

**16– 12 – 2023**

**News: Saiga Antelope**

- IUCN status of Saiga Antelope has been changed to **Near Threatened (NT)**, which was recently downgraded from **Critically Endangered (CE)**.

**Saiga Antelope**

- Saiga Antelope is a **large, nomadic, migratory herbivore** that lives across the **Eurasian Steppe**.
- It's found in **Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the Russian Federation, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan**.
- It belongs to the **family of Bovidae (order Artiodactyla)**.
- The Saiga has two subspecies: **Saiga tatarica tatarica** (found in most of the **range**) and **Saiga tatarica mongolica** (found only in **Mongolia**).
- Typical habitat consists of **flat open areas covered with low-growing vegetation, allowing animals to run quickly**.
- They have an **unusual hanging nose, which makes them look like a camel, although they are goat-sized, and male saigas have horns**.

**Decline in Saiga Population**

- The Saiga, which has roamed the earth since the last Ice Age, faced a drastic decline in its population by more than 95% within a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.
- The decline was primarily due to poaching for the species' meat and horn. The horn is used in Chinese Traditional Medicine.
- In 2015, a major epidemic killed more than 200,000 animals, which was a blow to the species' promising recovery.

## Conservation

- Conservation efforts have led to a positive change in the global Red List status of the Saiga antelope.
- Kazakhstan has shown commendable leadership in species recovery, implementing anti-poaching initiatives, law enforcement measures, and establishing State Protected Areas.
- The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) has facilitated cooperation among governments and civil society organizations for the conservation of the Saiga antelope.
- The Saiga antelope population has soared to over 1.9 million, with the Mongolian subspecies witnessing a notable increase, reaching 15,540 individuals in the 2023 census.

## Ongoing Challenges

➤ Poaching, illegal trade, disease, climate change, disturbance, and infrastructure development continue to pose challenges.

➤