

PROJECT INFORMATION

As at November 2011

Conservation of steppe and semi-desert ecosystems by land-use and conservation management planning for the Altyn Dala reserve in Central Kazakhstan



Herdsman in the steppe during sunrise (picture: S. Zuther, ACBK)

Background

Temperate grasslands are the least protected biome of the world. A big share of the remaining natural grasslands can be found in the steppe of Kazakhstan, providing a habitat for several threatened and endangered species like the saiga antelope. The Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative, a partnership of NGOs (Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK)) and the government of Kazakhstan, aims at protecting these valuable ecosystems and establishing a network of new protected areas in Central Kazakhstan, the historical range of the Betpak-Dala population of saiga.

As a first important step, a new protected area, the State naturreservat "Altyn Dala", is supposed to start operating in 2012. It consists of 3 clusters, including important calving sites and summer pastures of saiga. Nature conservation organizations as well as the government of Kazakhstan are very much interested in preserving this unique species.

Project

In order to make conservation of steppe habitats and species really effective, sustainable land-use has to be introduced in the surrounding and between the clusters of the reserve as well as at the border to the neighboring oblast, where another protected area is located. Furthermore, a technically excellent management plan is needed for the reserve itself. To achieve this, the project aimed to demonstrate land-use planning techniques in Kazakhstan, which take into account the needs of nature conservation and interests of local people. Planning procedures are generally little developed in Kazakhstan, and therefore international planning standards should be applied in the framework of this project as a possible improvement of the current situation. In participative workshops, previously developed suggestions for a land-use planning in Zhargeldinsky rayon have been commonly discussed and adapted. As a result, a planning document could be handed over to the local administration as well as to national governmental and non-governmental institutions. Stakeholders were informed about the project progress and results on special seminars in Astana. Based on the existing background documents for the reserve and monitoring data, a draft for a management plan has been developed, which will serve as a basis for the development of the final document. During the project, a young expert at ACBK could be educated in landscape planning.

- Target country/region: Kazakhstan
- Duration: 11/2009 – 11/2011
- Implementing organisations: Frankfurt Zoological Society, Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan
- Beneficiary: Zhargeldinskiy rayon, planning institutions
- Project identification: FKZ 380 01 215