



Mongolian wolverines? Read more about them in RPCV Rebecca Watters' interview on [page 3](#).

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Friends of MongoliaTM

A National Peace Corps Association Affiliated Organization



Lindsay Holmes elected as Mongolia-based Co-Director

Friends of Mongolia is pleased to announce the election of Lindsay Holmes to the position of co-director of Friends of Mongolia. Lindsay is excited to become a part of FOM and hopes to award many more Mongolian student scholarships that opens windows of opportunities that they otherwise could never achieve. She also desires to maintain Friends of Mongolia's good name in Mongolia and the United States and to do all that is possible to keep Friends of Mongolia a well-organized and smoothly run organization.

Lindsay Holmes graduated from the University of Georgia magna cum laude with a Bachelor's of Arts in Sociology, a minor in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages and a certificate in Global Studies in December 2007. She came to Mongolia as part of the M-19 Peace Corps training group and began teaching English at Sergelen soum's 9-year secondary school in Dornod aimag in August 2008. Lindsay will complete her Peace Corps service in July 2010.



Above: New co-director Lindsay Holmes with Enkhtuya, librarian at Sergelen soum 9-year school

As a PCV, she has taught English to most of Sergelen soum's students as well as to the school's teachers and community members. Lindsay wrote a grant and received funds for the construction of a greenhouse for the soum's secondary school. The project is currently in the implementation phase.

Lindsay will begin teaching primary school at the Hobby School in Ulaanbaatar in September.

Diplomatic Updates

President's Visit

President Tsakhia Elbegdorj is slated to make an official visit to Washington in the fall on dates to be decided. It had been hoped that the President could visit in May, but the White House schedule precluded this. When he comes to Washington, we hope that FOM will take part in an event. Also, First Lady Borloma Khajidureen will make a private visit to Washington in July during which she will host a discussion on challenges faced by women and children in Mongolia.

Departure of Embassy Officer

Second Secretary Sambuu Dawadash is due to depart Washington on reassignment to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in mid-June. During his four years in Washington, Mr. Dawadash has been a close friend of FOM; his assistance has been invaluable in many respects as our informal liaison to the Embassy. It is expected that Mr. Dawadash will be replaced by two officers, one of whom will have responsibility for liaison with Congress. FOM is deeply appreciative of Mr. Dawadash's support over the years.

State Desk Officer Departure

Byron Tsao, Mongolia desk officer in the Department of State, is being reassigned in mid-July. During his time as desk officer, Mr. Tsao has been instrumental in securing additional educational and economic assistance for Mongolia. FOM is likewise grateful for the good relations we have had with Mr. Tsao and his office in the State Department.

Happiest of Hours in Washington DC

Ethan Takahashi, M-17



Back row: Byambahuu Darinchuluun, Tsogbadrakh Tserenbat, Odmaa Ichinkhorloo, Ariel Wyckoff, Anne Riordan, Ethan Takahashi, Hongoroo Khurelbaatar
Bottom row: John Kinsella, Angie Braun, Baljinnyam Chinzorigt

Friends of Mongolia (FOM) and the Young Mongolian Professional Association (YMPA) held the happiest of happy hours on April 14, 2010 at the Pasha Lounge in Washington DC. The party was jumping with hot tracks from artists such as Javlan and Altan Urag and, more importantly, with hot buuz and tsuivan supplied by FOM and YMPA members. Money raised from the sale of the Mongolian food went to the FOM Scholarship Fund.

Everyone seemed to enjoy catching up with old friends and meeting new ones. This was the first joint event between FOM and YMPA and both groups look forward to working together again.

FOM and Asia Society Co-Host Event

Angie Braun, M-13

Friends of Mongolia and the Asia Society partnered for the first time this winter to co-host a dinner-dialogue event on February 25, 2010 at the Charlie Chiang restaurant in Washington, DC. Students, retired Foreign Service officers, academic experts, and

other assorted Asia-philes gathered for "Stories from Volunteers in Asia: Dinner and Discussion with Returned Peace Corps Volunteers." Choosing amongst four tables, each hosted by a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer from

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Cambodia, China, Mongolia or Thailand, diners had the opportunity to listen about the Peace Corps experience, discuss and ask questions as they ate Chinese food together family style. A journalist from Voice of America-Cambodia sat in on the Cambodia table for a piece on Cambodia's first successfully COS'ed (close of service) Peace Corps group.

Right: The Mongolia table hosted by FOM Co-Director, Anne Riordan



Mongolia RPCV Interview: Rebecca Watters, M-11, 2000-2002

Interviewed by Ariel Wyckoff, M-11

This is Part 1 of a 2-part series. The Fall 2010 newsletter will have Part 2

Rebecca Watters grew up near Boston. She has a BA in Anthropology from St. Lawrence University and a Master's of Environmental Science from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. She served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Kharkhorin, Mongolia, where she taught ecology and conducted field surveys for wildlife. She has also lived, worked, and studied in Cambodia, Bosnia, Kenya, and India. Rebecca currently lives in Jackson, Wyoming, where she is the Project Manager



Above: Rebecca Watters

for the Northern Rockies Conservation Cooperative and the coordinator for the Mongolian Wolverine Project. She spends her spare time writing, working on art, skiing, climbing, and otherwise being outdoors.

Rebecca, can you tell us what led you to choose Mongolia as a country of service?

I had spent time in Kenya and India in college - in Kenya I looked at conservation and pastoralist peoples such as the Maasai and the Samburu, and in India I worked with Tibetan Buddhist nuns. As an anthropology major, I did a research project comparing Chinese policies for pastoralists in Tibet and Inner Mongolia with Mongolian policies in Mongolia. All of this fused into a desire to spend time in Mongolia. I was interested in the status of Buddhism in a recently

post-Communist society, and I was especially interested in a country where everyone essentially came from a pastoralist background. This is a pretty rare situation, globally; most of the time pastoralist peoples are minority groups who are constantly the target of settlement programs by dominant ethnic groups from

“...Kharkhorin had a much more profound effect on me than I had on it.”

sedentary, agricultural backgrounds. I wondered how things might be different in Mongolia. I pushed to be assigned to Mongolia, and although I know this rarely happens, I actually got what I wanted. I don't know if I

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Scholarship contributions

July is the time when students across Mongolia send in applications to obtain financial support to continue their higher education through an FOM Scholarship. The cost of higher education continues to rise in Mongolia, and FOM would love to support as many students as possible.

We would like to thank the following FOM members who recently contributed to the FOM Scholarship Fund:

Joe and Dany Zadrozny
Melody Balcet
EsOldoh (Eska) Tuizen
Barbara Ann Klein

Back in Mongolia: Bobby Barnes and Business in Mongolia

Bobby Barnes is a M-12 who served as a volunteer in Baruun-Urt. He currently works at ICMC, Corporate Management Company in Ulaanbaatar. Bobby is a current member and long-time supporter of Friends of Mongolia.

Business in Mongolia is, by most accounts, on the verge of, if not already, booming. The Oyu Tolgoi Investment Agreement was finally signed last autumn, the Tavan Tolgoi project bid winners are about to be announced, we are heading into the short period during which construction and mining can actually take place and I am, finally, able to buy my \$5,000 bag at Louis Vuitton... yes!

Despite everything that has been happening, Mongolia still has that “final frontier” middle of nowhere image to most of the world:

“Do you ride a camel to work?”

“Does everyone live in a tent?”

And my personal favorite, asked by my grandmother:

“Do they have sidewalks there?”

What!?! Obviously she thinks I live on the dark side of the moon.

But unless you work in quite a specific field, namely minerals or

a minerals-related sector, Mongolia is most likely not on your radar screen. To try to spread the word in a very small way I have recently started a Mongolia-specific business podcast here in UB with Ch. Mergen, owner of WebGuru, a web marketing firm, and E. Lkhagva, from Khas Bank. Working in a corporate services company here gives me a bit of an inside view on what investors are interested in...although at this point it is still generally focused on minerals.

We have now recorded 25 episodes or so and we try to spotlight a different guest each week. We have been lucky enough to have guests ranging from the CEO of State Bank, the state-owned bank formed from the remains of Zoos Bank, to the co-founder of Tavan Bogd, one of the biggest holding companies in Mongolia, to those just entering the market in Mongolia. While we have had the obligatory mining podcast or two, our attempt is to focus on aspects of business in Mongolia that are not usually



Above: Bobby Barnes

highlighted and to make it accessible to as many people as possible.

We would love for you to have a listen. We can be found at <http://mongoliabusinessblog.com> or on iTunes by searching for “Mongolia business blog”. If you have any questions, comments or observations let us know, we are always happy to hear from listeners. In the meantime, we’ll keep recording, so we hope you keep listening.

Recent Research: Mongolian Teacher's Perceptions of Disability

Anne Riordan, M-14, was a 2007-2008 Fulbright Fellow in Mongolia

FOM co-director Anne Riordan attended the American Center for Mongolian Studies' US Annual Meeting in Philadelphia on March 26, 2010. Anne presented a poster on "Mongolian Teachers' Perceptions of Disability." Anne also gave a short presentation on the work that FOM does in Mongolia and even signed up a few new members. The meeting also featured khoomi, murin hoor, and opera performances, coordinated by the Mongolian Cultural Center in Washington, DC.

Anne's research focused on perceptions by teachers and stakeholders in Ulaanbaatar and two aimag centers, with the idea that beginning to understand how these groups shape their ideas about disabilities will open up new avenues of focus and research, with resulting data



Above: Anne presenting her poster at the ACMS US Annual Meeting

being potentially useful for informing educational policy and practice concerning education for students with disabilities in Mongolia.

Opportunities like this allow FOM to grow and expand its membership and educate people about our scholarships and small grants projects.

Mongolia-21 Group Arrives

Charlene Barina, M-18, is the PST 2010 Deputy Training Manager

The latest group of Peace Corps Trainees—the M-21's—arrived on a drizzly and chilly evening about a week ago. This is our largest group ever, with over 70 people getting off the plane.

They're now with their host families. If blog posts over the weekend are any indicator, they're busy: they're hand-washing laundry and lighting dung fires.

This year we've put a lot of emphasis on skill-building of trainers in facilitation and emphasizing

the modeling role of PCV trainers and Mongolian technical coordinators.

Concerning training staff, Chingee (Erdenechimeg), our previous Training Manager, moved on to a different position with an international company a few months ago, to be replaced by Chingee (Batchimeg). Lisa Powers is now Program and Training Officer, and we are up to a four-person Cross-Culture and Community Development team and a

completely separate Host Family Coordinator.

Lisa, Chingee, and I are doing regular weekly session observations to give feedback on planning and technique. We're hoping to continue to improve on the past few PST's successes and you'll find out in the next newsletter how it all turned out.

Friends of Mongolia Supports Mercy Corps Mongolia's Dzud Relief Response

The Crisis

- Harshest winter in 50 years
- 8.5 million livestock dead
- 80,000 Mongolians affected
- 8,500 families have lost their entire herd
- More families expected to be affected
- Negative impact already seen in family malnutrition and immunization levels



Photo by Paula Bronstein/Getty Images

How to help

Join FOM in supporting Mercy Corps' efforts to help rural herders recover from the tragic loss of herding livelihoods in Mongolia during the Winter of 2009 and Spring of 2010. Contributions will go toward animal removal to prevent the spread of disease and support for developing alternate sources of income.

By mail

Send a check with "Mongolia Dzud Response" in the memo line to:

Mercy Corps
Dept W
PO Box 2669
Portland, OR 97208-2669

By phone

Call Mercy Corps at 1 (888) 256-1900 and speak with Geri Manzano to donate via credit card. Mention it is for the Mongolia dzud.

Online

Go to <http://bit.ly/mng-dzud-help>. On the checkout page, enter "Mongolia Dzud Response" in the comments section.

Donate online:

<http://bit.ly/mng-dzud-help>

Learn more about the dzud:

<http://bit.ly/mng-dzud-info>

About Mercy Corps Mongolia:

<http://www.mercycorps.org.mn>



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would have done Peace Corps if I'd been assigned somewhere else. Once I had my assignment, I had no qualms about going - I was excited.

Can you describe your position with Peace Corps in Kharkhorin? What was your service like?

I was a hybrid environmental and English volunteer, working at one of Kharkhorin's two secondary schools. I taught kids English and ecology, and I worked with the school's biology and English teachers. I also worked with the national park, surveying birds at the request of the local ranger, and I spent summers surveying for snow leopards and their prey species. During my second year in Kharkhorin I ran an ecology club that took kids out into the mountains to do things like look at tracks, or identify birds or plants, or count tree rings in areas that had been logged. I also taught English and some basic ecology to the monks at Redone Zulu, the monastery in Kharkhorin.

When I look back on my service, I have to laugh at how seriously I took myself - I was 22, just out of college, and I knew almost nothing. I was lucky enough to have a Mongolian friend tell me, on my first day in town, "Mongolians have been taking care of the environment for 4,000 years, and we don't need Americans to tell us how to do it." I was taken aback



Above: Rebecca on a wolverine research trek in the Absaroka Mountains, Montana

at first, but it was a pretty powerful lesson, and I reminded myself of that friend every time I thought I had an answer to a Mongolian problem based on some Western legal or scientific formula.

I find it hard to enumerate accomplishments because in the end I think that Kharkhorin had a much more profound effect on me than I had on it. All I did was

show an enthusiastic interest in an environmental ethic that is deeply rooted in Mongolian culture anyway. When I went back for the first time in 2009, the monks had built an ecology temple and they are working with projects for Buddhist environmental ethics, which is great, but I'm sure that would have happened anyway. I think my own greatest accomplishments proba-

bly came from day-to-day relationships with people. The thing that I most noticed this summer was the way everyone remembered me as if I'd just left yesterday, even though I hadn't been in touch with many of them for seven years. The little boy who lived in my hashaa, who was three when I left, greeted me by name and said, "I remember you used to give me chocolate and read to me. That's why I love to read now." Or my friend, who paints Thangka paintings and whose work I helped sell to Peace

"The little boy who lived in my hashaa, who was three when I left, greeted me by name and said, 'I remember you used to give me chocolate and read to me. That's why I love to read now.'"

Corps volunteers without really thinking about it - he showed me the property that they'd bought with the profits and told me that without my help, they never would have been able to do that or to send their kids to college. I'd never once thought about that as a successful small business

venture, but I guess it was. If you manage to build strong relationships across cultural divides and get to the point where you're able to make an impact just by being yourself and being a good friend, that's a true accomplishment.

How did those two years in Mongolia affect your subsequent professional or educational career path?

Mongolia had a huge effect on my professional development. While I was there, I realized that there was this whole field called conservation where you essentially built a career based on being outdoors! It was a field where I had the chance to combine my interests in cultures, in language, in human rights, in wildlife, in science, and in writing. And it also brought into focus the fact that I really love northern ecosystems. Ecologists are all crazy about the

tropics, but for me, boreal and montane [ed: Montane is a term for the highland area below the subalpine zone.] regions are more interesting. I'm working and living in Wyoming and Montana now because the ecosystem is so similar to Mongolia.

Peace Corps provided a unique experience even within conservation, though, because it allowed me two years to live and work in a community where I spoke the language and understood the culture. You don't get this chance anywhere else, not even through academia. I've subsequently worked with large international NGO's in other countries and I've been shocked by the lack of contextual understanding of Western 'experts.' I have a Master's degree from one of the world's leading environmental schools, but at heart I think that the lessons I learned in Kharkhorin - from



Above: F3, a young female wolverine from the Absaroka-Beartooth Project, in April of 2010

people like the friend who told me that I needed to pay attention to Mongolian traditions - are as valuable as a diploma from an Ivy League school, especially in terms of maintaining one's humanity and sense of perspective.

In addition to your work on the Northern Rockies Conservation Cooperative (NRCC), you are now coordinating the Mongolia Wolverine Project. Can you tell us about this project?

In 2006, I came to Wyoming to do a grad school research project on social perceptions of large carnivores. NRCC was my host organization in Wyoming, and the executive director of NRCC, Ja-

wolverine population is in Mongolia, and I'd only known Jason and Kate for about ten minutes when they mentioned that they'd always wanted to go to Mongolia. Jeff Copeland, one of the foremost wolverine biologists in the US and director of the ABWP, had been to Mongolia and collected some genetic samples from hats, but he'd only had a chance to travel to Khentii and Hovsgol, so he was interested in going back.

So here was a ready-made crew of wolverine biologists who wanted to go to Mongolia, and, coincidentally, a woman who spoke Mongolian, loved the country, and loved wildlife research. Wolverines are difficult to study - it's

“For me, a big part of this is opening a dialogue between scientists working in two very similar ecosystems on opposite sides of the planet...”

son Wilmot, was also the field director for the Absaroka-Beartooth Wolverine Project (ABWP). Jason and his wife Kate are wildlife people of the highest caliber, and they loved talking about wolverines (which, for those who don't know, are 20-30 pound snow-dependent weasels that live at high altitudes in the Rockies, and on tundra as you move further north.) As it turns out, the world's one unstudied

almost impossible to overemphasize how hard it is to learn anything about these animals - and the only way you're going to accomplish anything on wolverines in Mongolia is to rely on in-depth interviews with herders and hunters and rangers to get some basic information. So in the summer of 2009 I received a fellowship from the American Center for Mongolian Studies to brush up on my language skills (I hadn't



Above: Luvsandavaa, a hunter from Kharkhorin, and his wife with a wolverine pelt, July 2009

been back since 2002) and while there, I conducted basic interviews about where people were seeing and/or harvesting wolverines, kept track of the fur trade through Ulaanbaatar, and tested a couple of methods of social surveys. During summer 2010 we'll travel to the locations that people indicated as sources of wolverine populations and talk to local communities, then, based on this information, we can work out a way to set up hair snares and/or camera traps to obtain genetic samples. The kind of infrastructure-heavy work we do in the US, where we live-trap wolverines, collar them, and follow them with GPS and telemetry, or survey using helicopters or snowmobiles, is out of the question in Mongolia, but I'm looking forward to the challenge of creating a low-tech monitoring program in cooperation with local communities. I hope that we can monitor and collect samples for a few years at least, at the end of which everything will be run by Mongolians,

FOM Awards Grant to PCV Allison Mintz and Uugantsetseg Gantumur for The Youth Development Center in Arvikheer

On May 1, 2010, this project was selected and awarded in a competitive process from 5 applicants for this round of FOM Small Grants. The Youth Development Center intends to use the funds to create a computer resource center open to local youths, including youths with disabilities.

Both the local government and the Aimag Children's Center are partners on the project. We congratulate Allison and Uugantsetseg and look forward to hearing about the project implementation.

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with the exception of the genetic work - we'll do that over here where there's already a database of global wolverine genetic samples. We're working with the American Center for Mongolian Studies and the National University, and I would love to bring some Mongolia students to the US to work with our project for a season or two as well. For me, a big part of this is opening a dialogue between scientists working in two very similar ecosystems on opposite sides of the planet - I think we have a lot to learn from each other, not just about wolverines but about how these systems work and how we take care of them.

As it turns out, too, the wolverine population in Mongolia may be

particularly interesting and possibly unique among global wolverine populations. What little we know suggests that Mongolian wolverines are found outside of what we'd consider optimal habitat in the rest of the world, with some implications for adaptation to climate change. I don't want to get too technical here, but I keep a wolverine blog with more about why this is potentially important, so please visit or feel free to get in touch if you want to know more.

How did the blog evolve, and how can Friends of Mongolia members and supporters keep updated?

I'm a writer above all, and there's a tremendous need for people who can translate environmental science into good mainstream writing. That was how the blog started - I wanted to bring

wolverine research to a wider audience. Anyone interested in keeping up with this project can visit the blog at <http://egulo.wordpress.com> - I'll keep a running online journal of the project this summer, when internet access is available, and if you're really interested, you can subscribe to updates. You can also get more succinct updates at the Northern Rockies Conservation Cooperative's website (<http://www.nrccooperative.org>), on our NRCC Facebook cause page, or by signing up for our electronic newsletter. And I'm writing a book about the Mongolia wolverine project as well, so for anyone who just wants to wait until the whole story is in better and more cohesive narrative shape, keep an eye out for that.

Read more about Rebecca's work in the Fall 2010 newsletter.

Below: John Kinsella, e-filing FOM's taxes. Have you thought about donating to FOM?



New FOM Communications Coordinator

The votes are in and Danny Marx has been elected to be the new Communications Coordinator.

Danny has spent years roaming the world, gathering experiences, figuring out his creed, and leaving good cheer behind wherever he stopped. Afraid to just jump into the rut mentality of American maturation he let the whims of the world train and direct his actions. A large chunk of that introspective reed swaying played out working with the United States Peace Corps, where he worked in Community and Youth Development in Erdenet, Mongolia.

Upon his return to the states he picked up the helm as Internet Director for the Energy Action Coalition. The Coalition has been recognized by notable personalities like Al Gore, James Hansen, and Bill Clinton as the face of the youth climate movement in America.

Most recently Danny has transitioned into the Engagement Manager position for Hostelling International - USA. In this role he has been charged with developing deeper connections between the traveler and hostel than merely guest and accommodation.

Danny is already hard at work revamping the FOM website and social media outreach tools. Assisting him will be Charlene Barina, who will take responsibility of the FOM newsletter starting from this issue.



Left:
Danny plus
disco ball

“Mash Ikh Bayarlalaa” from Chuluunkhoroot, Dornod

Ariel Wyckoff, M-11, FOM Board member



Above: Ariel with students and teachers in Chuluunkhoroot

On a recent trip with his family to the Dornod aimag in eastern Mongolia, FOM Board Member Ariel Wyckoff visited the Chuluunkhoroot soum middle school where he used to teach.

This school recently engaged in a large-scale renovation and upgrading project, to which the Friends of Mongolia contributed roughly \$2,000 in small grants funds for the repainting, refurbishing, and re-flooring of the Mathematics classroom: the “Matematikiin Kabinet”.

As you can see from the picture of Mr. Wyckoff with some Chuluunkhoroot Middle School students, the project was successfully completed, and the new hand-assembled desk and chairs especially look great!

The teachers and students of the Chuluunkhoroot Middle School in northern Dornod are very pleased with the new classroom that they foresee benefitting well over 2,000 students, teachers, and community members over the course of the next several years, and expressed much gratitude to Mr. Wyckoff during his brief stay in Chuluunkhoroot.

Friends of Mongolia Membership and Donation Form

Your contact information

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Why Membership?

Membership Dues are an important source of funds. Your membership dues are what make FOM possible. In addition, membership allows you to stay directly connected to Mongolia and PCVs.

You can also join FOM and donate online at www.friendsofmongolia.org.

Membership options

- FOM Individual (\$25)
- FOM Family (2 individuals; \$45)
- FOM/NPCA Joint Individual (\$50)
- FOM/Mongolia Society Joint Individual (\$50)

Donation options

General donation

- \$10
- \$20
- \$50
- \$100
- \$250
- _____

Community grant donation

- \$10
- \$20
- \$50
- \$100
- \$250
- _____

Scholarship fund donation

- \$10
- \$20
- \$50
- \$100
- \$250
- _____

Total amount enclosed \$_____

Please make checks out to Friends of Mongolia and mail to:

Friends of Mongolia
PO Box 53314
Washington, DC 20009

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