

Tenger and Zaraa part ways!



Tsagaan



Shonkhor



Saikhan



Devekh



Aztai



Khashaa

In May of last year, we first laid eyes on the fluffy young snow leopard we affectionately call Zaraa. Weighing about 24 kg, we estimated her to be just under two years old. Based on her behavior we wondered if her mother was nearby when we fitted her with her



collar. That was supported when we later captured several photos of Zaraa traveling with another snow leopard, slightly bigger in size, on our motion sensor cameras. Then late last autumn we were fortunate to fit the female companion we call Tenger, meaning Sky Spirit, with a collar and found that she and Zaraa were traveling together. We have followed the pair throughout the winter and they have remained so close that many times the locations markers are on top of each other.

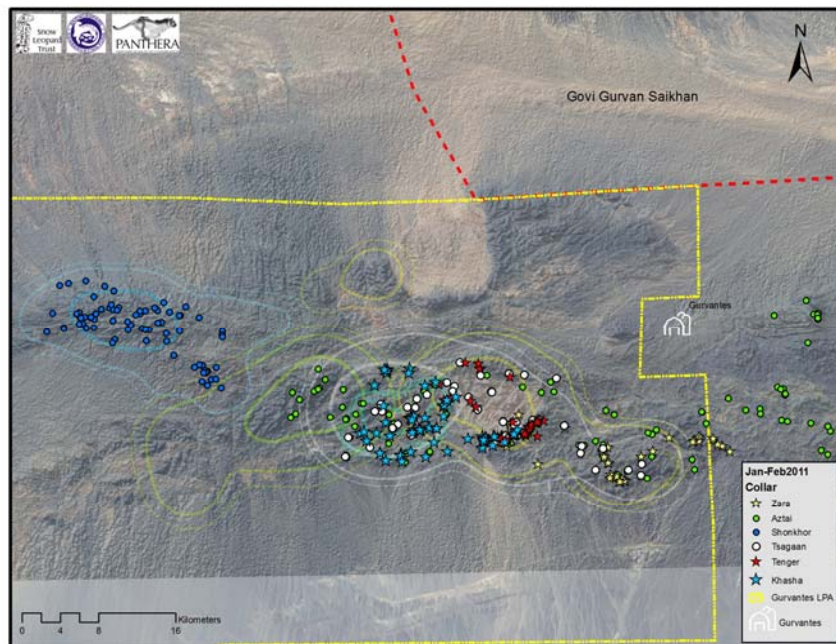
In this last week, it appears that Zaraa may have finally separated from her mother. For the longest duration since we have been following them, Tenger and Zaraa have traveled in to distinctly different areas. If they continue to remain apart, this will be the first time that dispersal behavior will be documented in snow leopards. It will be interesting to see when and if Tenger breeds this year and how far Zaraa will travel from her mother. We have so many questions and are excited to observe this stage of life for these females.

It has been interesting to see that Zaraa is close to Khashaa, the third female that we have been tracking. They were last seen about 200 m from each other on a couple of occasions and we are curious about this association and if they have gotten so close in proximity by chance or if some pattern will develop. We will keep a close eye on all three females to see how they interact and where their movements take them. We also hope to learn more about this through the photos we receive from the motion sensor cameras that have been installed in the field throughout the winter. Although the probability of getting specific photo images is quite low, it is possible that a few photos of these the females could provide new information to add to our understanding of snow leopards.

Photographs of Tenger are not available. Zaraa shown in upper right.

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Tenger has moved north west, and it appears that she might have been followed by both Aztai, and Tsagaan. These two males have been keeping us on the edge of our seat as well these last few weeks! Aztai, having taken his longest documented walk ever last month of 75 km (50 miles) in two days, took yet another long walk towards the East. This time he did not go quite as far as he did during last month's expedition, but we noticed something even more spectacular: it appears that he either had an encounter with Tsagaan, or that Tsagaan followed him so closely that in one instance their locations



were uplinked when less than 300 m (~1000 ft) apart. Aztai walked a long distance to the east then took a circular path back via the northern edge of the Tost mountains, with Tsagaan 'right on his tail.' Aztai has now returned to his home range core after walking a total of ~ 90 km. (56 miles) in 10 days, the final 37 km. of which he covered in less than two days. He has been on a cluster since then and we hope that he has made a successful kill after such an exhausting run in the mountains.

Tenger last mated about two years ago, and her offspring is grown up and weaning away slowly, so it is possible that she could be the reason for Tsagaan and Aztai coming so close to each other. Perhaps they have even had some sort of 'face off' over Tenger during this 'season of love'. We are only speculating at this point, but it will be exciting to keep tabs on their movements.

Shonkhor has remained in his home range's core, and is on a cluster. We were just informed by the field staff that in the past 3 days, Shonkhor killed approximately 13 goats and sheep. The herder who lost these goats is unfortunately not a member of the livestock insurance program, but because of the presence of the Snow Leopard Trust's conservation programs such as Snow Leopard Enterprises and the Livestock Insurance Program he chose not to kill the snow leopard even though Shonkhor was there for several days around his corral. We will be meeting with him and talking to him about the Livestock Insurance Program and we will provide more information in our next update. This once again highlights why it is imperative that we work with herding communities in the area to ensure there is no negative backlash from events like this. Thank you for your support!