

Checklist of Mammals in Ikh Nart Nature Reserve

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Abstract

We present a checklist of mammal species recorded in Ikh Nart Nature Reserve, Dornogobi Aimag from August 2004 to August 2007 to add to existing knowledge about mammal distribution in Mongolia. We recorded the presence of mammals through opportunistic observations and live captures as part of on-going research projects in the reserve. We recorded 33 mammal species representing seven orders, 15 families, and 28 genera. Rodentia ($n=14$ species) represented the most speciose order and Perissodactyla ($n=1$ species) the least speciose. Of mammals present, one third are classified as IUCN threatened or near threatened in Mongolia, five are listed in CITES appendices, and six are categorized as rare under the Mongolian Law on Fauna. Ikh Nart reserve harbors a quarter of the native mammal species known to occur in Mongolia, yet its size covers <0.05% of the country's land area. Given the high diversity, high proportion of declining species, and small land area of the reserve, we suggest that Ikh Nart should represent a priority area for mammal conservation efforts in Mongolia.

Key words: checklist, diversity, Dornogobi, Ikh Nart, mammal, Mongolia, species

Mongolia covers approximately 1,565,000 km² that encompasses a variety of biomes ranging from low-elevation grasslands (~550 m) to alpine zones exceeding 4,300 m (Mallon, 1985). The mammal community in Mongolia is diverse and includes 128 native species in eight orders, including shrews, bats, rodents (>60 species), hedgehogs, pika and hare, carnivores, and ungulates (Sokolov *et al.*, 1991; Clark *et al.*, 2006). Four non-native mammals also occur in Mongolia and additional native species are thought to be present (Clark *et al.*, 2006; Dolch *et al.*, 2007). In Dornogobi Aimag, which extends across three major vegetation zones in the country (Mallon, 1985), few details on the distribution of mammals exist, yet are needed for managing, protecting, and conserving populations of several species. The dearth of distribution data is largely due to a lack of systematic surveys in recent years, limited publication of survey results, and the difficulties associated with detecting some species.

Here, we present a checklist of mammals recorded in the Ikh Nart Nature Reserve of Dornogobi Aimag, Mongolia from August 2004

to August 2007. Our aim is to provide a relatively comprehensive record of mammals in the reserve and to add to existing knowledge about mammal distribution in Mongolia. We also comment on conservation issues facing some species in the reserve.

The Ikh Nart Nature Reserve (hereafter Ikh Nart) is a small protected area located in the northwest region of Dornogobi Aimag (N 45.72°; E 108.65°). Established in 1996, Ikh Nart protects 666.2 km² of rocky outcrops and harbors one of the largest remaining populations of argali sheep (*Ovis ammon*) (Myagmarsuren, 2000; Reading *et al.*, 2006). Two soums overlap the reserve, including Dalanjargal and Airag, and jointly manage its protection. Dalanjargal Soum covers the northern 57% of the reserve (37,919 ha) and Airag Soum covers the remaining southern region (28,700 ha).

Ikh Nart lies at the interface of semi-desert and grassland steppe vegetation zones and typifies the Gobi-steppe ecosystem (Mallon, 1985; Reading *et al.*, 2006). A unique mix of habitats occurs in the reserve, including rocky outcrops,