

## PROJECTS REPORTING TEMPLATE FOR SAIGA-RELATED ACTIVITIES

<b>Project: Saiga conservation in Kazakhstan</b>				
<b>Country:</b>	China	<input type="checkbox"/>	Turkmenistan	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Kazakhstan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Uzbekistan	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Mongolia	<input type="checkbox"/>	International	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Russia	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Organisation / Contact details:</b> Fauna & Flora International / <a href="mailto:paul.hotham@fauna-flora.org">paul.hotham@fauna-flora.org</a> / <a href="mailto:david.gill@fauna-flora.org">david.gill@fauna-flora.org</a>				
<b>Duration of project:</b> from 2006 to present, report here from 2015 to 2019				
<b>Location(s) of main activity:</b>				
All of FFI's work is focussed on saiga sub-populations in Kazakhstan and is framed by the CMS Saiga MOU MTIWP and Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative joint workplan:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing field conservation activities (including anti-poaching patrols, population monitoring, ecological research, range mapping and education and awareness-raising) are focussed on the <u>Ustyurt region</u> in southern Kazakhstan.</li> <li>• Our work focussed on Illegal Wildlife Trade (including roll-out of SMART, research on IWT hotspots and routes and capacity building for environmental police and the judiciary) has a <u>national level</u> focus and has potential to benefit all three sub-populations occurring in Kazakhstan (Ustyurt, Betpak-Dala and Ural)</li> <li>• We also provided emergency funding to support swift investigation of the causes and impacts of the mass die-off on the saiga population in <u>Betpak-Dala</u> in 2015.</li> </ul>				
<b>Sub-species:</b>	<i>Saiga tatarica tatarica</i> *	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	<i>Saiga tatarica mongolica</i> *	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Areas of work:</b>				
Anti-poaching	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Habitat restoration	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Population monitoring	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Protected area management	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ecological research	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Training & capacity-building	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Education and awareness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Law enforcement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Alternative livelihoods	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trade issues	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Socio-economic research	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Captive breeding	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Range mapping	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Reintroduction/release	<input type="checkbox"/>	

\* 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*.

Habitat research



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

**Project Summary:** FFI's current conservation work on saiga takes place in Kazakhstan. Our work is implemented in partnership with the national NGO, Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK), and forms part of the Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative (a national level partnership between the Committee of Forestry and Wildlife of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan, ACBK, FFI, Frankfurt Zoological Society and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds).

Over the period of the current MTWIP, FFI has supported three inter-related sets of activity:

(1) We have focussed our field conservation activities in the Ustyurt region, where the most threatened of the saiga sub-populations – the Ustyurt saiga – occurs. We aim to significantly increase the population size of saiga in the Ustyurt region through (a) increasing the effectiveness of anti-poaching, (b) ensuring that conservation management is guided and informed by ecological research and range mapping and (c) engagement of communities in saiga conservation (including education and awareness). Specific activities carried out include:

- Five rangers recruited in May 2017 with monthly patrols carried out since then throughout the Ustyurt region. This complements patrols carried out by the Okhotzooptom ranger team.
- Fitted 12 saiga with radio collars to track movements in October 2017.
- Completion of more than 100 meetings between rangers and local people from 15 villages in the Ustyurt region.
- 30 education events held at local schools, attended by 800 school children in 2017.
- Five eco-clubs set up by the project participated in annual saiga days in 2016 and 2017.

(2) Recognising that poaching is a major threat to the Ustyurt sub-population and to the other two saiga sub-populations in Kazakhstan, we are also strengthening capacity and collaboration to combat trafficking of saiga horn. We aim to reduce poaching of saiga for trade in horn by (a) developing mechanisms for strategic, intelligence-led patrolling and dog deployment to enhance law enforcement; (b) training and capacity building of and collaboration between nature protection, law enforcement and intelligence agencies and the judiciary to successfully prosecute wildlife trafficking and (c) increasing cross-border cooperation to address illegal wildlife trade issues. Specific activities carried out include:

- Sourcing of eight new sniffer dog teams (adding to three existing dog teams) in August 2017. The now 11 dog teams have been trained to detect saiga horn derivatives, as well as cash, opiates, saker falcon and steppe tortoise scents, and are being actively deployed with customs and border guard service.
- Collection of information on illegal wildlife trade hotspots and the routes used to transport products through Kazakhstan and across the border. The information was compiled into a report by zoologist K. N. Plakhov, a UN expert on Kazakhstan's biological diversity and IUCN expert on protected areas in Central Asia.
- Training of 30 officials from customs, border guards, police and rangers on CITES regulations, including practical implementation of the convention, and identification of saiga horns and other threatened wild species.
- Meeting held with 26 senior Kazakhstan government officials representing eight different government agencies in July 2017 to discuss illegal wildlife trade.
- Three exchange visits between Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Mongolian sniffer dog practitioners

(3) We have also provided emergency funding to support the investigation of the causes and impacts of the Saiga mass die-off in the Betpak Dala region in 2015. Specific activities carried out include:

- Extensive fieldwork was conducted during the mass die-off in order to collect as much data as possible. Samples of tissue and blood were sent outside the country and analysed in international reference laboratories for any pathogens.
- ACBK and the Royal Veterinary College, supported by FFI, produced a range of scientific reports and data that was used to inform responses to future mass die-off events.
- An expedition involving key specialists investigated saiga habitat along the migratory routes and at die-off sites. This helped to identify factors influencing saiga health and describe vegetation of a reference site in Western Kazakhstan compared to die-off sites in Betpak-Dala.

#### **Planned Activities:**

Planned activities for 2019-20 include:

- Continued patrolling, saiga population monitoring and ecological data collection on the Ustyurt Plateau. Patrolling and poaching detection will be further refined to improve detection using drones, camera traps, gun-shot detection technology and SMART patrolling methods.
- Strengthening of local informant networks in the Ustyurt region to support local enforcement.
- Following a successful piloting of a government led SMART programme, we will, with the support of WCS Russia, support roll-out of SMART in Kazakhstan, helping to design tailor-made patrol monitoring systems.
- We will continue to build the capacity of border officers in Kazakhstan to detect and report wildlife products. This will include training and the deployment of an additional 10 sniffer dogs along trade routes and hotspots and improvements to wildlife crime investigation and evidence management protocols.
- We will continue to support the strengthening of collaboration between government agencies (nature protection, intelligence and the judiciary), supporting more effective management and sharing of data and helping to achieve a greater rate of prosecution.
- We will engage with communities and stakeholders on the Ustyurt and recommence the process of addressing community needs including the development of sustainable livelihoods.

#### **Achievements to date:**

Population increase: As recorded by aerial surveys, the Ustyurt sub-population has increased from a record low of **1,270** animals in 2015 to **2,600** in 2017 to **3,700** in 2018.

Patrol effectiveness: Since establishment in May 2017, the new patrol team has covered around 100,000km<sup>2</sup> and are helping to deter and detect poaching incidents. In 2018, the Ustyurt ranger team detected 8 cases of illegal hunting of saiga, with all cases reported to staff from the Okhotzooptom and the regional branch of the Committee of Forestry and Wildlife. We aim to refine patrol methods in 2019 through roll-out of SMART and use of innovative detection technologies.

Management better informed: Ecological data from saiga collaring has allowed the rangers to find for the first time in many years a calving area of the Ustyurt saiga population. These data are helping to inform patrol routes.

Protocols in place to respond to future mass dieback events: The disease protocol produced is used by rangers for dead saiga and a standard operating procedure has been finished. We aim to have this procedure adopted by the government and put into operation to manage any future die off events.

**Reports / Publications / Information material:**

Plakhov, K.,N., 2018. Hotspots and routes of the illegal trade of saiga horns. Report. Fauna and Flora International.

**Collaborators/partners:**

- Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK),
- Committee of Forestry and Wildlife of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative partner)
- Frankfurt Zoological Society (Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative partner)
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative partner)
- Okhotzoprom
- Government officials from the Prosecutor Office, Customs Office, the Territorial Inspectorate of Forestry and Hunting, the Police, and Border Guard Office;
- Kazakhstan Regional Dog Training Centre, Almaty
- WCS Russia (in relation to SMART implementation in Kazakhstan)

**Budget available:** Budget changes each year but currently averages ~ \$175,000 per year

**Current sponsors:** FFI's Species Fund and the US Fish and Wildlife Service

**Past sponsors:** Disney Conservation Fund and the Frankenberg Foundation

**Information contributed by:** David Gill and Paul Hotham

**Date report submitted:** 29/03/2019

**Other:**