

Making a Difference for Wildlife

Hundreds of local conservation projects are undertaken annually by SCI Chapters. They are reinforced by many notable conservation initiatives funded by the SCI Foundation.



Argali Sheep Population Survey

Mongolia

Total Funds: \$17,500

Sheep are classified as adult ewes, lambs, or rams, with rams further categorized by horn length. Locations are recorded by GPS and plotted on topographic maps. Data also are acquired as appropriate from hunter-harvested sheep and animals found dead in the field. Experienced field staffs from observation points and ridge top travel routes also are conducting repeatable visual surveys.

The 1998 survey of the arid, windblown and rocky East Gobi Desert revealed a population density of one Gobi argali per square kilometer, identical to 1993 survey results. In the alpine Altai study area, the same numbers of large rams were spotted per day in 1999 as in 1997. In the Hangay study area, argali are abundant.

Population trends, lamb-ewe ratios, and estimated populations from the study area have yielded information about sheep never before available. Researchers have concluded that argali populations are stable, have good lamb survival, and that no adverse impact has been made by hunting. However, sheep are still susceptible to drought and severe winter weather.

This data will assist the Mongolian Environmental Protection Agency to develop a formal argali management plan. Special thanks go to project leader Dennis Campbell.

ARGALI SHEEP, of which two subspecies, the Gobi and the Altai, are recognized in Mongolia, are classified as endangered by the United States, rare by the Mongolian Ministry for Nature and Environment (MMNE), and listed in Appendix II of CITES. Mongolia permits limited hunting for both subspecies.

Adequate population surveys are necessary for good conservation and continued hunting privileges. However, surveys have been intermittent.

In 1997 Argali Conservation International and MMNE began a cooperative project that utilized Mike Frisina of Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks and Gombosurn Ulziimaa of the Mongolian National Agriculture University to conduct Gobi and Altai argali population surveys. Survey sites were established in the Altai and Hangay Mountains and the East Gobi Desert.

SCI Foundation, SCI's Alabama Chapter, ACI, Donald Cox, Mongol Tours, and Juulchin funded the program. SCI member Gretchen Stark, Safari Outfitters and CanAsia assisted with international travel arrangements.

