

## **Project Update: December 2009**

We have conducted our first expedition of the "Ecology and morphology of the wild goat (*Capra aegagrus*) populations and their implications for conservation of Armenia's mountain ecosystems", during which we surveyed Kakavaberd area of Khosrov NR, Urts Range, Zangezur Range and Nuvadi area of Meghri Range. I'd say we were quite successful.

According to programme, we had to survey 3 sites: Kakavaberd area of Khosrov NR (not far from Erevan, capitol of Armenia); Geghi and Kajaran Valleys of Zangezur Range; and Nuvadi area of the southern end of Megri Range.

We started on November 26th 2009 with Kakavaberd area, where 33 animals were counted - one adult male (older than 5 yrs), one young male, 14 females, two yearling males and 15 kids, some of them repeatedly. The only adult male had one horn growing sideways, so could be recognized in the future if he survives. The problem was that rut had not yet started, so that could explain low number of males. So next time we shall leave Kakavaberd for the end of our trip. There we collected and measured a yearling female dead from a belly wound.

The next site was Zangezur Range, where 91 goats were counted - 17 adult males, 10 young males, 26 females, nine yearling males and seven females and 22 kids, again some of them repeatedly. There is one individually recognizable male there though we didn't spot him now, but then we see him only in summers. The rut was on but rather slack, as usual in this area. Snow cover was much greater than in 2008, so we had difficulties in entering Kajaran Valley.

In Nuvadi, the rut was close to the end but males were still very active, which is typical for this area. A total of 193 animals were counted - 14 adult males (older than 5 yrs), 31 young male, 72 females, 28 yearling males and 20 females and 46 kids. There are three individually recognizable animals in this area, two adult males and one female. Though this area is merely some 25-30 km in a straight line from Zangezur Range, there was considerably less snow there than in 2008. In Nuvadi, we measured four pairs of male horns.

By the end of the expedition, when we decided to visit Kakavaberd once again, if possible, we got an opportunity to survey Urts Range, formerly a part of Khosrow NR but since 2006 in private lease. This place is quite famous in scientific literature on Armenia, having been visited and surveyed virtually by everybody who cared to do any research in Armenia, being close to Erevan and easily accessible. We jumped to the opportunity, as we had been denied access previously. However, wild goats seem to be scarce there, though we managed to find mouflon (*Ovis [orientalis] gmelini*) there.

There is no point in calculating age and sex ratios, etc. now, in the very start of the project. The next expedition is planned for end of June – end of July 2010.

