



Saving Wild Horses (图)

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Hustain Mountain Range, some 100 km eastward from the capital city of Ulaanbaatar, has become a place of keen interest of many zoologists from all over the world.

This is an area where a unique experiment on the reintroduction of wild horse is taking place. Known as Przewalski Horse, they once roamed in thousands over the vast open steppe stretches of the Central Asia, but were extinguished by early 20th century. Nowadays only about 1,200 animals remain in zoo.

In 1992, the Denmark Fund for Wild Horse Preservation with the support of the Danish Government, brought to Mongolia first 15 horses. It took almost two years for them to adjust to harsh winters and local pastures. Since then, altogether 68 more horses were brought from abroad.

During last few years, more than 47 colts were born and now the horse herd exceeds 100 horses. The project leader, Mr. Jan Vetger, hopes that in few years as many as 400 wild horses will graze in the Hustain Mountain range area, the sufficient number to release them back into wilderness. Christian Osvald Fund from Germany also actively participates in the project helping to raise funds to buy horses from zoo and transport them to Mongolia.

In 1996, five stallions and 13 mares from zoos in Germany, Czech, Switzerland were taken to their native land, an area called Wild Horse steppe in Bugat county of Gobi Altai province. The herd already has ten new colts and three more are coming.

Europeans first learned about the Takhi or Wild Horse existence after the expedition by Russian scholar Nikolai Przewalski in 1898. While in zoos of USA, Europe and Russia this species that may be the ancestor of domesticated horse was closely studied, back in Mongolia they were excessively hunted pushing them into remote wild areas. In 1968, the last herd of wild horses was seen in the Gobi Desert.

Since then, the wild horses become endangered species with only few animals remaining in zoos. All 1200 horses are the siblings of three stallions and seven mares that survived WW II. Only now, thanks to efforts of scholars from 25 countries, these horses now have a real chance for survival and return to the nature.

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