ANNUAL REPORT 2013

GREEN INITIATIVE

Bayangol District, 6th khoroo, Micro District 10,
Number of state registration: 9071007135

Mongolia belongs to the group of Land-locked Developing Countries (LLDCs), one of the Economies in Transition (EIT). Since 1990, Mongolia has adopted a policy of economic liberalization, including privatization, financial liberalization and capital account convertibility. Last two decades were characterized by mineral extraction activity, which is driving the rapid growth in Mongolia's economy. Safeguard of Mongolia's natural heritage and protection of nomadic life style, is in challenge that should compete with the intensive economic growth and urbanisation. This challenge is a set a race against time. To support our activity is a contribution for winning this challenge.

The year of 2013 was a very important and productive period at the Green Initiative, NGO. It was our 4th year in operation and we had chances to increase our effort protecting the Mongolian wildlife species, implementing the project on "Investigation of Siberian Ibex (*Capra sibirica*, *Pallas 1776*): Trade and Exploitation in Mongolia". Siberian Ibex is a target species for international trade and it could be a serious threat. Our goal is to explore the current trade system of Siberian Ibex and regulate it. We have partnered with local and international institution, planning new initiative to discover and protect the Mongolian environment. Despite the limited funding, we have increased our collaborators in number, and recruited from the national and international institutions in environmental field. We are cordially grateful to them. Because our action could not be effective without their contribution. This report is dedicated to the steps and nomadic people whom believe and support our activities.

J.Choikhand

What WE HAVE ACHIEVED!

Wildlife Conservation

In 2013 our team start ed the project "Investigation of Siberian Ibex (*Capra sibirica*, *Pallas 1776*): Trade and Exploitation in Mongolia". We implemented the first step of the project, consisting in a preliminary survey on use and hystory of Yangir product trade, collecting official data and interviewing local communities

Eco-Volunteering

2013 was the 3rd year we implemented the eco-volunteering camp in order to succeed our field research and contribute the local community. Our camp was held in Bayan Onjuul soum a buffer zone closest to the Hustai National Park.

Water Conservation

We also continued the work on water conservation and its management by herders group. Water supply for herders and animals is made through simple dug well. We conducted an analysis of Nitrate in water and planning a project to conserve the quality of the water and avoid to waste it.

Coat made of Yangir cashmere, offered online

Investigation of Siberian Ibex (Capra sibirica, Pallas 1776):

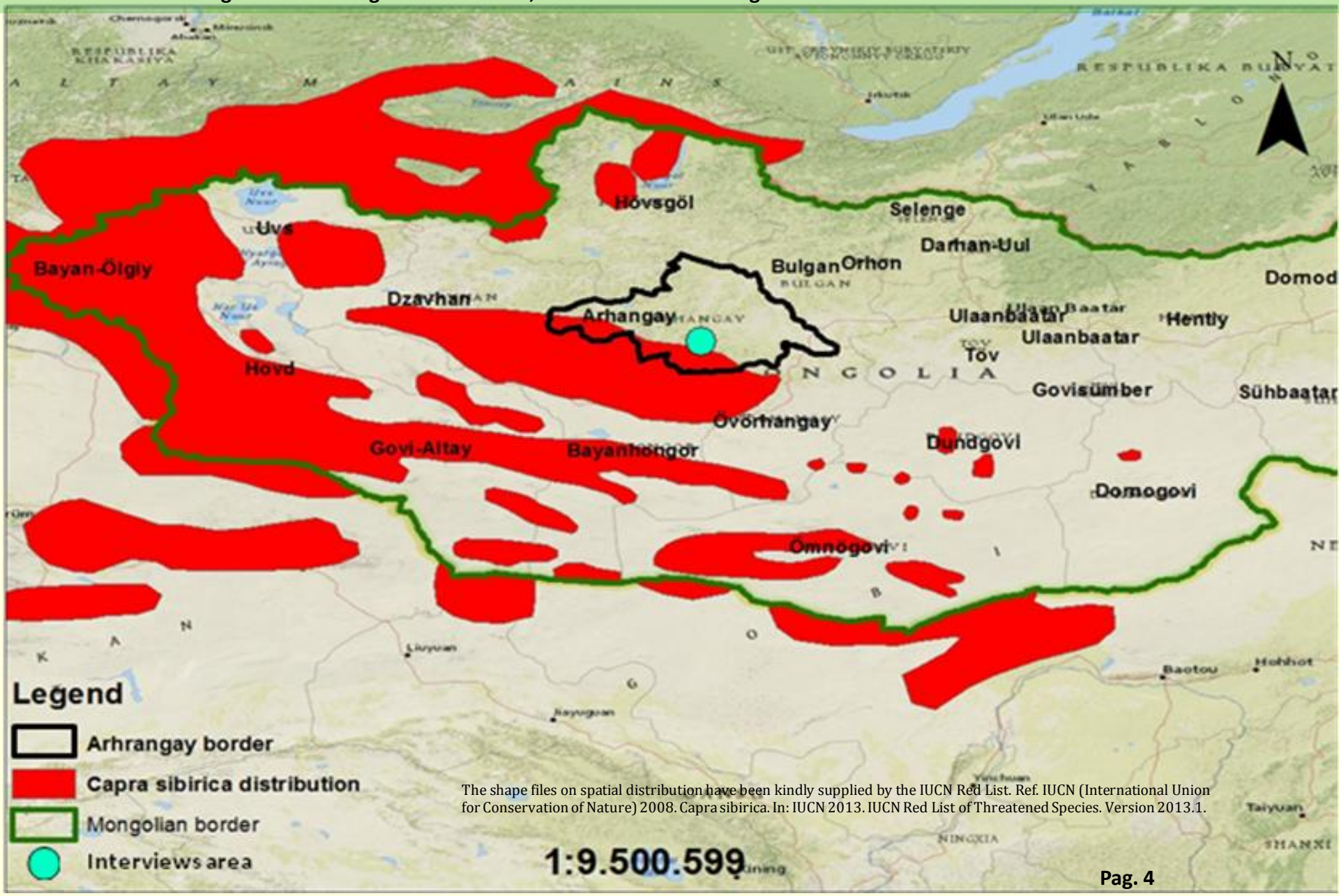
Trade and Exploitation in Mongolia

In recent years there has been an ongoing international trade in Siberian Ibex Wool, known as "Yangir" in Mongolian language. This current trade is also found in internet online shopping sites.
To obtain 1 kg of Ibex cashmere requires around 15 specimens.
To explore the hypothesis of the current raw materials' export from the Siberian Ibex, we will conduct a market research to investigate the sources, since it is difficult to reveal the origin of final products. The Siberian Ibex has been rarely studied in Mongolia.

Our team will collect and record data on the Siberian Ibex trade, including volume and system. A preliminary data collection and comparative analysis will be produced on the basis of information obtained through official government sources and relevant conservation projects. Our team will investigate in 3 main markets for animal raw materials, which are located in Ulaanbaatar and Tov Provinces. Other surveys will be conducted in the markets of main Siberian Ibex distribution areas, which are in Bayan Olgii, Hovd, and Govi-Altai Provinces. In these locations, we will conduct observational surveys and some interviews to shop owners, local hunters, and traders.

Two young specimens of Siberian Ibex trapped by our camera trap

Conducting interviews is begun with the local herders near the Siberian Ibex areas and local hunters. The area for interviews with the local community was Arhangai Province in the central Mongolia, which hosts the margin of the Siberian Ibex distribution area. The questionnaire was developed on the basis of four main concerns: personal details of interviewees; interviewee's knowledge about Siberian Ibex ; interviewee's knowledge about hunting of Siberian Ibex; interviewee's knowledge about use of Siberian Ibex.



The shape files on spatial distribution have been kindly supplied by the IUCN Red List. Ref. IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) 2008. Capra sibirica. In: IUCN 2013. IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2013.1.

CONCLUSION

- the commercial name of the products corresponds to the translation of Siberian Ibex in Mongolian as “Yangir”;
- more or less reliable information obtained from the online sellers, who specified the details of the yangir cashmere products and a country of origin as Mongolia;
- and the interviewed local people provided the description of international trade of Siberian Ibex cashmere from Mongolia;

As presumed, Mongolia has been involved at least in the past for international trade of Siberian Ibex cashmere. It maybe influenced a population decrease. It can be validated from the population survey results of the Institute of Biology, Mongolian Academy of Sciences in 2009. According to the result of this survey conducted in 2009, the Siberian Ibex population has dramatically declined in Mongolia. The estimate of ibex population was 24,371 compared to the 80000 estimate according to “The Mongolian Red Data Book” in 1987

Eco-Volunteering

Thanks to the excellent qualification of our ecovolunteers, we accomplished the main task of our mission. Their scientific knowledge and training drew the attention of the local people and they shared the quality time during the field study.

The ecovolunteers had great experience for being with nomadic lifestyle. They impressed the knowledge and the parataxonomy skills of local people

re-consider and reflect the crucial points of coupling conservation and livelihood of nomads at grassroot level through participation and awareness raising.

monitoring of species

During the field, we tracked the presense of the species in the area, recorded: the species name, number of specimens per herd and the geographical coordinates.
The species of ungulates for which we collected the data were: Argali (*Ovis ammon*), Mongolian gazelle (*Procapra gutturosa*), Siberian Ibex (*Capra sibirica*) and Red Deer (*Cervus elaphus*). A majority of these species have become rare throughout their habitats. We mapped the presence in B. Onjuul of the four species mentioned above. Our long term research aim to collect data enough, to address the local auhority preserving the ungulates herds.

The main activity concerned our biodiversity research in the field. Mainly the activity in Bayan Onjuul was focused on the monitoring of species belonging to the Artiodactyla order. In fact, this species are target for hunting and trade (as trophies and for their wool) at the local and international level. Domestic trade is significant across the region, but a major proportion of the trade is international, with massive demands for wildlife from the core consuming nations. An area like Bayan Onjuul which is located just next the Hustai National Park, could be attractive for many national and international poachers.

Among our eco-volunteer project's objectives there is the understanding animal species ecology well enough to develop a long-term conservation management plan for the species. During this first year not only we recorded data about mammals but also about the others class of vertebrates and some taxa between invertebrates.
We had the chance to collaborate with the inland water crustaceans researcher, Federico Marrone, from University of Palermo (Italy) and find interesting result about the crustaceans species occuring in the area. Around twenty ponds and lake has been sampled in the area nearby Bayan Onjuul centre and a list of the crustaceans of the area iscompiled and ready to be pubblished in a scientific paper.

Carnivorous and herders can cohabit!

Part of the field study, consisted in observing the conflict between herders and predator species. This conflict draws our attention to further study.

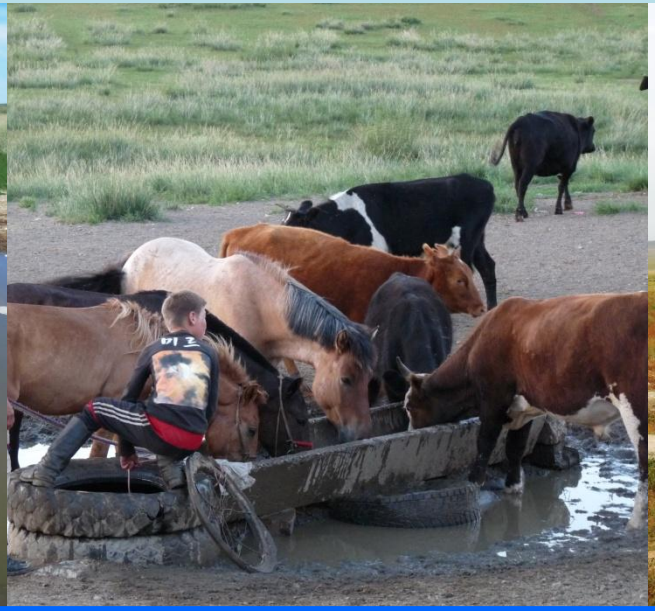
In order to understand this critical issue and find potential solution, we prepared a questionnaire for local communities. We were able to make twentyfive interviews of the herders around the field study areas, and got very significant information regarding this issue.

Our NGO realised that there is an urgent need to find a suitable solution and appropriate balance between helping herders' livelihood and saving wolves from the indiscriminate persecution.

The eco-volunteers interested assisted in the interviews.

Finally since our Eco-volunteering program started, we have so far been very satisfy in its progress, because as we anticipated it has been a very useful instrument in the monitoring of the area. We are happy contributing to the awareness of Mongolian beauty consisting in its environment and traditional life style, getting the enthusiasm of local community people. Furthermore our data collection are precious to find results which will help the management of the natural resources. It is definitively a very important instrument to implement a long research program, involving local community and authority.

Water Conservation



When we started our activity, it was focused on water conservation as our priority. We also continued the work on water conservation and its management by herders group. Mongolian society outside of the Capital City Ulaanbaatar, is still remained as family of herder groups and live in the traditional GER. Out of large urban settlements, only small portion of rural population live at the semi-rural centre (Soum). Water supply for herders and animals is made through simple dug well. Generally these wells have an average depth of 3-5m. According to the report of the "National Water Authority of Mongolia", there is 38.700 such kind of wells recorded in 2006 throughout Mongolia.

Due to the lack of strategic planning and health and safety standards dug wells were served in both ecological degradation and needs of drinking water sources of rural Mongolia. According to our observation, dug wells were built and used inappropriate materials (like truck's tires). In our last concern, rural wells were found exceeding the limits of minimum requirement of health and safety standards. In addition there is a risk of pollution for the ground water that caused by the physiological waste of large number of livestock accumulated on the surface of the dug wells. Those wastes can penetrate into the ground and further polluting water sources by Nitrogen. During the field survey we found a calf fell down into one of those dug wells and local users can not use the water for many days. We conducted an analysis of Nitrate in water and soon will pubblish the results. Furthermore, there is a notable waste of fresh water during the animal watering due to the tub damages. It needs an urgent action to resolve this situation and increase the efficient usage of fresh water sources. It would be our next goal.

Save the Mongolian Steppe

Saving the riparian Vegetation

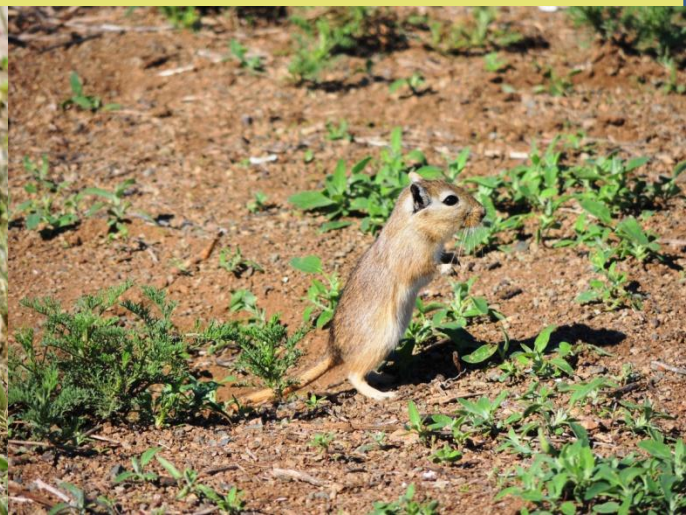
In riparian areas the destabilization of streambanks by livestock activities contributes locally to a high discharge of eroded material. Furthermore, livestock can overgraze vegetation, disrupting its role of trapping and stabilizing soil, and aggravating erosion and pollution. We conduct a quadrat sampling analysing the riparian vegetation of a number of ponds, located on the steppe of Tov Province. Data collection was focused on finding the hotspot of livestock pounding, measuring vegetation coverage and plant species' richness.

Stop the Overgrazing, recognizing the steppes rodents role

The Mongolian steppe is in danger due to many threats developed in few years. Human activity, under economic pressure, is growing the quickest threat that could be presented. Cashmere market attracts to increase number of goats, which are considered harmful livestock besides the intensive increases of millions of livestock in every year. We aim to assess the ecosystem resilience and assist the local communities, whom live in the steppe as their traditional way. There are some evidences that wild rodents' species play an important role on soil restoration.

During our field research we studied about rodents species and colony density. We tracked the presence of the species in the area, recorded: the species name, the habitat where their colony were found and geographical coordinates.

Preliminary data were conducted in Tov provinces, which include steppe habitats. In total we got data about eight species of rodents.



Green Initiative Present and Future

Camera Trapping

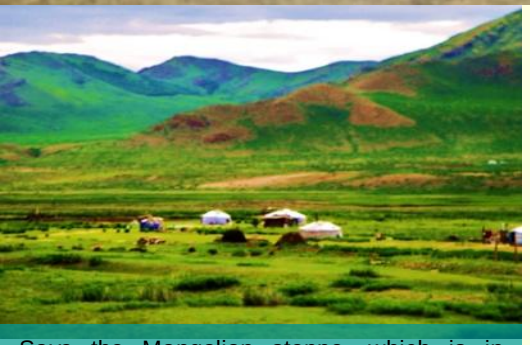
The use of automatic cameras triggered by passing animals (camera trapping) is a fundamental technique to record medium to large mammals but also small mammals like shoewd in the photos. Photographs provide objective records, or evidence, of an animal's presence and identity. The method underwent enormous advance and has been increasingly used in the last decade. Besides faunal inventories and assessments of activity pattern, relative abundance and habitat preference, inferential sampling studies using camera traps allow estimations of occupancy and density. As such, camera trapping is a undamental method for All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory (ATBI) projects.

Thanks a collaboration with international expert, we are using this methods in our field research area, placed in the central Mongolian steppe. Using this methods we will: find the hot spot of biodiversity in the area; compile an updated check-list of vertebrate, understand the fundamental biology and ecology of the target species for hunting (all carnivorous and ungulates occur in the area); evaluate the level of threats facing these species and use this information to develop a wildlife conservation program in the steppe and its sustainable use;

Green Initiative Present and Future

Follow the Mongolia Gazelle (Procapra gutturosa) migration. It is one of the last mammals migration which moves herds of hundred thousand animals

Accomplish our project on investigation about Siberian Ibex explotation and trade, to find the best way to regulate it!



Save the Mongolian steppe, which is in danger due to many threats developed in few years. Human activity, under economic pressure, is growing the quickest threat that could be presented. Cashmere market attracts to increase number of goats, which are considered harmful livestock besides the intensive increases of millions of livestock in every year. Mining activities, such as exploration and transportation caused the major soil erosion, soil hardness, air, water, and soil pollution as well as the dust storms. We aim to assess the ecosystem resilience and assist the local communities, whom live in the steppe as their traditional way.

Establishing the "Ponds and Wells Monitoring System" in Bayan Onjuul Soum and conducting a Strategic Assessment of water management concerning the adaptation and mitigation of climate change, were the priorities emerged by our project, which recently concluded.

Green Initiative will go far!

Thanks to:

CITES Switzerland, Ministry of Environment, Bayan Onjuul Governor, Fototrappolaggio srl, Federico Marrone, Stefania Merlino and all the local people that join and enjoy our initiative.