



Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund Half Year Report

(due 31st October 2018)

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 2018, (HYR2)

Project website/blog/social media: [Panthera Homepage](#); [Panthera Twitter](#); [Program Twitter](#); Ilbirs (formerly [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).

Reporting on 1 April – 30 September 2018. Summary of project progress, by implementation activity timetable:

Activity 1.1 Conduct a training workshop in snow leopard camera trap survey techniques, faecal collection for DNA analysis, and ungulate survey techniques in 6 conservancies in the Kyrgyz Republic. Updated activity per approved change request: ...in 5 conservancies in the Kyrgyz Republic and 1 conservancy in Tajikistan.

In the Kyrgyz Republic, the workshops were previously completed for the 5 conservancies and reported on in year 1.

In Tajikistan, Guldara conservancy has not yet been recognized by the government to manage their lands, so we have not yet conducted surveys or survey trainings in the area.

Activity 1.2 Conduct a training workshop in natural resource management in the 6 conservancies in the Kyrgyz Republic and the 4 in Tajikistan. Updated activity per approved change request: Conduct a training workshop in natural resource management in the 5 conservancies in the Kyrgyz Republic and the 5 in Tajikistan.

In the Kyrgyz Republic, this was completed and reported on in 2017.

In Tajikistan, this has not yet been conducted because it was beyond the capacity of our staff at

the time. We will put together a program for the workshops based on conservancy needs and then identify person who can best deliver those workshops to the communities.

Activity 1.4 Conduct repeat ungulate, snow leopard camera trap and faecal DNA surveys in 6 conservancies in the Kyrgyz Republic and the 4 in Tajikistan. Updated activity per approved change request: Conduct repeat ungulate, snow leopard camera trap and fecal DNA surveys in 5 conservancies in the Kyrgyz Republic and the 4 in Tajikistan.

In Kyrgyz Republic, camera traps were set for snow leopards in 4 conservancies in July: Chon Alai region (2 conservancies – 26 camera traps in “Ming Teke” & 13 in ‘Bektosot”), Alai region (9 traps in “Janaydar”), and Chon Kemin region (5 cameras in “Shumkar-Tor”). The camera traps will be collected in late October or early November. No camera traps were available for placement in Talas (“Chegetei-Too” conservancy). Panthera will conduct camera trapping in this conservancy summer 2019.

In Kyrgyz Republic, ungulate surveys will be conducted in November after the State Agency sends an order letter for the surveys which states a start date. One State Agency ranger will accompany our team. Talas (“Chegetei-Too”) also will be surveyed.

In Tajikistan, repeat ungulate surveys will be conducted in cooperation with state management agencies in November and December 2018 in Alichur (“Burgut”) and Zong (“Yuz Palang”). Ravmeddara (“Parcham”) and Darshai (“Yoquty Darshai”) will conduct surveys in November with the support of Panthera staff.

Activity 1.5 Conduct 4 exchange meetings on leadership, governance, and gender awareness with the executive committees, inclusive of women, of the 6 Kyrgyz Republic conservancies with support from staff and Burgut Community-based Conservancy in Tajikistan. Updated activity per approved change request: Conduct 4 exchange meetings on leadership, governance, and gender awareness with the executive committees, inclusive of women, of the 5 Kyrgyz Republic conservancies with support from staff and “Burgut” Community-based Conservancy in Tajikistan.

In Kyrgyz Republic, leader of the “Burgut” conservancy in Alichur, Tajikistan, Mahan Atabaev conducted an exchange meeting with the rangers of 4 Kyrgyz conservancies after Activity 4.6 (see below), and toured the Chon Kemin conservancy “Shumkar-Tor”. The rangers were very interested to learn about Mahan’s successful development of the conservancy and increases in numbers of wild animals. In 2013, Chon Kemin rangers visited Alichur and requested an update on progress and the hunts conducted. These rangers have not been able to organize a hunt with the moratorium until 2020. The update included results, process of organizing hunts, etc. The Kyrgyz rangers also asked about launching non-consumptive tourism (e.g. yak riding) and decided to not bring trained yaks from Tajikistan but instead to train yaks locally with Mahan’s advice. Rangers from “Janaydar” in the Alai region were unable to attend due to a delayed harvest season.

Activity 1.6 Draft the management plans for each conservancy in the Kyrgyz Republic.

In Kyrgyz Republic, draft management plans for the 5 conservancies will be completed by end of 2018. The plans have been discussed but not yet formalized. This will be completed following the fall ungulate surveys. Private concession plans will be used as a starting point.

In Tajikistan, conservancies are drafting their own management plans but they are behind schedule due to lack of skilled personnel. We intend to assist conservancies with this process in the next year.

Activity 1.9 Together with PECTA and KCBTA and Panthera staff, conduct tourism management and accounting training skills for women in the 6 conservancies in the Kyrgyz Republic and the 4 conservancies in Tajikistan. Updated activity per approved change request: Together with PECTA and KCBTA and Panthera staff, conduct tourism management and accounting training skills for women in the 5 conservancies in the Kyrgyz Republic and the 5

conservancies in Tajikistan.

This has not yet happened in either country. This activity is planned for late 2018 in Kyrgyz Republic and Spring 2019 in Tajikistan, according to schedule. PECTA does not have the capacity to conduct such activities. In Tajikistan, we will assess the cost of sending 5 women from 5 different conservancies to the University of Central Asia's short course for Cashier/Financial Assistant training.

Activity 1.10 Support the development of non-consumptive nature tourism programs and the marketing of such services in the conservancies with support from KCBTA and PECTA. Updated activity per approved change request: replaced PECTA with H&CAT.

This was previously completed and reported upon, culminating in the ITB Tourism Fair booth in Berlin, Germany, in March 2018.

Activity 2.1 Through existing participatory process, finalize and adopt business plans identifying percentage of hunt profits that will be invested in the conservancy and for community development and prioritize development projects.

In Kyrgyz Republic, due to the government-mandated rolling moratorium on hunting, the first hunt will not be possible until 2020 for Chon Kemin ("Shumkar-Tor") and 2023 in Alai ("Janaydar"). There are no "big money" ungulate trophy species like argali. The price foreign hunters pay for ibex here is USD and of this, USD goes to the State Agency for the permit which leaves USD for the conservancy. Once conservancy rangers are paid (salaries in Kyrgyz Republic are higher than in Tajikistan), there is little money for community development projects.

Paying the conservancy rangers is critical as they are currently volunteering their time. For these two reasons, business plans have not been developed for the Kyrgyz Republic. With the lack of expensive species to hunt, we need to assess other options with the local communities for profits such as planting fast-growing tree species for firewood and construction purposes, honey bees, and non-consumptive tourism activities such as yak riding.

In Tajikistan, this process is not yet formalized in writing. There is currently an understanding among conservancy members regarding the percentage of profits from hunts that should be invested in development projects. There will be a meeting of all conservancies this fall when they will agree on the specific percentage of hunt profits to be invested in development projects. This decision will then be formalized and implemented. Percentages will be different for different conservancies because different species (ibex or argali) generate different amounts of money. Also, in November and December, conservancies in villages Ravmeddara ("Parcham") and Darshai ("Yoquty Darshai") will for the first time finance their own ungulate surveys from hunting proceeds.

Activity 2.4 Conduct community surveys of men and women to assess their level of satisfaction with the investment of profits from the hunts.

This activity has not yet taken place. Our new Tajikistan in-country director Qobiljon Shokirov has the background to develop these surveys and conduct in April/May 2019. He has taken PhD-level classes on survey design and development, spent over 300 hours of developing surveys, has previously carried out household economic surveys in the Pamir region of Tajikistan, and has analysed and reported survey data related to rangeland management in the Pamir region of Tajikistan.

Activity 2.7 A trekking guide training session will be conducted by year 2. The training session will last 21 days, combining theory and practical experiences (including short treks and a longer multiple day trek) in one of the conservancies, with an emphasis on wildlife spotting and sustainable hunting practices. The group will be accompanied by a local hunter who can explain the life of wildlife up in the mountains and the main hunting practices.

We were unable to conduct the scheduled full length of this training session nor able to train all the scheduled young women due to corruption in the local government: our full international team arrived in Tajikistan in late July to launch the 21-day training but we were immediately illegally banned from conducting the training session and instructed to leave the country via the land route through Osh by corrupt local officials from the Committee of the Environment and the secret police. As our primary contracted trainer, wildlife biologist and skilled outdoorswoman Piia Kortsalo, was not yet with our group, she was able to enter the country via the airport and conduct the training in one of our partner conservancies, M-Sayod. Our volunteer photographer was also able to assist with the training as she is an experienced mountaineer Ana-Maria Pavalache. We were able to offer 8 days of training, which was a real victory given the incredibly difficult and complicated circumstances.

Ana-Maria started the first day of training for 5 young women from Shamsiddin Shohin District who had no previous experience in hiking, and had never even been in the mountains or observed wildlife. She introduced basic hiking and outdoor skills and gear, and did an overnight hike. With the help of 4 young male guides from the 3 nearby conservancies, the young women were introduced to the basics of wildlife viewing.

Piia joined training on the second day along with 4 young women from Alichur and Bartang who had previous experience with hiking and hunting training thanks to our programs, although their level of skills varied. The training included hiking in 3 different conservancies and camping at least one night in each location, demonstrating practical skills in hiking and other outdoor activities (orientating, pacing, camping and cooking), discussing various topics on conservation and sustainable behaviour, teaching about local wildlife and responsible wildlife viewing, and practising leadership skills by leading group hikes in different conservancies, dealing with role-playing various issues with clients, and practicing communication and English.

The second hunting training presented by Wild Sheep Foundation scholar and hunter Kelli Poole was held 20 September through 1 October in the Bartang Valley (first training was conducted in 2017). She provided a summary: "These trainings included taxidermy skills, client relations, scouting and game observation, and butchering and processes of wild game. Two women were able to attend these trainings.

Taxidermy: One day was spent skinning a domestic goat. This allowed for the trainees to get hands-on experience with skinning tools on a non-trophy animal. The goat was skinned for a shoulder mount. Two ibex were harvested during the hunt, where the women got to observe the rangers and also participate in skinning the ibex and cleaning the skulls in preparation for boiling.

Client Relationship: During the time spent with the hunters, trainees were shown what to expect when working with clients. They experienced first-hand how to make sure their clients were comfortable and taken care of. This opportunity provided an insight into what the women should expect with overseas hunters. The women learned what is to be expected of them when working with clients.

Scouting/wildlife Observation: During the course of the hunt, the women were able to help scout for ibex using both binoculars and a spotting scope. Days in spike camp were spent observing wildlife, while discussing ibex life history and behaviour.

Butchering/Game processing: In conversation with Khalil (from H&CAT) and the hunters, we decided it would be great to teach the trainees how to prepare traditional cuts of the wild game for the clients after harvest. I spent time preparing and teaching the women how to cook the back strap.

This training offered a very unique position in that both trainees were able to accompany two women ibex hunters. This allowed the women to not only interact with the clients, but also to be part of the process from start to finish. These hunts allowed the women to assist with sighting-in rifles, setting up spike camps, preparing meals for the hunters, and scouting for ibex in the

surrounding area.

Both women showed promise as guides. They were extremely fit, showed enthusiasm in the process, and worked endlessly. They both have invested interest and showed dedication to the program. The hunters were very impressed with their capabilities.”

Activity 3.1 Build 20 predator-proof corrals (with locals providing free labour) in villages where snow leopard conflict has occurred in Tajikistan to protect 14,000 sheep and goats.

The following is a status report for the 15 corrals being built in 2018 in the villages of Darmorkh (1), Chartem (1), Yagulom (1), Roshorf (4), Alichur (2), Nisur (1) Yapshor (1), Madiyan (3) and Ishkashim (1): the walls of all 15 corrals were completed in summer 2018. After the walls were completed, our staff inspected the construction sites and then distributed construction materials to the families responsible for the corrals. By October, roofs have been completed for half the corrals and they are being used by communities. The roofs of the remaining half will be completed in Spring 2019 since there was not enough time to complete construction before snow at these higher elevations. All together, these 15 corrals will provide safe space for the livestock of 236 families. At this stage, we don't know exact numbers of livestock that will be sheltered in these corrals, but all together will be capable of providing shelter for up to 600 sheep and goats. Next year, we will survey these families to determine exact numbers of livestock, usefulness of corrals, and how many families have been using the corrals.

Activity 3.2 Designate a conflict mitigation coordinator in each of the villages where predator-proof corrals are built, to respond to conflict and oversee building of corrals as well as their proper use and maintenance.

In Tajikistan, regional conflict mitigation coordinators were chosen for 3 different regions: Mahan Atabaev the head of “Burgut” conservancy is responsible for Murgab region, Munosib Madimarov, community mobilizer for the “Guldara” conservancy is responsible for Bartang Valley, and Munavvar Alididov, the head of “Yoquty Darshai” conservancy is responsible for Ishkashim region. They are volunteers and their responsibilities include: ensuring construction of corrals was adequately completed based on proposed sketches and responding to community conflicts regarding corrals. For instance, ethnic Kyrgyz communities tend to practice a semi-nomadic lifestyle. When they move, they would like to deconstruct the corral and take it with them to the next pasture. Deconstructing and reconstructing causes significant damage to the corrals and they therefore last only a few years. So, coordinators have been ensuring that corrals stay in one place and are not moved around like yurts.

Activity 3.3 Introduce environmental curriculum developed by in-country Panthera staff in at least 8 schools in the conservancies and surrounding areas to sensitize at least 1000 children to wildlife conservation.

This activity is for just the Kyrgyz Republic. We have not yet made it into schools. We conducted two environmental education camps in summer 2018. The first, “Til Bil Camp” (this means “acquire language”) was held for one week in June in the Toguz-Toro District, Jalabat region for 38 students ages 13-15 from 15 schools. Students learned about protecting wildlife and nature, English language skills, reducing their use of plastic and increasing their use of reusable items, proper trash disposal, leadership skills and the children were fed healthy/natural foods. Five Peace Corps volunteers assisted with the training and students received certificates for the week from foreign language teacher association in Kyrgyz Republic.

The second, week-long camp was held in August in the Chon Kemin conservancy (“Shumkar-Tor”) for 25 children from the rangers’ families ages 10-16. It was conducted by a Peace Corps volunteer who learned how to do so at the Til Bil Camp. She taught English, the children drew animals, learned how to kindly handle domestic animals, and they participated in some hikes – this is not a popular pastime in Kyrgyz Republic but they need to learn since tourists visit the conservancy for hiking.

While the Peace Corps volunteer (who speaks Kyrgyz) was at the conservancy, the rangers

used this opportunity to improve their tourist skills. They treated her like a tourist so she could advise them. Rangers were able to practice their English, especially what and how to explain things to tourists. They did role-playing activities and she provided a lot of valuable feedback.

In early November, we will meet with a Peace Corps volunteer to discuss teaching wildlife skills and English language in the two Chon Alai conservancies (“Ming Teke” and “Bektosot”) in 2019 for both rangers and their children.

Activity 4.3 Conduct off-site support for dogs and their handlers.

This was conducted through the end of September by Tanya Rosen who has since resigned. We are developing a new plan with Working Dogs for Conservation to maintain off-site support.

Activity 4.4 Facilitate 5 community meetings in the villages where the corrals are being built in Tajikistan to expand existing informal anti-poaching network by linking in these new villages; the network is tasked with both addressing conflict with snow leopards and trade in snow leopards, their parts, and poaching of prey species.

The network remains informal. The 120 people are actually at this point the conservancy rangers (~70 in Kyrgyz Republic and ~50 in Tajikistan) who act as an anti-poaching network. There is a need for this network to be better developed to include more communities in the region and we will attempt to do this over the next year.

Activity 4.5 Strengthen transboundary anti-poaching network which already includes 120 members by holding 4 additional community meetings between representatives from informal networks in Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, including representatives of 6th conservancy in the Kyrgyz Republic. Updated activity per approved change request: ... including representatives of 5th conservancy in Tajikistan.

In Kyrgyz Republic, this network includes approximately 70 rangers. Their families also pass along information, so the network is actually a much larger number. An aside here... we are discussing starting an association between the conservancies next year in order to share ideas to improve their work.

In Tajikistan, this network includes approximately 50 rangers and their families.

Activity 4.6 Hold 2, 2-week Standard Enforcement Training courses. The first will be for 40 rangers of the local conservancies in Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic who are all members of the informant network, and the second will be for 20 Tajik and Kyrgyz customs and border officers. The purpose of the trainings is to establish collaboration and communication protocols that allow for the intelligence from the informant network on illegal trade and poaching to be effectively communicated and used by the customs and border officers working at the supported border post between Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and China.

The first training was held in November 2017 in Tajikistan. The second training was completed in Kyrgyz Republic in September 2018. We also added a day-long first aid training seminar afterwards, funded by the UNDP.

Fourteen rangers from the following 4 of 5 conservancies attended: 2 from “Ming Teke” in Chon Alai, 4 from “Bektosot” in Chon Alai, 5 from “Shumkar-Tor” in Chon Kemin, and 3 from “Chegetei-Too” in Talas. Unfortunately, no rangers from “Janaydar” in Alai were able to attend because of the harvest season which provides their primary source of income. Usually harvests are completed by September, and people who are semi-nomadic return from high pastures to their villages so this would be a good time for a training workshop. However the harvest was later than expected and unfortunately we could not reschedule the training.

Our contracted trainer Luke Bond from EcoEnforce provided this detailed summary of the training workshop: “The training program was an intensive contextualised three-day program based on internationally recognised best practices and standards for law enforcement with a

focus on planning, communications, operational safety and evidence management. During the course, rangers were provided with a planning and risk management framework based around objectives of enforcement which can be applied to patrol operations, incident response or management of ongoing investigations.

The training identified key enforcement objectives (such as the locating and containing wildlife offenders) followed by identification on how operational activities must be conducted including leadership, roles and responsibilities, equipment requirements, logistics, evidence management procedures, communication support and identification of contingencies and associated risk management controls. A key aspect was to impress upon the participants the need for operational safety and conducting enforcement in a manner which contains and control risks and to be in an advantageous position to get the work done in a manner and time and place that leads to success.

Ethics and principals such as integrity, reasonableness and fairness were reinforced throughout the program, along with diligence, thoroughness and accountability. The challenges and risks associated with corruption were openly discussed and workshopped to analyse consequences whilst the positive, lawful and sound benefits of integrity were reinforced.

The training moved to practical and applied techniques for safe and effective communication with suspects and witnesses. Operational safety depends on planning, risk identification, situational awareness, effective communication, capability, de-escalation and strategies for disengagement/reengagement. This was then applied in a scenario setting of approaching poacher camps to safely and effectively manage suspects and gather sufficient admissible evidence to subsequently enable appropriate regulatory responses.

The second stage of the scenario-based training focused on the participants conducting crime scene investigations on a scenario based around the identification of a vacated poachers camp. Key to the activity was planning and preparation for gathering of potential evidence to provide an indication of who did what and when, followed by the systematic recording and documented collection of evidence for subsequent analysis.

The final scenario-based activity related to vehicle-based enforcement operations, reapplying the frameworks around planning, roles and responsibilities, leadership, team work, safety, people management and evidence identification and collection.

The training provided a framework underpinned by safe work practices which could be applied regardless of the law enforcement setting to ensure that officers and teams have a structured approach to their work, have effective communication strategies for dealing with suspected offenders, improved situational awareness to manage risk and identify opportunities as well as defensive tactics to safely disengage or manage difficult and challenges law enforcement interactions in a lawful, fair and reasonable manner.”

In Tajikistan, conservancy rangers received this training in Darvoz in October and November 2017.

Activity 4.7 Establish first National Environmental Security Task Force (NEST) in Kyrgyz Republic in cooperation with Kyrgyz government and GSLEP Secretariat.

The NEST is under the jurisdiction of GSLEP and there has not been any movement on this front in 2018. The first NEST meeting, which Panthera staff attended, was held in November 2017 with a planned second meeting anticipated within 3 months. We are told that the second meeting is now being scheduled for the end of November 2018.

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.

Our Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic country program director, Tanya Rosen, resigned unexpectedly in September. She was the primary individual responsible for guiding the field work for this grant. We are dedicated to ensuring the work continues without significant interruption. Snow leopard program manager Rana Bayrakcismith (whose new position within Panthera is senior program manager for Conservation Science) has taken temporary responsibility for guiding the work in the field until we can find a replacement for Rosen. Our new Tajikistan in-country director Qobiljon Shokirov has begun working fulltime with us as of 1 October and is quickly coming up to speed on all the work in that country.

The local NGO that Panthera US operates through in the Kyrgyz Republic, Panthera Foundation Kyrgyzstan, has changed both management and their name – which is now Ilbirs Foundation. We are currently negotiating a revised MOU in order to seamlessly continue our work within the country.

And finally, our Tajikistan branch of Panthera has been under intense review by the Ministry of Justice due to corruption and perceived competition between private hunting concessions and the conservancies. We have been in court on multiple occasions already and there are additional upcoming court dates to decide if we can continue operating as an international NGO in Tajikistan. The judge is not finding us in violation of any Tajik laws or regulations, so we are optimistic that we may be able to remain open. In the meantime, we continue to work quietly on existing projects and are steering clear of the contentious hunting topic and instead allowing the in-country NGO H&CAT to deal with any hunt-related issues. We will soon negotiate a more extensive MOU with H&CAT for them to take over all hunting-related activities funded under this grant. Please also see description of extensive complications in Activity 2.7.

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: **Yes/No**

Email notification sent by Tom McCarthy on 26 September and reply from IWT on 27 September: “Many thanks for getting in touch, and please do update us with a change request form once you have a replacement in place.”

Formal change request submitted: **Yes/No**

We will submit a change request as soon as possible.

Received confirmation of change acceptance **Yes/No (N/A at this stage)**

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. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that

Defra will agree a rebudget, so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary.

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

Not at this time, thank you.

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document. Additionally, if you were funded under R4 and asked to provide further information by your first half year report, please attach your response as a separate document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also be raised with LTS International through a Change Request.**

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.**

Note:

We were not asked to provide a response from this year's annual review in the half year report.