

INTERNATIONAL TAKHI-GROUP

Re-introduction Project Great Gobi B Annual Report 2013



International Takhi-Group

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Editorial

It is a great pleasure to be able to count 2013 as a great success again. The main topic during this year was the enlargement of the Gobi B SPA from 9'300 km² to nearly 24'000 km². It is based on a great idea and an even greater commitment. To build a transnational international Peace Park in the region of Mongolia and China had been in the minds of our experts for some time already: it would create one of the largest areas globally for migrating species and allow 'flagship' Takhis, Khulans, Gazelles to roam long distances without barriers.

The director of the Great Gobi B SPA, Oyunsaikhan Ganbaatar, has absorbed this idea and prepared its implementation through an admirable effort in scientific, political and administrative terms. He seized the favorable political opportunity after the last change of government and was supported in this endeavor by his employees, the ITG board and further partners.

May the project develop into a formal Act of Parliament in 2014. To reach this goal, Mongolia follows a process of exemplary democracy: the National Parliament requires approval by the Aimag's parliaments, which rely on the decisions of the *Sums* parliaments and, in turn, those of the *Bags*. Accordingly, all objections and framework requirements have to be collected and analyzed in order to find solutions.

The Takhi population has grown to 90 animals in 2013. Thus nearly half the loss caused by the severe winter of 2010 has been regained. Another transport of four mares from Prague to Takhintal organized by Prague Zoo and the Czech Airforce has further improved future perspectives. The collaboration with Prague Zoo is developing very well.

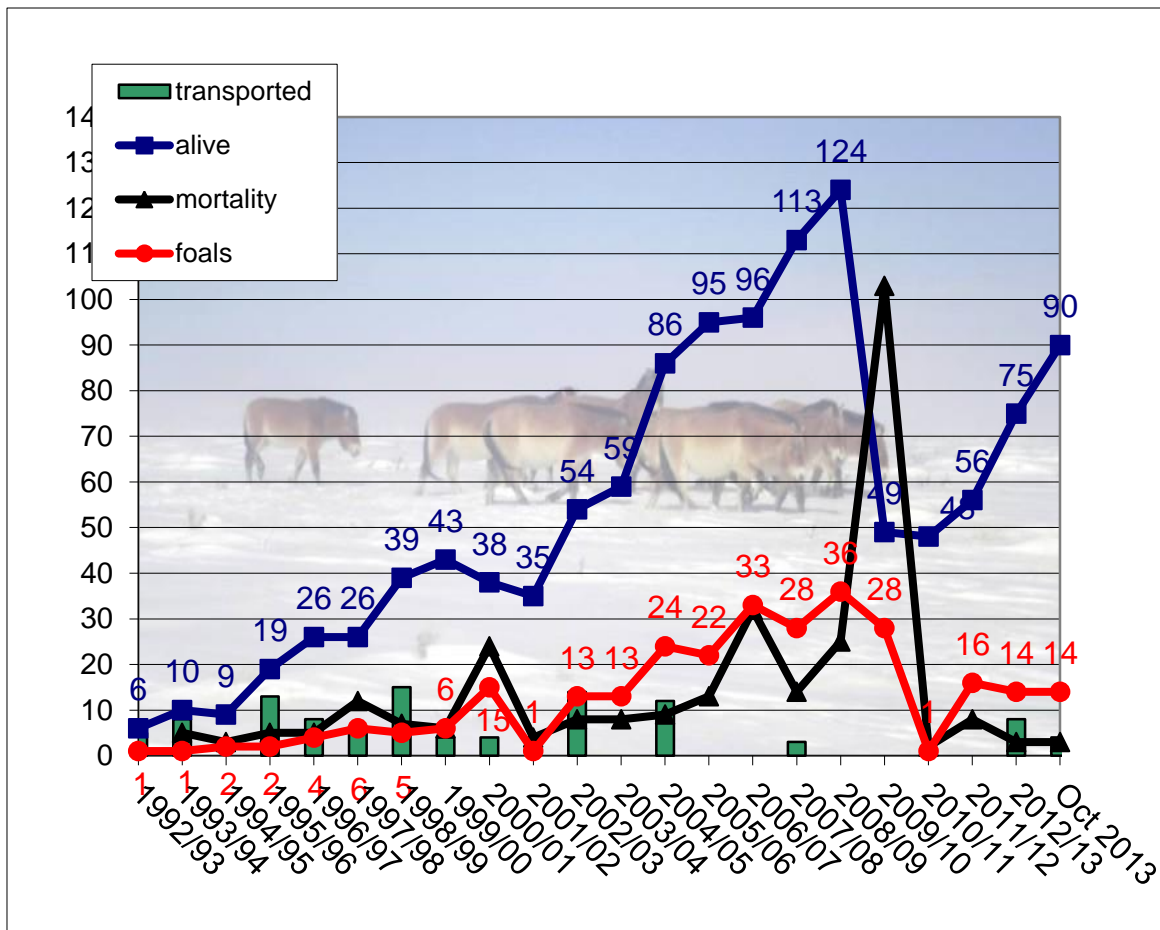
Thomas Pfisterer, president of the ITG

Report

Population Development

Until mid-June, the soil of Great Gobi B was able to absorb sufficient humidity to allow good development of flora and fauna. In November 2013, the Takhi population has reached 76 adults and 14 foals forming six harems and several bachelor groups. During summertime, there were again intense dynamics between and within the groups.

On July 2nd, Prague Zoo again brought 4 mares to Takhintal. The transfer was successful, and the animals are in a good shape. The mares brought to Takhintal in 2012 were released in June and are roaming Great Gobi B with a young stallion named Erhen.

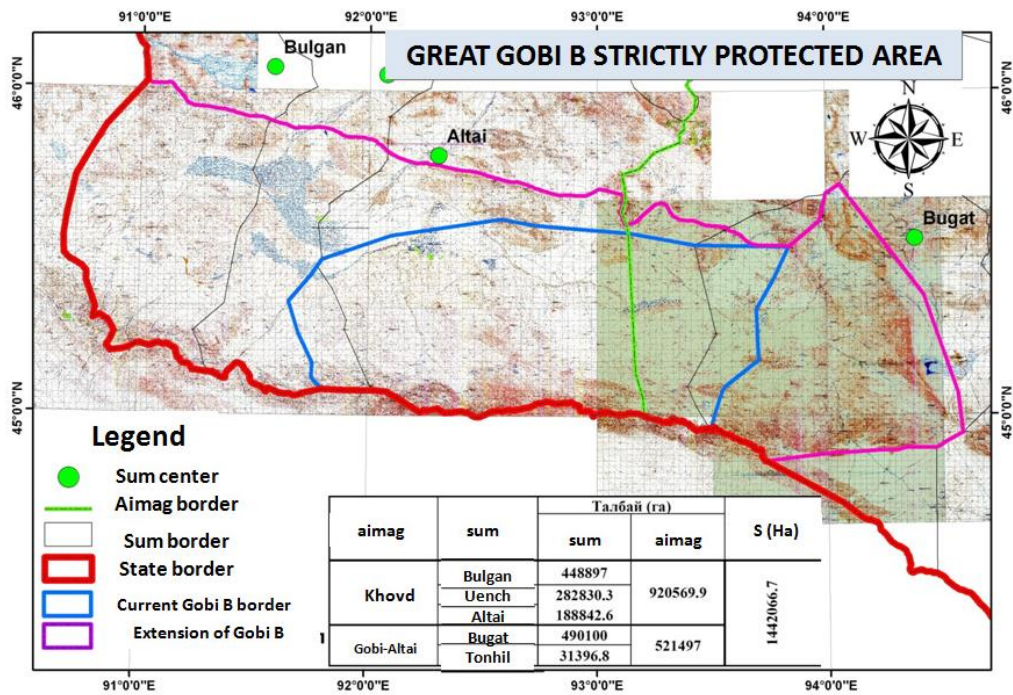


Enlargement of the SPA

One of the most important topics in 2013 was the western expansion of the protected area in the Great Gobi B. It would more than double the current area of 9'300 km² to nearly 24'000 km². The additional habitat offers further ecological niches and waterholes.

Since early 2013, O. Ganbaatar has been tireless in conducting discussions, informing nomads and speaking to authorities and parliamentarians of the *Aimags*, *Sums* and *Bags*. He collected objections and processed them, thus increasing confidence in the project. This phase of democratic opinion-building is still ongoing; further assemblies are in preparation until the parliament in Ulaanbaatar will decide upon the matter. President Elbegdorj as well as Minister Oyun of the «Ministry of Environment and Green Development» have promised their support. In preparatory talks with them, an increase in the number of rangers could be proposed as well. This is an important precondition for maintaining Great Gobi B SPA as one of the best-managed National Parks after the expansion.

The enlargement of the Great Gobi B SPA would be a pivotal step towards an extended, transnational Peace Park offering migratory species such as Takhis, Khulans and Gazelles a varied range of habitats for sustainable survival.



Research

In June, Chris Walzer's research team fitted four Takhis with GPS transmitters. The data generated allow researchers to follow the wanderings of two harem groups and two bachelors in the Takhin Us vicinity, as well as their spatial behaviour. However, one collar had to be removed from a stallion in November after it became dislocated and restrained the animal. The GPS data can be downloaded from the ITG website (www.savethewildhorse.org).



In addition, FIWI (Research Institute of Wildlife Ecology at the University of Veterinary Medicine in Vienna), also conducted bi-monthly wildlife monitorings under the lead of Chris Walzer and Petra Kaczensky.

Communication

In December 2012, the completely relaunched website went online in German and English. The Mongolian version followed in June 2013 (www.savethewildhorse.mn). This, together with the new information brochure of the ITG which is available in all three languages, ensures that interested parties can continuously update on the goals and newest developments of ITG. In the mid-term, these measures will hopefully help to increase the number of „Friends of the Wild Horse“ and win potential donators.

Partnerships

The president of Mongolia, T. Elbegdorj, made a gift of three Takhis to Tama Zoo in Japan. They were transported from Switzerland to Japan in January. At the same time, ITG has applied for support from Tama zoo; the answer is expected in April 2014.

FIWI (Research Institute of Wildlife Ecology at the University of Veterinary Medicine in Vienna) has again been a very important research partner for the ITG by providing the scientific basis for the success of the project.

Financial situation

2103 was characterized by a strained financial situation. Expenses had to be planned with care and in balance with the cashflow. The still sensitive economic situation seems to have led to a decline of donations compared to previous years. Fortunately, the «Takhi-Post» which was sent to all «Friends of the Wild Horse» triggered a substantial increase in incoming payments, which helped to slightly relax the situation.

More than 20 applications for support have been written to Swiss foundations in 2013. By the end of the year, four of them resulted in a positive answer, enabling ITG to use some of the money to cover research costs (CHF 16'000.-), salaries and running maintenance costs at Takhintal (CHF 20'000.-).

Socio-Economics

In September, the accompanying economical project of the Czech Development Agency in the Gobi B was completed. A little hospital in Bij, 10 km from Tahkintal, was completely renovated and supplied with medications and medical devices. At the same time the agency helped the community to set up a center for artisans and craftsmen, where they can meet to produce handicrafts out of felt and other local products.



Takhi Clubs

The Takhintal team provides an important contribution to environmental education in surrounding schools. It helped to establish Takhi Clubs in Altai and Bugat. In 2013, two field trips to Takhintal were organized for young students from regional schools. Ganbaatar and his team of rangers informed their visitors about Przewalski's horses and their life in the Dzungarian Gobi. These field-trips for the local nomads are an important instrument for the mutual understanding. The kids offered great self-made pictures as a thank you for the exciting day.



Staff of the International Takhi-Group

Board

Thomas Pfisterer, President	Reinhard Schnidrig, Vice-president
Christian Stauffer, Executive Secretary	Chris Walzer, Research Coordinator
Mirjam Würsch, Media/Website	Rebekka Blumer, Treasurer
Ruth Baumgartner, Board Member	Sven Hoffmann, Board Member
Anita Fahrni, Board Member	Evzen Kus, Board Member

The entire board works in an honorary capacity. ITG maintains an office at Ulaanbaatar and manages the Great Gobi B Strictly Protected Area (SPA) together with the Mongolian government.

Our co-founder and Honorary President of the International Takhi-Group, **Jean-Pierre Siegfried**, died on Saturday October 5th, 2013. With his passion, driving force and courage he had laid an important foundation to the re-introduction of the Takhi in Mongolia. We are deeply grateful for all his efforts. Our deepest sorrows and thoughts are with his family. Beyond his death, he made sure that both through ITG and through the Jean-Pierre and Sonja Siegfried Foundation his dedication and support for rare equids and the Takhis in particular will live on.

Mongolian office

Enksaikhan N., Manager

Employees in the Great Gobi B SPA

Ganbaatar O., Director	Altansukh N., Deputy Director
Baatarsuren D., Senior Ranger	Nisekhkhoo G., Ranger
Chinbat B., Ranger	Batsuuri B., Ranger
Baast Z., Ranger	Oinbayar L., Ranger
Amgalan Ya., Ranger	Ganbataa H., Ranger
Altantseseg E., Veterinarian Assistant	Tunga S., Cook
Tumur N., Housekeeper	



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