

**Wintering Ring-necked Pheasants
(*Phasianus colchicus*) in Western Mongolia
(Buhmurun and Khovd river valleys at Uvs and Khovd provinces)**



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The pheasant of Khobdo (*Phasianus colchicus hagenbecki*) lives as isolated population from source population in the West of Mongolia, on a territory restricted to the valleys of rivers Khovd and Buhmurun, in the province Uvs.

Professor Gombobaatar led an expedition in these regions during the winter 2010, from 9th till 17th February, by daily temperatures of about -18° C, to study these pheasants and their wintry living environment. By means of his local team, habitants of the region and the members of a local association of nature conservation, he was able to locate 19 individuals (11 hens and 8 cocks) and to collect numerous informations.

The last observations had been made by Buyant in 1999. Since then, the west of Mongolia knew devastating winters for the wildlife and the animals of breeding. The winter of 2004 caused the loss of a large number of pheasants, because of the very low temperatures and the thick coat of snow.

It emerges from this study that the pheasants of Khobdo are endangered, if measures are not quickly taken.

The habitat environment of wintering and reproduction shrinks year by year thru the action of the people (uncontrolled deforestation) and the overgrazing. The poaching and the illegal hunting (for the sale of game in nearby China) and the natural predation by the red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) contribute to weaken the population of pheasants.

Action needed

- It is urgent to publish and to distribute educational flyers to the local population to explain the critical situation of these pheasants.
- Financial help for the local breeders to make more hedges for protection from the cattle. This would benefit the pheasants also during winter. An education about better cultivation and better management of the forest which is a refuge for different types of pheasants, should be offered.
- Financing of studies must be found, to count the population and breeding density during the next spring and summer.
- To set up surveillance of telemetry by radio and satellite, to determine their behaviour and their favourite living environments.
- Genetic studies are to be considered, to attest the appropriate characteristics of life in extreme climatic conditions and also to understand the phylogenesis of the species.
- Finally, plan a captive breeding *in situ*, as it was the case before the independence.