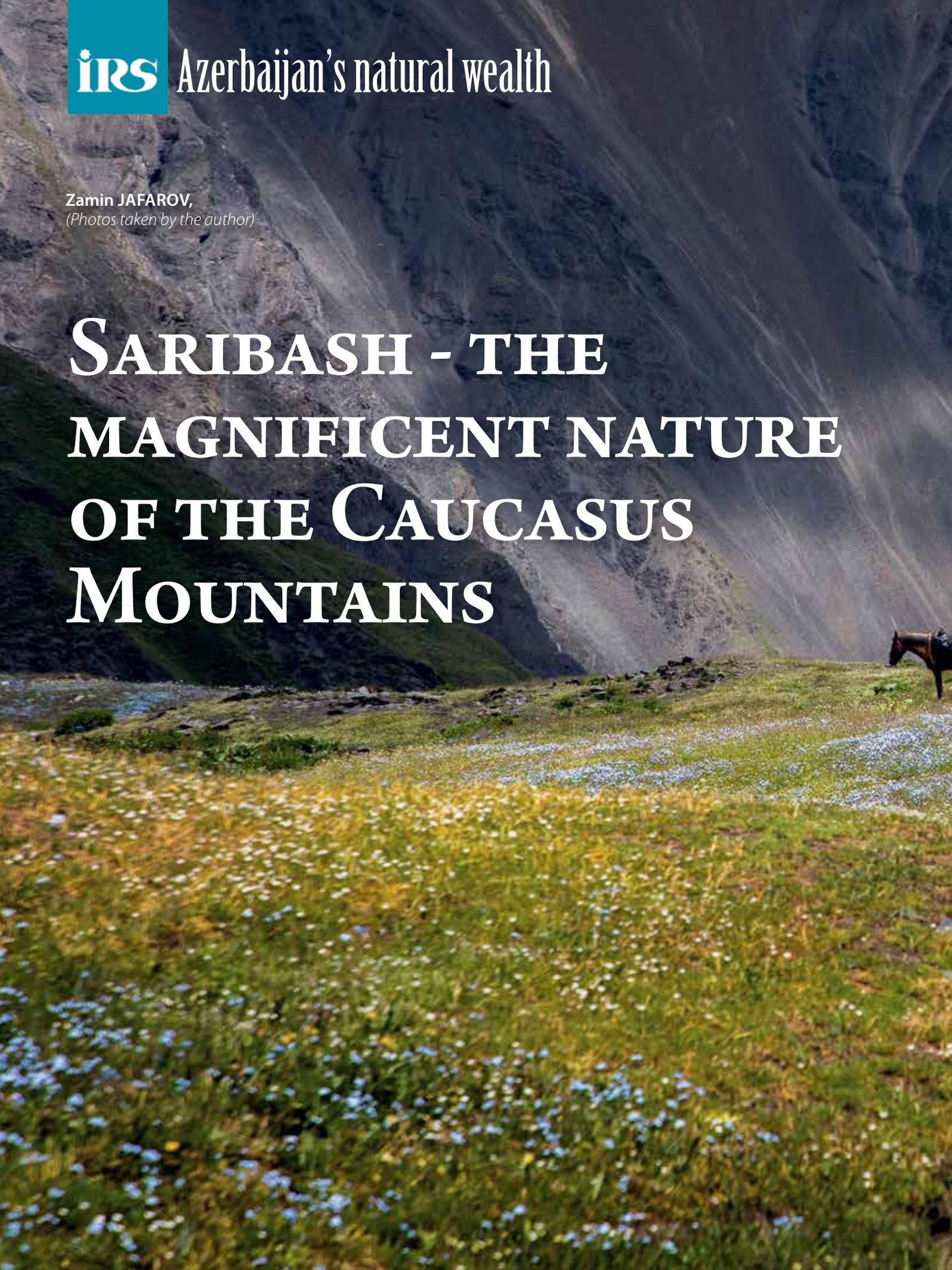




Azerbaijan's natural wealth

Zamin JAFAROV,
(Photos taken by the author)

SARIBASH - THE MAGNIFICENT NATURE OF THE CAUCASUS MOUNTAINS







There are many places in Azerbaijan that attract not only by the beauty of nature, but also by historical and cultural sights. A very interesting area in this sense is the village of Saribash in Gakh District in the north-west of the country. Located in the spurs of the Greater Caucasus at an altitude of 1,800 meters above sea level, this small village, with its solitude and old houses with grass-covered roofs, some of which have partially collapsed, causes an unusual mood - it seems that you have been transported a few centuries back. It is worth mentioning that a number of historical events are associated with this remote village. In 1394, Emir Timur passed through the village of Saribash, heading north for his next conquest campaign, and more than three centuries later, Iranian Shah Nadir Avshar moved in the same direction, setting out to conquer Dagestan. A century later, with his militia, Ilisu Sultan Daniyal proceeded in the same northern direction to join Sheikh Shamil, the leader of the liberation struggle of the Caucasus people.

However, the magnificent scenery of these places, imbued with tranquility, does not really match thoughts of military campaigns and army affairs. Wooded mountains and emerald meadows with cool springs form a truly fertile area.

One of the nice days, we and a group of comrades made a short excursion, going to the old bridge across a river flowing nearby. Crossing the bridge with a chain, we passed by the meadow and entered the forest. Then there was an ascent, but the surrounding beauty, combined with the singing of birds, the chatter of insects and the aroma of herbs, did not allow us to think about tiredness. Having washed up from the spring that came along the way and having drunk its water, we completely restored our strength and began to climb further until we reached a small hut. Here we set up a camp and had a dinner, especially as there was a wonderful panorama of the village of Saribash and the surrounding countryside from here. The sun's rays reflected in the river flowing nearby, forming a unique effect.

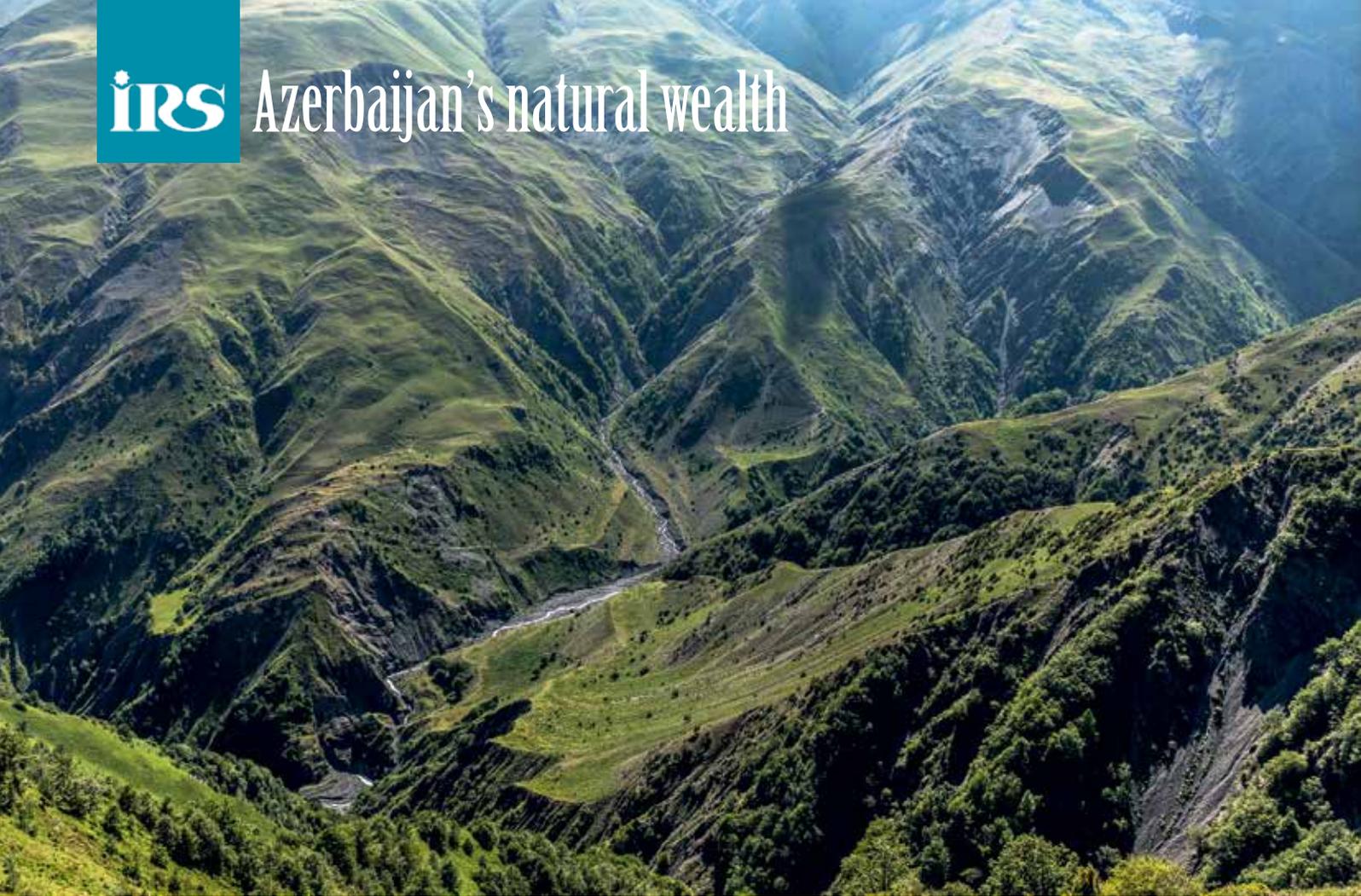
We returned in the evening. Under the rays of the setting sun, everything around was stained with gold, so we wanted to take more and more photos. Admiring this incomparable panorama, we reached the village, where a luxurious dinner awaited us. As we finished the meal, I was called to watch a scene that deserved to serve as a plot for photography: two little goats seemed to be challenging each other for the right to suck mother's milk, continually jumping on the udder with childish bleating and at the same time playfully running back and forth.



The night turned out to be moonlit, while the night sky, dotted with unusually large and bright stars for the inhabitants of the plains, formed a kind of magical tent over us. Before falling asleep in tents, we discussed the plan for tomorrow. The next morning, having got up early, we loaded our belongings and food for horses and set off along the path leading through the forest up to the nearby reserve. Five years ago, in winter, I happened to climb one of the neighboring 3,400-meter peaks. Having traveled a long way uphill, we reached the upper edge of the forest and took a short rest, had a snack and then continued our ascent. So we moved for a long time, and felt thirsty. We drank a lot of incomparably cold spring water from a mountain spring that turned out to be right there, and it turned out that thirst had exhausted our horses much more than us — these wordless creatures drew life-giving water into themselves so greedily.

As we climbed, more and more beautiful landscapes opened before us, and the field of view expanded. We could have a bird's eye view of many lowland areas, and majestic mountain peaks rose around us. Far below was Saribash, and a mountain river twisted intricately not far from it. I fell behind my fellow travelers, because amid





such an abundance of material I had to spend time picking up plots for photography. The comrades climbed one peak, and when I began to photograph them from below, an eagle circling high in the sky turned out to be in the frame, as if he was bathing in the sun's hands. This picture turned out, perhaps, the most spectacular of all that I brought from this tour.

After some time, we passed through a mountain plateau when a dog, apparently a wolfhound, suddenly appeared from somewhere barking at us in alarm. Having climbed on a rock, he stared at us intently, making it clear that we must not enter his territory. After watching us leave, the formidable guard returned to his flock.



I felt hungry and began to look for something to eat. Finally, I noticed the sorrel, after eating which I felt a surge of strength. I must note that the flora of these places, as they say, will not allow you to die, and we received visual confirmation of this very soon when we stopped for lunch. We did not have a supply of tea, but our guide Azerchin immediately found some herbs and brewed tea, which I personally had not drunk before. This tea - a genuine elixir of health that absorbed the aroma and vitality of the mountain meadows of the Caucasus - very quickly relieves fatigue, instills vitality and gives you a positive wave.

In front of us, the snow-capped peak of Akhvay, majestically rose into transcendental heights, on the slopes of which our guide could see a herd of mountain goats through binoculars. By the way, the fauna of these places is similar to its flora: in addition to the mountain goat, the Caucasian ular, wild boar, wolf, lynx, fox, hare, bear, and many species of birds, including birds of prey, are found here. The reserve regime of the territory contributes to this diversity of flora and fauna.

After lunch, we moved to the nearby mountain lake Chanakhur, which looked like a pearl in a precious setting



of surrounding flowering meadows and mountain ranges. Naturally, a mass of new impressions followed from the beauty of these places. I wanted to admire these unparalleled landscapes more and more, but it's time to return ... 🌿



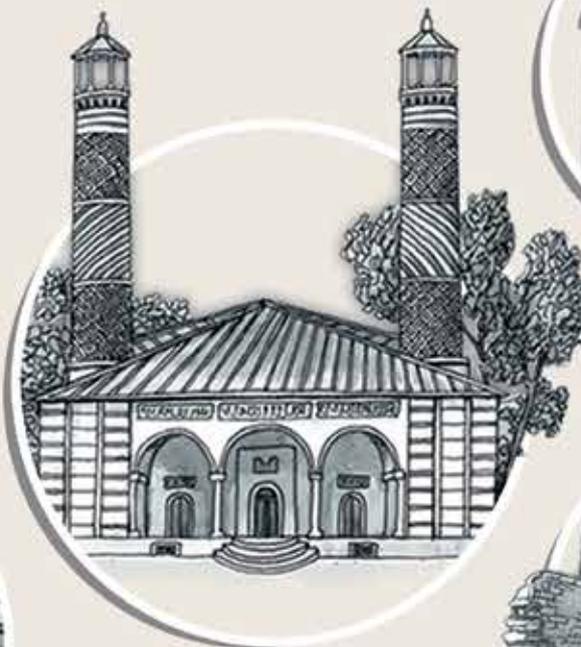
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**KARABAKH IS
AZERBAIJAN!**

