

Extracts from the volume: About Pallas' cat illegal trade in Mongolia

Pallas' cat (*Otocolobus manul*) is described as the primary fur trade targets along with Siberian and Altai marmot (*Marmota sibirica* and *M. altaica*), wolf (*Canis lupus*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), corsac fox (*Vulpes corsac*), red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*), snow leopard (*Uncia uncia*), brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), and lynx (*Lynx lynx*).

Pallas' cat is included in the domestic medicinal market (and also marmot, wolf, corsac fox, badger (*Meles meles*), sable (*Martes zibellina*), brown bear, muskrat (*Odonthra zibethicus*), roe deer (*Capreolus pygargus*), musk deer (*Moschus moschiferus*), snow leopard, Pallas' cat, Daurian hedgehog (*Mesechinus dauuricus*), Daurian partridge (*Perdix dauuricae*), Altai snowcock (*Tetraogallus altaicus*), and northern raven (*Corvus corax*).

Pallas' cat (*Otocolobus manul*) furs as Red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), corsac fox (*Vulpes corsac*) ones have long protected Mongolians from the bitter winters.

Beginning in the late 1950s, Mongolia added Pallas' cat as well as roe deer, ground squirrel (*Spermophilus dauricus*), lynx, mink (*Mustela vison*), weasels (*Mustela altaica* and *M. erminea*), steppe polecat (*Mustela eversmanni*), tolai hare (*Lepus tolai*), pikas (*Ochotona* spp.), and Mongolian gazelle (*Procapra gutturosa*) to the official fur trade.

Pallas' cat is one of still selling for relatively low prices be found on the market in Mongolia for \$3 a skin (for muskrat it is only \$1 to \$2 a skin).

Mongolian CITES exports for Pallas' cat were 4 in 1996, 18 in 2000, 31 in 2001, 6 in 2002, 3 in 2003, and 2 in 2004.

Pallas' Cat (*Otocolobus manul*) is classified by IUCN as Near Threatened (assessment in 2002) and listed in CITES Appendix II, neither the Mongolian Law on Fauna nor the Law on Hunting offer any special or protected status to this species. It also has no established hunting season and so, by default, may be hunted year round. The

Mongolian Red List of Mammals (2006) lists the species as Near Threatened.

Pallas' cat has a wide distribution in Mongolia, inhabiting the steppes, high deserts, and mountainous country and can be found at elevations exceeding 4,000 meters. It shelters in caves or burrows and feeds primarily on small mammals and ground-dwelling birds.

Records made available to the wildlife trade research team show historical trade in Pallas' cat skins beginning in 1965 and trade averaging over 5,400 skins annually until 1985. However, other sources note that as many as 50,000 animals may have been traded in the early 1900s, with harvests averaging 10,000 animals per year from the 1920s to 1980s (Heptner and Sludskii 1992, Nowell and Jackson 1996). While there may have been some restrictions on trade in place in Mongolia under the former regime, this is no longer the case and Pallas' cat pelts are once again being traded at local markets. There is no evidence of international trade from this survey, although this should not be ruled out.

Pallas' cat pelts are not considered high quality fur and therefore have low values compared to Mongolia' s other wildcat species, snow leopard and lynx. Local hunters responding to the survey reported selling small quantities (1 or 2 pelts) for just \$3 per skin. However, in addition to the fur trade, Mongolians also harvest *O. manul* for its oil and meat, both of which are purported to have medicinal properties. Sold in small quantities, the oil is sold for \$4 per gram. No price was quoted for game meat.

Product market value of Pallas' cat game meat \$25, fir \$3, oil \$20 per individual. Its domestic trade value is \$48.

Estimated number of Pallas' cat hunters is 1000. Adjusted mean harvest per hunter is 2 cats, maximum individual harvest is 4 cats.

Source: Wingard J.R. and P. Zahler. 2006. *Silent Steppe: The Illegal Wildlife Trade Crisis in Mongolia*. Mongolia Discussion Papers, East Asia and Pacific Environment and Social Development Department. Washington D.C.: World Bank.