

A mammal, bird and grass-watching trip to -

Mongolia

(and a short stay, for Dave and I, in Beijing)

10th July to 13th August 2004

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“road (noun) – way, usually open to the public for the passage of vehicles, persons and animals, except in Mongolia”



Chinggis Khan is buried somewhere in Mongolia. Nobody knows where he is buried, although some may think they do. One thing is certain, nobody will ever forget what he

looks like as his image is easily spotted, most commonly on the labels of vodka bottles and beer cans.

Mongolia is one of those places that everyone has heard about even if some are unclear on whether it is a real country or part of China. Not too many people live there (in fact no-one at all) and less than three million people survive there. Surviving means emerging unfrozen at the end of winter. During winter the rivers and livestock are frozen solid, your supply of beer is in the fire and once a week half the people count to ten whilst the others count to eleven to make sure they still have control over their extremities.

Outline of Trip

Four Australians and two Americans from Arizona were determined to scatter around Mongolia for four weeks to experience the culture, ponder the monotonous landscapes, but more importantly to track down a few birds, mammals and examples of the more sedentary varieties of the vegetation. If you thought all vegetation was sedentary, think again, as it often it passed us at high speed, sometimes in the company of tents and their contents.

We wanted to find some of the birds and mammals for which this part of the world is noted – cranes, waterfowl, wolves, gazelles, ibex, jerboas and all those little furry things that Richard Gere made famous. Having said that, we didn't go to any specific places to seek out any particular bird or mammal. We took our chances wherever we went. So when you look at the lists at the end of this report you may see some gaps that might have easily been filled by going to a known site to see one thing or another.



We engaged the services of Selena Travel, the Ulaanbataar (UB)-based travel agent, to organize all our arrangements in Mongolia. They sourced a driver and guide and suggested an itinerary for us that would take in the range of wildlife habitats the country has to offer. Selena were very helpful over a period of six months of planning and gave us information to the best of their abilities. The tourist season in Mongolia is short and permanent guides / drivers are rare – what to do with them during winter? – so don't expect a driver with a name tag and a silly uniform or a guide that smiles all the time and keeps trying to interfere with your youngest daughter.

Our guide, Lkhagvasuren, was a biologist from the National University. He was an expert on small mammals and loved his critters in quite a different way to Mr Gere. Like many scientists he displayed a remarkable lack of excitement in the field. He came complete with 20 live mammal traps, so he was an instant success with those of us that take an interest in small furry things....



Our driver for the first few days was Doina, a charming guy who looked like a very good reason for the building of the Great Wall of China. If Chinggis had an army of Doinas, they would have reached Vienna, Lisbon, the Canary Islands and Greenland, and the American Indians would have been unknown to the modern world. Thinking about it, Australia might not have had so much rock art as well.

Driver #2, Bhartra, was a miracle of patience, good cheer without the need for alcohol, and a deft hand at chasing tents through the desert. His vehicle, a Russian UAZ 4WD (or “Gull”), was an uncomfortable beast that would routinely die in interesting locations. Bhartra was never concerned too much, he just got about fixing the problems with a minimum of fuss and as far as we ever knew, with no swearing!

Our expectations for the trip were generally not exceeded, although those of us from Australia were happy with the experience. What follows are some general observations, a diary, and a bird and mammal list. Mongolia is a good place to see some rare or unusual animals but you have to work at it. Don’t believe everything you may have read or heard about the “respect for nature” ethic of the locals.

(Dave and I spent six days in Beijing on the way - my diary reflects this)

Sites visited

Below is our itinerary. It was changed quite a bit from what was first agreed with Selena because the original itinerary was almost impossible to achieve. One “driving day” ended up taking 16 hours (not including meal, fuel or minor rest stops), all spread over two and a half days. Most of our planned “stop and explore” days just didn’t happen. This was disappointing as we spent almost every day on the road from about eight in the morning until about four or so in the afternoon. Some days were much longer. Apparently this is what most tourists in Mongolia experience (or expect to experience?), but it is a bit frustrating when you want to explore the country’s natural history and not each others kneecaps.

I have kept the wording of the itinerary as close as possible to the original. My words are in italics.

Part 1. Ulaanbaatar and Eastern Mongolia. Mountain and hills

Day 1. Arrival in Ulaanbaatar. City tour including Natural History Museum. Stay at Kuhkree ger camp on Bogd Uul.

Day 2 Drive out of the town for 2 hours to Gun Galuut Nature Reserve. Enjoy the wilderness. Ger camp overnight

Day 3-4. Free days at the Nature Reserve. Bird Watching, hiking, wild mountain sheep and other wild mammals viewing. Ger Camp overnights

Day 5. In the evening drive back to Ulaanbaatar. Hotel overnight.

Part 2. Southern Mongolia. Plain steppes, desert and sand

Day 6. Drive to the south to the Gobi steppes. Enjoy the nature beauty and wilderness.

Ger camp overnight at Rashaant camp.

Day 7. Drive to Bayanzag-the Flaming Cliffs in the arid Gobi Desert. Tent

Day 8. Explore around for dinosaur fossils and hiking in Saxaul Forests. Drive to Yoliin Am-Vulture's Gorge at the Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park. *Ger camp outside the park.*

Day 9. At Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park. *Ger camp in sight of the park if you have a good telescope.*

Day 10. Drive to Khongor Sand dunes, the largest sand dunes in Mongolia which extends 200 km long and 20 km in width and upto 200 m high. Enjoy the views of gazelle herds along the way, *Return to Bayanzag – tent.*

Day 11. *Look for lake that disappeared some years back. Camp in beautiful mountains north of Bayanzag. Chase tent.*

Day 12. Drive to Ongi Monastery Ruins by the River Ongi-the only river in the Gobi Steppes. Enjoy the wilderness. Ger Camp

Part 3. Central Mongolia. Woody mountains and rivers

Day 13. *Drive to a nature reserve at the end of the earth. Marvel at the temperature extremes in summer. Get violently ill eating the lamb.*

Day 14. Drive to the Orkhon Waterfalls, a very beautiful site in the Central Mongolia. Hiking around.

Day 15. Drive to Taikhar Stone, an interesting granite rock at the River Tamir via Kharakhorum-the ancient capital of Mongolia to visit Erdene Zuu, the first Buddhist center in Mongolia.

Lunch at a ger camp nearby. Drive to Taikhar Stone. Ger Camp

Day 16. Drive to Khorgo-Terkh National Park. Climbing up the volcanic mount Khorgo. Tenting at the lake Terkh.

Day 17. *Drive part way toward Lake Khovsgul. Tent at fabulous site alongside forests and creek*

Part 4. Northern Mongolia. High mountain, forest, rivers and wetland

Day 18. *Drive to Moron. Marvel at certain things. Tent.*

Day 19. Get at the Lake Khuvsgul -the dark pearl of Asia in the Khuvsgul National Park. Transfer to a ger camp.

Enjoy the beauty of the nature. Ger camp

Day 20. At the lake *in the rain.* Optional horse riding, hiking and visit to Tsaatan or the Reindeer People-a small clan of Mongolia. *Start leaving Khovsgul on account of the roads.* Tent

Day 21 *Drive to Selenge River.* Tent

Day 22. Drive to Uran Togoo-an interesting volcanic mount. Enjoy the wilderness. Tent *north of here.*

Day 23. Drive to Khustai National Park, where the Takhi-the only specie of wild horse existing graze. *Stay at Moilt camp “cabins”*

Day 24-26. Free days at the National Park. Bird watching, hiking and relaxing. Day 24 at Moilt camp, days 25 and 26 in ger camp.

Day 27. After breakfast drive to Ulaanbaatar. Shopping, sightseeing, in the evening enjoy the performance of Mongolia's best folklore ensemble. Hotel

Day 28. Departure



journey as shown on map is very approximate only

Some observations

Mongolian People

Never stand still in a crowded place in Mongolia unless you have full body armour. Even the grannies will push you over. Come to think of it, it was the grannies that were more likely to do so. It seemed the Mongolians learnt something from Chinggis about asserting dominion over the next guy's personal space, if not his or her whole country.

Actually the Mongolians are probably the most caring people on earth. They have to be. They are fairly evenly, if thinly, scattered about their remarkable country but they all seemed to know where everything should be. So when strangers turned up, even if not remotely near one of their gers, you can always expect a horse. Now I never knew exactly what was said between the locals and our driver or guide, but I expect the exchange probably went like this –

“Do your tourists want to buy, rent, eat or shoot my horses, cows, goats, sheep, children or marmots?”

“Nah, something about looking at wildlife and drinking alcohol”

“What about gerbils (wink wink), we’ve got lots around the ger?”

“Only if its one they haven’t seen”

“Pity, car going okay?”

“Yeah, horse?”

“It’s okay, smoke?”

“Sure”



Doina, our first driver, and one of the reasons for the height of Great Wall a gentleman actually



There is a very strong “help your neighbour” ethic in Mongolia. Whenever a car flashes its lights at an oncoming vehicle it is compulsory to stop and ask what’s happening and lend a hand if at all possible. This kind of spontaneous assistance is a distant memory where I come from. And in Mongolia there is all the time in the world to do it. At one point in the middle of the Gobi Desert a motorcyclist flagged us down and asked for some fuel. Fair enough, we gave a litre or so. Not that it would have helped all that much, the motorcycle was lacking a front wheel! He had a dog for company. That was his third problem. You have to picture this – no bastard anywhere, a thumping big desert and a one-wheeled fuel-less motorcycle + rider and dog and no road.

We found people in the remotest places in the pokiest corners of the Gobi Desert, and elsewhere, hospitable to the point of embarrassment and charming in their own way if you didn’t get in the way (see above). Somewhat surprisingly given the poxy climate, many of the women are very beautiful and not just in the exotic way an Eskimo or a fur seal could be said to be beautiful, but in the big league of beautiful. I can’t remember what the men looked like except that Chinggis isn’t dead.

I don’t expect much ever gets stolen from tourists in rural Mongolia (except by other tourists) so the country is a very safe one in which to travel. Except I wouldn’t trust some of the genetic throwbacks in UB, especially in market areas.

Accommodation

We stayed in gers, a hotel in UB, and in tents either supplied by Selena Travel or bought with us. The gers were great. It is a wonder they haven't become popular outside Mongolia. They had comfortable beds, could be well ventilated by rolling up the sides a little if it was hot, and five minutes later when it was freezing you could quickly turn the bloody things into an oven by lighting a very small fire in the fireplace. Three bits of quality cowshit could be used to heat the ger for about a month. Only problem being that you couldn't cool the thing down afterwards.

The ger camp staff, if they could be located, were friendly and obliging.

Our tents were fine except when you tried to use them in an upright position. See "Weather".

When in UB we stayed in the Anujin Hotel (3 star I think), which was great. It had all the things you might expect plus the most incredible showers in the world. The only problem was in understanding all their functions so that you didn't get scalded or frozen mid-shower. There is probably a TAFE course you could do but we didn't have the time.

The range of toilets covered the full spectrum. If you are considering taking small children to some of the "long drop" sites, you might wish to take a length of rope and lash some of their body parts to the door just to be on the safe side. Some of the floor architects have overestimated how far apart feet need to be placed, so one could easily plummet through the hole with hilarious results.



Roads / transport

Before I left Australia I bought a map of Mongolia. Why it showed a road network on the map and not just a line that shows you where Russia and China are and blobs where the airports were I will never know. Clearly the authors of this so-called map had never been anywhere near the place. A random collection of scribbles drawn by a spider on LSD would have been just as accurate. That the map showed main highways that it suggested were sealed is commendable except for two small points:

- they were not sealed, and
- they were nowhere near where the map showed them to be.

Our driver used five methods of navigation:

- two completely different maps,
- a compass,
- repeatedly asking directions (there are no signs),
- guesswork, and
- accepting that any goat track we were on probably led to somewhere.

When the dirt track gets a few holes in it, you start a new one next to it. When it gets a bit used, you start another, ad infinitum. It was not unusual to find up to twenty roughly parallel roads all leading in the same direction. They merged and diverged with monotonous regularity. Passing another vehicle could be the high point of the driver's day – there are so many options for how this might be achieved. Plus there is a law in Mongolia that says that you must overtake any vehicle in sight in the most expeditious manner – hang on to your seat.



Since arriving home I have been driving very slowly, not because I am a timid driver, but I keep expecting the kind of bone jarring surprises that are randomly spaced throughout the Mongolian road “network”. These include bridges with broken backs, very big holes and the occasional farm animal with a lower than average IQ. Yes, it is a country with no fences and it lacks a few other things besides. What is really funny is the occasional kilometer marker post about half a kilometer perpendicular to the part of the countryside that is currently being used as a road.

The most common vehicle is the Russian-built UAZ or “Gull” 4WD just like ours. Other big 4WDs are popular. Everything else is confined to the larger towns or is broken on the side of the “road”.

Weather

We arrived in mid-summer. This coincides with the period when Mongolia gets most of its rain, but that isn’t very much. So when we went to the Gobi Desert it rained every day but one. It generally didn’t rain continuously but often enough to keep you looking over your shoulder. It could be quite hot one minute and then a northerly wind change would send the temperature plummeting in a fashion I have never experienced. Bring all your clothes.

If you want to experience every kind of weather there is, all in the one day, and you don’t want to travel to Melbourne, then Mongolia could be for you.

Travel tip – don’t even think of going to Mongolia in winter. The average temperature is –30 Celsius in the warmer parts.



is this a rainbow or what?

Insects

We were prepared to get eaten by mosquitoes. It didn't happen but I am told that it can, especially if you travel to far eastern parts. This was the first trip I have ever undertaken when I didn't get bitten by a tick so that has to count for something. There was the occasional fly but nothing to stress about. There was the odd plague of Pallas's sandgrouse but these apparently don't bite and there is some doubt over whether they are insects. Sure, there were grasshoppers, and I don't trust them when they appear in biblical numbers but they seemed to spend most of their time eating each other rather than worrying about us.

The only thing that had us a little confused was the mites. These were the size of cocker spaniels and seemed to spend most of their waking hours trying to hitch a ride in your tent or sleeping bag. I don't know what they eat and although it could have been me (I did lose some weight), I didn't feel anything.

Food

I was told that UB had half a freezer full of food. For everyone. In the country. This was not the case. In fact the capital had some of the best restaurants I've been to if the restaurant selection chosen by our ground agent was any guide. Just sit down and wait for your Korean, Mexican, or Mongolian food and lots of it.

In the countryside we ate at the ger camps, with the food generally very good, or, at tent camps, cooked by our guide and driver (with a little assistance sometimes), which was mostly good after we established a few rules of hygiene. This came about after the "Great Dead Sheep Incident". This is where we were foolish enough to listen to my advice about the cooking of poorly prepared dead sheep. Needless to say we ate no more sheep, dead or otherwise, at least not bought at local markets anyway. Be warned that if you go to Mongolia, understand that the locals have more different things living in their digestive systems than you will see living in their national parks. Be careful.

Beer

Beer comes in three forms, warm, mildly cool (marketed as cold) and cold. Only the first two are found in Mongolia. Happily the local brews were quite drinkable. Chinggis (you guessed it) is very drinkable and could occasionally be found "on tap", whilst Cass and Hite (both Korean) were cheap, ubiquitous and tasty. Tiger beer from Singapore was freely available and reasonably good, and Heineken could be found at the ger camps but it was hardly worth the premium prices charged.

Mongolians make some interesting beverages aside from beer but when we learned how much it makes them sick, we passed. We figured that if our driver didn't stop to buy the stuff it was very dangerous indeed.



Wildlife (see full list in table at end of report)

Birds

Everyone I had talked to, and everything I had read, prepared me for the fact that there are not a huge number of different birds in Mongolia. Further, many are passage migrants and we were not going to be around for the migrations. There was said to be a bit of quality about the birds that are seeable, whatever that means. Together we would have seen over 200 birds. My list was 184. I could have seen that many in the local national park at home if I had spent a month there, but would I have seen Siberian crane, white-naped crane and demoiselle crane on the first day in the field?

I think that if we had spent less time driving around up north and a little more time in parts of the Gobi or further east of UB we would have seen more birds but having said that we did spend a lot of time searching for mammals. It must also be said, of course, that we did not use a professional bird guide. In any country there are always lots of birds laughing at you from the roadsides because you don't know precisely where to stop.

The best places we found for birds on our itinerary were:

The lakes at Gun Galuut (in fact any lake was good, leading to my colleagues to conclude that I had an unusual obsession with them, culminating in the search for a mirage at one point).

The Gobi Desert especially Yolyn Am Gorge

Any vegetation along large rivers, even the Tuul at UB, and

Forests that are not exclusively comprised of larch.



Larch forests probably have lots of birds in them – I'll never know. We found that the edges of these forests could be good but deep within was very quiet and those birds found here tended to be in the tops of the trees and lacked diversity. Naturally there would be some fat chook things about if you spent the time searching.

All said, Mongolia is a place to go birding after you have been to a number of really good birding countries, or if you have a fascination with waterfowl. It is possible to see tens of thousands of waterfowl on a single patch of water – no exaggeration here.

Mammals

We identified 35 different mammals. If not for Lkhagvasuren's live mammal traps we would have seen far fewer. I was very happy with the mammals we saw. Mongolia has an amazing mammal list. Sure it has its fair share of small furrries that all look the same, but it also has some of the all-time greats in terms of large scary things like wolves and bears, lots of bovids, lots of cats, and lots of mustelids.



The highlights were wolves, Mongolian gazelles, Arabian sand gazelle (or black-tailed gazelle), Siberian ibex, hangay argali, Przewalski's horse and red deer. Amongst the smaller critters on offer were corsac fox, Mongolian marmot, Mongolian five-toed jerboa, two different hedgehogs, some cute hamsters and the ubiquitous susliks or ground squirrels.

Of cats and mustelids there were few. We probably spotlighted a Pallas's cat at Gun Galuut but we'll never know for sure. The same can be said for Gobi cat at Bayanzag but it ran away as well. Of mustelids there were surprisingly none. Methinks that the locals have done a number on them. See below "National parks and other protected areas".

Some of the problems we had with seeing more mammals included:

Exhaustion from traveling all day,
Unkind weather for spotlighting,
Very late sunsets,
Freezing temperatures that precluded trapping without the likelihood of killing whatever was silly enough to walk into them, and
The locals had gotten to the mammals first.



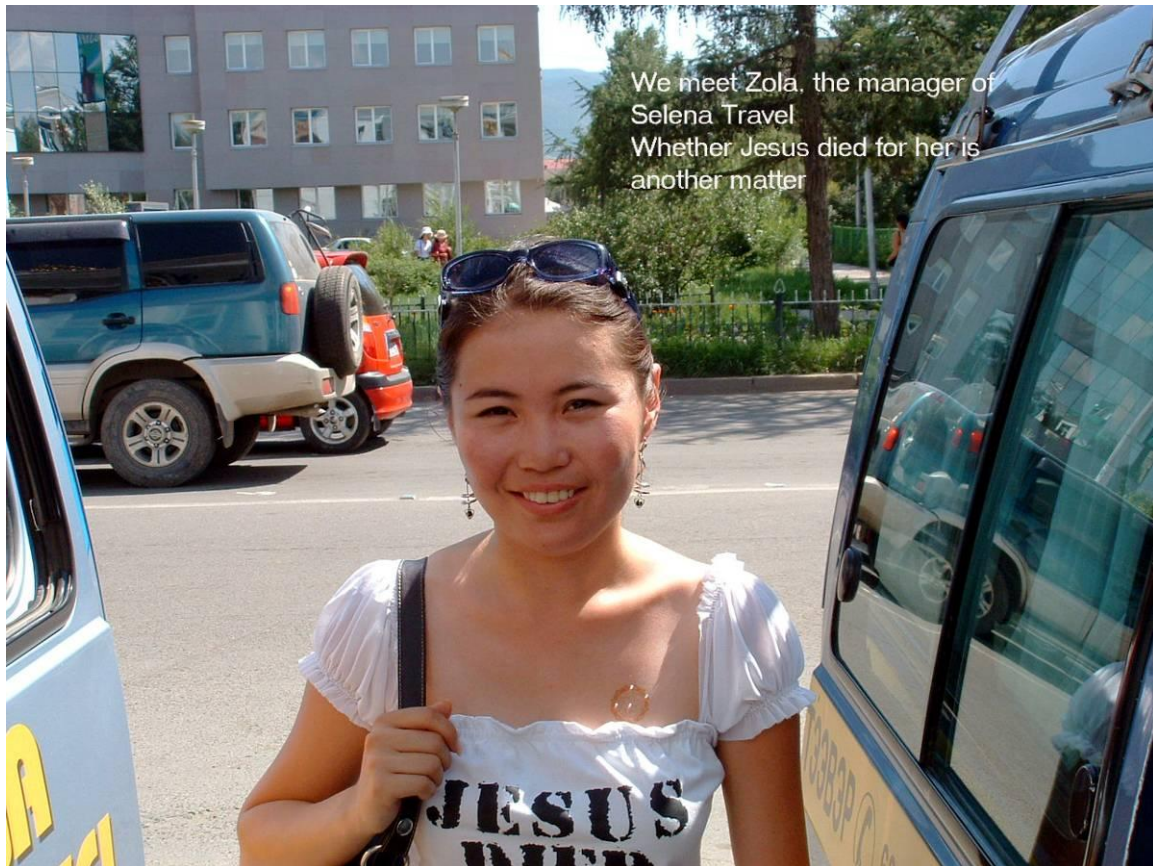
Reptiles

For a country that is so cold in the winter we spotted quite a few reptiles, including several snakes and some really neat agamids and skinks. Most of these were in the Gobi but some were in rocky mountains. Regrettably I forgot to write down their names from our guide's book! In any event I doubt any serious reptile-head will be going to Mongolia.

Selena travel

We booked with Selena Travel six months in advance of our trip. They were selected on the basis of the itinerary and price offered us and not on the basis of being recommended by anyone I knew. I had sent identical questions to about ten agencies found on the internet. I had some reservations using Selena as they also offer hunting trips for large mammals. Then I discovered so did most of the others – they probably all did in fact.

Selena offered us a 15% discount if we booked early so that's what we did. This may not be the bargain that it seems because I am fairly confident we didn't get the best maintained vehicle at their disposal but we certainly had two very good drivers and the guide that we wanted. The price offered us was very good for the tour we booked on at around \$55US per day per person, all inclusive.



Zola is the manager of Selena and she is very skilled in English, very obliging, and recently graduated in tourism management (or something). She can answer any questions you might have, very quickly and professionally. If you are considering a trip to Mongolia I can recommend Selena. However, you should nail down the actual vehicle to be used, whether all the seats face forward, and check the itinerary for travel time. Don't rely on maps for this – they are useless. It seems that tour operators in Mongolia think that everyone wants to see the country from a vehicle because that's what all the

operators we ran into had you do. Some Europeans think this is great, apparently, because they marvel at the wide open spaces.

Zola's email address is: sales@selenatravel.com



National parks and other protected areas

There aren't any.

A few years ago some numbskull suggested the whole country should be declared a World Biosphere Reserve. Clearly this boofhead had looked on a map and seen all these national parks etc and figured that if there were hardly any people then the wildlife and ecosystems must be in good shape. I thought the same thing. Whoever it was had obviously never been there. Now I'm not saying that after one month and having been to a selection of sites I'm an instant expert but consider these immutable facts:

The government allows anyone to hunt anything not listed as endangered (CITES I) anywhere – including national parks – for a fee. I reckon you could shoot the rest for a larger fee but I don't know this.

The government allows Mongolian gazelles to be hunted for a short season each year – the Chinese prefer to use machine guns for this – what joy to be a gazelle. No wonder they run so fast.

The government exports very large numbers of raptors to the Middle East every year (mostly saker falcons).

The locals kill anything they like anywhere they like to do it – we saw cooked marmots for sale within national parks. In Hustai NP one of the park rangers kills and eats the things, presumably caught within the park. Eating marmots appears to be some sort of national obsession.

All national parks we saw were full of domestic animals and their herders.

Gift shops in UB offer all sorts of dead animal parts including whole wolf skins and all types of trophy heads.

The method for trapping wolves for research within Hustai NP is to lay baited steel jaw traps. I need not go on about the likely results except to say that these traps had killed at least one lynx, many raptors and lots of badgers in the year prior to our visit.

Now, some might say that I am being a little harsh here – Mongolia is a poor country etc. So what; look what the Ugandan government has done! Try killing a flea in one of their national parks and see what happens. Mongolia will be lot poorer unless they get their act together. There is no difference between national parks and any other part of the country in terms of wildlife protection except that the parks charge a small entry fee. This was the most disappointing aspect of my trip. Does it show?



On the positive side, our travel agent, Selena, has started a project at Gun Galuut to protect 60 odd argali sheep. They are seeable. The other critters are along for the ride. Private conservation projects like this one have a far greater chance of success for wildlife, primarily because they are created for commercial gain. This generally means the profits are spread, albeit thinly, across the local community. Lets hope this spreads to other areas. The Mongolian Government is apparently useless in terms of environmental commitment. *(Since our trip, Gun Galuut has won an international conservation award)*



Diary

Day 1 - Saturday 10th July 2004

A mother-of-all-stuffups started our day. Apparently the ever so organized Air China (not to confused with China Air) had cancelled our plane tickets. Some numbskull at the check-in suggested we had cancelled them. Well why had we bothered to turn up then? So arriving at the airport early and being first in the check-in queue had its advantages, like this one – we got to fly in the very full plane by being “forced on”. I hadn’t previously been entertained by this bit of airline speak but at least our waiting time was reduced by trying to ring our agent in Sydney, Melbourne or wherever and by trying to find anyone at the very large airport who would admit any connection with the very absent Air China staff. Travel tip: avoid Air China if at all possible.



The flight was full of Chinese. Funny that. Everything written down anywhere in the plane was also in Chinese, but the movies were in English – the only problem being that they were all about five years old and the tapes so badly damaged that you wish there were screaming children in the plane as a distraction.

All the people on the plane were very well behaved. Hmmm. After five hours I politely asked if we might have a nice beer to drink, fearing the response. Nobody else was drinking anything at all. To my inestimable relief some beer arrived. And some more after that. What was going on here?

It was comforting to know that there are still things I could learn about flying. As we transitted through some very large city starting with the letter “G”, we were all herded off and made to pass through immigration and customs and then channelled by all sorts of people that had fancy clothes and fixed smiles to a so-called transfer lounge. There, at the entrance to a spotless toilet we were greeted by an official whose sole purpose in life was to smile at foreigners and say “hullo” and “goodbye” as we entered and left the said facility. There was a queue of such people talking turns. Yep, welcome to a very different place indeed.

Our plane refused to leave for Beijing on account of a very large amount of the world’s fresh water that had taken an interest in traveling there at the same time as us. The airport at Beijing was currently entertaining all of it. Around midnight we approached the city in a sort of spiral that saw the plane, a 777-200, fly about 100km from the airport for quite some time. The nose-cam on the plane as we landed gave us great views of what we thought might have been our last moments on earth.

We met our hosts Clio, a great young lady and the manager of travel@tour-beijing.com and Annie, our guide, and sped off into the night in our Mao Citizen (my name for our Chinese car) to the Harmony Hotel. The hotel was very good and we both died.



Day 2 – Sunday 11th July 2004

We were resurrected with a generous buffet breakfast and then started our all expenses paid six day tour of Beijing and surrounds. First stop was the Temple of Heaven. In the rain. It is possibly a very nice place but the weather kind of stuffed it. Lunch was breathtaking. This was at a restaurant at one side of Tiananmen Square. So many staff and so much food. We were to learn that all meals in the next six days would be the same.

The Forbidden City, even in the rain, was like nothing I had seen - amazing. The scale, quality of architecture, presentation, preservation and history made my head spin. Our guide gave an expert commentary. It is one of those places that should be visited twice – the first time to inspire awe and the second time to actually learn something. I cannot speak highly enough of the way the Chinese have preserved and presented their cultural heritage.



Forbidden City, Beijing
with a curious absence of Chinese

For a change of pace we were taken to a facility where we were entertained by a Chinese tea ceremony. I thought this trivial and rather quaint at the time, but I am currently the proud owner of a Chinese tea set and tea courtesy of the Beijing Airport duty free shop.

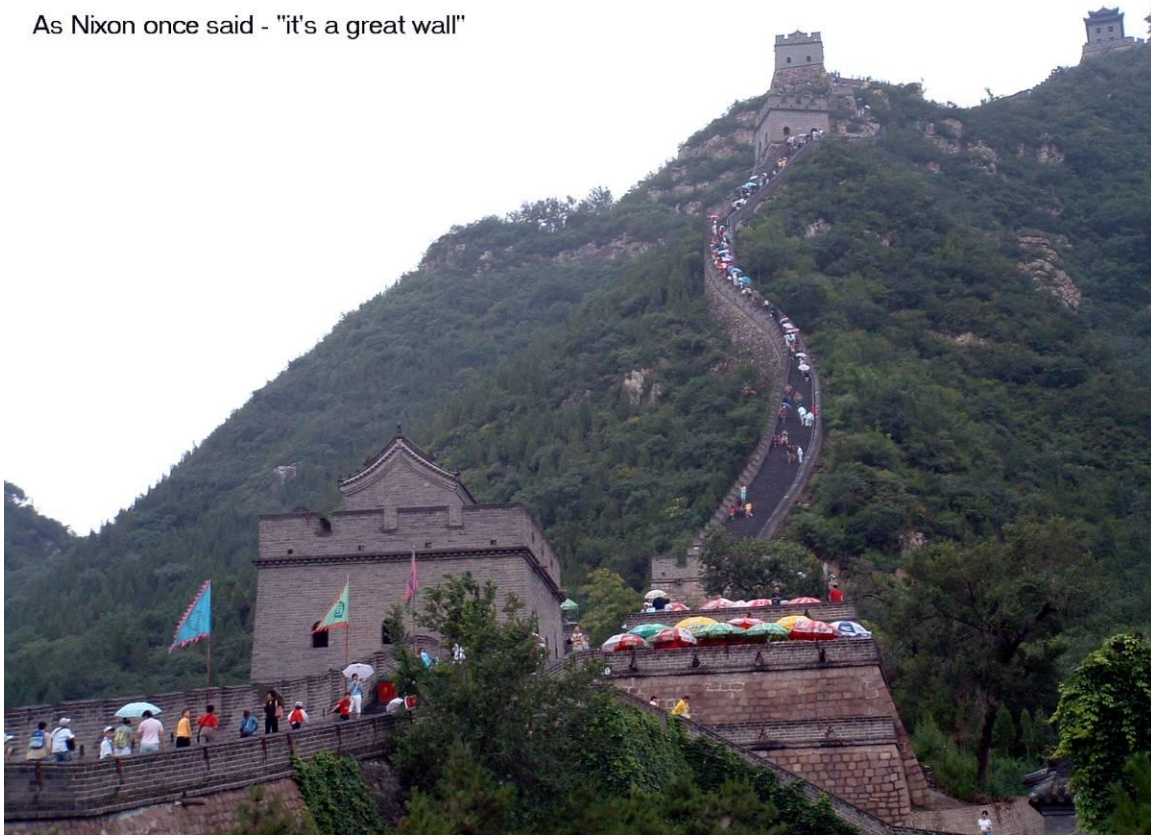
Dave and I purchased beers from the shop across the road from the hotel and drank them. Dinner was cancelled on account of lunch. We learned that few people starve in China.

Day 3 – Monday 12th July 2004

Every night our hotel room received attention from the outside world. Tapping on the door, phone calls and the like from kind folk wishing to offer us services of one kind or another. All we wanted to do was sleep. Trust me.

Our driver was a Mr Lao, who looked like the sort of guy who could achieve things with a car that might have others imprisoned, or worse. He picked us up with our new guide, Jerry. What happened to Annie is anyone's guess and polite or even direct enquiries of Clio elicited no intelligible response. Perhaps she had become a lower part of the food chain somewhere. Mr Lao and Jerry took us on the aptly named Badaling Freeway to the Badaling section of the Great Wall. Thereabouts the freeway ended.

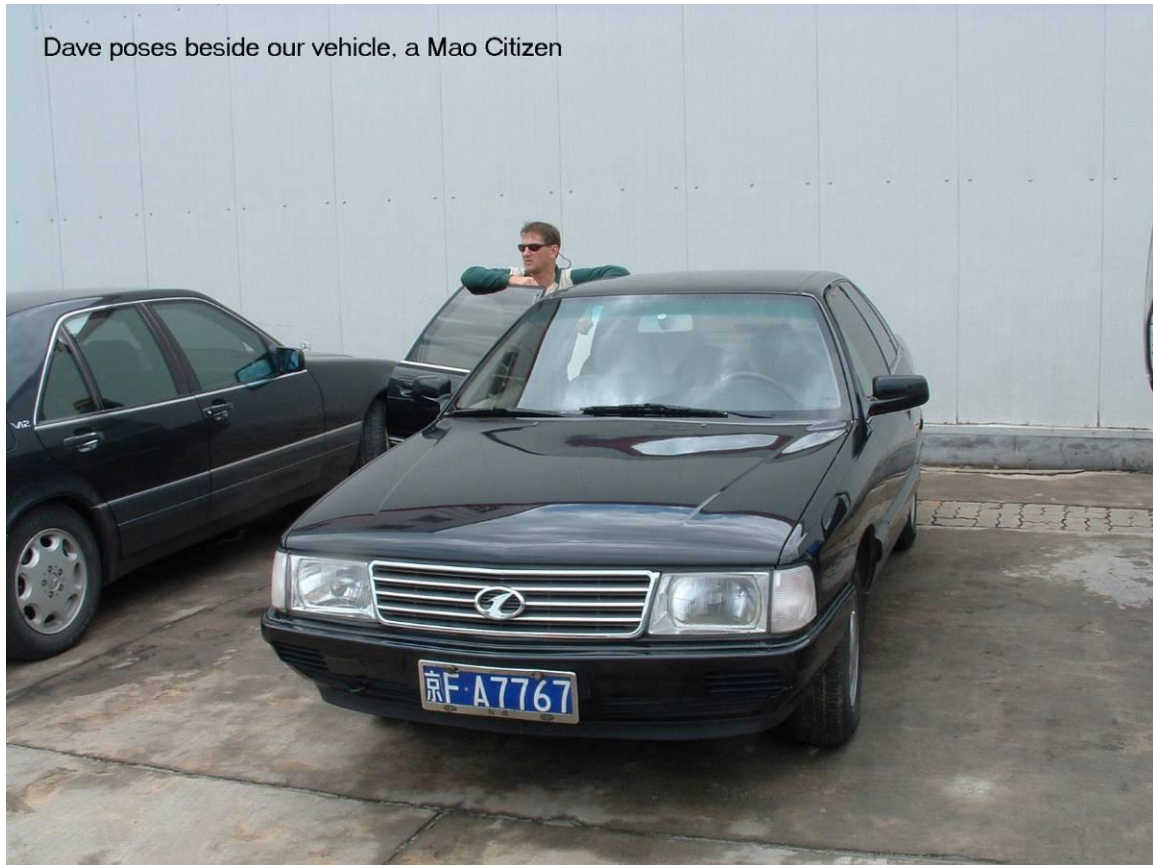
As Nixon once said - "it's a great wall"



I thought that the Great Wall would be the sort of place where you parked beside a dusty road and wandered through a village or two before stumbling onto, it must be said, a great big long wall. Nothing could be further from the truth. The buildings that service the car park were bigger than Australia's fourth largest city. The bits of Wall that tourists visit are largely of the rebuilt variety. Not surprising when you consider the numbers of tourists, mostly domestic, that climb it daily. Still, it is a must see and we did spot Pere David's laughingthrush, a few squirrels and the odd redstart. The funniest experience was the young Chinese women who wanted their pictures taken with the white man with the beard. Odd to be on the receiving end of "may I take your picture?"

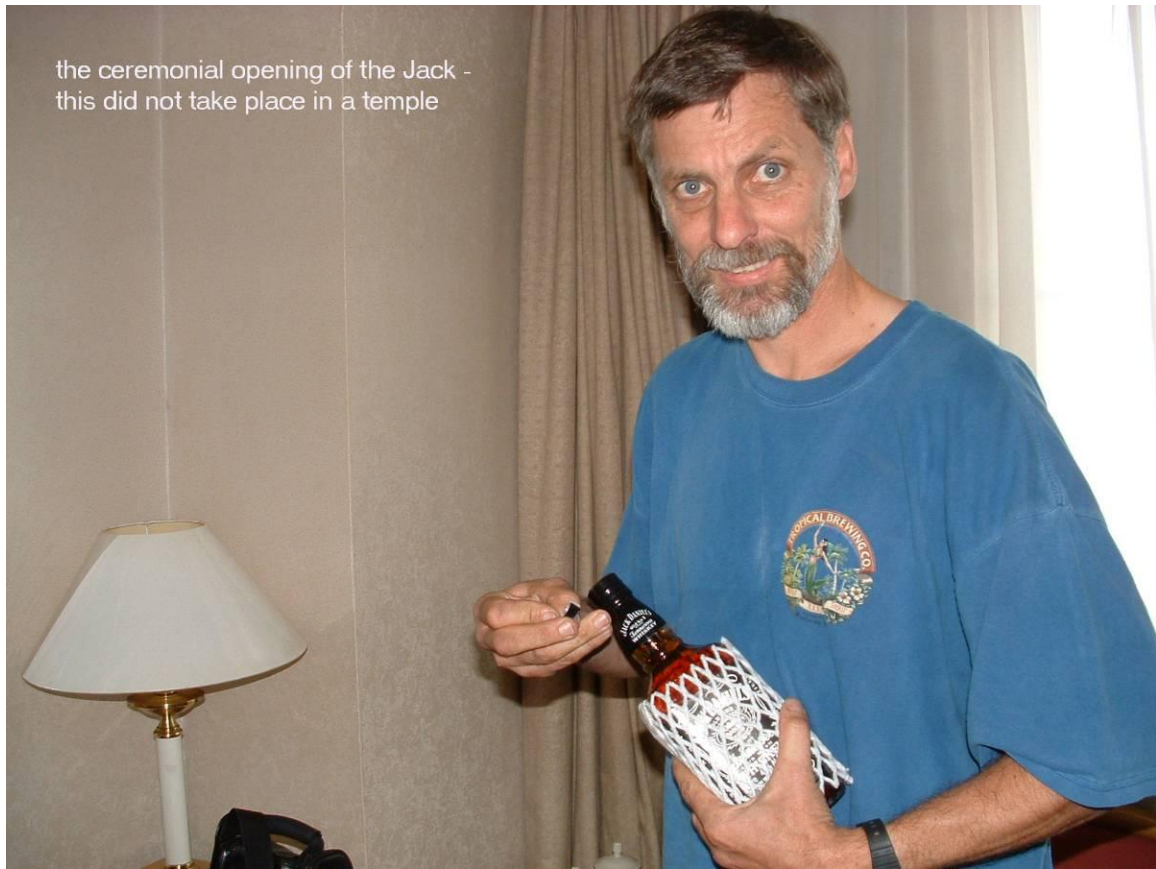
Lunch was preceded by a visit to the cloisonné factory, interesting, but not buying. We were to visit every kind of factory Beijing has on offer and there are a few common observations – every factory / shop is immaculately presented, interpreted very competently by an English-speaking guide, overstaffed and overpriced.

Our 29-course lunch was alright I suppose.



Off to the Ming Tombs, brilliant of course, but only a taste of what was to come. This was the Yonghe Lamasery, not on every tourist's itinerary but given the amount of days we had, it was on ours. Aside from the standard selection of brain-numbing temples, there was this big bit of wood that the Nepalese king had given these guys in 1748. This wooden Buddhist charm is 28 metres (not inches) high, coloured gold, looks like a Buddha and is carved from a SINGLE piece of sandalwood. Well f*ck me!! A number of things came to mind all at once. Firstly, how on earth did the Nepalese get this Guinness World Record toothpick moved there, given their national airline can't check your luggage from Kathmandu to Sydney, or anywhere else in any reliable fashion come to think of it? Boggles the mind. It is the most enduring image I have of Beijing.

The evening hosted the ceremonial opening of our first Jack.



We met Clio for a Peking duck dinner at a four star hotel. The 38-course dinner was reasonable and was followed by a show across the road where we were entertained by a troupe of young acrobats. This went for an hour during which some very young people did impossible things with their bodies, whilst smiling. I sat in pain most of the time. This made the phone call at the hotel offering a massage harder to ignore.

Day 4 – Tuesday 13th July 2004

After marvelling at the queue to view Mao Tse Tung's body we toddled off to undertake the "Hutong Village Tour". The Hutong Village is supposed to be a section of the authentic "Old Peking" residential area. The parked tourist buses covered about 40% of the total land area. That Chinese tourists undertake tours of their own residential areas is somewhat strange.

Indeed the rickshaws, the narrow streets, the birds in cages and the urban design laws did create an image of Old Peking as near as I can tell. We dined at a local family's home in a small garden courtyard where they have done this sort of thing many times before. Never mind, with the food and the atmosphere it was just great! The visit to a local primary school (where boys significantly outnumbered girls) and the chance of dying in a rickshaw accident filled in the day nicely.

We learned about ghosts and the silly ways they are prevented from entering homes. It seems that your common ghost has two forms – the vertically challenged and the navigationally challenged. You prevent the first of these from gaining access to your home by the simple construction of a threshold, which the ghost has no ability to cross. The second type of ghost can't go round corners so each doorway has a ghost-busting blank wall behind it. We also feasted on all sorts of reasons why the number "9" is important. We discovered how you could tell the occupation of a home's inhabitants and what they had eaten for breakfast. Great. It's great to know that the Chinese are not superstitious.

It was after leaving the Hutong Village that I began to challenge the authorities. We chose to walk back to the hotel through Beihai Park, a large and beautiful park with a big lake in it. Don't drink the water. Here we found, surprisingly, temples, lots of them. After leaving the park I tried to cross a line painted on the footpath that defined a triangle of pavement of about three square metres in area. This site must have been where Chairman Mao had his first crap or something because a uniformed man in a booth darted out and redirected me. He did not seem happy that I had managed to intrude so far – about 9 centimetres.



9 centimetres was further than I managed to get when I tried to walk around a taped barrier at the big important government building opposite Tiananmen Square, where a different man in a different uniform physically escorted me. I really must be more

careful. Anyway we spotted the Burmese military leader as a consequence thus getting my first, but not last, president tick for the trip (the other being the Mongolian president in UB).

It is a curious fact that in Beijing all manner of people approached us for all manner of reasons. The most common was attempts to practice their English. In the next few weeks or so when the Chinese are in charge of the world, I hope they remember our kindness.

One thing to note – we felt very very safe in Beijing.

Day 5 – Wednesday 14th July 2004

Our new guide had the shortest name in the whole world – Li Yi. She was not a “morning person” but brightened as the day progressed. First stop was the Summer Palace. Yeah, awesome. Large crowds of Chinese and owls. Yes, gobsmacked we were, we actually saw some wildlife here. First an Oriental scops owl and then a parliament of brown hawk owls.



After our 73-course lunch it was the cultured pearl factory tour. This was followed by the silk factory tour and I kid you not, the lecture on Chinese medicine by the doctor at the hospital tour. We “passed” on the sincere invitation for a free physical – more than a

smidgeon of eastern propaganda on this one. How did I end up at a hospital in China – I didn't even feel sick.....?

The day concluded with a complimentary imperial cuisine dinner. This dinner was given us by the tour company on account of my suggesting an improvement to their website – I thought they should spell their email address correctly. The 99-course dinner was embarrassing. We had our own room in a 4-diamond restaurant in the middle of Beihai Park, where we retraced our previous day's walk by car – the only car in the place. We asked Li to join us. There was never the slightest chance we could have eaten all the food if we had sat there for a week.

Day 6 – Thursday 15th July 2004

Song Shan Nature Reserve was on the menu. This forested reserve is about 100km from Beijing. Being forest, nobody in town had ever heard of it, but off we went eventually arriving by mid-morning. We walked up along a creek. This was enchanting for a number of reasons. We did see a few birds, very few. There were a number of old Chinamen gathering herbs. Interpretation of the vegetation was terrific (in English), and the forest was populated by many edible fruits and nuts. Here were wild peaches, pears, walnuts, mulberries, various other berries and lots of edible fungi. No wonder the Chinese could feed their population.



The down side was lots of rubbish, very noisy Chinese, and horrid air pollution from town.

Dave and I ended the day by having 9 drinks.

Day 7 – Friday 16th July 2004

We checked out of our hotel and Mr Lao and Li took us to the airport. Mr Lao, who had the same rabid and aggressive driving style of every other driver in Beijing managed to get us within 50 feet of the passenger drop-off area before he had a car plough into his. Close.

Chinese airport torture. Here we learned that you could't take alcohol into the terminal as "hand carry". So we lost half a bottle of Jack. Oddly, you could buy as much as you wanted at the duty free shops as soon as you cleared customs. This is called a rort.



We caught up with friends Barry-Sean and Sue, his partner, in one of the airport queues. They had been elsewhere in China and joined us for the Mongolian tour. Eventually we boarded our 737-300 for Ulaanbataar. It sat at the airport for an hour or so whilst the mixture of fog and chemicals in the air cleared a little.

It was very hot when we arrived in Mongolia. The city was larger and more modern than I expected, although there was a clear utilitarian Soviet influence mixed with the need for buildings to cope with very cold winters. We were met by our guide and driver and rushed off to a restaurant for lunch. Here we caught up with Larry and Nancy, our fellow travellers from Arizona. Then to the bank to change money to pay the smiling Zola from Selena Travel, followed by a tour of the natural history museum and then off to the Kuhkree ger camp across the river. Why we were at a ger camp across the river was a mystery. It was not on our program when we left home. A walk in the larch forest produced a few woodpeckers, lots of beautiful flowers and our first mammals – marmots.

Day 8 – Saturday 17th July 2004

For mine, one of the great things about going to a different country is getting up early and going for a pre-breakfast walk in vegetation that is all unfamiliar. Or was it. On the hillsides there were common garden plants from home, even rhubarb, parsley and strawberries – all where they should be.

We left for Gun Galuut Nature Reserve after breakfast. We were spoilt as we travelled on the best road in the whole country – it went to a large coal mine. The ger camp at Gun Galuut is sited in the middle of nowhere, although in retrospect it is at one of the better sites we stayed at. It is curious that Mongolians site the tourist ger camps at the most featureless barren flat and boring sites they can find. And in a landscape that often has all these qualities and more, this is quite a feat.



We backtracked to a lake we spied on the way in and to our excitement there were four Siberian cranes, an endangered bird that lives in some of the worst countries in terms of wildlife protection. Larry was excited. Also present were large numbers of breeding spotted redshanks, a pair of whooper swans, hosts of other waders in full breeding plumage, some of the more common ducks and terns, a hundred or so demoiselle cranes, and northern lapwings.

After a delicious lunch we wandered to some distant small lakes to spy a pair of white-naped cranes with two chicks – so a three cranes day! Icing on the cake was provided by a family of active corsac foxes running across the open grass. Very attractive animals.

We enjoyed a few Chinggis beers before dinner and a Jack on the riverbank as the horses came to drink and the sun set on a splendid day.



Day 9 – Sunday 18th July 2004

This was argali sheep day. These woolly monsters were one of the reasons I thought to go to Mongolia. Along the way we picked up a “ranger”, a remarkable word that could describe anyone from a collector of entry fees to someone who shot wild animals for food. This guy (impossible to make sense out of people’s names in this country) fell somewhere in between. We were deposited at the top of some formidable looking mountains whereupon the vehicle disappeared. The local guide waved vaguely into the

distance at a point about three time zones away and said the vehicle would pick us up there. Larry and Nancy bailed immediately and I wondered to what we had subscribed. I sent the local ranger off with the age-challenged Americans while the rest of us went searching for sheeps.

The car park theory held, again. We mountaineers were stumbling along a ridge when we spotted through binoculars the valley people waving frantically. Naturally those least interested or least likely to see the argali had spotted a couple of rams on a ridge, affording the rest of us with decent views. We were later to see 12 more. There are about 60 in this pocket of rocky hills. They are kept company by at least one wolf flushed by Dave, which quickly disappeared. A sensible wolf if the gift shops in UB were any guide.

It was a glorious walk through unpopulated hills dotted with flowers and the odd bird and reptile. The best of them was an imperial eagle. Also seen were daurian suslik (reasonably common) and lots of Mongolian marmots.

In the afternoon we had no vehicle. This decision by our agent confused me but apparently they thought that we would just love to ride horses or rest for a day or so. Horses? Rest? This is a bloody holiday, not a health camp! The only thing requiring rest was my stomach, which was most unhappy with some of the local comestibles.

So Jack, riverbank and the glow that follows an exciting walk.



Day 10 – Monday 19th July 2004

We visited a local lake of the waterfowl covered variety that kept most of us entertained for hours. Pretty much all the lakes in Mongolia have no vegetation whatsoever around the edges so they can be approached easily. Unfortunately this means anything living on them can see you coming. Duck hunting seems relatively unpopular so the lakes are VERY well stocked. On this lake there were ten different ducks, none of which were rare, and lots of terns, gulls, grebes, swans and waders. We stopped counting demoiselle cranes but viewed numbers well into the hundreds for the morning. We trapped Mongolian pika and daurian suslik near the ger camp and released them after taking a few photos.

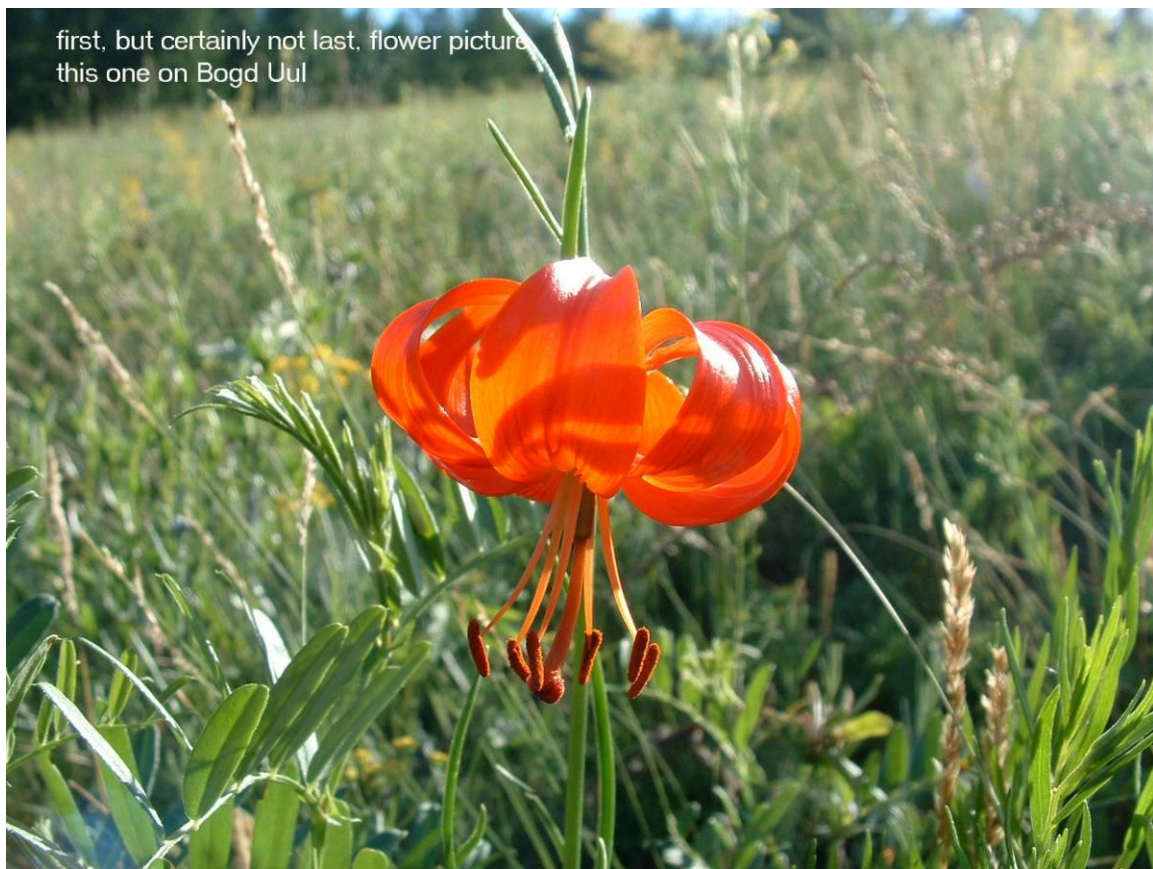
The evening saw Dave, Lkhagvasuren, Doina and I spotlighting from the vehicle for an hour or so. Aside from a number of corsac foxes we failed to positively identify anything from the myriad creatures we scared the crap out of as we chased them across the grasslands and up into the hills. Much of this was achieved from a vehicle travelling at lunatic speeds, with Doina, our driver, as excited as we were for entirely different reasons I am sure. We almost certainly had a Pallas's cat but the rest are still a mystery.



Day 11 – Tuesday 20th July 2004

Our trapping was improving with Brandt's vole, house mouse and the absolutely stunning Campbell's hamster being captured and released around the camp.

We left Gun Galuut for UB via lunch on Bogd Uul, the sacred mountain opposite the capital. We went shopping for food and essentials (read: alcohol). There were quite a few good shops contrary to what we were told to expect. I escorted Dave to a few nearby bars where we watched the locals go about their day. It is a credit to Mongolians that they have a real cultural identity when surrounded by the giants of Russia and China. Russia has had more influence in terms of language and urban architecture, the latter regrettably so.



Dinner was in a great Indian / Mexican restaurant - as you would expect.

Day 12 – Wednesday 21st July 2004

We changed drivers and vehicles as we headed towards the Gobi Desert. Our “new” vehicle was a Russian UAZ or “Gull” 4WD van that spent the non-tourist part of the year as a public transport vehicle near the Siberian border. It was not recently made. After repeated enquiries of our guide over a period of weeks we failed to establish whether it was the first of its kind. We thought the driver's name was Bhartra although we were far

from certain. The only thing that we were sure of was that he seemed happy. This is always good.

Our first breakdown occurred soon after we left the bitumen, which was soon after we left town. Basically it happened half way up our first hill. While Bhartra drank some bad petrol we amused ourselves at an ovoo. Ovoo's are at the top of passes and consist mostly of rocks. They are festooned with all manner of stuff put there by the locals who have some utterly unsound reason for doing so. I think it's because all the good religions were already taken or some such thing. This one was covered with paper money, much of which was still where it had originally been placed, but mostly it was strewn about the countryside by the wind. Odd. Very odd. From here we were introduced to the most featureless landscape I have ever seen.



the mighty Gull has its first breakdown (on day one)

The lunch stop was rather nice. Out of the steppe rose a few rocky hills sufficient to support lammergeiers and all manner of other raptors. It would have been a great spot to camp but no, the Rashaant Tourist Ger Camp beckoned. This place was comical. It was at the junction of three or four featureless areas. The most interesting thing for miles around were the power lines, such as they were, that terminated there. The only thing that might have inspired the original inhabitants of the place is the wind. It should have inspired them to go elsewhere. Never mind, they did have beer at a decent room temperature (I didn't say that the power lines carried any power), it was cheap, and we could time the rate at which the empty cans raced across the desert before we retrieved them.

Dave walks to town to get beer



Day 13 – Thursday 22nd July 2004

Rain and 45 knots of wind ensured that I slept well.

The day had all the hallmarks of being a disaster of an order that would have made Chinggis very proud. The featureless flat landscape became more featureless and flatter. It was so utterly without features that it was impossible to tell how fast the vehicle was moving as there was no frame of reference.

The rain cleared by mid-afternoon as we arrived at the saxaul forests near the “flaming cliffs” of Bayanzag. Much is written of these queer forests and how they were shrinking. No mystery there – goats and camels and collection for firewood do that to a forest.

The campsite selection sub-committee made its decision and finally we could roam about a bit. Now here’s a funny thing – there is hardly any other vegetation other than the saxaul “tree” and yet there were so many small mammals, almost all of which were rodents, in both diversity and biomass that it boggled the mind. The great gerbils were certainly not the kind that Richard Gere had an alleged fondness for – they are nearly a foot long and they were literally under every bush. Other diurnal curiosities included saxaul sparrows, nesting grey shrikes, desert warblers (worth traveling about five metres to see) and the occasional Pallas’s sandgrouse or five thousand.



The evening was mild and quite still. The spotlighting was nothing short of spectacular. Lkhagvasuren had his landing net and Dave and I had torches. There were small mammals going in all directions. The delightful desert hamster (two inches of terror!) was able to be caught by hand. We ran down long-eared hedgehogs, mid-day gerbils whose watches had stopped, and saw what may have been a Gobi cat but we will never know for certain. The Mongolian five-toed jerboas were less interested in being near us and a range of other critters went the same way.

Day 14 – Friday 23rd July 2004

We were up early to check our traps. Lots of mid-day gerbils and desert hamsters. We packed our gear and went looking for the mythical drinking place of the sandgrouse. The hunt ended with a withering stare from a local on his horse (what else?) who clearly thought we were deranged to suggest such a site existed in the first place. Whatever other qualities sandgrouse might have, one thing is certain, the locals didn't know how to cook them in these parts because there were more sandgrouse than sand.

On to the flaming cliffs. These red-earthed walls were impressive, red and earthy. They contain dinosaur fossils or so they say. All we saw were the impressions of dinosaur fossils and some great desert scenery.



the flaming cliffs

We changed the schedule and left for the Great Gobi NP or whatever they call it, a day early. We passed a great herd of one and a half Mongolian gazelles along the way. They weren't hanging around to have their pictures taken so we pushed south to Yolyn Am Gorge. A morose ranger gave us all the news that mattered – we weren't allowed to camp in the park. Might disturb the hunters I guess. We had just entered when Dave spotted our first Siberian ibex, for me the mammal of the trip. Four large males with magnificent horns and quirky beards. Later we spied a few more so they must be in fairly good shape.

Lunch was followed by picking carefully through a sea of daurian pikas. These guys were in numbers that cannot be exaggerated. There was also the occasional red-cheeked suslik. We walked far enough from the van so that if a really big thunderstorm came over we could all get drowned and catch colds. Not there was much chance of this happening in the Gobi Desert. When we returned to the van there were five people lying on the ground underneath it out of the rain. It was then quite cold, so we were cold and wet.

The search for a ger camp was on in earnest. The prospect of hot showers had most of us salivating. The camp we selected was fine except for one slight problem – the price, as interpreted, kept changing. We never discovered who should have been shot but it made for some interesting dummy spitting the next day. In the meantime Dave and I had christened the day as the “Day of the Ibex” and decided to do some serious hill sitting and beer drinking. We achieved both without serious injury.

An evening of spotlighting inside the park and on the way back to the ger camp set a record of sorts. Not one live thing except each other.

Day 15 – Saturday 24th July 2004

An inspirational day clambering about the mountains in the national park. Saw some good birds that included Pere David's and white-winged snowfinches, various rosefinches, accentors, pipits (yuck), chukars with their chicks and lots of raptors. Ibex were common and the seething masses of pikas and their kin continued to have us shaking our heads. This place must have the fattest raptor chicks in the world.

Our ger camp was sensibly located as far as possible from anything the least bit interesting. It did have cold beer however. Certainly there was nothing else to distract us.



Day 16 – Sunday 25th July 2004

It surprises me that when you have formed an image of a place you have never been to, it sits there despite lots of new information that suggests that the image is worthless. I had imagined that the "Singing Sands" of Kongoryn Els, the tallest dunes in the desert with a river running in between, would be an idyllic place where herds of wild beasts would come to drink or make beastly love in the late afternoon. As the river empties into a lake, all sorts of images formed, of rare waterfowl or the drinking place of the sandgrouse.

This is what we found at the tourist camp ground at the Singing Sands, part of a national park – a small pile of mud on which a world class selection of domestic camels, goats and sheep were holed up and not inclined to want to move. Two nights here? We thought not. My ever so polite enquiry of our party suggesting we “go away” seemed unanimous for once. So back we toddled to Bayanzag; this meant a 12 hour day in the Gull.



The road between the now long forgotten areas of singing to the more familiar flaming was not without its merits. Small herds of Mongolian gazelle were seen as they fled smartly and the small rocky hills we crossed near the sands housed numerous ibex, an animal that doesn't easily get boring.

The late afternoon gale made spotlighting rather subdued and camping became an extreme sport.

Day 17 – Monday 26th July 2004

An Armenian hamster was silly or hungry enough to enter a trap that had not filled up with sand. We proved that a hedgehog could also fit into a trap although it couldn't turn around. The staples were mid-day gerbils and desert hamsters. If you ever hear that mid-day gerbils are on the endangered list, worry, you're next.

The mythical lake shown large and proud on my map and just as large but not so colourful on Bhartra's was the main course for the day. Pity it had disappeared five years ago and nobody had seen where it went. Never mind, we had a little time to explore, and along the way saw Arabian sand gazelles, McQueens bustard, a very obliging Mongolian five-toed jerboa and Mongolian ground-jays. It seems that this part of the desert has no water so there were no domestic animals, ergo....

Lunch was enjoyed at a local ger at a ghost town that the Ruskies had built. The Russians have a talent for building something that after twenty years looks like it predated the pyramids. In any event, our little lunch stop showed us what really large flocks of sandgrouse looked like.



Entertaining and educational as changing the water pump on the Gull on a clay pan in the desert might be, it provided yet another reason why I didn't get an afternoon snooze. It had an effect on Bhartra insofar as he struggled to want to drive on the "roads". So when we pointed to some distant hills as a potential campsite, he drove straight at them at fair speed sans road. We were so thrilled that we might perish in the desert in a spectacular single vehicle accident, and one that would not be discovered for a thousand years or so.

The hills provided fascinating territory for walking and discovery. We found an old Mongol fort or lookout post (I think) and some long abandoned ovoos and other structures that gave no clue to their function.

A gale was getting stronger, our warm beer was becoming mostly sand and Larry and Nancy's tent disappeared. The tent had a number of personal effects included, like air mattresses, sleeping bags and the like. Bhartra was the first to spot the empty ground where the tent had previously been. Those not involved in the hunt quickly cleared the van as it followed the tent roughly in the direction of the wind and towards China. The tent could only be seen though binoculars as it rolled away at good speed for a tent, randomly spewing its contents through the desert. It was recovered after the van intercepted it. Oddly it was not too badly beaten up after its little holiday. We needed a good laugh.



Day 18 – Tuesday 27th July 2004

Featureless desert was the main feature en-route to the ruins of the circa 1670 Ongi Monastery, our ger camp for the night. The monastery would have been amazing if the rascally Ruskies had not found it and fiddled with its architecture and the inhabitants. A small functioning monastery had been built on the site but looked rather out of scale with the original.

A small river ran through the area. A few trees were dotted along its banks. Lots of birds, but very little variety – a common theme throughout.

The afternoon was largely taken up with drinking beer and wondering what would happen when the big bank of clouds we could see up north came to town. Another night that would have been interesting had we been camping. The temperature fell twenty degrees in about twenty minutes.



Day 19 – Wednesday 28th July 2004

A day best forgotten.

We made a large town where we were tempted by a big building that suggested we might send an email or make a phone call. Yeah, right. Lkhagvasuren helpfully suggested we seek out the lakes at a nearby nature reserve because the Orkhon Waterfall, our campsite for the next two nights, was not all that far away. Huh. One of the problems with travelling with a guide and driver who have never before been to where we were going, is that we had as much chance of predicting the future as they did.

The lakes were at the end of a tortuous road and at the bottom of a near vertical mountain accessed by a twisting road that none of us wanted any part of. We decided to camp in a peaceful grassy valley. There was just us, a poisoned sheep (more on that later), a howling wind and a pleasant hailstorm.

Day 20 – Thursday 29th July 2004

The day of the reformation.

I have just read a book written by Stephen Fry, the English comedian. He describes how sick he was in Peru. Compared to the remains of my digestive system, his would have looked like a shop bought one. I was not alone. Of five that had eaten the poisoned sheep, four were very ill. The only one of us that didn't eat it was ill anyway. So this was the day when we introduced a few rules regarding camp hygiene.

I lost interest in the 90km short drive to the waterfall that took six hours. With the sluices opened at both ends I would happily have beamed myself home and stayed there. I resorted to counter-poison pills, even Russian examples that Bhartra kindly gave me.



The Orkhon Waterfall was nothing much but the forest around it was alive with birds and small mammals. The birds included Eurasian eagle owl and various thrushes, rosefinches, tits, redstarts, wagtails and woodpeckers. The mammals seen were Eurasian red squirrel, Siberian pika, mountain vole and northern red-backed vole.

Needless to say this was the trip-alcohol-free day. Dinner was poorly attended.

Day 21 – Friday 30th July 2004

Breakfast was called off altogether. All of us were sick.

Larry and Nancy announced that they were going home from the next big town, Karakoram, the old Mongol capital. Larry told us that he has been sick almost every day since he arrived in the country. Didn't seem to affect the volume of alcohol he consumed daily, but that's another story.

With attractive scenery along the way, we arrived at the 1586AD Erdene Zu Monastery in Karakoram. It was not destroyed by the Soviets. It would have been really exciting as a monastery had I never seen one, but I was pretty much bored with them by this time.

Then all sorts of things were happening at once. We couldn't find the ger camp where we were to have lunch. If we had looked from anywhere interesting into the middle of nowhere we would have found it instantly. Dave wanted to ring / text his beloved, Larry wanted out, preferably in a taxi, and the rest of us were very suspicious of anything that looked like food.

This is what happened after we found the lunch camp in the middle of nowhere. Dave continued with his telecom problems, Larry did a little dummy spit when the taxi wasn't dancing to his tune and returned with the long-suffering Nancy to find Barry-Sean, Sue and I playing with our food. Another perfectly good day wasted.

Another bucolic sojourn later and we arrived at the ger camp adjacent to the Taikhar Stone. Uniquely the camp was near something of five minute's interest. This was almost as interesting as the camp amenities commandant. This lady, a cold war relic, made an inspection after every visit from anybody to her area of professional interest – toilets and showers. That I am writing this, is testimony to my understanding of Mongolian toilet function and etiquette.

Although the Taikhar Stone site is a wildlife desert, it saw the return of my stomach, so the day was not wasted after all.

Day 22 – Saturday 31st July 2004

A much anticipated day, where we went on what we were advised was a "short drive" to the Khorgo-Terkh NP.

After lunch at an extinct volcanic cone we camped at the edge of a large lake in perfect time to watch it rain for the rest of the day. The only distraction, aside from our well-stocked bar, was watching Bhartra try to jury-rig the front offside wheel assembly so that it didn't part company with the rest of the vehicle. Most of the bolts that used to hold these rather important parts together were snapped. The solution was severe – take the thing to "town" and weld it all together. That fixed the problem rather permanently, but fixed it nevertheless.

There was nothing that distinguished this national park from the rest of the country except the modest entry fee. There were just as many domestic stock, domestic stockpersons, marmots to hunt and sell along the roadsides, and remnant forests to cut down.



Day 23 – Sunday 1st August 2004

Cloud-spotters heaven. The day started with every type of threatening-looking cloud known moving in at least three different directions, so I did the only thing sensible in the circumstances – went for a long walk into the mountains. These mountains had patches of larch forest but few mammals and all of them small. Siberian chipmunks were common and there were lots of birds but nothing special. A northern goshawk took out a long-tailed suslik for lunch.

The most exciting thing to happen was the return of the now repaired van from the “mechanics”.

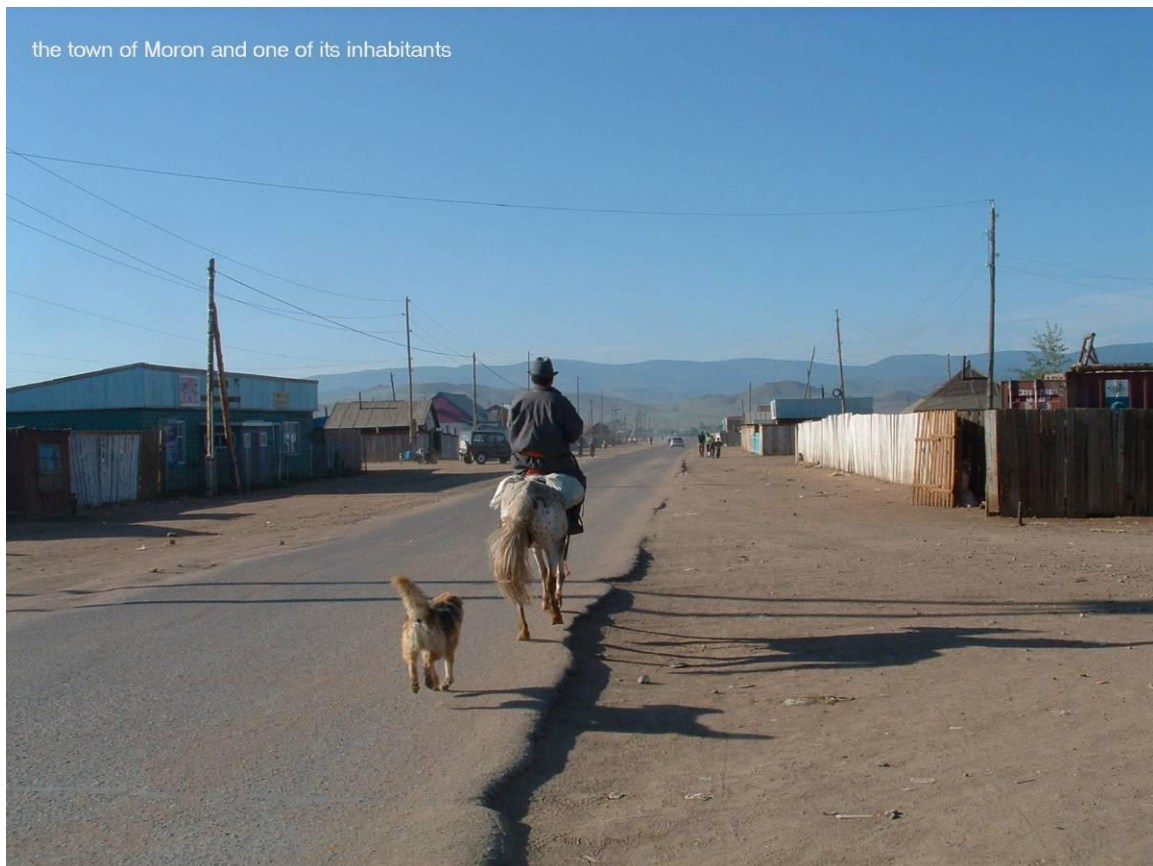
We started north to steal some distance from the next day which would otherwise be a long driving day. After we re-attached the spare wheel that had fallen off after hitting a speed hump, we found an area that was not being grazed. Who knows, it may be in the national park. We were prepared to go on but we had been trapped before, where “going

on” means emerging from an area of good habitat into the man-made wilderness that occupies much of the country. So we camped beside a great little creek with *almost* primary larch and pine forest on three sides, and enough time left in the day to explore a little. Saw a few new birds, Pallas’s bunting, yellowhammer and Siberian stonechat. There were many woodpeckers because, sadly, there was an insect that was killing whole swathes of larch.

We decided on having a fire in the evening that Bhartra enthusiastically but unnecessarily lit with some petrol, almost becoming a statistic in doing so. Larry was babbling like an idiot because his other passion, birds, had satisfied him. Dave and I went for a spotlight but at this latitude it refused to get dark, even at 11pm, so we gave up and went to bed.

Day 24 – Monday 2nd August 2004

A long day was spent driving north toward Lake Khovsgul. Larry’s sarcasm had returned as the birds dried up. We ended up camping on the edge of a river in sight of the town of Moron. I kid you not. The town is not very inspiring but at least I don’t have to write very much which is good given my typing skills, or lack thereof.



Day 25 – Tuesday 3rd August 2004

The Morons provided us with a selection of car parts, including a new starter motor – Bhartra had been hand cranking the van for weeks. We grabbed some food and other essentials, and once more steered in the direction of Lake Khovsgul, which had taken on great significance in terms of our expectations for seeing wildlife (oh, no).

We stopped at a series of smallish lakes. One had maybe 10,000 birds on it, mainly ruddy shelducks, common goldeneye, whooper swans and herring gulls. Also present – brown-headed and mew gulls, common and white-winged terns, avocets, demoiselle cranes, bar-headed geese, a variety of waders and who knows what else. Would have loved to have had my kayak. Really spectacular.

The rest of the journey was pure torture as we didn't seem to get any closer to our camp. Getting to the lake was one thing, finding our way along its shores was another matter. Even Dave was starting to get the shits.

Camp Toilogt was situated on the edge of the lake and was very pretty. A smaller lake resting to one side was home to breeding horned grebes, white-winged scoters and a variety of the more common ducks. It is surrounded by larch forest that gave up a few birds – red crossbill and black grouse among them, but we failed to see the targeted black woodpecker.



Larry was entertaining as he “psst psst psst”ed the ger shower attendant to point out the shower plumbing problems that the same attendant had just finished warning him about. Pay attention Larry. Enough to drive a man to drink.....

All the gers had a fixed menu dinner and this night’s effort was delicious. Pity I can’t remember what it was.

Day 26 – Wednesday 4th August 2004

This was supposed to be a free day spotting animals but it was raining. Dave, Lkhag and I went anyway with a predictable result – no wildlife and wet us. Heard a black woodpecker but failed to see it and that was the most exciting thing that happened in three hours. Visited some so-called reindeer people and their reindeer. All very interesting. I bought a hat and took a few pictures. That took ten minutes.

After lunch we packed and moved an hour or so back down the road. A great campsite was found but the rain never really went away. Lit a fire and had a few drinks. So much for Lake Khovsgul NP. Bit of a waste of time really.

Day 27 – Thursday 5th August 2004

The day dawned bright and off we went in the van. We did not trust the itinerary anymore. We were meant to go to Uran Togoo to camp. It ended up being 16 hours drive away but we were not to discover this until the next day!! Sue spotted a red deer on the way out so all was not lost.

Otherwise it was a totally boring day that culminated in a 1630 finish on the banks of the Selenge River. It was a great campsite plus it produced a few new birds including azure tits. The day was quite warm so we put some live animal traps out before going to bed.



Day 28 – Friday 6th August 2004

We trapped some Chinese hamsters but naught else. We were told to expect a two to three hour drive to our next site. We got there at 1830. We did stop for a short walk along the way seeing black and hazel grouse in good numbers.

I waved the white flag in the afternoon. I had had enough driving to last through three or four holidays. Started drinking beer in the van. Larry didn't improve the situation, with his untimely and unhelpful comments along the way.

Lkhag and Bhartra explained to me during the evening drinkies that most travel companies drive till 7 or 8 at night – we were soft! Stuff that, we want to see wildlife, not grass speeding past Russian 4WDs.

Day 29 – Saturday 7th August 2004

I went for a short walk after breakfast. My bare feet were frozen because I didn't want to soak my shoes on the wet grass. At 0930 we left for Hustai National Park. We may have been persuaded to stop along the way somewhere but the landscape was utterly stark. We were supposed to go to a monastery further to the north but there was spirited and unanimous agreement to shorten our driving time no matter what delights we may have missed.



Hustai NP did not allow camping so we drove to Moilt Camp, which, as the name suggests, is not a camping area. Great location, pity about the management. The resident ranger, who had a flock of sheep, goats, horses and who knows what else, gets involved in a little live animal trapping of his own, or at least that's the idea. He puts out baited steel jaw traps to catch wolves, which allegedly are then fitted with radio tracking collars. Odd the way they do things. Anyway these traps are more likely to break legs than restrain animals. We were happily told about the lynx and the badgers that had expired as a result of this trapping method. Depressing. Drank beer and went to bed.

Day 30 – Sunday 8th August 2004

This was the first day since leaving Sydney that I did not get into a vehicle – a full day in the field. The forest at Hustai is birch with a few (very few) other trees and shrubs thrown in on creek lines and ridge tops. We scattered in all directions. I walked for five hours non-stop through good forest and along ridge tops thinking that there would have been deer or Przewalski's horses or whatever. Plenty of spoor but no cigar. Dave, Barry-Sean and Sue were more successful, having scattered some horses.



So after lunch, back up the hill. A few male black grouse – they were common – and one red deer and one horse in company. Excellent! The day then abruptly ended. A comfortably warm day turned into an ice box. The storm front was attractive, it rained for a bit, then the famed north wind clocked on and just increased in velocity as the day gave up and died. 28 degrees turned into about five degrees in an hour or so.

Day 31 – Monday 9th August 2004

Very cold. After brekkie went for a wander into the next valley but the prospect of freezing to death made me wander back again. Visited the ranger's ger and donated the last of my stuffed toys to a pleasant little girl. The ranger then sequestered our van to put his precious murdering traps out. He declined to let me join him.

We moved to our last ger camp – the Hustai *Resort*, can you believe it? Too cold to do anything. Drank beer and talked with tourists.

Day 32 – Tuesday 10th August 2004

Our last day in the field so we got an early start. Up at 0515 and in the company of the park's biologist, a friend of Lkhvag, we set forth to see all there is to see. After finding a lone Mongolian gazelle, a Eurasian hare and a small herd of takhi (the horse) from the van we stopped in a small but fascinating gully where we thought the biologist had a

stakeout for something. Not true. We climbed higher and higher and went further and further into the hills, losing customers along the way. The sun came up on a magical day – the sighting of a lone wolf trotting off – with colourful cliffs and rock piles, but the main menu, red deer, had decamped. Not so a large covey of Daurian partridge.



I laughed when Sue of the “can’t we sleep in and have a later breakfast” variety, expressed such enthusiasm about the beautiful sunrise. It happens every day.

After breakfast, Barry-Sean, Sue and I went to a black woodpecker stakeout in an unlikely small patch of forest but there it was, a splendid and obliging large black bird, pecking. Bhartra meanwhile was staring at 23 red deer but his windmill impression and screaming from a hilltop went unnoticed. Many more takhi were seen.

After lunch I walked around the bald ridges near the resort, which, like so many others, was sited at the only place in the park that wasn’t the slightest bit interesting. Dave was suddenly consumed by the need to spend most of the day writing in his diary. The afternoon saw us spend a little of our time seeing how many grasshoppers a large flightless cricket could eat. I didn’t know they could do that?



Our last hurrah for spotlighting went as planned after dinner. If there are 160 wild horses in Hustai and we must have seen more than half of them. There is a real possibility that someone doing the census can't count. Of 80 red deer said to occur we saw a herd of 62 minimum and that doesn't include 23 seen earlier. A wolf howled a couple of times in the distant hills. This was more like it! The spotlighting was a tad disappointing as I sat on the roof of the van with lovely vision in all directions. The only critter seen was a Daurian hedgehog, which suffered the Mongolian water torture trick (pouring water on it) to get it unravelled. This is a big hedgehog, about one kilo in weight. One of the best days of the holiday.

You have to believe me here. We just made camp before the latest northerly gale hit. It blew the toilet door off its hinges taking the door jamb with it, and all the plastic furniture around the camp was heading for its place of manufacture – China.

Day 33 – Wednesday 11th August 2004

Our friendly gale ensured we didn't stop on our way back to UB.



Lunch was at a Korean restaurant where the amount of food was extra-ordinary. Then off to the markets to do some shopping. Bought a few old trinkets to add some spice to the customs peoples' lives but there was a distinct lack of things to buy that were reasonably priced or interesting. I passed at the opportunity to buy full wolf skins or other rare animal bits.

We attended a Mongolian folkloric concert that was tremendous. Throat singing, music, dance and a youngish lady of moderate build who could, amongst other things, put her head up her bum. The mind struggled to come to terms with the arrangement of her body parts. How do they do this?

Last but not least – the Mongolian barbecue restaurant. Our stunning waitress and the equally delicious food rounded the day off very nicely.

We said goodbye to Larry and Nancy who had an early flight the next morning as Dave and I went to a bar for our last Cass beer and a post-mortem. We attracted the attention of the serving wenches, as we tend to do, before being handed some free packets of condoms and tissues. Why?

Day 34 – Thursday 2th August 2004

Went home, or at least tried to go home, but Air China had other ideas. This saw us eventually leave with a very good working knowledge of Beijing Airport.

Steve Anyon-Smith
1st September 2004
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Below are mammal and bird lists. They are not terribly useful for trip planning because I didn't spend too much time keeping records. Sorry.

Mammal	Latin name	First seen
Long-eared Hedgehog	<i>Hemiechinus auritus</i>	Bayanzag
Daurian Hedgehog	<i>Mesechinus dauuricus</i>	Hustai NP
Daurian Pika	<i>Ochotona dauurica</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Northern or Siberian Pika	<i>Ochotona hyperborean</i>	Orkhon Waterfall
Pallas', or Mongolian Pika	<i>Ochotona pallasi</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Eurasian Hare	<i>Lepus timidus</i>	Lake Khovsgul NP
Siberian Chipmunk	<i>Tamias sibiricus</i>	Khorgo- Terkh NP
Eurasian Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	Orkhon Waterfall
"Grey squirrel" in Beijing		Great Wall
Daurian Suslik	<i>Spermophilus dauricus</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Red-cheeked Suslik	<i>Sperm. erythrogegens</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Long-tailed Suslik	<i>Spermophilus undulatus</i>	Orkhon Waterfall
Mongolian Marmot	<i>Marmota siberica</i>	Bogd Uul
Striped or Chinese H'ster	<i>Cricetulus barabensis</i>	Selenge River
	<i>Cricetulus pseudogriseus</i>	Selenge River
Armenian or Grey H'ster	<i>Cricetulus migratorius</i>	Bayanzag
Desert Hamster	<i>Phodopus roborovskii</i>	Bayanzag
Northern Red-backed Vole	<i>Oethrionomys rutilus</i>	Orkhon Waterfall
Brandt's Vole	<i>Lasiopodomys brandtii</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Mid-day Gerbil	<i>Meriones meridianus</i>	Bayanzag
Great Gerbil	<i>Rhombomys opimus</i>	Bayanzag
House Mouse	<i>Mus musculus</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Mong' Five-toed Jerboa	<i>Allactaga sibirica</i>	Bayanzag
Gobi Cat <i>possibly</i>	<i>Felis bieti chutuchta</i>	Bayanzag
Pallas' Cat <i>probably</i>	<i>Otocolobus manul</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>	Gun Galuut & Hustai NP
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	Gobi Desert
Corsac Fox, Steppe Fox	<i>Vulpes corsac</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Przewalski's Horse	<i>Equus ferus przewalskii</i>	Hustai NP
Siberian Ibex	<i>Capra siberica</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Goitered or Arabian Sand Gazelle	<i>Gazella subgutturosa</i>	Gobi Desert
Hangay Argali	<i>Ovis ammon hangaii</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Mongolian Gazelle	<i>Procapra gutturosa</i>	Gobi Desert
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	Lake Khovsgul & Hustai

Mongolian/ Beijing birds		First seen
Chukar	<i>Alectoris chukar</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Daurian Partridge	<i>Perdix dauurica</i>	Hustai NP
Black Grouse	<i>Tetrao tetrix</i>	Khovsgul NP
Hazel Grouse	<i>Bonasa bonasia</i>	s of Khovsgul NP
Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Swan Goose	<i>Anser cygnoides</i>	s of Khovsgul NP
Bar-headed Goose	<i>Anser indicus</i>	Moron
Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Ferruginous Pochard	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	Gun Galuut NR
White-winged Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	n of Khorgo-Terkh NP
Eur 3-toed Woodpecker	<i>Picooides tridactylus</i>	Orkhon Waterfall
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>	Bogd Uul
White-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos leucotos</i>	Orkhon Waterfall
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	Beijing
Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>	Hustai NP
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Bogd Uul
Oriental Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus saturatus</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Bogd Uul
Fork-tailed Swift	<i>Apus pacificus</i>	Bogd Uul
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	Gobi steppe
Oriental Scops-Owl	<i>Otus sunia</i>	Beijing
Eurasian Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>	Orkhon Waterfall
Brown Hawk Owl	<i>Ninox scutulata</i>	Beijing
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	Beijing
Hill Pigeon	<i>Columba rupestris</i>	Gobi steppe
Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	Beijing
Oriental Turtle-Dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>	Beijing

Eurasian Collared-Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Gobi steppe
Demoiselle Crane	<i>Anthropoides virgo</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Siberian Crane	<i>Grus leucogeranus</i>	Gun Galuut NR
White-naped Crane	<i>Grus vipio</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Macqueen's Bustard	<i>Chlamydotis macqueenii</i>	Gobi desert
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	?
Pied Avocet	<i>Whatever it is i forgot</i>	N of Ongi ruins
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Pallas's Sandgrouse	<i>Syrrhaptes paradoxus</i>	Gobi steppe
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Pintail Snipe	<i>Gallinago stenura</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	<i>Calidris acuminata</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Red-necked Stint	<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Mew Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	s of Khovsgul NP
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Great Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ichthyaetus</i>	Gobi steppe
Brown-headed Gull	<i>Larus brunnicephalus</i>	Gobi steppe
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Bogd Uul
White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Black-eared Kite	<i>Milvus lineatus</i>	Bogd Uul
Lammergeier	<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>	Gobi steppe
Himalayan Griffon	<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Cinereous Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	Bogd Uul
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	Khorgo-Terkh NP
Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Steppe Eagle	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Imperial Eagle	<i>Aquila heliaca</i>	Gun Galuut NR

Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	Bogd Uul
Eurasian Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Beijing
Amur Falcon	<i>Falco amurensis</i>	Beijing
Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Saker Falcon	<i>Falco cherrug</i>	Bogd Uul
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Gobi steppe
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Horned Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	Lake Khovsgul NP
Eared Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Khorgo-Terkh NP
Black-crowned Night-Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Beijing
Gray Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Chinese Pond-Heron	<i>Ardeola bacchus</i>	Beijing
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Wallcreeper	<i>Tichodroma muraria</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Bull-headed Shrike	<i>Lanius bucephalus</i>	Beijing
Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>	Gobi steppe
Northern Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	Bayanzag
Red-billed Blue-Magpie	<i>Urocissa erythrorhyncha</i>	Beijing
Azure-winged Magpie	<i>Cyanopica cyana</i>	Beijing
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	Beijing
Mongolian Ground-Jay	<i>Podoces hendersoni</i>	Gobi Desert
Eurasian Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>	Khorgo-Terkh NP
Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	Beijing
Daurian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus dauuricus</i>	n of Orkhon Waterfall
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	Beijing
Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	Beijing
Hair-crested Drongo	<i>Dicrurus hottentottus</i>	Beijing
Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>	Gobi steppe
Scaly Thrush	<i>Zoothera dauma</i>	Orkhon Waterfall
Eyebrowed Thrush	<i>Turdus obscurus</i>	Khorgo-Terkh NP
Dark-throated Thrush	<i>Turdus ruficollis</i>	Orkhon Waterfall
Dusky Thrush	<i>Turdus naumanni</i>	Lake Khovsgul NP
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Daurian Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus aureus</i>	Beijing
Plumbeous Redstart	<i>Rhyacornis fuliginosus</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Orkhon Waterfall
Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>	Orkhon Waterfall

White-throated Bushchat	<i>Saxicola insignis</i>	Khorgo-Terkh NP
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Bogd Uul
Pied Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Siberian Stonechat	<i>Saxicola maura</i>	n of Khorgo-Terkh NP
White-cheeked Starling	<i>Sturnus cineraceus</i>	Gun Galuut NR
European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Beijing
Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	Bogd Uul
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	Khorgo-Terkh NP
Yellow-bellied Tit	<i>Parus venustulus</i>	Beijing
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	n of Hustai NP
Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montana</i>	Beijing
Azure Tit	<i>Cyanistes cyanus</i>	Selenge River
Bank Swallow	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Eurasian Crag-Martin	<i>Hirundo rupestris</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Common House-Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	Orkhon Waterfall
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Selenge River
Dusky Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus fuscatus</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Chinese Bush-Warbler	<i>Bradypterus tacsanowskii</i>	Lake Khovsgul NP
Thick-billed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus aedon</i>	Ongi ruins
Arctic Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus borealis</i>	Beijing
Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>	Bogd Uul
Greater Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	Lake Khovsgul NP
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	Hustai NP
Asian Desert Warbler	<i>Sylvia nana</i>	Bayanzag
Barred Warbler	<i>Sylvia nisoria</i>	Gobi Desert
Pere David's Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax davidi</i>	Beijing
Mongolian Lark	<i>Melanocorypha mongolica</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	Gobi Desert
Asian Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella cheleensis</i>	Gobi Desert
Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Saxaul Sparrow	<i>Passer ammodendri</i>	Bayanzag
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Beijing
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	Beijing
White-winged Snowfinch	<i>Montifringilla nivalis</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Pere David's Snowfinch	<i>Montifringilla davidiana</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Citrine Wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>	Gun Galuut NR
Gray Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Beijing
Richard's Pipit	<i>Anthus richardi</i>	Bogd Uul

Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Blyth's Pipit	<i>Anthus godlewskii</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Bogd Uul
Brown Accentor	<i>Prunella fulvescens</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Twite	<i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Lake Khovsgul NP
Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	Lake Khovsgul NP
Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	Lake Khovsgul NP
Mongolian Finch	<i>Rhodopechys mongolica</i>	Ongi ruins
Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Beautiful Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus pulcherrimus</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Long-tailed Rosefinch	<i>Uragus sibiricus</i>	Orkhon Waterfall
Pallas's Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus roseus</i>	Khorgo-Terkh NP
Red-mantled Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus rhodochlamys</i>	Yolyn Am Gorge
Yellow-billed Grosbeak	<i>Eophona migratoria</i>	Beijing
Pine Bunting	<i>Emberiza leucocephalos</i>	Khorgo-Terkh NP
Godlewski's Bunting	<i>Emberiza godlewskii</i>	Beijing
Gray-hooded Bunting	<i>Emberiza buchanani</i>	Khorgo-Terkh NP
Chestnut-eared Bunting	<i>Emberiza fucata</i>	Lake Khovsgul NP
Pallas's Bunting	<i>Emberiza pallasi</i>	n of Khorgo-Terkh NP
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	n of Khorgo-Terkh NP
Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	Khorgo-Terkh NP