Wildlife

Saiga antelope numbers rise after mass die-off

A recent aerial survey has revealed that the numbers of all three saiga populations in Kazakhstan are going up, Mongabay reports

Shreya Dasgupta for Mongabay, part of the Guardian Environment Network

Monday 20 June 2016 12.46 BST

Shares 103 Comments 2
Save for later



About 200,000 saiga antelopes died last year likely due to a bacterial infection. Photograph: Anatoly Ustinenko/AFP/Getty Images

Last year, catastrophe hit saiga antelopes in Kazakhstan. About 200,000 of these critically endangered antelopes died in Betpak-Dala in May, deeply worrying conservationists. The deaths, scientists eventually found, were most likely caused by bacterial infection.

But there may be hope for these severely threatened migratory mammals.

A recent aerial survey of saigas carried out from April 18 to May 3, 2016 has revealed that the numbers of all three saiga populations in Kazakhstan—Ural, Betpak-Dala and Ustyurt — are going up. The surveys were conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan in partnership with the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK) and JSC "Kazaviaspas", Kazakhstan government announced on Tuesday.

"The news about recovering saiga populations in Kazakhstan is a sign of hope after the catastrophic mass saiga die-off event in 2015," Bradnee Chambers, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), said in a statement.



Saiga distribution map. Photograph: Steffen Zuther/Mongabay

The surveys counted a total of 108,300 adult saigas. The Ural population has about 70,200 individuals, up from 51,700 in 2015, while the Ustyurt population has around 1,900 individuals, up from 1,200 in 2015. The Betpak-Dala population also showed promise with about 36,200 individuals, the results revealed.

"This is far below the 242,000 animals we counted in spring 2015, before the mass-die off," Albert Salemgareyev from ACBK, co-leader of the Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative, said. "But we are grateful for this glimpse of hope."

Scientists are continuing to investigate the conditions that could have led to the 2015 mass deaths.

Meanwhile, poaching is an immediate threat to saigas, conservationists say. Male saigas are especially targeted by poachers for their horns that are used by the Chinese in their traditional medicine.

"Poaching remains a serious threat to the species and we need to be aware of the fact that mass die-offs such as the one which shocked the world in 2015 can occur again and that we have still not fully understood the underlying causes of the mass die-off," Chambers said.

Advertisement
10% off THAILAND 10% off INDIA 7% off THE REST OF WORLD Till 30 September 2016 at selected hotels
Use your Sampath Bank American Express® Credit Card! and Enjoy
AMAZING DISCOUNTS WORLDWIDE!
agoda
CLICK FOR MORE INFO
Sampath Bank

More news Topics Wildlife Conservation Kazakhstan Endangered species Animals South and Central Asia

Save for later Reuse this content

Most popular in US


George Soros: EU exit risks 'black Friday'

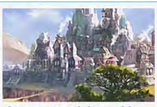

Judge allows Starbucks customers to sue over underfilled lattes


British man tried to take officer's gun to kill Trump at Las Vegas rally, police say


Senate fails to pass new gun control restrictions in wake of Orlando shooting


If 18-month-old girls are being gang-raped, why are the suspects still free? | Lauren Wolfe

promoted links from around the web
Recommended by Outbrain


Gamers around the world have been waiting for this game!
ELVENAR
20 May 2016


Where the World's Billionaires Live
MANSION GLOBAL BY DOW JONES
5 May 2016


7 Powerful Reasons Men Leave The Women They Love
HOT DATING TIPS
3 May 2016


7 tricks to learn any language in just 7 days
BABBEL
29 Apr 2016

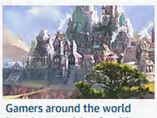
More tigers poached in India so far this year than in 2015
29 Apr 2016

Mass deaths of saiga antelope in Kazakhstan caused by bacteria
14 Apr 2016

Malaysia destroys 9.5 tonne hoard of ivory
14 Apr 2016

First Sumatran rhino found in Borneo in 40 years has died
6 Apr 2016

promoted links from around the web
Recommended by Outbrain


Gamers around the world have been waiting for this game!
ELVENAR


Where the World's Billionaires Live
MANSION GLOBAL BY DOW JONES


7 Powerful Reasons Men Leave The Women They Love
HOT DATING TIPS


7 tricks to learn any language in just 7 days
BABBEL

Immuno-oncology - A new approach to cancer therapy
MERCK

Breaking the Internet "Right of the Dot" Myths
VOICES.EARTH

Birth can be the most dangerous day of a mother and baby's life in the...
INTERACTIVE NEWS CHARTS ON THE TOP BUSINESS, POLITICAL AND FINANCE STORIES – FT.COM

What A Million Dollars Can Buy You Around the World
MANSION GLOBAL BY DOW JONES

outbrain
About this Content

comments (2)

Sign in or create your Guardian account to join the discussion.

Order by Newest Threads Collapsed

Energiz3 12h ago 1
The UN's leader, Ban Ki Moon needs to condemn the use of wild animal parts in trad. med. But he's Korean. Will he? Why does the WHO of the UN ignore this year after year???? The UN's getting to be more paper tiger with every passing year.
Reply Report

BrooklynNonHipster 15h ago 1
- "Male saigas are especially targeted by poachers for their horns that are used by the Chinese in their traditional medicine."
What the hell?!
Reply Report