
Asian Wild Horse - *Equus przewalskii* (12/1/98)

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ASIAN WILD HORSE

Equus przewalskii

Description: The Asian wild horse, also called Przewalski's horse, is the only true wild horse that exists today. It is a small, sturdy horse with a sandy-colored coat and a short stiff mane. It has a thick neck and heavy head, and dark legs often with faint striping and a dark stripe down the back. It is genetically different from the domestic horse, having 66 chromosomes, while domestic horses have 64 chromosomes.

Range: Asian wild horses are thought to be extinct in the wild, but they formerly ranged over Mongolia, China, and the Soviet Union.

Habitat: Grassy plains and steppes of central Asia make up its habitat. The Asian wild horse requires access to drinking water.

Diet: Grasses make up the diet of the wild horse.

Social Organization: The herd structure of the wild horse is highly developed, with a dominant stallion defending his group. Young males are ejected from the herd prior to their reaching sexual maturity. A hierarchy exists among the females of the herd and a lead mare often guides the herd in grazing activities.

Conservation Status: The Asian wild horse is thought to be extinct in the wild as the last reported sighting was in 1968. It is listed as extinct by the IUCN Red Data Book and as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Threats to Survival: The Asian wild horse was driven into extinction in the wild by hunting and encroachment of domestic animals grazing in their habitat, which forced the horses into marginal desert habitats where they had difficulty finding adequate water.

Zoo Programs - SSP: Zoos are the last haven for the Asian wild horse, the only horse which has never been domesticated. There are 180 horses in the SSP program. A global management plan has been developed that will increase cooperation between the zoological communities of North America, Europe and the Soviet Union. One of the areas of concern for the plan is reducing inbreeding among the horses, which all descend from just 13 individuals.

Reintroduction: Programs are underway to reintroduce captive-bred Asian wild horses to habitats in Mongolia, China and the Soviet Union. Reintroductionís require funds for financing the projects, facilities with trained staff for acclimatizing the horses to their new homes, and a system for tracking, monitoring and protecting the animals once they are released. Animals released into the Hustain Nuruu National Reserve in Mongolia have successfully reared foals.

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