

## Survey of Gobi Bear (*Ursus arctos gobiensis*) in Great Gobi 'A' Strictly Protected Area in 2004

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### Introduction

The Gobi Bear (*Ursus arctos gobiensis*) is scarcely distributed, living in inaccessible areas and because of this it has been studied very little. Although it has been seen by biologists and rangers in the past 4 years, females with young have not been seen and so it is difficult to estimate the population size and structure.

The Mongolian Academy of Science organized expeditions to study the geography, flora and fauna in trans-Altai Gobi in 1927, 1935 and 1936. In 1937 the geographer A.S Simukov mentioned that local people living in Tsagaan Bogd Mountain reported bears living in the area between Tsagaan Bogd and Edren Mountain. Bannikov (1954) and his friends saw Gobi Bear in Tsagaan Bogd mountain and they also saw a bear carcass. He identified this bear as *Ursus priunosus* based on its size, colour, toes, claws and by some behavioural traits and its diet.

The movie producer O. Urtnasan and natural history museum specialist S. Tumurochir whilst travelling in Gobi Altai and Bayankhongor aimag,

hunted a male Gobi Bear in Tsagaan Bogd mountain on 2 October 1966. That was the first Gobi Bear specimen to be collected. Bold (1967) studied and published the first scientific article on Gobi Bear comparing it to the Brown and Tibetan Bear.

At the beginning of the 20 century, Gobi Bear was distributed from Aj Bogd in the west, Tost and Nemegt mountains in the east, Eejkhairkhan, Zakhui Zarman oasis and Edren mountain in the north to the national border in the south (Bannikov 1954). Since the mid 1990's the Gobi Bear was distributed from Tsagaan Bogd in the east, Baruun Tooroin in the west, Zaraa, Buurin Khar mountain in the north and the state border in the south. This distribution is half of the previous distribution area and now the Gobi Bear lives in Segs Tsagaan Bogd, Shar Khuls and Atas Inges mountain. Since 1990 Gobi Bear has been occasionally found in Tost mountain.

Great Gobi A (Fig. 1) is located in the south western part of Mongolia and it occupies 4.419 million ha. This is one of the most extremely arid areas in central Asia. It is home to other globally

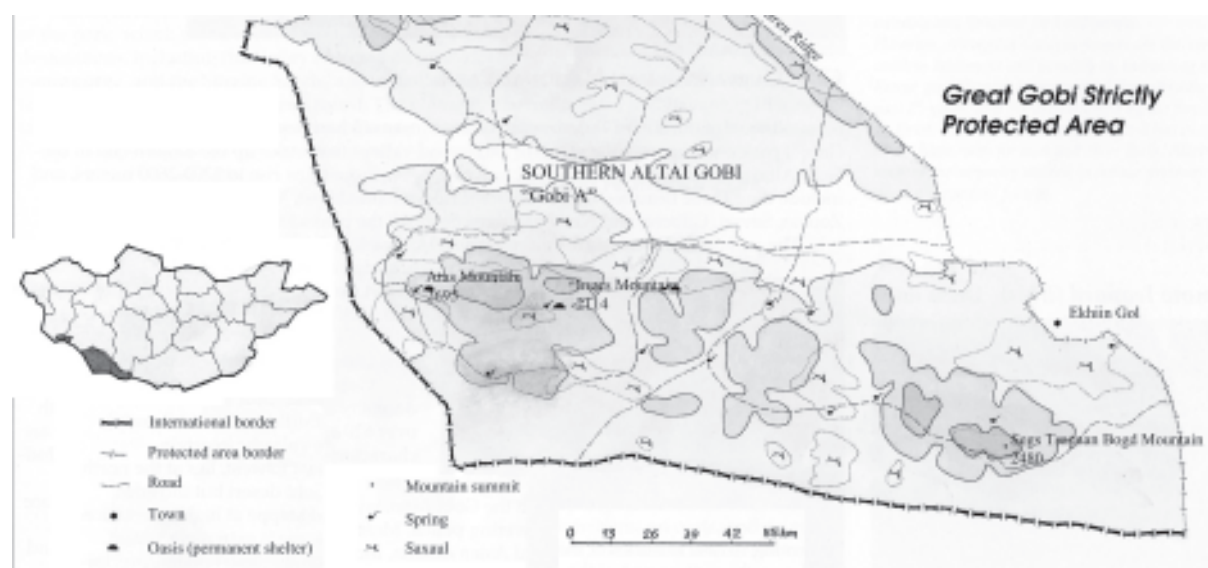


Fig. 1. Map of study area