

RESOURCE NOTES

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Conservation Issues for Wild Zebra, Asses, and Horses in Africa and Asia

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Background

The long range goal of the Equid Specialist Group, IUCN is to conserve biological diversity by developing and executing programs to study, save, restore, and wisely manage wild equids and their habitats. Thus, the following information is relevant because conservation issues for wild native equids are similar to those facing wild horses and burros in the USA and management lessons can be learned from a comparative perspective.

Discussion

Family Equidae is composed of zebras, asses, and horses. During the Pleistocene they were the most abundant medium-sized grazing animals of the grasslands and steppes of Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Today there remain only seven species. In Africa, the African wild ass (*Equus africanus*) is critically endangered, the Grevy's zebra (*Equus grevyi*) and the Mountain zebra (*Equus zebra*) are endangered, and the

Plains zebra (*Equus burchelli*) is dependent on conservation support. In Asia, the Asian wild ass (*Equus hemionus*) is vulnerable with some subspecies in an endangered state. The Kiang (*Equus kiang*) is considered a lower risk, but data are inadequate for the assessment of the status of two of the subspecies. The Przewalski's horse (*Equus ferus przewalski*), or Takhi, exists in captivity, but is extinct in the wild. Re-introduction projects for the Takhi are occurring in China and Mongolia. The majority of species in this small family are endangered or vulnerable. Equids are significant for conservation both for their unique genetic heritage and their role as flagship species for the conservation of biodiversity in desert and grassland ecosystems in Africa and Asia.

Most endangered equids live in desert ecosystems. These habitats are not rich in species, but do contain unique and endemic animals and plants. Zebras, asses, and horses can serve as 'flagship' species for the conservation of desert ecosystems and their biodiversity.

At present better information is needed on:

- the national and local population status and trends for all species, but the data are deficient in particular for the subspecies of Asian asses, Kiangs, and Plains zebra.

- the genetic definition of subspecies for the Mountain zebra, the African wild ass, and the Asian wild ass.
- the genetic viability of isolated and re-introduced populations, in particular the Mountain zebra and the Przewalski's horse.
- the behavioral ecology, resource requirements, disease epidemiology, and demography of all free-ranging wild zebras, asses, and horses.
- the risk assessment of geographically distinct populations.
- the socio-economics and viability of alternative conservation/utilization strategies such as the sale of meat and skins (Grevy's zebra, Plains zebra, Mountain Zebra), capture for captive breeding (Grevy's zebra, Mountain zebra), photo tourism, and hunting tourism.

Conclusion

National capability in all the range nations needs to be supported by training and a communication network. In addition, the involvement of local communities in the conservation of their natural resources is fundamental to the future of these species. Conservation of wildlife and natural resources often results in economic and cultural deprivation for local resource users. It is important to develop economic and

WILD HORSE AND
BURRO PROGRAM



WILD EQUIDS --- CONSERVATION STATUS

Equus africanus (African wild ass)

- E.a.africanus
- E.a.somaliensis

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED

- Critically Endangered
- Critically Endangered

Equus grevyi (Grevy's zebra)

Equus zebra (Mountain zebra)

- E.z.zebra
- E.z.hartmannae

ENDANGERED

ENDANGERED

- Endangered
- Endangered

Equus burchelli (Plains zebra)

- E.b.boehmi
- E.b.zambesiansis
- E.b.crawshayi
- E.b.chapmani
- E.b.antiquorum
- E.b.burchelli

LOWER RISK

- Lower Risk
- Data Deficient (extinct in the wild?)
- Data Deficient (endangered?)
- Data Deficient
- Lower Risk
- Extinct (1930)

Equus hemionus (Asian wild ass)

- E.h.hemionus
- E.h. luteus
- E.h.kulan
- E.h.onager
- E.h.khur
- E.h.hemippus

VULNERABLE

- Data Deficient (?extinct in the wild)
- Data Deficient
- Lower Risk
- Endangered
- Endangered
- Extinct

Equus kiang (Kiang)

- E.k.kiang
- E.k.holderei
- E.k.polyodon

LOWER RISK

- Data Deficient
- Lower Risk
- Data Deficient (? endangered)

Equus ferus przewalskii (Takhi)

EXTINCT IN THE WILD

political mechanisms which allow local people to benefit from the conservation of wildlife.

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