

## Project Update: November 2018

In October 2018, vulture feeding at three feeding sites situated on the territory of Ustyurt state natural reserve was completed. As a result, during the project we received a large number of pictures of birds of prey and other animals, which will be analysed in the preparation of the final report. However, the most amazing and unexpected result of our work, which became a real zoological discovery, is not associated with vultures: for the first time in the history of observations in Kazakhstan the rarest representative of the cat family – Persian leopard *Panthera pardus ciscaucasica* was photographed. This subspecies listed in the IUCN Red Book as Endangered, EN ver. 3.1 (2016).

In the territory of Kazakhstan, the leopard is known through only a few reliable encounters in recent decades, two of which occurred on the territory of Mangystau in 2007 and 2015. Unfortunately, in both cases, these rare cats, protected all over the world, were killed by humans. It is obvious that in Mangystau leopards periodically come from neighbouring Turkmenistan and, probably, could settle here in the absence of persecution by man and proper protection.

It should be noted that the leopard is not even listed in the fauna of Kazakhstan and the Red Book of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Currently, we are preparing an application to the State Committee of forestry and wildlife with a proposal for the immediate inclusion of the Persian leopard in the national Red Book, which will ensure the necessary legal status for its effective protection.



Leopard *Panthera pardus ciscaucasica* on the feeding site on the territory of Ustyurt state natural reserve on 29.09.2018 – first picture of a live leopard on the territory of Kazakhstan.