



DENVER ZOO

FIELD CONSERVATION / MONGOLIA



IKH NART NATURE RESERVE

Steppes to Sustainable Success

Mongolia's Ikh Nart Nature Reserve is home to a variety of iconic wildlife species, and 20 years ago, the local government was struggling to manage the protected area. Using the holistic, adaptive approach that would ultimately guide our efforts across four continents, Denver Zoo's Field Conservation team brought experience in wildlife conservation, grassland management, scientific research and community engagement to Mongolia's Gobi Steppe. Two decades later, our leadership is helping transform Ikh Nart into a model protected area—one with principles and programs that can be scaled across multiple ecosystems.

Our Challenge

POPULATION + CLIMATE PRESSURES

For centuries, Mongolian herding communities, native wildlife and domesticated livestock have successfully shared resources in the vast grasslands of the Gobi Steppe. In recent decades, however, a boost in the size of livestock herds has led to overgrazing and heightened disease risk. Combined with the increasing droughts that plague this ecosystem, these pressures have led to population declines for multiple threatened species.

Our Solution

MULTI-PRONGED PROTECTION

Securing the survival of wildlife in Ikh Nart requires a confluence of diverse conservation disciplines and collaboration with multiple partners—all wrapped in a sustainable approach that empowers local families, students and organizations to be part of the long-term solution. Denver Zoo's efforts focus on four critical areas: Threatened Raptors, Endangered Ungulates, Rangeland Management and Community Engagement.



MORE THAN 2,500 MONGOLIAN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

(K through post-graduate) have participated in our popular conservation education programs.



Orphaned and injured as a tiny chick, cinereous vulture Aztai—"lucky" in Mongolian—is a living symbol of our conservation victories on the steppe.

50+ stakeholders, including government, mining, tourism and herding community representatives, are collaborating on rangeland management strategy.

20 YEARS OF IMPACT



150+

GLOBAL STAKEHOLDERS COLLABORATING ON IKH NART RANGELAND MANAGEMENT PLAN



150+

MONGOLIAN COLLEGE STUDENTS (INCLUDING 40 SCHOLARSHIPS) HAVE CONDUCTED FIELDWORK



13 YEARS OF RESEARCH AND 500+ NEST SITES

will inform our culture conservation strategy



"WILDLIFE OF THE MONGOLIAN STEPPE"

Project at Ikh Nart Nature Reserve Voted As **EARTHWATCH TOP 5** Volunteer Projects (2017)

Scalable Success

Nearly doubling the protected acreage in Ikh Nart Reserve has been a major accomplishment for our team. But perhaps of equal importance is the fact that our adaptive, stakeholder-driven conservation strategies are poised to serve as a model for the entire protected area network of Mongolia.