



**CONVENTION ON  
MIGRATORY  
SPECIES**

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Samarkand, Uzbekistan, 12 – 17 February 2024  
Agenda Item 31.4

**PROPOSAL FOR THE INCLUSION OF THE PALLAS'S CAT (*Felis manul*)  
ON APPENDIX II OF THE CONVENTION\***

Summary:

The Government of Kazakhstan has submitted the attached proposal for the inclusion of the Pallas's Cat (*Felis manul*) on Appendix II of CMS. The proposal is supported by the Government of Uzbekistan.

A revised version of the supportive statement to the listing proposal has been submitted by the proponent on 29 September 2023 to address the comments of the CMS Scientific Council (ScC-SC6 UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.31.4.2/Add.1). This has resulted in amendments to the supportive statement relating to 'Migrations', 'Biological Data' and 'Consultations'.

\*The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CMS Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.

## PROPOSAL FOR THE INCLUSION OF THE PALLAS'S CAT (*Felis manul*) ON APPENDIX II OF THE CONVENTION\*

### A. PROPOSAL

To include Pallas's Cat (*Felis manul*) on Appendix II of CMS

### B. PROPONENT

The Government of Kazakhstan (supported by the Government of Uzbekistan)

### C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

#### 1. Taxonomy

1.1 Class: Mammalia

1.2 Order: Carnivora

1.3 Family: Felidae

1.4 Genus: *Felis/Otocolobus*

1.5 Species: *Felis/Otocolobus manul* (Pallas, 1776)

1.6 Subspecies: *F. m. manul* (Central Asia, South-west Asia)  
*F. m. nigripectus* (Himalaya)

1.7 Scientific synonyms: *Otocolobus manul* (Pallas, 1776)

1.8 Common names in all applicable languages used by the Convention:

English: Pallas's Cat, Manul

French: Chat manul

Spanish: Gato de Pallas

#### 2. Overview

*Felis manul* has an extensive but fragmented range from the South Caucasus through south-west Asia, Central Asia, Mongolia, the Russian Federation, and China (see Annex 1). The southern limit of the range is the northern edge of the Himalaya. Pallas's Cat is widespread in Mongolia, adjoining regions of Russia, Kazakhstan, and western China; populations in other parts of the range appear to be small and isolated. The species has declined or disappeared in several western parts of the distribution. Pallas's Cat is a habitat and prey specialist and has a naturally low density and patchy distribution and it remains vulnerable to various threats including rangeland degradation and climate change. The whole range of the species, apart from the Caucasus, lies within the region covered by the CMS Central Asian Mammals Initiative. Pallas's Cat is proposed for listing on CMS Appendix II to enhance conservation of the species under this Initiative.

#### 3 Migrations

3.1 Kinds of movement, distance, the cyclical and predicable nature of the migration

Almost all the populations in Russia lie along the border with Mongolia, and all the key populations in Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Turkmenistan lie close (<50 km) to international borders and have a transboundary character. Several known populations in the deserts and mountains of Central and South-west Asia are also considered to be transboundary. Pallas's Cat has large individual home ranges for a small cat and adults of both sexes commonly make unusually large movements. Individuals may migrate a straight-

line distance up to 52 km, and longer movements up to 170 km over two months have been recorded (Ross et al. 2019). These migrations often entail crossing habitats that are not normally used, including swimming across large rivers, before the animal settles in a new area. The high incidence of home range abandonment (50% of adults in one collaring study) indicates that such behaviour is an integral part of Pallas's Cat ecology (Ross 2009). These migrations are likely caused by localised prey depletion, as their rodent prey undergo cyclic fluctuations and are also vulnerable to severe winters and summer droughts, obliging Pallas's Cats to migrate over long distances to find areas with adequate prey. Disturbance or competition with other carnivores may be additional factors making their home range unviable (Ross 2009). Development of linear infrastructure poses an increasing obstacle to these migrations.

### 3.2 Proportion of the population migrating, and why that is a significant proportion

About half the population in India and Russia, almost all the populations in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, and Turkmenistan, 65-80% of those in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, 15% in Afghanistan and Mongolia, and 11% in China, Iran, and Kazakhstan are situated in transboundary zones. These zones cover some of the largest and most important populations of Pallas's Cat. The occurrence of Pallas's Cat in at least seven countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) is totally dependent on transboundary movements.

## 4. Biological data

### 4.1 Distribution (current and historical)

Pallas's Cat has an extensive but fragmented range from northeastern China through Central Asia and Iran to the South Caucasus (see Annex 1). The range extends north to the southern edge of the boreal forest of Siberia, and south to the northern side of the Himalaya. Core populations occur in Mongolia and China. In Russia, it occurs along the borders with Mongolia and China, mainly in the Altai, Tyva, and Buryatia Republics (Altai and Sayan Mountains), and Trans-Baikal territory. It is found in central and eastern Kazakhstan and some parts of Kyrgyzstan. There have been no records of the species in Uzbekistan since the 1960s. In South-west Asia, the widest range appears to be in Iran, principally along the Alborz and Zagros mountain ranges. There are a very small number of records from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan. Recent presence has been confirmed from Bamyan in northern Afghanistan, the Kopet Dagh mountains in Turkmenistan along the border with Iran, and the Uly Balkhan mountains in Turkmenistan. In Pakistan, presence is confirmed from Gilgit-Baltistan in the north but has not been recently confirmed in Balochistan in the south-west. Along the northern side of the Himalaya there are sporadic records from India, Nepal, and Bhutan.

### 4.2 Population

On the IUCN Red List, the global population size is provisionally estimated at 58,000 mature individuals and declining (Ross *et al.* 2020).

### 4.3 Habitat

Pallas's Cat mainly occupies montane grassland and shrubland steppe, rocky areas, ravines, and in Pakistan and Iran, Juniper (*Juniperus* spp.) woodland. It occurs up to 5,593 m on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. The species is reliant on suitable den sites (rock crevices, burrows made by marmots or other carnivores) which are a limiting factor and may explain the low-density occurrence of the species (Ross *et al.* 2019).

#### 4.4 Biological characteristics

Home range size is unusually large for a small felid, up to 98 km<sup>2</sup> for males in Mongolia. Prey mostly consists of pikas and rodents, many of whose populations are subject to natural cyclic fluctuations, exacerbated by the effects of severe climatic conditions.

#### 4.5 Role of the taxon in its ecosystem

Pallas's Cat is a small predator with a key role in the montane shrub and grassland food chain.

### 5. Conservation status and threats

#### 5.1 IUCN Red List Assessment

Least Concern (Ross *et al.* 2020)

#### 5.2 Equivalent information relevant to conservation status assessment

A Pallas's Cat status review and conservation strategy has been prepared in collaboration with the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group (Pallas's Cat Global Action Planning Group, 2019).

#### 5.3 Threats to the population

The main threat is from habitat degradation due to overgrazing and expansion of livestock grazing, and conversion of land to agriculture. Other threats include predation by domestic dogs, direct killing, incidental trapping, and wild carnivores, reduction in the prey base through rodent poisoning campaigns, infrastructure development, and climate change. Climate change is predicted to have large impacts on the grasslands and mountain ecosystems of Central Asia and the Himalayas (Angerer *et al.* 2008, Xu *et al.* 2009) affecting the vegetation and all levels of the food chain. Expansion and intensification of livestock grazing also increase disturbance and displace Pallas's Cats away from optimal habitats. The combined effects and increasing level of fragmentation mean that isolated subpopulations are very likely already disappearing without our knowledge (Ross *et al.* 2019). Many gaps in knowledge and lack of capacity are further constraints.

#### 5.4 Threats connected especially with migrations

Road construction, mining development, settlement expansion, and border fences all pose barriers to transboundary movement and dispersal and increase fragmentation of habitat.

#### 5.5 National and international utilization

The skins are used for fur, and the fat and organs of Pallas's Cat are used as medicine in Mongolia and Russia. The levels of harvest and trade are unknown.

### 6. Protection status and species management

#### 6.1 National protection status

The species is fully protected by law in 12 of the 16 range countries. Hunting is legal in Mongolia (Barclay *et al.* 2019).

## 6.2 International protection status

Pallas's Cat is listed on CITES Appendix II (as *Felis manul*).

## 6.3 Management measures

The Manul Working Group (MWG) collates information and coordinates research and conservation activities between specialists working across the species range (<https://savemanul.org/>). Working closely with the MWG, the Pallas's Cat International Conservation Alliance (PICA) operates a small grant scheme to support the research and conservation across the range of Pallas's Cat and delivers capacity building and training (<https://pallascats.org/>). A Pallas's Cat conservation strategy has been prepared through collaboration between MWG, PICA and IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group (Pallas's Cat Global Action Planning Group 2019; <http://www.catsg.org/index.php?id=711>). PICA is also a formal partner of the Global Snow Leopard & Ecosystem Protection Program (<https://globalsnowleopard.org/what-is-gslep/gslep-structure/partners/>).

## 6.4 Habitat conservation

Throughout the species range (16 countries) at least 19.3% of the total area of the potentially suitable habitats of manul are covered by 587 protected areas. Five range countries (China, Iran, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and Russia) which include more than 87% of global manul habitats, have 420 protected areas within the species range, presence of the species has been documented at least in 100 (almost 24%) of them (Barashkova and Smelansky 2023).

## 6.5 Population monitoring

There have been some individual projects at site level, and some incidental information is collected as part of ongoing snow leopard monitoring activities. There is a strong need for systematic monitoring across the whole range and monitoring guidelines for the species were published in 2022 (Moqanaki and Samelius 2022).

## 7. Effects of the proposed amendment

### 7.1 Anticipated benefits of the amendment

Listing on CMS Appendix II will raise the profile of the species among governments and conservation practitioners, especially for populations in the south-west and South Asia which are low in number, fragmented, and declining.

### 7.2 Potential risks of the amendment

No risks have been identified.

### 7.3 Intention of the proponent concerning development of an Agreement or Concerted Action

Over 90% of Pallas's Cat range lies within the region covered by the CMS Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI) and the species occurs in all CAMI countries. The objectives and actions in the CAMI Programme of Work Part I (Cross-cutting) and Part IV (Implementation Support) are directly relevant to Pallas's Cat. Part III (Landscape Level) lists actions for the Gobi-Steppe and Qinghai-Tibet Plateau regions, both of which harbour important Pallas's Cat populations. For Part II (Species-specific Measures) Objectives can be derived directly from the Pallas's Cat Conservation Strategy (see Annex 2). Listing on the CMS Appendices will therefore facilitate increased conservation action for the species at national and regional level

under the CAMI initiative. The Manul Working Group and the Pallas's Cat International Conservation Alliance are ideally placed to coordinate activities and monitor implementation.

## 8. Range States

Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, China, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

## 9. Consultations

The draft proposal was submitted to all range state Parties on 12 May 2023. The proposal was developed in consultation with the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group, Manul Working Group, and Pallas's Cat International Conservation Alliance. The proposal was revised in September 2023 based on recommendations made by the CMS Scientific Council ([cms cop14 doc.32.3.3.add1 e](#)).

## 10. Additional remarks

Educational materials on Pallas's Cat have been produced in 13 CAMI member country languages, plus English (<http://pallascats.org/resources/>).

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ANNEX 1.

DISTRIBUTION MAP

Compiled by:  
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**ANNEX 2.**

**PROPOSED OBJECTIVES FOR PALLAS’S CAT UNDER THE CAMI PROGRAMME OF WORK, ALIGNED WITH THE PALLAS’S CAT CONSERVATION STRATEGY**

<b>Pallas’s Cat (<i>Felis manul</i><sup>1</sup>)</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Priority</b>
1 Prevent habitat destruction and fragmentation and mitigate negative impact of infrastructure and agriculture development	Government agencies, NGOs	High
2 Make legal hunting sustainable (Mongolia only) and stop illegal killing and illegal trade	Government agencies, NGOs	High
3 Understand and reduce human-caused mortality of Pallas’s Cat (free-ranging dogs, poisoning, etc.)	Government agencies, NGOs, MWG, PICA	High
4 Increase scientific research and understanding of the basic ecology and population dynamics of the species	Government agencies, NGOs, MWG, PICA, IUCN CatSG	High
5 Develop science and conservation capacity in field ecology and conservation in Pallas’s Cat range countries	Government agencies, NGOs, MWG, PICA, IUCN CatSG	High
6 Develop the global network (Manul Working Group) and participation of Pallas’s Cat specialists to increase knowledge and conservation of the species	Government agencies, NGOs, MWG, PICA, IUCN CatSG	High

<sup>1</sup> *Otocolobus manul* on the IUCN Red List