



WCS Mongolia



Saving Wildlife and Wild Places

Discover ... Protect ... Inspire

Our Mission

WCS saves wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature.

WCS Mongolia's mission is the conservation of Mongolia's wildlife and its intact landscapes, particularly the vast expanses of the Eastern Steppe and the Southern Gobi. WCS Mongolia is dedicated to science-based, long-term, and landscape-level conservation.

We work with governments, communities, NGO-s, and industry to maintain biodiversity, ensure landscape connectivity, and contribute to sustainable management of resources. When combined, these goals will lead to resilient ecosystems in Mongolia that support thriving populations of wildlife and the livelihoods of local communities.



WCS History in Mongolia

Founded in 1895 in the United States with the initial purpose of saving bison populations from extinction, the Wildlife Conservation Society now operates in more than 60 countries around the globe. WCS first entered Mongolia when our senior conservationist, Dr George Schaller, came to study snow leopards, Gobi bears, Bactrian camels, Argali, and Mongolian gazelles in 1989. He led the first ever radio collaring of snow leopards in the world.

In 1993, he helped initiate a UNDP-GEF conservation project, which led to the implementation of the WCS Eastern Steppe Biodiversity Project. In 2003, the WCS office was officially opened in Ulaanbaatar, after which the Living Landscapes Program, and the SCAPES Program were respectively commenced. Over the past twenty years, WCS Mongolia has undertaken a range of activities, including research on wildlife hunting and trade, wildlife movements, distribution, abundance, and productivity, and wildlife health, protected area and community support, wildlife law development and enforcement, and planning for wildlife-friendly mining development including modified road and railroad designs.

Wildlife Research

One of the core activities of WCS Mongolia is research on wildlife species using the latest scientific methods to understand their population dynamics, behavior, distribution, movement patterns, poaching related mortality levels, and disease risks, among others.



Eight Landscape Species

Using our global conservation planning framework, the Landscape Species Approach (LSA), we identified eight priority species for the Eastern Steppe. These indicator species, which provide the foundation for our conservation strategies, enable us to identify and monitor threats to biodiversity across the region. The eight species include: Mongolian gazelle, grey wolf, Siberian marmot, white-naped crane, eastern moose, saker falcon, Asiatic grass frog, and taimen. Our research has especially focused on Mongolian gazelle, white-naped crane, and marmot, and includes distribution and density studies, community perception surveys, and provision of data to help wildlife managers identify priority sites and improve management.

Ungulates

We use distance sampling and telemetry to study the population size, movement patterns, and mortality rates of ungulates (hoofed-animals), including Mongolian gazelle, saiga antelope, khulan, and goitered gazelle. Radio collaring of ungulates is an invaluable method for monitoring the potential adverse impacts of linear infrastructure (railways and roads) on wildlife movements and survival- impacts that are becoming increasingly important as Mongolia rapidly increases linear infrastructure development over the coming years.



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Foot and mouth disease

The origins and vectors of foot and mouth disease (FMD) is a contentious topic among the stakeholders affected by the disease, especially livestock herders. Our studies indicate that Mongolian gazelles are very unlikely to cause outbreaks of FMD, but rather victims of livestock disease spill over. These findings have widespread policy implications because gazelles have often been the target of FMD elimination efforts. To reduce rates of unnecessary culling of Mongolian gazelle, we organized a national workshop to disseminate science-based information on FMD transmission, including the relative roles of vehicles crossing international borders, livestock and Mongolian gazelles.

Avian Influenza

WCS has worked intensively on the outbreak characteristics of highly pathogenic avian influenza virus (HPAIV) H5N1 to determine its presence among free-living water bird populations, and to determine seasonal and annual variation in prevalence and diversity. Other studies, such as that on low pathogenic avian influenza virus, were able to detect Influenza A virus subtype H3N8. As a result, we are working to determine relationships between the avian H3N8 virus and the equine H3N8 virus.



Advocacy for Science-based Policy

Brandt's voles are perceived as major pastureland pests by herders because they appear to compete with livestock for forage. The popular management response has been aerial spraying to kill the voles. However, spraying has had the unintended effect of killing other species. WCS has helped create a dialogue around the negative consequences of aerial spraying, and about raising awareness of the conditions that lead to vole population outbreaks in the first place, namely overgrazing.

Community Based Conservation

WCS works with herder communities in the Eastern Steppe, because in this vast landscape, where people, livestock and wildlife co-exist, secure livelihoods enhance community stability, which in turn supports long-term conservation goals. Much of our work involves supporting herders to develop community-based natural resource management plans. Community partnerships are responsible for managing land important for marmots, waterfowl, and gazelles. One goal of the management planning process is to enable communities to sustainably harvest wildlife within biological and legal limits. WCS works closely with the Eastern Mongolian Community Conservation Association (EMCCA), including assisting in collaborative work with local governments. Additionally, our work includes the dissemination of information about wildlife natural history and hunting laws, and training for local people on how to monitor wildlife on community lands.



RARE Pride Campaign



WCS engaged in an intensive social marketing campaign focused on the Mongolian gazelle, called the RARE Pride Campaign in Toson Khulstai Nature Reserve and Choibalsan city. This campaign aimed to raise people's sense of knowledge and pride for the gazelle, with a resulting reduction in hunting levels.

Protected Area Management

WCS Mongolia works predominantly with protected areas in the Daurian Steppe and the Gobi desert, with an emphasis on trans-boundary protected areas, including Mongol Daguur and Nomrog Special Protected Areas. The Daurian Steppe ecoregion spans across most of eastern Mongolia and also includes parts of Russia and China. As such, the proper management of migratory waterfowl and other wildlife requires collaboration between the relevant jurisdictions. WCS assists with protected area management planning and law enforcement training among rangers (volunteer, soum and protected area rangers), border guards, and special agents.



President Elbegdorj recognizing the launch of Sustainable Conservation Approaches in Priority Ecosystems (SCAPES) at the WCS Headquarters. One component of the SCAPES Program is to strengthen the capacity of transboundary protected areas.



Wildlife Trade

Wildlife hunting and trade continue to be one of the most critical threats to wildlife around the world, and Mongolia is no exception. WCS conducted one of the first comprehensive evaluations of wildlife trade in Mongolia. Our findings revealed that most economically important wildlife species in Mongolia are enduring tremendous levels of poaching. The fur trade, for example, threatens Siberian and Altai marmots, grey wolf, red fox, corsac fox, red squirrel, snow leopard, brown bear, lynx, and Pallas' cat. Our study, entitled 'Silent Steppe: The Illegal Wildlife Trade Crisis', was based on surveys of markets and households across Mongolia, analysis of wildlife trade violation documents, and an extensive literature review.

This research led to the formation of the multi-agency inspection team (consisting of protected area authority, environmental protection agency, police, customs, intelligence agency, mayor's office, food market authorities), which regularly patrols areas in Eastern Mongolia for poaching activities, and food markets for illegal trade. With the help of a broad informant network and a publicly advertised reporting hotline, this multi-agency team now regularly patrols Eastern Mongolia for illegal hunting and trade activities.



Studies indicate a 75% decline in marmots between 1990-2002 in Mongolia.



Infrastructure

WCS recognizes that development is important for the nation's economy. However, haphazard development can result in unnecessary harm to Mongolia's wildlife and landscapes. In the face of rapid economic development expectations throughout the country, WCS is concerned about the impact of linear infrastructure development on the nomadic, long-distance movements of wildlife species. Consequently, we are working with the government of Mongolia to develop a regulatory framework that requires current infrastructure projects to incorporate wildlife-friendly design elements.

Extractive Industries

We also work directly with private industry to closely monitor the environmental impacts of mining and associated infrastructure development, and to advise them on the best ways to mitigate and offset adverse impacts on wildlife and vegetation. The ultimate goal, jointly supported by WCS and private industry, is a net positive impact on regional biodiversity during the life of the mine.



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RARE Conservation

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Eastern Mongolia Protected Area
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General Agency for Specialized Inspection

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Wildlife Science and Conservation Center
(WSCC)

People Centered Conservation (PCC)



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You can learn more about our organization (i.e. the WCS Conservation Leadership and Internship Programs, and the monthly Biobeer gatherings) from our Facebook page (**Wildlife Conservation Society Mongolia**), Twitter account (**@WCSMongolia**), or our website (**mongolia.wcs.org**).