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A House for the Gobi.

The most important place for a nature reserve is in the hearts of the people. Yielding land for it, they shall gain a future.

Photo: © Uli Rutz

Let's protect the primordial Wild Horse and its habitat.

Dear friends of the Wild Horse



Twenty-one wardens are entrusted with protecting the Dzungarian Gobi – one of the largest nature reserves world-wide. Mission impossible? Not quite. One can see far in the enormous, treeless plain surrounded by three mountain ranges in the extreme southwest of Mongolia. Moreover, in the south it runs along the border between Mongolia and China, guarded by the military. What helps even more is that most of the locals support the protection of the Dzungarian Gobi and especially the conservation of the primordial Wild Horse (takhi).

For ages the current reserve has been used by nomadic herders as wintering grounds and as rangeland in spring and fall. So they, too, care about protecting this spectacular, but very fragile ecosystem from overuse and degradation.

Still, watchfulness is warranted. Soldiers of fortune in pursuit of mineral resources and some venison hope to remain undiscovered in the rolling hills of the west, the low ridges in the east or in the mountains. Doubling the reserve's area in 2019 definitely didn't make the rangers' job easier. High time for adjusting. The hiring of 14 additional rangers (so far there were 7!) is only a first step. They also need equipment, patrol vehicles, and training. And it is hardly possible to continue running the reserve professionally from the remote current warden and research station, Takhin tal. That's why we want to build new headquarters for the reserve in the village of Altai (Khovd province), at the reserve's northern escarpment. This will improve infrastructural connection, enable a more efficient management of the reserve and offer more attractive jobs for qualified personnel, an information centre for tourists and a meeting place for locals and travellers alike.

Yet for us as a small organization of volunteers, this is a large chunk. Luckily we could win the German KfW Development Bank for financing the construction, and the master plan was generously donated by graduate architect Franz Michler from Bad Säckingen, Germany. However, there remains a lot to cover, including the detailed planning, interior fittings and terrain work. May I count on your unwavering support?

Dr. Reinhard Schnidrig, President, ITG

We thank KfW Development Bank for financing the construction of the new headquarters within the framework of the development programme "biodiversity and adaptation to climate change" (BACCP). This intends to strengthen the management of the network of protected areas in Mongolia, conserve biological diversity and concurrently improve the livelihood of the local population.



The takhi: umbrella species for many others

Extinct in the wild 50 years ago, reintroduced a quarter century ago as critically threatened species in its former habitat, but still at risk: the primordial Wild Horse (takhi in Mongolian), the last surviving species of the true wild horses, is living through a dramatic history. The successful, internationally exemplary reintroduction programme of the International Takhi Group (ITG) reserves not only this charismatic species of wildlife, but also numerous further species of the steppes and mountains of Central Asia. The Dzungarian Gobi, or "Great Gobi B", is a refuge of world-wide importance for Asiatic wild asses, goitered gazelles, snow leopards, Argali wild sheep, Siberian ibex, Manul wild cats, the ecologically important saxaul bush, the critically threatened snow lotus and further species of the Central Asian steppe, a globally important ecosystem. ITG plays an important role not only in the takhi reintroduction, but also in the comprehensive preservation of its ecosystem aligned with the local cultural tradition.

We are greatly indebted to Dipl. Ing. Arch. Franz Michler (Bad Säckingen, Germany) for gratuitously conceiving and planning the building. Architect Michler is the father of Lena Michler, who is currently writing her doctorate in agricultural ecology on the topic of sustainable pasture management in the Great Gobi biosphere reserve.

"The nomads, too, care about protecting this spectacular, but very fragile ecosystem from overuse and degradation."

A house for the future

The new headquarters for the reserve with a floor space of about 825 m² combine the functions of an administration building, an information centre and a meeting point. With office space, guest rooms, a conference room and an information centre including exhibition space, the headquarters can both inform and host tourists as well as enable the wardens to explain benefits and practice of nature conservation to the local population.

Four main utility areas are arranged around a central patio:

- An administration sector with 4 offices, a community room for the rangers, the director's office, a laboratory and the archive as well as a meeting room which also serves as a visitor lounge
- an information centre with a café, a kitchen and a multifunctional room for exhibitions and trainings with a larger number of visitors
- four double rooms for guests with space for up to 8 persons
- a technical sector with a workshop area for car repairs and 4 garages, whose walls bordering the patio offer space for a summer exhibition.

In the extreme Gobi climate energy efficiency is a must. For this purpose the house shall be built with energy-saving materials and be partitioned into a heated and an optionally heated section (café, multifunctional room and guest rooms). Energy supply is achieved through solar panels which almost completely cover consumption, even including the heating.

The patio serves as a meeting point for employees, visitors and tourists. Several green oases are planned to surround the house. A nature education trail covering more than 1'500 m² will serve as a drop-in centre for locals and travellers and shall increase their awareness for the local flora and fauna. A kitchen garden and a greenhouse will provide fresh food for the wardens and will also have an educational function in future. A free area to the northeast can be used as a yurt village during high frequencies. One room shall support the local cooperatives planned to be created for the joint use of cashmere and for touristic supplies.

Please have a look at the animated 3D view of our house for the Gobi through the following link!

https://1drv.ms/u/s!AkCnsGJb_TIHwUUL6nSoRl6VAdRt?e=KydEsR



*In the UNESCO biosphere reserve wardens and nomads cooperate closely. Here a takhi foal got lost and then joined a group of domestic horses. It has to get back to its harem. Warden Batsuri discusses the tricky action with the herder, whose husband stands ready with the lasso.
Photo: © Uli Rutz*

Preserving 18'000 km² of a threatened ecosystem

A nature reserve is only as good as its management: it takes know-how, personal and financial resources to factually enforce its declared protection status. Wardens play a key role in this. They implement the goals on site and are contact persons for the local population. The rangers of Great Gobi B almost exclusively originate from the region. Increasing the headcount by 200% creates local jobs. However, besides well-trained personnel, a suitable infrastructure and sufficient operating resources (e.g. petrol for the vehicles) are also indispensable. Whilst the Mongolian Ministry for Environment and Tourism finances staff salaries, ITG through donations provides a major share of the operating resources and contributes significantly to securing operational readiness – e.g. through off-road vehicles and personal equipment. However, the massive extension of the reserve to 18'000 km² (almost half the area of Switzerland) and the increase in staff head count both call for adapting current infrastructure and staff management alike. It is for this purpose that we are creating a new administrative centre. The current one, far away from any noteworthy medical logistics and adequate schooling, will nevertheless remain an essential operations base for ranger work and field research.

The Dzungarian Gobi reserve shall not only protect the ecosystem, but also help to retain the ancient nomad culture and benefit the local population. Perhaps these girls will someday find tasks and an income in tourism. The colourful culture and the spectacular landscapes in the extreme southwest of Mongolia definitely deserve a trip. Photo: © Uli Rutz



The new headquarters for the reserve combine the functions of an administration building, an information centre and a meeting point.

Let's secure the future of the Primordial Wild Horse together



„The new house for the Gobi will enable wardens, locals and tourists to meet and will thus become a pivot point for an effective and efficient conservation of the Dzungarian Gobi ecosystem. Perhaps we may soon welcome you to our new home?“
Dalaitseren Sukhbaatar, biologist, research assistant, Great Gobi B reserve

ITG works in an honorary capacity.

Each donation is used directly for protecting the primordial Wild Horse.

How your donation helps us – many thanks!

USD/CHF 50.-

will finance 100 bricks for the new headquarters.

USD/CHF 75.-

will enable the production of one information panel for the exhibition.

USD/CHF 100.-

will contribute to purchasing furnishings for the warden offices.

USD/CHF 200.-

will finance one window of the combined meeting room and visitor lounge.



If you want to specifically donate for the „House for the Gobi“, a respective remark will suffice.

Any donation helps conserve the takhi as well as other flora and fauna of the Central Asian steppe.



Photo: © Bolor Erdene

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Membership for private persons **CHF/USD 50.-**

Foal membership for teens, students and apprentices **CHF/USD 20.-**

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