



Mustyr (5,108m), first climbed by Harford and Littlejohn. The central summit is the highest. *Barney Harford*

*Piks Shumkar (4,925m, Falcon), Helen (4,710m), Bars (4,800m, Snow Leopard), Pik Kumay (Vulture, 4,830m), first ascents.* Time flies. This was the International School of Mountaineering (ISM)'s 14th expedition to the Tien Shan, and it was as great as ever. This time we visited two virtually untouched areas, the Torugart-Too range, right beside the Torugart Pass into China, and the Western At Bashi, a very accessible range little more than a day's drive from Kyrgyzstan's capital city, Bishkek.

Torugart exceeded all expectations. On a map of the Tien Shan the range appears tiny, but it is nearly the size of the Swiss Valais, being 35km from end to end (and that's just the glaciated bits, not the "foothills" to either side, which contain many respectable peaks). The highest mountain in the range, and the glacier beneath it, have the Kyrgyz name of Mustyr, which means "snow pasture," a nice insight into the way local herdsmen perceive the mountains.

Access was easy compared to most previous trips. Base camp was just one hour's drive from the main road, and ABC three hour's walk above this. There were three glaciers we could reach easily, and plenty of superb objectives to keep us busy. Helen, Max, and I made a first recce to 5,108m Mustyr. We climbed a long snow/ice couloir for 400m before the altitude made us gasp a bit and forced a retreat. Next day was poor weather, but while some of us made an exhausting exploratory trek to the glacier to the east, Vladimir and Leif [all last names supplied near end of report] explored the next glacier to the west (Teke-Lutor) and climbed a good peak—Pik Shumkar (4,925m)—the first success of the trip.

Spurred by Vladimir's enthusiasm for this glacier, Max, Barney, Helen, and I made an early start next day to climb a neighboring peak, but after two hours climbing to a col, we looked the ridge above and saw that we had greatly underestimated the difficulties. On the other side of the col was a rocky peak that looked hard but shorter, so we attempted it instead. After three difficult pitches we succeeded on Pik Helen (AD+).

Next day two teams set off in different directions: Vladimir, Leif, and Pete to attempt a peak at the head of Teke-Lutor, and Barney and I for a more serious attempt on Mustyr (Helen and Max fancying a rest day). However, Pete, who had been feeling under the weather from the start, took a turn for the worse and retreated to base camp to recover from feverish symptoms. Vlad and Leif were also turned back after exciting ice climbing, but thanks to lucky route-finding and snow conditions that were just safe enough, Barney and I emerged exhausted on the summit of Mustyr at around midday. This was a fantastic peak and among the six best I have climbed in the Tien Shan over 14 expeditions.

Next day Vlad, Leif, and Helen climbed the big snow peak at the head of Teke-Lutor and

were rewarded with an amazing sight: snow leopard tracks crossing the col! Some of these even continued to the summit. We have seen snow leopard tracks on just one other expedition. That settled the name for the first human ascent of the peak: Pik Bars, 4,800m (*bars* is Kyrgyz for “snow leopard”).

The priority now was to get down to BC and do something with Pete, who had recovered somewhat but had now suffered a retinal hemorrhage in one eye, causing a disconcerting blind spot. Despite this he had explored the glacier above BC and found a possible route up the big peak at the head of it. So in the morning we persuaded Natasha, our cook, to make a very early breakfast, and by 6 a.m. Pete, Max, Barney, and I were heading for the peak we later named Pik Kumay, 4,830m. It was a great effort by Pete. The summit was covered in footprints, which baffled us until we saw what had made them: a massive vulture!

There were wonderful-looking limestone crags above base camp, and we debated staying to climb for a day, but the lure of the next area, At Bashi, proved too strong and we were soon on the road again. [The At Bashi report is below—Ed.]

A list of first ascents in the Torugart-Too made by Max Gough, Helen Griffin, Barney Harford, Leif Iversen, Vladimir Komissarov, Pat Littlejohn, and Peter Mounsey:

Pik Shumkar (Falcon, 4,925m): northwest flank to north col, ridge to summit, PD, Iversen-Komissarov.

Pik Helen (4,710m): snow/ice couloir on west side to south col, steep couloir up buttress to summit, AD+, Gough-Griffin-Harford-Littlejohn.

Mustyr (Peak of the Snow Pasture, 5,108m): long couloir on west side to base of south ridge of south summit, long traverse north at ca 4,800m to snow/ice, AD, Harford-Littlejohn.

Pik Bars (Snow Leopard, 4,800m): to northeast col from Teke-Lutor Glacier, then snow/ice slope to easy summit ridge, PD+, Griffin-Komissarov-Littlejohn.

Pik Kumay (Vulture, 4,830m): from Ayutor gain northwest col, then snow ridge to first rock summit, second (highest) summit gained with more difficulty, PD (first summit), AD+ (second summit), Gough-Harford-Littlejohn-Mounsey.

PAT LITTLEJOHN, *Alpine Club*

*Little Sister (4,206m), Middle Sister (4,341m), Big Sister (4,492m), Zeus (4,747m), Daisy (4,239m), Snow King (4,580m), first ascents; Rock Dragon (4,597m), attempt.* Andy Barret from the U.K. and I from Cyprus arrived in Kyrgyzstan on September 23, hoping to explore the far west corner of the Western Kokshaal-Too Range, a region that climbers had not visited. But when we meet with our logistics provider in Bishkek (ITMC), we learned that there was no way to know if we would find horses when we reached the end of the 4x4 road, three days' walk from the valley we wanted to visit.

We spoke with Vladimir Komissarov, the president the Federation of Alpinism and Rock Climbing of the Kyrgyz Republic, as well as being president of the Association of the Central Asia Tour Operators. He had just returned from the first expedition to climb in Torugart-Too, on the border with China [see Pat Littlejohn's report, above]. He gave us lots of useful information about this range. We didn't want to spend too much of our limited time carrying gear to base camp, so we changed our plans to Torugart, with its easier approach.

Next morning, armed with an old Russian map (the only map of the area) that we borrowed from Vladimir, we loaded our powerful Russian 4x4 van with loads of food, gear, and