

OSI-PANTHERA NARYN

August 2018

Objective of the expedition:

Explore the Naryn reserve in order to pick up camera traps that had been previously set. Goal is to capture pictures of Snow Leopards and gather information (tracks, urine etc ...) not only on the Snow Leopard population, but also on their main preys (Argalis, Ibexes) in the Naryn reserve.

Team :

The team was composed of 3 reserve rangers, 2 guides from OSI panthers and 6 volunteers :

- Joldoshibek KYRBASHEV (Vice-president of the reserve)
- Taalai DUISHEEV (Chief of Rangers)
- Kubanychbek ALIEV (Ranger)
- Bastien CHAIX (Guide)
- Aselya SHAROFOVNA (Assistant guide)
- Elise BERTRAND
- Caroline DORIAN
- Emilie ROCH-PAUTET
- Yannick WEBER
- Denys REUTENAUER
- Théophane PIETTE

Area :

The expedition took place between the 16th and the 27th of August 2018 in Naryn Reserve, created in 1983 and monitored by OSI-Panthera since 2016. The explored area covered the most core part of the reserve and the Kok-ozeun valley.

Weather :

The weather was mostly good, but sometimes rainy, and it even snowed once. Above 3000 the nights were cold.

Expedition :

DAY 1 NARYN-OISHILBI

Coming from Naryn, we took contact with the rangers and our horses. Then, around 10am, the expedition officially started, riding through the mountain to our first camp, close to the Naryn River. This first ride allowed us to the most iconic birds of the reserve, such as the Himalayan Griffon, the Golden Eagle, the Bearded Vulture and the Black Kite.



DAY 2 OISHILBI-DOBOTATOR

We learned how to recognize trees on which bears scratch their backs, and animal prints along the Naryn river. Then we rode to our first cabin, crossing our first mammal, an European badger and his cub. Arrived to the camp, one brave group went to the camera trap of the Umeut Valley, while the remaining volunteers were cutting meat (and also grease). This day also marked our first bath and lost shoe in the (very) cold torrent.

DAY 3 DOBOTATOR-UMEUT

In the morning, the meat cutters went to a camera trap just near the cabin. Unfortunately the trap had fallen probably due to a bear scratch and did not provide interesting pictures. Around 10am the group rode to another cabin inside a wetland, where we would stay two days. At the sunset, we observed two female Tian Shan wapitis and their two fawns.



DAY 4 UMEUT

Walking up under frozen tent and surroundings, we split in two groups, one going to Umeut and the other to Orto-taldo. During several hours of riding and walking, we have experienced incredible moments, with Bearded Vulture or Golden Eagle flying above our heads. These trips gave us the chance to spot our first Snow Leopard tracks and feces, with splendid sunset on the Kirghiz mountains. The camera traps were particularly efficient, taking numerous Snow Leopards pictures, even four of them at the same time (which is quite rare to capture). We even took some feces samples, probably one from a Snow Leopard.



DAY 5 UMEUT- KASHKA-SUU

Under a cloudy sky, we rode to our first camp without trees. On the road, we had the opportunity to observe a male Tian Shan Wapiti for 15 minutes. Once again, we split in two groups hiking two crests for camera traps. One group came across numerous bear attacks on marmot holes, as well as bear feces. The trap gave us nice surprises: Wolves and Snow leopard hunting Siberian Ibexes. Meanwhile, even if they were less lucky with animals, the others enjoy incredible sight views.



DAY 6 KASHKA-SUU-AK-BAI-ULAN-KARATEUR

Riding to a pass, where we found a camera trap, we were surprised by a thunderstorm, which forced us to deviate from our initial way, but offered amazing view. After a very long day of riding, we were exhausted but happy to reach our camp at the foot of a glacier.



DAY 7 KARATEUR

The first group rode to the Kashka-suu glacier where they reached the highest altitude of the expedition: 4110M. The second group went to a crest nearby, giving nice views on the valley. Coming back to the camp, we decided to observe the surroundings with telescopes, looking for animals. Argalis and Siberian Ibexes appeared in front of us, and suddenly, at the bottom the glacier, we had the incredible chance to observe a Snow Leopard, that we followed during two hours.



DAY 8 KARATEUR - KOK-OZON

We left the core zone of the reserve to reach the secondary zone after a very long horse ride. The sight views were clearly changing to a dryer environment. We crossed a huge scree, along red torrents full of iron. We went to a pass to pick up a trap where we found a picture of Snow Leopard, but also amazing wolves pictures. At the end of the afternoon, we enjoyed a resting moment.



DAY 9 KOK-OZON

The first group went to a crest upon 4000m. The trap was really productive, as a lot of pictures of Argalis, Ibexes and of course Snow Leopards were taken. The second one hiked through a small canyon to the trap which had been attacked and bitten by a bear (we found the evidence on the pictures). The weather was cold and it even snowed.

DAY 10 KOK-OZON - ULAN

On the road again! We had to go back to the place we crossed on day 6, but this time, the sun was shining. We found a bear attack on marmot holes, so huge we wondered how we could have missed it the first time. Ibexes were observed in the evening.

DAY 11 ULAN

Unfortunately, the weather was not on our side, as it rained the whole morning. Therefore we played cards and learned a Kirghiz game. At noon, as the sun was coming back, a group went to the trap as another one explored the valley to find animal tracks (we found wolf feces). Finally, we packed our belongings and rode to reach a cabin at the limit of the reserve. We celebrated the end of the expedition as this was our last day in the Naryn reserve.



DAY 12 ULAN – KARAKOL SUU

4x4s were waiting for us at 4 hours horse riding. We crossed large and dry plateaus surrounded by mountains. Everyone was sad to leave Kirghiz rangers.

