PROJECTS REPORTING TEMPLATE FOR SAIGA-RELATED ACTIVITIES

This reporting template is designed to collate information on projects carried out by intergovernmental, international non-governmental and non-governmental organisations as well as academics and other experts working on any aspect of Saiga antelope conservation and sustainable use. Information will be compiled into a table for discussion at Saiga MOU meetings. The information will be used to: (1) monitor implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of the Saiga Antelope (*Saiga* spp.) and the associated Medium Term International Work Programme.

Please complete sections as appropriate and **return to the CMS Secretariat.**
E-mail: polina.orlinskiy@un.org.

Project:				
Country:	China	☐	Turkmenistan	☐
	Kazakhstan	☐	Uzbekistan	☐
	Mongolia	☒	International	☐
	Russia	☐		
Organisation / Contact details: WWF Mongolia, Inter office, 8th khoroo, Sukhbaatar district, Ulaanbaatar 14200, Mongolia				
Duration of project: from _____2007/07/01_____ to _____2024/08/09_____				
Location(s) of main activity: The Mongolian saiga distribution area in the dry steppe and semi-desert grasslands in Great lakes depression, Western Mongolia, Altai-Sayan Ecoregion (ASER) which covers an area of 46,091 sq.km.				
Sub-species:	*Saiga tatarica tatarica**	☐		
	Saiga tatarica mongolica *	☒		
Areas of work:				
Anti-poaching		☒	Habitat restoration	☒
Population monitoring		☒	Protected area management	☒
Ecological research		☐	Training & capacity-building	☒
Education and awareness		☒	Law enforcement	☒
Alternative livelihoods		☐	Trade issues	☐

* Note that CMS Parties have adopted Wilson, D.E. & Reeder, D.M. (2005) Mammal Species of the World. A taxonomic and geographic reference. Third edition. John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, USA as taxonomic reference for terrestrial mammals through Recommendation 9.4 where *S. t. tatarica* is referred to as *Saiga tatarica* and *S. t. mongolica* is referred to as *Saiga borealis*.

Socio-economic research	☐	Captive breeding	☐
Range mapping	☒	Reintroduction/release	☐
Habitat research	☒		

For each box ticked, please provide brief details in the project summary box below

Project Summary: WWF Mongolia has been active for endangered Mongolian saiga conservation since 1997 and currently we are implementing the project titled "Mongolia's 100 springs of life: Protect 100 springs to support 1'000 herder families to sustain 15'000 Mongolian saiga antelopes" funded by WWF Switzerland. Also, the Mongolian saiga conservation work supported by the Altai Sayan Ecoregional Program (ASER) financed from WWF Netherlands and latter supported by the WWF Germany and WWF Poland, WWF Singapore and MAVA Foundation and WWF International contributes to the implementation of Strategic plan through protecting ***globally important ecosystems and species in the Mongolian part of Altai-Sayan Ecoregion***. The program implementation is ongoing under the following overarching seven strategies to achieve conservation goals of the ASER:

1. Environmental Crime Prevention (ECP)
2. Protected and Conserved Areas (PCA)
3. Freshwater Conservation
4. Communities in Conservation (CC)
5. Sustainable Forest Management (SFM)
6. Responsible Business and Investment (RBI)
7. Communication

At the same time, SCA supports for "Saiga Day" activity in Mongolia with available funding and development of Mongolian version of "Saiga News".

The dedicated project for Mongolian saiga takes place in the desert steppe of the Western Mongolia, Altai-Sayan landscape and focuses on preserving the Mongolian saiga antelope**.** The Mongolian saiga is endemic to Mongolia and inhabits only in arid areas of Gobi and desert steppe. IUCN and the Large Herbivore Network register the species as the most threatened large mammal species of Eurasia. The species has been under continuous pressure during the last decades. Poaching of males for their horns, competition with livestock for pasture and water, harsh winters (dzud) and infectious disease threaten its survival.

With Mongolia's opening to the world in 1990, coupled with collapse of central planning system, the wildlife products sold to China and Korea became the only source for cash income for many. Due to horn used in Traditional Chinese Medicine, males of Mongolian saiga have been poached severely, dangerously depleting the genepool of the species. The situation is further exacerbated by climate change induced frequent natural disasters such as the severe drought following harsh winter of 2000 that killed all but 800 Mongolian saiga and other anthropogenic pressures like habitat disruption and the transmission of diseases like the outbreak of Peste des petits ruminants, known as "goat plague", that wiped out 2/3 of Mongolian saiga in 2017, manifest the need for concerted and continued efforts by all for conservation of remaining 10,000 animals that once roamed along with mammoths and woolly rhinos in Mongolia.

Due to its geographical and climatic conditions - the observed data at meteorological stations in Mongolia have shown that an annual mean air temperature increased by 2.24°C between 1940-2015 – already overshooting 2.0°C threshold, which was agreed by the international communities at the Paris in 2015. Coupled with changes in precipitation pattern and increased aridization process is expected to have serious impacts on available water resources, especially in already water stressed dryland areas of Mongolia that encompass 97 percent of the territory. Several studies in the country indicate that Mongolian herder communities[2] are most seriously affected

[2] *Mongolia has more than 30 different ethnic groups, some of which (e.g., Dukha, Kazakh groups) need special plans in place to engage in and benefit from, development project. However, there are no such special groups present in the project's target area. The people of the Saiga distribution areas soums are identified as belonging to the Khalkh, Oold and Uriankhai ethnic groups. Neither of these ethnic groups are classified as indigenous but are rather identified primarily by specific*

by climate change because most productive ecosystems steppe, desert steppe and forest steppe are shrinking due to expansion and shift of desert zone to the northwards and pastureland availability is declining due to drying up surface water. The situation will be further exacerbated by increased frequencies of heat and cold waves and other natural disasters that will disrupt the livestock grazing pattern. Herder communities that share the dry steppe and semi-desert pasture with Mongolian saiga over thousands of years are already facing the challenges because the life-sustaining open water sources are disappearing one after another.

In 1990s, the current Mongolian saiga habitat used to have 548 natural springs that sustained all living creature in the area. Over the past decade, 81 springs are perished (National Statistics Office of Mongolia, 2020, http://www.1212.mn/en/) due to aridization caused by climate change, overgrazing, and polluting and trampling over the spring source (natural discharge point of subterranean water at the surface) by increasing number of livestock. Disappearance of open water sources limits utilization of the pasture by livestock and wildlife, which in turn exacerbates an overgrazing in surrounding pasture of available open water sources. Such livestock and wildlife concentration near few water sources may also increase transmission of contagious disease to the wildlife, as it happened to Mongolian saiga in late 2016 and 2021. WWF-Mongolia's pilot initiative that supported local communities' effort conservation of spring source showed remarkable mutual benefits for all. A spring that was almost drying up due to livestock tramping and denuding plant cover by grazing animals has revived with a simple fencing and maintenance carried out by local communities. The ecoclub children's monitoring around fenced springs showed that within two years it started to flow and run as far as 4 km downstream where Mongolian saiga and other wildlife started to come to drink the water (https://altaisayan.wordpress.com/2018/08/03/reviving-tungalag-spring/). Herder communities living around the spring area also benefitted from their efforts, securing water resources for own drinking and livestock watering and the fact that this project is not threatening their way of life but is helping them to keep the grazing activities. Moreover, in Mongolia these natural springs are directly linked with seasonal and or sporadic permafrost. Therefore, the conservation of the springs contributes to CC mitigation by halting the potent GHG emission. Building on the success of this initiative WWF-Mongolia is seeking for donor to support an ambitious goal of conserving the Mongolian saiga by securing water availability together with local communities and school ecoclub children.

The project titled "Protect 100 springs to support 1'000 herder families to sustain 15'000 Mongolian saiga antelopes" aims to protect at least 100 most affected natural spring in current saiga range and build coalition of local communities, ecoclub children and local authorities centered on these springs to ensure water availability for Mongolian saiga and local communities by sustainable management of water resource and pasture. The project has the following three interlinked and mutually reinforcing objectives.

- Objective 1. 100 springs protected/restored for the benefit of people and wildlife
- Objective 2. Mongolian Saiga population increased to 15,000 animals in the project area
- Objective 3. Knowledge attitude and practice of 1,000 herder families changed towards sustainable natural resource management

Key interventions under the objectives include community consultation for identification of natural springs and commitment building, joint restoration and fencing of source point of selected springs with community members, support local communities and players for maintaining restored springs, active involvement of ecoclub children in monitoring and awareness raising campaigns and children becoming the change agents and future guardians of natural resources and diligent monitoring of Mongolian saiga by the Community Conservationists Network for saiga.

WWF-Mongolia believes that the protection and restoration of natural springs in Mongolian saiga range is essential for providing drinking water to local people as well as to wildlife and livestock, and improves the livelihood of roughly 50,000 people calling this project area as their home. This is significant project because water is a critical resource in the arid and semi-arid landscapes of Mongolia.

Planned Activities:

- Reduce livestock numbers by 10% across the saiga range without undermining the livelihoods

cultural elements and their language dialect. They are considered as "Uuguul" or native people, who were born in a particular soum and province.

of herder communities,
- Extend up to 10% of saiga range soums have their reserve pastureland into critical habitats,
- Reduce potential negative impacts from mining and extractive industries in saiga range through capacitating decision makers and local herders,
- Minimize and mitigate the impacts of new linear infrastructures such as paved roads and railways in key saiga habitats,
- Encourage wildlife friendly herding practices to reduce competition for resources between saiga and livestock,
- Restore natural springs or water points in saiga range,
- State PA network has been expanded and covers at least 20% of Mongolian saiga habitat,
- Management effectiveness of the protected areas is increased to the level of 2020
- Scale up SMART patrolling system in saiga range.

Achievements to date:

- WWF-Switzerland in close cooperation with WWF Mongolia successfully raised additional 477,117 EUR for the project "Mongolia's 100 springs of life (Saiga)" to enable the protection of 100 springs to support 1'000 herder families to sustain 15'000+ Mongolian saiga antelopes.
- WWF-Mongolia has successfully trained 123 rangers and officers from 9 State Protected Areas Administrations that manage 23 State protected areas in ASER as a support to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism to adopt SMART patrolling nationwide at the 120 State protected areas.
- The Minister of Environment and Tourism, Mr. Bat-Erdene B, has officially approved a national training modules for rangers on 29th March 2024. This standardized training modules will deliver all the necessary knowledge and skills for wildlife rangers through basic, intermediate and advanced levels of 120-hour lectures and on-ground practice training, which is in line with URSA tools and standards.
- 325 law enforcement officials were trained in partnership with the National Police Agency, Prosecutor General's Office of Mongolia, Department of Protected Areas Policy and Coordination to prevent and combat illegal activities at national level.
- WWF-Mongolia initiated the National standard for "Barrier fences for railways and highways. General requirements MNS 7042:2024" was approved by the Mongolian Agency for Standard Metrology with collaboration among stakeholders.
- 217 local employees from Uvs and Gobi-Alta provinces equipped with knowledge on comprehensive rescue and care techniques for mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians, along with veterinary procedures and the provision of necessary rescue equipment.
- Besides the case of the young Mongolian saiga rescue from FY23, other good examples occurred in September 2023 for snow leopard rescue and Houbara bustard rescue in November 2023, injured argali sheep rescue, a rare migratory bird (Great bustard) resuce during this reporting period.
- Head of the 11 degraded springs were protected in saiga habitat to ensure that both wildlife and livestock have access to clean water.
- With the goal of enhancing awareness about rare Gobi animals among children 6 series of puppetry show was produced in collaboration with the Mongolian Puppetry Theatre.
- Thanks to persistent and effective conservation actions by the WWF-Mongolia and Community conservationists for saiga, along with local partners, Mongolian saiga population has surpassed a previously recorded population peak on 14,600 individuals prior to the Goat plague and following harsh climate conditions, reaching at minimum of 15,540 individuals.
- The distribution range of Mongolian saiga antelope extended by 464 sq.km area to the northern most range, a former historical range during the 1930s, after 9 decades, making total saiga range as 46,091 sq.km. In addition, 34 core habitats covering an area of 12,480 sq.km (30.7% of the saiga's range) were identified and 68 least cost-paths (ecological corridors) between various pairs of core habitats across the entire saiga range. To ensure the survival of the saiga, it is also crucial to mitigate the impact of existing and planned linear infrastructures, as well as other human disturbances that have the potential to fragment habitats and disrupt connectivity. For details: Chimeddorj, B., Buuveibaatar, B., Galsandorj,

N. et al. From isolation to integration: assessing habitat connectivity of the endangered saiga antelope in Mongolia. Mamm Biol (2024). https://doi.org/10.1007/s42991-023-00391-2.

More details please refer below contents.

- WWF-Mongolia has developed standardized basic level training modules for rangers with help from WWF-Greater Mekong office and experienced consultants, Mr. Barlow in FY22. This training module was submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism of Mongolia (METM) to be officially adopted as a main tool to train and build skills of the wildlife rangers in State protected areas. Unfortunately, several key staff changes had happened during the last 2 years from the METM, resulting in considerable delay for approval of the training module. During the reporting period, in December 2023, the Department of Protected Areas Policy and Coordination requested a WWF-Mongolia and US Forest Service funded project to incorporate each training module and programmes into a single training module. Thanks to WWF-Mongolia's consistent engagement, METM established temporary working group to finalize and approve the standardized training modules for rangers in February 2024 (Figure 1A). The working group successfully finalized the training modules with 3 levels (basic, intermediate and advanced) and submitted it for the approval. The minister of Environment and Tourism, Mr. Bat-Erdene B, has officially approved a training modules for rangers on 29th March 2024 (Figure 1B, C). This standardized training modules will deliver all the necessary knowledge and skills for wildlife rangers through basic, intermediate and advanced levels of 120-hour lectures and on-ground practice training, which is in line with URSA tools and standards. This training modules is crucial to enhance the skill of wildlife rangers and State inspectors thus improving the effectiveness of conservation law enforcement and increasing the ability to combat natural resource crimes at State level. As a next step, we are developing training materials in cooperation with KfW funded "Biodiversity and adaptation to climate change (Phases III)" project through the working group. Those detailed training materials for each topics of the standardized training modules are expected to be completed by October 2024. Following the completion of training materials by experts, WWF Mongolia will support ranger training in cooperation with the METM at priority sites as an initial training and support further improvement of the training materials and establishment of regular training structures under the MET. We plan to train 180 rangers from the 10 PAAs in ASER (6 PAAs) and AHEC (4 PAAs). In FY25, we will support basic training for rangers and State inspectors, while in FY26, intermediate and advanced training of the rangers are planned to be supported at those PAAs by WWF-Mongolia.

A B C

Figure 1. (A) Officlal decree to establish working group for standardized training modules for rangers; (B) Official decree for approval and use of standardized training modules for rangers; (C) cover of the standardized training modules for rangers

- WWF-Mongolia collaborated with the subcommission on prevention of environmental crime to enhance advocacy, coordination and capacity building among member organizations and law enforcement agencies. In this reporting period, WWF-Mongolia completed all 8 planned works in cooperation with member agencies of the sub-commission on prevention of environmental crime in Mongolia for the year 2023. 4 works form 2023 work plan were already implemented in the second half of FY23. For the 2024, WWF-Mongolia is working jointly with subcommission on 5 specific activities, of which 3 of them already completed in the first half of 2024. Highlights of the coordinated works since July 2023 are:
- WWF-Mongolia has been facilitating initiatives aimed at fostering enhanced cooperation among government agencies, elevating the expertise of personnel, and organizing collaborative training sessions. As part of this endeavor, the Department of Training and Research under the Prosecutor General's Office of Mongolia and WWF-Mongolia, in cooperation with the sub-commission on prevention of environmental crime in Mongolia, organized capacity training titled "Crime against the environment and prosecutor's control" in Ulaanbaatar in September 2023. This training involved the participation of 40 deputy prosecutors from Prosecutor's Offices across 21 provinces and the Capital of Mongolia. The training sessions were led by key authorities, including representatives from the State Prosecutor General's Office, the Mongolian Lawyers' Association, the Mongolian State University, and academic experts from the University of Internal Affairs. Leveraging their academic research and insights derived from real court cases, the trainers captivated participants' interest by offering practical perspectives. The training was meticulously designed and conducted within the purview of prosecutor supervision concerning environmental crime, aligning with the imperative of addressing crimes against the environment.
- The Department of Ecological Police is expanding its staff to 270 police officers from 170 officers in 2023 and 2024. WWF-Mongolia has supported regular training for the 142 police officers, mostly newly recruited officers, between 11th Nov and 1st Dec 2023 in Ulaanbaatar in cooperation with the National Police Agency. Police officers have received training on tactics to tackle illegal logging and illegal wildlife cases, mental training of officers along with specific topics for police officers.
- WWF-Mongolia is also cooperating with the Department of Ecological Police on online training sessions for newly recruited police officers, refresh-training of active officers on combating environmental crime cases and identification of illegally traded wild animal and plant species in different forms. An online training of 39 short video lessons, totalling 68 minutes, were completed. The National Police Agency has uploaded these short video lessons to their internal network for the continuous use of the training materials not only for the police officers from the Department of Ecological Police, but also for all police officers. It enables newly recruited police officers to obtain necessary knowledge and skills immediately after recruitment independently, and eliminate or reduce costly annual training of new police officers in the future, while enhancing effectiveness of environmental crime case handling. Moreover, it also enables police officers to immediately check the identification of wildlife and plant species and case handling instruction videos from the police network on-ground once they encounter potential wildlife and plant illegal trade cases.
- It is not often possible for law enforcement officials to receive adequate training on flora and fauna taxonomy and identification due to no specific training structures within the law enforcement agencies, and staff work locations, duties, and responsibilities. Customs and border protection agencies have a policy to replace their staff in a few years and transfer them from one border point to another within 1-2 years to prevent any potential corruption scheme establishment, which necessitates regular training. Therefore, we provided a mobile on-the-job training in cooperation with the Subcommission on prevention of environmental crime and the National University of Mongolia, where best wildlife and plant experts are employed, in selected 5 border points in ASER Mongolia. These border points are considered to be the main destination for the trade of wildlife products owing the majority of transboundary activities in ASER goes through those border points. This training activity is one of the interventions that the subcommission in cooperation with WWF Mongolia conducts on a yearly basis in western Mongolia since the establishment. A total of 128 law enforcement officers received a training on recent changes in legal framework, investigation and resolution of crimes and offences of illegal trading of wildlife and plants, identification of wildlife species and their parts. Training were conducted

using real cases of crime, good practices, short videos, and facts with group discussions, team working and debates.

- Annual "Let's preserve our Nature" campaign was organized under coordination of the Sub-commission on prevention of environmental crimes between 15 April and 15 May 2024 at national and regional levels. The main aim of this year's campaign was to promote "good action/threatment" towards nature and call for threating nature as their home targeted to general public. During the campaign, WWF supported activities in Ulaanbaatar and Khovd province on conducting a campaign. The campaign produced 13 video contents, 8 reels, 15 interviews with environmentalists, 10 news for online news websites, 26 posters for social media, and 114 other posts, contents and news at social media (Figure 2). The campaign reached over 21.6 mln people with duplicated numbers, receiving 427,000 likes, 277,500 shares, 8,588 comments at social media. One of the main social media pages to disseminate contents was the Ecological Police official Facebook page with 286,000 followers.

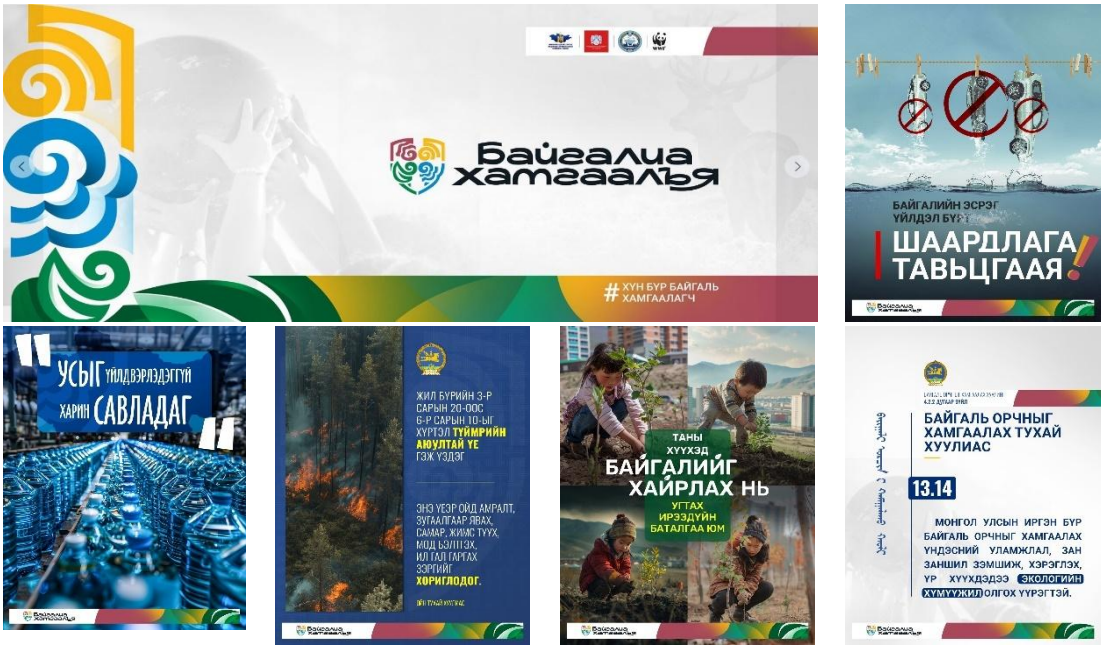


Figure 2. Some of the social posters produced during annual campaign, "Let's preserve our Nature" in 2024.

- The Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART), specifically designed to collect, measure and evaluate data to improve the effectiveness of wildlife conservation efforts with joint effort from international conservation organizations including WWF International, is being used successfully in over 100 countries and 1,100 sites, mostly the protected areas. The Government of Mongolia committed to adopt SMART for the State Protected Areas Network of 120 State Protected Areas (SPA). WWF-Mongolia has been actively supporting the adoption of the SMART since 2018 by testing the SMART at Uvs Lake Basin and Munkhkhairkhan Protected Areas Administrations (PAA), in Saiga range through Community Conservationists for Saiga successfully. WWF Mongolia supported a training of trainers in May with technical support from the Asian Poaching Prevention Working Group under WWF International in cooperation with Department of Protected Areas Policy and Coordination under the METM. As a follow up actions, WWF-Mongolia supported training of SMART for 123 rangers from 9 Protected Area Administrations (PAAs), namely Khar-Us Lake, Khan Khukhii, Khukh Serkh, Uvs Lake Basin, Mongol Altain Nuruu, Myangan Ugalzat, Mongol Els, Munkhkhairkhan and Great Gobi B) that manage 23 SPAs in ASER during October and November 2023 (Figure 3). Seven of them received initial training of SMART for adoption. WWF-Mongolia support team co-organized SMART training of on-ground with field practice at each PAAs with respective PAAs trainers prepared by previous training of trainers in May 2023. To ensure successful adoption of the SMART by those PAAs, WWF-Mongolia is planning to provide necessary technical support as required in coming 2 years. By adopting SMART

at SPAs, the Government of Mongolia will be able to do following key measures:

- to collect timely information of any violation and potential environmental crime incidents
- to respond quickly and plan appropriate actions against violations
- to develop effective conservation strategy for each PAAs and mobilize resouces to hotspot areas
- to monitor and evaluate PAA rangers' performance and PAA management effectiveness.

Figure 3. Rangers during the field practice of SMART training.

- WWF-Mongolia has been working towards a wildlife rehabilitation system in Mongolia for the last 3 years. Currently there are 3 specialized units established to carry out the wildlife rehabilitation practices within ASER with support from WWF-Mongolia. Moreover, as a sustainable operation of such specialized units, 4 separate national standards (Wildlife rescue and care activities for mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles) were developed by WWF-Mongolia. Existence of these units are making a difference on the ground. Besides the case of the young Mongolian saiga rescue from FY23, other good examples occurred in September 2023 for snow leopard rescue and in November 2023 for Houbara bustard rescue during this reporting period. The news of snow leopard injured in the leg preying on livestock in Bulgan soum of Khovd province were received by WWF-Mongolia. WWF-Mongolia forwarded news to the specialized unit of Khovd province, which took immediate action to rescue and treat injured young snow leopard timely (Figure 4).


Figure 4. Injured snow leopard, Argali and goitered gazelle are being treated by speciealized units on ground.

Moreover, 4 calls were made to the specialized wildlife rescue unit of the Gobi-Altai province in this reporting period regarding injured or helpless wild animals, including injured argali sheep, a rare migratory bird (Great bustard) rescued by a herder family, and a lost baby goitered gazelle, highlight the importance of these training initiatives in safeguarding wildlife care.

- WWF Mongolia, in collaboration with Uvs province's Department of Environment and Tourism, Department of Veterinary and Department of Police, successfully conducted specialized training for 117 local employees across 19 soums in Uvs province (Figure 5). Moreover, such training was organized in Gobi-Altai province in December 2023 for over 100 environmental experts, state environmental inspectors, veterinarians, police, and rangers from environmental authorities. These trainings encompasses comprehensive rescue and care techniques for mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians, along with veterinary procedures and the provision of necessary rescue equipment. Establishing local support groups for specialized units in the soums for wildlife rescue and care, along with annual budget allocation approvals for the rescues expenses during Citizens' Representatives meetings, ensures continuous and professional support for wildlife rescue and care efforts.




Figure 5. Particiapnts during the capacity building trainings to rescue and care wildlife in Uvs and Gobi-Altai provinces.

- After extreme population decline caused by the Goat plague and following drought and harsh winter between 2016 and 2018, Mongolian saiga population has recovered gradually and even surpassed the previously recorded highest level of 14,600 individuals from 2014, estimated as at minimum of 15,540 individuals in November 2023 (Figure 6). Currently, we have reached the main goal of ASER strategy in regard to Mongolian saiga population size, which is to reach a 2014 level. In upcoming year, we revise the main goal regarding Mongolian saiga conservation in the ASER strategy 2021-2030 that has aleardy been achieved, and continue work towards maintaining our success by supporting natural extension, recovery of the population, and habitat restoration.

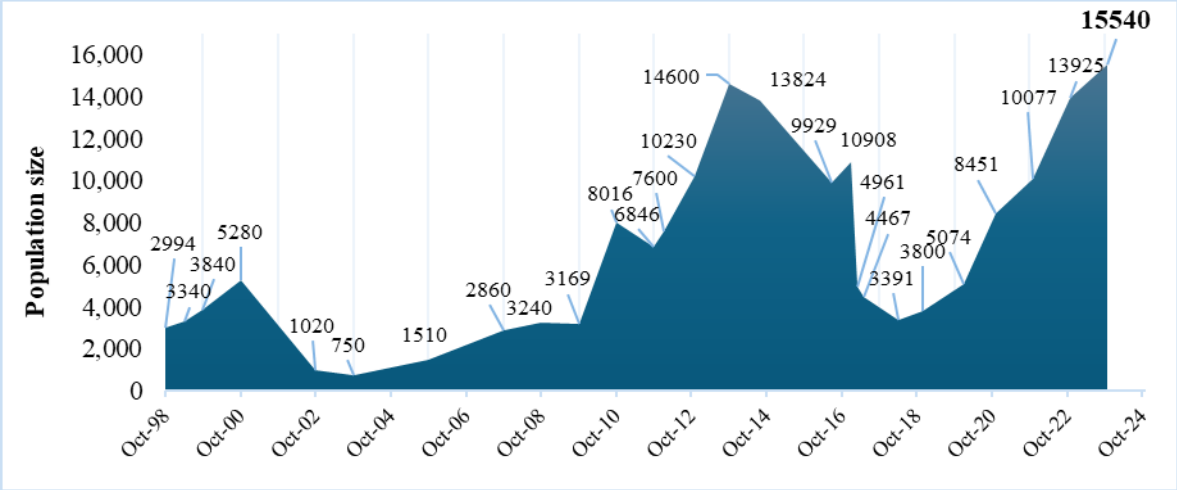


Figure 6. Mongolian saiga population dynamics during last 26 years

Mongolian saiga is extending its range in the north, a former historical range during the 1930s, after 9 decades. Small herds of Mongolian saiga have been recorded consecutively for the last two years and are currently being closely monitored by the rangers from Naranbulag soum, Uvs province and saiga rangers in Zavkhan soum, Uvs province. Those few individuals are extending Mongolian saiga population range to the very north-west of the saiga range, adding around 464 sq.km area into the Saiga range in FY24, making a total saiga range around 46,091 sq.km (Figure 7).

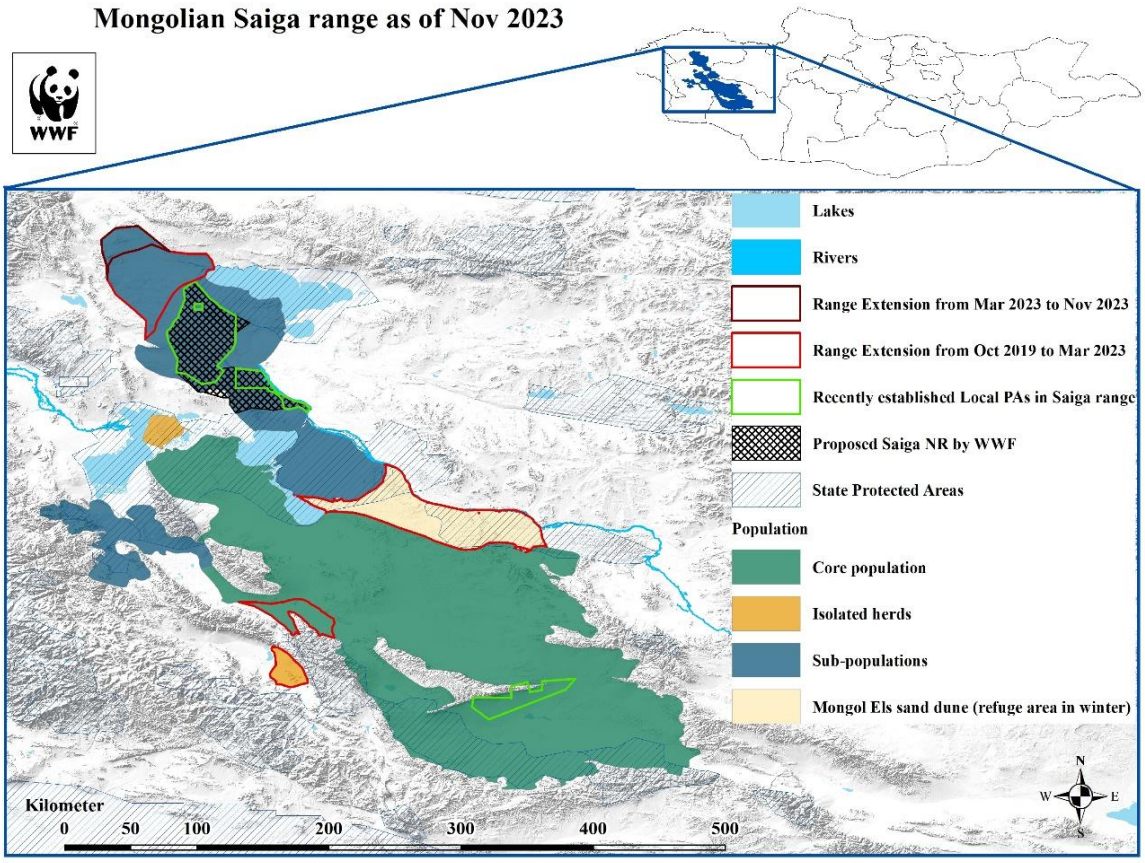
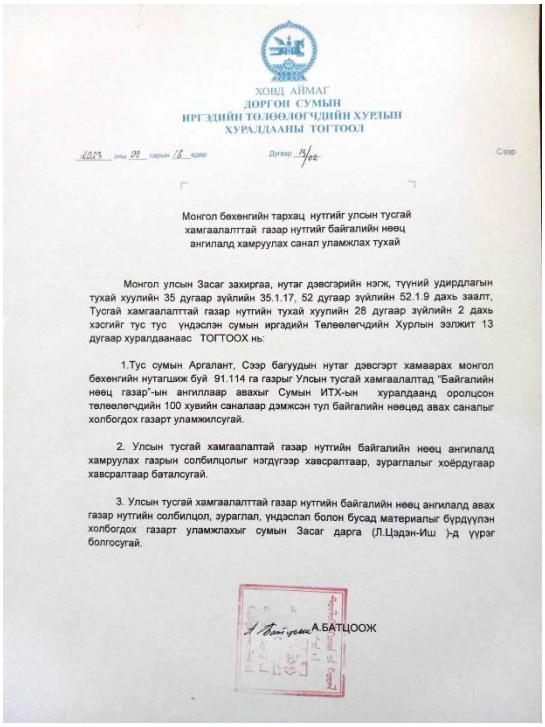


Figure 7. Saiga range as of November 2023 along with a range extensions, newly established LPAs and proposed NR by WWF.

- It is crucial to support natural extension of Mongolian saiga into its former range until the small, yet fragile subpopulation becomes a self-sustaining well established population. Therefore, WWF-Mongolia is working towards strengthening such small subpopulations. The habitat of those subpopulations needs to be protected from potential disturbances to allow smooth natural recovery and extension of Mongolian saiga range. WWF-Mongolia have lobbied and supported 2 Local protected areas (shown at Figure 10 as Recently established Local PAs in Saiga range) in the Khyargas lake population (also called Zavkhan population), which resides in the Zavkhan soum of Uvs province and Durgun soum of Khovd province, in recent years. To solidify our success and ensure habitat quality of the Khyargas lake population, WWF-Mongolia has finalized a development of the justification for the new Nature Reserve (shown at Figure 10 as Proposed Saiga NR by WWF) in this reporting period. Zavkhan soum local parliament had supported the new establishment of NR in March 2023. In this reporting period, thanks to continuous engagement and support from WWF-Mongolia, Durgun soum local parliament formally endorsed the establishment of new NR for 91,114 ha area of their soum territory in September 2023 and, subsequently, Khovd province local parliament also endorsed the Durgun soum's decision on establishment of NR for saiga in December 2023 (Figure 8). The local parliament of Uvs province endorsed the decision of Zavkhan soum's formal approvement of new NR in its territory in March 2024 as well. Those formal endorsements were submitted to the METM to be enlisted into the list of proposed State PAs, which will then be submitted to the State Parliament for final approval.



ХОВД АЙМАГ
ДӨРГӨН СУМЫН
ИРГЭДИЙН ТӨЛӨӨЛӨГЧДИЙН ХУРЛЫН
ХУРАЛДААНЫ ТОГТООЛ

2023 оны 09 сарын 13 өдөр Дугаар 14/02 Сэзэг

Монгол бөхөнгийн тархац нутгийг улсын тусгай хамгаалалттай газар нутгийг байгалийн нөөц ангилалд хамруулах санал уламжлах тухай

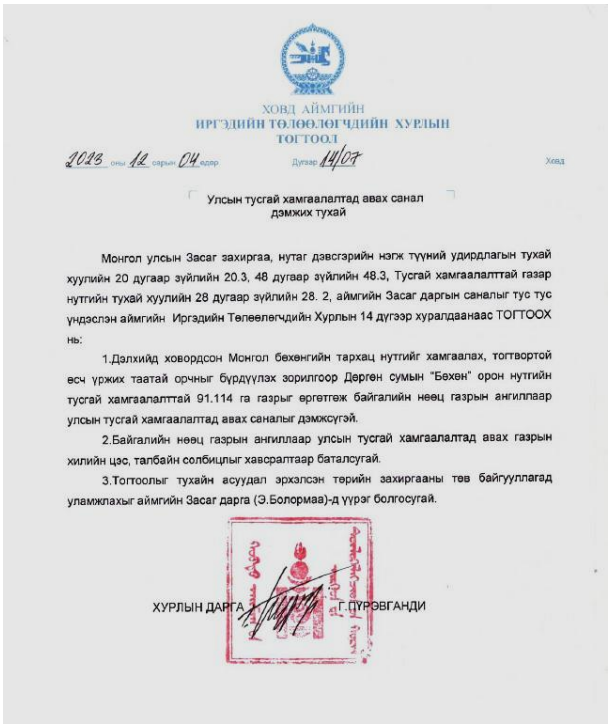
Монгол улсын Засаг захиргаа, нутаг дэвсгэрийн нэгж, түүний удирдлагын тухай хуулийн 35 дугаар зүйлийн 35.1.17, 52 дугаар зүйлийн 52.1.9 дахь заалт, Тусгай хамгаалалттай газар нутгийн тухай хуулийн 28 дугаар зүйлийн 2 дахь хэсгийг тус тус үндэслэн сумын иргэдийн Төлөөлөгчдийн Хурлын зөлжит 13 дугаар хуралдаанаас ТОГТООХ нь:

1.Тус сумын Аргалант, Сээр багуудын нутаг дэвсгэрт хамаарах монгол бөхөнгийн нутагшиж буй 91.114 га газрыг Улсын тусгай хамгаалалтад "Байгалийн нөөц газар"-ын ангиллаар авахыг Сумын ИТХ-ын хуралдаанд оролцсон төлөөлөгчдийн 100 хувийн саналаар дэмжсэн тул байгалийн нөөцөд авах саналыг холбогдох газарт уламжилсугай.

2. Улсын тусгай хамгаалалттай газар нутгийн байгалийн нөөц ангилалд хамруулах газрын солбилцолыг нэгдүгээр хавсралтаар, зураглалыг хоёрдугаар хавсралтаар батлалсугай.

3. Улсын тусгай хамгаалалттай газар нутгийн байгалийн нөөц ангилалд авах газар нутгийн солбилцол, зураглал, үндэслэл болон бусад материалыг бүрдүүлэн холбогдох газарт уламжлахыг сумын Засаг дарга (Л.Цэдэн-Иш)-д үүрэг болгосугай.

А.БАТЦООЖ



ХОВД АЙМГИЙН
ИРГЭДИЙН ТӨЛӨӨЛӨГЧДИЙН ХУРЛЫН
ТОГТООЛ

2023 оны 12 сарын 04 өдөр Дугаар 14/07 Ховд

Улсын тусгай хамгаалалттад авах санал дэмжих тухай

Монгол улсын Засаг захиргаа, нутаг дэвсгэрийн нэгж түүний удирдлагын тухай хуулийн 20 дугаар зүйлийн 20.3, 48 дугаар зүйлийн 48.3, Тусгай хамгаалалттай газар нутгийн тухай хуулийн 28 дугаар зүйлийн 28. 2, аймгийн Засаг даргын саналыг тус тус үндэслэн аймгийн Иргэдийн Төлөөлөгчдийн Хурлын 14 дүгээр хуралдаанаас ТОГТООХ нь:

1.Дэлхийд ховордсон Монгол бөхөнгийн тархац нутгийг хамгаалах, тогтвортой есч үржих таатай орчныг бүрдүүлэх зорилгоор Дөрөн сумын "Бөхөн" орон нутгийн тусгай хамгаалалттай 91.114 га газрыг өргөтгөж байгалийн нөөц газрын ангиллаар улсын тусгай хамгаалалттад авах саналыг дэмжсүгэй.

2.Байгалийн нөөц газрын ангиллаар улсын тусгай хамгаалалттад авах газрын хилийн цэс, талбайн солбицлыг хавсралтаар батлалсугай.

3.Тогтоолыг тухайн асуудал эрхэлсэн төрийн захиргааны төв байгууллагад уламжлахыг аймгийн Засаг дарга (Э.Болормаа)-д үүрэг болгосугай.

ХУРЛЫН ДАРГА Г.ӨҮРЭВГАНДИ

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Figure 8. (A) Official endorsement of the Saiga NR establishment within the boundary of Durgun soum and (B) following official endorsement of Khovd province based on Durgun soum's decision.

- WWF-Mongolia is implementing Asia's Linear Infrastructure safeGuarding Nature (ALIGN) project funded by USAID in its third year. This four-year project is aimed to enhance the development and implementation of effective, high-quality safeguard measures to avoid, lessen, and/or mitigate adverse impacts from linear infrastructure (LI) development on people and natural resources in Mongolia including both ASER and AHEC. Key highlights from this project regarding ASER in this reporting period are as follows:

In response to rapidly increasing linear infrastructure development which could fragment the habitat of endangered species in ASER, WWF-Mongolia had reliable prediction maps for the target species (argali, siberian ibex, snow leopard, dalmatian pelican, Mongolian saiga and Mongolian gazelle-funded by AHEC in FY22) connectivity areas using internationally accepted and proven analytical methods in FY23 using our previous research and monitoring results on target species both in ASER and AHEC. In this reporting period, we have produced a comprehensive maps and database, recommendations via USAID funded ALIGN project on existing and planned linear infrastructure impact and potential effects to not only our target 4 species from ASER strategy but also other key endangered and long distance migratory 12 terrestrial large mammals and 4 birds (gobi bear, wild bactrian camel, goitered gazelle, khulan, red deer, moose, roe deer, Mongolian gazelle, Mongolian saiga, snow leopard, argali, siberian ibex, dalmatian pelican, white–naped crane, asian great bustard and houbara bustard) of Mongolia using those of identified important connectivity corridors and other included species' stopover and important sites (in case of bird species) (Figure 9). Detailed recommendations on avoidance and mitigation actions for the species from the impact of existing and planned linear infrastructure projects, including paved roads, railroads and powerlines, and series of maps and considerations relating to wildlife will help decision-makers, engineers, and the public to sensitize and make wise decisions on building wildlife-friendly linear infrastructure or improving existing linear infrastructures. This database and following detailed recommendation on every overlaps with habitat of the species, potential and existing intersections of each species corridors/connectivity areas and linear infrastructures to ensure the free movement of the species is presented at the second meeting of recently established Coordination platform on wildlife friendly linear infrastructure development in September 2023 and disseminated to the government agencies, linear infrastructure developers and operators through the Coordination platform and through WWF-Mongolia official website. Members of the coordination platform, especially railway companies, the METM, and the Ministry of

Road and Transport Development emphasized that this database is the most crucial missing part for them since they had no such detailed information on wildlife that could be readily available and used directly for LI development and mitigation actions. Furthermore, first scientific article from those researches "From isolation to integration: Assessing habitat connectivity of the endangered saiga antelope in Mongolia" has been published it the peer-reviewed scientific journal "Mammalian biology" in January 2024. More scientific articles are expected to be written to spread the results and awareness of Mongolian migratory species and current and potential impact from the booming linear infrastructure development to the wildlife.

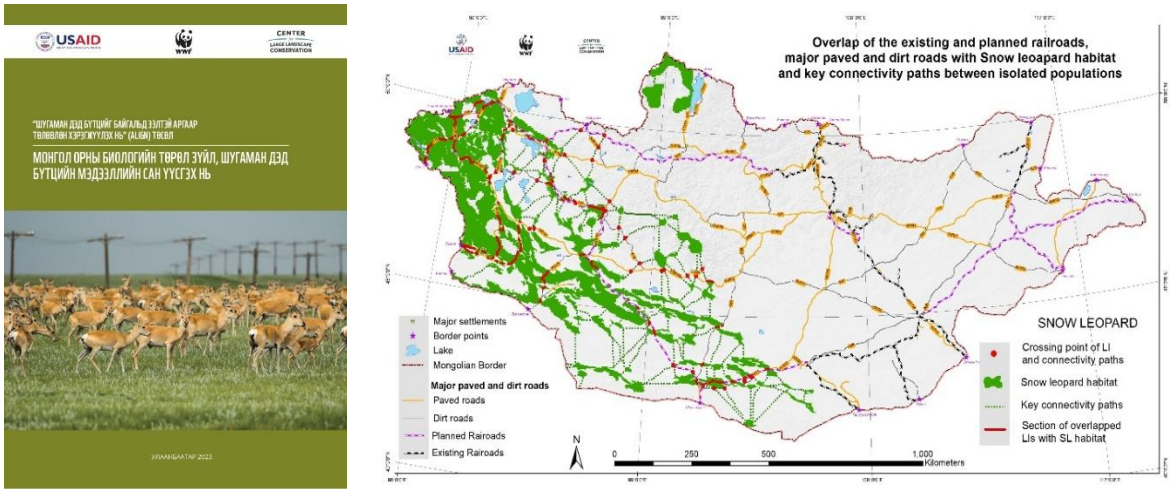

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Figure 9. (A) Report cover of the database and following detailed recommendation and (B) sample map of snow leopard habitat and key connectivity paths overlapping with existing and planned linear infrastructures.

- The fencing along various railroads in Mongolia to keep livestock away from the railway tracks has been a critical issue within the environment community. The fencing acts as a barrier for crossing the railroads which impedes the movement of wildlife and fragments their habitats. In addition, climate change is also impacting the migration tendencies of nomadic species as they are observed to be not following their traditional migratory patterns at predicted time period in many places. These factors are leading to the need for a new fencing regulation that eases these issues. In response to this issue, WWF-Mongolia through the ALIGN project teamed up with the Ministry of Road and Transport Development and the METM on the development of a national standard for wildlife-friendly fences that will be effective for national level including ASER. In this reporting period, WWF-Mongolia has financially supported and coordinated a contract with the expert team to develop the national standard for wildlife-friendly fences by the ALIGN project. In May, the National standard for "Barrier fences for railways and highways. General requirements MNS 7042:2024" was approved by the Mongolian Agency for Standard Metrology after a long process of joint collaboration among stakeholders (Figure 10). Previous achievement and successful collaboration with the Ministry of Road and Transport Development on developing and approving 2 national wildlife friendly passage standards through ASER and AHEC programme were the instrumental for the new wildlife friendly fence standard development and approval. Experts from the Policy and Planning Department, and the Railway and Maritime Transport Policy Planning Department of the Ministry of Road and Transport Development, and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism played an important role in the national wildlife friendly fence standard's approval. A key feature of the newly adopted standard is the requirement to construct barrier fences on railways and highways without barbed wire. This new requirement will reduce the risk of thousands of migratory species being caught in barbed fences and injure or die. Additionally, the standard specifies that fences should be designed to allow wild animals to move freely by sneaking underneath or jumping over it, while preventing livestock to keep outside of the fence. The standard has been effective since June 4, 2024 and currently 2 railroad campomise are applying the standard for their planned fences for 2024 in Southern Mongolia, where endangered ungulate species resides.

СТАНДАРТ, ХЭМЖИЛ ЗҮЙН ГАЗРЫН ДАРГЫН ТУШААЛ

2024 оны 05 сарын 22 өдөр Дугаар С/18 Улаанбаатар хот

Үндэсний стандарт шинээр болон шинэчлэн батлах, хүчингүй болгох тухай

Засгийн газрын агентлагийн эрх зүйн байдлын тухай хуулийн 8 дугаар зүйлийн 8.4 дэх хэсэг, Стандартчилал, техникийн зохицуулалт, тохирлын үнэлгээний итгэмжлэлийн тухай хуулийн 9 дүгээр зүйлийн 9.1, 9.2, 9.4 дэх хэсэг, 11 дүгээр зүйлийн 11.1 дэх хэсэг, 11.3.4 дэх заалт, 25 дугаар зүйлийн 25.1 дэх хэсэг, 25.3.2 дахь заалт, 28 дугаар зүйлийн 28.1, 28.4 дэх хэсэг, Автозамын стандартчиллын техникийн хороо (ТХ 48)-ны 2024 оны 4 дүгээр сарын 12-ны өдрийн 01 дугаар дүгнэлтийг тус тус үндэслэн ТУШААХ нь:

1. MNS 7042:2024, Төмөр зам болон хурдны авто замын хориг хашаа. Ерөнхий шаардлага стандартыг Улсын хэмжээнд хүлээн зөвшөөрч, шинээр үндэсний стандартаар батлуулсугай.

2. Улсын хэмжээнд хүлээн зөвшөөрч, үндэсний стандартаар шинэчлэн батлах стандартыг нэгдүгээр хавсралтаар батлуулсугай.

3. Дээрх шинээр болон шинэчлэн батлагдсан стандартыг улсын мэдээллийн нэгдсэн санд бүртгэсэн өдрөөс эхлэн мөрдүүлсугай.

4. Үндэсний стандартаар шинэчлэн батлагдсантай холбогдуулан хөөрдугаар хавсралтад дурьдсан стандартыг хүчингүйд тооцуулсугай.

5. Стандартыг мэдээлэх, сурталчлах ажлыг зохион байгуулахыг Зам, тээврийн хөгжлийн яаманд зөвлөмжлөн, Мэдээллийн технологи, стандартын лавлагаа, сургалтын төв (Ч.Содном)-д үүрэг болгосугай.

ДАРГА С.БАТБААТАР

МОНГОЛ УЛСЫН СТАНДАРТ

Төмөр зам болон хурдны авто замын хориг хашаа. Ерөнхий шаардлага

MNS 7042:2024

Стандарт, хэмжил зүйн газар
Улаанбаатар хот
2024 он

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Figure 10. (A) Official approval decree of the Barrier fences for railways and highways. General requirements MNS 7042:2024 standard by the by the Mongolian Agency for Standard Metrology; (B) Offical copy of the standard.

With this standard the impact of unfriendly fences along the linear infrastructures will be mitigated and or reduced from now, thus, movement of the migratory species and species with isolated populations, like snow leopard, can be facilitated to ensure long term survivability of the species in concert with well positioned wildlife friendly passages along the linear infrastructures.

- WWF-Mongolia initiated “GG6 initiative” became a great tool for bringing attention of parties and conservationists into conservation of endemic and endangered 6 species of Gobi region, Gobi ecosystem preservation. Through this initiative, we facilitate cooperation between government and other parties, boost conservation actions and budget spent for the Gobi ecosystem conservation. An annual meeting for GG6 initiative’s parties was held in October, 2023 at the Mongol Els PAA in Gobi-Altai province with a special focus on linear infrastructure development, its impact towards wildlife in the Gobi region. Participants agreed on submission of a regional proposal of the GG-6 conservation policy document to the METM for incorporation into the sectoral development policy document. Urged effective cooperation between the parties, in particular the policy support from the Ministry of Road and Transport Development regarding proper implementation of existing two national wildlife friendly passage standards. Furthermore, the Department of Environment and Tourism of Gobi-Altai province promised to be a leading organization of the GG6 events and the parties expressed their willingness to support follow-up actions of the planned conservation activities.

- WWF-Mongolia is implementing WWF Switzerland's funded Saiga project in the second year for habitat restoration of Mongolian saiga and Mongolian saiga profile promotion. With this project following highlight in this reporting period is worth mentioning:
    - As a consequence of climate change driven aridity, as well as overgrazing and trampling around the spring head by livestock, over 80 springs had dried out in the past decade in the Saiga range. Given the increasing scarcity of the surface water in semi-desert saiga range, near permanent

presence of people and livestock at the water sources, the competition between wildlife and ever increasing number of livestock has intensified, which often displaces Mongolian saiga into less suitable or water scarce pasture. To mitigate the loss of springs, WWF-Mongolia has been protecting degraded natural springs for many years. The protection of natural spring sources in the desert steppe with direct involvement of local communities has become a "win-win" for local communities and wildlife, and building long-term management schemes over natural spring sources in the drylands to address the climate vulnerability of local communities and wildlife. To scale up our effective conservation approach for making real change to the Mongolian saiga habitat, we put restoration of natural springs as the main objective for the Saiga project and planned to restore at least 100 degraded natural springs in Saiga range within 4 years to improve water accessibility to both Mongolian saiga and livestock, utilize pastureland around those of degraded springs. Within this Saiga project, 30 springs that are crucial for Mongolian saiga were inspected on ground from both Khovd and Gobi-Altai provinces and field measurements for fencing were taken in September 2023. A total of 24 springs out of those 30 degraded springs are chosen to be fenced before July 2024. As a demonstration of a good practice, WWF-Mongolia staff has fenced one of those 24 springs with a help from local herders in Bayan-Uul soum, Gobi-Altai province is Saiga range. As of June 30 2024, fencing of the 11 out of those 24 springs are completed and rest are under construction, where they are expected to be completed by October 2024. Based on budget needs to protect more springs in Saiga range to reach the Saiga project goal of protected and restored 100 springs (including previously protected 26 springs by ASER programme) by FY26, WWF-Mongolia requested to fund missing amount to WWF Switzerlands and successfully raised 477,117 EUR for Mongolian saiga habitat restoration in this reporting period.

- During the reporting period, River Basin Authority of Khuis Govi-Tsetseg Lake conducted a field monitoring measurement on water parameters of 17 springs, restored in FY23, within Saiga range in Gobi-Altai province in September with some help from Community conservationists for saiga and local herders (Figure 11). Measurements revealed that water discharge of all restored 17 natural springs increased 2-3 times compared with pre-protection (increased discharge of min. 0.12 cubic meters/sec, max. 67.1 cubic meters/sec). The monitoring will be conducted annually to measure restoration impact by the River Basin Authority of Khuis Govi-Tsetseg Lake including additional protected springs in Saiga range.

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Figure 11. (A) Before restoration: Field measurement on water discharge conducting with local herder, (B) After restoration: Monitoring measurements on water discharge conducting with local herder

- Thus, secure livelihood of locals can indirectly have a great impact on wildlife wellbeing in the long run. WWF-Mongolia is supporting a good governance and market accessibility of the Agricultural herder's cooperatives in ASER for several years to increase herder's livelihoods while also alleviating the pressures faced by wildlife through increasing numbers of livestock. As part of this endeavor, WWF-Mongolia has established a close partnership with the National Association of Mongolian Agricultural Cooperatives (NAMAC) and it enables the provision of professional and methodological consulting

services to the cooperatives. A total of 10 herder's cooperatives which recruited around 20% of total households in 10 soums (Bayan-Uul, Khukhmorit, Dariv, Darvi, Zereg, Mankhan, Tarialan, Turgen, Sagil and Khovd), are being supported by WWF-Mongolia. In this reporting period member households of those 10 herder's cooperatives have increased by 2% from 1048 to 1064, with a remarkable 97% of them being herding families. A total active assets of those cooperatives has reached 2,472 mln MNT (~670,000 EUR) with a gross profit of 4,184 mln MNT in 2023 by selling a livestock derived raw products such as wool, cashmere, meat, milk, milk derived dairies, and skin. Cooperatives have streamlined a supply of the raw products to the market saving herder's time and resources, while offering a financial benefit to the members through skipping middleman by supplying products directly to the market at market price.

- A significant achievement has been the diversification of sales income within the 8 herder's cooperatives in Uvs and Gobi-Altai provinces. Notably, income from small-scale factories experienced a substantial increase in 2023, independent of solely relying on livestock raw materials and store income. Reaching 107 million MNT in 2023, this production income accounts for 32% of the total sales income (Figure 12). This emphasizes the herders' cooperatives' ability to add value to livestock-origin raw materials and efficiently supply them to the market.

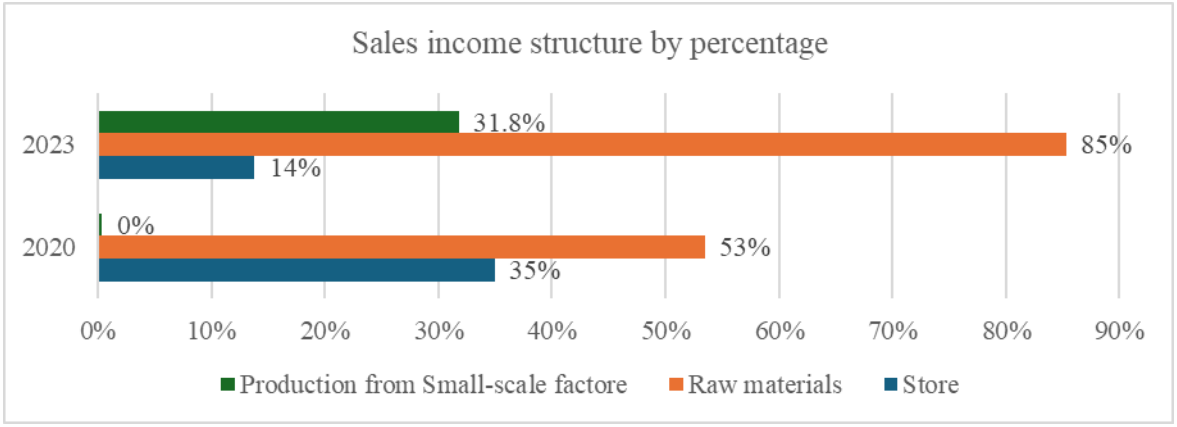

Figure 12. The structure of sales income from 8 herder's cooperatives in Uvs and Gibi-Altai provinces

- Moreover, over the past four years, more than 1000 members across 8 cooperatives received distributions totaling 98 mln MNT in price differences and 32 ml MNT in dividend income. These distributions underscore the operational success achieved by the cooperatives. To mention one example, in this reporting period Sanjin Bogd herders' cooperative of Bayan-Uul soum, Govi-Altai province expanded their warehouse for collecting raw materials with the support from the WWF-Mongolia. Before the construction of the warehouse, about 1.2 mln MNT was allocated to the price difference from raw materials, but in 2023, it has doubled, and 2.5 mln MNT has been allocated to cooperatives members as the price difference.
- In the current reporting period, the wildlife-friendly pasture managements, initiated in the previous year in four soums, have made significant progress, with approximately 80% of the pasture management plans successfully implemented. Stakeholder engagement, including a key consultation meeting, specialized training, and expert's consulting service conducted in the previous year, has empowered local authorities and pasture specialists. This collaborative effort has fostered effective collaboration, resulting in more efficient pasture management in the target areas. As part of the implementation of the pasture management plan, the following key actions have been undertaken in the last six months.
    - The bag governors, land, and pasture specialists in Khovd and Turgen soums of Uvs province, responsible for executing the pasture management plan, conducted training sessions with support from WWF-Mongolia, and provided information to 430 households regarding pasture utilization regulations. Additionally, they presented the pasture management plan of 2023 to a total of 616 herder households, ensuring widespread understanding and engagement in sustainable pasture practices.
    - Thanks to last year's training and outreach efforts focused on herders to emphasize proper

pasture use and herd turnover calculations, many herders adopted a practice of rotating their livestock and participating in selling at the market. Currently, herders from Khovd soum have supplied a total of 6,005 head of livestock, comprising 5,200 goats, 530 sheep and 275 cattle, to the meat factory in Bayan-Ulgii province.

- Concurrently, analysis of four soums (Turgen, Khovd, Dariv and Bayan-Uul) implementing the pasture management plan revealed a 15% decrease in average livestock numbers from last year. Specially, Bayan-Uul soum in Gobi-Altai province saw a significant 25% reduction in livestock, signaling a positive shift towards sustainable practices.
- Furthermore, Turgen soum Governor's office from Uvs province issued notifications to four herder households in wildlife breeding areas, successfully preventing pasture overlap during the wild animals' breeding season.
- In June 2023, we collaborated with agricultural cooperatives, pasture specialists, and an agricultural expert in target soums to conduct on-site training on planting green fodder for 133 herder households in the four soums and distributed 5-7 kg of seeds to plant as a fodder for livestock. This resulted in an impressive 80 percent successful growth and harvesting a total of 21 tons in this reporting period (Figure 13). The soum governors have expressed their intent to expand and share cost-effective methods for preparing fodder within their livestock yards, providing valuable insights to other herder families. Furthermore, they highlighted that implementing this method would alleviate grazing pressure and significantly contribute to enhancing the well-being and livelihoods of herders.

Figure 13. Local herders area planting fodder at the livestock yard with a success of high yields.

- To showcase the annual population assessment results of Mongolian saiga and introduce its diet preferences towards local herders and public, three types of digital posters were created. These posters were shared on various digital platforms and received good engagement (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Posters produced to disseminate information on Mongolian saiga.

- WWF-Mongolia has been supporting the young conservationist, Bayarmaa Chuluunbat, since 2014 from her middle school years. She has been enthusiastic leader of ecoclub from her hometown Mankhan soum, Khovd province, and was a champion for initial anti-trap "A Safe Mountain for Wildlife" campaign, which had a great success on removing over 1,000 traps along with following anti-trap campaigns from the snow leopard habitat and convinced Khovd province to ban a use of traps. WWF-Mongolia together with community conservationists for saiga has supported her research on Mongolian saiga diet during her bachelor degree at National University of Mongolia, and currently continuing the support on her master thesis research which is the continuation of her Mongolian saiga diet research, but more focused on overlap of the diet of Mongolian saiga and livestock in different seasons. This research results can greatly contribute to the conservation of Mongolian saiga in the future and can help convince the local herders with scientific proof that Mongolian saiga is not competing with livestock. Her bachelor thesis main results were disseminated to local herders and via social media as a poster (Figure 24).
- A five-day "Wildlife-friendly Mongolia" photo exhibition took place in September under the slogan "No Barbed Wires" organized by WWF-Mongolia and other conservation organizations. The primary objective was to raise public awareness about the impact of barbed fencing on wildlife and their migration. The exhibition also aimed to disseminate good achievements in the progress of transforming linear infrastructures into a more wildlife-friendly one and propose potential solutions to ensure the wildlife-friendly linear infrastructure development in the future. The exhibition was featured at the Sukhbaatar Square (the main square in Ulaanbaatar city), enhancing attendance from a broader audience for 3 days with thousands of visitors and in the exhibition hall near Sukhbaatar Square for 2 days with over 2,400 visitors. The exhibition is viewed 173,000 times via social media.
- Good understanding of the current situation and locals' opinion on how they perceive conservation and needs for the environment is crucial to plan and implement effective conservation actions with the right approaches. Thus, WWF-Mongolia conducted regular surveys from locals in Saiga range to identify current attitude towards Mongolian saiga and analyse the impacts and effectiveness of the communication works and for further planning triennially. The KAP (knowledge, attitude and practice) survey was conducted from 632 locals of 7 soums from Khovd and Gobi-Altai provinces in September 2023. The main highlights of the KAP survey are as follows:
    - According to the survey 74.7% locals highlighted the importance of ecological roles and benefits of Mongolian saiga. This percentage decreased by 11% compared to the 2020 survey, implying the continuous need on awareness raising activities for Mongolian saiga.
    - Attitude towards illegal action showed slight decrease between 2020 and 2023 surveys. For example, in case of illegal hunting or trade of Mongolian siaga and its body parts 41% (48.3% in 2020) of local communities are ready to inform it to ranger or other authorities. Though, it appears to be declined, the root can be several factors that no poaching for the last 6 years might have eased the seriousness of the issue by locals instead of decline in locals attitude towards

Mongolian saiga. It needs to be explored further.

The survey to identify people's attitude towards protection of natural springs revealed that 76% of interviewees support the initiative to protect natural springs (7% regarded "do not support" and 14% stated "uncertain") and 63.3% expressed to take part in spring protection voluntarily.

- With the goal of enhancing awareness about rare Gobi animals among children 6 series of puppetry show was produced in collaboration with the Mongolian Puppetry Theatre. All 6 series were recorded as videos and disseminated on social platforms as well as on the Khovd TV channel. The viewership of Khovd TV encompasses 7,000 households or approximately 45,000 individuals. To be more inclusive for the children with hearing disabilities WWF-Mongolia team included sign languages to the series. All 6 series can be accessed from the WWF-Mongolia's official youtube channel.
    - Annually, WWF-Mongolia and eco club students jointly celebrate the "Saiga Day" event to raise public awareness about the value of the regionally critically endangered Mongolian saiga antelope and to mobilize community efforts for the species' conservation. Saiga Day 2024 was organized through two parallel activities. One focused on raising awareness and educating the public about saiga antelopes, their conservation status, and the threats they face in 3 soums (counties) of Uvs province which was a historic saiga range of the species. There were no records on saiga in this part of the range since the 1950s. However, some individuals of saiga have been seen therein starting from 2009. According to the 2023 saiga population assessment, the saiga population in the territory of 3 soums was counted as 464 individuals. This shows that the Mongolia saiga have returned to their native range and their population has increased. During the Day, numerous public awareness activities were held and the documentary "The sprinter of the desert steppe: Mongolian Saiga" produced by WWF-Mongolia was shown to the participants and school children (Figure 15). To the event, a total of 4,643 people from the communities and 3,140 school children were involved. The other activity focused on community engagement. Over 60 eco-club members together with 5 teachers joined the field visits to the saiga range and its monitoring sites. Many of the field trip participants have not seen saiga in the field before. So, the field visits were interesting for them to watch saigas in their native range and habitat while learning about many details on the regionally critically endangered saiga and its values and conservation activities by the community conservationists for saiga. Many interesting details on the saiga provided by community conservationists for saiga including average age of the saiga, average numbers of baby saiga, birth of female saiga, and the plants the saiga feeds on. The school eco club members were able to increase their awareness of saiga and its habitat thanks to all these interesting details provided by the community conservationists for saiga (watch the related video). Moreover, 1,345 school children shared the saiga event contents to their Facebook friends and followers and 2,604 children in 12 soums have learned a song "Baby Saiga", as well as 1,717 children downloaded the awareness contents from the WWF-Mongolia's YouTube channel at their cell phones for further dissemination. The event and its awareness raising activities co-organized with the eco-club members have reached over 17,000 local people, according to the event organizers.

Figure 15. School children duringthe Saiga Day 2024

- For the second year, thanks to funding from the people of Poland, a spring, named Urd Gol Spring, in the Saiga range has been protected from further degradation by the livestock (Figure 16). The spring was chosen based on field measurements taken in September 2023 to determine the fencing requirements. Further monitoring of the spring and maintenance of the fence will be carried out by eco-club children and herder communities.

Figure 16. The spring, Urd Gol spring, after fenced to prevent livestock trampling in Bayan-Uul soum, Gobi-Altai province.

- At Khovd City Airport, and along the road between Khovd and Gobi-Altai provinces new billboards were printed, and displayed to educate travelers and locals about Mongolian saiga and its conservation needs (Figure 17). The aim was to capture attention and inspire action towards conservation efforts.Three additional information boards were dedicated solely to the Mongolian saiga. Each board, from concept to creation, emphasized the species' ecological importance, its current challenges, and practical steps individuals can take to contribute to conservation of the species. These boards were strategically placed to maximize visibility and engagement. The designs featured vibrant images of Mongolian saiga in their natural habitat, alongside clear, concise messages urging viewers to protect these endangered species and their habitats. By integrating educational content with compelling visuals, these billboards and information boards not only raised awareness but also empowered individuals to make a tangible difference in safeguarding Mongolian saiga and promoting broader biodiversity conservation efforts across the region.

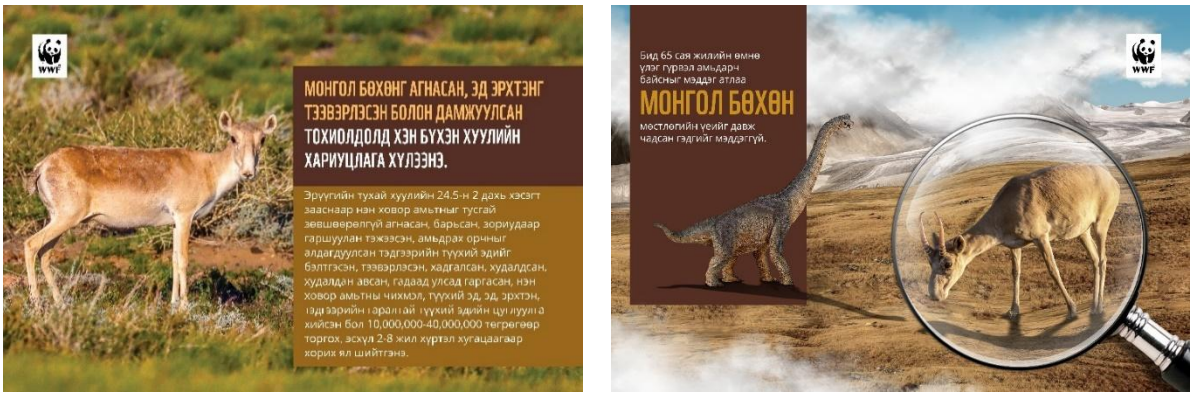

Figure 17. Billboards placed at the Khovd City Airport and along the main road from Khovd to Gobi-Altai province.

- Based on needs of training for communication officers of the Department of Environment and Tourism of 5 western provinces and PAAs in ASER, WWF-Mongolia organized a capacity building training for the officers in Western Mongolia in August 2023. Total of 14 communication officers from 9 Protected area administrations and 4 province's Department Environment and Tourism attended. The training was organized in forms of classroom (30%) and practice demonstration (70%). The participants have learned about efficient use of digital photo camera and drone, and process or edit the photos with Adobe Lightroom software. Also, they learned how to edit video footage with Adobe Premiere Pro software. All these new

knowledge and skills obtained from the training were very practical and useful in their daily works at the present time, when the public do prefer to see short videos and recordings, according to the training and public awareness specialists. During the training pre and post surveys were taken from the participants. Results show at least 50% of the participants increased in their knowledge and skills, according to their responses.

- Earth Hour represents another significant opportunity to unite everyone in solidarity for the benefit of people and wildlife. To mark this year's Earth Hour, WWF-Mongolia is highlighting six remarkable animals inhabiting the Gobi Desert. We refer to them as the Gobi's Great Six (GG6), which include the Mongolian saiga, Gobi bear (Mazaalai), Przewalsky's horse (Takhi), wild Bactrian camel (Khavtgai), goitered gazelle, and Asiatic wild ass (Khulan). As part of our event, we ran a donation box campaign to raise funds dedicated to protecting water sources, recognizing water as the precious jewel of the Gobi (Figure 18). Public were active in donation and a total of MNT 1,200,000 (590USD) was raised during the event. Although this may seem like a small amount, it is a start of initiative of public donating to the environmental conservation by WWF-Mongolia.

Figure 18. Captures during the Earth Hour event at the crowded mall in the City center in March 2024.

- In order to promote importance of the National standard for "Barrier fences for railways and highways. General requirements MNS 7042:2024" 4 articles and 2 news was published through daily newspaper and web sites. Moreover, success was shared with local communities and international supporters (Figure 19).

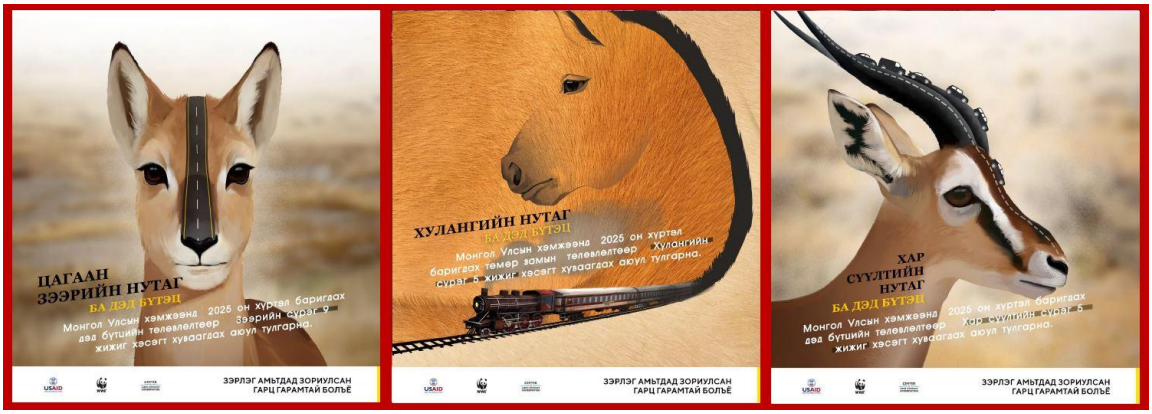

Figure 19. Awareness raising posters regarding a harmful impact of the Linear infrastructure and barbed fence in favour of introducing a new National wildlife friendly fence standard.

Reports / Publications / Information material:

- Documentary film: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHGO0IDho-I&t=71s
- Puppetry video for kids: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fA2zg4w6gH4
- Connectivity corridor scientific paper: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s42991-023-00391-2
- National fence standard: https://estandard.gov.mn/website/masm/standards_details.aspx?code=18da2a53-19ca-4356-a2f0-2a4a3d98f81a
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15qMBpEhLnY

Collaborators:

- Ministry of Environment and Tourism (former)
- Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs
- Ministry of Road and Transport Development
- Environmental Departments of Khovd, Gobi-Altai nd Uvs provinces
- Protected area administration of Mongol Els NP and Khar-Us Lake NP
- WCS Mongolia
- Sub Council on Prevention of Environmental Crime

Budget available:

- ASER Program – 400,000 Euro
- Saiga conservation project – 240,000 Euro

Current sponsors:

- WWF Switzerland
- WWF Germany
- WWF Netherlands
- SCA

Past sponsors:

- WWF Switzerland
- WWF Germany
- WWF Netherlands
- SCA

• MAVA Foundation
Information contributed by: Chimeddorj Buyanaa, Conservation director of WWF Mongolia
Date report submitted: 09/08/2024
Other: