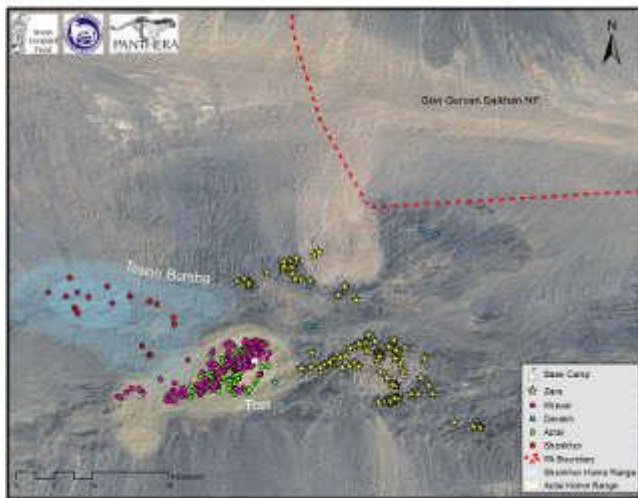




## Follow the Cats: July 15th, 2010



We are happy to announce that the collars worn by Aztai, Khavar and Zara continue to work fabulously, uploading up to 80% of the scheduled locations. Although the collars of Shonkhor, Tsagaan, Saikhan and Devekh seem to be underperforming to some degree, the good news is that Orjan will be returning to the field in mid-August and will work on replacing these collars.

**The most exciting set of locations have come understandably from Zara, the lone female we have managed to follow so far. She is already covering an area larger than 200 sq. km.** We don't know enough yet to say if that is her home range size. It is possible that she could have a larger home range, and that so far over the past two months she has only been using a smaller proportion of what could be a larger area. We will know more with time as we follow her movement patterns. Zara has been on feeding sites several times in the past two months, which is a good indicator of her well being. **Interestingly, she has been the first cat we have followed so far who has ventured into what we call the badlands—an area where apparently none of our previously collared snow leopards ventured.** She was in the middle of the badlands for a few hours during which we received two locations on June 22nd. Other than this, her collar locations show that she seems to use habitat in the southern edge of the Tost Mountains extensively. **Another amazing dynamic we are following is the overlap between Aztai and Khavar. There is greater than 90% overlap of home range sites between these two males, which is exciting and informative.**

For more than two decades we have known that snow leopards use home ranges that overlapped extensively. Unlike many other solitary felids, this even holds true for males. We long suspected that their elaborate scent and sign marking system evolved, at least in part, to allow males avoid one another while using almost identical spaces. As we continue to follow these intricate movements and interactions of our collared cats, and ultimately their offspring, we will hopefully better understand this unique social system that seems to allow cats to live in close quarters yet avert aggressive interactions. That alone is something we could have never done even 5 years ago before the advent of GPS-satellite phone collar technology. *(As a reminder, the collaring project is a key component of the long-term study which is a joint project of the Snow Leopard Trust, Panthera, and the Snow Leopard Conservation Fund.)*

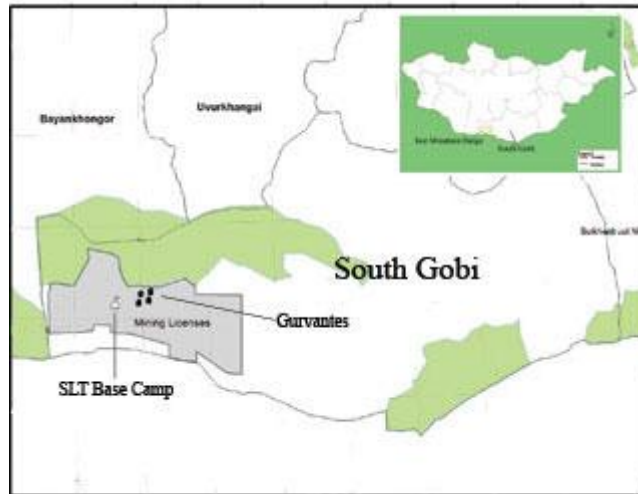
## Camera Trap Surveys

**Camera trapping to estimate population abundance:** One of the most reputable methods used around the globe to estimate abundance of cryptic animals is the analysis of photographs obtained through camera traps. **In the month of June, our field crew installed 40 remote sensor cameras in the mountains of Mongolia at specific locations such as saddles or steep canyons that are thought to be used by snow leopards.** The cameras will stay in the field for the next two months and photograph any animal that trips their field of view and hopefully that will include the rare and elusive cats. Last year, these cameras took over 600 photographs of snow leopards. This exciting research is helping establish models that we can use to track snow leopard populations over time—and better plan for their conservation.

## Community Surveys

**Human-wildlife conflict surveys:** Last year two snow leopards, Longtail and Itgel, were caught in steel-jawed traps set for wolves. Longtail was subsequently shot and killed, and Itgel was seriously injured. These two incidents brought to the surface an indirect threat to snow leopards and many questions. How many snow leopards are being caught in traps set out to catch and kill wolves? How big of a threat does this represent? This summer, Nadia Mijiddorj, one of SLT's Mongolia field staff, was in the Gobi studying this problem as part of her Masters project. She interviewed hundreds of community members living in the Tost region about the wildlife conflicts they deal with and what hunting practices they use. We hope to understand the social, cultural, historical, and economic factors surrounding the issues of hunting predators in the South Gobi. Nadia's initial surveys are a great first step to understanding this important issue and we look forward to sharing more of her work with you in the months to come.

## Update On Mining in Mongolia: Proposed People's Protected



### Area

Our scientific findings are helping decision makers to demark areas that need to be protected to conserve snow leopards and their habitat. Mining currently threatens landscapes used by herders and wildlife in Mongolia. Because the majority of the Tost Mountain range was designated for mining, Bayara, our Mongolia Country Program Director, led community meetings in the Tost Township that resulted in a unified effort by the community to exclude the region from mining and declare it a **People's Protected Area**. They asked Bayara to help them work on the proposal. Bayara, Koustubh Sharma, SLT Regional Field Biologist and Orjan Johansson, wildlife biologist, provided the district governor with a proposed protected area boundary map. This encompassed some of the most critical habitat and corridors for snow leopards that exist in the Tost and Toson Bumba Mountains. In addition, some areas reaching into the surrounding steppe that are important oases for local communities were also included. The coordinates for the proposed People's Protected Area boundary have been submitted to the appropriate ministries within the federal government and we hope that the proposal will be accepted soon.

Thank you for your commitment and support,

Jennifer & SLT Staff

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