

Eric York (1970–2008)

(Dedication by Tom McCarthy, Science and Conservation Director, Snow Leopard Trust)



It is very hard to write about Eric in the past tense, because I am so unwilling to admit he is not here. I know a lot of folks who feel the same. This is just not right. But we only get one chance to say our words about a departed friend, so I will do what others are doing and share why he meant what he did to so many.

I met Eric at U-Mass in the late 1990s. We studied under the same professor, he doing his masters and me a Ph.D. I was a lot older than Eric, so I should have been able to teach the kid something. But it was the other way around from the start. The first thing he helped me with was building trap cameras for my

snow leopard and bear research in Mongolia, something he and others had perfected for fisher and other critters in Massachusetts. I could tell he wanted to go set the cameras himself in Mongolia, he had a serious itch to see places like that.

My time with him at Amherst was brief and I headed back overseas. We ran into each other here and there, or emailed now and then, but it wasn't until a mutual friend, Zara McDonald, suggested Eric as someone who could run our snow leopard collaring program in Pakistan for us. I didn't hesitate to jump on that idea, knowing we could find no one better.

In Pakistan it was a lot like at U-Mass, this old snow leopard biologist was ready to give Eric some pointers. But it took about an hour for Eric to again become the teacher and he changed a lot of our methods, much for the better. He caught the cats with skill and compassion, and trained several Pakistani biologists in the process. He was a natural teacher. I think it was partly because Eric didn't "do" wildlife biology, he lived it.

Eric, my Carhart-clad friend and teacher, I wasn't done learning from you yet. We had some work (and hunting) to do. My trip to Grand Canyon got set back too long, for that I will always be sorry. The next cat is for you. Travel well my friend.