

## **REPORT ON Saiga MoU COORDINATION ACTIVITIES BY THE Saiga CONSERVATION ALLIANCE, 2021-2024.**

### **Summary:**

This document outlines the activities of the Saiga Conservation Alliance (SCA) as one of the two organisations with Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK) that have provided technical coordination of the Saiga Memorandum Of Understanding (Saiga MoU) in agreement with the decision of the Fourth Meeting of Signatories to Saiga Memorandum Of Understanding (MOS4).

These include both activities paid for by the United Nation Environment Programme (UNEP) Convention On Migratory Species (CMS) Secretariat, United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and other activities that the NGO has undertaken to support the communication and coordination among Saiga experts and Range States.

All activities correlate with Medium-Term International Work Programme For The Saiga Antelope 2021-2025 (MTIWP 21-25) and Technical Coordination Of The SaigaSaiga MoU.

### **1. Aim of the coordination agreement**

At their fourth Meeting in September 2021, Signatories of the Saiga MoU agreed that the technical coordination of the Saiga MoU would continue to be provided by two NGOs, the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan (ACBK) and the Saiga Conservation Alliance (SCA). Both organisations are working together to facilitate communication and information exchange between the Saiga Range States in order to support implementation of the Saiga MoU.

The objective of the agreement is to draw upon the complementary experience, expertise and knowledge on best practice of both organisations.

ACBK and SCA provide technical and logistical support for the coordination of the implementation of the Saiga MoU and its MTIWP for 2021-2025 through the following activities:

- A. Support to the CMS in technical and logistical matters, such as the preparation for Saiga MoU Signatory meetings and the organisation of technical meetings and acting as focal points for the Central Asian Mammals Initiative.
- B. Development of mechanisms for broader communication between all interested parties, so that the results of Saiga projects, and progress being made under the Saiga MoU is communicated to all, and a positive atmosphere of collaboration and work towards a joint goal can be fostered.
- C. A proactive approach to driving Saiga conservation forward internationally, so that the Saiga MoU is not just being passively supported, but coordination has a positive effect in increasing Saiga conservation activities.
- D. Provision of technical advisory services for the Saiga MoU, including addressing daily Saiga MoU coordination questions from Saiga MoU stakeholders and other interested individuals.
- E. Since the last CMS Saiga MoU meeting many of the activities carried out by the SCA have particular relevance to the priority actions on the MTIWP 21-25, we outline some of these activities in the following report.

### **2. Activities carried out under the coordination agreement**

#### **2.1 Enhancing stakeholder engagement**

**The Saiga Resource Centre (MTIWP 21-25 points 1.3, 1.6, 1.8, 5.7, 6.5, 8.9.)**

Since 2015 SCA continues to host and manage The Saiga Resource Centre website. The site is fully accessible in 4 languages, Chinese, English, Kazakh and Russian.

We have updated and reviewed all areas of the website, and are constantly uploading new resources, such as images, scientific publications, reports and educational materials for both students and teachers.

On the SRC website the following resources can be accessed (listed in English only for ease, but replicated in all languages on mirrored sites):

1. Peer reviewed scientific papers, Thesis, Reports and other: This section is fully searchable by Author, country, Saiga population or subject matter.

A. Peer Reviewed papers: We now have 222 Saiga-related scientific publications listed on the website, each with an abstract and either available to download or as a link to the publication.  
<https://www.Saigaresourcecentre.com/content/literature>

B. Reports (and other): We now have 30 Saiga-related reports listed on the website, each with an abstract and either available to download or as a link to the publication.  
<https://www.Saigaresourcecentre.com/index.php/content/reports-and-other>

C. Thesis archive: We now have 29 PhD and Masters thesis, focussed on the Saiga antelope uploaded to this section.  
<https://www.Saigaresourcecentre.com/content/thesis-archive>

2. Saiga News section. This publication, which is published twice per year is now available in digital format from the website. All 29 issues, (172 'magazines' including all languages; English, Russian, Kazakh, Chinese, Uzbek and Mongolian) dating from the first in Spring 2005 to the winter 2023/24 version can now be found on the website. Visitors can download the entire copy as a PDF, or search for and read individual articles from each publication.  
<https://www.Saigaresourcecentre.com/content/Saiga-news-magazine>

3. Experts section. Visitors can easily find and contact 30 experts on any aspect of Saiga conservation right across the range states.  
<https://www.Saigaresourcecentre.com/content/experts>

4. Our Projects. Visitors can view a map of central Asia which pinpoints Saiga conservation projects and gives the opportunity to find out more about each one.  
<https://www.Saigaresourcecentre.com/content/map-projects>

5. Videos. This section is fully searchable. It contains 42 clips from award winning Saiga cartoons drawn by children, educational clips on how to draw Saigas to short documentaries and clips on catching Saiga calves.  
<https://www.Saigaresourcecentre.com/content/videos>

6. Picture library. 179 photographs credited to 43 contributors are searchable by population, country, photographer, subject and by keywords. It has proven popular with journalists looking for high resolution images of Saigas.  
<https://www.Saigaresourcecentre.com/content/pictures>

7. Education section. This section contains sections for children as well as for teachers and adults. We are always uploading new literature, booklets, activities, colouring sheets etc. in English, Russian, Kazakh, Mongolian and Chinese, which can both educate and entertain children. We have teamed up with artists such as Julius Csotonyi, Nell miles and groups such as Conservation Optimism to produce and distribute these resources. 31 individual resources are available across 10 projects.  
<https://www.Saigaresourcecentre.com/content/educational-activities>

8. Background. <https://www.Saigaresourcecentre.com/content/background> In this section visitors can learn about Saigas, their conservation status, background to the Saiga MoU and rationale for the site, as well as finding a section on Saiga Heroes. This section reflects the feature of the same from 'Saiga News'. Here we thank individuals and reflect on the great work they have done/are doing to protect saigas.

<https://www.Saigaresourcecentre.com/content/Saiga-heroes>

9. CMS. <https://www.Saigaresourcecentre.com/content/cms>. In this section we list the key documents and work toward the Saiga MoU. Uploading updates and reports, the action plan, progress towards the MTIWP 21-25 and the Saiga MoU itself.

<https://www.Saigaresourcecentre.com/content/cms>

10. USFWS Project. A microsite within SRC have been produced for Saiga Conservation Alliance's USFWS Project, 'Building a Collaborative Foundation for Evidence-Based Saiga Antelope Conservation'. The project aims to bring together all stakeholders involved in Saiga conservation, to boost our collective impact on the species' status and ecosystem role. As well as supporting 5 projects across all Saiga range and consumer states this project funds *Saiga News* and the upkeep of SRC and is aligned with all action points of MTIWP 21-25.

<https://www.Saigaresourcecentre.com/content/Saiga-conservation-alliances-usfws-project>

### **Saiga News (MTIWP 21-25 points 1.3, 5.4)**

Saiga News is the SCA's annual bulletin, published in six languages (English, Russian, Chinese, Uzbek, Kazakh, Mongolian), aimed at conservationists, governments, and the public, especially within Saiga range states. It bridges the gap between in-country efforts and international decisions, fostering a global Saiga conservation community.

As a leading source of Saiga-related research and conservation updates, Saiga News addresses key issues like the recent change in the saiga's IUCN Red List Status from Critically Endangered to Near Threatened. It features news, articles, Saiga hero profiles, project updates, and press reports. The Editorial Board includes representatives from range states, China, and the UK, with readers ranging from schoolchildren to government ministers. The bulletin also enables those without access to international journals to share their work and engage with best practices.

All editions are printed, distributed to stakeholders, posted online, and promoted via social media.

Since 2021, we have published three new issues, with Issue 30 planned for release by the end of 2024, featuring insights from the CMS MOS5 meeting.



Since the 2021 meeting, we have published three additional issues, with issue 30 planned for release by the end of 2024, including a feature on the CMS MOS5 meeting outcomes.

Issue 27: Winter 2021/2022 (6 languages)

Issue 28: Winter 2022/2023 (6 languages)

Issue 29: Winter 2023/2024 (6 languages)

All 26 previous issues, dating back to Spring 2005) are now available on the SRC.

## **2.2 Other awareness-raising activities (MTIWP 21-25 points 5.2, 5.6, 5.7).**

The SCA continues its online outreach to diverse audiences, from donors to children, adults, and the global scientific and conservation community. Our efforts span multiple platforms, including the SRC website and the general public-facing Saiga Conservation Alliance website and social media.

We maintain an active presence across key platforms:

Twitter: @SaigaCA has 1,181 followers, with regular posts throughout the week.

Instagram: Saiga\_conservation, now with 2,310 followers, is popular for field images.

Facebook: @saveSaigas has over 3,879 followers, with ongoing interactions, likes, and fundraisers.

### **2021**

Expanded the SCA website, including regular updates of links, videos, news, and more dynamic content across social media.

Launched a structured social media plan, resulting in increased engagement across all platforms.

Twitter: Grew followers to 951 (+100), with 220 posts.

Facebook: Gained 267 followers, reaching 3,704, with 160 posts.

Instagram: Reached 1,917 followers (+271) with 154 posts.

### **2022**

Ongoing SCA website development and enhanced coordination between social media and the website.

Implemented regular features like #CameraTrapTuesday, highlighting field projects, research, and Steppe Wildlife Club activities.

Twitter: Grew to 1,053 followers (+102), with 140 posts.

Facebook: Gained 167 new followers, reaching 3,871, with 130 posts.

Instagram: Increased to 2,114 followers (+197), with 120 posts.

## **2023-2024**

The SCA made significant strides in fundraising, marketing, and public engagement, boosting our capacity to protect the Saiga antelope.

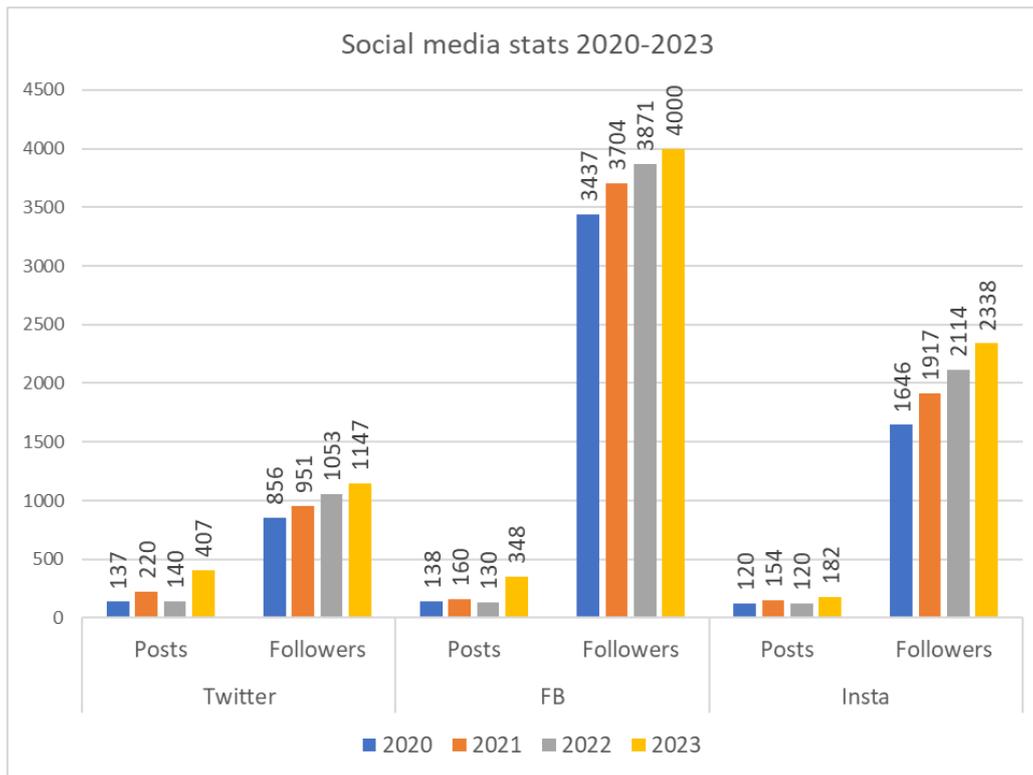
Key initiatives included:

- Impact Blogs: Showcased project activities to drive website traffic, donations, and mailing list sign-ups.
- Public Speaking: Represented SCA at major events like the Deserts Conference and WCN Expo, raising awareness of Saiga conservation.
- Content Production: Created content for major donors (e.g., Whitley Fund for Nature, PTES, WCN) to amplify our message through their channels.
- Collaborations: Partnered with organisations to spread awareness about Saiga's changing conservation status and the cull in Kazakhstan.

## **2025 and beyond**

Our communications strategy will focus on:

- Improving impact blogs and delivering monthly donor thank-you emails
- Launching a semi-regular e-newsletter
- Enhancing social media engagement through increased posts, collaborations, and coverage of major activities
- Expanding our digital presence by linking social media with our website more frequently and exploring new platforms like LinkedIn



- Strengthening connections with our Saiga community and institutional members and increasing visibility along the supply chain via the USFWS program

## 2.2. Meetings and Events (MTIWP 21-25 points ?, ?, ?.)

2021?

2022?

### Saiga Inception Meeting and Panel Event - Oxford, UK, Mar 23

In March 2023, the SCA hosted the ‘Saiga Inception’ meeting and ‘Conserving Wildlife in the Central Asian Steppes’ panel event in Oxford. These events brought together participants from different projects in the Saiga antelope range, supported by the US Fish and Wildlife Service’s new 5-year “Catalysing Conservation Fund”.

The panel discussion included prominent figures in wildlife conservation, including Polina Orlinsky of the Central Asian Mammals Initiative of Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, who debated the future of Saiga conservation. Topics included the ethical implications of interventions like population control and the importance of maintaining genetic diversity. The panel event was also included as a fringe event to Deserts Conference organised by Oxford University’s geography Department which saw a crossover in attendance and opportunities for further collaboration.

The inception meeting aimed to facilitate collaboration among projects and provide a platform for sharing objectives, approaches, and addressing key aspects such as data availability, evidence gaps, theory of change, capacity needs, and opportunities for shared learning.

With the goal of maximising collective effectiveness, the meeting was designed to be as interactive as possible, allowing participants from different projects ample time to get to know each other and explore opportunities for collaboration and support. The presence of more participants in person was seen as a measure of success for this approach.



The event brought together representatives from various organisations, including United Nation Convention for Migratory Species/Central Asian Mammals Initiative, United States Fish and Wildlife Service , Oxford University, Zoological Society of London, Wildlife Conservation Society, The Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology , Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan, Flora and Fauna International, Traffic, Frankfurt Zoological Society, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and many more, highlighting the diverse stakeholders involved in Saiga antelope conservation efforts.

#### **Topics Discussed:**

- **Conservation Strategies:** Participants explored innovative conservation approaches, including habitat restoration, anti-poaching efforts, and the role of local communities in Saiga conservation.
- **Scientific Research:** Presentations highlighted recent research on Saiga populations, migration patterns, and the impact of climate change on their habitats.
- **Policy and Collaboration:** Discussions emphasized the need for cross-border cooperation, particularly among the range states (Kazakhstan, Russia, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, etc.), and the integration of scientific research into policy-making.

#### **Outcomes:**

- Commitment to enhancing collaboration between scientists and policymakers, ensuring that research findings are effectively translated into conservation actions.
- Plans for follow-up workshops, events and the development of a more detailed action plan for Saiga conservation, involving all stakeholders.

Overall, the Saiga Inception Meeting and Panel Discussion at Oxford University in March 2023 were pivotal in advancing the global conversation on Saiga conservation, fostering greater collaboration, and setting the stage for more effective conservation strategies in the coming years.

## **2024**

### **UNEP CMS CoP14 - Samarkand, UZ, Feb 24**

SCA recognised the rare opportunity of having many of the Saiga conservation community being in the same city and decided to host and or support events

## SCA Annual Awards Presentation Ceremony 2024

The Annual Awards Presentation Ceremony at CMS CoP14 in Uzbekistan celebrated conservation champions, recognising outstanding contributions to wildlife protection. The ceremony featured 37 individuals from 21 organisations across 9 countries.

### Award Winners:

- Excellence in Saiga Protection, Arman Kuzhakhmetov, Kazakhstan; Olonbaatar Ganbat, Mongolia
- Small Grant Programme, Bayarmaa Chuluunbat, Mongolia; Aibat Muzhbay, Kazakhstan; Mao Jing, China
- Young Conservation Leader, Mekhriban Saparbayeva, Uzbekistan; Mao Jing, China
- Special Achievement Award, Anna Lushchekina, Russia, For dedication to Saiga conservation

## Saiga Horn Stockpile Workshop

The Saiga Horn Stockpile Workshop held in Samarkand in February 2024, as part of CMS COP14, also addressed the complex issue of the legal trade of saiga horn, particularly in countries like Malaysia and Vietnam, where it is utilised in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Saiga horns are highly prized in TCM, believed to have medicinal properties such as reducing fever and treating various ailments. This legal trade is regulated under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), but despite this, the demand for saiga horn remains a driving force behind illegal poaching.

Participants discussed the challenges of managing the legal trade alongside preventing illegal activities. Countries such as Malaysia and Vietnam play a significant role as consumer markets, where enforcement of trade regulations must be strengthened. The workshop emphasised the importance of ensuring that any legal trade is strictly monitored, with appropriate traceability mechanisms in place, to prevent further harm to saiga populations. One proposal highlighted was the development of marking, cataloguing, and storing systems for saiga horns to ensure that stockpiles are accounted for and do not enter the illegal market.

This system becomes particularly crucial in the context of events such as the mass mortality event (MME) in Kazakhstan in 2015, where over 200,000 saiga antelopes perished due to a sudden outbreak of *Pasteurella multocida* bacteria. This devastating event wiped out a significant portion of the global population, highlighting the importance of cataloguing and securely storing horns produced from such unavoidable natural culls. Without proper systems, horns from these tragic events could easily be laundered into the illegal market, further fuelling the trade.

The workshop highlighted that Kazakhstan, home to the majority of the saiga population, must be central in leading the way for other range states by developing structures to handle such events in the future. This includes creating transparent processes for marking and cataloguing horns from any culls, ensuring they are kept securely in government stockpiles, and guaranteeing that they are not misused.

Through this workshop previously unknown domestic markets in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, came to light. a small market for antique knife handles may emerge or become a conduit for modern horn.

The implementation of such processes will help not only in safeguarding the species but also in ensuring that any potential use of saiga horns in trade is ethical, sustainable, and legal, preventing illegal horns from undermining conservation efforts.

## CMS CoP14 Official Side Event:

In partnership with the Government of Kazakhstan, Altyn Dala Conservation initiative and ACBK, SCA hosted a side event highlighting the success of international cooperation in Saiga recovery.

The event titled "Recognition and Development of the Success of Transboundary Cooperation on the Restoration of the Saiga Antelope in Central Asia" was a significant gathering of stakeholders and experts to discuss and advance the conservation efforts surrounding the critically endangered Saiga antelope. The primary focus was on transboundary cooperation to ensure the protection, reproduction, and sustainable use of Saiga populations across Central Asia.

### Speaker and Presenters:

- Nurken Sharbiyev, Vice-Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of Kazakhstan,
- Polina Orlinskiy, Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)
- Andrey Kim, Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Forestry and Wildlife in Kazakhstan
- Khalilulla Sherimbetov, Head of the Protected Areas Uzbekistan's State Committee for Ecology and Environment Protection
- Buvei Baatar, Saiga lead at WCS Mongolia
- Alyona Krivosheyeva, Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan
- Dr. E.J. Milner-Gulland, Chair, Saiga Conservation Alliance

## Saiga Networking Event

Saiga Conservation Alliance, supported by the Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative, hosted a networking event following the Official Side Event. The event created an opportunity for organisations and individuals to showcase Saiga conservation achievements and addressed emerging issues, and also an opportunity to develop professional relationships and opportunities to collaborate.

Like speed dating for Saiga conservationists, conversation stations were established and grouped by similar themes, geographic projects, or those funded by the same organisation. Attendees moved between stations, fostering connections among projects from different regions and with various focuses.

The event was attended by individual from organisation such as, Global Ungulate Atlas, WCS Mongolia, ACBK, Altyn Dala, FFI Traffic Malaysia, WWF Mongolia, Nabu, GIZ, UZ Institute of Zoology, USFWS, UKAid and ambassadors stationed in the region.

## 2.3. Grants and Awards (MTIWP 21-25 points ?, ?, ?.)

### Annual Awards Programme

The Saiga Conservation Alliance (SCA) prioritises international collaboration, capacity-building, and local partnerships to restore the Saiga Antelope across Central Asia and the pre-Caspian steppes. Our annual awards programme supports this mission through the **Small Grants Programme (SGP)**, **Young Conservation Leaders (YCL)**, and **Excellence in Saiga Protection (ESP)**.

These awards aim to build capacity, promote excellence, and increase grassroots participation across Saiga range states (Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia) and consumer countries (China, Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia). The awards foster collaboration, expertise sharing, and engagement among the public, governments, and conservation communities.

### Award Categories

**YCL:** Engages future conservation leaders

**SGP:** Enhances SCA members' capacity for conservation and knowledge-sharing

**ESP:** Recognises individuals in Saiga protection, such as rangers and conservation staff

Supported by the Wildlife Conservation Network, SCA provides about \$15,000 annually to seven candidates, fostering relationships that often lead to leadership roles within SCA. Since 2008, the SGP has funded 47 projects in 6 countries, focused on research, education, and animal protection, all directly related to the MTIWP.

### **Notable Alumni**

- Vera Voronova, Executive Director, Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan
- Buuveibaatar Bayarbaatar, Conservation Scientist, Wildlife Conservation Society (Mongolia)
- Karina Karenina, Research Associate, Saint Petersburg State University
- Olga Esipova, Research and Development Officer, Saiga Conservation Alliance

### **2021 Awards**

After a pandemic pause, SCA resumed its competitions, receiving numerous applications across YCL, SGP, and ESP:

#### **YCL Winners:**

Dilnaz Malikova (Kazakhstan), Developed an online course on Saiga conservation for students.  
Ekaterina Berezina (Russia), Used camera trap data to monitor Saigas in the Stepnoi Reserve.

#### **SGP Winners:**

- Karina Karenina (Russia), Project on "Socially Significant Areas in the Saiga Habitat."
- Mikhail Shpigelman (Kazakhstan), Promoted coexistence between communities and Saigas
- Svetlana Aitkulova (Russia), Developed a monitoring system for migratory Saiga herds at Lake Elton Biosphere Reserve

#### **ESP Winners:**

- Vladimir Kalmykov (Russia), director of Stepnoi Reserve, was recognised for his field conservation efforts.
- Maksim Kulushev and Alexey Garagan (Russia),
- rangers for the Committee of hunting and fishing of the Saratov region, Russia, were awarded the "Highly commended" prize.

### **2022 Awards**

Due to the Russia/Ukraine conflict and UK trade sanctions, the awards were paused, as it was deemed unfair to exclude Russia-based conservationists.

### **2023 Awards**

After a hiatus, the awards returned.

#### **YCL Winners:**

- Mekhriban Sapparbayeva (Uzbekistan), Led the "Nadezhda" ecological club, raising awareness about Saiga conservation through education and community engagement
- Mao Jing (China), Awarded for a project hosted by WCS China, starting in 2024

#### **SGP Winners:**

- Aibat Muzbay (Kazakhstan), Assessed biomass production impacts on Saiga calving areas
- Bayarmaa Chuluunbat (Mongolia), Studied diet overlap between Mongolian Saiga and livestock to aid conservation planning

#### **ESP Winners:**

- Arman Kuzhakhmetov and the Okhotzooptom Ranger Team (Kazakhstan), Recognised for their anti-poaching efforts



- Olonbaatar Gaanbat (Mongolia), Honoured for his Saiga protection and community outreach work

## 2.4. Training, Education and Community engagement

### 2021 Activities

#### Community Education and Outreach - Saiga Days, Day of Migratory Species and Steppe Wildlife Clubs

In 2021, Saiga Day returned in person, with 19 SWCs and 1,400 participants across Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, and Russia celebrating the event.

In 2021, we resumed support for Mongolian clubs, and all countries submitted reports on their activities, which were featured in *Saiga News*. With in-person meetings allowed again, participation soared, with more children joining and new clubs, even without SCA financial support. In 2020, we supported 13 clubs, and by 2021, this number grew to 30. Club leaders also continued to use Telegram for peer-to-peer communication, sharing success stories and best practices—an encouraging sign of self-sustainability.

In 2021 there were 7 Steppe Wildlife Clubs (SWCs) in Russia, 6 in Kazakhstan, 6 in Uzbekistan, and 11 in Mongolia. These clubs participate in Saiga Day, the Day of Migratory Species, and host their own activities. For example, Russia's "Vozrozhdenije" club led its annual excursion to Stepnoi Reserve, educating children about Saiga conservation and local biodiversity.

Though COVID restrictions in Kazakhstan limited the Day of Migratory Species to online events, Russia and Uzbekistan held in-person activities. Russia's SWCs showcased their video project "Protect me, human," and Uzbekistan hosted open lessons and performances.

In Russia, clubs held poetry contests on Saiga conservation, and Kalmykia's new "Tsagda" club was featured in a local newspaper. Mongolia's celebration focused on protecting 16 vital springs, with a campaign involving herders, SWCs, and local governments pledging to safeguard them.

Two new clubs were established in Uzbekistan's Aral Sea region, with over 400 children participating in Saiga Day celebrations, part of a national total of 1,265 participants.

#### International Education and Outreach - Saiga Day and Day of Migratory Species

Overall, the return of in-person celebrations sparked enthusiasm among children, teachers, local authorities, and industry, reflecting strong community commitment to Saiga conservation.

## Educational Materials

In Kazakhstan, a comprehensive set of educational materials for Saiga Day was developed and distributed to 12 schools, enriching celebrations with presentations and contest activities.

## 2022 Activities

The Steppe Wildlife Clubs (SWCs) program engages older teenagers in Uzbekistan, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Mongolia through sport and community-based ecological projects.

In Kazakhstan "Saiga Friends" clubs conducted lessons in 3 schools, offering art classes, and held a lectures on the Saiga's life cycle. Additionally, 23 students participated in an outdoor Saiga monitoring exercise, gaining field skills.

Mongolia faced some COVID restrictions, even so about 40 SWC members went on a field trip where they learned safe techniques for releasing captive Saigas and observed wildlife with input from rangers. An animation, "Pride," blending Mongolian folklore with modern technology, was produced, teaching filmmaking skills and promoting surface water protection. Since its April 2022 release, it has reached over 20,000 people.



In **Russia SCA** supported 7 SWCs conducting quizzes, games, discussions, and presentations. The "Animals of Our Region" project included classroom activities and out-of-school initiatives such as waste collection on the steppe and releasing young Saigas from a breeding center.

### SWC Statistics:

- Russia: 7 clubs
- Kazakhstan: 7 clubs
- Uzbekistan: 10 clubs
- Mongolia: 11 clubs

In Uzbekistan, socio-educational activities targeted 6 villages. Saiga Day was celebrated in 10 schools, engaging 500 children with competitions, art exhibitions, and performances. The Day of Migratory Species was held in 4 villages, supported by environmental teachers who organized lessons and provided educational materials and uniforms.

In 2022, we developed and shared educational resources to enhance Saiga conservation awareness, particularly in the Aral Sea region. An online meeting in April 2022 with club leaders

and educators from 3 new schools in Muynak discussed organising Saiga Day and related activities. A follow-up meeting took place in March 2023.

## **Educational Materials**

Educational materials, available in English and Uzbek, were distributed to SWC clubs and during public outreach events. Approximately 400 people benefited from these resources across the range states and at village events in the Aral Sea region.

## **2023 Activities**

### **Saiga Day, Day of Migratory Species and Day of Protected Areas**

In May 2023, Saiga Day was celebrated in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Mongolia with the support of the Saiga Conservation Alliance (SCA). Initiated by SCA, this international event aims to raise awareness about Saiga conservation among rural communities, coinciding with the birth of the first Saiga calves of the year. Activities are organized by local schools' Steppe Wildlife Clubs, promoting environmental education through sports events, quizzes, songs, dances, and plays.

Estimated Saiga Day Participation Numbers for 2023:

- Uzbekistan, 900 students, teachers, and guests
- Kazakhstan, 200 children and 15 teachers
- Mongolia, 500 people, including over 300 children

## **Cases Studies**

### **Saiga Day Uzbekistan, May 12, 2023, Ak Keme children's camp, Muynak**

- Participants, Over 70 individuals, including students and teachers from four secondary schools in Kungirat and Muynak districts

#### **Activities**

- Poster competitions on "SOS - Save Our Saigas"
- Sports competitions on themes such as "Save Saigas from Poachers" and "Aral Water for Saigas" Cycling marathon "Saiga 2023"
- Concert featuring performances by children

#### **Guest Speaker**

- Nida Al-Fulajj from the People's Foundation for the Protection of Endangered Species (PTES)

### **Saiga Day Mongolia: May 22, 2023, Khukhmorit soum, Gobi-Altai**

- Participants: Over 500 participants, including more than 300 schoolchildren

#### **Activities:**

- Tree-planting initiative led by young people aged 18 to 30
- Field trip for 100 children to learn about Saiga habitats and the work of rangers
- Drawing competition "Saiga and Spring" with nearly 100 participants

### **Saiga Day Kazakhstan: May 10-12, 2023, Kostanay region, Baitursyn school**

- Participants, 36 students and 3 teachers

#### **Activities:**

- Interactive lessons using the book "Saiga and its Neighbours" by A. Oleksenko and A. Oreshina
- Debates on "Saiga and its Environment" between students and teachers
- Presentation of the Kazakh-translated textbook "Saiga and its Habitat" in Aktau

- Trip to Lake Karakol involving 50 participants for a bird count, environmental cleanup, and quiz

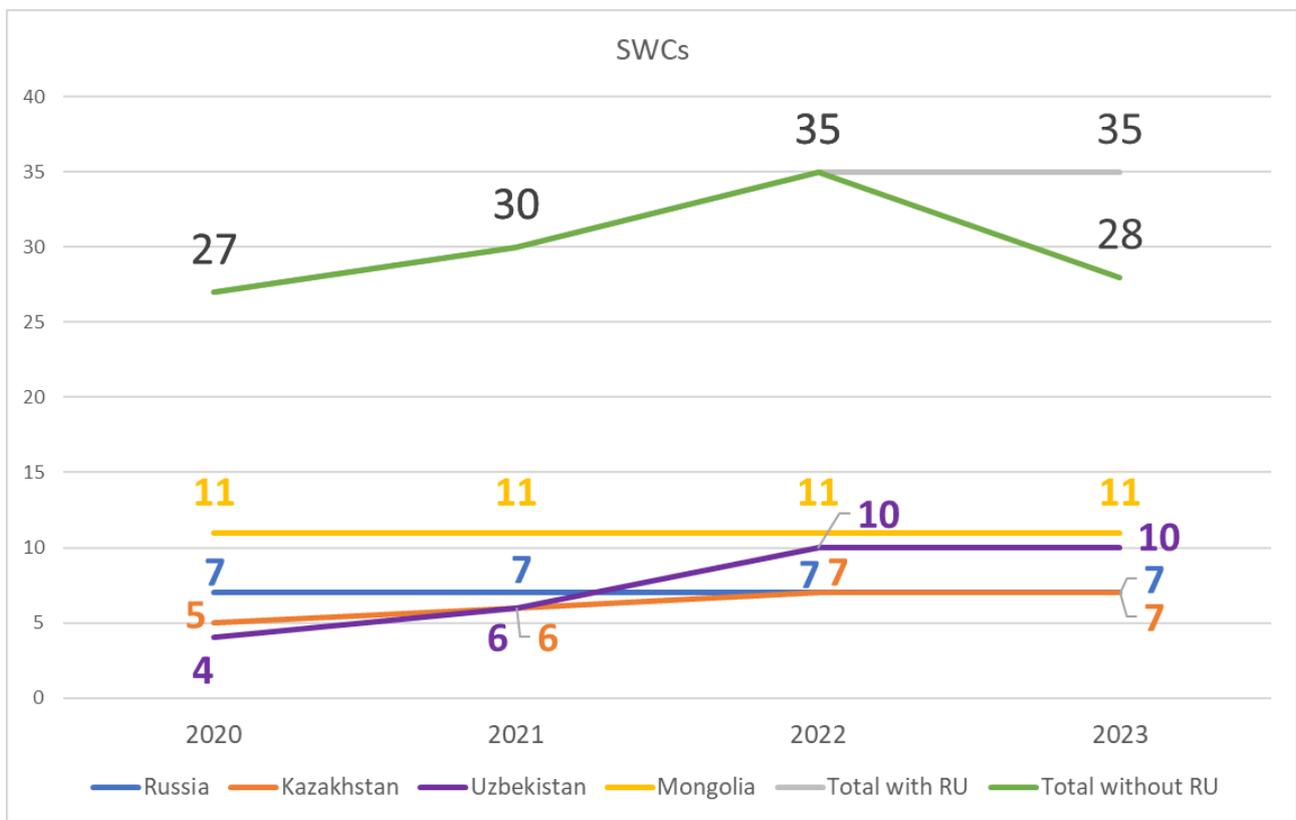
**2024 Activities**

**Mongolia**

Public awareness efforts included a screening of WWF-Mongolia’s documentary *Mongolian Saiga*, reaching 4,643 community members and 3,140 schoolchildren.

**Community Engagement and Field Visits:**

60 eco-club members and 5 teachers participated in hands-on learning through visits to Saiga



ranges. For many, this was their first time seeing a Saiga in the wild. Rangers shared insights on Saiga behavior, birth rates, and feeding habits, significantly enhancing understanding of the species and its habitat.

**Social Media and Outreach Impact:**

1,345 schoolchildren shared Saiga Day content on Facebook, while 2,604 children across 12 sub-provinces learned the "Baby Saiga" song. Additionally, 1,717 children downloaded awareness materials from WWF-Mongolia's YouTube channel. These activities, organized in collaboration with eco-club members, reached over 17,000 people locally.

**Uzbekistan**

Saiga Day, initiated in 2010 under the SOS Saiga Project, is now officially recognized by Uzbekistan's 2023 Presidential Decree. In 2024, events marking the "Year of the Saiga" involved over 1,250 students, 720 teachers, and 420 community members across 12 schools in 7 towns,

with partnerships from the Institute of Zoology, Saiga Conservation Alliance, Ecomaktab, Uz-Kor Gas Chemical LLC JV, and the Saigachiy Integrated Reserve.

### **Key Celebrations:**

Nukus (May 3-4, 2024), Under the theme “The Great Steppe is our common home,” activities included biodiversity lessons, Saiga-themed drawings, and sports competitions. The event concluded with a Saiga anthem, speeches, performances, and an awards ceremony, promoting environmental awareness.

Jaslyk & Karakalpakiya, Celebrating 14 years of combating poaching and raising awareness about the declining Saiga population, events involved 300 students and 100 adults. Activities included ecology lessons, sports relays symbolizing Saiga migration, and cultural performances with Saigas as the central focus.

Karakalpakiya (near Saigachy Reserve), Events focused on environmental stewardship with 500 participants, including 3-kilometer cycling and running marathons, relay races, biodiversity lessons, and cultural performances to reinforce environmental values.

Muynak (May 4, 2024), Led by teacher Gauhar Tanabergenova, with participation from Schools No. 4 and 5, events featured biodiversity lessons, creative competitions, exhibitions, and presentations by environmental inspectors, emphasizing local and international conservation collaboration.

Ustyurt (Kyrkyz & Elabad), Events included drawing competitions, quizzes, performances, and conservation lessons, engaging 300 schoolchildren and 100 adults. Village elders shared stories of Saigas, connecting youth with their natural heritage.

These celebrations underscore Uzbekistan’s deepening commitment to Saiga conservation, combining education, creativity, and community engagement to safeguard biodiversity.

### **Educational Materials**

A Wildlife of Uzbekistan: Karakalpakstan (Deserts and Semi-deserts). Colouring book has been produced. This colouring book will familiarise Local children with some wildlife inhabiting Karakalpakstan. The coloring book (in Uzbek, English, and Russian languages) is intended for children and elementary school students and aims to develop creativity, foster love, and respect for nature, and responsibility for the conservation of unique wildlife. The information about the rare inhabitants of the deserts and semi-deserts in Karakalpakstan is given in an entertaining form.

## **2.5. Document production and publishing (MTIWP 21-25 points ?, ?, ?.)**

### **The Sustainable Use of Saiga Antelopes: Perspectives and Prospects**

The document titled *"The Sustainable Use of Saiga Antelopes: Perspectives and Prospects"* was prepared by the Saiga Conservation Alliance, in collaboration with various organisations, for the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). It was funded by Germany's Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety through the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, and completed in September 2021.

English version:

[https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/unep-cms\\_saiga\\_mos4\\_doc.7\\_sustainable-use-saiga-antilopes\\_e.pdf](https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/unep-cms_saiga_mos4_doc.7_sustainable-use-saiga-antilopes_e.pdf)

Russian version:

[https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/unep-cms\\_saiga\\_mos4\\_doc.7\\_sustainable-use-saiga-antilopes\\_ru.pdf](https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/unep-cms_saiga_mos4_doc.7_sustainable-use-saiga-antilopes_ru.pdf)

The lead authors included E.J. Milner-Gulland, P. Hughes, E. Bykova, and others, with contributions from specialists across academic institutions, NGOs, and government agencies. The report examined the potential for the sustainable use of Saiga antelopes to support the Memorandum of Understanding concerning their Conservation, Restoration, and Sustainable Use under the CMS. The long-term aim was to restore saiga populations to a point where regulated hunting could become viable.

The report provided a comprehensive analysis, drawing from theory and examples from other species and regions, and was intended as a resource for decision-makers in range states and other stakeholders. It included insights into population theory, sustainable harvest strategies, institutional structures for saiga management, and specific considerations for populations in Russia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and China. It also discussed the current status of saigas under CITES, with a focus on trade regulations for saiga products, particularly horns.

Key findings emphasised the need for a precautionary approach due to the saiga's high productivity but vulnerability to environmental shocks. Recommendations highlighted the importance of involving both state and local communities in management, ensuring benefits were shared equitably, and the necessity of continuous monitoring and adaptive management. The report also encouraged exploring non-consumptive uses such as eco-tourism to provide economic benefits without threatening populations.

International collaboration among range states and consumer countries was deemed essential for successful saiga conservation and sustainable management. The report balanced conservation needs with the prospects for sustainable use, integrating biological, ecological, social, and economic factors.

### **IUCN Red List Assessment – “IUCN SSC Antelope Specialist Group. 2023. Saiga tatarica. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2023”**

English Version: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/pdf/233712210>

Published by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), this assessment, conducted by the IUCN SSC Antelope Specialist Group, updates the conservation status of *Saiga tatarica* (Saiga Antelope). Contributors included D. Mallon, E.J. Milner-Gulland, and other IUCN partners such as universities, conservation organisations, and research institutions.

The report highlights the species' reclassification to Near Threatened due to a significant population recovery, particularly in Kazakhstan, where 98% of the global population exists. By May 2022, numbers had risen by 1,100%, reaching over 1.32 million. However, the classification reflects uncertainty, with Near Threatened being a compromise between possible Endangered, Vulnerable, or Least Concern statuses.

Previously, in 2015, *Saiga* was assessed as Critically Endangered due to a projected decline of over 50% caused by mass mortality events (MMEs), poaching for illegal horn trade, and severe climatic conditions. Although a reassessment was due in 2020, the current population recovery has mitigated immediate concerns.

Key Threats:

- MMEs caused by diseases like haemorrhagic septicaemia and peste des petits ruminants (PPR).
- Illegal poaching for horns.

- Habitat degradation and competition with livestock.
- Harsh climatic conditions.

Geographic Range: Historically spread from south-eastern Europe to Mongolia and China, *Saiga* populations are now primarily concentrated in Kazakhstan, with smaller numbers in Russia and Mongolia.

Takeaways:

- Major population recovery in Kazakhstan, uzbek and russian population remain depleted.
- Uncertain Future: Continued risks from disease, poaching, and environmental factors.
- Global collaboration remains essential for the species' future.

The document serves as a record of the species' current status and a call for ongoing conservation efforts.

### **IUCN Red List Assessment – “Milner-Gulland, E.J. 2021. *Saiga tatarica* (Green Status assessment). The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2021”**

This document was published under the IUCN Green Status of Species initiative, which assesses species recovery alongside traditional Red List extinction risk. It evaluates *Saiga tatarica* (Saiga Antelope), focusing on historical and future recovery potential, conservation impact, and action effectiveness.

Classified as "Largely Depleted," the Saiga's Species Recovery Score is 38%, reflecting partial recovery but ongoing threats. While populations have rebounded in some regions, they remain severely reduced in others. The score is based on historical depletion, conservation successes, and setbacks. The Saiga's future viability depends on continued habitat protection, poaching prevention, and disease management, with reintroduction to former habitats potentially aiding recovery.

The assessment highlights the species' reliance on conservation efforts, which prevented extinction in key areas. However, disease outbreaks have hindered progress, leaving the Saiga vulnerable. Without ongoing actions, recovery would likely reverse over the next decade.

Conservation Metrics:

- Conservation Legacy: Medium (19%) – Past efforts prevented extinction in critical areas.
- Conservation Dependence: Medium – Continued actions are crucial; without them, decline is likely within 10 years.
- Conservation Gain: Medium – If current efforts continue, recovery could reach 52% in 10 years.
- Recovery Potential: Medium – Over the next 100 years, recovery could reach 52%, assuming continued conservation and suitable habitats.

The Saiga's recovery score reflects its partial recovery, ongoing threats, and reliance on conservation. Disease outbreaks and habitat loss remain significant challenges, underscoring the need for continued efforts to secure the species' future.

## **2.6. Kazakhstan Saiga Conservation and Management strategy (MTIWP 21-25 points ?, ?, ?.)**

In May 2023, Professor EJ Millner-Gulland, Chair of the Saiga Conservation Alliance, took part in an expert mission to help the Kazakh government develop a strategy for saiga antelope conservation and management. This initiative followed a significant increase in saiga populations, particularly in West Kazakhstan, where the Ural saiga population had soared to about 1,130,000. This was a notable recovery from a low of approximately 6,500 just 20 years earlier. However, this

success led to new challenges, notably concerns from farmers about damage to crops, competition for water, and disease spread. These issues had become more pressing in recent years.

The expert team, including specialists in various fields such as landscape ecology, spatial planning, community conservation, sustainable hunting, and saiga ecology (Michele Bowe, Norbert Hölzel, Tamas Marghescu, Stefan Michel, Professor Millner-Gulland, Navinder Singh, and Steffen Zuther), as well as representatives from the Convention on Migratory Species and CITES (Hyeon Jeong Kim, Clara Nobbe, Polina Orlinsky) visited West Kazakhstan to assess the situation. After a long journey, they arrived at a petrol station near Kaztalov, where rangers from Okhotzooptom informed them of a large saiga herd on communal grazing lands. Professor Millner-Gulland, who had previously seen only small groups of saigas, found the sight of several thousand grazing saigas outside the village both extraordinary and emotional. The saigas were calm and untroubled by human presence.

This sight showcased the success of conservation efforts, but farmers were increasingly concerned about the saigas causing crop damage, competing for water, and spreading disease. They felt powerless and frustrated by the lack of action to address their concerns.

The visit highlighted the complex dynamics of the region. Land use had shifted significantly over decades, with much of the area converted to wheat fields in the 1950s. By the 1980s, saigas had been heavily exploited, leading to reduced numbers. The collapse of both livestock and saiga populations in the early 1990s resulted in denser vegetation. As both populations now increased, water scarcity became a critical issue due to urban demands and water diversion from the Volga River. Understanding these dynamics, given the region's land-use history, was challenging.

Achieving a sustainable balance required solutions that supported farming and conservation. This meant both immediate and long-term actions with local community involvement. Observing and engaging with local people proved crucial.

The trip was a rare opportunity for Professor Millner-Gulland and other experts to reconnect with the steppe environment, evoking nostalgia and joy. They valued the hospitality of their hosts and enjoyed local dairy products and traditional dishes.

Following their field trip, the experts participated in a three-day meeting in Astana, organised by the Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species at the request of the Kazakh government and funded by Germany. This meeting gathered all relevant stakeholders, including the Committee on Forestry and Wildlife, Okhotzooptom, farmers' representatives, research institutes, UNDP, and hunting associations. The meeting aimed to create a strategic action plan for saiga conservation and management. Although debates were sometimes intense, there was consensus on the need for coexistence between people and saigas, incorporating sustainable saiga use, conservation incentives, and long-term land-use planning.

Tourism potential was also discussed. The large saiga herds, alongside the region's cultural and natural attractions, could draw visitors. The experts visited Korgalzhyn Reserve, where they observed saigas from the Betpak-dala population and noted the potential for expanding tourism.

The next steps involve securing resources for implementing the strategy, starting with pilot projects to build trust and address immediate issues. It was vital for local communities to see tangible change. Challenges included gaining CITES approval for sustainable horn trade and enacting legislative changes.

Throughout the mission, the international experts highlighted Kazakhstan's achievement in saiga recovery and its potential to lead in sustainable management. Professor Millner-Gulland felt that Kazakhstan was well-positioned to seize this opportunity and was committed to providing ongoing support.