

Project Update: September 2010

Brief Summary of Grant Achievement

Since 1998, a community-based programme called Snow Leopard Enterprises (SLE) has worked to protect the snow leopard and its habitat in Mongolia. SLE helps herders increase their income, contingent on commitments to safeguard snow leopards from poaching and retribution killing. To help SLE operate more effectively, it was our aim to bring together all 31 remote SLE field coordinators for the first time for a multi-day training where they could set an agreed protocol for moving the program forward and develop a coherent strategic plan that would improve snow leopard conservation efforts.

Thanks to our grant from the Rufford Small Grants Foundation, we held a 4-day workshop in Khovd Province, Mongolia, with a total of 53 people in attendance, including 22 SLE coordinators and 11 National Park Specialists and Environmental Inspectors. This training workshop would have not been possible without the Foundation's support as all 22 SLE coordinators are herders living in poverty and volunteering to run the programme locally in order to help their own wildlife, families, and communities.

Progress Since Our Final Report

As mentioned in our final report to the Foundation, during this training workshop stakeholders agreed to develop 3-year actions plans for the 2010-2012 periods and began the process of mapping the boundaries of their communities in order to improve their SLE contracts. Since our final report, we have continued to move forward with these activities.

In our final report we mentioned that the 3-year planning exercise guideline has been put together and distributed to workshop participants. Local coordinators (even those who were not able to attend our training) then brought together their community members and local environmental officials to complete these plans. We have received nine final 3-year action plans back from 27 of our SLE communities and a formal copy of each one is on file in Ulaanbaatar.

The rest will be in the office after the September 2010 trip into the field. The process of completing conservation strategies was delayed because of the extremely harsh winter in Mongolia, during which time herders could not gather to discuss action plans.

The nine 3-year strategies that were developed by communities were reviewed by SLCF; SLCF tries to incorporate suggested activities as much as it can into the action plans each year in order to help communities and collaborates with them closely. The strategies we have received so far focus on five main areas such as habitat conservation of snow leopard, capacity building of herder organizations for conservation, awareness raising among herders who are not part of the communities, and improved collaboration for conservation.

SLCF and herder communities have already collaborated on some suggested activities. For example: nature excursion for school children led by Noyon community, South Gobi, with the cooperation of school teachers; capacity building activities for herder participants with Umnu

Otor community, Uvs; and conservation awareness raising events with Orogiin Dolgio, Bayankhongor Province.

We have completed a participatory mapping process with five SLE communities (Jargalant orgil, Orogiin dolgio, Tost bag, Tost, Gobi bulag). In these communities, members have clearly identified the boundaries they are responsible for protecting under their SLE conservation contracts. Each map outlines seasonal land use by the households in the community, which enables them to better manage and watch for poaching of wildlife. Additionally, the mapping process has made it clear who is responsible for certain areas because each household within the community agrees on protecting their own seasonal places. The smaller areas also make it easier to determine conservation contract compliance and clearly define when a community is responsible for illegal hunting and other law violations. We are now working with three more SLE communities to develop their maps and incorporate them into their conservation contracts. We were able to leverage your support to receive a separate grant to cover this long-term mapping project, which aims to map the boundaries of all 26 SLE communities.

Once again, on behalf of our entire staff and, our Local Coordinators, and all our SLE participants, I thank you for your grant. The training workshop you made possible accelerated our snow leopard conservation efforts. I have noticed improvements to how our team works together, how our SLE program operates, and how we communicate with the environmental officials in our communities. We are now more efficient and effective in our efforts.

