New Nature Reserve Created in Mongolia

After seven years of grassroots organizing by local people and our staff, an 8,000 km² landscape of prime snow leopard habitat called Tost is now the country’s first dedicated Nature Reserve for snow leopards. Your support has been critical towards ensuring proper surveys, outreach and ranger trainings in Tost in 2016.

- Tost has some of the richest snow leopard habitat
- These mountains are home to a stable, breeding population of snow leopards
- Once threatened by large-scale mining, Tost’s new designation will safeguard the land and allow the continuation of traditional herding practices
- Tost and surrounding national parks now form one of the world’s largest continuous protected snow leopard habitats

Hunting Park Converted to Wildlife Sanctuary

Illegal poaching of snow leopards and their prey is a major threat to the cats in Kyrgyzstan. Abuse of the legal trophy hunting system contributes to this problem, and about 70% of Kyrgyzstan’s snow leopard habitat is covered in trophy hunting concessions. With your support, in 2016 the Government of Kyrgyzstan agreed to let us turn a former hunting concession in the northern Tien Shan Mountains, called Shamshy, into a wildlife sanctuary. Shamshy’s ibex used to be hunted commercially and have dwindled in numbers. But now, no hunting will take place in Shamshy for the next 10 years. Trust researchers estimate that the ibex population could double or triple in that time to better support local snow leopards. In the meantime, we’ll use Shamshy for research, education and—perhaps—limited eco-tourism.

Emil, a former hunting guide, is now a ranger for Shamshy. Emil is delighted with his new role as a protector of wildlife. “I promised myself ‘no more hunting’,” he says. Emil recalls that 20 years ago there were hundreds of ibex in Shamshy, “I have a strong belief that with all of us working together, we can bring back the ibex and they will return soon.”
Preventing Poaching in Kyrgyzstan

Illegal wildlife hunting is one of the most pressing threats to snow leopards in Kyrgyzstan. Rangers often feel unable to control poaching, due to lack of training and equipment. In response, you enabled us to launch a Ranger Reward Program.

Ranger Rewards provides rangers with skills training and tools to apprehend illegal hunters, such as crime scene investigation kits. The program also recognizes rangers through with financial and public rewards for successfully filing cases against hunters under the Kyrgyz criminal justice system.

In 2015 and 2016, we collaborated with Interpol to develop and conduct specialized trainings in wildlife crime prevention for frontline rangers and wildlife managers from all 23 of Kyrgyzstan's Protected Areas.

In 2016, we held the first inaugural national ceremony to honor 10 rangers publicly for their success in combating illegal hunting. One ranger, Chinasilov Baktibek, from the Sary Chelek Nature Reserve (an UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve) joined with two colleagues to apprehend a poacher who had killed a brown bear and an ibex. The poacher has since paid a fine of $12,000.

You provided training to over 40 frontline wildlife rangers in two countries.
From Heartbreak to Hope

In 2008, we placed a GPS collar on a cat nicknamed “Longtail”. He had an incredibly long tail, even by snow leopard standards! We followed Longtail for three months until suddenly, in December, his movements stopped. We soon learned that Longtail had entered a livestock corral at night and been shot by a herder. This terrible incident confirmed the importance of collaborating with herders to find peaceful ways to coexist with snow leopards. With your support, we have been working with herders to protect livestock against mass depredation by “predator-proofing” corrals. In 2016, you helped us build over a dozen corrals in Pakistan and Mongolia. In total, we’ve helped build or reinforce over 100 corrals in Mongolia, India, and Pakistan. Next year, you can help us build even more so herders can rest easy, and snow leopards can be safe.

This year you supported community-based conservation programs for 5,000 herder families across 5 snow leopard range countries. 

Building a predator-proof corral to protect livestock from snow leopard attack. 

South Gobi, Mongolia, August 2016
Inspiring Children as Future Conservationists

Your support enables us to bring the classroom outdoors with fun, hands-on summer Eco-Camps.

In July 2016, we ran our fourth annual Mongolia eco-camp for 40 local children and their teachers. They spent an unforgettable nature experience learning about the plants and animals around them. In one full day devoted to the snow leopard, children learned about the lives of snow leopards, the threats they face and ways that humans and snow leopards can co-exist. They looked at stunning research photographs of snow leopards from nearby mountains and took an expedition to a place called ‘snow leopard valley’ in the heart of Mongolia snow leopard habitat. Chances of seeing a snow leopard are rare, but the children were thrilled to see signs of snow leopards (scrapes, scat and snow leopard scent marks), and the remains of an ibex that had been killed by a snow leopard.

At the end of the camps, children were given “eco-kids” certificates, an honor that helps empower them to become conservation awareness messengers for their communities.

Thanks to you, over 300 children in India and Mongolia attended eco-camps in 2016.

4 out of 5 children say their perception of wildlife and the environment change in positive ways thanks to eco-camps.