



AAC Publications

Dzhirnagaktu Glacier, Glasgow University Expedition

Kyrgyzstan, Western Kokshaal-Too

Our group consisted of five female mountaineers from the Glasgow University Mountaineering Club: Hannah Gibbs, Carol Goodall, Imelda Neale, Libby Southgate, and me (Emily (Roo) Ward). We planned a lightweight, self-sufficient expedition. Sadly, our small expedition became even more lightweight when we lost two climbers before reaching base camp. Hannah caught a bad vomiting virus on the road to Naryn and returned home. Carol developed HAPE while carrying loads to base camp. Our sat phone was temperamental, and a stressful day was spent waiting for a helicopter to appear. Fortunately, she was safely evacuated to Bishkek.

In early September, Imelda, Libby, and I finished establishing base camp on the glacier with food for 12 days: significantly less time than we had hoped for! Our luck soon changed, however, as the weather and conditions were amazing. Most days were bluebird, and good ne?ve? covered the glacial ice. Cooler autumnal temperatures conveniently stuck together the loose shale.

As there were only three of us in the area with a faulty sat phone, we toned down our ambitions for technical climbing. Instead we aimed for routes in the PD to D- bracket. We climbed five new routes, with four of the summits being first female ascents. Two were insignificant peaks with little difficulty. The three more significant routes were all on peaks first climbed and documented by a Polish expedition three years earlier (AAJ 2011).

On Butterfly's Leg (4,865m), we climbed Point Zero Zero One Gully, a 300m, 55° couloir leading to the crest of the ridge between Rock Horse and Butterfly's Leg. From here we followed the south ridge to the summit via some crevasses and chossy scrambling. [The peak's first known ascent was by the west ridge, though the Poles found a cairn on the summit.]

We also climbed Pony (4,750m) by its north face and west ridge, ascending the second snow couloir on the north face with some interesting mixed steps at UIAA IV. From the top, we traversed the knife-edge ridge east, toward Rock Horse, until it was too chossy to continue. [In 2012, Alek and Vladimir Zholobenko, part of an Irish expedition, climbed another line up the north face, starting farther east (AAJ 2013). The Poles did the first ascent of Pony in 2010 via a couloir on the south side.]

On Night Butterfly (a.k.a. Nochnoi Motyl, 5,056m) we completed the route up the east ridge attempted by the Poles before they successfully climbed the peak by the south face. The aesthetic snowy crest is gained by an easy angled snow couloir. After a false summit, we dropped onto the south face to avoid cornices, and then climbed a final slope with harder glacial ice up to 60°. There is a large bergschrund below the main summit that may be impassable in certain conditions. This route, which we called Flutterby, was our first ascent of a 5,000m peak and definitely the highlight of the trip! We owe gratitude to the British Mountaineering Council and the Mountaineering Club of Scotland for helping to sponsor our expedition.

Emily Ward, U.K.

Images



Line of Point Zero Zero One Gully on Butterfly's Leg.



Climbing the aesthetic east ridge of Night Butterfly (5,056m).



The north face and west ridge of Pony (4,750m).



Summit ridge on Butterfly's Leg (4,865m).



East ridge of Night Butterfly (5,056m).



The team on top of Night Butterfly.

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