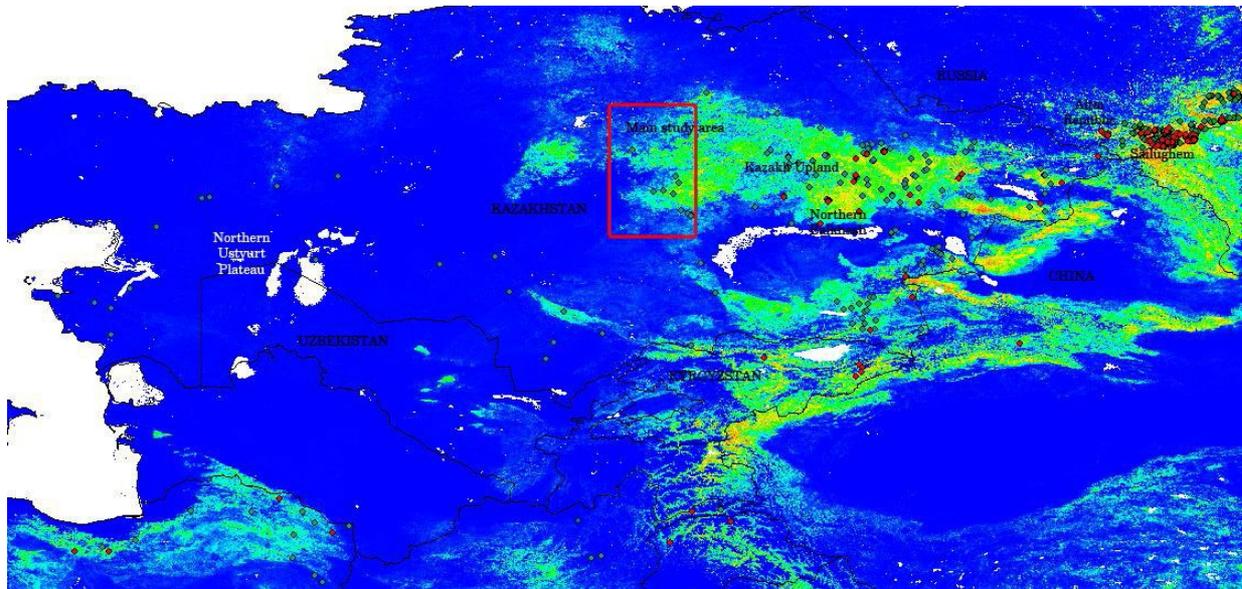


## Project Update: March 2018

Before planning the fieldwork we have created the model of species distribution in the Maxent using confirmed data on the species obtained earlier (these data is available at the online database on small wild cat species of Eurasia <http://wildcats.wildlifemonitoring.ru> we have). The preliminary model was used for planning survey routes and study sites (particularly the locations for camera trapping).



Study sites put on the map of potential habitats of Pallas's cat in the Kazakhstan (red points – the confirmed records of the species, green – unconfirmed).

Thanks to co-finance of the Pallas's Cat International Conservation Alliance (PICA) and additional funds for the field research provided by the local NGO (the Association for Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan, ACBK) we have added some new activities to the project schedule. Particularly we have investigated the most western edge of the potential Pallas's cat's range which is situated in the Aktobe province of the Kazakhstan. The Pallas's cat was mentioned there in the middle of the 20th century (data on the harvest of skins before entering the species to the Red Data Book) but there were no confirmed records of the species since that time. For clarifying of the situation 10 camera traps were set on the chinks of the Northern Ustyurt Plateau in June, 2017.

In September, 2017, we have checked the camera traps which were installed in the northern Balkhash area in 2016 (22 cameras) and in the eastern Kazakhstan upland (four cameras). After that 21 camera traps were installed in the western part of the central Kazakhstan upland (from Betpakdala desert to the north) where we propose the most north-western edge of the modern Pallas's cat range. Unfortunately it occurred that a part of camera traps were damaged or didn't work correctly so we could install fewer amount than it was planned. The camera traps will be checked in June, 2018.

In October, 2017, the camera traps set on the Ustyurt Plateau



were checked in cooperation of the ACBK researchers, batteries and SD-cards were changed. Only Asiatic wildcats were recorded there. Next checking will be made in June, 2018.

Local people were also interviewed during the field work.



*Pallas's cat recorded in the Northern Balkhash area*

All camera trap data obtained were organised uniformly (sorted on folders by recorded species). Besides the camera traps from northern Balkhash area worked differently (not all year) almost a half of them have recorded Pallas's cats. It occurred that the species is quite common in the area and it is the second after the red fox. These data have confirmed our prepositions about the importance of the northern Balkhash area for the habitation of the Pallas's cat. Unfortunately, the data obtained is not enough to estimate the species density (just because the cameras worked different time) but it is relatively high comparing with data from other study sites. The data is preparing for the publication.

Besides now it is quite unpopulated area (in Soviet time it was used everywhere as pastures) it is potential for development. There are a lot of mineral deposits and some of them are developing now. We intend to continue our work on creation of protected area(s) here which we have started some years ago. The protected area(s) will limit human activities particularly the mining.

Also in September 2017 we have started the negotiations with the national

association of hunters and hunting agencies "Kansonar", discussing the possibilities for the cooperation and support with its head. The article on the Pallas's cat and our investigations was prepared for the Kansonar magazine.

In the Altai Mountains, Russia, where we have additional part of the project, we have 20 camera traps set for the monitoring of the species. Some of these cameras were checked in November 2017 and March, 2018, with the help of the scientific researchers of the Sailughem National Park.

All data obtained will be used for the updating of the conservation status of the species – in the report which is planned to be published in the special issue of the Cat News in the end of 2018.



*Camera trap set in Karaganda province, September 2017*



*With the ACBK researchers on the Northern Ustyurt Plateau, June 2017*



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*Pallas's cat in the Sailughem ridge, Altai Republic, Russia (Sailughem National Park)*



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*Camera-trapped Asiatic wildcat on the Northern Ustyurt Plateau*