

**Project Update: July 2015**

Context	Rufford Foundation (Sponsor)	Fauna & Flora International	European Association of Zoos and Aquariums
<b>1. Correspondent</b>	Simon Hicks Independent Advisor Conservation Works	Richard Allcorn, Projects Manager for Saiga work for the last 10 months.	Angela Glatston Ph.D Rotterdam Zoo
<b>2. Entry point</b>	(FFI) Director for Eurasia ... mentioned saiga as having the potential for a Zoo Counterpart Initiative, a concept that combines the resources of international conservation NGOs with zoos to conserve species in their habitats.	I look forward to any responses and suggestions	Anyway, let me know what you are thinking of and we can see how we might be able to work together.  ..... The EAZA Antelope and Giraffe TAG are very interested in working to support any conservation initiatives surrounding the saiga.
	Angela – we don't want to tread on any toes here, please advise re potential problems arising.		I don't think (treading on toes) is a problem as far as zoos are concerned. We are interested in supporting others, but it is not a specific zoo programme.
<b>3. Aim</b>	I suggest that you introduce yourselves ... in terms of your work with Saiga and tell each other what your problems and needs are. You will become a case study for the Zoo Counterpart Initiative	We are looking for ways to expand and strengthen our saiga/steppe programme and looking for partners and initiatives that we feel will do this. Our strategy, in development as we investigate opportunities with ministries and other partners, would be potentially to support wide ranging anti-poaching patrols and more community ranger initiatives. We are looking at the possibilities of protected area work, especially as the protected area in Uzbekistan is little more than a paper park at the moment.	I was asked by the European zoo antelope group (the Antelope TAG) to contact some of the saiga researchers working in Kalmykia and see if there was anything the European zoos could do to help the saiga.  ..... The saiga is a European species and thus we in the TAG feel we must play a role in trying to preserve it.
<b>4. Background issue</b>		A main driver of the poaching is horn for traditional Chinese medicine and this needs to be addressed either by eliminating the opportunity to, or need	

		for, poaching ...	
	Do we know what the 'horn medication' is meant to do? Would flooding the market with Viagra do the trick?!	<p>Saiga Antelope horn is used in calming the liver to check endogenous wind, clearing away heat from the liver to improve acuity of vision and clearing away heat and toxin.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Hunting for meat is definitely an issue in the Ustyurt region but from other non-FFI work the indications were that horn poaching was a great problem.</p>	The poaching in Kalmykia was/is also for meat. I am sure that the horn is also extremely important but poaching seems to have increased with the collapse of state-controlled agriculture. Partly the meant people needed to make money but also, they needed meat.
		<p>... or by creating a sustainable and regulated source of saiga horn to bypass the black market (a suggestion of the Chinese delegates to the Convention of Migratory Species (Saiga) meeting in Almaty last year).</p> <p>.....</p> <p>I would agree from my limited knowledge of the captive breeding and the trade that you wouldn't be able to export saiga products legally at the moment.</p>	I think it will be difficult in the short term to export such products over the border to China. Undoubtedly it would be possible to use the products of saiga farms from within China. (they do after all have tiger farms). In the short term I do not get the impression that captive breeding is successful enough to be able to sustain commercial harvesting for horn at present.
	Have you checked CITES for opinion whether species captive bred for their biproducts <u>reduces</u> illegal trade?	No, haven't checked but there is I think already one saiga farm established in China. I wasn't precisely advocating this route but identifying it after a suggestion by a Chinese delegation.	
<b>5. Current Activities</b>	Angela, do you want to hear more about this?	The work so far has been the establishment of 2 relatively small scale "pilot" projects. Firstly, addressing rural poverty driven saiga poaching by providing alternative livelihood grants to the poorest, and therefore most likely to poach, elements of the	The EAZA Antelope and Giraffe TAG are very interested in working to support any conservation initiatives surrounding the saiga. This was how I came to be involved with finding support for the Kalmykia programme. We chose for Anna's work because at the time she approached us

		community. Secondly, we have just begun an initiative in Uzbekistan to mobilise poachers and hunters to act as community rangers and advocates for saiga.	regarding saiga problems and her need for support. I eventually got her some funding from the Dutch Zoo Federation's conservation fund. The fact that the Large Herbivore Foundation (also a Dutch based organisation) was involved helped gain this support. Saiga conservation will never be a major zoo project because we do not hold many saiga in our collections.
	Richard, Is there any literature on results? E.g., How are you evaluating success? What incentive greater than the profits from poaching are you advocating?	This is new ground for us and we have belatedly started to try and evaluate the success more formally. We have no results presently because a) no baseline was implemented at the start & b) sample sizes are really unscientifically small.	
<b>6. Problem!</b>		Possibly the biggest problem is addressing effective conservation over such a large migratory range and across one, sometimes two, international borders. This is a serious limitation to our livelihood approach as it stands at the moment, especially as it is apparent that a proportion of the poaching is by organised "urban" gangs rather than rural poor.	
	Do we know why urban gangs? Is it cash or sport driven?	Agreed. By 'urban' I meant non-rural communities who are organized into better supported poaching gangs or crews rather than the odd individual from villages who is almost just trying his luck at getting saiga horn. Very little sport hunting for saiga in Ustyurt. Might be more of a problem in Betpak Dala?	Hunting by "urban" gangs would seem to be for profit in Kalmykia rather than for sport but then in Kalmykia the term "urban" is relevant, we are not talking Moscow's Mafia rich.

<p><b>7. Programme</b></p>	<p>Angela – do you need to know more?</p>	<p>FFIs Saiga programme (or more broadly a steppe rehabilitation programme focusing on saiga as a flagship and a keystone) has been slowly gathering strength and presence over the last 3 years. It is, though, still noticeably small.</p>	
	<p>Richard – anything written/ sharable yet? Have you got anything on the ‘steppe rehabilitation programme?’ (not too long!)</p>	<p>Not readily to hand – this is a new direction for us that we are actively promoting to be honest. Up until the end of 2006 we were approaching this as a purely saiga conservation programme. We now see it as a broader landscape scale approach but are still creating our parameters. I have saiga material I can share.</p>	
<p><b>8. Rationale and implications</b></p>	<p>Angela – Do we know what other TAGs are doing about species Richard mentions? <b>How are TAGs at working together?</b></p>	<p>We see the saiga work as a key component of our Eurasia strategy, both for the sake of the individual species, and also for its role and position in any steppe rehabilitation programme (numerous big species have been lost from the region such as wild ass, non-domesticated Bactrian camel, Przewalski's horse, even asiatic cheetah so it is very important to win with saiga ).</p>	<p>I know of no TAG work with wild camels, but the Equid TAG does support the P. horse reintroduction programme and <b>horses are going from zoos in Europe and possible now from N. America to the programme.</b></p>
	<p>Richard – gone for good? The latest WAZA Conservation Strategy has zoo bred P. horses being released in Gobi B on its front cover!</p>	<p>Nothing is gone for good (except perhaps the Caspian Tiger) but what is realistically recoverable in Kazakhstan is another question. P Horse has been successfully re-introduced into 3 reserves in Mongolia and is wild breeding again (with a few teething problems as always). ..... <b>Was talk about re-introducing it to Kazak but</b></p>	<p>..... .... <b>I am not sure why the TAG has been less supportive of the Kazak reintroduction</b></p>

		<p>not sure where or when or if. Wild ass I think has been re-introduced to a small preserve and is stable but not expanding. Only wild camels still going are in Mongolia. Asiatic cheetah is elusive – best estimates are a few dozen individuals in Iran.</p>	<p>programme for P. horses – I was told but have forgotten. Wild ass reintroductions do not, as far as I am aware, involve any European zoos.</p>
<b>9. Demography</b>		<p>(As you may be aware there are now 4 discrete saiga populations - 1 in Kalmykia, 1 trans-Volga, the Ustyurt plateau population and the central Kazakhstan Betpak Dala population - plus of course the sub-species of Mongolian saiga).</p>	
<b>10. Target population</b>	<p>Angela - is there any reason why EAZA needs to restrict itself to supporting the Kalmykia population?</p> <p>Richard - Your population-specific (rather than development necessarily) approach will find interest among some potential zoo counterparts.</p>	<p>We have been focusing on the Ustyurt population, located between the Caspian &amp; the Aral 'Sea' (the population migrates between Kazakhstan &amp; Uzbekistan (occasionally wintering as far south as Turkmenistan),</p> <p>...This population was chosen as a) at the time it had only recently started being hunted/poached so was more or less intact &amp; b) no other major conservation effort was targeting this population.</p>	<p>I think the zoos are interested in trying to conserve the saiga and will be willing to assist the FFI programme.</p>
<b>11. Contacts and Links</b>		<p>... we have good relations and communications with Anna Lushekina and the Kalmykian Saiga group.</p>	<p>I have been in contact with Anna Lushekina to write a proposal to the Dutch Zoo organization for a grant for her work. We were successful and this money was used to build a new captive breeding facility for saiga in Kalmykia and to support an education programme as well.</p>
	<p>Richard – sounds as if you ought to see what is being/can be achieved with Zoo support. Can</p>	<p>I am more or less aware of what Anna and the Kalmyks have achieved but have been trying to</p>	<p>We have received quite good reports from Kalmykia and could probably get more detailed information if that</p>

	<p>you visit?</p>	<p>develop a way of getting out there but currently we just don't have the free funding to visit Kalmykia. I am writing it into the plans, but it is not likely in the short term unfortunately.</p>	<p>would help Richard get an idea of what might be achieved</p>
	<p>Richard - You will find experience among zoos for protected area work. E.g., <a href="mailto:Nick.Lindsay@zsl.org">Nick.Lindsay@zsl.org</a>. The King Khalid Wildlife Research Centre, with Zoo Society of London supporting, bred and released large numbers of <i>Gazella gazella</i> &amp; <i>G. subgutturosa</i>. The fenced pre-release areas open into unfenced, protected wild areas, patrolled by rangers who use radio collars for post release monitoring.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Very much a part – though I have no idea how active Steppe Forward is, I would say not very. Nick will know better. I'm going to bring him in, you may hear from him.</p>	<p>Coincidentally, have interest in <i>subgutturosa</i> for another of our projects in the Caucasus!</p> <p>Will try and follow up on this contact at some point.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Is ZSL part of the EAZA? They have their 'Steppe Forward' programme dealing with similar issues in Mongolia.</p>	<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>ZSL is part of EAZA and Nick usually attends our TAG meetings, but I have never heard him talk of Steppe Forward in any context. He certainly has not mentioned it in terms of the TAG's policy to support the saiga</p>

<p><b>12. Breeding for release</b></p>	<p>Angela – So maybe we are asking the wrong zoos to be counterparts? Where should we look for zoos with the right climate? E Europe countries? Canada? Calgary could be interested. We may want others to join a breeding and release programme – what is the situation on moving animals between E and W European countries?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Angela - Slightly at odds with your info that they are sending P horses back to the wild? (8 above) Though I do so agree with breeding for release 'in range'.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Angela – it sounds to me as if we should get CITES involved a.s.a.p. to guide us through this. Is there someone at CITES you know and like, with the regional knowledge we are looking for? Or shall I have a forage? Would it be premature to add this person to your TAG invitations?</p>		<p>However, I am not certain about a captive breeding effort in zoos. ... but despite many attempts by reputable zoos in western Europe we have had little success with the species we think the problem may be that the climates are often too wet.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Involving N.American zoos would not be a good option, there are questions of import permits (CITES Appendix 1) not to mention a nightmare of veterinary laws to deal with.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>I think this needs to be looked at in the context of Europe. Moving animals between East and West Europe (where the east European zoos are not in the EU) has similar veterinary problems and CITES permits will be complicated if we are discussing wild caught or F1 animals.</p>
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<p><b>13. Opportunity</b></p>	<p>Angela – Could the Ukraine Zoo be a ‘Zoo Counterpart’. They won’t have any money, so can we find an EAZA Zoo Counterpart to fund the CBP at the Ukraine Zoo?</p> <p>Can you tell us more about the Ukraine Zoo? This could be interesting.</p> <p>Angela – it would be good if you can find the name.</p>	<p>The idea of a captive breeding centre in either Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan has also been mooted but this has not been developed as we haven't, to date at least, the capacity in this area.</p>	<p>There is a good herd of saiga in one of the zoos in Ukraine</p> <p>I don’t think the problem is money. They (name eludes me at present) have a large herd of saiga which they have maintained for a number of years and which I think are showing inbreeding/domestication changes. However they might be persuadable to participate in some kind of official breeding and reintroduction programme</p>
	<p>Angela - Quite agree, but if we want to encourage zoos towards a more conservation role, it would be good to offer them the option of managing the game farm – with counterpart help?</p>		<p>I think that a good saiga breeding programme probably needs a safari park type environment or a game farm idea rather than a traditional zoo – we need large groups of animals and to be geared for a rapid turnover of stock. This does not fit well into zoo practice.</p>
<p><b>14. Collaboration Opportunities</b></p>		<p>Our future work will look to continue with our involvement in Uzbekistan and develop our programme in Kazakhstan. We will look to support or become involved in other saiga population activities (eg Kalmykia) where we can be useful and where our capacity allows.</p>	
	<p>What about your sector, Richard, who else is doing what on the Steppe? WCS? CI? WWF?</p> <p>What other conservation sectors are working in the area, animal welfare? Game farming? Government? Other?</p>		

	Richard - ?	<p>Anna was quite keen when I last met her to get FFI involved more in Kalmykia but at the time our capacity meant we wanted to concentrate properly on the Ustyurt but it is still in our strategy.</p> <p>Not sure what type of co-operation to suggest at this stage. Tapping into people like Nick's experience would be useful ...</p> <p>Beyond that our capacity on the ground in Kzk is probably a limiting factor currently to creating a captive breeding centre although maybe meeting in June to discuss options could start building towards such strategies.</p>	<p>So, there is a basis for a zoo link with saiga conservation at least in Kalmykia.</p> <p>So, it depends on what kind of cooperation you were thinking of, we may be able to build on this Kalmykia link.</p> <p>This is a good topic for discussion in June. We are expecting members of the Large Herbivore Foundation to join us so this will assist the discussion. Hopefully (but not definitely) the coordinator of the P.horse programmes.</p>
<b>15. A Developing Strategy</b>		<p>What perhaps could be a long term strategy would be the establishment of breeding centres to re-establish wild numbers and then when wild populations are recovered and safe to service (as viable economic units) the TCM trade.</p>	<p>I agree this is a workable option</p>
<b>16. Action steps</b>	<p>Richard – do you need help with education materials?</p> <p>Angela – do you have everyone/ everything you need, or would you like me to contact IZE?</p> <p>Let's be clear whether the zoos are in or ex range.</p>	<p>... and using zoos as a platform to promote the work would be beneficial.</p>	<p>What zoos can do is provide a venue for FFI to tell people about the steppe programme,</p>
	Do you need fundraising for radios, uniforms, other needs?	Yes. We are working on this within FFI fundraising streams.	... and we can help with some fundraising.
	Oh and thanks for the invitation to join your	As things stand I am in the UK for June 18-20 (and	I think it would be good to develop some ideas

	<p>TAG Angela. I'm afraid i'll be stuck in Congo, chimp-sitting. Any chance this matches your next home trip, Richard?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Super, I'll write you an agenda - to use or ignore at will! So sorry to miss this. Please keep me copied on your arrangements etc.</p>	<p>conveniently close to Woburn!). I do manage a number of other projects so can't categorically say I am available yet but would be very interested in attending and discussing.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Woburn in June looks definite if it is still an open invite. Paul Hotham (Eurasia regional director) is interested in coming as well if that is possible but his timetable isn't set yet so just thought I'd mention it for now.</p>	<p>together, preferably face to face. One thing which might be possible is that you (both) join our next TAG meeting. We are planning a mid-year meeting in Woburn safari park in June (18-20). It would be great if Richard were around to tell us about FFI steppe programme and we could then talk further over future cooperation. What do you think?</p>
	<p>'Capacity building' is a rather new concept for zoos, but is the core discipline of FFI, so there is an immediate coupling of need with solution... How?</p>		
	<p>... Reconnaissance of East European Zoos to produce a short list of facilities best suited to join a 'captive breeding for release' strategy ... approach animal welfare?</p>		
	<p>Another will be an EAZA led recruitment of its member zoos as counterparts - perhaps a relaunch of Steppe Forward (Steppe Wise?!)</p>		
	<p>Once a plan is shaping up, contact other TAGs working with spp in the same region; Reintro Specialist Group; other?</p>		
	<p>Treat Saiga as a model for a Steppe mega-fauna programme, to meet FFI broader aim and zoo appeal – especially E. European.</p>		
	<p>Organize briefing on effect of climate</p>		

	change on steppe and spp - <u>early</u> in programme.		
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