

Learn about protecting endangered animals

1 Before you read, discuss these questions in pairs.

- 1 Look at the pictures below. What do you think the text is about?
- 2 What do you know about the Tibetan antelope and the Changtang National Nature Reserve?

A DAY IN THE CLOUDS

The air is thin and we have to rest several times on the short hike from camp. To our left, snow-covered mountains disappear into clouds that seem almost close enough to touch. On the **plain** in front of us, we can just make out a herd of graceful animals. This is why we're here—to **observe** Tibetan antelopes.



Tibetan antelopes live on the plains of Tibet, Xinjiang, and Qinghai. Watching them move slowly across the green grass, I'm struck by their **beauty**. I'm also **reminded** of the danger they are in. They are being hunted, illegally, for their valuable fur.

My guide is Zhaxi, a villager from Changtang. He works at the Changtang National Nature Reserve. The reserve is a shelter for the animals and plants of northwestern Tibet. To Zhaxi, the land is sacred and protecting the wildlife is a way of life. "We're not trying to save the animals," he says. "Actually, we're trying to save ourselves."

The 1980s and 1990s were bad times for the Tibetan antelope. The population dropped by more than 50 percent. Hunters were **shooting** antelopes to make **profits**. Their habitats were becoming smaller as new roads and railways were built.

In order to save this species from extinction, the Chinese government placed it under national protection. Zhaxi and other volunteers watched over the antelopes day and night to keep them safe from **attacks**. Bridges and gates were added to let the antelopes move easily and keep them safe from cars and trains.

The measures were effective. The antelope population has **recovered** and in June 2015, the Tibetan antelope was **removed** from the endangered species list. The government, however, does not **intend** to stop the protection programmes, since the **threats** to the Tibetan antelope have not yet disappeared.

In the evening, I drink a cup of tea and watch the stars. I think about the antelopes and what Zhaxi told me. Much is being done to protect wildlife, but if we really want to save the planet, we must change our way of life. Only when we learn to **exist** in **harmony** with nature can we stop being a threat to wildlife and to our planet.

