

maximum, but generally 60° or less) and northwest ridge, recording a GPS summit height of 4,905m. Jaka and Jani climbed the northeast ridge of Neizvestniy (400m, 50-60°, the route of the first ascent in 2005) as far as the east foresummit and skied the east flank via an impressively steep and icy line, which they named Hidden Ice. Jani also climbed the small hill on the ridge west of the entrance to the valley (just north of Pt. 4,798m on the AAC map), naming it Pik Freapproved II (4,627m).

The day before we all descended to base camp, Arne and Jaka went for the highest unclimbed peak in this part of the range, Pik Byiely (5,697m). They left advanced base at 2:30 a.m. and used skis to reach the 4,880m saddle on the frontier ridge at the head of the glacier. They continued up the south ridge, at first broad, then a couloir, and finally a rock rib, where a relatively safe “weakness” was found through the big serac barrier above. Unfortunately, the summit slopes, laden with fresh snow from a storm two days previous, were too avalanche prone for safe passage and the pair turn back 300m below the top [Editor’s note: their line is visible in the center of the face in *AAJ 2001*, p. 401]. We used GPS for all measurements except Zastova, where we used altimeters reset to the height of advanced base on the day of the ascent. Our recorded GPS altitudes were generally a little different from those noted on the maps. There is a slight possibility that this was connected with signal jamming. Three years ago, during an expedition in western Xinjiang close to the Tajik border, there was a day when our two GPS readings of base camp altitude were 500m higher than at other times. This was believed to be the effect of the Chinese having signal jamming in operation. All was not over, as we still had to get back to base camp with an injured Tadej, who was carried alternately on the backs of Arne and me. Back home, Tadej required surgery to fix torn ligaments in his ankle.

ANZE COKL, *Slovenia*

AK-SHIRAK

Ski traverse, five first and two second ascents. We should have been in Tibet. That’s what we’d planned. But after the riots in Lhasa, it was no surprise to find our permit withdrawn and, soon after, the borders closed. We realized that only Kyrgyzstan could offer an exploratory expedition in the time remaining. Three of us had already been to the Ak-Shirak, but it is a beautiful range with plenty of ski-mountaineering objectives. Our five-man team comprised Derek Buckle, Jerry Seager, Mike Sharp, Robert West, and me, all Eagles Ski Club members. The new Nature Reserve tried to levy illegal entry fees, but we avoided these by crossing the Ak-Bel Pass, location of my first visit in 2003, and descended into the Kara-su Valley. The river was well-frozen and we made better progress than in 2006, though this time we headed east at the confluence of the two glaciers to explore the mountains around the Kyondy Pass. We lost three days to storms before making the first ascent of Pik Step (4,790m, PD) via the glacier north of our camp and a pleasant ridge. The mountains to the south looked savagely beautiful, with sharp summits rising above broken icefalls.

Next day we made the first ski crossing of the Kyondy Pass (4,327m) en route to Pik 4,980m, which we subsequently named Karyshkyr (Kyrgyz for *wolf*). Keeping well clear of the spectacularly serac-studded northwest face, we eventually reached a secluded cirque, from where we climbed to a saddle on the ridge above. Derek, Jerry, and I carefully traversed the ridge on skis, keeping below a subsidiary top to follow a streak of steep snow through the barrier of cornices and ice cliffs to the summit. The grade was AD, and the distant view included Khan Tengri and Pobeda, standing above a vast panorama of lower peaks. In need of an easier day and



Derek Buckle on the west ridge of Pik 5,004m in the Ak-Shirak . *Dave Wynne-Jones*

with signs of a change in the weather, we retraced our tracks the following morning, north up the glacier to a col northeast of a peak that dominated the back wall of the cirque. We climbed a broad snow ridge, keeping well clear of the cornice, to reach an ample snow summit of 4,767m (PD-). We later named this summit Pik Prospect. It commanded a fine outlook, and for the three veterans of the 2006 expedition offered views of the peaks we'd climbed that year. Scanning our planned route from the Kyondy Pass into the heart of the 5,000m peaks revealed an expanse of snow-free moraine that I had not expected. Worried that we would lose a lot of time crossing and re-crossing the moraine, we reluctantly descended to the confluence of glaciers and headed up the Kara-su to the main watershed. Several days later, with one night spent at the site of our 2006 Kyrgyzia camp, we set out from tents on the eastern branch of the glacier, heading southeast into a bay leading to a peak that rose like a wave to a curling crest at its summit. The north ridge looked distinctly climbable.

Leaving skis below the ridge, we reached the crest, where hard ice created a crisis of confidence for Robert with his alloy crampons, and Mike, whose telemark boots didn't have the rigidity for such technical ground. They waited, a wise decision as it turned out. More steep hard ice had Derek remarking that he normally climbed this sort of thing with two ice tools. Pulling onto the top, we found a flattish summit, hung with cornices on all sides. We named it Pik Volna (4,860m, Wavecrest) and rated our route D. An alternative pass lay to the north, with several interesting peaks to the east, so the following day we skinned into the eastern cirque and climbed the peak that dominated it, via the northeast ridge. Derek and I reached the 4,966m snow summit (subsequently named Pik Cirque) first but were immediately drawn to the higher peak along a ridge to the east. We gained this 5,003m peak via a classic alpine crest, and rejoined the others on the first summit. They had been disappointed to discover a recent cairn. With no cairn on Pik 5,004m and technical ground between, we felt ours was a first ascent (AD-) of Pik 5,004m.

Reconnaissance showed that, as in 2006, we would have to cross the watershed at Prospect Pass, which we did just before a big storm arrived. We never did climb the mini-Matterhorns to the east, instead skiing down to the Petrov Glacier. Crossing it to the site of our 2007 moraine camp was hard work, but I had a score to settle with one of the nearby peaks we had turned back from that year. Despite dubious weather, next morning we re-crossed the glacier to the southeast and climbed it, skinning to a high saddle between the main summit and a shapely granite subsidiary peak rising from the col to the north. Derek, Jerry, and I struggled up steepening ice, right of the rocky spine of the ridge, to gain the windswept 4,834m summit (christened Pik Petrov), only to find another cairn. Despite subsequent research, we found no written claims to ascents of the two peaks with cairns, and the fact that they'd been climbed before also surprised our Kyrgyz hosts. Perhaps a Dutch team from 2007 was responsible and did not log ascents nor publicize names for the peaks. Two days later, on a golden morning, we packed camp for a long gentle schuss to Lake Petrov, where we camped for the last time. It was strange to find ourselves on a gravel beach after so many days with the uncertainty of snow beneath our feet and nights of solid cold under our backs. We had traveled over 60km and climbed seven peaks (five new) in 24 days during April and early May. It was clear from observations over the five years we have visited the range that glacier recession is accelerating. Next day we skated over the frozen lake to the roadhead. Our heads were down but we had a feeling of success salvaged from what had so nearly been a complete disaster.

DAVE WYNNE-JONES, *Eagles Ski Club, U.K.*

TENGRI TAG

Pik Parashutny, north face, not to summit. On July 27, Tadej Kriselj, Matej Smrkolj, and I made the first ascent of the north face of Pik Parashutny (5,360m). The 1,000m face is mainly snow and ice. We took a direct line toward the summit, climbing through poor weather. Due to bad



Looking up the Zvezdochka Glacier. (A) Pik Parashutny (5,360m), showing the line of Slovenian Birthday Party (1,000m), which did not reach the summit. The Slovenian team descended a couloir (hidden) on the west face. (B) Pik Pobeda (7,439m). (C) Pobeda West (6,918m). *Andrej Magajne*