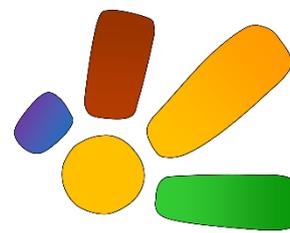




OSI-PANTHERA
CITIZEN SCIENCE EXPEDITIONS



**Objectif
Sciences
International**

Organisation Internationale Non Gouvernementale

Expedition to Naryn (11th to 25th of July, 2022)

Objectives :

- Cross the Naryn reserve from West to East along the left bank of the river Naryn, in the southern buffer zone.
- Gather proofs of presence of snow leopards and information about their ecosystem through an ensemble of scientific methods (photographic traps, feces genetic analysis, prey counting...)

Team :

The team included one guide (Bastien Chaix), and an assistant guide (Aruke Kadyrdin kyzy), three kyrgyz reserve guards (Maksat, Talai and Jirgal), 6 French participants:

- Bissuel Maxime
- Presa Lea
- Prudhomme Coralie
- Gamblin Brigitte
- Gamblin Annie
- Henry Florian

and a kyrgyz student in ecology and geology: Maxabat Birimkul kyzy.



Area of research:

2 days at Son Kul Lake before entering the natural preserve.

The camping sites, in the Kok ozon valley were:

- Baibitche valley
- Tepchi
- Karateur
- Dungureme

The participants prospected in Kitchi ayoluteur and Ak uluk (around the tepchi camp), and more generally the Ulan valley, before crossing the kizil pass to reach their next camping sites.

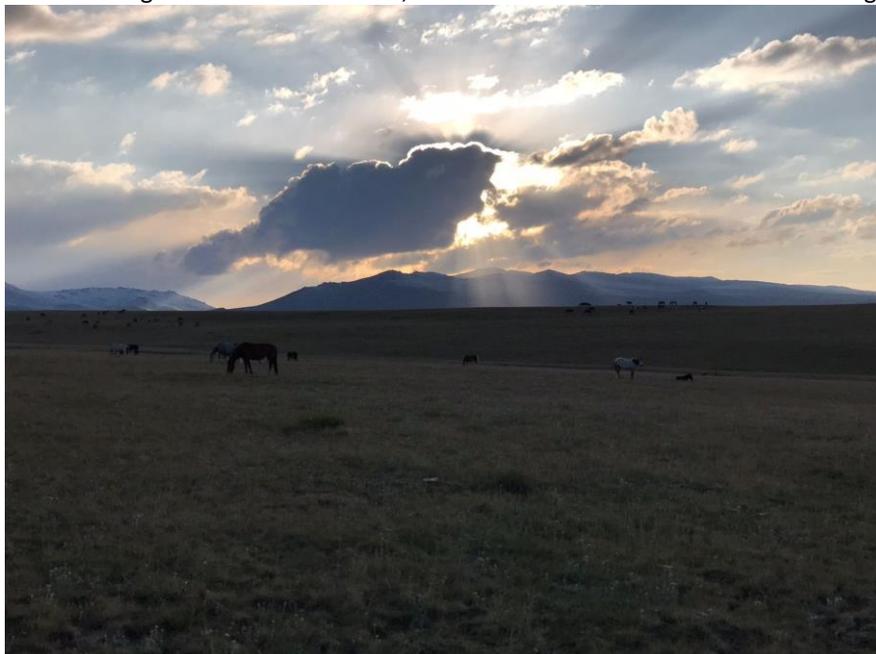
Map of our expedition through Naryn :



Son Kul Lake :

Activities :

- Horse riding to the Ak Tash mountain to get ourselves fit for the core of the expedition ;
- Observing birds of the Karatal-Japirik reserve next to the lake ;
- Sleeping in yurts and sharing dinners with our hosts, which allowed us to know more about kirghiz culture.



Animals :

- 4 Black storks (*Ciconia nigra*) ;
- 50-60 Great crested Grebe (*odiceps cristatus*) ;
- 30 Common Redshank ;
- 36 Great Cormorant ;
- 1 Black headed gull (*larus ridibundus*) ;
- 6 Gray heron (*arderia cineria*) ;
- 8 Northern lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) ;
- 16 Tadhorn Casarca.



Naryn :

On the 13th we reached Naryn city to get our food supply, and to spend one last night in a guest house before entering the wildlife reserve. We celebrated Lea's Birthday on the evening, with a huge creamy cake !

Expedition :

Day 1 (14/07/22)

We met the guards in Kok Tala, we ate with them in a yurt. Then, we started our riding trip to Baibitche valley, under a continuous rain/hail during the last hours. On the way, we've seen a couple of birds, such as the himalayan vulture, a couple of black kites, bearded vulture, golden eagle. We pitched our tents in a very wet atmosphere at the end of this long day, and drank our first tea with the guards. At it was National Day in France, we sang our national anthems and drank Anti virus all together.

Day 2 (15/07/22)

We visited the unexplored Baibitche valley, looking for signs of presence of the snow leopard. We set up a new photo trap (number 23) on a crest, and saw one leopard's footprint. We found some wolves and weasel poops, and some Himalayan snow rooster scrappings. The weather was clear for most of the day but we still got showered at some point when we were exposed on our way down.



Day 3 (16/07/22)

We rode the horses for 3-4h to change camp site. The weather was sunny and dry, but turned into rain storm a couple of minutes after we reached Tepchi. We started to observe with goggles around 5pm, and saw a couple of ibex and mountain sheeps. After a few minutes, Bastien got so surprised, a Madoul Cat visited us! It was the first time for him and two of the guards and of course, all of us. We could watch him for quite a long time, as he tried to hunt small animals, while being chased by the cows. In the evening, Bastien got us to play a game around the animals of the reserve, and how to recognize different prints.

Day 4 (17/07/22)

We divided the group in 2, to be able to pick up two photo traps in different areas. Annie and Brigitte went to Ak Uluk, down the valley, as Flo, Maxime, Coco and Lea went to the Ayouluteur Crest. We found a couple of panther scapping, changed a photo trap (which we found face to the ground, as it got destroyed by a bear) as we were somehow following an ibex's pack, down the other side of the crest. At some point, we sat to look for animals with our goggles, and a female ibex visited us, like 5m away from us, looking for her offspring. Maksat and Flo tried to go down to observe the pack, but as they got close, they ran away. That was such a unique event for us, we loved it. On the evening, we played telling jokes with the guards, Coco killed us all.

Day 5 (18/07/22)

We went to Kitch Ayouluteur, a place that had been poorly explored before, mainly down the valley by the guards in autumn, but the crest had never been visited. On the way, we saw 2 bearded vultures flying side by side. We left the horses and started our way up, and quickly we saw our first obvious panther's pee below a cliff, with some clear scappings next to it. We found a den, which Flo and Max explored, but it was probably unoccupied. There was for sure a bed in it so it's been used before, but not recently. We went on the crest, saw a few panther poops and paw prints, so we set up a new trap. Everyone went down, and Max and Flo made sure it worked before following the other ones. Before taking the horses, the first fight with the guards had started. Snowballs, cow dungs, and flowers went flying in every direction.

We got back to the camp, and Lynx's Eye Coco spotted two wolves in the middle of the rocks, which we could see for about an hour, coming down in our direction, to eat on a cow's carcass. As we ate and went to bed, we could hear them howling for at least one more hour.



Day 6 (19/07/22)

It's Annie's Birthday. We woke up at 5 am to try to spot again the wolves, but they weren't there anymore. We still spotted 3 ibex fighting, and a Himalayan snowcock following them discretely, it was so fun to mimic them.

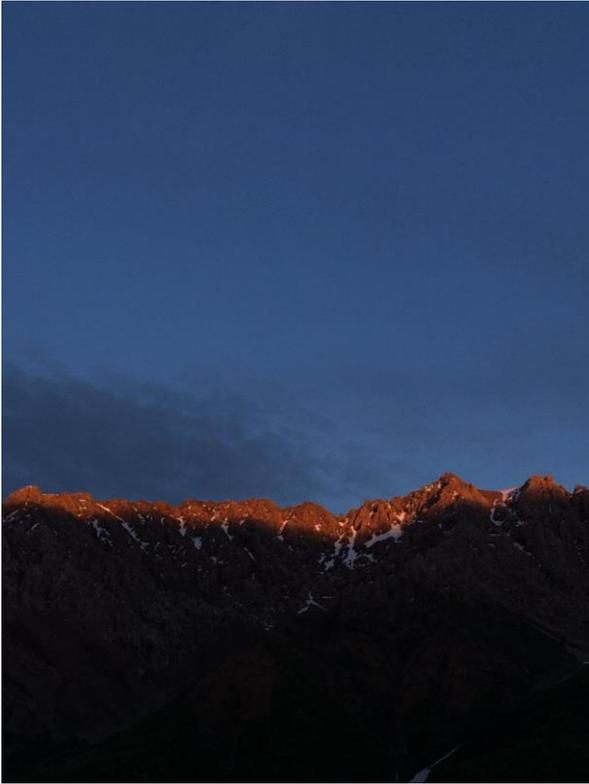
We moved our camp for a long riding day. As we cross the Ulan Pass, the wind was beating us, along with the hail. Surprise, we met a traveler there. A French woman going across Kirghizstan by horse. We changed a trap next to the pass, and went down to eat, sheltered from the wind.

After taking the rain in the cold for two hours, we reach the Karateur site. We camped on a plateau, and as we started pitching the tents, the sky became all clear and nice. We quickly start observing, in a nice area to be stealth, and Max spotted a bear super fast. The time for Lea to come, it disappeared and she cried because she is a victim. Then we partly moved to try to see it again, the other group did, but not us. Finally it showed up again when Lea vanished one more time. She was sad, cheh.

We celebrated Annie's birthday with a homemade gingerbread (by Lea), that felt nice, along with some vodka shot to celebrate both this and the bear.



Day 7 (20/07/22)



We woke up again at 5am again, but just saw a couple of ibex. We chilled in the morning, in the sun, doing laundry, reading etc. , that was a really sweet morning. In the afternoon, we went to the Ulan valley, crossing a tumultuous river, to pick a photo trap and prospect for a bit. We saw bear's fur and a very fresh panther pee right after the river.

As we got back to the horses, Bastien called us on the radio because they spotted another time the bear. We joined them and observed him for two hours, as he was wandering the valley in front of us. He thought it was the same as the day before, approximately 2 years old. The bear spent his time digging to eat roots, mostly.

We went back to the camp and heard Brigitte, who stayed the whole day because of knee pain, saw one as well with Maksat!

On the evening, Bastien invited us all to speak out about our general feelings of the expedition, it was nice to hear everyone's opinion.



Day 8 (21/07/22)

We took our time in the morning, a long time was about to come. A young yak came along with the horses when Maksat went to look for them, he chilled with us and wanted to join the whole expedition, that was fun, but we couldn't let him so we chased him off.

We started riding the horses to the Kachkasu Glacier, and on the way, saw some bearded vultures and two eagles fighting off a young one. Then we left them down the glacier, and went up to the photo trap to change it. The day was a bit strange, the atmosphere was so warm and opaque, we couldn't see well the peaks around us. We ate at the pass, and divided in two groups, one going back straight to the camps with the horses, and one walked the whole way back on the crest.

We saw a lot of snow leopard marks, as soon as the crest got narrower, a lot of scrapings and poops.

On our way, we found a lot of eagle pellets, that we took for analysis, and a couple of marmots. As we got down the last crest, we smelt the nice a greasy Mai tokoch from far. What a meal.



Day 9 (22/07/22)

We woke up at 5am, but saw nothing except two Himalayan snowcocks.

We took the horses to move camp, to Dungureme. On the way, we saw a yurt demolished piece by piece by a bear, and a marmot's den fully opened up by a bear, the head of the victim next to it. It felt so warm, way too much for being at 3500m high.

We ate on the new site, and the rest of the day was chill. We went swimming in the river, and a fun battle with the guards started. Basically everyone swam, even Bastien who dodged it for so long. Maksat looked for trouble and found it, Maxime dumped him in the river. The afternoon was so fun but turned bad after we found a horse lying in the river, head underwater. We raced to pick him up, not knowing whether he was gonna die or not. He finally got up on his feet, we dried him and took care of his wounds. What an adrenaline shot, fortunately, he could go eat the grass with the other ones, all strapped like a tuned car.

Before going to bed, Coco and Lea tried to play a card game with the guards, but got fooled the whole time.



Day 10 (23/07/22)

Some of us woke up to observe animals, they saw quite a lot of ibex but that was it. On this day again, the weather felt so warm and dry.

Breakfast and departure for one last hike, deep into the unexplored Dungureme valley. We found quite a lot of panther presence hints, especially a pee under a rock, along with a very ancient ibex cadaver (wool and stomach content, very dry).

We ate under a cliff, and we split in two groups, one going back to the camp and the other one keeping exploring further the valley. There we saw some Ibex again, some took a nap as Max and Flo went exploring a glacier a bit more up. We saw some ibex's beds in a scree, these were the first ones we saw.

On the evening we ate more Mai tokoch, and as it was dark, inside the tent we freaked out a bit because the guards called Bastien very hard from outside, like if something dangerous was happening. We went out and it was just the Space X satellites going across the marvelous, stary sky.

Day 11 (24/07/22)

It's Flo's birthday.

We take one last chance to find the panther in the morning but it doesn't show up. We guess it's dead to see it now, another time!

We take the horses for a last ride, to reach a guard's cabin in Ulan. It's a lot fresher on this day, wind and a tiny bit of rain show themselves. We pitched our tents along the river and eat in this mud house, on a table, a first one on this expedition!

Then we watched for a bit the eagle's nest, the young one was still there, still not knowing how to fly.

A one-hour walk followed this, just to enjoy the landscape, as (which we didn't know about at this time) Bastien, Maxabat and the guards were cooking Boorsok, like a ton of it.

A TABEEEEEEEEEEEEUL! Maksat shouts it one last time and as we enter the cabin, the table is literally full of Boorsok. Then we know we're gonna have a good time. We eat all this and made loads of toasts (just a pretext to finish the last 3 vodka bottles we have), to celebrate the expedition. Almost each of us sang songs around the table, then the party was on, we moved the table and danced on kirghiz songs until 1 am. Kirghiz songs are so nice, but the playlist is super short so it became quickly redundant, but still so fun as everyone let it go completely. Maksat spent the night imitating the animals we saw on the trip.

Lea and Coco thought they could destroy Max and Flo's tent without consequences, big mistake.



Day 12 (25/07/22)

Already the day to leave the guards, it feels a bit weird to quit the mountains and the fresh air of nature. 9 am, vodka is out for a last toast. Then we got up in the 4x4 that would take us to Yssik Kul. The road is super bumpy, the marmots, fat as super loukoums. A huge river almost swallowed a car, which got pulled out by the two other ones. It underlines the end of the super trip.



Thanks for every moment spent together, what a “zink” team, in a “zink” place

