



AAC Publications

Borderski

Tajikistan, Pamir

Kate Harris, Rebecca Haspel, and I created Borderski, a ski mountaineering expedition that took place during February and March, to document the fences and frontiers of the Pamir. Our goal was to bring awareness to tightened border security and subsequent fence construction along Tajikistan's borders with Afghanistan, China, and Kyrgyzstan, and the resulting impacts on the natural migration of wildlife, specifically Marco Polo sheep, ibex, and snow leopard.

We traveled by road to the village of Alichur, in southeastern Tajikistan, and were dropped off at a small hunting camp from which we could double-carry over a snowy pass into the Zorkul Valley, just north of the Wakhan Corridor in Afghanistan. We were then able to ski more or less east for a week until the snow ran out. After that we took to the frozen river. At one point we ditched skis and sleds to visit two remote mountain passes leading into Afghanistan. Temperatures were down to -30°F. We then circled back to Alichur and a rendezvous with local conservationists. An attempt to ski along the Tajik/China border was stifled by Chinese soldiers. We spent a final week skiing in the Alai Valley in Kyrgyzstan, just over the border with Tajikistan. In all, we skied 22 of the 30 days we'd planned, averaging 12km/day.

We climbed several summits during our expedition, and one of them, Peak 5,372m, ca 20km north of Alichur (37°55'31.40"N, 73°11'39.32"E), climbed by Rebecca and me, was pretty remote and most likely a first ascent. [Editor's note: This expedition was supported by the AAC's Lara-Karena Bitenieks Kellogg Memorial Conservation Grant and Scott Fischer Memorial Conservation Grant. [Click here](#) to download a full expedition report.]

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Images



Borderski map.



The Borderski team after skiing across the Tajik-Kyrgyz border and into the Alai Valley.

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