

# LEOPARD TRAIL FOLLO FROM CALLANDER TO



**ZOO LEOPARD:** David broke his epic rail journey in Moscow to visit the zoo and to get a lot closer to a snow leopard than he would in the wild. David said: "When you get a view like this you really appreciate what a magnificent animal the snow leopard is. Even in captivity you still get a good idea of how well adapted it is for its mountain home and with such superb camouflage why very few people are ever privileged to see one in the wild."

**C**ALLANDER-based tourism and environment consultant David Warnock has recently returned from an expedition to the Altai Mountains in Southern Russia as part of an international team gathering data on the elusive snow leopard.

The main aim of the trip, organised by Biosphere Expeditions, was to collect information about the Altai Mountains indigenous wildlife – particularly snow leopards and their prey – and also record details of the habitat condition.

The Altai is in the very centre of Asia between China, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Russia and the Tuvan Republic – well off the beaten track!

Just getting to base camp was an adventure in itself explained David.

"As I was helping snow leopard conservation in a pristine mountain environment I wanted to avoid flying as much as possible to reduce my 'carbon footprint'."

### Adventure

"I also liked the idea of beginning my big adventure from my local station and so I started from Dunblane."

The first part of the epic 4000-mile rail journey was on the Caledonian Sleeper to London then through France on Eurostar via Brussels to Cologne.

The next stage was through Poland and Belarus to Moscow on the Jan Kiepura sleeper train for a stopover in Moscow to visit the collection of Russian wildlife at Moscow Zoo.

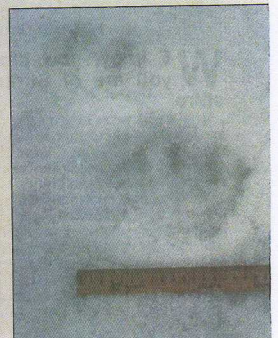
The final rail section was on "Train 26", the famous Trans-Siberian Express, for the 2000-mile journey across the flat, Russian steppe to Novosibirsk to meet the other expedition members. Base camp in the Altai



**BASE CAMP:** The expedition base camp was in the river valley in the centre of this picture. The land rovers are sitting on part of the huge expanse of flat steppe that forms much of eastern Russia with the first of the Altai Mountains in the background.



**EVIDENCE:** Photographing and measuring wolf droppings. As well as species of primary interest – snow leopard, ibex and argall – the expedition was also on the look out for signs of other animals such as marmot, manul, wild boar, lynx, bear and wolf.



**LEOPARD TRACK:** Each survey sheet shows tracks and droppings very exciting when we found this "disallowed" for surveying purpose



**TRAIN PLUS:** Loading mailbags on to Trans-Siberian Express. David said: "One of the great benefits of going by rail was to get a much better insight of the countries that I passed through. I also met some fantastic people and enjoyed a great party in the company of some very hospitable Russian army officers!"



**STEPPE EAGLE EYRIE:** These of plenty of prey in the area. As part work of the Siberian Environment feathers for DNA analysis



# LOWED ASIA

**HITTING THE HEIGHTS:**  
David hard at work high in the Altai Mountains on the Russian-Mongolian border.



Mountains was reached after two days travelling south in expedition Land Rovers.

The camp was at an altitude of 8580 feet with the original plan to climb as high as 11,880 feet and have overnight stays on the summits for some of the more intensive survey work.

However, many of the high, narrow ridges had very large, overhanging snow cornices on them making this too dangerous.

### Wolves

As part of the research work local herders were visited to find out if they had seen any snow leopards and if they had any issues with leopards attacking livestock.

This was something they hadn't seen - the problems they had were with wolves!

Although there were plenty of sightings of the snow leopard's prey such as ibex and argali (a kind of long-legged sheep), the only sign of an actual leopard was a track in the snow.

David said: "The weather was fantastic and it was a real privilege to have been involved in such worthwhile work in a very special mountain environment."

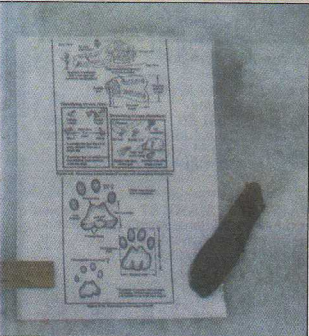
He added his sincere thanks to ScotRail for their tremendous support for his trip.

"It's a very gentle, civilised and much more environmentally friendly way to travel," he added.

### Expedition

There is an opportunity to find out more about David's adventures on Monday, November 23 at 7.30pm in the Callander Kirk Hall, South Church Street, Callander when he will be showing slides and explaining more about the work of the expedition.

Entry by donation in aid of the Snow Leopard Trust (UK) who are working to help conserve these fantastic animals, their habitat and the way of life of their human neighbours.



ng group was equipped with recording s of the key animals to be studied. It was ye track in the snow. Unfortunately, it was es because it was not definite enough.



o big, healthy chicks are a good indication of Biosphere Expedition's support for the I Centre we collected discarded eagle sis. zszof061109warnock-9

