**The wildlife of Kalmykia**

A large part of Kalmykia is located in the Caspian lowlands below the level of the World ocean. The main natural areas here are the steppe, desert and semi-desert. Such rivers as the Volga and the Manych flow on the territory of Kalmykia. The largest body of water is the Caspian sea. There are no bright and lush landscapes in the Republic, but there are discreet charm of the steppe landscapes and the beauty of which is revealed gradually.

The vegetation of Kalmykia exist in harsh environments: saline soils and the continental climate determined the peculiar composition of the flora. There are many endemic species – plants that grow only here. There are more than 800 species of plants belonging to 80 families. About 300 species of these are of economic importance, they grow on pasture land, and 100 species of medicinal plants. The reserve "Black earth" was created in order to save the ecosystems in Kalmykia. The reserve includes the Manych-Gudilo lake. Scientists are trying to save plants, many of which play a conservation role, for example: astragalus, kochia, grate burs, eurotia, calligonum and others. The flora in the steppes is dominated by Gramineae plants such as grasses, fescue. Various types of drought-tolerant wormwood and camel thorn can be found in the desert and semi-desert. In April flowering tulips begin to bloom in the Kalmyk steppes. There are several types of them. It is an unforgettable sight so many people specially come to see the huge floral carpets.

There are about 60 species of mammals living on the territory of Kalmykia. Nearly 130 species of birds nest on the water ponds and around 50 species migrate during the seasons. There are 20 species of reptiles and 3 species of amphibians. 23 species of birds are listed in the Red Book of the Russian Federation.

The most part of mammals are rodents, such as hares, hedgehogs, gerbils, gophers and ground squirrels. There are also lots of predators – wolves, foxes, corsac foxes, polecats, raccoon dogs. The wild steppe antelope saiga is the pride of Kalmykia. But it is on the verge of extinction due to poaching and the high demand for the horns. There are a lot of wild boars In the Republic. Camel Kalmyk Bactrian camel is one of the core values of Kalmykia. It gives milk, wool and meat.

There are more than 150 species of birds: skylarks, herons, seagulls, swans, geese, many species of ducks and pochards. The pink and the Dalmatian Pelican, the eagles long-legged buzzard and Imperial eagle, white-tailed eagle are listed In the Red book.

The rivers and lakes of the Republic and the Caspian sea is home to commercial species of fish. It's sturgeon, pike, perch, catfish, carp, bream, Rudd, crucian carp, perch, herring, roach.

The climate in the Republic is severe continental. This means very dry and hot summers with average July temperature of 25.5 degrees. Warm weather continues for up to 275 days a year. A feature of the summer period are very strong winds-winds.

Winter in Kalmykia is snowy and cold, average temperature in January is 7 – 12 degrees. Generally the winter is intermittent, alternating periods of thaw and snow storms give rise to ice and the icing of the pastures.

Spring and autumn are more comfortable seasons when the steppe is in bloom. The season of hunting for the beast and bird begins, fishing comes to life.