



## CENTRAL ASIAN MAMMALS INITIATIVE

Goitered Gazelles © Viktor Lukarevsky

Dear friends and colleagues,

In the midst of the current global pandemic, I hope that you, your families and colleagues are safe and healthy. This crisis is heavily affecting our lives and work and I hope that you are managing to stay optimistic and keep a positive spirit in these difficult times. Alternative working arrangements are in place for the CMS Secretariat, with all staff working remotely until further notice. At least through 31 May 2020, no in-person meetings of CMS will be organized, and no staff will be able to travel on official meetings or missions. The situation is under constant review and we are also exploring the use of virtual platforms for external meetings of CMS Parties and partners.

Much has happened since the last CAMI Newsletter was issued in September 2017, which makes this edition long and comprehensive. In the attempt to keep you informed and in line with the new CAMI Programme of Work, I aim at returning to sending out the Newsletter regularly twice a year (April/October). In order for the newsletter to reflect the many activities going on in the region, this edition includes contributions from the Species Focal Points and other stakeholders sharing information about relevant projects and developments in the region. The newsletter includes information on the recent CAMI Range State meeting as well as CMS COP13, which provided additional momentum to push for implementation of CAMI and its ambitious programme of work. We also want to inform you about our continued cooperation with the BfN, which includes another six workshops up until 2023, about the launch of the IUCN SOS Central Asia Programme, a funding mechanism to support the implementation of CAMI, results of a number of conservation projects in the region and much more.

We thank all contributors and hope you enjoy reading!

CAMI Coordinator

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## Recent Meetings

### CMS COP13 (Gandhinagar, India, 17-22 February 2020)



'Gibi' the enchanting Great Indian Bustard, representing all the endangered species that need our love, care, and protection.



The 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS (CMS COP13) concluded on 22 February in Gandhinagar, India with the adoption of a number of important resolutions and decisions to address the conservation needs and threats facing migratory species around the globe. Ten new species were added to the CMS Appendices at COP13, seven of which were added to Appendix I and three species, including the Urial (*Ovis vignei*) were listed on Appendix II. CMS COP13 also adopted the Gandhinagar Declaration calling for migratory species and the concept of connectivity to be integrated and prioritized in the new Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework developed under the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD). India, as COP13 host, will assume the role of COP Presidency for the next three years. India also serves as the chair of the CMS Standing Committee and vice-chair of CAMI.

The COP also adopted the revised [CAMI Resolution 11.24 \(Rev.COP13\) and the new Programme of Work 2021-2026](#), which was developed during the Range States meeting in Mongolia last year. CMS Parties fully endorsed the Resolution and its annexes with only minor changes with Mongolia, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Uzbekistan expressing their strong and continued support for the initiative.

The COP also agreed on a number of cross-cutting policy measures relevant to CAMI, such as Decisions 13.130 - 13.134 Infrastructure Development and Migratory Species and Decisions 13.119 - 13.121 Community Participation and Livelihoods, which are available at [https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/cms\\_cop13\\_decisions\\_e.pdf](https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/cms_cop13_decisions_e.pdf)

### COP13 Side Event: A Global Animal Migration Atlas

On 20 February, the CMS Secretariat organized a side event entitled “A Global Animal Migration Atlas” in the margins of CMS COP13. This side event aimed at illustrating progress in the Atlas initiative since its launch at CMS COP11 as well as perspectives for future developments. Fernando Spina, outgoing Chair of the CMS Scientific Council, provided an overview of the Eurasian African Bird Migration Atlas and Christiane Röttger presented the Central Asian Migration and Linear Infrastructure Atlas. In addition, several related initiatives on other taxa were presented, including an initiative to develop a Global Atlas on Ungulates Migration, the Global Swimways project and the Migratory Connectivity in the Ocean (MiCO) system.

### COP13 Side Event: Addressing the impact of linear infrastructure on migratory species

On 17 February, the CMS Secretariat organized a side event entitled “Addressing the Impact of Linear Infrastructure on Migratory Species” in the margins of CMS COP13. The event was chaired by Christiane Paulus (Government of Germany) and illustrated ongoing activities to address the impact of linear infrastructure on migratory species. Ms. Ariuntuya Dorjsuren (Government of Mongolia) shared her country’s experience and work under CAMI, which helped to implement a number of mitigation plans and actions in Mongolia. Tanya Rosen (IUCN) and Vinod. B. Mathur (Government of India) also shared their experiences and emphasized the importance of conservation and restoration of ecological connectivity.

### COP13 Side Event: IUCN SOS Save Our Species Central Asian Initiative

The CMS Secretariat and IUCN jointly dedicated a side event at CMS COP13 to talk about ways the IUCN Save Our Species (SOS) Central Asia initiative supports the work of the Convention. Launched in 2019, SOS Central Asia supports CAMI through funding targeted priority conservation projects currently focusing on Goitered Gazelles and Snow Leopards in both high-mountain and lowland semi-desert ecosystems in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The programme supports civil society organizations by funding initiatives that address pressing threats to those species. The side event was chaired by Jane Smart, Global Director of IUCN’s Biodiversity Conservation Group. Maarten Hofman (IUCN ECARO) gave a presentation about the SOS Central Asia programme and Christiane Röttger about CAMI. Dr Ranjini Murali, Conservation Scientist from the Snow Leopard Trust presented one of the funded projects, which aims to create co-managed protected areas and conservation-linked livelihood opportunities to save Snow Leopards and their prey in Kyrgyzstan.

More information about the SOS Central Asia programme is available at <https://www.saveourspecies.org/our-work/sos-central-asia>



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## Second CAMI Range States Meeting (Ulaanbaatar, 25-28 September 2019)

The Second Meeting of the Range States of CAMI took place from 25 to 28 September 2019 and was generously hosted by the Government of Mongolia in Ulaanbaatar, as part of the Mongolian Wildlife Week. The meeting was attended by Range state Representatives, NGOs as well as scientists and experts. Participants developed and agreed a set of comprehensive conservation measures as part of a new CAMI Programme of Work covering the period 2021 – 2026. These new measures address major threats that affect all species covered by CAMI as well as targeted actions to conserve individual species. The new draft Programme of Work for CAMI was subsequently adopted by the CMS COP13 with [Resolution 11.24 \(Rev.COP13\)](#).



© Tatjana Rosen

The meeting also agreed to include the Gobi Bear, the Persian Leopard and the Urial in CAMI and elected Tajikistan as the Chair of CAMI and India as Vice-Chair. Representatives from China, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, together with non-governmental organizations, scientists and other wildlife experts, also reviewed the draft report “Mapping Transboundary Conservation Hotspots for CAMI”. Participants provided guidance on ways to prioritize important transboundary areas in the region and to promote actions to conserve them and their species under CAMI. The meeting was jointly organized by the CMS Secretariat, the Mongolian Government, the International Academy for Nature Conservation of the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN INA) as well as the Michael Succow Foundation with funding from the German Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU).

Further information including the outcomes of that meeting is available at <https://www.cms.int/cami/en/meeting/second-range-state-meeting-cms-central-asian-mammals-initiative>



© Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Mongolia

## CITES COP18 (Geneva, 17-28 August 2019)

The 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES CoP18) took place in Geneva, Switzerland, from 17-28 August 2019. On the agenda of the meeting were decisions on Saiga Antelopes ([Decision 18.270 - 18.274](#)) as well as a proposal from Mongolia and the United States to uplist *Saiga tartarica* from CITES Appendix II to Appendix I. After an intense discussion which included the taxonomic scope of the proposal, the meeting agreed to keep Saiga (*Saiga spp.*) on Appendix II but with a zero export quota for wild specimens traded for commercial purposes.

The COP18 also agreed to establish a CITES Big Cats Task Force ([Decision 18.244 - 18.250](#)), focusing on big cat species from Africa, Asia and Latin America. The remit of the Task Force is inter alia to discuss enforcement and implementation issues related to the illegal trade in specimens of big cats, to exchange intelligence and information and develop strategies and make recommendations to improve international cooperation regarding the enforcement of CITES concerning illegal trade in specimen of big cats.

For a full overview of the discussions at CITES CoP18 related to Saiga see also the current Saiga News Issue 25 <https://www.saigaresourcecentre.com/content/saiga-news-magazine>

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## Technical Workshop under the Saiga MOU (Isle of Vilm, Germany, 27-20 April 2019)

Range States of the Saiga Antelope agreed on a set of concrete conservation priorities guiding the work under the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Concerning the Restoration, Conservation and Sustainable Use of Saiga Antelopes (*Saiga spp.*) up to 2025. During a technical workshop under the Saiga MOU, held from 1-4 April on the Isle of Vilm, Germany, representatives of four of the five Signatory States of the MOU and China, and of the CMS and CITES Secretariats, cooperating organizations and experts reviewed progress in implementing the MOU and its Medium-Term International Work Programme (MTIWP) 2016-2020, which guides joint conservation measures for Saiga Antelopes. Participants exchanged information on current Saiga conservation activities and

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developed a new work programme covering the period 2021-2025 to be submitted for approval to the Fourth Meeting of Signatories to the MOU to be hosted by Russia in late 2020. The workshop was jointly organized by CMS and CITES as well as the BfN INA with funding from the BMU.

More information can be found at <https://www.cms.int/saiga/en/meeting/joint-cms-cites-technical-workshop-under-mou-concerning-conservation-restoration-and>

## Sustainable Use and Livelihoods (SULi) Central Asia Regional Meeting (September 2018, Kyrgyzstan)

In September 2018, the IUCN Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group (SULi) co-convened with the GIZ, Panthera, the Hunting and Conservation Alliance of Tajikistan, TRAFFIC and the IUCN Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office a regional meeting in Kyrgyzstan to explore sustainable use and community management of wild resources. Sustainable and integrated use of wild species and habitats plays an important role in conservation strategies, livelihoods and resources management options for many Central Asian countries. However, illegal and/or unsustainable use continues, as does extensive land degradation, with challenges in terms of inadequate governance frameworks and institutions.

The meeting reviewed the status of key wild species populations across the region and the threats facing them, frameworks and approaches to managing the use of resources, the role of community rights and benefits, and the potential to work with key stakeholders - including the hunting sector - to strengthen wildlife conservation and associated livelihood benefits. Based on extensive presentations and discussions, meeting participants concluded that strengthening the role of local communities in managing wildlife (plants, animals and their habitats) could reduce poaching and land degradation and support food security and livelihoods, more effective law enforcement, and climate adaptation and resilience. Participants highlighted the key challenges facing community-based wildlife management and articulated key recommendations for governments, conservation organizations, development agencies, local communities, and other stakeholders in the region. (*Khalil Karimov*)

The report of the meeting “Achieving conservation goals through community benefits and empowerment” is available at <https://www.iucn.org/commissions/commission-environmental-economic-and-social-policy/our-work/sustainable-use-and-livelihoods/events/suli-central-asia-regional-meeting-kyrgyzstan-4-6-september-2018>

## Midterm Review of the Central Asian Mammals Initiative (16-19 April 2018, Isle of Vilm, Germany)

Range State representatives, scientists and conservation experts met on 16-19 April 2018 at the International Academy for Nature Conservation on the German Isle of Vilm to review the implementation of the CAMI Programme of Work (POW) and agree on priorities until 2020. Countries and other stakeholders reported on implementation at the national level since 2014. Participants also discussed priorities for implementation and agreed that promoting transboundary cooperation and addressing cross-border conservation issues should be a main focus for CAMI, as well as addressing the issue of border fences, poaching and scientific research in transboundary areas. Steps to be taken in preparation for CMS COP13 were



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also discussed as well as timelines and formats for the preparation of species conservation status updates. The meeting produced an overview of the implementation of the CAMI POW, updated information on the conservation status of CAMI species and agreed on further coordinated action up until CMS COP13. The meeting was made possible through the support of the BMU and was organized by the CMS Secretariat in cooperation with the BfN INA.

More information including the meeting report can be found <https://www.cms.int/cami/en/meeting/midterm-review-central-asian-mammals-initiative-cami>

The overview on implementation status is available here <https://www.cms.int/cami/en/document/overview-implementation-programme-work-2014-2020>

## Projects and Cooperation

### Pilot Phase to Reconnect the Gobi-Steppe Ecosystem Through Mitigation of Fences along the Trans Mongolian Railroad

The Trans Mongolian Railroad ‘Wildlife Friendly’ Fence Corridor project, a component of the Gobi Steppe Ecosystem Connectivity Initiative is beginning to demonstrate its potential. The project has been piloting a wildlife-friendly design of the safety corridor fence at three locations (4 km total) for Mongolian Gazelle since December 2018, and in May 2019 corridor fencing was removed at two locations in Kulan<sup>1</sup> range (700m and 500m). The purpose of the pilot is to establish a proof of concept that wildlife will cross the railroad if movements are unimpeded and to address safety concerns associated with a corridor fence that is more porous for wildlife and livestock.

A preliminary review of images from automatic cameras placed along the fenceline have revealed that Mongolian Gazelle and Goitered Gazelles have found these locations and crossed. Recently, a single Kulan has been reported to have crossed to the eastern side, marking the first time since the 1950s Kulan have been able to access parts of their former range in the eastern steppe. The team is looking forward to its next field visit to check the camera images. Support for the initiative has come from Swiss Government via CAMI, the Senckenberg Institute and Oyu Tolgoi LLC. The project was initiated by B. Lhagvasuren and the effort dedicated to him in memoriam. (*Kirk Olson*)



Mongolian gazelles crossing the railroad © Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) / Oyu Tolgoi

<sup>1</sup> Asiatic Wild Ass

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## Mobility at Risk: Sustaining the Mongolian Steppe Ecosystem

Many drylands are currently undergoing social-ecological transformations that affect the mobility of both wildlife and pastoralists. The Mongolian Steppe Ecosystem (MSE) is an example where the mobility of wildlife and pastoralists is key to cope with environmental stochasticity, but it is undergoing social-ecological transformations that could be leading to decreased mobility of pastoralists and their livestock and ultimately to a sedentary and more urban lifestyle. With respect to wildlife in the MSE, human infrastructure development is fragmenting vast amounts of the Mongolian Gazelle's range into small parcels, causing the entire steppe ecosystem to potentially collapse to less diverse and less productive states.

“MORE STEP – Mobility at risk: Sustaining the Mongolian Steppe Ecosystem” is an interdisciplinary research project of Mongolian and German partners, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). The overarching goal of the MORE STEP project is to identify societal drivers that could lead to an ecological tipping point of the MSE. The project particularly emphasizes the importance of mobility of wildlife, pastoralists, and livestock in the context of societal change and seeks to contribute to the sustainable development of the MSE. To understand behavioural responses of wildlife to anthropogenic disturbances including linear features and the reduced mobility of pastoralists in the MSE, in September 2019

38 solar-assisted GPS collars were fitted on Mongolian Gazelles along the gradient from the more to less human dominated places of the MSE. The preliminary observation on the movement data showed that individuals in more disturbed areas in the west of the study region move shorter distances compared with those in less disturbed areas (Fig 1). (Nandintsetseg Dejid)

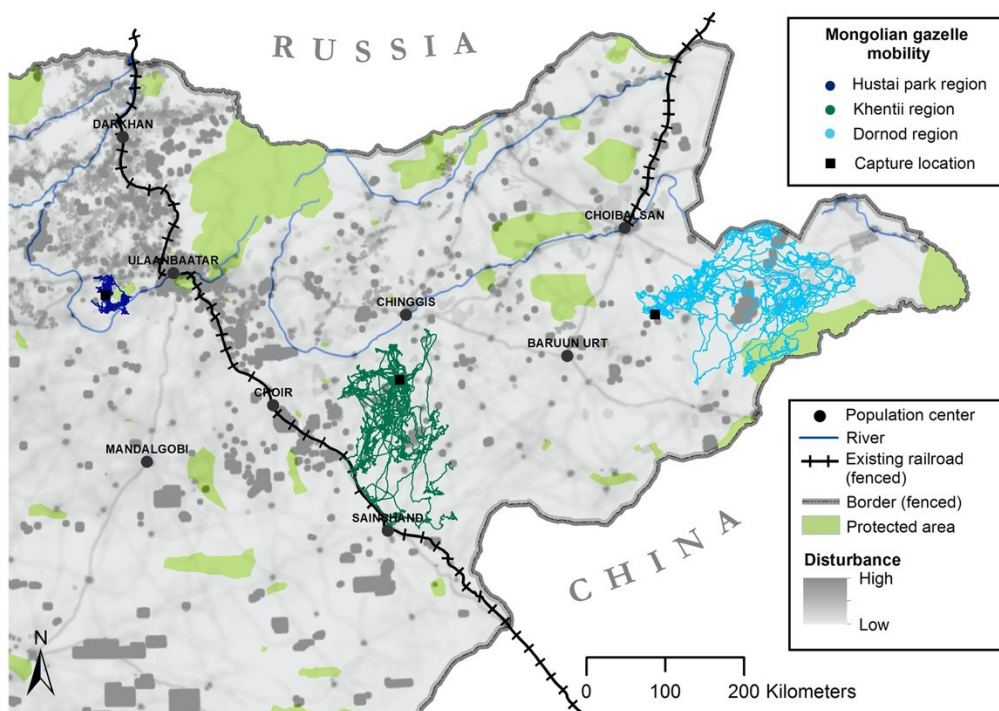


Fig 1: Movement paths of Mongolian Gazelles and human disturbances across the Mongolian Steppe Ecosystem. In total, we deployed GPS collars on 38 Mongolian gazelles at three different locations across the MSE. The most western capture location was in the Hustai national park region, which is close to the capital of Mongolia and surrounded by high disturbances. The second capture took place in the central Khentii region, which has moderate disturbances. The last capture location was in the Dornod region. In comparison, this region has fewer disturbances.

## CMS and BfN INA Continue Partnership to Support Implementation of CAMI

Following the adoption of the new CAMI Programme of Work 2021 - 2026 at the recent CMS COP13, BfN/INA is planning its work to support implementation of the programme of work and is currently discussing priorities for workshops relevant for CAMI on the Isle of Vilm with the CMS Secretariat. Funding has been provided by the BMU for the years 2020 - 2023. The Academy plans to focus its work with partners on topics that have been already addressed in the past, thereby building on existing work and following up on results - ranging from work on barriers to migration for CAMI species to developing targeted actions for individual species. BfN INA is focusing much of its capacity development work in the regions of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. It is particularly committed to support the implementation of multilateral biodiversity conventions. The CMS Secretariat and BfN INA have agreed on a joint work plan which they update regularly. (Andrea Strauss)

## The Klaus Toepfer Fellowship Programme in the CAMI Region

The Klaus Toepfer Fellowship Programme is a relevant career opportunity for conservation professionals in the CAMI region. The programme is extra-occupational and allows young professionals from sectors relevant to nature conservation and sustainable resource use to take part in four training modules on the Isle of Vilm, Germany. In each cycle of the programme, 20 fellows from State and non-State institutions from Central Asia, the Caucasus and Eastern Europe are invited to join the



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fellowship after going through an application process. The current course cycle has fellows, e.g. from ACBK in Kazakhstan, the State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan and GIZ in Turkmenistan. The aim is to create a professional network in the region in the long term. The CMS Secretariat is one of the strategic partners of the programme and has enabled previous participants to visit the Secretariat and learn about the Convention and its work. (*Andrea Strauss*)

The next application process will be announced at <https://www.bfn.de/en/int-academy/klaus-toepfer-fellowship-programme.html>

## Vanishing Treasures: An Integrated Approach Promoting Ecosystem-based Adaptation and Climate-smart Wildlife Conservation

Climate impacts are likely to force migratory wildlife to shift migration routes and movement patterns across the globe. Human-caused habitat fragmentation may inhibit these movements and may result in increased human-wildlife conflict. The Vanishing Treasures Programme by UNEP is tackling the climate and biodiversity crisis in three mountain regions home to iconic and endangered species: Bhutan (Royal Bengal Tiger), the Virungas (Mountain Gorilla) and Central Asia (Snow Leopard). These regions differ significantly in terms of their settings and issues, but the programme follows a similar approach across all three. It uses climate-smart conservation approaches for these flagship species to conserve the wider mountain ecosystems, in synergy with ecosystem-based adaptation to strengthen the resilience of the mountain communities living there. In Central Asia, Vanishing Treasures focuses on the CAMI-listed Snow Leopard in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (both CMS Parties and CAMI Range States). Central Asia and the other regions are pilot regions for the Vanishing Treasures programme and are intended not only to deliver positive change on the ground, but also serve as test cases and examples for other mountain regions. (*Maarten Hofman*)

For more information, please visit <https://vanishingtreasures.org/>.

## Species Updates

### Short Update on Kulan Activities in Central Asia 2018-2020

The last two year has seen a lot of activities centered around Kulan in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. By 2018, the entire Kulan range in Turkmenistan had been assessed with the sobering outcome that there are most likely no more than 50-55 animals remaining with circumstantial evidence suggesting illegal killing as the key threat (Kaczensky et al. 2019). However, some positive news comes from the southern Ustiurt in the area around Sarygamysh Lake. This population was originally reintroduced onto Turkmen territory and has spread into Uzbekistan and is now estimated at around 100-130 individuals (Marmazinskaya et al. 2016, N. Marmazinskaya unpubl. data). In April 2019, a single Kulan was observed on the Kazakh side of the Uzbek – Kazakh border fence; however, the border fence between Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan is a serious obstacle for ungulate movements (Pestov et al. 2018).



Kulan in Barsa Kelmes State Nature Reserve © Petra Kaczensky

Elsewhere in Kazakhstan, the reintroduced Kulan populations in Barsa Kelmes and Altyn Emel are doing well. A new reintroduction project was started in the Torgai Steppe in central Kazakhstan and 2017 saw the transport of nine Kulan from Altyn Emel and 2019 the transport of two Kulan from Barsa Kelmes during the pilot phase. Both groups of translocated Kulan have survived their first winters in the adaptation enclosure well but released Kulan have not successfully reproduced yet and two animals were lost to illegal killings. Lots of hands-on experience with Kulan was gained, awareness for the species conservation has grown, but more transports will be needed to make this initiative a success. Furthermore, with the loss of the original source population in Turkmenistan's Badkhyz reserve, the reintroduced populations in Kazakhstan's Altyn Emel National Park and Barsa Kelmes reserve are now of crucial importance for the survival of Central Asian Kulan. (*Petra Kaczensky*)



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The Reintroduction of Kulan into the central steppe of Kazakhstan: Field Report for 2018-2019 can be found here: <https://hdl.handle.net/11250/2650193> and the Field Report for 2017 is available here: <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/2494076>

The Rapid assessments of wildlife in Turkmenistan 2018 is available here: <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/2639265>

## Update on Bukhara Deer Activities since 2017



Bukhara deer in Ramit, Tajikistan © U. Akramov

the Zarafshan national nature park and 24 in pens for future releases. About 60 to 150 deer migrate between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. In Kazakhstan, the reintroduced population in the riparian forests of middle Syrdaria is growing, there are 75 deer in the free-ranging population in the Syrdaria-Turkistan nature park and its surroundings and 83 in captive facilities for future releases. The Bukhara Deer population in Kazakhstan has reached now 878 animals.

Within the framework of the Tiger reintroduction Programme in Ily-Balkhash region (a memorandum between WWF Russia and the Government of Kazakhstan was signed in 2017), WWF Russia has prepared enclosures for deer adaptation and in December 2018 the first five animals were translocated from the Syrdaria pens to Ile-Balkhash reserve. They were released into the wild in 2019 and two females were equipped with satellite collars. Females kept close to the pens for the first months but in the middle of winter together with one of the males moved 100 kilometres away from the enclosure. At the beginning of 2020, 13 additional females and one male from the Karatchingil were translocated for adaptation to the enclosures of the Ile-Balkhash reserve. (*Olga Pereladova*)



Bukhara Deer in Zerafshan, Uzbekistan © Natalya Marmazinskaya

More detailed information can be found at <https://www.cms.int/manage/sites/default/files/publication/BukDeer-Opereladova-CAMI%20-long.pdf>

## Border Fences in Mangistau Region, Kazakhstan, Threaten the Migration of Goitered Gazelle

The Goitered Gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*) inhabits the border areas of the Mangistau region with Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The border fence built in 2013, in accordance with the current Kazakh national legislation, made of barbed wire fixed to metal posts in eight horizontal rows, supplemented by diagonal rows of wire, impacts the migration of wild ungulates, such as the Goitered Gazelle, by blocking the migration all together or injuring and killing animals. At CMS COP13, CAMI Parties were urged to adopt conservation measures, such as removing barriers to migration, in the Transboundary Conservation Hotspots identified for CAMI, (UNEP/CMS/COP13/Inf.27), such as this area.

In September 2019, during a field expedition in this region conducted by the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan (ACBK) within the framework of the Central Asian Desert Initiative (CADI), for the first time a Goitered Gazelle was observed dashing through the wire fence, leaving traces of blood and hair on it, and apparently injuring itself.



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Another gazelle died after slicing its throat on barbed wire while running through the fence (figure 1). Finally, we found remains of one more gazelle: entangled in the barbed wire and eaten by predators (figure 2). During 2017-2018, border guards



Figure 1 © Mark Pestov



Figure 2 © Mark Pestov

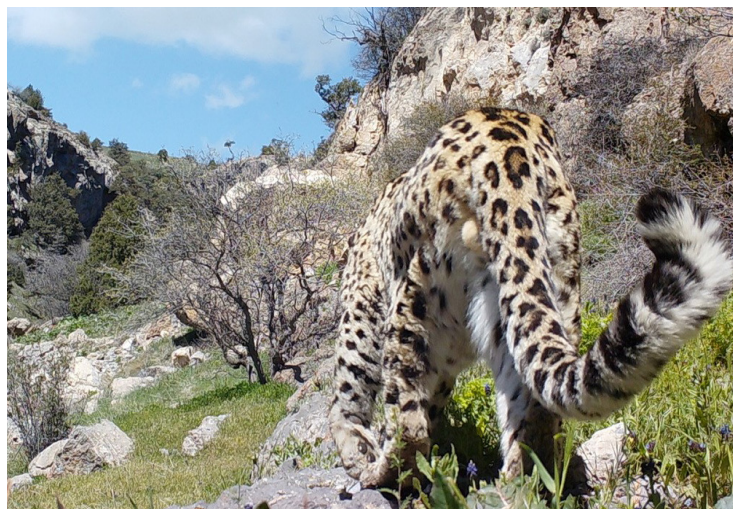
in the region reported to ACBK some cases of gazelles found dead along the fence.

In light of the events, ACBK initiated a series of meetings with senior officials from the Committee for Forestry and Wildlife of Kazakhstan and representatives of the Border Service of Kazakhstan, and proposed options for mitigating the impacts of the border fence on migratory ungulates, including through openings in the barrier. A precedent for creating such passages exists for Saiga in the Aktobe region in the border area between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. As of April 2020, consultations on this issue are ongoing. (Mark Pestov, Aktan Mubashov, Vladimir Terentyev and Tatjana Rosen)

For more information about the status of Goitered Gazelles in the region, please also see the update for Uzbekistan provided by Natalya Marmazinskaya available at [https://www.cms.int/manage/sites/default/files/publication/Gazella\\_CAMI\\_Newsletter\\_Uz.pdf](https://www.cms.int/manage/sites/default/files/publication/Gazella_CAMI_Newsletter_Uz.pdf)

## Connecting the Spots: Expert Process to Develop Recommendations for a Range-wide Strategy for the Conservation of the Persian Leopard

By adopting Resolution 11.24 on CAMI and its new Programme of Work, Parties agreed to the inclusion of the Persian Leopard (*Panthera pardus saxicolor*) in CAMI. One of the activities marked as of “high priority” in the Programme of Work is to support CAMI Range States in the development of a range-wide strategy for the conservation of the Persian Leopard (inclusive of other non-CAMI Range States, i.e. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iraq and Turkey).



Persian Leopard © Team Bars Turkmenistan

The IUCN Species Survival Commission Cat Specialist Group together with WWF-Germany and Caucasus Programme, the Michael Succow Foundation Central Asian Desert Initiative (CADI), the Center for Large Landscape Conservation and the CMS Secretariat had originally planned to hold an expert workshop in Tbilisi, Georgia in July 2020 to develop recommendations for a

range-wide strategy for the conservation of Persian Leopard. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the organizers have instead agreed to launch an expert process, during which teams from across the range will, through largely virtual means, work together to prepare status review papers as “input documents” to a range-wide strategy to be formalized during an expert workshop and adopted at a Range State meeting to be convened by CMS in 2021. (Tatjana Rosen)



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## Snow Leopard news from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan



Snow Leopard © Ilbirs Foundation, SAEPP

Katey Duffey, a US Snow Leopard conservationist, reports that in December of 2019, 19 camera traps were deployed for the first time in Altyn-Emel National Park by her team working alongside park staff, within the Matai Mountains. The camera traps are still in the field awaiting retrieval. She also highlighted the fact that although transboundary regions of the Snow Leopard's range are increasing protections and population surveys despite the physical and political difficulties, more support needs to be provided for areas that historically were used by Snow Leopards in the past, like Altyn-Emel, but no longer have consistent evidence of occurrence despite appropriate habitat and prey.

In the fall of 2019, the UN Environment Programme and partners, including the Ilbirs Foundation, the Snow Leopard Trust, GSLEP and ANCOT held the first national

consultations under the Vanishing Treasures Project, which in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan is focused on Snow Leopards. The goal of the project is to better understand the direct impacts of climate change on Snow Leopards and their prey species, as well as pastoral communities. This new knowledge will then be used to implement pilot solutions on the ground to lessen human-wildlife conflict, sustainably manage pasture resources and reduce communities' vulnerability to climate change. *(Tatjana Rosen)*

For more information see here: <https://vanishingtreasures.org/portfolio/snow-leopard/>

## Saiga Antelopes: Stepnoi Reserve Celebrates 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

On 5 April 2020, the Stepnoi Reserve had its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It lies in the Astrakhan oblast, Russia, and was created especially for Saiga conservation. The north-west pre-Caspian Saiga population spends a significant part of its time in the reserve. Due to the dedicated work of the reserve's rangers, poaching has been completely eliminated and the number of Saigas is growing - and of course the reserve became a safe haven not just for Saigas, but for many other species.

Because the employees of the Stepnoi Reserve are well aware of Saiga ecology and behaviour and the places Saigas prefer at different times of their life cycle, they have been able to zone the reserve into two parts: a breeding zone, where over the past few years calving and rutting have taken place and a sustainable nature management zone, within which economic activity is possible in accordance with certain regulations. Reserve employees not only protect wildlife but put a great deal of effort into bringing on a new generation of ecologically responsible people, who are aware of and dedicated to nature conservation. In this respect the reserve has a close friendship with "Vozrozhdenije" (Rebirth), their neighbouring children's "Steppe Wildlife Club". *(Alexandra Bukhareva)*

Please see also the most recent edition of the Saiga News Issue 25 for a full update on saigas: <https://www.saigaresourcecentre.com/content/saiga-news-magazine>

## Saiga Antelopes Caught on Camera Traps in Uzbekistan

Last winter, a herd of 35 Saiga Antelopes was caught for the first time by camera traps in Uzbekistan. Since last year with the technical support of Central Asian Desert Initiative (CADI) and implemented by Gritsina, Marmasinskaya, Mardonova and Mitropolsky, staff of the landscape (complex) Zakaznik Saigachiy protected area (IUCN Ib) could use camera traps for biodiversity monitoring. CADI cooperates with the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Ecology and Environmental Protection in order to support Saigachiy with biodiversity monitoring.

CADI is jointly implemented by the Michael Succow Foundation, the University of Greifswald and the Food and Agriculture Organization Representation in Uzbekistan. The project is part of the International Climate Initiative (IKI). The Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) supports this initiative on the basis of a decision adopted by the German Bundestag. *(Jens Wunderlich)*

# CENTRAL ASIAN MAMMALS INITIATIVE

More information about the project can be found on: <https://cadi.uni-greifswald.de>



Saiga Antelopes in Saigachy, Uzbekistan © Goskomekologii, Uzbekistan



## A Pilot Study of the Wild Camel Population Near the Mongolian and Chinese Border in Mongolia

The critically endangered Wild Camel (*Camelus ferus*<sup>2</sup>) moves over long distances across the Central Asian desert, which makes the species very vulnerable to disturbance. Reduced to fewer than 1,000 individuals, the Wild Camel is known to occur in only a small number of herds in Mongolia and China. The fenced and heavily patrolled Mongolia-China border, which runs along the length of the Great Gobi A Strictly Protected Area (GGASPA) poses a physical barrier to camels, bisecting their historic range and cutting off their migration routes. It is therefore essential to determine this barrier's impact and verify whether camels are still able to across the border.

With funding from the Swiss Government, CMS supported a project designed and implemented by the Wild Camel Protection Foundation Mongolia to take the first steps in developing monitoring of Wild Camels in the Gobi across border in Mongolia and China as well as to enhance transboundary collaboration in this area, benefitting also the conservation of other endangered Gobi species, such as the Gobi Bear, Snow Leopard and Argali. In 2019, 85 automatic cameras were installed at 1-4 km intervals along both the fenced and unfenced areas of the border between Mongolia and China of the GGASPA. On the Chinese side, the border is almost fully fenced. There is no physical border fence on the Mongolian side. Thirty cameras were installed in the unfenced area. The project also included training on the use of camera traps for the Park rangers and staff from the border agency and check points around the Park. The cameras recorded 18 Goitered Gazelles, 5-6 different bird species, 3 Red Fox and a few bat species during April and November 2019. Cameras will be checked again in early May and hopefully Wild Camels will be detected then. (*Adiya Yadamsuren*)



Wild Camel © Wild Camel Protection Foundation Mongolia

<sup>2</sup> The Wild Camel is listed as *Camelus bactrianus* on CMS Appendix I, in line with Wilson and Reeder 2005, is the standard taxonomic reference for terrestrial mammals under CMS.



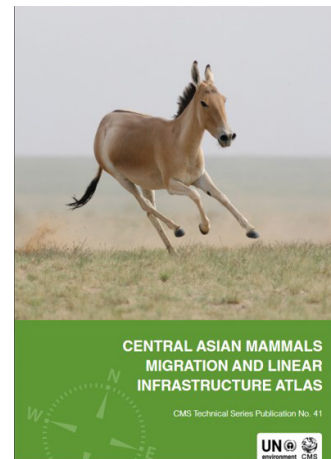
# CENTRAL ASIAN MAMMALS INITIATIVE

## Publications

### CAMI Migration and Linear Infrastructure Atlas

More than two years after the inception workshop, the Central Asian Mammals Migration and Linear Infrastructure Atlas was finalized and published. The atlas includes distribution maps of 10 CAMI species and combines them with information about linear infrastructure such as fences, railways, roads or pipelines, highlighting areas of conflict and barriers to the free movement of large wide-ranging animals. The project was funded by the Governments of Germany and Switzerland and implemented by the Wildlife Conservation Society with major contributions from CAMI Species Focal Points and experts from the region.

The atlas is available here [https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/publication/cami\\_atlas\\_3\\_complete.pdf](https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/publication/cami_atlas_3_complete.pdf)



### Transboundary Conservation Hotspots for the CAMI Region

The report Mapping Transboundary Conservation Hotspots for the Central Asian Mammals Initiative was developed with funding from the Government of Switzerland to identify and analyze transboundary conservation hotspots of major importance to CAMI species in the region and develop recommendations for the species' conservation, building on existing projects and information available within CAMI. This report was discussed at the CAMI Range State meeting and constitutes a final draft pending the expansion of the current geographical and species scope.

The report is available here [https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/cms\\_cop13\\_inf.27\\_cami-tb-hotspots\\_e.pdf](https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/cms_cop13_inf.27_cami-tb-hotspots_e.pdf)

## Upcoming Events

### 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Signatories to the Saiga Antelope MOU

The 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Signatories to the Saiga MOU was scheduled to take place in September 2020, at the generous invitation of the Russian Federation. However, due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, and the related uncertainties regarding international travel, the meeting will be postponed to 2021. Further information will be made available soon.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Signatories to the Bukhara Deer MOU

During the CAMI Range State meeting, Range States of the Bukhara Deer confirmed their interest and commitment to continue and revitalize their cooperation under the MOU. In the framework of the cooperation with BfN/INA, the Secretariat has scheduled the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Signatories to the MOU to take place in October 2020 on the Isle of Vilm, Germany. Depending on how the current pandemic evolves, the meeting may be held virtually. Further information will be made available soon.

## In Memoriam

### In Memoriam of a Man Who Connected Mongolian Mammal Conservation to the World

It was with deepest sadness that I had to announce the passing of Dr. Lkhagvasuren Badamjav on 1 August 2019, a passionate conservationist, loving husband and an amazing father figure. He dedicated his heart and soul to the conservation of Mongolian animals and nature. His research, conservation initiatives and work were well known not only in the country but also internationally. My father was known as Zeer (which means Mongolian Gazelle) Lkhagva among his friends and colleagues. This simply indicates his genuine love and passion towards the conservation of this species and other animals. Between 1988 and 1990 he worked as the scientific advisor in a project to reintroduce Mongolian Gazelle from Dornod province to Khomiin Tal in Zavkhan province. As a result of this project Mongolian Gazelle successfully made a come-back in south-western Mongolia.

As his son who followed him since I was six years old, I never saw him relaxed about the situation and the future of Mongolian species. He loved and cared for the animals as if they were his family. This dedication made his job part of his life. I used to see sparks in his eyes when he talks about the species and ideas of how to protect them.

# CENTRAL ASIAN MAMMALS INITIATIVE



Dr. Lkhagvasuren Badamjav © Lkhagvasuren

My father's contribution to the conservation of mammal species is invaluable. He had about 90 scientific papers published in national and international journals and gave more than 90 presentations and lectures. Another example of his greatness is when I was in high school while I was visiting the National History Museum in Ulaanbaatar, I saw his name and research mentioned all over the Mammals' hall. That was the moment I realized how massively Mongolian conservation was impacted by my father. I could not imagine all those animal lives saved by him.

Moreover, he was well known among Mongolians as an astounding sportsman. In 1992 he and his four friends left the country with an ambitious goal to go around the world on bicycles. After an amazing journey of almost two years they came back to their country and became heroes called "5 fingers of a hand" who advertised Mongolia to the world.

One of his legacies that we are still seeing today is the project to partially remove and redesign the barbed-wire fences along the Ulaanbaatar-Beijing railroad, which became a huge barrier for species such as Mongolian Gazelle and Goitered Gazelle, and became a full ecological barrier for Asiatic Wild Ass (or Khulan in Mongolian). The Khulan population on the east side of this railway was completely wiped out due to the fences. He worked for almost 20 years to create passages for the animals. I was standing right next to him when the fences were being removed in May 2019. That was the last time that I saw him feeling accomplished. In March 2020 - not even a year after the pilot project initiated - a Khulan crossed the railway through the opening and came to the east side of the railway. Today hundreds of Mongolian and Goitered Gazelles are crossing that railway without being harmed. This has proven to be a great choice of locations to remove the fences because my father was an intuitive and well-experienced scientist.

He was a hero and still is among the Mongolian conservationists and to me. As a fellow conservationist I need him now more than ever. (*Myagmarjav Lkhagvasuren*)

## The Central Asian Mammals Initiative

The Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI) and its associated Programme of Work were adopted by CMS Parties at the 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP11) in Quito, Ecuador in 2014. With an initiative to strengthen the conservation of Central Asian migratory mammals, CMS aims to provide a framework to coordinate conservation activities in the region and to coherently address major threats to migratory species.

## CMS at a Glance

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), also known as the Bonn Convention, is a treaty dedicated to the conservation of wildlife beyond national borders worldwide. It has 130 Member States.

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