

Tarpan wild horses to be reintroduced to Bulgaria

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The prehistoric [horses](#) will be brought to the Rhodope mountains in southern Bulgaria, a region they are believed to have inhabited in the past, as part of a joint Dutch-Bulgarian project.

"Twelve tarpans will be transported Sunday to the southeastern region of Krumovgrad from their [breeding ground](#) in the Netherlands," Stefan Avramov, a biodiversity expert with the New Thracian Gold project told AFP.

Once in Bulgaria, the horses will be raised in enclosures until they adapt to the mountainous conditions here, he added.

The enclosures will be gradually enlarged until the animals get used to the surroundings and are ready to be released into the wild, Johan Bekhauis from the Dutch ARK foundation added.

The experts were however unable to say how long the adaptation might take.

"In the Netherlands they have never seen a rock, a mountain. They have to be used to the landscape: rocks, valleys, different vegetation, to find water, to protect themselves," Bekhauis said.

Ordinary horses will be used to "teach" the newcomers how to protect themselves from [wolves](#), for example, he added.

The tarpans died out in the wild between 1875 and 1890, but Polish peasants continued to raise them together with ordinary horses up until the 1930s.

They were then introduced in the Netherlands and from there to some regions in western France, northern Germany, Britain, Belgium and Lithuania, Avramov explained.

The New Thracian Gold project received funding from the Dutch National Postcode Lottery in 2009 and has since worked to develop natural grazing, [organic agriculture](#) and eco tourism in the eastern Rhodope mountains.

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