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# Saiga Antelope: Ural, Kazakhstan

## Migration Description

The Ural saiga population in northwestern Kazakhstan is currently the largest in the world, numbering more than 1.6 million animals according to surveys conducted in 2025. Though saiga are known for making semi-nomadic migratory movements over vast distances across the Kazakh Steppe, the Ural population shows a more predictable migration pattern than the country's other herds. The Ural population migrates generally between wintering areas in the south and distant summering areas in the north of its range in western Kazakhstan, sometimes several hundred kilometers away. Saiga typically form massive herds during May, when they gather to give birth on calving grounds that may vary year to year. The Ural population typically calves within a one to two week period in the northernmost extent of its migratory range. They then roam the steppe throughout the summer, tracking precipitation events and vegetation growth. In the early fall, the saigas move south towards their traditional rut area and winter range. Snow depth is an important driver in their winter migrations, and may determine how far south they travel to find milder conditions and sufficient forage. This transboundary population spends most of the year in Kazakhstan, but may cross the border into Russia during its spring migration.

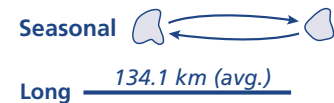
## Threats to Migration

The growing population of saiga in western Kazakhstan presents challenges to the livestock and herding communities of the region, which, like saiga, rely on open pasture and access to water sources. The potential for disease transmission between saiga and increasing numbers of livestock on the landscape is a significant management concern for the region. The government has introduced large-scale hunting to reduce the population and attempt to mitigate the conflict with local people.

International demand for saiga horns, believed to contain medicinal properties in some Asian countries, is another threat to saiga in Kazakhstan. Large scale illegal killing nearly led to the species' collapse across its range, but conservation efforts have since allowed saiga to rebound. In 2023, the species was reclassified by the IUCN from Critically Endangered to Near Threatened. However, serious threats remain. The rapid development of linear infrastructure across the country poses a significant challenge to migratory saiga, as saiga need vast and connected habitats for survival in this often unpredictable landscape. The Ural population has historically remained isolated from the large development projects underway in the country, however, as traffic volumes increase on newly paved roads in the region, impacts on the population are highly likely. Additionally, the border fence with Russia is another barrier limiting freedom of movement.

## Local Population Facts

### Migration



### Threats



## Species Facts

**Common name:** Saiga antelope

**Species name:** *Saiga tatarica tatarica*

**Range:** Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Mongolia (Mongolian subspecies: *Saiga tatarica mongolicus*)

**Diet:** Herbivore

**Global population:** ~3.9 million

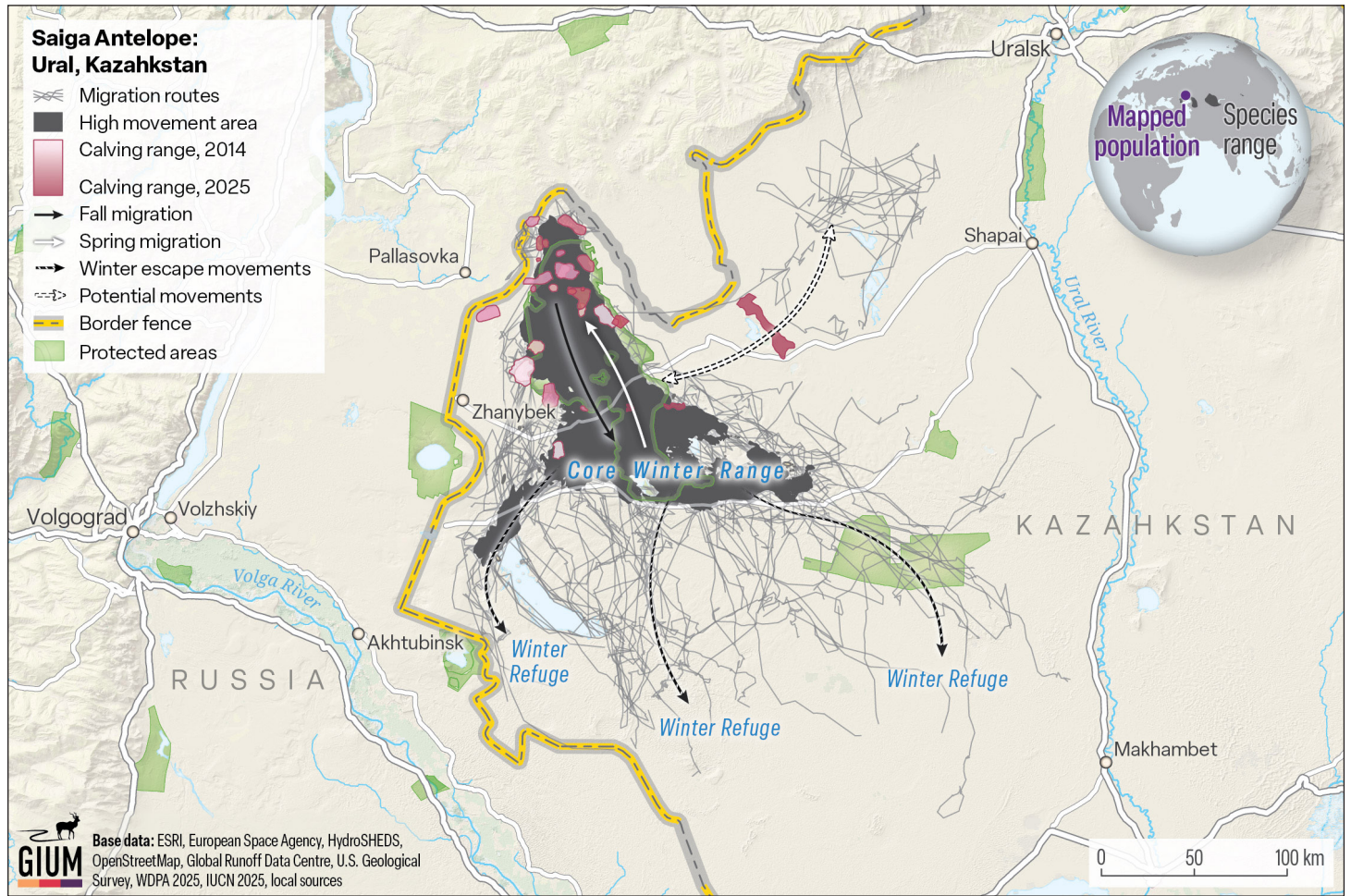
### IUCN Conservation Status

**NT** Near threatened

### CMS Status

**Appendix II** Migratory species conserved through agreements

# Saiga Antelope Migration



## Study Information

### Sample size

53 (out of 63 individuals)

### Relocation frequency

1 GPS point per day

### Project duration

13 years between 2013–2024

## Data Analysis

### Delineation of migration periods

Net squared displacement to delineate migration between seasonal ranges.

### Models derived from

Brownian Bridge Movement Model (166 sequences, fixed motion variance: 3500)

## Route Summary

### Migration start and end date (median)

- Spring: March 22–April 21
- Fall: October 14–October 29

### Average number of days migrating

- Spring: 26 days, ( $\pm 12$  days)
- Fall: 24 days, ( $\pm 15$  days)

### Migration route length

- Min: 2.4 km
- Mean:  $134.1 \pm 67$  km
- Max: 345.7 km

## In partnership with:



## Data Providers

Data were collected and provided by Albert Salemgareyev and Steffen Zuther from the Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative implemented by the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK) together with the Committee of Forestry and Wildlife of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Kazakhstan, supported by Fauna & Flora, Frankfurt Zoological Society and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.



The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), also known as the Bonn Convention, is an environmental treaty of the United Nations that provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory animals and their habitats.



The Global Initiative on Ungulate Migration (GIUM) was created in 2020 to work collaboratively to: 1) create a Global Atlas of Ungulate Migration using tracking data and expert knowledge; and 2) stimulate research on drivers, mechanisms, threats and conservation solutions common to ungulate migration worldwide.



View and Download Map Data from the GIUM Migration Atlas

Salemgareyev, A. and S. Zuther. 2026. Saiga antelope: Ural, Kazakhstan Global Initiative on Ungulate Migration, editors. *Atlas of Ungulate Migration*. Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals.