



MONGOLIAN WILDLIFE WATCHING PHOTOGRAPHING TOUR REPORT BY STEPPE WILDLIFE IN 2024



Dr. Buyandelger Suuri and Otgonbayar Baatargal

2024

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE TRIP

PALLAS'S CAT

- In winter season, we organized 5 trips in the beginning of 2024. However, it was hard year, we concentrated in 2 areas and frequently observed 4-5 individuals. Every time the road closes after a snow storm, it snows for clean roads and fixing cars several times.
- In breeding season, we organized 9 trips in summer 2024. After a difficult winter, the summer was really productive and there was good rainfall so it was a nice green summer.. We found 25 breeding den site and one breeding den 2-6 kittens. In addition, we did a long documentary trip this summer.
- In autumn, we organized 5 trips this year. The long grass was one of the challenges for tracking the small cat. However, we did successfully organize those trips in the long beautiful autumn.



Other species observed during the trips

Mammals: Corsac fox, Red Fox, Mongolian gazelle, Argali Sheep, Goitered gazelle, Tolai Hare, Brandt's Vole, Mongolian Hamster, Mongolian Gerbil

Birds: Cinereous Vulture, Steppe Eagle, Upland Buzzard, Eastern Buzzard, Northern Goshawk, Hen Harrier, Eurasian Kestrel, Saker falcon, Eurasian Eagle-owl, Little Owl, Short-eared Owl, Demoiselle crane, Daurian Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, Northern Raven, Dusky Thrush, Naumann's Thrush, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, Eurasian Hoopoe, Horned lark, Crested Lark, Mongolian Short-toed Lark, Mongolian Lark, Asian Short-toed Lark, Sand Martin, Pallas's Leaf Warbler, Dusky Warbler, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, Daurian Redstart, Siberian Rubythroat, Red-flanked Bluetail, Isabelline Wheatear, Amur Stonechat, Rock Sparrow, Pere David's Snow finch, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, Richard's Pipit, Grey-capped Greenfinch, Twite, Pine Bunting, Little, Pallas's Reed, Common Reed Bunting

In plantation of Steppe Wildlife camp: Daurian Redstart, Dusky Thrush, Siberian Rubythroat, Red-flanked Bluetail, Brambling and Pine, Little and Black-faced Bunting.

Birds in Gungaluut: Siberian Crane, White-napped Crane, Grey Plover,



PALLAS'S CAT



Picture. Breeding pairs of Pallas's cat



Picture. 4 cubs in rock shelter



Picture. A female with 3 cubs in borrow shelter

SNOW LEOPARD

- Steppe Wildlife tour organized 6 snow leopard photographing tours in 2024. It was favorable good temperature and lower snowfall in western Mongolia. Thanks to a really good hard-working team, we took excellent photographs and 5-7 times in 7-10 days.
- We organized 4 snow leopard watching tours in 2024. Trip duration was usually 5-6 days and we observed cat 2-5 times in once.



Other species observed during the trips

Mammals: Argali Sheep, Siberian Ibex, Saiga Antelope, Grey Wolf, Red Fox, Mongolian Marmot, Long-tailed Ground Squirrel, Tolai Hare, Pallas's Pika, Midday Gerbil, Hairy-footed Jerboa and Mongolian Jerboa.

Birds: Cinereous Vulture, Bearded Vulture, Golden Eagle, Booted Eagle, Black Kite, Northern Goshawk, Saker Falcon, Common Kestrel, Eurasian Eagle-owl, Eurasian Kestrel, Saker falcon, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Long-eared Owl, Altai Snowcock, Chukar, Hill Pigeon, Mongolian Ground Jay, Eurasian Crag Martin, Yellow-browed Warbler, Northern Raven, Carrion Crow, Isabelline Shrike, White-winged Snowfinch, Altai Accentor, Two-barred and Dusky Warblers, Two-barred Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Guldenstadt's, Eversmann's, common and Black Redstarts, Dark-sided Flycatcher, Brown and Siberian Accentors, Common Starling, Mistle Thrush, Northern, Pied and Desert Wheater, Rock Sparrow, White-winged Snowfinch, Mongolian Finch, Plain Mountain Finch, European Greenfinch, Godlewski's, Rock, Meadow, Yellow-browed Bunting.

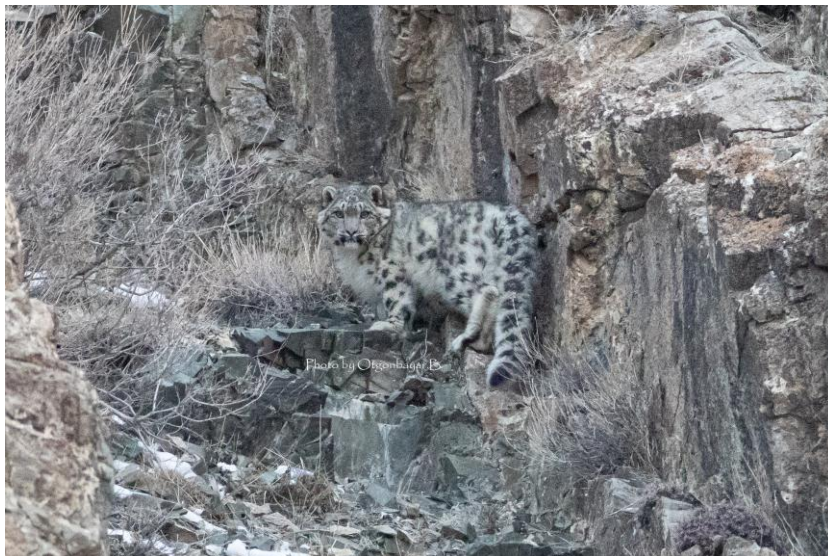
Birds in Khar Us Lake: Tundra Bean Goose, Greylag Goose, Swan goose, Common Shelduck, Ruddy Shelduck, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Eurasian Wigeon, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Eurasian Teal, Red-crested Pochard, White-headed Duck, Eurasian Coot, Black-necked Grebe, Western Marsh Harrier, Water and Tree Pipit, Eurasian Chaffinch,



SNOW LEOPARD



Picture. Breeding pairs of snow leopard



Picture. 1 snow leopard cub



Picture. A female snow leopard

MAMMAL AND BIRDWATCHING TRIP

In 2024, we did two long distance mammal and birdwatching trip.

- Spring trip: We travel Ulaanbaatar, Khovd, Gobi-Altai, Bayankhongor, Uvurkhangai and Hustai that was over 3500 km trip.
- Autumn trip: We travel Ulaanbaatar, Bayankhongor, Gobi-Altai, Khovd, Hustai, Sukhbaatar that was over 4800 km trip.



Other species observed during the trips

Mammals in Great Gobi: Wild Camel, Asiatic Wild Ass, Goitered Gazelle, Tolai Hare, Alashan Ground Squirrel, Long-eared Jerboa, Gobi Jerboa, Mid-day Gerbil.

Birds in Great Gobi: Griffon Vulture, Eurasian Hobby, Eastern Spot-billed Duck, Garganey, Eastern Spot-billed Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, European Nightjar, Oriental Turtle Dove, Eurasian Collared Dove, Pallas's Sandgrouse, Mongolian Ground Jay, Little Ringed Plover, Common Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Asian Desert Warbler, Great Grey Shrike, Eurasian Hoopoe, Crested Lark, Saxual Sparrow, White Wagtail, Common Rosefinch, Black-throated Trush, Desert Wheatear, Lesser White-throat, Daurian Redstart,.

Mammals in Sharga Gobi: Saiga Antelope

Birds in Sharga: Pallas's Sandgrouse

Birds in Buuntsagaan: Bar-headed Goose, Greylag Goose, Ferruginous Duck, Tufted duck, Common Crane, Great Crested Grebe, Black-winged Stint, Pied Avocet, Grey Plover, Wood Sandpiper, Common Redshank, Ruff, Curlew Sandpiper, Temminck's Stint, Sanderling, Dunlin, Caspin Tern, Common Tern, Black-headed Gull, Pallas's Gull, Relict Gull, Common Gull, Mongolian Gull, Eurasian Spoonbill, Great Egret, Grey Heron, Black-throated Thrush, Blyth's Pipit, Water Pipit

Birds in Ikhes Lake: Black-winged Stint, Pied Avocet, Black-tailed Godwit, Common Snipe, Red-necked Phalarope, Dunlin, White-winged Tern, Relict Gull, Mongolian Gull, Eurasian Spoonbill, Great Egret, Grey Heron, Dalmatian Pelican, Great Grey Shrike, , Eurasian Chaffinch, Brambling



HUSTAI EXTENSION

In 2024, we did 8 trips in Hustai National Park. The trip main purpose was the Przewalski's horse (*Equus ferus przewalskii*), that is declared extinct in the wild in 1969. In 1992, reintroduction of wild horses was begun in Mongolia, China and Kazakhstan. At that time, 16 wild horses from the Netherlands were successfully transported to Hustai. Now, the wild horse number is 380. Mongolia is the only place in the world where Przewalski's horses exist within their historic range; Hustai is home to the world's largest number of Przewalski's horses in the wild.



Other species observed during the trips

Mammals: Wapiti (*Cervus elaphus*, in IUCN red list), Mongolian gazelle, Argali Sheep, Grey Wolf, Corsac fox, Red Fox, Tolai Hare, Mongolian Marmot, Long-tailed Ground Squirrel.

Birds: Cinereous Vulture, Bearded Vulture, Osprey, Black Kite, Demoiselle Crane, Common Crane, Daurian Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, Northern Raven, Pallas's Leaf Warbler, Daurian Redstart, Horned Lark, Asian Short-toed Lark, Pine, Pallas's Reed Bunting and Rustic Bunting.



CLIENT REVIEW

Miles

Snow Leopards and Pallas Cats

Had an amazing time on this tour of Mongolia led by David and Wild Lens Nature Tours. The scenery, wildlife and company were all exceptional and without doubt has been one of the highlights of my photography journey. On such a remote tour it's vital that the logistics and lodgings are up to scratch and everything worked perfectly. More importantly, the wildlife photographic opportunities exceeded my expectations and delivered some once in a lifetime experiences both in the Altai Mountains and the Gobi Desert. It was a tour I will never forget and would thoroughly recommend.

Date of experience: 10 January 2024



Mohammad Murad

[Iceland & Mongolia expeditions \(2023, 2024\)](#)

I was fortunate enough to visit Iceland to photograph the Arctic Fox with Wild Lens Nature Tours, i had the best experience with them that I had to join them again to Mongolia to photograph the Snow Leopards and the Pallas Cats.

It's not just about the incredible logistics that i had in both trips (which was amazingly more than I expected), it's also about how nice David is .. without doubt David is one of the most humble person I have ever met in my life. He cares for everyone and every detail in the trip, he always smiles and makes sure that everyone in comfortable and happy.

David helped me a lot in both trips, he doubled checked everything with me before each trip just to make sure i have the right tools, clothes and camera gear for the trip.

I came back home with lots of incredible shots, lots of great memories and new friends.

I would definitely recommend everyone to join David and Wild Lens Nature Tours for any of their very well tailored trips for nature photographers.

Date of experience: 11 January 2024

SNOW LEOPARD MITIGATION PROGRAM IN WESTERN MONGOLIA

Steppe Wildlife tour was started to our photographic and wildlife watching tours based in Jargalant Mountain, Mankhan Soum, Hovd Province since 2014. The Jargalant Mountain lays next to Khar Us Lake that is a national Protected Area with a National Park in 1997 to protect specifical natural formations including habitat for threatened wildlife fresh water lakes in terrestrial land, Gobi desert, steppe and Mongol Altay's alpine with permanent snow covers. Lands around the lake are used by local people for livestock grazing, hay making, and vegetable growing. Steppe Wildlife tour do mitigation programs against snow leopard and local people conflict based on the local community.

1. The wildlife watching tourism work provide job for local people. Every trip 10-20 local people that support them income generated through snow leopard such as work for mountain spotters, cook, camp staff and renting local family's ger and car.
2. Steppe Wildlife Tour-led livestock insurance program helps rural communities reduce the economic impact of snow leopard predation by providing compensation for lost animals through a shared insurance fund. This initiative serves as a safety net for herders, enabling them to better cope with occasional predation and ultimately promoting coexistence with snow leopards and other predators.
3. Snow Leopard Enterprises is conservation-focused handicrafts brand that helps create sustainable economic opportunities for families living in snow leopard habitat. This local group 'Hoshoon Ar' initiative promotes the production and sale of handmade products to tourists and photographers. Participating communities are also actively involved in conservation actions to protect snow leopards.
4. International funds giving to support to our NGO and we supported local people. For example, Shared Earth Fund giving support: 2 motorbike to a ranger of Khar Us Laker protected area and a spotter of "Hoshoon Ar", one binocular to a spotter of "Hoshoon Ar" community and 100 sack bags of rough bran cattle feed to 23 local families.

Picture 2. Local spotters in Jargalant Mountain, August, 2024



PALLAS'S CAT CONSERVATION IN EASTERN MONGOLIA

Steppe Wildlife was established in 2018 as part of the Pallas's cat Conservancy. Our program is meticulously designed to conserve the steppe ecosystem through the collaboration with local communities. We focus primarily on building local stewardship through community-based tourism, education and research in Eastern Mongolia.

1. The wildlife watching tourism work provides jobs for local people. Every trip 6-10 local people that support them income generated through Pallas's cat such as work for Pallas's cat trackers, cook, camp staff.
2. Research projects on Pallas's cat, reintroduced Mongolian marmot, endangered steppe eagle, small prey species abundance and artificial nest survey. We collected long term research data from 2018 until now. We published several results to international journals.
3. For the ecosystem conservation: we reintroduced 120 individuals of marmot, planted over 2000 trees, and cleaned the environment around Khalzan village. 100 artificial nests were set by Steppe Wildlife and local people in 2023. The colonization of the artificial nest was 60% in 2024. Moreover, we set up an artificial shelter for carnivores in 2023, most of them used by corsac foxes, Pallas's cat and raptors.
4. Educational activity: we organize wildlife educational day 5 times among local people and school children. Every year we have different subjects such as Pallas's cat, how to save our environment, marmot protection, and how to save raptors in the steppe zone. During the educational event we organized essay writing, drawing competition among school children and volleyball and wrestling competition among adults.
5. Introducing Pallas's cat to world. Pallas's cat became one of the subjects of international documentaries such as Frozen Planet II by BBC, Pallas's cat by NHK, Earth Asia by BBC and Home by National Geography.

Picture 2. Local people, police man, local children, our staff during a marmot reintroduction work in 2021





Photo by Otgonbayar.B

If you challenge yourself, see beautiful mountains, vast steppes, wonderful wildlife and different people,

please contact us: steppewildlife@gmail.com

Website: www.steppewildlifetour.com

NGO website: www.steppewildlife.org

