

****NEWS RELEASE****



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First Central Asian Migration Atlas Created to Reduce Harm To Wildlife from Infrastructure

- **Infrastructure such as roads, railroads, pipelines and border fences are significant threats to wildlife**



IMAGE: The growing number of railways, roads, pipelines, and fences increasingly threatens large migratory mammals such as Mongolian gazelles in Central Asia. **CREDIT:** Copyright Ganbayar Hureelen. Additional images available here: <http://bit.ly/2qssGHe>

Vilm, Germany (May 4, 2017) – Experts have for the first time mapped the distribution and movement corridors of migratory mammals in combination with threats from linear infrastructure, such as railways, roads, pipelines, and border fences, across the entire Central Asian region. This migration atlas features the distribution of the ten most affected species in ten countries and the constructed and planned infrastructure. Having this information ready in one

database will help to more effectively inform decision makers to take the needs of migratory species into account when building and planning any kind of infrastructure.

Understanding and reducing the impact of such barriers to migration is a key priority for the conservation of steppe and mountain ungulates. Knowing exactly where the animals move and what kind of infrastructure is being constructed and planned in their range is crucial to react at an early stage and influence the location and design of the infrastructure to make it less harmful. Combining information on both infrastructure construction and species distribution helps to inform decision makers accordingly and mitigate negative impacts already in the planning stage.

Said Bradnee Chambers, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS): “The growing number of railways, roads, pipelines and fences increasingly threatens migratory large mammals such as antelopes and gazelles in Central Asia. These obstacles severely fragment habitats and affect or even prevent wildlife migration which may result in significant species decline. These movements are critical to breed, feed, and avoid drought or winter weather. The atlas will help address key threats triggered by growing linear infrastructure development across critical habitats and migration corridors and reduce harm to the species in the region.”

The upsurge in the construction of linear infrastructure has serious implications for the survival of many CMS-listed migratory species such as the Saiga Antelope, Mongolian Gazelle, Wild Camel, Asiatic Wild Ass and Argali Sheep which depend on open interconnected landscapes to move freely over long distances. The devastating impact of fences can be seen in Mongolia, where more than 5,300 Mongolian Gazelles died during the winter 2015 along the Trans-Mongolian Railway because they could not cross the fenced tracks to escape harsh weather events.

Experts attending a workshop on the Isle of Vilm, Germany, created the Migration Atlas. The workshop, 27-30 April 2017, was organized by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) with its International Academy for Nature Conservation together with the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), with financial support from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB), and the Government of Switzerland.

The maps making up the atlas have been reviewed and validated during the workshop by international experts working across the region and will, once finally completed, be published on the CMS website and become publicly available and usable.

Said Peter Zahler, Asia Regional Director of WCS: “Central Asia is one of the last places on Earth that still has large, intact wild landscapes. These landscapes are crucial for the survival of many species – such as great herds of Saiga Antelope and Mongolian Gazelle, majestic Argali Sheep and Snow Leopards – which depend on moving across these enormous areas for their survival. This project is a critical step in identifying ways to mitigate impacts from fences, roads, and railroads that threaten the integrity of the great temperate grasslands and huge mountain ranges that support these unique species.”

Said Eric Sanderson, WCS Senior Conservation Ecologist: “We are mapping range, distribution, and movement patterns of key wildlife species, and linear infrastructure – both existing and planned – that threatens movement of these species, and developing recommendations for

avoidance and mitigation. This information, which will be compiled into an ‘Atlas’ for Central Asian wildlife, can then be used by government, industry, lenders, conservationists, and research scientists to avoid or mitigate the single greatest threats to movement, and thus ultimately survival, of migratory mammals across Central Asia.”

The workshop took place in the framework of the Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI), which covers 15 large migratory mammal species occurring in 14 Central Asian countries, adopted by CMS Parties at the Eleventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP11) in 2014.

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BfN (German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation)

BfN is the German government’s scientific authority with responsibility for national and international nature conservation. BfN is one of the government’s departmental research agencies and reports to the German Environment Ministry (BMUB). The Agency provides the German Environment Ministry with professional and scientific assistance in all nature conservation and landscape management issues and in international cooperation activities. Contact: Ruth Schedlbauer, Bundesamt für Naturschutz, Referat Presse/Öffentlichkeitsarbeit, www.bfn.de, presse@bfn.de

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) aims to conserve terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory species throughout their range. It is an intergovernmental treaty, concluded under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme, concerned with the conservation of wildlife and habitats on a global scale. To date 124 State Parties have ratified the Convention. [@bonnconvention](http://www.cms.int)

WCS (Wildlife Conservation Society)

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