A LIFELONG ENGAGEMENT FOR NATURE

The International Takhi Group is not interested only in the
horses. Indeed, even though the takhi is our main focus, you cannot conserve a species without caring for its habitat, which includes a network of intersecting plant and animal species. Therefore, many of ITG’s activities include habitat management. A good park management by the rangers is extremely important. This means that we support the elaboration of a management plan that includes the utilization of the park by nomads and their livestock. Despite the large size of the Gobi B, our research has shown that the home-range of the takhi already extends beyond the park borders. For that reason, ITG supports the idea of enlarging the park.

Mongolia is not the only country where takhi roam. Just across the border in China, there are also wild horses.

In former times, the takhi’s home-range extended from Mongolia and China through Central Asia all the way to Europe. Since its extinction in the wild, several visionaries have worked on bringing the takhi back to the wild. Apart from Mongolia, China started a reintroduction program in the provinces of Xinjiang and Guangdong in the early 1990s. There is an information exchange between ITU and the Wild Horse Broadcasting and Research Center in Xinjiang, as partnership and cooperation in such a difficult project are very important. In the late 19th century, takhis were being hunted in northern Xinjiang, so there was a continuous population reaching into Mongolia. This makes us ask whether suitable habitats in both countries might be reconnected through a wildlife corridor, allowing steppe animals to migrate seasonally.

You have just been with other board members in Kazakhstan. Yes, we involved through the vast steps of central-western Kazakhstan of steppes of Hulunbuir working on the reintroduction of khulans, another endangered equid. The sole of great white steppes, white steppes and camels in the golden steppe is just wonderful. As the khulans will be back in Kazakhstan within a few weeks after our visit, the only species missing to complete the picture of grazers and browsers there is the takhi. Hopefully, the dream of seeing takhis in Kazakhstan, too, will come true someday soon!

What can Mongolians do to support the work of the International Takhi Group?

The project in the Great Gobi B is a national Mongolian project but ITG is working closely with people in the government, the soums and provinces who all are very supportive. A project like the reintroduction of the takhi, ending their extinction in the wild, is a very challenging conservation task. Its success is a reason for pride as the project was initiated by Mongolians. But to succeed, it needs people who put their hearts into it, like the rangers working in the park. One way of helping is to support the project’s goals and activities. But we also need money for salaries, cars, gasoline, infrastructure maintenance, hay and so on. I do hope that the generally Mongolian story of bringing the takhi home inspires other companies and private owners in Mongolia to support the Friends of the Takhi with a donation.