



AAC Publications

Peak 6,122m and Peak 6,076m, First Ascents

Nepal, Changla Himal

The view south from the summit of Lukeko Baref (Peak 6,122m). (A) Peak 6,506m. (B) Lachama Chuli. (C) Gave Ding. (D) La Sum (Peak 6,076m). (E) Lachama Khola North Fork. The sharp summit directly below B and nearer the camera is Peak 6,233m, attempted by Polish climbers in 2018 and also by the 2022 expedition. Photo by Hansueli Jud.

In October, I led a large group to the Changla Himal, located on the northeastern edge of Humla district in the far northwest of the country. The highest peak in the range, Lachama Chuli (6,721m, 30°8'36.91"N, 82°11'53.81"E), was climbed in 2007 by a Japanese team coming from Tibet (where it is known as Kubi Kangri), and the region is known to mountaineers for Mick Fowler and Paul Ramsden's 2015 route on the northwest face of neighboring Gave Ding (6,521m).

The occasion for the expedition was the 125th anniversary of the Academic Alpine Club of Zurich (AACZ), and I chose the area to offer an exploratory climbing experience to a broad spectrum of club members. We ended up with a team of 19, from 11 countries, supported by five Nepalese kitchen staff. All the complex logistics for such a remote region were handled expertly by Rajendra Dalal of Mountain Sun Valley Treks and Expeditions, with not a single thing going wrong, despite the need to fly two tons of excess baggage to Simikot and to round up 44 mules for the four-day trek to a base camp at 4,400m (30°08'35"N, 82°05'40"E) in the Lachama Khola.

During the acclimatization phase, some team members climbed Peak 5,503m (30°09'24"N, 82°08'19"E). However, at this point we were impacted by a major cyclone that caused flooding and landslides over much of the subcontinent. From October 5–9, we received a meter of snow at and above 4,000m, and unlike in other parts of the Nepalese Himalaya, this did not melt off for the rest of the season. All plans for small teams exploring everything from walk-ups to big lines on 6,500m summits shrank rapidly to mind-numbing trench warfare in the snow.

The bulk of the team fought its way up the north fork of the Lachama Khola, turning north beneath Gave Ding and identifying Peak 6,122m (30°11'20"N, 82°09'45"E) as the best target under the conditions. On the 16th, after 18km of trenching teamwork to reach the upper glacier, Javier Alegria, Max Brunner, Daniel Crepaz, Andreas Frank, Felix Hermann, Hansueli Jud, Yannick Revaz, Gediminas Simutis, Charlotte Steinmeier, and Yannick Walo reached the summit via the east-northeast ridge, enjoying truly expansive vistas of the western Himalaya on a cloudless day. The climbers suggest the name Lukeko Baref ("Hidden Glacier Peak" in Nepali) for this summit.

Peak 6,076m (La Sum) viewed from the southeast by drone. The rock tower on the right is a prominent peak on the west ridge of Gave Ding. Photo by Andreas Frank.

A splinter group of four, Manuel Bonnet, Ulla Heikkilä, Ven Popov, and Yoann Trelu, decided to aim for the south fork and gained 10km in an equally heroic trail-breaking effort. They identified the south ridge of Peak 6,076m as a suitable target, and after climbing a long access couloir, they scrambled over snowy blocks, punctuated by two pitches of rock with difficulties up to 5a, to arrive on the central summit (ca 6,050m GPS, 30°07'13"N, 82°08'56"E; the northern top may be higher). They suggest the name La Sum or "Three-summit Peak" in Tibetan.

Of the remaining team members, Christian Läubli and I were sick, Steve Brown was weak from illness, Alex Skawran had a small accident, and our indefatigable expedition doctor, Sarah Marti, was too busy caring for the invalids to think about following the big team to the summit. In the remaining time,

the north fork group split up for small-team efforts on different projects (see map), but all were stymied by the persistent deep snow. This situation made us especially grateful when our 20-mule team was able to make it all the way to base camp, ensuring a safe and on-time exit.

The AACZ is an old club, but we were a (mostly) young team, well aware of the context of such expeditions in a climate crisis and of traveling from one of the richest countries in Europe to one of the poorest in Asia. We double-offset our estimated 62-ton CO2 emissions with tree-planting and efficient cooking stoves, and we ran two aid projects. In 2021 (when the expedition was canceled due to COVID-19 uncertainties), we raised 20,000CHF for the national medical NGO Ek Ek Paila (ekekpaila.org) to carry out cataract operations in mountain regions, and in 2022 we raised 12,000CHF for the Humla-based village development NGO RIDS (rids-nepal.org).

– **Bruce Normand, Switzerland**

Images



The route up Peak 6,122m (Lukeko Baref) seen from a drone above Camp 2 to the southeast.



Peak 6,076m (La Sum) viewed from the southeast by drone. The rock tower on the right is a prominent peak on the west ridge of Gave Ding.



Panorama from the summit of Peak 6,122m (Lukeko Baref), looking north into Tibet. The large foreground Gyaumazangyom Glacier flows into the Tibetan plateau, and most peaks visible remain unclimbed.



The view south from the summit of Lukeko Baref (Peak 6,122m). (A) Peak 6,506m. (B) Lachama Chuli. (C) Gave Ding. (D) La Sum (Peak 6,076m). (E) Lachama Khola North Fork. The sharp summit

directly below B and nearer the camera is Peak 6,233m, attempted by Polish climbers in 2018 and also by the 2022 expedition.



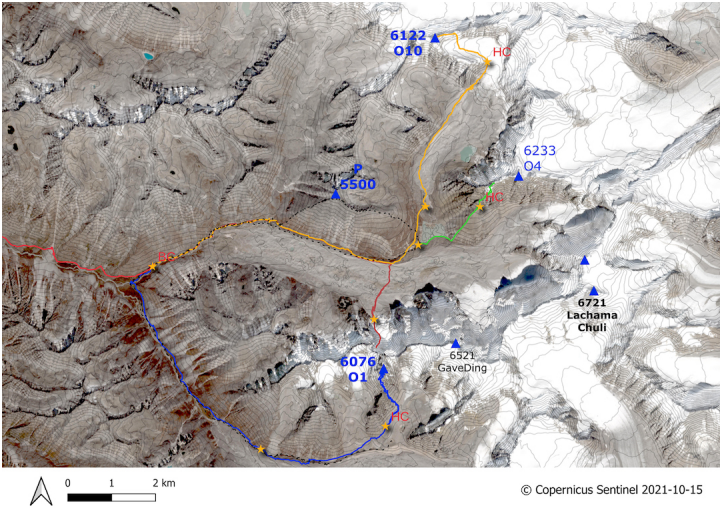
Daniel Crepaz, Hansueli Jud, and Gediminas Simutis starting the summit ridge of Peak 6,122m (Lukeko Baref). Border Peak 6,210m is behind.



Ulla Heikkilä starting the hard climbing on Peak 6,076m (La Sum).



This buttress of fine granite lies close to the approach to Peak 6,122m (Lukeko Baref). Peak 6,391m is behind.



Map summarizing activities of the 2022 AACZ expedition.

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