Wakhan National Park

Overview
Wakhan National Park (WNP) is home to about 15,000 people. The park borders China, Pakistan, and Tajikistan. It is home to the headwaters of the Amu Darya River and is the meeting place of the Hindu Kush and Pamir mountains. This relatively new protected area is co-managed by the Afghanistan Government and local communities. The park provides ecosystem services and supports livelihoods in one of the world’s poorest and most isolated regions. It is in one of the most remote areas of Afghanistan, with soaring mountains, alpine grasslands, and unique wildlife.

People
Wakhi and Kyrgyz

General features

Country: Afghanistan
Wakan District

Date of establishment: 2014

Area: 10,878 km²

Geographic location: Latitude: 37°00’N; Longitude: 73°30’E

IUCN category: NA

Flora
Primary mountain grazing slopes up to an altitude of 4,000 masl are dominated by perennial species such as Artemisia spp., Astragalus spp., Ephedra spp., Cousinia spp., and Oryzopsis spp., with grasses such as Stipa and ephemerals such as Poa. Polo ‘sedge meadows’ on higher valley flats are dominated by Carex spp., Kobresia spp., and Festuca spp. Slopes above 4,800 masl have rich alpine flora including Thymus spp., Saxifraga spp., Aster spp., Potentilla spp., Pedicularis spp. and Primula spp.

Fauna
The park provides protection and habitat for rare and vulnerable wildlife including Marco Polo sheep (Ovis ammon polii) and seventeen other mammal species, as well as carnivores like wolf (Canis lupus), red fox (Vulpes vulpes), brown bear (Ursus arctos), stoat (Mustela ermina), lynx (Lynx lynx), and snow leopard (Panthera uncia). Mountain ungulate species include the markhor (Capra falconeri) and Himalayan ibex (Capra sibirica).

Threats
- Reduced vegetative cover over large areas due to overgrazing, shrub collection, and forest destruction.
- Hunting and trapping are a threat to many large mammals and birds.