

Sustainable Management of Wildlife in Central Asia

Conservation of wild animals through their sustainable use and involvement of local population and private sector into the management of hunting grounds

Context

Wild animals are an indispensable element of the ecosystems of Central Asia's mountains and steppes. Poor management, extensive poaching, habitat degradation and fragmentation have caused significant decline and the extinction of wildlife. In Kazakhstan since the beginning of the new millennium the population of saiga antelope were reduced by 99 percent due to poaching and illegal trade of horns for Traditional Chinese Medicine. In Kyrgyzstan wild sheep (argali) and ibex have been over-hunted; and in Tajikistan the civil war and its aftermath caused intensive poaching which led to a sharp reduction of the range area and population numbers of Argali, Ibex, Urial Sheep and Markhor.

Our objectives

Jointly with our partners we aim to rehabilitate the populations of Saiga Antelope, wild sheep and wild goats and to improve local livelihoods through the introduction of sustainable management approaches, capacity development of users, area managers and governmental authorities, as well as the creation of a conducive legal and political framework. Assisting the implementation of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) is expected to fully reveal the benefit of these multilateral agreements to conserve wildlife species in Central Asia.

Our measures

At the local level we empower communities and facilitate the assignment of user rights and responsibilities in well-defined

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areas to community based and non-governmental organizations and local enterprises. This helps to build respective technical and management capacities to sustainably manage these areas and their wildlife, and to develop the skills related to monitor and rehabilitate animal populations, control poaching, as well as income generation out of non-extractive use (nature tourism) as well as extractive use (in particular hunting tourism) of the species. At the national level we aim to anchor good management approaches and incentive mechanisms in legislation through the provision of technical support and facilitation of active participation of all stakeholders in political dialogue. A wildlife database including the monitoring results is in development.

Special attention is paid to investigations into migratory routes of Saiga and Argali and to the division of species into subspecies and distinctive populations in order to determine proper management units. We assist the countries in accession to international conventions like CITES and CMS. Workshops with participants from all Central Asian countries are held to foster exchange of experiences and provide a platform for joint learning and concerted actions. The development of a transboundary ac-



Saiga antelope in Kazakhstan

Members of the community-based conservancy together with Kyrgyz colleagues monitor ibex population in Pamir, Tajikistan



Markhors in Pamir Mountains, Tajikistan

Ibex on the territory of hunting area Chakir-Corum-Trophy, Kyrgyzstan

Putting GPS collar on argali to monitor their migration routes in Issyk-Kul oblast, Kyrgyzstan

tion plan on conservation and sustainable use of Argali under the auspices of CMS is seen as a major activity for the entire region.

Our results to date

The essence of the new policy on the recognition of the value of the wildlife by the local population through the practice of community-based natural resource management has already proven itself in a number of projects and gave tangible results of the restoration of the wildlife populations over large areas. In **Tajikistan** this approach has been implemented successfully and local community start to benefit after 5 years of conservation activity. The improved management of those areas has already resulted in stabilization and rehabilitation of their wildlife populations.

Five model areas started with game keeping and have implemented international hunting tourism. Six further villages follow their example. Income from the first international hunters was used to establish sport facilities, to buy medicine for the medical station or to support handicapped people. Monitoring events have been established and an enhanced wildlife database supports decision-making and supervision of hunting activities on the national and local level. The final version of the hunting law is about to be signed by the President.

In **Kyrgyzstan** the Department of Natural Resource Management within the State Agency on Environmental Protection and Forestry implements reforms in the hunting sector to improve wildlife management and conservation policy. Two pilot community-based wildlife conservation organizations have been established, equipped and trained in wildlife management, monitoring and conservation. Due to a recently adopted new law on hunting, wildlife users are delegated rights to manage wildlife and hunting areas.

The Department through our support implements the National Programme for the conservation and study of wild ungulates. The

developed methodology for the monitoring of wild ungulates enabled the surveillance of wild sheep in the regions of Issyk-Kul and Naryn. This is now used during annual seasonal accounting. Furthermore, we assisted the establishment of GPS tracking of wild sheep migration in order to determine the protected corridors, and promote the genetic differentiation of wild sheep subspecies.

In **Kazakhstan** through our support of policy dialogue on sustainable wildlife use key actors came into discussion of the challenges and opportunities given by the on-going privatization processes in the hunting sector. The Committee of Forestry and Hunting of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan, private hunting concessions and civil society received international expertise and technical advice in this processes.

Series of stakeholder meetings to understand the current situation in the sector and elaborate recommendations on entry points for reforms and changes in the field on sustainable use of wildlife have been conducted. As a result of these consultations regional knowledge exchange on best wildlife use practices has been triggered.

The Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan received a small grant to improve the system of wildlife monitoring and data collection outside of protected areas and enable the setting of sustainable limits for wildlife off-takes and hunting quotas.

Through our support of the transboundary initiatives the **Central Asian countries** act in conservation of migratory species as well in implementation of the CMS. They conduct dialogue process to identify and address gaps and needs for the conservation of migratory mammals in Central Asia. Programme of Work, developed in preparation of a broader initiative to comprise all activities aimed at conserving large migratory mammals and implementing CMS in the Central Asian region is seen as a major activity for the entire region.

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