

PRZEWALSKI'S HORSE

(MONGOLIAN WILD HORSE)



Equus ferus przewalskii

STATUS

- Przewalski's horse is Critically Endangered (IUCN 2008). Previously, this species was classified Extinct in the Wild (IUCN 1996), but it has now been reintroduced to its former range from captive bred populations around the world.
- It estimated there are about 1800 Przewalski's horses in the world today with a wild population which includes 50 mature adults.
- Historically it has been used as a food source by humans.

ORIGIN

- Przewalski's horse was discovered and identified in Mongolia in 1870's by Nicolai Przewalski and hence the species' name.
- Detailed paintings of these horses are found in southern France in prehistoric cave paintings, dated 20 000 years old.
- They were last sighted in the wild in 1960's.

HABITAT

- Mongolian wild horses were once found in the steppe grasslands of central Asia and the cold desert habitat of the Gobi desert.
- When discovered in the 1890's they were found on the north west edge of the Gobi desert only.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

- Przewalski's horses live in small herds which include mares, young and a stallion. Bachelor males form separate groups.
- The herds protect the young from predators and blizzards by surrounding them in the middle of a circle.

- The stallions are very protective of their herds. Their location in the group depends on the location of predators and young horses.

DESCRIPTION

- Przewalski's horse are shorter and stockier than domestic horses.
- They have an erect brush like mane, no forelock and a thickset head.
- They have a different number of chromosomes from domestic horses.
- They are fawnish brown in colour. The males are darker. They have a black mane, tail and lower legs and a pale underside and muzzle.
- Przewalski's horses often have stripes on the backs of their legs.

POINTS OF INTEREST

- Horses from Monarto Zoo and from Western Plains Zoo Dubbo, NSW, were successfully returned to their natural environment, the Gobi desert on the border of China and Mongolia, in July 1995.
- Przewalski's horse is also called the Mongolian wild horse and is known as the 'Takhi' by the Mongolian people.
- They have an expected life span of 20 -30 years.