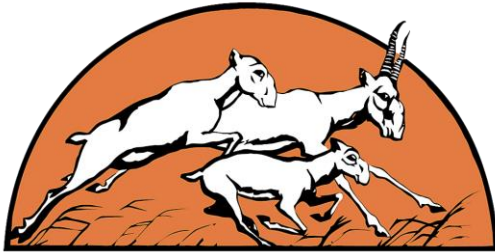
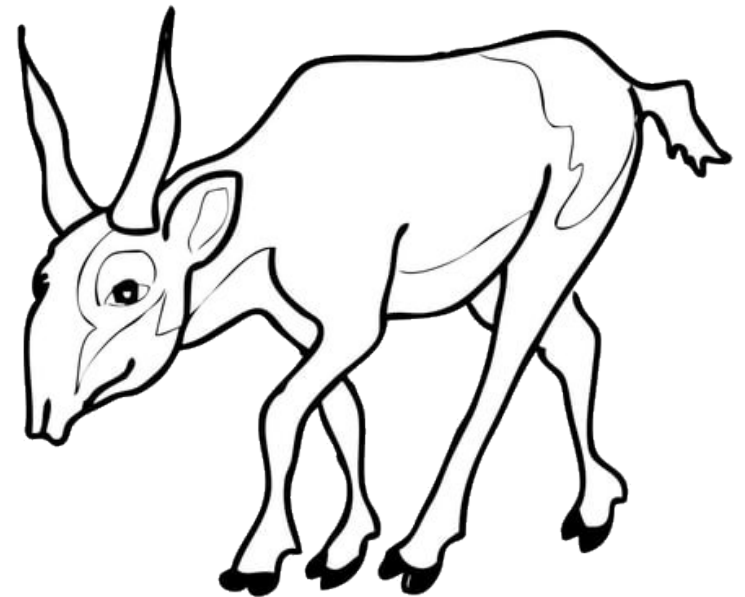


You can do things every day to be a hero for saiga!



SAIGA CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

SAN DIEGO ZOO.
GLOBAL

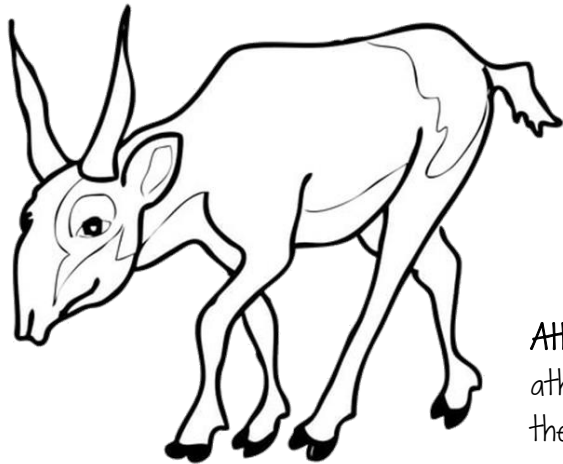


Created for the Saiga Conservation Alliance
by San Diego Zoo Global

What is a saiga antelope?

Horns: Male saiga have horns they use to defend territory and impress females.

Camouflage coat: Pale brown in the summer and almost white in the winter, the saiga's coat of fur helps the animal blend into its surrounding habitat.



Small body: At just 70 cm tall or smaller, saiga females only weigh about 28 kg, and males weigh about 41 kg.

Athletic legs: The small, athletic legs of the saiga help them run up to 80 km/hr.

Large nose: The nose of the saiga is flexible and able to inflate to look even bigger! It helps warm the air traveling to the lungs in the winter and helps keep dust out of the lungs in the summer.

What else do you know about saiga? _____

Keep Learning about Saiga!

Learning about the saiga is a great way to begin to help save this special animal from extinction. There are many ways to keep learning all about saiga.

- **Visit a library** – Many books, including encyclopedias, have information on saiga
- **Ask your teacher** – Teachers know many things and might be able to tell you more about saiga and how they live
- **Talk to your family or adults in your community** – Saiga have been around a long time. Ask your family or other community members what they know. They might be able to share a story with you, or you might be able to teach them something you have learned.
- **Ask an adult to help you search the internet** – There are some great websites online to help you learn more
 - Saiga Conservation Alliance: www.saiga-conservation.com
 - The Kuralai Embroidery Project: www.saigacraft.org
 - San Diego Zoo Global- www.endextinction.org



Words to Know

Throughout this book, you have come across words in **bold**. Next to each word, write a definition. These words are great to know when talking about saiga.

Poaching: _____

Habitat loss: _____

Migration: _____

Adaptive Response: _____

Herbivore: _____

Steppe: _____

Ecosystem: _____

Extinct: _____

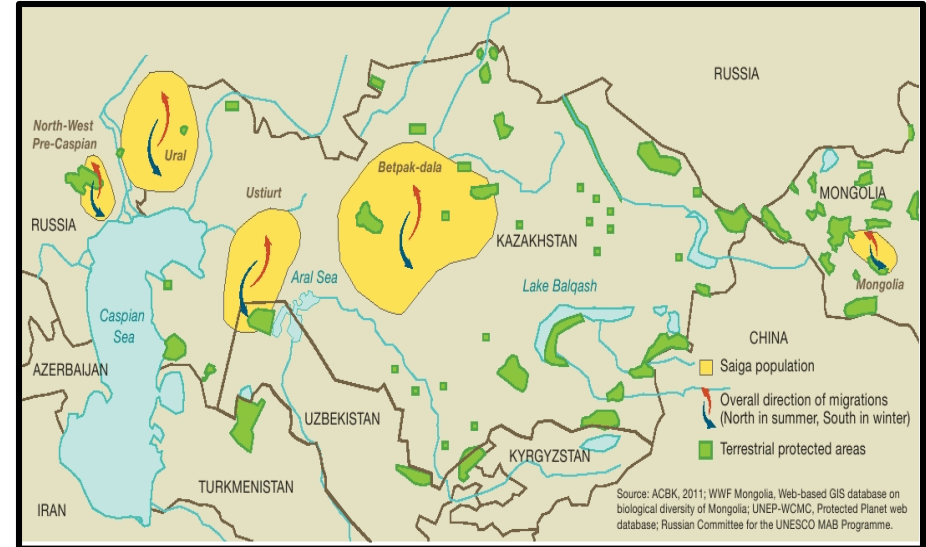
Conservation: _____

Reserve: _____

Did You Know?

Saiga are Eurasia's only antelope.

Found in Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.



Saiga live 6–10 years on average.

They eat grasses, herbs, and shrubs.

Birds such as golden eagles, other raptors, and vultures prey upon saiga. Foxes and wolves are also predators of saiga.

Circle where YOU are located on the map above.

Do you live near any saiga?

Saiga Shortage

What's happening to saiga antelope populations?

Saiga have lived in the Eurasian Steppe habitat since the last ice age. In the 1990s their total population was estimated to be over one million individuals. More recently, their total population is estimated to be a bit more than 100,000 individual saiga.

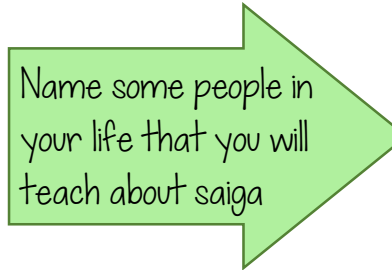
There are a few reasons that saiga populations are declining:

- **Poaching:** the act of illegally hunting and killing animals that are protected or are on protected land
 - Saiga are poached for their meat for people to eat or sell
 - Males are killed for their horns, which are sold to those that use them in traditional Chinese medicine
- **Habitat loss:** the destruction of natural land that causes the removal of habitats for plants and animals
 - Creation of towns, oil or gas developments, buildings, and boundary fences leave less land for the saiga
 - Saiga travel long distances as part of their natural behavior
 - This movement is limited when there are obstacles in the way
- **Competition and disease**
 - Saiga compete for food with free-range livestock that eat the same things
 - Livestock carry diseases that can cause saiga to become ill

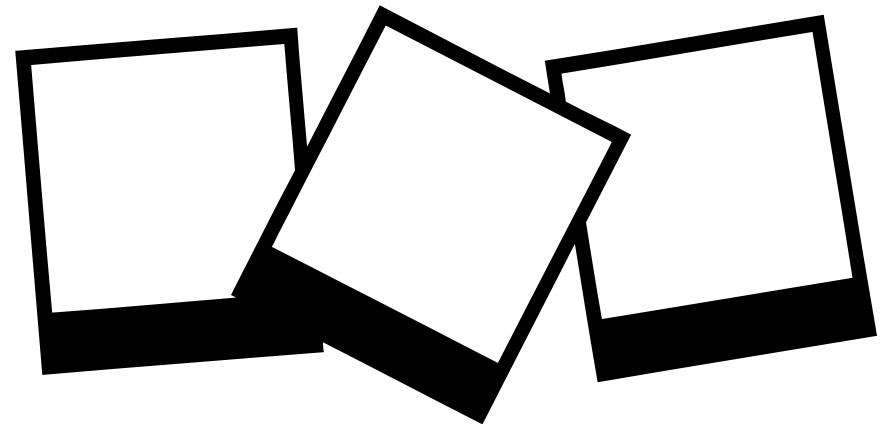
Saving Saiga

Now that you have learned how to be a hero for saiga, write down what you know and some ideas that you have to help saiga in Uzbekistan.

List some ideas, big or small, that you have for helping saiga:



Write your three favorite facts about saiga in the boxes below:



Great job! Share your responses with your classmates.
Saving the saiga can be done if we all work together!

Supporting Saiga

People in your community are working hard to create a safer place for saiga!



The Saigachy Reserve

A **reserve** is a special area of protected land that is set aside for a specific purpose. In this case, the Saigachy Reserve in Uzbekistan is over 7,000 km² and has six strictly protected areas (called “nuclear zones”) inside its boundaries for saiga and other steppe wildlife. Not only will saiga have a safe place to live, but the reserve will provide jobs to local people. Rangers at the reserve will be able to use electricity through renewable energy from solar panels. The reserve will also have an area called a “buffer zone” for families, local people, and students, just like you to see the land that saiga call home.

Kuralai Embroidery Project

The Kuralai embroidery project provides an opportunity for local women to come together and make beautiful crafts to sell. The money they earn can go toward affording an alternative meat to feed their families, instead of hunting saiga.



Spirit of the Steppe



Saiga have been called “The Spirit of the Steppe.” They have been around for as long as people remember, and are often discussed in folklore and stories of the steppe.

Saiga are known for running so quickly that many say they are “as fast as a spirit.”

Do you remember the first time you heard of saiga?

Was it in a folktale? A news story? Take a few moments and think about your first experience with the “spirit” antelope. Share that memory below!

Have You Herd?

Saiga herds usually consist of one male and up to 30–40 females

Babies are born once a year in early May. Scientists believe that all saiga are born within about a week of each other. There is a better chance for babies to survive if there are more saiga around for protection. Female saiga have 1–2 babies at a time, and the babies hide for about 10 days before they are seen walking around with mom.



Saiga are mainly poached for two things: their horns and their meat. Since only the males have horns and they are larger than females, most of the poached saiga are males. This can cause many challenges for saiga herds.

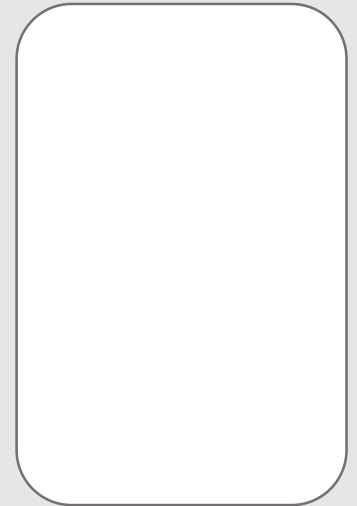
Why do you think scientists are so worried about poaching? What might happen if too many males are poached? What about if too many females are poached? Think about it and write down some of your thoughts below:

Extra! Extra! Read All About It!

Create a news article about saiga, poaching, and conservation. Remember to include a headline, the date, your name, and a story with a beginning, middle, and end. Draw a picture for your story, too!

Date: _____

Reported by: _____



A Call to Conservation!

Conservation is the wise use and protection of natural resources, including plants and animals. Saiga conservation means making wise choices and helping to protect saiga from extinction.

There are many things that you can do to help saiga:

- Learn all that you can: By learning about saiga, you are going to better understand the animal and what it needs. This is the first step to being a Saiga Hero and helping to protect them.
- Teach others: You can teach your family and friends what you learn about saiga. The more people that know about saiga, the more people we will have protecting them.
- Watch your step: Saiga rely on food that grows in the Steppe habitat. Although you may not see saiga in your community, the plants that grow there are still important.

Can you think of other ways to help saiga?

Saiga Survival

After playing the Saiga Survival Game with your classmates, use this space to answer the following questions:

Why does every saiga need food, water, and shelter?

What do the saiga find challenging during the game?

Do poachers or predators make survival harder or easier? Why?

Do you think saiga face the same challenges every day in the Steppe? Why or why not? _____

At the end of the game, there was one saiga left- do you think that would be good or bad for saiga survival? Why? _____

Great thinking! Now use what you have learned and play the Saiga Survival Game at home and with friends!

On the Move

Saiga are known for their yearly migration. A **migration** is when an animal moves from one place to another for resources such as food, water, or shelter. Saiga herds have been seen coming together and traveling in groups of more than a thousand.



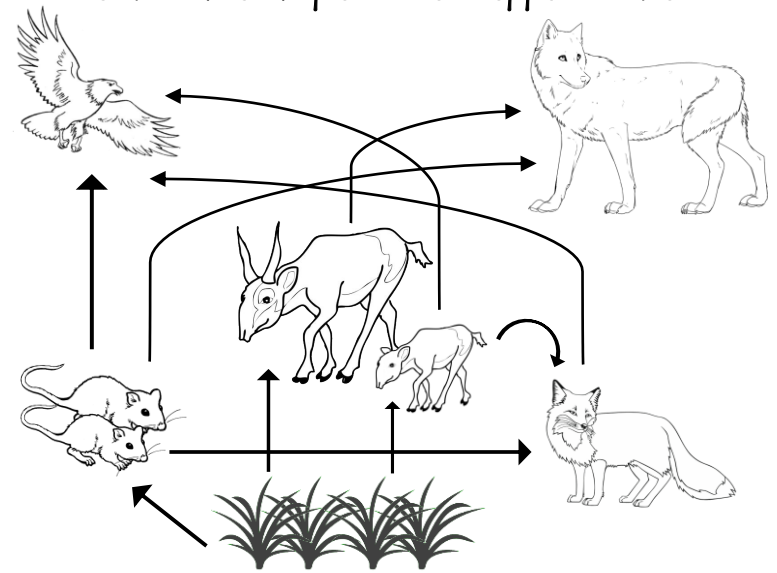
How do saiga know when to migrate?

Migration is an **adaptive response**, meaning the animals have learned to move through their environment to survive. Saiga migrate to find fresh new food and to escape from winter snows. The ability to move away from bad conditions and to areas where there is plenty of food, is important for their survival.

Saiga usually travel hundreds of kilometers during their migration. Lately they have been having trouble making their journey.

List the reasons migration could be difficult for saiga:

Below is an example of the Steppe food web:



An **ecosystem** is a community of plants and animals that make up a habitat. A food web shows how the ecosystem is connected. If the food web is disrupted, the ecosystem can become unbalanced.

What would happen to the raptors if saiga went **extinct** and disappeared from the food web? _____

What would happen to the plants if saiga went extinct?

What are some other things that might happen to the food web if saiga went extinct? _____

Home on the Eurasian Steppe

A **steppe** is a type of habitat. It is a grassy plain with few trees that gets minimal amounts of rain each year. The temperature varies by season. The Eurasian Steppe can be very hot in the summer and very cold in the winter.



Many animals, including the saiga, call the Steppe home. Some of these animals are listed below. Next to each animal, can you list some of the foods they might eat?

Raptor: _____

Vulture: _____

Saiga: _____

Fox: _____

Wolf: _____

Rodent: _____

Plants are an important food source for some animals.

What do plants need to grow and survive?

Mapping Migration

Answer the questions below after completing the partner puzzle about saiga migration.

What problems did you or your partner face when trying to find the saiga migration route? _____

Are these problems similar to the challenges saiga have to face during their migration through the Steppe? Why or why not?

Some of these issues are due to human activity. What can communities do to help solve these problems? _____

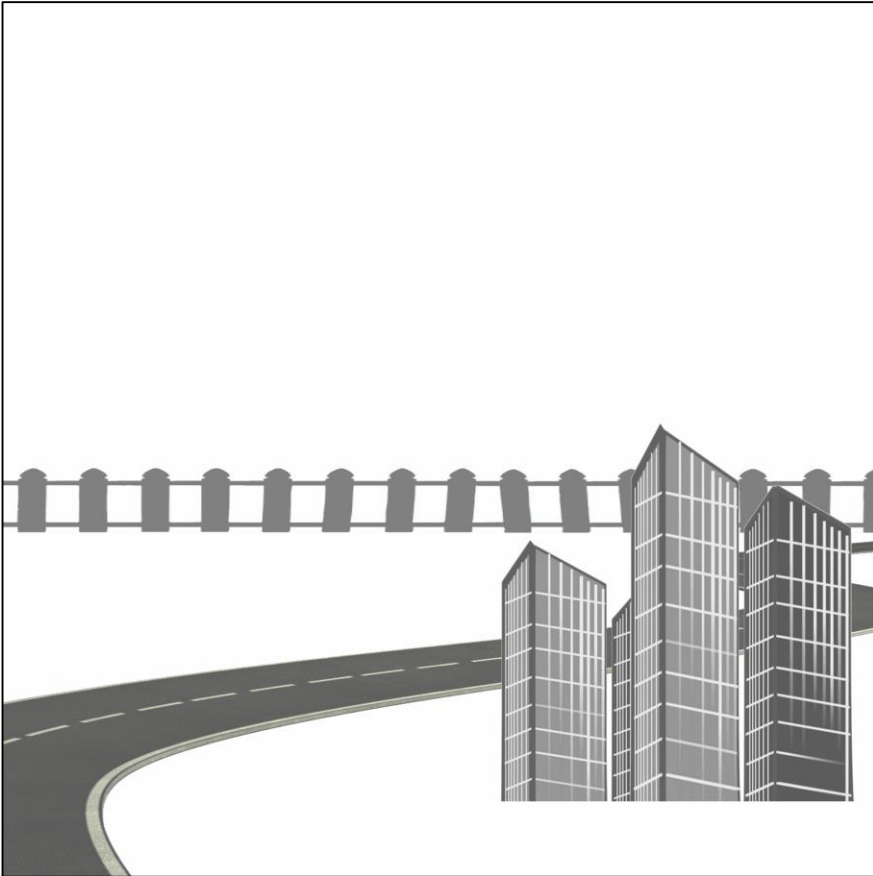
Why do you think saiga migration is important for humans to think about? _____

Growing Up Saiga

Scientists have learned that saiga moms have their babies in areas with lots of food, fresh water, and safe areas to hide.



In the box below, draw a habitat that would be safe for a saiga baby. Remember to label and include everything they need.



Feeding Frenzy

Saiga are **herbivores**, meaning they only eat plants. Grasses, shrubs, and herbs are their favorite things to eat. Saiga graze and eat food all day long. Proper food and nutrition are important to help saiga grow and survive.

Many of the plants that saiga eat can be found in your own community. With your instructor and classmates, or with your family at home, complete the plant search.

1. Go outside and look for plants growing nearby. Remember to bring your booklet and a pencil.
2. Use your observation skills to find two different plants.
3. Draw each plant in the circles below. Remember to label your drawing.

