PROJECTS REPORTING TEMPLATE FOR SAIGA-RELATED ACTIVITIES

Project: Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative (with subprojects)

Country:				
	China	☐	Turkmenistan	☐
	Kazakhstan	☒	Uzbekistan	☐
	Mongolia	☐	International	☐
	Russia	☐		

Organisation / Contact details: Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan, Beybitshilik st. 18, off. 406, 010000 Astana
Together with Frankfurt Zoological Society, Bernhard-Grzimek-Allee 1, 60316 Frankfurt
(as FFI is partner, too, their report is likely to be similar to this one)

Duration of project: from 2006 to present, here reported **since 2015**

Location(s) of main activity: Ural, Ustyurt and Betpak-Dala saiga population ranges in Kazakhstan

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	☒
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:

* 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*.

As the ADCI is huge, the overview in this report might not be 100% complete.

Anti-poaching: We created in 2017 an own ranger team for the Ustyurt population. One of their tasks is the support of anti-poaching activities.
We provide saiga distribution maps to the wildlife ranger service Okhotzooprom, so that their rangers can be distributed more efficiently. Equipment and training was also provided for rangers.
ACBK runs an own hunting area, now called Ecological Park "Alty Sai", funded through the ADCI, where gamekeepers patrol the area to prevent poaching.
Currently, SMART is being introduced in Kazakhstan, which will improve patrolling for saiga protection.

Population monitoring: We developed a new aerial survey method, which we applied for the annual aerial saiga survey in Kazakhstan (2015, 2016, 2018). Furthermore, we have an observation database, which is fed by all field personell. We have special expeditions to saiga calving, usually in the Ural and Betpak-Dala population, since 2018 also in the Ustyurt population. We monitor the saiga rut in Betpak-Dala.
We are piloting the use of drones.

Ecological research: We have a telemetry programme running for all three populations since years. Further investigations are made mainly during the calving period. We are also engaged in disease research.

Education and awareness: We set up a network of wildlife or saiga clubs at schools, which are supported by us and conduct regular events around saiga. Furthermore, eco camps have been organised. The Ustyurt ranger team meets with local people. We are working for a change in school education.

Alternative livelihoods: We support the development of ecotourism, which brings benefits for local people.

Range mapping: Through aerial survey and telemetry, see above.

Habitat research and conservation: We have a database with vegetation data, which is still being completed. The habitat at the calving areas is investigated every year. The telemetry data is an important component of this.
We work a lot for the prevention of negative effects of infrastructure developments as well as industrial use, natural resource extraction, and space rockets on saiga antelope.

Protected area management: We provide trainings for protected areas, had an international rangers meeting, and we support protected areas with equipment. Furthermore, we provided advice to improve management plans. The Irgiz-Turgai reserve was extended by more than 400,000 ha.

Training & capacity-building: We provide trainings not only for protected areas, but also for wildlife rangers of Okhotzooprom and other state agencies, as well as hunting areas. Further training is provided for customs officers, border guards, and sniffer dogs. Currently, SMART is being introduced.

Law enforcement: Law enforcement is strengthened with sniffer dogs, training for enforcement officers, especially on CITES procedures. Several meeting also on higher level have been arranged to discuss issues around law-enforcement and identify solutions.

Trade issues: Besides trainings for enforcement officers and sniffer dogs, we try to improve the prosecution of wildlife traders and conduct research into trading schemes and routes inside Kazakshtan

an beyond.

Planned Activities:

This is from the plan for 2017-2020.

Anti-poaching:
1. Continue to protect saiga at the territory of the Ecological Part "Alty Sai"
2. Maintain the ranger group at the Ustyurt.
3. Maintain saiga telemetry and provision of distribution information to rangers.
4. Improve patrolling with SMART.
5. Provide further equipment and training for rangers.
6. Develop improved anti-poaching strategy for Kazakhstan including coordination centre.
7. Develop ranger training programme.
8. Support efforts to improve the legal status of wildlife rangers.
9. Pilot drones for patrolling.
10. Support development of test system for saiga products.

Population monitoring:
1. Continue to be involved in the saiga aerial survey.
2. Develop a future-proof survey methodology, using potentially drones, photography or videography.
3. Continue monitoring of calving, including health monitoring with veterinarian support.

Ecological research:
1. Continue telemetry of saiga antelopes of all three populations.
2. Continue monitoring of calving, including health monitoring with veterinarian support.
3. Continue support of disease research.

Education and awareness:
1. Extend and maintain a network of saiga clubs at schools across the area of all three populations.
2. Produce newsletter and website.
3. Work with local people at the Ustyurt range through the Ustyurt ranger team.
4. Raise funds for more educational work.
5. Change school curriculum to include ecological subjects.
6. Conduct mass media campaign on illegal trade in saiga horn and conduct public destruction of confiscated horns.

Alternative livelihoods:
1. Create benefits for local people from tourism.

Range mapping:
1. Continue saiga telemetry programme.
2. Keep up database for wildlife ground observations.

Habitat research and conservation:
1. Continue research in valuable saiga habitats to identifiy key areas for protection.
2. Use telemetry data to identify conflicts between saiga migration and existing and planned linear infrastructure.
3. Support the application of mitigation hierarchy in the planning process of new objects.
4. Ensure mitigation of negative impacts of linear infrastructure on saiga and other wildlife.
5. Mitigate negative impacts of industrial use and natural resource extraction on saiga.

Protected area management:
1. Extend protected areas network (also for Ural and Ustyurt).
2. Improve management plans of existing protected areas.
3. Support implementation of management plans.

Training & capacity-building:
1. Conduct trainings for protected area rangers and Okhotzooprom rangers (as needed).
2. Introduce SMART to improve patrolling performance.
3. Conduct trainings in CITES procedures for enforcement officers.

Law enforcement:
1. Conduct trainings in CITES procedures for enforcement officers.
2. Conduct meetings of high-level decision-makers and judges to improve law-enforcement.
3. Train sniffer dogs for wildlife products.

Trade issues:
1. Expand programme of sniffer dogs for wildlife scents.
2. Conduct information campaign on illegal saiga horn trade.
3. Conduct research in trade routes.
4. Fight advertisements from horn traders.

Achievements to date:

Anti-poaching: We created in 2017 an own ranger team for the Ustyurt population, which patrols the Ustyurt area every month. One of their tasks is the support of anti-poaching activities. They collect valuable data on wildlife distribution and poaching activities and keep contact with local people.
We provide saiga distribution maps to the wildlife ranger service Okhotzooprom, so that their rangers can be distributed more efficiently.
Equipment was also provided for rangers. Trainings on how to build a strong case against poachers were conducted for rangers of various agencies in order to strengthen prosecution of rangers. An international ranger meeting was conducted.
ACBK runs an own hunting area, now called Ecological Park "Alty Sai", funded through the ADCI, where gamekeepers patrol the area to prevent poaching. They also work with local people and conducted an eco-camp for local children.
Currently, SMART is being introduced in Kazakhstan, which will improve patrolling for saiga protection.

Population monitoring: We developed a new aerial survey method, which we applied for the annual aerial saiga census in Kazakhstan in 2015, 2016, and 2018. The results from 2018 are the following: Ural – 135,000, Ustyurt – 3,700, Betpak-Dala – 76,400. Beyond that, we conduct regular ground monitoring. An online database stores all saiga observations and is fed by all field personnel.
In May each year, we have special expeditions to saiga calving, usually in the Ural and Betpak-Dala population, since 2018 also in the Ustyurt population. The goal is to understand the success of reproduction and check for any mortalities. Veterinarians usually accompany us to take samples for lab analyses. Saiga calves are tagged with eartags to get information about mortality.
In December, we monitor the saiga rut in the Betpak-Dala population. We are especially interested to get an idea of the sex ratio.
We are piloting the use of drones, both copter type and fixed-wing.

Ecological research: Since 2009 we have a telemetry programme, now running for all three populations. After a break, we also have since 2016 again collared animals in the Ustyurt population. The received data is especially important to evaluate the impact of infrastructure on saiga movements,

but is also used to identify key habitats for saiga.
During calving we conduct expeditions to all three populations to investigate the reproduction, monitor calving success, and to support veterinary work, which is mainly sampling and post-mortem examinations.
An information campaign on illegal trade in saiga horn is still ongoing (see below under Trade).

Education and awareness: A network of wildlife or saiga clubs at schools is running already for years and is still being extended, now numbering 11. These clubs are supported by us and conduct regular events around saiga (e.g., saiga day). Furthermore, eco camps have been organised for some children. Extra activities are conducted depending on available additional funding. The Ustyurt ranger team conducts regularly meetings with local people and holds lessons at schools. covering all villages at the Ustyurt.
We have completed an analysis of school books and educational plans for the content of ecological subjects and prepared recommendations for the Ministry of Agriculture.

Alternative livelihoods: ACBK offers trips for tourists to the steppe, also to see saiga. These groups visit local people and stay at their place, bringing extra income to these families. Furthermore, people are hired to support these tours to the steppe. This mainly takes place in the Betpak-Dala range.

Range mapping: Both the annual aerial surveys of saiga in spring as well as data from saiga telemetry allow reliable conclusions on the range of saiga. Additionally, ground monitoring data is used throughout the year, which provides altogether a clear picture of the saiga range in Kazakhstan.

Habitat research and conservation: We have a database with vegetation data, which is still being completed. The habitat at the calving areas is investigated every year. The telemetry data is an important component to identify key habitats for saiga, which allows to design targeted conservation actions.
We work a lot for the prevention of negative effects of infrastructure developments as well as industrial use. We are contacted when infrastructure objects are planned through or near saiga area, in order to provide our view on the potential impact for them. Our suggestions are usually taken into account and influence the planning process (for instance, rebuild of the railway from Balkhash to Aktobe). We have furthermore established that the railway Shalkar-Beyneu is an impermeable barrier for saiga, keeping them towards the north of it.
We have raised awareness about the problem of infrastructure and wild migrating mammals not only in Kazakhstan, but also beyond. The guidelines from CMS were essential in achieving this.
We help to minimise the negative impact from natural resource extraction and biodiversity. Furthermore, we have been involved in the assessment of a part of saiga habitat in Betpak-Dala as drop site for space rockets parts.
We have identified a problem with a fence at the border between Russia and Kazakhstan in the Ural population range (about 95 km long) and are supporting efforts to solve this, in order to prevent the animals from physical harm particularly around the time of calving in May, when they are more sensitive to stress and disease anyway.

Protected area management: At the end of 2016, Irgiz-Turgaiskiy state nature reservat was extended by another 409,962 hectares, giving a total area of 1,173,511 ha. This is a significant improvement of the Betpak-Dala saiga popultion, not making the connection with ecological Corridor "Yrgyz-Torgay-Zhylanshyk" and State nature reservat "Altyn Dala" complete. The ADCI has supported the preparation of this extension. The protected areas have also been supported through equipment and trainings. Furthermore, we provided advice to improve management plans.
In 2016 we had an international rangers meeting in Uralsk involving rangers from Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, in which also protected area rangers participated.
Currently, SMART is being introduced in some pilot protected areas in Kazakhstan.

Training & capacity-building: There are overlaps with other fields. We provide trainings not only for protected areas, but also for wildlife rangers of Okhotzooprom and other state agencies, as well as hunting areas. Worth mentioning is an international ranger meeting in 2016. Further training is provided for customs officers and border guards in CITES rules and procedures. Guidance material has been produced to be distributed among law enforcement officers. Sniffer dogs have been trained for wildlife products.
Currently, SMART is being introduced.
Generally, we provide trainings in almost all fields of work, as this is crucial to have sustainable impacts.

Law enforcement: Sniffer dogs have been (repeatedly) trained for scents of wildlife products, in the meanwhile not only searching for saiga horn, but also other species. Currently, 11 dogs are deployed mostly at the borders of Kazakhstan. Enforcement officers from customs and border service have been trained, especially on CITES procedures and handling of wildlife products. Several meetings (partly on higher level, also a meeting of judges) have been arranged to discuss issues around law-enforcement, identify gaps and problems and solutions for them.

Trade issues: So far, 11 sniffer dogs have been trained for scents of wildlife products, among them saiga horn. They are used at the border to Kazakhstan.
A high level meeting to discuss the problem of illegal trade has been conducted in order to improve law enforcement.
In 2018, an analysis of illegal trade in Kazakhstan was conducted with identification of main trade routes and trading systems.
An information campaign on illegal trade in saiga horn as been initiated, mostly through social media, but also through local actions in Kazakhstan. The campaign is conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of inner affairs (police) and the wildlife authorities. People in Kazakhstan were first asked to collect data from advertisement of saiga horn traders, which were handed over to police. As a second step, online advertisements were deleted through a cooperation with online marketplaces. Short clips about the problems around saiga conservation were aired for free in two national TV channels.
In autumn 2018, confiscated saiga horn were burned publically for the first time.

Reports / Publications / Information material: Annual reports, scientific publications, education material

Collaborators: ADCI is: ACBK, Committee of Forestry and Wildlife of the Ministry of Agriculture of Kazakhstan, Fauna & Flora International, Frankfurt Zoological Society, Royal Society of Protected Birds
Collaborations exist with Saiga Conservation Alliance

Budget available: as the ADCI is complex, it is difficult to say the amount for saiga. Roughly 180000 EUR p.y.

Current sponsors: Fauna & Flora International, Frankfurt Zoological Society, Royal Society of Protected Birds, CMS, Caspian Pipeline Consortium, USFWS

Past sponsors: (since 2006, excluding current ones, for saiga work)
BMU
BMZ / GIZ
UNDP / GEF
Darwin Initiative
Gregor Louisoder Umweltstiftung
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SCA ERG Disney FAO RIPBS CIM
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Other: