

Mammal-watching Trip across Central and Western Mongolia (2019 Aug 4-30)

Report by Paul Carter (<https://www.pacapix.com/mongolia-2019/>) – 30 Nov 2019 – v1

Trip with Kevin Bryan, Ian Thompson, Sjef Ollers and Anja Palmans

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1. SUMMARY

This four-week road-trip covered 5,300 km across Central and Western Mongolia (excluding the southern Gobi). Key sites visited were Hustai NP, Boon Tsagaan Nuur, Sharga, Gobi B SPA, Jargalant Uul, Tavan Bogd NP, Khurgas Nuur area and the Khangai Mountains. The focus was on mammals and we identified 44 species, with another two heard (Lynx and Wolf). Some of the bats seen and recorded have yet to be identified. Rodents were surprisingly scarce on some nights and we only had two mustelids. Small mammal highlights included Steppe Zokor, Zaisan Mole Vole, Grey Marmot, Five-toed Pygmy Jerboa and Thick-tailed Pygmy Jerboa.

Route Map (numbers 4 to 29 show overnight dates and sites; names in red show places camped at whilst at names in purple we used hotels or gers; route in red is the out-leg; that in purple the return leg):



From 2002 to 2007 my work in Mongolia, as an exploration geologist, included various helicopter-based trips (using Russian Mil Mi-8 helicopters). One of these trips included 4 days around western Mongolia and I had always wanted to return to the region and its spectacular scenery, especially the Tavan Bogd area. Due to the remote travel it was best done with at least two vehicles and Ian Thompson, Kevin Bryan, Sjef Ollers and Anja Palmans were keen; none of them had yet visited Mongolia.

I organised three land-cruisers through Erka (my work driver for over 3 years); I had last used him in 2016. He drove one vehicle whilst his son Kuchee and Erka's friend Mugi drove the other two. They were all safe drivers and excellent bush mechanics and spent many hours servicing the cars, often late into the night. Erka's niece Bella came along as our translator.

A limited selection of mammal photos is shown in section 6 of this report.

Updates to this report will be done in the website post.

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2. LOGISTICS AND REFERENCES

The main road trip from 4th to 30th August covered 5,320 km over 27 days. Accommodation outside of the capital included 5 nights in hotels or gers and 21 nights camping. Sjef, Anja and Ian flew out of UB 5 days before Kevin and me so they separated from us at Khurgas Nuur on the 21st Aug (to get back to UB on the 24th); their trip distance was probably around 5,100 km over 21 days. Cost per person on the longer 27-day trip was about \$2,500 (including food, fuel, vehicles, driver and translator expenses; but excluding flights and UB expenses).

If travelling within 100 km of the border you need a “border permit”; Erka organised this for us just before our arrival. Anja and I bought local sim cards, well worth it for the internet access in towns and google maps. I had planned the trip on Google Earth and had waypoints for much of the trip; tracks in Mongolia can be vague and the navigation challenging but I had visited about half the sites before. Kuchee was also an adept at navigation using local GPS maps and google. Ian and I had Pulsar thermal scopes. I also had an Echo Meter Touch 2 PRO bat detector (set on Europe species for rough IDs).

We did not take a cook and everyone looked after themselves food-wise. The vehicles carried small gas cookers, with gas cartridges easily bought in most towns. We stocked up in UB before leaving; then topped up on basics in reasonable supermarkets in larger towns; smaller towns often had eggs and limited tinned food. I lived mostly off nuts, muesli, coconut milk, boiled eggs, tinned fish, beans and snickers bars. Kevin’s diet was similar. Ian had a good supply of high-tech meals in bags. Sjef and Anja occasionally cooked a pasta and took their food more seriously.

The three western most provinces (including Hovd and Uvs) have a one-hour time difference to the central part of Mongolia but all times in the notes below and my photos are UB time.

Key words that crop up in Mongolian place names are Uul (mountain), Nuur (lake), Gol (river) and Khiid (monastery) whilst Ovoos are outdoor shrines mostly of rock piles, with some wood and mostly-blue prayer flags; animal skulls and vodka bottles are not uncommon adornments.

Key References

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3. ITINERARY

- Aug 4: Ulaanbaatar - Hustai **NP (Moilt Camp)**.
- Aug 5: Hustai NP - Lun - **Tsagaan Nuur** - Gurvanbulag - Mongol Els - Arvaikheer.
- Aug 6: Arvaikheer - Bayankhongor - **Boon Tsagaan Nuur**.
- Aug 7: Boon Tsagaan Nuur - Buutsagaan - Altai - **Sharga**.
- Aug 8: Sharga - Tugrug - Bugat - Bij.
- Aug 9: Bij - **Gobi B SPA**.
- Aug 10: Gobi B - Altai Uyench - Bodonch Valley - Bayanzurh - **Bort area**.
- Aug 11: Bort area - Monkhkhairkan/Alagteh - Tsenkher - **Tsenkher Gol**.
- Aug 12: Tsenkher Gol - Tugrug (Mankhan) - **Jargalant Uul** (west side).
- Aug 13: Jargalant Uul - Chandmani road - **Dorgon Nuur**.
- Aug 14: Dorgon Nuur - Khovd - **Tolbo Nuur**.
- Aug 15: Tolbo Lake - Ulgii - Tsengel - Har Nuur - **Dayan Nuur (Tavan Bogd NP)**.
- Aug 16: Dayan Nuur - Har Nuur - Khurgan Nuur - **Khoton Nuur** (west side).
- Aug 17: Khoton Nuur - Khurgan Nuur (east side) - **Ih Hag Nuur area**.
- Aug 18: Ih Hag Nuur area - Zagast Nuur area - Tsagaan Gol.
- Aug 19: Tsagaan Gol - Tsengel - Ulaankhus - Ulgii.
- Aug 20: Ulgii - Khovd River - Achit Nuur - Hovd - Shaazgay Nuur - Omnigovi - Naranbulag area.
- Aug 21: Naranbulag area - Khurgas Nuur - **Airag Nuur area**.
- Aug 22: Airag Nuur area - Urgamal - **Bayan Nuur**.
- Aug 23: Bayan Nuur - Tsetsen Uul area - Tudevtey area (south).
- Aug 24: Tudevtey area - Nomrog - Ikh Uul town - **Noyon Khangai SPA**.
- Aug 25: Noyon Khangai - Noot Nuur - Khorgo town - **Terhiyn Tsagaan Nuur** (east side).
- Aug 26: Terhiyn Tsagaan Nuur (east side) area including **Korgo Volcano**.
- Aug 27: Terhiyn Tsagaan Nuur - Tsetserleg - Altan Ovoo - Kharkhorin - **Erdene Khamba**.
- Aug 28: Erdene Khamba and **Mongol Els area**.
- Aug 29: Erdene Khamba - Lun - UB - **Manzshir Khiid**.
- Aug 30: Manzshir Khiid - **Ulaanbaatar**.

1 - Front: Paul. Back L-R: Sjef, Kevin, Anja, Ian



2 - Bella, Kuchee, Erka, Mugi



4. LIST OF MAMMALS SEEN

- 1 - Long-eared Hedgehog - *Hemiechinus auritus*
- 2 - Daurian Hedgehog - *Mesechinus dauuricus*
- 3 - Ognev's Long-eared Bat - *Plecotus ognevi*
- 4 - Eastern Water Bat - *Myotis petax*
- 5 - Red Fox - *Vulpes vulpes*
- 6 - Corsac Fox - *Vulpes corsac*
- 7 - Mountain Weasel - *Mustela altaica*
- 8 - Steppe Polecat - *Mustela eversmannii*
- 9 - Przewalski's Horse - *Equus ferus*
- 10 - Eastern Roe Deer - *Capreolus pygargus*
- 11 - Wapiti - *Cervus canadensis*
- 12 - Goitered Gazelle - *Gazella subgutturosa*
- 13 - Mongolian Gazelle - *Procapra gutturosa*
- 14 - Saiga Antelope - *Saiga tatarica*
- 15 - Asiatic Ibex - *Capra sibirica*
- 16 - Alpine Pika - *Ochotona alpina*
- 17 - Pallas's Pika - *Ochotona pallasii*
- 18 - Daurian Pika - *Ochotona dauurica*
- 19 - Tolai Hare - *Lepus tolai*
- 20 - Eurasian Red Squirrel - *Sciurus vulgaris*
- 21 - Siberian Chipmunk - *Eutamias sibiricus*
- 22 - Altai Marmot (Grey Marmot) - *Marmota baibacina*
- 23 - Siberian Marmot - *Marmota sibirica*
- 24 - Daurian Ground Squirrel - *Spermophilus dauricus*
- 25 - Pallid Ground Squirrel - *Spermophilus pallidicauda*
- 26 - Long-tailed Ground Squirrel - *Urocitellus undulatus*
- 27 - Gobi Jerboa - *Allactaga bullata*
- 28 - Siberian Jerboa - *Allactaga sibirica*
- 29 - Five-toed Pygmy Jerboa - *Cardiocranius paradoxus*
- 30 - Thick-tailed Pygmy Jerboa - *Salpingotus crassicauda*
- 31 - Northern Three-toed Jerboa - *Dipus sagitta*
- 32 - Andrews's Three-toed Jerboa - *Stylodipus andrewsi*
- 33 - Steppe Zokor - *Myospalax aspalax*
- 34 - Korean Field Mouse - *Apodemus peninsulae*
- 35 - Midday Jird - *Meriones meridianus*
- 36 - Mongolian Jird - *Meriones unguiculatus*
- 37 - Long-tailed Dwarf Hamster - *Cricetulus longicaudatus*
- 38 - Campbell's Hamster - *Phodopus campbelli*
- 39 - Desert Hamster - *Phodopus roborovskii*
- 40 - Brandt's Vole - *Lasiopodomys brandtii*
- 41 - Zaisan Mole Vole - *Ellobius tancrei*
- 42 - Gobi Altai Mountain Vole - *Alticola barakshin*

43 - **Mongolian Mountain Vole** - *Alticola semicanus*

44 - **Grey Red-backed Vole** - *Myodes rufocanus*

5. LIST OF MAMMALS RECORDED AND SITES

1 - **Long-eared Hedgehog** - *Hemiechinus auritus* - 7/8 - Sharga campsite.

2 - **Daurian Hedgehog** - *Mesechinus dauuricus* - 28/8 - Erdene Khamba Monastery (PC+KB).

3 - **Ognev's Long-eared Bat** - *Plecotus ognevi* - 26/8 - Khangai Mts - Yellow Dog Caves area. 27/8 - Erdene Khamba Monastery.

4 - **Eastern Water Bat** - *Myotis petax* - 11/8 - Dund Tsenher – Echo Touch - Q. 26/8 - Khangai Mts - Khorgo Volcano.

5 - **Eurasian Lynx** - *Lynx lynx* - HEARD only (PC+KB) twice: 24/8 - Noyon Khangai NP. 28/8 - Erdene Khamba Monastery.

6 - **Grey Wolf** - *Canis lupus* - HEARD only (PC+KB): 29/8 - at Erdene Khamba Monastery.

7 - **Red Fox** - *Vulpes vulpes* - 14/8 - Tolbo Lake (PC+IT). 18/8 - Tsagaan Gol (PC+IT). 24/8 - Tudevtey area (PC+KB). 26/8 - Terhiyn Tsagaan Nuur (KB only). 28/8 - Erdene Khamba Monastery (PC+KB).

8 - **Corsac Fox** - *Vulpes corsac* - 5/8 - Gurvanbulag area. 13/8 - Dorgon Nuur. 28/8 - Erdene Khamba Monastery.

9 - **Mountain Weasel** - *Mustela altaica* - 4/8 - Hustai NP (PC only).

10 - **Steppe Polecat** - *Mustela eversmanii* - 5/8 - Arvaikheer east area (KB only).

11 - **Przewalski's Horse** - *Equus ferus* - 4/8 - Hustai NP. 9/8 - Gobi B.

12 - **Eastern Roe Deer** - *Capreolus pygargus* - 26/8 - Khangai Mt - (PC+KB).

13 - **Wapiti** - *Cervus canadensis* - 4/8 - Hustai NP. 28/8 - Erdene Khamba Monastery (PC+KB).

14 - **Goitered Gazelle** - *Gazella subgutturosa* - 8/8 - Sharga area. 9/8 - Gobi B. 12-13/8 - Jargalant Mt range west side.

15 - **Mongolian Gazelle** - *Procapra gutturosa* - 22/8 - Airag Nuur area - (PC+KB).

16 - **Saiga Antelope** - *Saiga tatarica* - 7/8 - Sharga. 12-13/8 - Jargalant M.t range west side. 13/8 - Dorgon Nuur

17 - **Asiatic Ibex** - *Capra sibirica* - 12-13/8 - Jargalant Mts. 20/8 - Khovd River north of Ulgii (not by PC-KB).

18 - **Alpine Pika** - *Ochotona alpina* - 26/8 - Khangai Mts - Terhiyn Tsagaan Nuur (PC+KB). 26/8 - Khangai Mts - Khorgo Volcano (PC+KB).

19 - **Pallas's Pika** - *Ochotona pallasii* - 8/8 - Togrug rd to Bugat. 10/8 - Bort area. 14-15/8 - Tolbo Lake (PC+IT). 17/8 - Khurgan Nuur. 18-19/8 - Zagast Nuur. 21/8 - Airag Nuur (PC+KB).

20 - **Daurian Pika** - *Ochotona dauurica* - 4-5/8 - Hustai NP.

21 - **Tolai Hare** - *Lepus tolai* - 5/8 - Lun. 7/8 - Sharga campsite. 10/8 - Altai Uyench (in town midday) x2. 13/8 - Dorgon Nuur. 17/8 - Har Nuur. 26-27/8 - Terhiyn Tsagaan Nuur.

22 - **Eurasian Red Squirrel** - *Sciurus vulgaris* - 17/8 - Tavan Bogd (not by PC). 26/8 - Khangai Mts - Khorgo Volcano (PC+KB). 27/8 - Terhiyn Tsagaan Nuur. 29/8 - UB area - Manzhir Khid (common) (PC+KB).

23 - **Siberian Chipmunk** - *Eutamias sibiricus* - 16/8 - Tavan Bogd (PC+KB+IT). 26/8 - Khangai Mts - Khorgo Volcano (PC+KB).

24 - **Altai Marmot** - *Marmota baibacina* - 16-17/8 - Tavan Bogd.

- 25 - **Siberian Marmot** - *Marmota sibirica* - 4/8 - Hustai NP. 8/8 - Togrug south on road to Bugat. 9/8 - Gobi B. 10/8 - Bodonch Valley and Bort. 14/8 - Tolbo Lake. 19/8 - Ulaankus south area. 26 - Bayan Nuur (PC+KB). 29/8 - Manzshir Khiid.
- 26 - **Daurian Ground Squirrel** - *Spermophilus dauricus* - 4/8 - Hustai NP.
- 27 - **Pallid Ground Squirrel** - *Spermophilus pallidicauda* - 6-7/8 - Boon Tsagaan Nuur (north). 7/8 - Buutsagaan area. 7/8 - Altai east. 8/8 - Togrug town.
- 28 - **Long-tailed Ground Squirrel** - *Urocitellus undulatus* - 4/8 - Hustai NP. 8/8 - Togrug south on road to Bugat. 10/8 - Bodonch Valley and Bort. 11/8 - Monkhaikhan Mt area. + numerous other sites.
- 29 - **Gobi Jerboa** - *Allactaga bullata* - 7/8 - Sharga road. 13/8 - Dorgon Nuur.
- 30 - **Siberian Jerboa** - *Allactaga sibirica* - 4/8 - Hustai NP. 6/8 - Boon Tsagaan Nuur.
- 31 - **Five-toed Pygmy Jerboa** - *Cardiocranius paradoxus* - 9/8 - Gobi B. Only sighting of the trip.
- 32 - **Thick-tailed Pygmy Jerboa** - *Salpingotus crassicauda* - 6/8 - Boon Tsagaan Nuur (PC+KB). Only sighting of the trip.
- 33 - **Northern Three-toed Jerboa** - *Dipus sagitta* - 6/8 - Boon Tsagaan Nuur. 9/8 - Gobi B. 20/8 - Naranbulag South area. 21-22/8 - Airag Nuur area (PC+KB).
- 34 - **Andrews's Three-toed Jerboa** - *Stylodipus andrewsi* - 13/8 - Dorgon Nuur.
- 35 - **Steppe Zokor** - *Myospalax aspalax* - 5/8 - Mongol Els Dunes (KB and IT). 28/8 - Mongol Els Dunes (PC+KB).
- 36 - **Korean Field Mouse** - *Apodemus peninsulae* - 28/8 - Erdene Khamba Monastery (PC+KB). 30/8 - Manzshir Khiid Monastery (PC+KB).
- 37 - **Midday Jird** - *Meriones meridianus* - 20/8 - Naranbulag south area.
- 38 - **Mongolian Jird** - *Meriones unguiculatus* - 4/8 - Ulaanbaatar west - by others (excl PC). 5/8 - Gurvanbulag area on road. 6/8 - Arvaikheer Horse Monument. 7/8 - Sharga. 22-23/8 - Bayan Nuur (PC+KB).
- 39 - **Long-tailed Dwarf Hamster** - *Cricetulus longicaudatus* - 5/8 - Hustai NP. 28/8 - Erdene Khamba Monastery (PC+KB).
- 40 - **Campbell's Hamster** - *Phodopus campbelli* - 13/8 - Dorgon Nuur. 23/8 - Bayan Nuur (PC+KB).
- 41 - **Desert Hamster** - *Phodopus roborovskii* - 6/8 - Boon Tsagaan Nuur. 9/8 - Gobi B. 21-22/8 - Airag Nuur (PC+KB).
- 42 - **Brandt's Vole** - *Lasiopodomys brandtii* - 4/8 - Hustai NP. 5/8 - Gurvanbulag area. 6/8 - Arvaikheer Horse Monument. 7/8 - Altai area. 23/8 - Tsetsen Uul area (PC+KB). 24/8 - Tudevtey area. 27/8 - Erdene Khamba. 28/8 - Mongol Els.
- 43 - **Zaisan Mole Vole** - *Ellobius tancrei* - 28/8 - Tsetsen Uul area (PC+KB).
- 44 - **Gobi Altai Mountain Vole** - *Alticola barakshin* - 11/8 - Monkhaikhan Mt area. 19/8 - Tsagaan Gol camp area west of Tsengel.
- 45 - **Mongolian Mountain Vole** - *Alticola semicanus* - 25/8 - Khangai Mts - Noyon Khangai (PC+KB).
- 46 - **Grey Red-backed Vole** - *Myodes rufocanus* - 5/8 - Hustai NP.

List of mammals new to PC: Campbell's Hamster, Korean Field Mouse, Grey (Altai) Marmot, Daurian Hedgehog, Eastern Mole Vole and Eastern Water Bat.

6. PHOTOS

3 - Steppe Zokor



4 - Zaisan Mole Vole



5 - Daurian Hedgehog



6 - Long-eared Hedgehog



7 - Campbell's Hamster



8 - Desert Hamster



9 - Thick-tailed Pygmy Jerboa



10 - Five-toed Pygmy Jerboa



11 - Siberian Jerboa (and Kevin's boot)



12 - Andrew's Three-toed Jerboa (note tail tuft)



13 - Gobi Jerboa



14 and 15 - Northern Three-toed Jerboa (x2)



16 - Gobi Altai Mountain Vole



17 - Brandt's Vole



18 - Grey (Altai) Marmot



19 - Siberian Marmot



20 - Siberian Chipmunk



21 - Halys Pit Viper



22 - Pallas's Pika



23 - Alpine Pika



24 - Jargalant Uul area



25 - Dorgon Nuur area



26 - Ulgii area



27 - Khurgas Nuur area



7. SITE NOTES

7.1 Ulaanbaatar (Aug 4th)

We left the Ulaanbaatar Hotel at 8 am; on the outskirts of UB we fuelled up; **Mongolian Gerbil** at the fuel station was the first mammal of the trip.

7.2 Hustai National Park (Aug 4th - 5th)

At 10.30 am we arrived at Hustai after a two-hour drive from UB. We had pre-booked Moilt Camp (\$50/p including 3 meals, park entry and the drivers' accommodation) and paid on arrival at the main entrance office. Before lunch we drove the area up to 2 km into the park; seeing a few **Daurian Ground Squirrel** (not seen again on the trip), **Long-tailed Ground Squirrel** and **Siberian Marmot**. Near the research station we saw **Przewalski's Horse**. We arrived at Moilt Camp at 3.45 pm. **Daurian Pika** was easily seen at camp at dusk and early morning on the grass trails immediately in front of the cabins. **Brandt's Vole** also common here. On a 2016 September trip with Jon Hall we did not see the Pika or Brandt's Vole but did have Mongolian Mountain Vole in nearby rocky areas and Reed Vole at the camp. A **Mountain Weasel** was seen briefly by PC and **Red Fox** by SO. On an evening drive we had views of **Wapiti** on a distant ridge and a few **Siberian Jerboa** (the only jerboa species in the park) on the drive back. After the night drive we walked the valley behind the cabins. In this area we had **Grey Red-backed Vole**, **Long-tailed Dwarf Hamster** and **Tolai Hare**.

7.3 Bayan Nuur and Tsagaan Nuur (Aug 5th)

I had Steppe Zokor on a previous trip here to the Tsagaan Nuur wetland dunes (southwest of nearby Bayan Nuur) so we tried for that. We staked out two zokor mounds but after no sightings within 45 minutes and after rain set in we drove on westwards. Sjeff picked out White-naped Cranes at Tsagaan Nuur Wetlands.

7.4 Gurvanbulag area (Aug 5th)

Weather improved as we turned south towards Gurvanbulag, soon seeing **Corsac Fox**. We then stopped at a bridge, to watch another **Corsac Fox** hunting **Brandt's Voles**, without success.

7.5 Mongol Els area (Aug 5th)

Driving south there were a few sites with zokor mounds; close to Mongol Els; we stopped to work some of the mounds. Kevin and Ian had brief views of **Steppe Zokor** nose; the rest of us watched soil being moved.

7.6 Arvaikheer (Aug 5th – 6th)

Shortly before Arvaikheer, Kevin had brief views of a **Steppe Polecat** (only one of the trip). At 10.30 pm we checked into Arvaikheer Palace Hotel and left the next morning at 8.30 am; stopping 30 minutes later at Erka's request at Morin Tolgoe horse monument alongside the main road. **Brandt's Vole** and one **Mongolian Gerbil** were easily approachable here.

7.7 Boon Tsagaan Nuur (Aug 6th - 7th)

We stopped in Bayankhongor for lunch and supplies, leaving at 14.15; 30 minutes later we turned south off the main road towards Boon Tsagaan Nuur; seeing a few **Pallid Ground Squirrel** on the way. At 5.30 pm we reached the southeastern corner of the lake, camping 100 m from the lake edge in low grassy

dunes. On a night drive we saw **Siberian Jerboa**, **Northern Three-toed Jerboa**, and **Desert Hamster**. Back at camp we walked the dunes area; Kevin finding a **Thick-tailed Pygmy Jerboa** which was very approachable (seen only by KB and PC). Just after midnight on the lake shore Kevin and I had a Siberian Jerboa foraging around our feet for 40 minutes; it dug small pits and moved a few stones during this. At 9 am we left the area; after some brief birding stops along the shoreline.

7.8 Sharga - Togrug area (Aug 7th - 8th)

We reached Altai at 6 pm, stopped in at some shops; had dinner at EHTYM Hotel; and decided to carry onto Sharga to keep us on plan; leaving Altai at 8 pm. Just after turning off the main road south on the track to Sharga, and in the last hours of daylight, Erka spotted three **Saiga**. We also had two **Gobi Jerboa**. Just after 10 pm we reached the low dune area, alongside a dry river, where I had camped 3 years before. In the dunes we had a **Long-eared Hedgehog** (only one of the trip). We left camp at 8.30 am after a slight delay; Mugi had lost his car keys but Erka miraculously found them completely buried in some sand next to the vehicle. We drove the road south to Togrug, looking for Saiga but saw none, surprisingly, but did see **Goitered Gazelle**. At Tugrug there were **Pallid Ground Squirrel** on the outskirts of town.

7.9 Tugrug to Bij (Aug 8th)

From Togrug we drove to Bugat; **Pallas's Pika** seen along the way. At around 5 pm we drove over a pass at 2485 m EL. In Bij we camped at 8pm a nearby Gorge. The gorge was well used by livestock but looked promising for small mammals; but we saw nothing except bats (audio collected) and two **Halys Viper** (the only snakes of the trip).

7.10 Gobi B SPA (Aug 9th - 10th)

At the Gobi B field office the manager GANBAATAR Oyunsai Khan generously gave us a talk on the reserve. We also met Sukhbaatar Dalaitseren, biologist and Takhi Researcher. After the talk we spent 20 minutes looking for voles around the gers; none seen. Dalaitseren then took us into a nearby enclosure where there were 4 male Przewalski's Horses; the Prague Zoo sends 4 males every year. From the office camp we drove south about 30 km before turning northwest towards a planned camp site. Over the day we saw about 30 groups of Goitered Gazelle; 3-30 animals per group; all very nervous and fleeing the vehicles. We reached the planned camp spot early, at 3 pm; it was hot, we relaxed. We took 2 cars on a 3-hour dusk and night drive, heading back on the road we came in on. We stopped at a ridge to watch sunset and in the far distance we saw a white Russian jeep and motorbike driving erratically; running down a gazelle, which they loaded into the jeep. On the drive back to camp we saw **Northern Three-toed Jerboa** and five **Desert Hamsters**. Back at camp area a **Five-toed Pygmy Jerboa** was the only one of the trip. Small Five-toed Jerboa had been recorded somewhere in this area, but we dipped on that. We left the area at 8 am and drove via Barlag to Altai-Uyench.

7.11 Altai Uyench and Bayanzurh (Aug 10th)

We refueled at Altai-Uyench. In town we saw two **Tolai Hare** in the open, resting in shade; it was unusual to see them in the open like this and they were not at all flighty. From Altai we drove north on new asphalt road through the scenic Bodonch Valley to Bayanzurkh (small village with fuel), arriving 2.30 pm.

7.12 Bayanzurh to Bort in the Monkhairkhan Uul area (Aug 10th - 11th)

From Bayanzurh we left the asphalt road, taking a rough track towards Bort and Monkhairkhan Uul region (the peak at 4112 m); a rugged area with snow at higher elevations. We crossed a pass at 2800 m El then

stopped at some deer-stones and burial mounds. Just south of Bort we took a rough side road 8 km up a valley to where there is a small lake; **Siberian Marmot** and **Long-tailed Ground Squirrel** common along the way. On a slow-going, very rough track and running out of time we stopped 2.5 km short of the lake and at 6 pm we turned back and ended up camping in the main valley at 1900 m EL; **Pallas's Pika** around the camp; no other mammals seen overnight. Bella's 20th birthday meant chocolates for breakfast.

7.13 Tsenkher Gol (Aug 11th - 12th)

From our camp in the Bort area the track followed the Dund Tsenkher Gol (Middle Blue River) valley north. At one stop (N46.99143° E91.86111°) we watched two **Gobi Altai Mountain Vole** actively collecting and storing plant material. The planned campsite (forest area along the river) was flooded; and the drivers thought that a nearby scree area had potential for a rockfall; so we carried on a little. After passing a bridge we camped in an open, rocky area near the river (camp at N47.222976° - E91.942286°). After setting up camp all three drivers decided to shave their heads. There was another **Gobi Altai Mountain Vole** at a nearby corral. We left the valley the next morning and at midday refueled at Mankhan town. We skipped a visit to a 'nearby' cave; otherwise we were still on the trip plan.

7.14 Jargalant Mountain area (Aug 12th - 13th)

From Tugrug Mankhan we headed to valleys on the west side of Jargalant Mountain; taking the wrong track but the excellent scenery worth the detour. After a scenic detour (1-2 hours) we were back on the main track northwards on the western side of Jargalant Mountain; the lower valley here around 1200 m EL. Two **Saiga** were seen on the way. The main targets in these mountains were Snow Leopard and Argali but we only spent a day here as half the group had seen Snow Leopard previously. At around 3 pm up one of the main valleys we set up camp near an ovoo at 2000 m EL (7.5 km WSW of Jargalant Uul peak), then walked up nearby ridges. On slopes across the valley we saw one group of 18 **Asiatic Ibex** and another group of 3. We started walking down at around 9 pm (still light). Fatigue and mosquitoes on the rampage forced a retreat to the tents. At 6.20 am I left camp and walked up the mountain; Ian and Kevin had already started; Sjef and Anja followed. Bella and Erka also trekked up. We scanned until 10.30 am; seeing four groups of Ibex totaling around 85 animals; the largest herd about 35; but no argali or leopard.

7.15 Dorgon Nuur area (Aug 13th - 14th)

At 2 pm we left the camp site; heading to Chandmani area to look for Saiga and rodents. After Sharga this is the other key range in Mongolia for Saiga. We crossed the low pass at 4.30 pm; taking us onto the eastern side of the Jargalant range, and soon into the main range of the **Saiga**; we had a group of nine on the plains. We camped in this open grassland; an old carcass of a juvenile at the camp site. At 7.30 we went for a night drive with two vehicles (Erka and Mugi), seeing a few **Andrews's Three-toed Jerboa**, **Campbell's Hamster** and **Gobi Jerboa**. We left camp at 8.30 am; returning the way we came in, towards Mankhan; two punctures along the way.

7.16 Khovd (Aug 14th)

After lunch at a hotel in Khovd, Ian and I (with Erka) then drove north to Tolbo Lake; a scenic drive on good road. The rest of the group stayed in Khovd for the night for some hotel time and local birding. We drove past Tsambagarav Mountain and Sayrn Uul.

7.17 Tolbo Lake (Aug 14th - 15th)

Ian and I with Erka camped at the southwest end of Tolbo Lake, near a wetland; after crossing a very narrow bridge, at most 1 foot wider than the vehicle. On a night walk along the track we saw only a **Red Fox** and **Pallas's Pika** on the road. At 8.30 we left camp and drove to the SE corner of the lake where at 8.45 we met the rest of the group who had left Khovd at 5.30 am. After a coffee break and scan for shore birds we drove onto Ulgii, a large regional town.

7.18 Ulgii (Aug 15th)

In Ulgii we were 2,726 km into the trip, just past half-way. We visited the parks office; in the parking area they had a map board worth photographing. After lunch in a hotel we left for Tavan Bogd NP.

7.19 Tavan Bogd NP (Aug 15th – 18th)

We left Ulgii at 14.15; taking the dirt road (A15) through Sagsay, past Har Nuur, stopped at the Ranger Post and Bridge en route to Dayan Nuur; it was late, cold and drizzling on reaching Dayan Nuur. We had enough light to put up tents on the open shore then managed a brief walk near the camp, no mammals. Woke up to rain, so slept in until 7.45. Spectacular views of snow-capped mountains across the lake. We left camp at 9.15; the clouds had lifted. Because of track conditions we had to backtrack to the ranger station and Har Nuur, taking the longer route to Khurgan Nuur. West of Har Nuur we saw **Altai Marmot (Grey Marmot)**, in Mongolia restricted to the Tavan Bogd region. About 7 km west of Har Nuur we searched boulders and scree for rodents; just seeing **Pallas's Pika** (N48.63307° E88.80637°). Lunch stop was on the eastern side of Khurgan Nuur, near Sirgal. At 3.30 pm we crossed the long, narrow wooden bridge to Sirgal and drove north up the west side of Khoton Nuur, a 4wd track. We camped near some Kazakh gers, then walked the forest, most of the larger trees removed, only seeing one **Siberian Chipmunk** and one **Red Squirrel**; nothing seen on a later night walk. This is national park but domestic livestock common.

Aug 17th: we left camp at around 9 am; stopped for lunch at a small saline lake (south of another lake also called Har Nuur in mapbook); then more **Altai Marmot** in the afternoon. That evening we camped a few kilometres beyond Ih hag Nuur. I was short of energy, ended up in my tent for 12 hours from 7.30 pm. Everyone else on various walks saw nothing of interest.

Aug 18th: we left camp at 9 am, drove north towards Zagast Nuur and then, on the southern side of Tsagaan Gol, we drove west towards Potanin Glacier. Weather-wise it was cold and miserable; clouds very low and not moving; it looked set in so concluding that we would not get good views of the mountains and glacier we turned back east along the Tsagaan Gol (White River), looking for a side valley with good mammal potential. We stopped on the edge of Tsagaan Gol; seemingly symbolic to the drivers who doused themselves with the water.

7.20 Tsagaan Gol (Aug 18th – 19th)

At midday, still raining on and off, we reached a wide, open side valley and decided to camp near a fenced-in orchard area, with a stream and rocky valleys nearby, and a small dam; camping at 49.007509°N - 88.763814°E. Ian and I on night walk along the road saw only one **Red Fox** still raining on and off; but **Gobi Altai Mountain Vole** were common in a nearby rocky gully. Pallas's Pika and Siberian Marmot also seen as we drove east towards Tsengel.

7.21 Ulgii (Aug 19th - 20th)

Back in Ulgii, after 2 weeks of camping, we overnighted at Makhsum Hotel. The two groups also planned to separate in the next two days, so a parting dinner was in order; and we needed to celebrate Erka's 60th birthday which was the next day.

7.22 Ulgii to Achit Nuur (Aug 20th)

From Ulgii we drove to the northeast through a 20 km long, rugged, verdant scenic valley along the fast-flowing Khovd River; heading towards Achit Nuur. The first two cars saw an **ibex** with young at close range (30 m away). After lunch at Achit Nuur we drove past Shaazgay Nuur, a surprisingly scenic lake, then along the southern edge of Uvsiin Khar Us Lake, small Ulgii and followed a track northeast towards Naranbulag.

7.23 Naranbulag and Khurgas Nuur area (Aug 20th - 21st)

At dusk, on a track over the plateau, and 30 km west of Khurgas Lake, we stopped to camp at rocky area on the plateau. On a night walk around the camp we saw **Northern Three-toed Jerboa**, **Midday Jird** (at a corral) and **Tolai Hare**. At 8.15 am, just before leaving camp, Kevin spotted a **Northern Three-toed Jerboa** excavating a burrow a few meters from the cars. From Naranbulag we were back on good asphalt road. On the north side of Khurgas Nuur the drivers again changed the springs on Erka's car. From there at midday Kevin and I with Erka drove south (along the eastern shore of Khurgas Nuur) whilst the others continued towards UB (spending one night in Khangai Mountains and two nights in Hustai NP).

7.24 Airag Nuur area (Aug 21st - 22nd)

From the the eastern shore of Khurgas Lake we drove towards Airag Nuur, camping on a sandy track a few kilometres east of the lake. That night we had **Northern Three-toed Jerboa** and **Desert Hamster**; and two species of bats (Echo Touch audio, no confirmed ID yet). We left camp at 9.30 am; following tracks eastward and seeing a herd of about 150 **Mongolian Gazelle**; the only ones of the trip. The field guide shows this area as a small, isolated range for the species.

7.25 Bayan Nuur area (Aug 22nd - 23rd)

We fueled up in Urgamal at midday, then backtracked to the track running along the north side of the dune field and headed east to Bayan Nuur, but could not get access up to the dune area by the lake. We camped in a well vegetated shrubby, sandy area; seeing **Siberian Marmot**, **Mongolian Gerbil** and **Campbell's Hamster**. Erka again worked on the car springs; though it seems the shocks are the problem.

7.26 Tsetsen Uul area (Aug 23rd)

At 2 pm we stopped an hour for lunch and to check out some mole vole hills in the short grass of the valley floor on the edge of an old valley dune system; very happy to finally have views and photos of the **Eastern Mole Vole**. The site (N48.71264° E95.96601°) was about 5 km SSW of Tsetsen Uul and 7 km east of Tsegeen Nuur. This appears to be an extension of the range shown in the field guide.

7.27 Tudevtey area (Aug 23rd - 24th)

We camped about 30 km southwest of Tudevtey. The next morning we drove through a **Brandt's Vole** colony at least 9 km long; seeing one **Red Fox** in that area. We drove through Nomrug to Ikh Uul after which we drove south into the Khangay Mountains; following Deed Tsetsuuh Gol. There was a large tree die-off in the area we planned to camp so we carried on south to Noyon Khangai SPA.

7.28 Noyon Khangai SPA (Aug 24th - 25th)

At 7 pm, after some slow bumpy valley road, we reached Noyon Khangai SPA. I had been there 3 years before (with Phil Telfer) but wanted to try a different valley. Having had a long day, we did not go for a long night walk but did see **Mongolian Mountain Vole** in rocks near our camp. At 3 am we heard what Kevin ID'd as a **Eurasian Lynx** - a low, raspy barking call. I looked out of my tent but it was cold, misty and I saw no eye-shine. In the morning we walked a ridge for a few hours; **Siberian Marmot** and **Long-tailed Ground Squirrel** common. We then tried to drive further up the valley, but it was too boggy and we left the park, driving past Noot Nuur and Khunt Nuur then east to Khorgo Volcano and Terhiyn Tsagaan Nuur.

7.29 Khorgo Volcano and Terhiyn Tsagaan Nuur (Aug 25th - 27th)

At the lake edge we booked into Tsagaan Nuur Tourist Camp, close to the lava field. Kevin and I took a 3-bed ger each (40,000 mnt ea; Erka's was 20,000). **Long-tailed Ground Squirrel** was habituated in the camp and the pet goat was quick to get into the ger and hunt around for available snacks. I had lunch here in 2007, not much changed it seems, except the goat. We did not go on a night walk. From 8 am (26th) we walked the lava field with conifer woodland; **Alpine Pika** were sunning themselves; and Kevin saw an **Eastern Roe Deer**. We also had **Eurasian Red Squirrel** here the next morning. At 11.30 am we walked up to the rim of Khorgo Volcano (popular with tourists), then went down to the less visited, smaller crater on its flanks. At the subsidiary crater we saw **Alpine Pika**, **Eurasian Red Squirrel** (I had seen both here before) and a **Siberian Chipmunk**. At 7.30 pm we walked over to the lava field; staying out until 11 pm; I had a brief view of the Eastern Roe Deer; and we also saw **Ognev's Long-eared Bat** and **Eastern Water Bat**.

7.30 Erdene Khamba Monastery (Aug 27th - 29th)

Brandt's Vole were common on the track to Erdene Khamba Monastery track, **Corsac Fox** also seen. We camped two nights about 500 m before the monastery and close to the rock side of the valley. We had a few **Korean Field Mouse** near the camp and **Ognev's Long-eared Bat**. We heard **Eurasian Lynx** the first night and **Grey Wolf** howling the second night. At 7 pm (Aug 28th) we started a hike up the valley behind the monastery, walking up in daylight and spotlighting back down in the dark, finishing up at 23.30; we had two **Wapiti**, about 400 m away at dusk; and another 2 groups of Wapiti in the same area on the way back but no small mammals seen. Back on the valley floor near the monastery we checked the scrub here; with the thermal scope I picked up a **Daurian Hedgehog** and a **Long-tailed Hamster**.

7.31 Mongol Els (Aug 28th)

Whilst camping at Erdene Khamba we returned to the area of **Steppe Zokor** mounds on the western edge of the Mongol Els dunes (where we had seen one on 5th Aug) and tried a few mounds with no reward then over lunch we staked out another set, Kevin's patience giving him great views and I managed a photo.

7.32 Manzshir Khiid (Aug 29th - 30th)

Manzshir Khiid (aka Manzhushir monastery) on the southern side of Bogd Han Uul (the mountains on the southern side of UB) was a favourite day-walk of mine when I was based in UB. We reached Manzshir Khiid at around 3 pm and camped on the edge of the trees before the main parking area; **Eurasian Red Squirrel** was common. In the evening we walked up to the main temple; **Siberian Marmots** common. After dark we went spotlighting for flying squirrel but saw nothing. Near the camp we had **Korean Field Mouse** and one of the **red-backed voles**. We left Manshir Khiid at around 10 am and at midday Erka dropped us off in UB at the Corporate Hotel; Kevin and I both flew out the next day.