



Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund Half Year Report



(due 31st October 2017)

Project reference: IWT037

Project title: Conservation and community resilience: IWT alternatives in snow leopard range

Country(ies): Kyrgyz Republic & Tajikistan

Lead organisation: Panthera

Collaborator(s): Panthera Foundation Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz Customs State Service, State Agency on Environmental Protection and Forestry under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, Hunting Association of Tajikistan, Pamir-Eco Cultural Tourism Association (PECTA), Committee on Environmental Protection under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, Working Dogs For Conservation (WD4C), CITES Secretariat, EcoEnforce

Project leader: Thomas McCarthy

Report date and number (e.g. HYR1): 31st October 2017, (HYR1)

Project website/blog/social media etc: [Panthera Homepage](#); [Panthera Twitter](#); [Program Twitter](#); [Panthera KG Facebook](#); [TJK Conservancies Facebook](#); [H&CAT \(Partner Website\)](#);

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed project implementation timetable (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to the end September).

Project launch on 1 May 2017. Summary of project progress, by implementation activity timetable:

1.1) Please see 2a, “Conservancies” for further detail.

1.2) In June and July 2017 we conducted 3 trainings for 5 conservancies and 65 rangers throughout Chon Kemin, Aksu and Jar Bashe, Alai valley, benefiting 65 rangers from all 5 conservancies (Ming Teke, Bek Tozot, Janay Dar, Chumkar Tor and Aksu). Panthera Foundation KG trainers—with support from National Academy of Sciences of KG and OSI Pantera—introduced fundamentals of camera trapping, fecal collection, GPS tech, ungulate age-class identification, and information-relay protocols.

1.4) Ahead of schedule. In June 2017, we placed 41 camera traps in Ming Teke and Bek Tozot conservancies in the Alai Valley and will collect them in early October. In May 2017, we placed 20 camera traps in the Chon Kemin and Aksu conservancies. We collected the cameras in July, but photographed no snow leopards. Ungulate surveys will begin in October 2017.

1.8) Negotiations ahead of schedule. In Tajikistan, 15 ibex hunting quotas were approved in the conservancies for the 2017/18 season, and for the first time, 2 argali permits.

1.9) Ahead of schedule. We are building the Hunting and Conservation Alliance of Tajikistan (H&CAT) website and developed hunting packages through the “Book Your Hunt” website. For the 2017/18 hunting season we have 15 ibex and 2 argali hunts booked. For the 2018/19 hunting season, we have an agent with 10 ibex and 2 argali hunts booked.

We are exploring expansion of the H&CAT platform to include the Kyrgyz Republic and new collaborations with different partners. One is OSI Pantera, which charges eco-tourists to participate in conservation science. We piloted this work in the Alai Valley for the June camera trap survey. Two conservancies (Ming Teke and Chak) earned £ for a 2-week stay. In 2018 we will conduct 2 trips in the Alai Valley. We are developing a partnership with Edge Expeditions, a high-end tourism experience, and Abercrombie & Kent. Through the Tajik Women & Conservation (TW&C, formerly “Women Rockin’ Pamirs”) initiative we anticipate developing a niche tourism targeting women hikers.

1.10) In August 2017, Panthera staff taught a day-long accounting seminar for 4 conservancies in Tajikistan. We are organizing a 5-day product development and storytelling seminar in October 2017 (a

month behind the original schedule) by Marketing Sans Frontières to benefit women trained in the TW&C program, PECTA, and Panthera Tajikistan staff.

1.11) We are expanding and revising partnerships (see Section 2a, “Partnerships” below), updating treks in the conservancies, identifying new itineraries, and updating tourism marketing materials.

2.5) In May 2017, Panthera staff and Burgut and Parcham conservancy leaders held community meetings explaining TW&C project goals. Interested participants completed questionnaires and were interviewed by conservancy leaders and Panthera staff. In the more conservative village of Alichur, the conservancy leader sat with families of the most qualified candidates to explain the importance of the program for the professional development of spouses and daughters. Nine participants from each conservancy were vetted and selected by mid-June 2017.

2.6) Nine women trainees from Alichur and neighbouring village Bash Gumbuz along with 9 trainees from Ravmed and neighbouring Khijez participated in two 10-day training sessions in July and August 2017. Sessions included a theory component (3 days), maps and GPS exercises (2 days), and a field trek (5 days) with conservancy leaders and rangers practicing wildlife observation and camera trap setting. 4 of the trainees used their newly acquired skills to accompany tourists on treks, including National Geographic and Pulitzer-prize winning journalist Paul Salopek.

3.1) In progress. 12 predator-proof corrals have been built: 2 in Yazgulom, 2 in Vanj, 2 in Bartang, 2 in Murghab, 2 in Pshart valley, and 2 in Rangkul.

3.2) Designated. Where villages overlap with a conservancy (e.g., Bartang), mitigation coordinators are members of the conservancy. In Yazgulom, Vanj, the herders who first reported the conflict with snow leopards are coordinators. In Murghab and Pshart, the deputy of the Murghab branch of the Committee on Environmental Protection of the Republic of Tajikistan is coordinator. In Rangkul, it is the hunting guide of the Vostok hunting concession.

3.3) Ahead of schedule. We launched “Tajik Kittens” to be used as the umbrella children’s programming to introduce youth to wildlife conservation. In Rangkul we held a day-long nature camp for 15 children, followed by a week-long nature camp in Alichur for 45 children, ages 4-15. Children were introduced to wildlife conservation and human-wildlife conflict concepts through games. They learned about binoculars, GPS, and camera trap use. The Alichur school will maintain a camera trap and there is currently a competition among the Tajik Kittens group in Alichur, the rangers of the conservancy, and the trainees from TW&C for best snow leopard pictures.

4.1) Two dogs are posted at the Bordobo border post between Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic. One of the dogs from this post detected the illegal shipment of 4 argali and 7 ibex trophies from Tajikistan. An investigation is underway of consequence to the international hunting community. The other 2 dogs are currently used for stings based out of Bishkek, with one to be deployed at Torugart at the border with China, where we completed building a new kennel in August 2017.

4.2.) Refresher training provided by Tanya Rosen in August 2017 for all dogs. The 4 dogs have been trained to detect saiga horn.

4.3) Ongoing through the trainers of the Kyrgyz Customs Service, Rosen, and weekly contact with Aimee Hurt of Working Dogs for Conservation.

4.4) Ahead of schedule. Four community-meetings were held over the summer in Vanj, Yazgulom, Murghab, Rangkul. 2 more meetings were held in Shaimak and Tokhtamish, where corrals will be constructed in 2018. Twenty Foxlights will be deployed in the interim to deter conflict. Foxlights are solar-powered, light sensor devices that produce light at random intervals to emulate a moving person carrying a flashlight (torch).

4.5) In August 2017, Panthera held one meeting with the 2 networks (including customs and environmental agency officials from both countries) in Murghab to address illegal trophy hunting of argali, the increase in saker falcon poaching, and communication needs. The network was informed of a trapper from the United Arab Emirates targeting saker falcons with local support. The man was informed of the search, hid in the Murghab hospital, and the quickly crossed the border. It is unclear whether he was successful in leaving the country with saker falcons.

4.6) In preparation. The first training course will be for Customs and Border officers in November 2017.

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

1. Conservancies: After lengthy political debate regarding hunting management in Kyrgyz Republic and an attempt to introduce a carpet ban on hunting through 2030 in Parliament, the Kyrgyz State Agency on Environmental Protection introduced a staggered hunting ban which will affect the introduction of hunting as an incentive in the 5 conservancies we support in Kyrgyz Republic. One conservancy (Chon Kemin) anticipated hosting its first hunt this fall and is now to wait until 2019. The Alai Valley conservancies may not be affected by the ban until 2020 and we anticipate introduce hunting as a tool before then.

In Tajikistan, there is an opportunity to establish a community conservancy for argali in Tajik National Park as a result of contraband confiscation at the border (see 4.1 above) and cooperation by international hunting community to distance itself from implicated outfitters targeting snow leopard and ungulates. Panthera held meetings with poachers from Ghudara Aktash and Karakul villages, who organized and requested our support to establish a conservancy. With approval of our submitted change request, Panthera intends to support this 5th conservancy in Tajikistan in place of the 6th conservancy in the Kyrgyz Republic. The conservancy is called "Guldara" ("Valley of Flowers").

2. Partnerships: Collaboration with PECTA and KCBTA is not as effective as originally anticipated with respect to the promotion of community and wildlife based tourism. PECTA promotes the Silk Road as a go-through, generating motor vehicle traffic, trash, and other disturbance to wildlife. The KCBTA partnership alone is ineffective for generation of financial returns for communities, instead prioritizing individual households. We will maintain partnerships with both, but we are pivoting to the H&CAT to use the organization's platform to create new partnerships and promotion of wildlife tourism that treads lightly on the environment. Our next step is to expand H&CAT to Kyrgyz Republic and develop the Hunting and Conservation Alliance of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (H&CATK). Panthera met with the UK Ambassador in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, who expressed enthusiasm and support for the project.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS: (via change request) **Yes**

Formal change request submitted: **Yes**

Received confirmation of change acceptance **No**

3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully.

N/A

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to IWT challenge Fund management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

N/A

Please send your completed report by email to Victoria Pinion at IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: IWT001 Half Year Report.