

Proceedings of the Mongolian Biodiversity Databank Workshop: Assessing the Conservation Status of Mongolian Mammals and Fishes: II – Mammals: Assessment Results and Threats.

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Abstract

The Mongolian Biodiversity Databank Workshop was held at the National University of Mongolia and Hustai National Park from 31st October to 4th November, 2005. As part of the workshop, participants assessed the conservation status of all Mongolian mammal species using the IUCN Categories and Criteria. Of the 128 species assessed, 2% were Critically Endangered (CR), 11% Endangered (EN) and 4% Vulnerable (VU). A further 5% were categorised as Near Threatened (NT) and 36% categorised as Data Deficient (DD). Ungulates were the most highly impacted: 79% were threatened with extinction. Twelve percent of carnivore species and 12% of rodent species were threatened. No non-rodent small mammal species were listed in a threatened category. Rodents and non-rodent small mammals were less well known, with 44% and 43% respectively found to be Data Deficient. This may have affected the threat assessment of these species. Greatest species richness of Mongolian mammals was found in the northern and western part of the country. The greatest number of threatened species also inhabit the north of the country, as well as the south-west. The main threat affecting most mammals in Mongolia was hunting, with lack of enforcement of legislation also considered a problem.

Keywords: *biodiversity, extinction risk, mammal, Mongolia, threat*

Introduction

The first Mongolian Biodiversity Databank Workshop, held at the National University of Mongolia and Hustai National Park from 31st October to 4th November, 2005, aimed to identify current knowledge of Mongolian mammals by bringing together experts in the field. Over several days of discussion these zoologists applied the IUCN Categories and Criteria to all mammal species and assessed threats affecting them. During this time, data were entered into the Mongolian Biodiversity Databank, including the justifications for the assessments. Although research has been conducted on Mongolian mammals for many years, relatively little has been published in the west and has therefore not received the international recognition that it deserves. This workshop enabled researchers to come together and share information, with the result that data about these species, or the lack of it, could be identified and published.

Mongolia is a large country with a small population (2.4 million people in 1.56 million km²) that is currently undergoing a period of socio-political

change (Ykhanbai *et al.*, 2005). Although Mongolia has a rich biodiversity, this change has put pressure on the native wildlife due to the resulting market economy (Reading *et al.*, 1999). Over the last 20 years the number of livestock in Mongolia has increased, with a concomitant threat of desertification and competition with wildlife for pasture or water sources (ADB, 2005). Hunting has also increased as vehicles become more abundant (ADB, 2005) and trade routes with China have opened. Mongolia is therefore at a crucial point in the conservation of its native mammals. Some species, such as the Mongolian gazelle (*Procapra gutturosa*), although at threat, are still in sufficient numbers that management plans can be put in place to conserve future populations (Olson *et al.*, 2005). Other species, such as the red deer (*Cervus elaphus*), are desperately in need of protection (Zahler *et al.*, 2004). Without knowledge of the distribution and abundance of a species, conservation is difficult. The information resulting from the workshop should help policy makers alter or draft legislation to protect wild-