

## Saiga Antelope

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Recent conservation efforts have led to the remarkable recovery of the Saiga antelope.



[Ref: nyt]

### **About Saiga Antelope:**

- The Saiga antelope, scientifically known as **Saiga tatarica**, was first classified by **Carl Linnaeus** in **1766**.
- It belongs to the **genus Saiga**, the only living member of this genus.

### **Habitat:**

- Historically, the Saiga inhabited a vast area of the Eurasian Steppe, extending from the Carpathian Mountains to Dzungaria.
- Currently, the dominant subspecies, **S. t. tatarica**, is found primarily in **Russia and Kazakhstan**, with some migrating to Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in winter.
- The Mongolian subspecies, **S. t. mongolica**, is confined to western Mongolia.

### **Physical Characteristics:**

- The Saiga stands about **61-81 cm at the shoulder** and **weighs between 26-69 kg**.
- A notable feature is its distinctively **large, bloated nostrils**, which are beneficial in both summer and winter conditions.

### **Behavior and Ecology:**

- Saigas form large herds and are known for their **extensive migrations** across steppes to escape natural calamities.
- They have a varied diet, including **plants poisonous to other animals**.

### **Conservation History:**

- The Saiga population experienced a drastic decline in the **1920s** but recovered by **1950**.
- However, following the collapse of the USSR, their numbers fell drastically due to **uncontrolled**

hunting and demand for their horns in traditional Chinese medicine.

- In the mid-2010s, the population shrank by as much as **95% in 15 years, leading to its classification as critically endangered.**
- Since then, there has been a significant recovery, with the **global population estimated at 922,600-988,500 mature individuals as of December 2023.**

#### Recent Developments:

- Conservation efforts, including **anti-poaching measures and habitat protection**, have been pivotal in the Saiga's recovery.
- The Government of Kazakhstan played a significant role in these efforts, resulting in a population increase from about **31,000 to 842,000 between 2016 and 2021.**
- Despite these successes, challenges such as **poaching, illegal trade, and habitat barriers persist, necessitating continued conservation efforts.**