

INTERNATIONAL TAKHI-GROUP

Reintroduction Project Great Gobi B

Annual Report 2014



International Takhi-Group

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Message from the President

The aim of the ITG is to help that Takhis - the sacred animals of the Mongols - are not just being transported back; reintroduction can only be called successful when the animals find a habitat in which they can survive sustainably. With 113 horses the stock is now well on its way. The image of more than half a dozen groups of horses roaming in a confined space by end of September is unforgettable for me. They were truly dominating the area and shows clearly that the Gobi B SPA should be called "Takhi National Park", which was requested by the ITG - away from the today's incorrect word "Dzungarian". The behavior of the Takhis still raises questions which research has to deal with. The park director tries to influence the spatial behavior of the Takhis through practical measures. One of it is a new, solar-powered, artificial well which should promote migration between the Eastern and the Western groups. It is not only accepted by the Takhis but also by other wild animals which can be easily detected by the many tracks. Furthermore, 54 recorded changes of individual animals between groups are interesting - the population is alive!

In October, the extension-project of the park and the transport of horses from Hustai National Park to Takhin Tal seemed well on its way. Discussions with the two new governors of Gobi-Altai Aimag and Bugat Sum were positive, as well as the more important ones with the Minister, the Prime Minister, the President of the relevant parliamentary commission and – carried out in 2013 already - with the Mongolian President. Park extension and horse transport were then settled in details with the Minister. In November however, the changes in government and ministry led to new needs of the cooperation; the new people in charge have to be convinced on the matter and new arrangements have to be made. Nevertheless, the work on the park extension seems to be advancing well in Parliament.

These events lead to realize again that a sustainable reintroduction of the animals into the wild requires political integration. The success of the Takhi-project depends on political conditions: 1) herders –people in and around the habitat in general – must accept the animals and their welfare again and again, especially when it comes to discussions about agriculture and mining. 2) people and authorities on all levels (central government, provinces, districts, communities) have to take responsibility; in the events of personnel changes, which is part of an ordinary democracy, the dialogue has to be sought with the successors. Only if this political integration is achieved, the Mongols may one day lead the project on their own. This has to be the goal.

Thomas Pfisterer, President

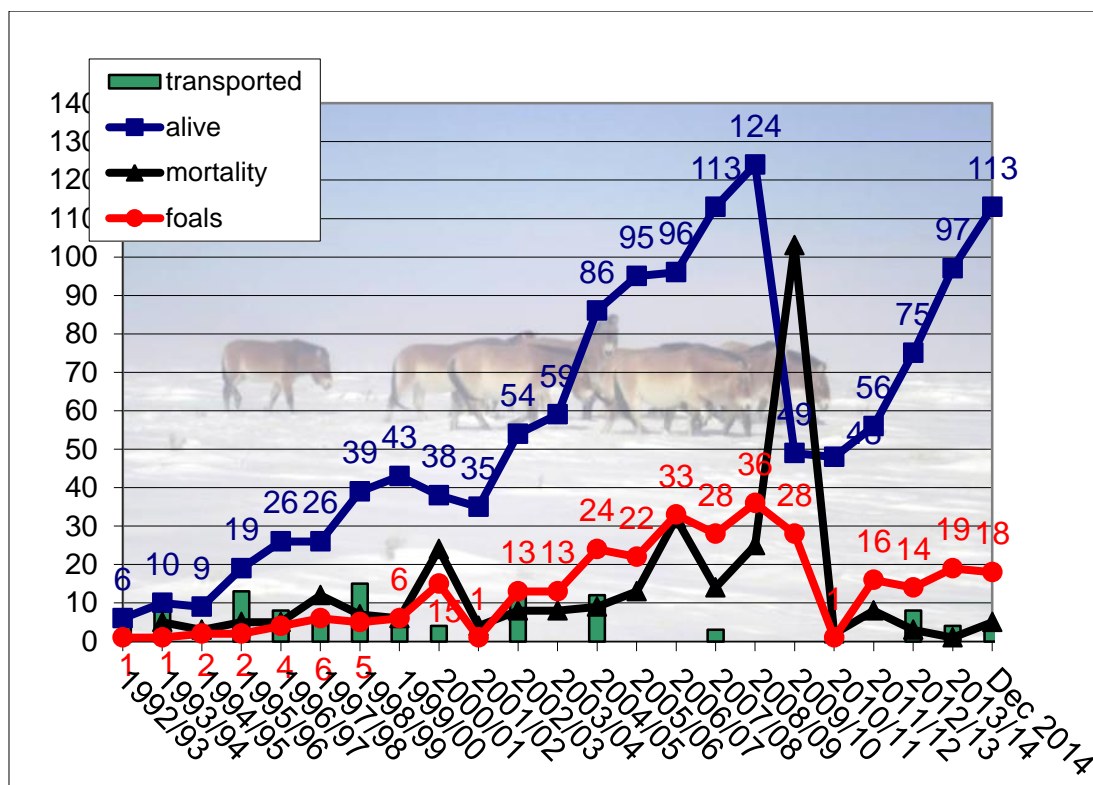
Statement of Accounts

Population Development

In 2014 the Takhi-population has continued to recover. Thanks to a mild winter and an average summer climate all animals are in good condition. The first of a total of 22 surviving foals was already born on the cold day of April 26th; two-thirds of the young horses are female, which corresponds to the gender distribution within the whole population. Counting the three Takhis delivered from Prague, the Takhi-population in the Gobi B has increased to a total number of 113 animals by the end of the year.

During summertime, the rangers were able to observe 54 changes of individuals between the different groups. The highest activity occurred in May/June and October. Additionally, five Takhi-groups were roaming closely to each other a couple of times in fall. This creates an impression of large herds known by other equids and from old descriptions of the 1930's, when there was still a large stock of wild horses in the Dzungarian Gobi.

In December 2014 nine harems and two bachelor groups were roaming through the protected area of the Gobi B SPA; another eight animals are in a fenced area and will be released to freedom in late spring.



Population development of Przewalski's horses in the National Park Great Gobi B SPA.

The numbers are filed within one horse year, which annually begins on May 1st and ends on April 30th of the following year.

Infrastructure and Staff

After several meetings of the ITG and the National Park Director O. Ganbaatar with the authorities three **new ranger positions** were granted by the Mongolian government in spring 2014. Their work mainly covers the Western part of the Gobi B SPA, which underlines the importance of the planned westward extension.

Also in spring 2014, a **solar powered well** was put into operation in the middle of the park. Shots by camera-traps show, that the well was very well accepted by all wild animals. Furthermore, one Takhi-group has substantially increased their home range thanks to the artificial waterhole. In September geological investigation concerning another new well near the Takhin Tal were made.

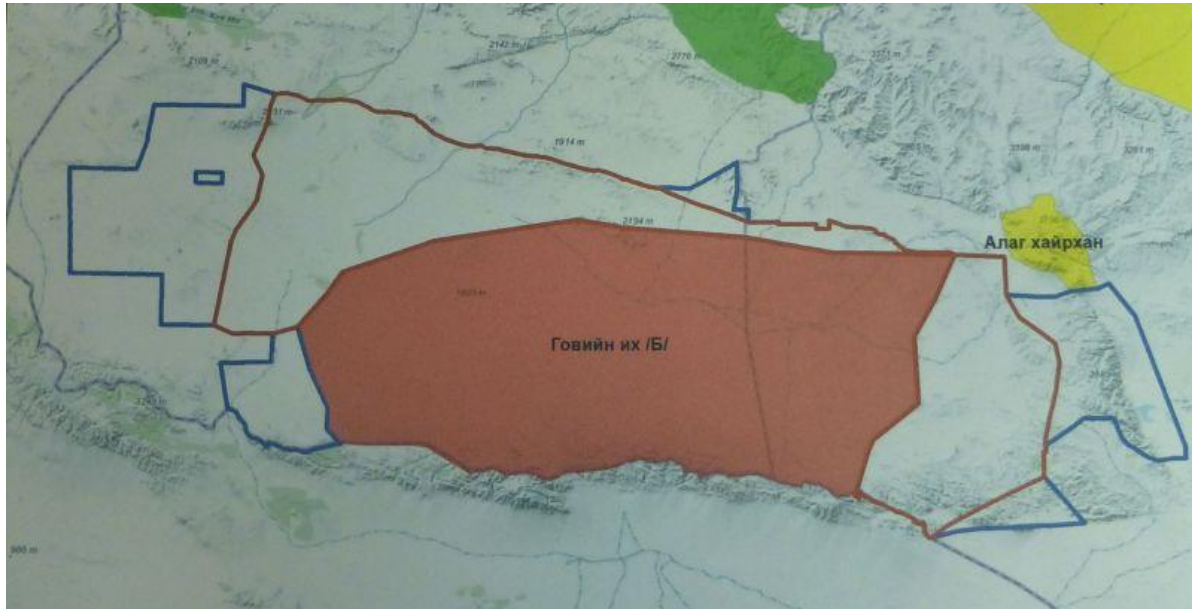


In September, an antenna was built on the mountain “Duut” near Bij, which significantly improved the **mobile connection** at Takhin Tal; the mobile reception in the remaining areas of the reserve is now guaranteed by a repeater south of Altai Sum. Thus the connection between the National Park Gobi B SPA and the ITG-office in Ulaanbaatar is now ensured. At the same time, the internet connection could be installed with Czech help.

Extension of the Protected Area

Efforts to expand the protected area in the Gobi B have also been continued in 2014 by O. Ganbaatar. The main hurdle on the way to the enlargement is the already existing licenses for mining exploration in the perimeter of the proposed extension. Mongolia’s economy is currently under heavy pressure due to the world’s uncertain development in the mining sector. After several consultations with the Minister of the Environment in 2014, it was agreed to exclude the areas in question for the term of their licenses and include them later.

Six national parliamentarians of the two affected Aimags (Altai and Khovd) have been supporting the extension of the protected area and have submitted a motion at the end of 2015. At the same time, protection at the local level (which can be expressed by local and regional politicians) is sought until the reserve extension can be discussed and adopted at national level.



Planned outline of the protected area expansion

Change in the Mongolian Government

On November 6th, 2014, the former Mongolian Prime Minister was deposed by a resolution of Parliament, and 14 days later he was replaced by the Democrat Chimed Saikhanbileg. Within the framework of the following complete overhaul a new Minister D. Oyunkhorol was appointed to the Ministry of “Nature Environment, Green Development and Tourism”.

Since changes in the ministry are associated with even an even greater staff turnover in the administration these alternations which are normal within a parliamentary democracy, will bring delays in individual projects for the ITG. The National Park operation in the Gobi B as well as the work of the Takhi-rangers are basically unaffected, however for the proposed extension of the protected area and the displacement of the National Park headquarter to Altai of Khovd, further discussions with the new people in charge are needed.

Partnerships

*Research partnership with **FIWI** (Research Institute of Wildlife Ecology of the University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna)*

The focus of research is currently on the development of the Takhi population and their monitoring and on the management of the protected area and its planned

extension. The mammalian fauna in the whole reserve was recorded bimonthly and was compared to those of previous years. GPS- and photo data were evaluated.

Tama Zoo

In 2014, the ITG has developed a collaborative relationship with Tama-Zoo in Japan. On the one hand this includes financial support and on the other hand collaborative activities were planned with ITG Mongolia to make the Przewalski's horse better known in Japan and to emphasize the importance of their reintroduction to Asia.

Regional Initiatives for the Takhi

In spring a special room dedicated to the Takhi and its history was opened at the museum of the capital of the Altai Aimag. Visitors are being informed about the planned extension of the protected area and they have the possibility to browse through various publications of the Przewalski's horse.

Also in 2014, several groups of the surrounding schools were visiting Takhin Tal and were introduced to the reserve of the Gobi B. A major subject on those day trips is the Takhi and its history of extinction and reintroduction. Many areas of the Gobi B include Takhi in its name - therefore, it is important that the children already learn about the history of their own environment.

Finances

Unfortunately, the difficult financial situation of 2013 continued in 2014. Despite the difficulties to raise money, we notice with great pleasure regular contributions by long standing sponsors and members. In addition, we thankfully received a generous support for our field work by the Sonja and Jean-Pierre Siegfried Foundation again in 2014. The association "Friends of the wild horse" contributed CHF 51'000 to the ITG.

The distribution of the "Takhi-Post" had a positive input on donations and raised the interest in our project. A regular update on the activities of the ITG and the "Friends of the wild horse" seem to be of interest and trigger spontaneous financial contributions. We tried to raise additional money by selling cards with Takhi images. Unfortunately, the echo was low and only a few orders were placed.

For the future, we need to raise income on various levels such as foundations and trust but also increase the donations by the "Friends of the wild horse" and increase the publicity of our project with potential sponsors in Mongolia .

Takhi Friends Mongolia

On June 9th, 2014, the association "Friends of the Takhi Mongolia" based in Ulaanbaatar was founded on an initiative of Alfred Naef and Joachim Goettel. The club's goal is to support the reintroduction of the Przewalski's horse to the Gobi B SPA. Various ways to support have already been evaluated and the activities for 2015 have been discussed.

Staff of the International Takhi-Group

Board

Thomas Pfisterer, President
Christian Stauffer
Rebekka Blumer, Treasurer
Miroslav Bobek
Sven Hofmann
Karin Hindenlang

Reinhard Schnidrig, Vice President
Mirjam Wuersch
Ruth Baumgartner
Jaroslav Simek
Anita Fahrni

All board members work as volunteers. The ITG maintains an office in Ulaanbaatar and in cooperation with the Mongolian government the Strictly Protected Area (SPA) Great Gobi B.

In 2014, two members of the ITG board received high honors by the Mongolian president. Miroslav Bobek accepted the "Medal of Friendship", while Anita Fahrni was awarded the "Polar Star".

Office Mongolia

Enksaikhan N., Manager

Employees in the Great Gobi B SPA

Ganbaatar O., Director

Altansukh N., Deputy Director

Khatanbaatar T., Senior Ranger

Nisekhkhuu G., Ranger

Chinbat B., Ranger

Batsuuri B., Ranger

Baast Z., Ranger

Oinbayar L., Ranger

Amgalan Ya., Ranger

Ganbataa Kh., Ranger

Myagmarjav, Ranger

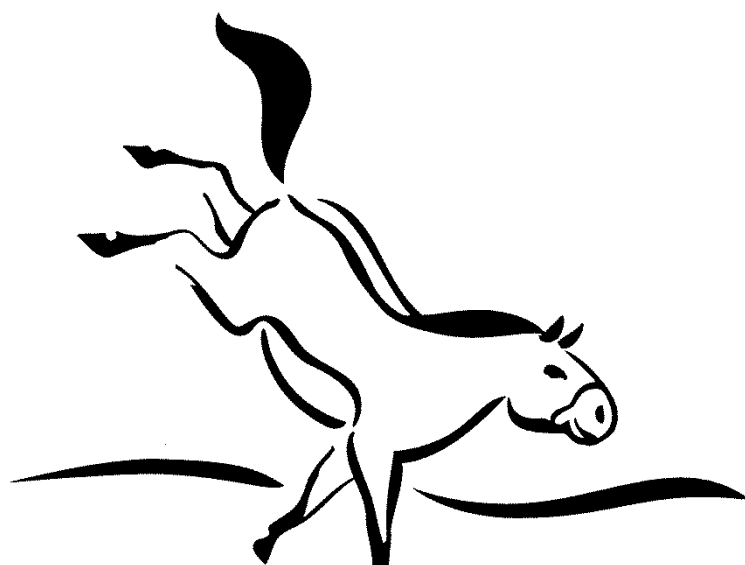
Narantuya R., Bookkeeper

Altantseseg E., Assistant Veterinarian

Tunga S., Cook

Tumur N., Housekeeper

In fall, O. Ganbaatar and five rangers were able to visit Europe at the invitation of the Czech government and with the help of the Mongolian government. They were spending the first week at Prague Zoo and in the Krkonose National Park close to Prague, where they were introduced to the work of their Czech counterparts. During the following weekend they got to know Wildnispark Zurich and met with the other members of the board of the ITG.



ITG INTERNATIONAL TAKHI-GROUP