

## Expedition to Naryn (11<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>th</sup> August 2022)

### Objectives

- Explore the secondary part of the Naryn reserve from West to East along the right bank of the river Naryn
- Gather scientific evidence of the Snow Leopard's presence, collect information about their habitat, ecosystem through various scientific methods

### Team

The team was composed of Bastien Chaix (guide and member of OSI panthera), Joldoshbek Kyrbashev (guard and vice president of the Naryn reserve), Kuban and Maksat (guards), and finally 7 French participants: Jerome Nadal, Odile Durand, Jean-Pierre, Camille and Jean Vidal, Lucie Puget and Florentine Jacolin.



*The whole group with Azir our amazing driver*

### Preliminary days:

- Song Kul

### Expedition:

- Ken-Saz (1er lieu)
- Airan suu
- Kichi Moldo Bashi
- Chong Moldo Bashi
- Kara-Moinok (col)
- Tileke
- Minteke
- Kurmenteu (waterfall)



*In red the journey done by horse and in yellow the transects hiked*

## **Preliminary Days**

### **Exploration of Song-Kul surroundings (8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> August)**

Drive to Song-Kul Lake with a strategical pit stop at Azir brother's family where we had a typical Dungan meal.



*Dungan Meal*

Arrival at Song-Kul Lake on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> in Kaniet's family. Ornithological observations around the lake, where we observed our first birds notably numerous Ruddy Shelducks, Crested grebes, great cormorants, 4 black storks, a few common Redshanks. After we had dinner and ate horse and Kumis (a first for many of us).



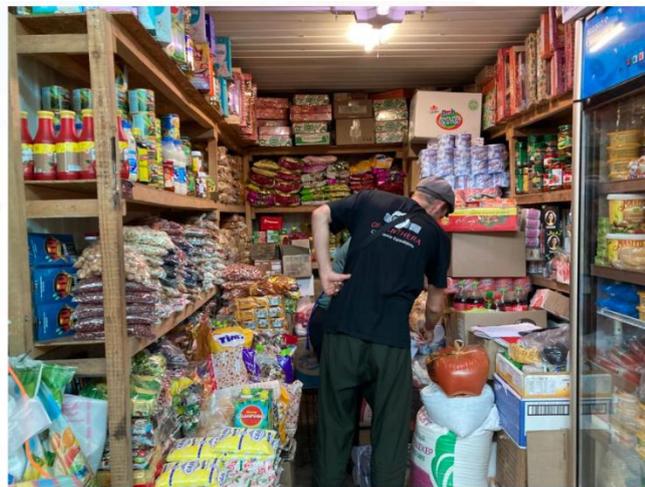
On the 9<sup>th</sup> of August, first horse ride for the group, exploration of Ak Tash, and some of us swam in the lake (the water was judged as perfect by Jerome but a little bit too cold for the rest of us). We observed two Cinereous vultures, Hobby, Isabeline wheathers, Common kestrels.



On the 10<sup>th</sup> of August, we left for Naryn city to buy the food supplies for the expedition in the bazar (14 kg of meat). We had our last shower and good night sleep, said goodbye to Azir, and welcomed Joldoshbek aka Djoki (our master to us all). We prepared the meat, and cooked it for 2 hours, meanwhile Jean was slowing dying. Right before bed we watched some videos of Kok Boru: basically, football but instead of the ball it's a sheep carcass and the players are horse riding (something to see trust me).



*Preparation of the meat for the expedition*



*Naryn Bazard*

## **Expedition**

### **Day 1 (11<sup>th</sup> August)**

We celebrated Camille 21<sup>st</sup> birthday at breakfast, Djoki joined us and offered Camille a typical Kirghyz horsewhip (making us all wish that our birthday was during the expedition). After breakfast we left for the reserve and arrived around noon at Ken-Saz, where we met the guard Kuban and Maksat and our brave horses (special mention to Pony, Odile's horse that she loved so much). After 5 hours of horse riding and a brief stop at a guard's cabin, we arrived just before sunset at our first camp: Airan Suu.

### **Day 2 (12 August)**

We separated in 2 groups: group 1 was composed of Jerome, Odile, Kuban and Maksat meanwhile group 2 was composed of Bastien, Jean-Pierre, Jean, Camille, Lucie and Florentine. Group 1 hiked the Tuyuk Suu transect under pretty good weather, they observed some old bear feces, and checked camera trap: around 3 snow leopard passages. We might have observed a bear, but nothing sure from this distance. Group 2 hiked the Airan Suu transect, also under a sunny weather. We observed fox, wolf, badger and snow leopard feces, and observed ibexes (12 and 1), 2 sparrowhawks, Hobby. We checked a camera trap, unfortunately the camera had not

been switched on... On our way back we observed 2 red deers (in reality Tian Shan Wapiti) and 6 does.



*Snow Leopard (SL) feces*



*An Ibex*

### **Day 3 (13<sup>th</sup> August)**

We left for Kichi Moldo Bashi in the morning. On the way we came across a long-eared owl carcass. We also observed 2 botted-eagles, 2 black kites. After a quick French lesson, we observed until sunset 1 rawdear (saw by Lucie), 1 wolf (furtive), 12 red-deers and 9 does.



*Long-eared Owl Carcass*



*Your turn to find the deer on this picture!*

#### **Day 4 (14<sup>th</sup> August)**

Four hours horse ride to reach Chong Moldo Bashi (highest pick in the reserve). We searched for evidence of animal's presence around the camp in the surroundings called Chong Tash. We collected 2 snow leopard feces, and observed a fox track. We observed for 2 hours but did not observe anything.

#### **Day 5 (15<sup>th</sup> August)**

We left the camp to pick up a camera trap, where 14 snow leopards' passages were recorded. On the way to the camera trap, we picked up 2 cartridges, and found 3 possible trophies hidden in a cave. We then hiked on the crest above the camera trap and collected evidence of Snow leopard passage: fresh urine and scrapping. We observed 11 male ibexes, 22 female ibexes with 6 young ibexes on the crest. Due to bad weather conditions, we proceeded back to the camp, where we observed 4 female ibexes and 4 younger ibexes.





*The hidden trophies*



*A Snow Leopard Scarring*



*Camille smelling snow leopard urine*

### **Day 6 (16<sup>th</sup> August)**

Heavy rain in the morning, we left around 11 o'clock for Tileke valley by the Kra-Moinok col (3650m) where we picked up a camera trap (1 SL passage). We also collected one SL feces. We arrived around 17h30 at Tileke. We installed our base camp under the rain.



*Djoki & Bastien picking up the camera trap    Kuban handling pretty well the bad weather*

**Day 7 (17<sup>th</sup> August)**

We hiked to collect data from the video and camera traps. We were not able to read the videos from the video trap, still near the trap we observed some bear hairs, as well as SL feces that we collected. We then collected the photography trap that captured 2 snow leopard's passages. We next proceeded to hike to the crest above, but we were caught by extreme weather: wind, rain, hail. We return to the base camp rather quickly.



*Lunch break and check of the camera trap*



*Tileke Valley*



**Day 8<sup>th</sup> (18<sup>th</sup> August)**

On Bastien's initiative, the whole group went at 5h30 to observe the animals on a crest above the base camp. We observed 10 ibexes then 4 ibexes, and Himalayan snow cox then at 8 o'clock we proceeded to go recover few hours of sleep in the sun. After lunch we left for Min Teke Valley next to Naryn River, less than 2 hours from Tileke. On the way, we met some shepherds that gave us a lamb. At Min Teke base camp we observed from a crest: 1 deer, 1 doe, 2 royal eagles, 1 common Kestrel.



*Camille and Jean freezing in the cold*



*View from the Crest*



*Active Observation from Bastien*

***(Joking of course, Bastien was the ONE that observed most of the animals)***

**Day 8 (19<sup>th</sup> August)**

Three hours hike to collect the camera trap on the Min Teke transect. The camera caught 15 snow leopards' passages most of them sniffing and peeing on the same exact same spot (the cross on the pictures). The camera also caught 4 lynx passages. We also observed a lynx track on the way to the crest. On the way back we installed a new photographic trap near the river: Orto Min Teke. For dinner the guards cooked the typical Kyrgyzh dish: Beshbarmak, **DELICIOUS**.



*Min Teke photographic trap*



*Orto Min Teke new photographic Trap*



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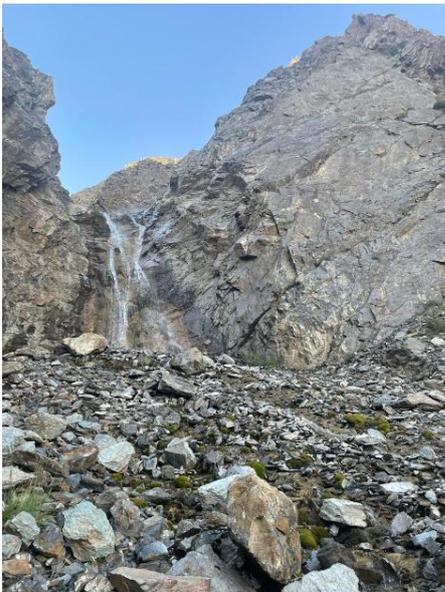
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### Day 9 (20<sup>th</sup> August)

We rode 2 hours to the Kurmemteu (Waterfall valley), on the high plateau of the reserve. We hiked to the waterfall, where we collected one SL feces and observed an old eagle nest. With the leftover of the lamb given by the shepherds, the guard cooked an amazing marinated Chachlik. We lighted a fire to cook the meat and had an amazing time.



*Kurmemteu Waterfall Valley*



*Kurmemteu base camp*



*Maksat and Djoki cooking meanwhile Bastien observes*



*Kuban and the Vidal family*



### **Day 10 (21<sup>st</sup> August)**

We left the base camp to collect the last camera trap at 3700m, Kurmemteu. The trap recorded only one Snow leopard passage. We proceeded to move the camera trap a little higher on the crest.



*Bastien and Kuban*



*Pretty steep descent to the base camp*



*Installation of the camera trap higher on the crest*

Later we were invited by Talai and Gulzat that own the farm below our camp. Maksat and Gulzat cooked all day long a traditional dish called Sirbash and some naans. Gulzat played the traditional Koumous sang a song that she composed for Talai, everybody sang. We toasted to each other health and wealth. The dinner was amazing, we each had a piece of lamb according to our age. The evening was amazing! After dinner we returned to the camp and looked at the stars, sipped tea.



*The amazing food cooked by Gulzat and Maksat*



*Gulzat playing the Koumous*



*The whole group with Talai and Gulzat*

**Day 11 (22th August)**

We packed our things and Talent and the drivers joined us for an early beer. We said gobye to our amazing guards, some of us cried a bit (a lot actually). We had an adventurous drive to Issik Kul, one of the largest altitude lakes in the world. The Vidal Family's truck had numerous problems but we finally made it.



And here we are finishing this report in Issik Kul, longing to have a swim in the lake. Thank you OSI PANTHERA for this amazing trip and a big THANK to our guards and guide: Kuban, Maksat, Djoki and Bastien for their kindness and benevolence.