



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I want to share with you a few amazing updates from the last month ó one of which is the fact that I had the honor of meeting my first wild snow leopard when I met the cat we have been calling Supermom!

You may remember that in 2008, with your help, we started putting out remote sensor cameras ó trying to identify where cats were walking in the Gobi and see if we could determine how many individuals were passing in front of the lens. Our camera efforts were rewarded, and one amazing cat with an öSö shaped spot pattern caught our attention from all the thousands of photographs we collected. Orjan and the team originally dubbed this snow leopard öSuperman.ö



Khashaa, was dubbed Supermom when her photo, along with her 3 cubs (!), was captured on one of our remote sensor cameras. This study is allowing us to identify and track snow leopards with cubs for the first time.

Superman made the rounds among our cameras, and we began to speculate about this cat. Then one day last summer, for the first time during our study, our cameras captured a photo of a mother **snow leopard with three cubs**. This was very exciting for us and is quite an astonishing feat for a wild snow leopard! As we compared photographs, **we saw the telltale “S” shape pattern and realized that Superman was actually a Supermom! So that is what we have been calling her.**

But that is just the beginning of this story. As you know, our team has been hard at work placing GPS radio collars on snow leopards as part of the Long-term Ecological Study in the South Gobi. This September, while I was working with Orjan in the field, we placed a collar on the 8th snow leopardö only the second female to join the tracking study; and my very first time to see a snow leopard in the wild!

An even more amazing firstöwas that for the first time ever, a herder was present during a collaring. This herderö name is Ganaa and he lives in a yurt nearby, where he rears his livestock. His relationship with us is an amazing part of the story and such an interesting glimpse into our conservation efforts. Orjan met Ganaa last year when he was thinking about this area as a collaring site and Ganaa said he would be moving his yurt, so that it would be a fine location. But, in the end, he didnö move. His livestock graze in the area where we were hoping to catch cats ó and that would have caused lots of extra work for Ganaa trying to keep his livestock away from that area. Orjan decided we should move our collaring site because this was Ganaaö home and we went to say our goodbyes. Ganaa said, öI like having you around. If you show me where your traps are, I will be very careful to keep my goats away.ö And that is just what has happened ó and so much more!



Ganaa, a local Mongolian herder, has become connected to one special snow leopard and to this cause. He is spreading the word of his experience throughout the Gobi!



Khashaa, a female snow leopard, helps us learn more about these elusive cats as we track the signal from her collar.

On the night that Ganaa and I helped Orjan place a collar on a female snow leopard, after watching the successful release of the cat, we turned to Ganaa to ask if he would like to choose the official name for this new cat. He decided to give this cat the name of his only daughter - Khashaa which means 'jade' in Mongolian. I think it was a sign of how moved he was by being so close to a snow leopard and a sign of increased tolerance for these cats.

Back at base camp when we examined the photos of Khashaa, we were amazed to see that telltale 'S' I think this might be Supermom my colleague Koustubh said to Orjan and me. Indeed, as we looked again, it was true. So Superman not only transformed into Supermom, but into **Khashaa**: a precious symbol of hope for all snow leopards in Mongolia.

We have witnessed the bond that this seems to have created between Ganaa and his family with this rare cat, as they stop by base camp often to find out any new information.

One last story the morning after we fitted Khashaa with the collar, Orjan, Koustubh and I went back to the site to fix the capture equipment. There, on an overhanging rock above the site, 200 Tugrik (the Mongolian currency) lay with a small stone on top. One can only assume that Ganaa and his family, so moved by their experience, made a small offering to Khashaa and the snow leopards. It was and continues to be such an amazing journey. Thank you for walking it with us! We couldn't do it without you!



A local herder, who saw his first snow leopard in the wild with our researchers, left an offering at the location where he saw her. The Snow Leopard Trust is working to change attitudes about these amazing and endangered cats.

Best wishes,

Jen

P.S. Mining Update – Over the past year, we have been working with communities around our study site in the South Gobi to address mining issues in the area. Bayara, Director of our Mongolia programs, has been helping the communities submit an application for a People's Protected Area. The proposal was rejected for a second time in August. This has not demoralized any of the communities in Gurbantanshan who have resubmitted the application with refined boundaries and additional information provided by the ongoing research. In the second week of September just after I left, an international conference was held in Ulaan Baatar on wildlife. Bayara and Puji, our Senior Biologist, made presentations on snow leopard conservation, mining and snow leopard habitat use, which were well received. The presentations have instigated support from various parts of Mongolia to protect snow leopards from the recent threat of mining. We will keep you updated of any changes.