and die-off sites found many remain unburied—so the figure might be higher. Some live saigas were present at the sites, mostly males and young calves.

Fortunately neither of the two other populations in Kazakhstan, nor those in Mongolia and Russia, were affected.

The most likely explanation appears to be haemolytic septicaemia, caused by a bacterium which is naturally found in saigas.. Another super-infection with the bacteria clostridium perfringens was also identified in some cases. That infection

results in the release of massive amounts of lethal toxins into the intestine, which are absorbed into the bloodstream and contribute to a rapid death.

It is not clear what triggered these bacteria to suddenly become virulent, causing the devastating outbreak. Scientists are investigating if stresses related to internal and/or external environmental factors – such as sudden temperature changes associated with heavy rain, and climate and pasture conditions – and other infections played a part in this catastrophe.



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New Saiga Garden built in Uzbekistan



Saiga – a Symbol of the Kazakh Steppe contest



Fun for all at our first 'Saiga Youth Wildlife Camp'

In August, Uzbek children aged 11-15 joined the SCA's first *Saiga Youth Wildlife Camp*. Youth from Karakalpakia, the region where saigas can still be found in Uzbekistan, joined children from the capital, who acted as "local guides." Teachers, SCA members, eco-camp volunteers and environmental educators came together and all headed off to the stunning Chimgan mountain range.



For the children from Karakalpakia, it was their first time in the mountains and they found it an awe-inspiring experience. It ignited their imaginations and enthusiasm for a week of hiking, camping and learning about their country's natural wonders.

They became proficient in survival skills, identifying medicinal herbs, climbing, and eco-journalism—and just having fun!



JOIN US!

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



Rangers battle poachers and extreme climates!

Thanks to generous donations from Wildlife Conservation Network (WCN) supporters we were able to buy essential equipment for our ranger teams in Russia and Uzbekistan.

These teams of dedicated rangers work 24/7 to protect saigas in harsh and often dangerous conditions out on the Steppe. They patrol vast areas on motorbikes, sleeping in the back of their vans for weeks at a time. They tell us that

it's not so bad in the summer, as they can set up tents - although it can still reach 104°F (40°C)! But in the winter it gets as cold as -22°F (-30°C), making life really challenging for them!

Your donations allowed us to buy each

team a camper van which will make their patrols much easier and give them somewhere warm to sleep, as well as

several sets of extreme weather motorbike clothing. This enables them to patrol during the rut when it is super cold, and throughout the harsh steppe winters.

Adopt a Saiga!

Have you ever thought about adopting a Saiga? Well now you can, and all funds raised go to help conserving this beautiful endangered species. Visit our online shop Saigacraft.org to find out more.

The package includes your own cuddly saiga plush, a photo, a certificate of adoption and regular updates via our *Saiga News* and *Seasonal updates* newsletters. You'll receive news from the field and SCA initiatives.



A trip of a lifetime!

This summer, the WCN made it possible for Lena and Olya, our Uzbek SCA mother and daughter team, to visit and exchange knowledge and experiences with three WCN-supported conservation projects in Africa. The journey took them across villages and protected areas in Kenya, where they were visited Grevy's Zebra Trust, Ewaso Lions and Save the Elephants.

They were inspired by the work being done by these programs, and learned so much from their community outreach, including the scouts and ambassadors' programs at

Grevy's Zebra Trust. At Ewaso Lions they met Samburu warriors involved in monitoring and education, and many other local people who described their relationships with wildlife, including taboos against killing wild animals. At Save the Elephants they joined a school wildlife lesson and shared their own stories of saigas with local people.

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Lena and Olya returned to Uzbekistan with photos and fascinating tales of animals and culture native to Africa, which they are sharing with amazed children in our wildlife clubs.

Our thanks go to WCN and its supporters – as well as our friends at Grevy's Zebra Trust, Ewaso Lions and Save the Elephants – for making this incredibly informative trip possible.

Read more on their blog [XXXX](#)

2015 Saiga Conservation awards

Our 2015 Award for Excellence in Saiga Protection goes to Enkhbat Enkhjargal, a Mongolian police officer. Enkhbat leads a team whose mission is to detect poaching and illegal wildlife trade of endangered species. It's incredibly difficult to track down illegally smuggled saiga horn, but Enkhbat set-up an informants' network

which, combined with his dedication and hard work, recently uncovered over 200 smuggled saiga horns. This culminated in several successful prosecutions.

Our Young Conservation Leaders award goes to a team led by Begis Sultamuratov, an environmental journalist from Uzbekistan. The team runs a young eco-journal-

ist's club, inspiring children to take part in saiga conservation through a series of exciting educational activities, while giving them real-world skills.



GET INVOLVED!

Visit www.saiga-conservation.com to see how you can help!

The Saiga garden

Thanks to Disney's 'Coins for Change' children and adults in Karakalpakia, Uzbekistan have created a 'Saiga Garden' which includes a hand-made statue of a saiga and calf, and one of a stork, a popular Uzbek bird. Children decorated the garden with animals and plants made of recycled plastic bags and bottles, old tires and gas pipes. The children also planted trees and flowers, while adults built a gate and decorative fence that

incorporates elements of traditional Karakalpak design.

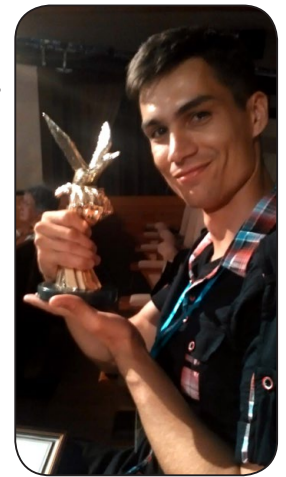


Saiga cartoon wins award



The latest installment in the adventures of Nosey the Saiga – *The Steppe Tale II* – won first prize in the short film category at the prestigious *Save and Preserve* environmental film festival.

The cartoon was created using artwork from schoolchildren in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Young actors Safina Starikova and Rustam Ahmadjon provided the voice overs in English, Russian and Uzbek. Thanks to our donors at WCN and Disney's Club Penguin for making this possible.



Saiga Heroes

Our thanks and respect go to two Star Fundraisers – Marc Enderby and Sean Denny – who raised funds to help protect saigas by taking part in two incredible events this year.

Marc bravely battled the gruelling TotalWarrior! 10km assault course, enduring electric shocks, ice-baths, and many other challenges! Sean ran the Bath Half marathon in just over 2 hours, facing a surprise hail-storm at the start of the race!



Thank you both so much for your incredible fundraising efforts and dedication to the cause.

Would you like to follow in their footsteps and raise money for saigas – in any way? Please let us know.



Saigas inspire Kazakh children

More than 3,000 children from all over Kazakhstan submitted their entries to the first national *Saiga - a symbol of the Kazakh steppe* contest. Children 6–15 creatively crafted poems, drawings, research papers and videos about saigas, all promoting a caring and responsible attitude towards this unique antelope and its habitat.

The most popular category was "Images of Saiga," with 1,500 submissions. The judges had a tough time choosing the best entries! The lucky winners will see their creations in a national environmental education and awareness campaign run

by SCA partners, the ACBK. Check out our Facebook page for a collection of the best poems and drawings.



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.

- \$70** provides a child with everything they need to take part in club activities for a year, including notebooks, pens and a uniform.
- \$170** buys a refurbished laptop so children can take part in international environmental competitions and on-line training.
- \$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

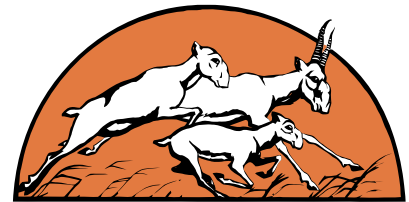
This project gives women the opportunity to learn sewing and business skills. The potential to earn a wage and provide a consistent income for their family enables women to afford alternative meat such as mutton, helping to reduce the hunting of saigas.

- \$100** helps a woman in rural Uzbekistan to buy materials and equipment to join an embroidery enterprise.
- \$250** buys a sewing machine. Allowing women to incorporate their beautiful hand-embroidered designs into purses, bags and other desirable items.
- \$2800** to create marketing and publicity materials to maintain an internet presence and 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.

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



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)

To make a donation to support Saiga Conservation:

- Visit www.wildnet.org [select "Saigas" in the "Where needed most" pull-down]
- 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
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Saiga Conservation
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