

the **SCREE**

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

February 2020

Volume 63, Number 2



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Grand Teton

Peak of the Month: Peak 6355,
Saint Elias Mountains

"You can't go back and make a new start, but you can start right now and make a brand new ending."

– James Sherman

FEBRUARY MEETING: Wednesday, February 5,
at 6:30 p.m. Nathan Pooler will present
"Mongolia - Cross-Cultural Climbing."

"To maintain, promote, and perpetuate the association of persons who are interested in promoting, sponsoring, improving, stimulating, and contributing to the exercise of skill and safety in the Art and Science of Mountaineering."

This issue brought to you by: **Editor**—Steve Gruhn **assisted by** Dawn Munroe

Cover Photo

Pat Schmalix below the Black Dike on the northeast face of Middle Teton while hiking the approach trail to Grand Teton. Moraine Camp is to the right of Middle Teton.

Photo by Wayne Todd

FEBRUARY MEETING

Wednesday, February 5, at 6:30 p.m. at the BP Energy Center at 1014 Energy Court in Anchorage.

Nathan Pooler will present "Mongolia - Cross-Cultural Climbing." He'll talk about his journey of climbing in Mongolia - the challenges of living and climbing in another country: from laws, interaction with local nomadic families, relationship building with the local climbing community, and climbing competitions.

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/BP+Energy+Center/@61.1900534,-149.8658586,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x56c897b71cbbd81d:0x5058f26b0a2567f1!8m2!3d61.1900534!4d-149.8636699>

Choate's Chuckle - Tom Choate

Q: The climber was health conscious and brought anti-fungal powder on a climb in Yosemite. Why?

Answer: on page 23.

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Hut Needs and Notes

If you are headed to one of the MCA huts, please consult the Hut Inventory and Needs on the website (<http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm/Huts/Hut-Inventory-and-Needs>) or Greg Bragiel, MCA Huts Committee Chairman, at either huts@mtnclubak.org or (907) 350-5146 to see what needs to be taken to the huts or repaired. All huts have tools and materials so that anyone can make basic repairs. Hutmeisters are needed for each hut: If you have a favorite hut and would like to take the lead on checking on the hut and organizing maintenance, the MCA would greatly appreciate your help!

Article Submission: Text and photography submissions for *the Scree* can be sent as attachments to mcascree@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 11th of each month to appear in the next issue of *the Scree*. Do not submit material in the body of the email. Do not submit photos embedded in the text file. Send the photo files separately. Send high resolution file photos separately, including captions for each photo. We prefer articles that are under 1,000 words. If you have a blog, website, video, or photo links, send us the link. Cover photo selections are based on portraits of human endeavor in the outdoors. Please submit at least one vertically-oriented photo for consideration for the cover. Please don't forget to submit photo captions.

For the MCA Membership Application and Liability Waiver, visit <http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm?useaction=members.form>.

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Online? Click me!



Check the Meetup site and Facebook for last-minute trips and activities. Or, schedule one that you want to organize.

Announcements

Trips

February 14-16: Valdez Ice Climbing Festival

February 21-29: MCA Winter Mountaineering School

A comprehensive training program for individuals who are accomplished backpackers who wish to START learning mountaineering skills.

Course of instruction: Trip planning, food preparation, leadership, winter travel, gear selection/preparation, navigation, leave no trace, snow travel, snow anchors, running belay, rope handling, communication, terminology, knots, gear essentials, route finding, glacier travel, crevasse rescue, belaying, avalanche recognition, avalanche rescue, staying warm, nutrition/hydration, winter camping, snow shelters, wilderness medicine, rappelling, ice climbing, winter survival, stream crossing, confidence building, and more. NO course fee; however, students share trip expenses. Certificate of Participation issued when student fulfills course requirements. Lead Instructor: Greg Bragiel.

The Mint Hut will be closed for training February 21-28. If you plan to be in the area, bring a tent and plan to camp outside.

February 29-March 1: Serenity Falls Hut ice-climbing weekend.

Mentorship Program

Interested in furthering your skills? The MCA has a volunteer-driven Mentorship Program that connects beginner and intermediate folks seeking technical experience in specific mountaineering disciplines with mentors who help you gain and work on new skills.

If you would like to become a mentee or mentor, please email mentorship@mtclubak.org.



Goat Rock, 5275 feet, in the Western Chugach Mountains adjacent to West Twin Peak near Eklutna Lake. Taken from Eklutna Lake on January 7, 2020.

Photo by Frank E. Baker.

Cracked Ice (6350 feet), North Ridge, Central Chugach Mountains

Text and photo by Mat Brunton



North ridge of Cracked Ice as viewed from the summit.

After a recovery day from the choss bender up Mount Dimond [Ed. note: see the December 2018 Scree], Taylor Brown recommended the Cracked Ice North Ridge (5.6 MI, Alaska Grade 2, AD) as a reasonable solo and Thompson Pass alpine-climbing classic. It did not disappoint. From the beautiful trailhead cairn on the roadside, up through the epitome of a Chugach climber's trail, the rough trail-less alpine, beautiful glacier, and splitter greywacke, it was the quintessential non-snow season Thompson Pass adventure.

Get over to the Thompson Pass-area Chugach and check out this zone! I actually find the zone more visually stunning in the non-snow seasons, especially the fall (amazing tundra colors), given the enhanced contrasts. Even if you're not into technical climbing, the Cracked Ice Trail provides access to a world-class alpine wonderland (lots of options for backpacking and trekking through this amazing Alaskan wilderness). This spectacular chunk of YOUR public land needs YOU to enjoy it – in order to ensure it will be preserved in a pristine state for future generations! To view additional information on alpine climbing in the Thompson Pass area, visit

<https://www.mountainproject.com/area/107102960/thompson-pass>.

There is a prominent cairn with a beautiful sign, just off the Richardson Highway, that marks the start of the trail.

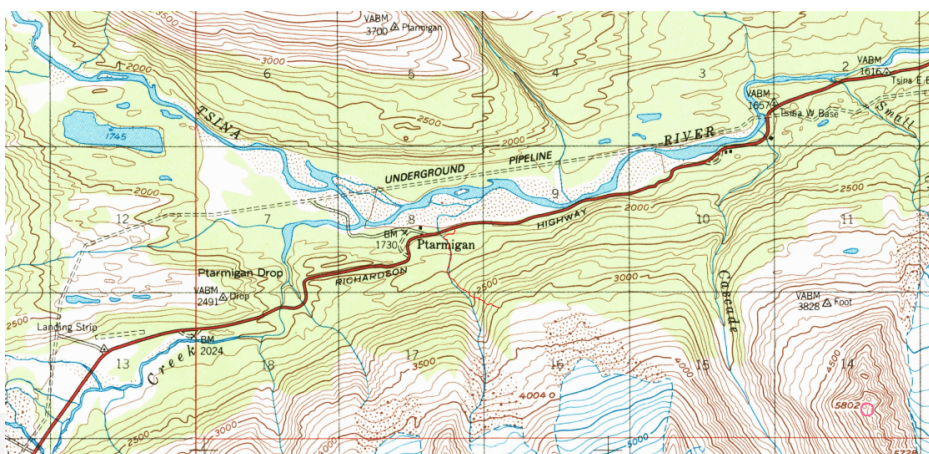
Higher up the views get even better.

At the base of the glacier, the north ridge of Cracked Ice comes into view.

The glacier travel starts out low angle, but steepens (crampons and ice tool necessary for summer-fall conditions) close to the base of the north ridge, where easy fifth-class climbing on good rock (for the Chugach) begins.

To view a video of the day, visit

<https://anchorageavalanchecenter.org/trip-reports/central-chugach/summer/cracked-ice-north-ridge/>.



Map showing the start of the Cracked Ice Trail.

Mount Tiekel (6350 feet) and Peak 6504, Central Chugach Mountains

Text and photos by Mat Brunton



North face of Mount Tiekel

As I sit in a cheap Salt Lake City hotel writing this trip report after skiing and peakbagging several ranges in the Canadian and American Rockies (Bow, Mission, Bitterroot, Swan, Rattlesnake, Sapphire, Gallatin-Hyalite, Teton, and Wasatch) in the past couple months, I feel like I've satisfied much more of my curiosity and further reaffirmed that the Chugach is the greatest and mightiest range on the planet. Furthermore, I've realized that The Greatland is really the greatest land. Socially, politically, culturally, ecologically, spiritually, etc., the Last Frontier is the future and the United States' greatest asset.

To provide some evidence of Alaska's greatness and uniqueness: while the indigenous people have it rough, and future generations will continue to struggle with deep psychological and spiritual wounds inflicted by decades of historical trauma, they haven't been exterminated or forced to relocate to reservation wastelands like their counterparts in the aptly named "Lower 48." They play a significant role in Alaskan economics and politics (as they should), and their sociocultural heritage is visible in everyday Alaskan life (as it should be). I thank the Creator(s) for this, as the Alaskan indigenous peoples' worldviews (and teachings transmitted directly from The Greatland they lived symbiotically with for millennia and have generously shared with the so-called "civilized" world) have provided me with more wisdom and enlightenment than science or any organized religion (western or eastern). The indigenous peoples of Alaska will surely lead the way in regard to The Greatland's inevitable transition to a post-carbon and post-consumer-capitalist society in the coming decades.

More evidence: having spent a month in Montana, faced with striking culture-shock of that state being the least diverse "whitest" place I've ever been, my sentiment has been reinforced that the public schools of Alaska's sociocultural capital (Anchorage) are perhaps the most vivid example of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech coming to fruition. That said, we still have a lot of work to do. As the Reverend and Doctor stated, "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." All of my experiences in Life and America suggest that The Greatland is the most fertile ground for Justice.

Driving through the concrete jungle that is Salt Lake City (as well as the rural highways of the American West) I'm thankful that, while Alaska has become increasingly susceptible to American homogeneity and consumerism, it's a relative respite from billboards, crass commercialism, and over-development. Perhaps more than anything, this trip has made me realize how deeply in love I am with Alaska: that bipolar bitch of a lover that swings me helplessly from the most ecstatic highs to the most depraved lows and has spoiled the rest of North America for me as nothing more than a short-term fling and resounding "meh."

The last thing I was reading before writing this trip report was renowned American ski-mountaineer Andrew McLean's [The Chuting Gallery](#). Compiling media for this trip report, despite that media being summer photos and videos, I couldn't help but fantasize about the endless ski-mountaineering lines of the Central Chugach I was noticing. The Wasatch, while beyond beautiful and special, is

but a tiny corner of the Chugach. But, enough with this Romanticism, and on with the trip report.

On June 26, 2019, between guiding gigs based out of McCarthy, I squeezed in a trip to the Central Chugach for peakbagging and visiting a good friend: Alaskan wilderness climbing and skiing guru Taylor Brown. I've to mention how interesting I find it that back-country tourists drop thousands of dollars to come to Alaska and do expensive (and carbon-intensive) fly-in trips to the various road-less national parks, while the Central Chugach remains an empty, road-accessible void of state land. Thrice throughout the summer of 2019, I found myself comforted by the Central Chugach's embrace after fly-in trips to Wrangell-Saint Elias, Lake Clark, and Gates of the Arctic National Parks. Despite the expense required to get to these remote road-less areas, it was the easily accessible Richardson Highway Central Chugach where I found the most unmatched freedom and solitude.

Little information is available in regard to Central-Chugach adventuring, especially in the summer when the heli-ski companies aren't operating and offering their uber-expensive and carbon-gluttonous services. As detailed in other Central Chugach trip reports, often unscrupulous heli-ski companies have set a dangerous and unsustainable economic precedent for Central Chugach adventure tourism. That has to change. While it'd be more than a stretch to consider any change or transition likely to come in the near future truly sustainable, relatively sustainable ecotourism is a niche that the greater Valdez area needs to tap if the area is to have any longevity in terms of modern human settlement. After all, the road (Richardson Highway) through the Central Chugach is only well-maintained due to it being a national interest tied to the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. Will the road wane, and be closed, along with the pipeline? I hope not; the area should be recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its wilderness value and preserved for future generations' recreational enjoyment.



Boulder Creek valley at treeline via Lance Breeding's restored mining trail.

Central Chugach locals and Alaska lovers like Taylor Brown and Lance Breeding have been doing what they can (perhaps unknowingly) to make this visionary notion a reality by re-establishing and maintaining historical alpine access trails in the area. Taylor's Cracked Ice trail has been featured in another trip report on page

4 of this issue of *the Scree* and Lance has put in a ton of single-handed work on the Boulder Creek alpine-access trail used to access the area of this trip report. Both such trails access endless Alaskan alpine wilderness and provide a portal to the best and wildest road-accessible trekking, peakbagging, and mountaineering in the world.

Lance's trail, upon reaching the alpine, continues up the east fork of Boulder Creek and is marked by cairns. For this trip, I left the trail at the base of the north ridge that led to Point 4970 and Mount Tiekel.

After passing Point 4970, the upper east fork of Boulder Creek and north face of Mount Tiekel came into view.

The north ridge of Tiekel was a sublimely pleasant early-summer snow climb.



The north ridge of Mount Tiekel

Being my 14th summer in Alaska, the summer of 2019 seemed like the one with the most thunderstorms. I chatted with longtime McCarthy residents about the unprecedented June and July thunderstorms that built up almost daily over the Kennicott-and-Root-Glaciers-area peaks before drifting down to the lowlands of the Nizina River and Chitina River valleys. That migration of thunderstorms from the Wrangell Mountains into the low valleys was something that had rarely, if ever, happened prior to summer 2019. Powerful thunderbolts struck directly over Taylor's cabin (near the confluence of the Kennicott and Nizina Rivers) several times throughout the summer.

The summer of 2019 was definitely the smokiest. July into August I drove from Valdez to McCarthy to Anchorage to Fairbanks and back to McCarthy (making a huge loop through the central portion of the state) and the wildfire smoke was inescapable. An equivalent, for scale and comparison's sake, would be the entire Intermountain West (Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado)

being engulfed in smoke. Add to that the reports of salmon dying from overly warm water on the great rivers of Alaska, and it became appalling how many Alaskans and Americans are burying their heads in the sand when it comes to acknowledging the increasingly undeniable reality of anthropogenic climate change.

From the summit of Tiekel, it was an easy hike down the south face-ridge to the col between Tiekel and Peak 6504. From there, great hiking up the north ridge of 6504 led to the summit. The views from that summit were even better!

From the summit of Peak 6504, I returned to the col between it and Tiekel and had the best glissade of my life down the large west-facing gully into the upper east fork of Boulder Creek.

One thing about the extremely sunny, hot, and dry summer of 2019 was that it produced insane wildflower growth throughout the state. I documented more than a dozen varieties on this trip alone.

In closing, the words of Derrick Jensen ring loud and clear when considering these Alaskan wildflowers: *"I know commercials for products I will never use better than I know birdsongs I hear at dawn and dusk. How could I possibly expect to integrate myself as a citizen into the community I at least call home if I can't be bothered to learn even their spoken or sung languages?"* It's a testament to the homogenizing power of modern America's capitalist sociocultural programming that we know more about consumer products than the ecology of our own localities.

To view Brunton's video of the trip, visit <https://anchorageavalanchecenter.org/trip-reports/central-chugach/summer/mt-tiel-peak-6504/>.



View west from the summit of Mount Tiekel with high passes between the east and west forks of Boulder Creek visible.



View from the summit of Peak 6504 into Stuart Creek (prominent valley left of center) and east fork of Boulder Creek (prominent valley at center right) drainages.



The west-facing gully leading from the col between Peak 6504 and Mount Tiekel to the upper east fork of Boulder Creek.

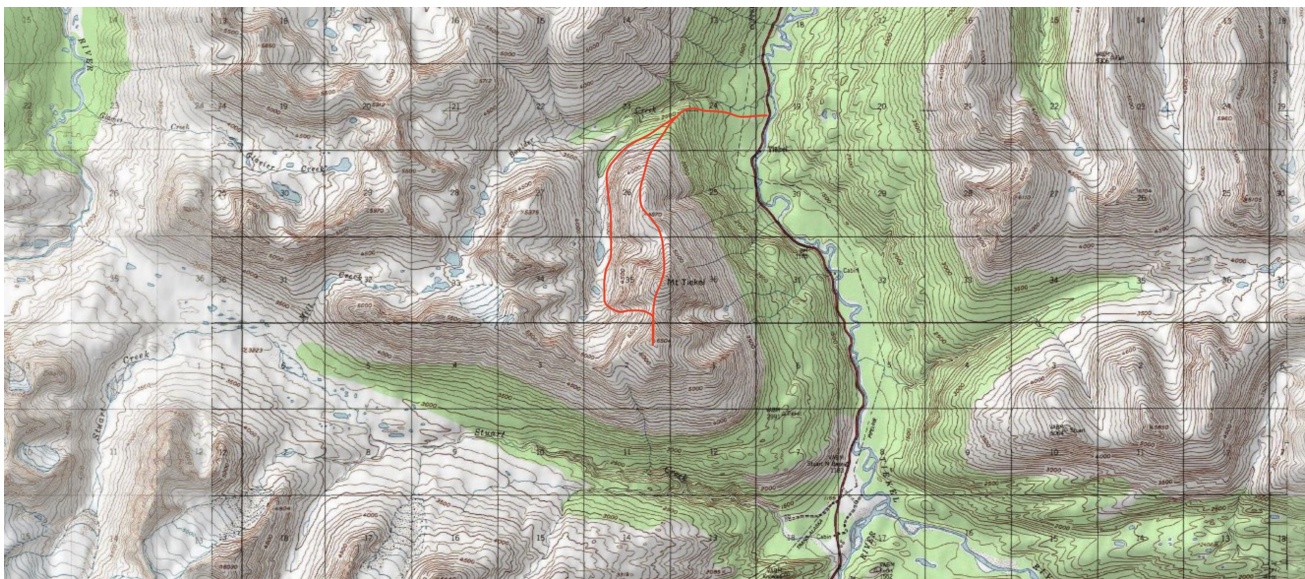
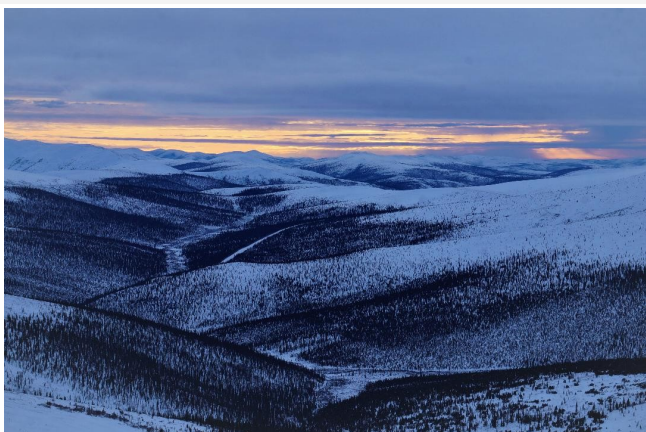


Table Mountain (4472 feet) and Peak 4142, Tanana Hills

Text and photos by Shane Ohms

October 19th, 2019



The Tanana Hills

The Tanana Hills have an unlikely yet undeniable allure. It's just miles upon miles of indistinguishable simple hills and trees. There are no recognizable landmarks. There is no impressive terrain to be spoken of. One could walk 30 miles in one direction and the views really won't change. A mountain man, like myself, should be bored to death by these repetitive, pathetic little hills – but I'm not. You see, in the Tanana Hills, "if you've seen one, you've seen them all." And that's precisely the reason you will want to revisit their wholesome, familiar, and soft beauty.

Ten a.m. Saturday morning – I've overslept. Apparently I hadn't actually set the alarm the night before like I thought I had. It is of little matter this time. My main objective for this weekend had only been to test out a new tent and pair of mountaineering boots. On the drive I consulted my memory of a few draft itineraries, searching for a shorter one that would work within my new time allotment. My decision was ultimately determined by the discovery of increasing amounts of snow on the Steese Highway and the limitations of my summer tires. The truck stopped at Twelvemile Summit. So it was decided; I would go for Table Mountain and a secondary peak of 500 feet prominence located three miles due east of Table Mountain and owning the contour of 4100 feet. In the absence of a surveyed elevation, I will herein call this summit Peak 4142 because my phone found the elevation to be 4142 feet at the summit.

The trip started at noon from the Twelvemile Summit parking lot. It wasn't long before I hit some sections of deep snow and donned my gaiters. There was considerably more snow than I'd anticipated, but it would serve as a good test for my gear. Up on the ridge, I saw the crusted-in marks of a cross-country skier. My post-holing self was a little jealous. Over the course of the trip, the snow up on

the ridges would vary from thin snow cover to knee-deep snow. By 4 p.m., I was on Table Mountain. Yippie. By then the clouds had created a ceiling at a pretty consistent level of about 5000 feet, meaning that everything as far as the eye could see was then visible (the White Mountains and Tanana Hills don't get very high). Far Mountain, at 4694 feet, seemed closest to breaching the clouds. I continued on to Peak 4142.

Traveling solo, I was paranoid of running into wolves and I'd been keeping a good lookout for any black spots moving across the white backdrop. As I was dipping into the saddle en route for Peak 4100, I saw something running on the hillside ahead. It was running away from me, so that was good, but I was still uneasy. I quickly put my 200-millimeter lens on my camera and snapped a picture. I played the picture back and discovered it was a fox and not a wolf. Whew! I'm capable of fighting a fox.

Eventually I wound up on Peak 4142 at 7:30 p.m. with the sun setting. There was a fun stack of rocks that made up the summit of Peak 4142 so that was kind of cool. It was too snowy to know for sure, there weren't any obvious signs of a prior ascent. I pitched the tent just below the rock summit and turned in after chowing some Mountain House and melting water. I had averaged 1 mile per hour for the day. Not super impressive, but who was there to impress out there, huh? The fox?

It snowed a little through the night, but in the morning it was just overcast clouds. The tent had worked and with the two objective peaks under the belt, there wasn't a whole lot

left to hang out for. I packed up my things and followed the ridge trending southwest 3.5 miles back to the highway. After about a mile of walking back to the car, a vehicle coming back from a weekend retreat in Central offered me a ride, saving me from three boring road miles. There was not a lot of truck travel going in either direction that day, so the timing to have caught him was pretty lucky.



Shane Ohms on the summit of Table Mountain with Far Mountain in the distant center.



Tent pitched under Peak 4142.

Hogsback Mountain (6135 feet), Central Chugach Mountains

Text by Shane Ohms

August 3rd, 2019



Ian Borowski on Hogsback Mountain. Meteorite Mountain is to the right of Borowski.

Photo by Shane Ohms

Closer mountain ranges looked less welcoming and Valdez had a promising forecast. I panned around on GoogleEarth, looking for something interesting to do there. I found 6135-foot Hogsback Mountain east of Valdez, buuuut I couldn't dig up any beta on it. That only made me more interested in it. I planned a route that I figured would yield the best success odds, and voila; it worked. Not only that, but it was actually quite easy and painless and the views were great. I solicited the company of renowned YouTube star, YOGOMAN (a.k.a. Ian Borowski) who happened to be moving some belongings to Fairbanks that week.

I met up with Ian after getting off work Friday night. But before we could even get out of Fairbanks, honking cars alerted us that my tailgate was open. We determined that nothing had fallen out, but the stop helped Ian remember that he'd left his shoes at home, so we went back for those before setting out on the road once again. Around midnight we hit construction near Thompson Pass and around 1 a.m., we were sleeping in my truck bed at the Worthington Glacier parking lot. At 8:30 a.m., we were parked at Horsetail Falls, where I believed we could best gain access to a shelf that would guide us between the map's steep gradients and into Snowslide Gulch. Well, after some extremely steep bushwhacking, we made it onto that shelf where we discovered a really nice trail that expediently brought us to Snowslide Gulch.

Meandering up Snowslide Gulch was straightforward and the sun gave us a good beating all the while. Eventually we hit some snow/ice caves where the gulch pinched and we cooled off in them for a little bit. The reprieve from the sun was nice. At that point we ditched the creek and connected fireweed patches leading upward on the south side of the creek. When we topped out of the Snowslide Gulch drainage, we were treated to the southern views. We topped off our water vessels before turning the corner (where the red line in the route image begins) and getting a look at the upcoming, more interesting parts of the climb.



Ian Borowski in Snowslide Gulch on the descent.
Photo by Shane Ohms

A waterfall with high powerful flows prevented us from taking the exact route I had in mind, but improvising is to be expected when exploring a new place, so improvise we did. We stuck to our side of the waterfall, passed a big lake, and successfully crossed the waterfall's inlet stream on snow bridges and ice at the glacier's toe. The glacier ice was exposed, eliminating crevasse danger and we traveled up it easily in our shoes (crampons/microspikes were not needed). We ditched the glacier to get on the south face of Hogsback, ultimately aiming for the south ridge, which was easily followed to the summit.

I reached the summit around 2:30 p.m. and found a lot (like more than 15 separate finds) of orange and pink flagging tape tied to sticks and caught in the rocks in a little bowl feature east of the summit. I can only

assume this was the work of heliskiing operations, but I couldn't think of one intelligent reason why they would have been put up there. I suppose there wasn't one. I mean; the summit is the highest point of the mountain, if you're in a helicopter, you should be able to know you have reached the top when you get there. I pocketed as much of the unaesthetic flagging tape as I could see. When Ian arrived at the summit, we began nearly a full hour of taking in the views. I had never even been to Valdez before, so there was a lot of new terrain to take in. I did my reconnaissance photography while Ian conducted drone cinematography. It was a great day to be on Hogsback Mountain, and only as we departed the summit did some thin clouds start to roll in.

For the descent we took the same way down. We stopped to swim in one of the lakes below the glacier that we had passed on the way up. Down lower we found some thick blueberry bushes and absolutely gorged ourselves for five minutes. Back in Snowslide Gulch, the water level was a bit higher from the day's melting, so instead of crossing a whole bunch, we took favor to walking on the north side of the stream. Once on the trail and en route for our vehicle at Horsetail Falls, we encountered Sean Wisner, a local who was out running the trail with his dog. He said that locals will sometimes climb Hogsback Mountain by the route I described. Instead of downclimbing the steep wall of vegetation at Horsetail Falls, we did as the locals did, and followed the nice trail down to the road and walked the road back to the car, reaching it at 9 p.m. We drove into Valdez for some fish 'n' chips and then drove to a pullout somewhere in the Delta Range where we slept in the truck bed. Sunday morning came and we finished the drive to Fairbanks. It was a great first trip to Valdez and there was certainly a lot more to return for.

YOGOMAN's video of this trip can be viewed at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnKdsuPblaE>.



*Hogsback Mountain route. Leprechaun Peak is in the background.
Photo by Shane Ohms.*



*Shane Ohms in a fireweed patch.
Photo by Ian Borowski*



*Ian Borowski ascending the vegetated wall at Horsetail Falls.
Photo by Shane Ohms*

Lynx Peak (6536 feet), Talkeetna Mountains

Text by Colleen Metzger



Summit view from Lynx Peak.

Photo by Colleen Metzger

I had been to the Bomber Glacier and stood on Bomber Pass, yet I never contemplated the large rocky peak looming to the east of the pass. Apparently I was not the only person who never fully appreciated Lynx Peak. Lynx Peak was so underappreciated it didn't even bear a name in my Gaia app, and so mysterious there was barely any route information online. But Lynx piqued my interest when I saw it listed among the six peaks of the "Soles in the Backcountry" challenge. My friends Gloria and Richard Rasch alerted me to the store Active Soles in Palmer which hosts a challenge every summer: six peaks to climb between May and mid-October, and those who complete all six receive a trophy. The peaks for the 2018 challenge were Government Peak (4781 feet), Matanuska Peak (6092 feet), East Twin Peak (5873 feet), Pioneer Peak (6398 feet), Bold Peak (7522 feet), and Lynx Peak ... and Gloria, Rich, and I had two left: Lynx and Government.

But it was tricky to find information on how to approach Lynx. Usually a quick Google of any peak reveals some hints on a good route. Lynx Peak boasted a few meager descriptions and one lone track in the Peakbagger app that we decided to follow, even though it varied slightly from brief write-ups listed elsewhere. Every summary of the peak suggested going up to Bomber Pass from Reed Lakes and traversing some exposed Class 3 scrambling east toward the peak. A few other routes suggested dropping onto the glacier to circumnavigate some of the scrambling. But the Peakbagger route didn't go via Bomber Pass, and avoided dropping onto the glacier, so in hopes of escaping some of the more exposed scrambling or the added effort of heading down to the glacier just to head back up, we decided to give that random route a try. We were so grateful to have some beta to guide us. I just wish we followed it.

This was supposed to be an easy peak – it was only about another mile and a half to the summit from Upper Reed Lake. We hiked to Upper Reed Lake Friday night to camp. It was one of those stunningly clear, summery days in early September that felt like a gift one had to take advantage of before the darkness of winter descended. We planned to get an early start Saturday morning, wrap up the peak in an hour or two, and be enjoying beers in Palmer by midafternoon.

Which would have been possible. Except for one small hitch.

We picked our way around Upper Reed Lake early Saturday, hurrying to meet the line of sunshine that was glowing teasingly just across the lake, encouraging us away from the chill of our camp. We started uphill, using the phone to find a promising gully to follow, and started

climbing up. Even though the sun was up, the rocks were frozen together, creating the nerve-racking phenomenon where one expected rocks to be loose, but they stayed glommed together ... until the sun gleefully released a rogue rock, and the foothold one anticipated providing solid footing suddenly skittered underfoot.

As we plunged deeper up the gully, the rock walls confounded the phone, leaving our track scattered and confused. We thought we had a good bead on the route, and continued doggedly upward, crossing a firm, frosty snowfield, then scrambling over tiny ball-bearing scree loosely encased in silty dirt, partly firm and frozen and partly soft and slide-y. It got steeper and steeper, until I saw a blue gap between two sharp rocks. I pulled myself up to the ledge and heaved onto the ridge, looking to the right, where the route to Lynx Peak should have been.

But Lynx Peak wasn't there. Lynx Peak was to the left. We were on the completely wrong side of the peak.

The confused phone signal in the gully meant that the phone track we were following had shown us on the right track ... but as we stood on the ridge and the phone updated we saw our path verging wildly from the track we had intended to follow. Our easy little day hike had suddenly become much more complicated.

We knew better – who doesn't acknowledge the pitfalls of relying on phones for navigation? We had watched ourselves veer farther and farther away from Bomber Pass, where we knew the usual route was, but had convinced ourselves we had found some secret sneaky route to the top. And we were now reminded, in the most disheartening manner of all, how dumb it was to trust only phone

navigation.

We picked our way around, hoping to see a route to the top from our side, but from the ridge it was a jumble of giant boulders with sheer faces dropping into the depth of the earth. Without a rope and some serious rock-climbing skill, we weren't going any higher.

We debated our options. The smart and safe option was to head back down, admit defeat, spend another night, and try again the next day. The slightly zanier and more optimistic option was to pick our way across to the other ridge and try to reach Bomber Pass without losing elevation. It was too crushing to head back down ... we agreed to attempt to head to Bomber Pass, acknowledging that if it started to get to late in the day we might still have to turn back.

So we started heading under Lynx Peak, picking our way across frosty snowfields and icy boulders. We lost more elevation than we wanted to, but soon we had nearly traversed over to the west side of the peak.

Now, the phone had been updating as we traversed and, since we weren't sunk in a deep gully, it seemed to be accurately tracking our progress. We now had another decision to make. The Peakbagger route we had been attempting to follow now showed that we were approaching that previous climber's route. Should we trust that route now, or head farther west to Bomber Pass and use the traditional, tested route to the summit?

We decided to try the Peakbagger route one more time. After all, it was right there ... tantalizingly close. The route led us to a narrow chute and we started clambering up. Even though it was then afternoon, the rocks there were cemented in ice. I wondered if maybe that route wasn't typically used because it probably remained frosty and snow-plugged far into summer. Maybe going



*Almost to the summit! Looking a bit worried. Upper Reed Lake in the background.
Photo by Rich Rasch*



*Colleen Metzger and Gloria Rasch during the final push.
Photo by Rich Rasch*



*Colleen Metzger and Gloria Rasch acting like lynx at the summit of Lynx Peak.
Photo by Rich Rasch*

in mid-September (a warm mid-September) was one of the only times it was accessible.

But it turned out to be the fast track to the summit we had been hoping for. We climbed up the chute, the deep sides obscuring the views of the terrain below. We just kept climbing up and up, until the chute widened into a tumble of larger rocks. We hauled uphill, now able to see the Reed Lakes far below, sparkling turquoise in the sun. Then suddenly, there was nowhere farther to go. It's always shocking to expect another mile, another hour, and suddenly be standing on the top. Far below was the Bomber Glacier, the crushed plane glistening weakly. As far as we could see were mountains in every direction, rows and rows of zig-zagging mountains as spiked and plentiful as shark's teeth.

We had made it. We whooped and cheered, and took ridiculous photos posing like Lynx. We started plotting a weekend to bag Government Peak, the last and the easiest in the six-peak challenge. And then we started heading back down, racing to return before dark.

As we scrambled down the mountain, fighting to stay ahead of the shadow that was swiftly falling across the flank of Lynx, we saw the bright dots of our tents and were happy we had decided to keep them pitched for our hike. Thanks to our detour and a desire not to hike back in the dark, we would be spending another night camped out. We straggled back into camp, finding our camp spot on the shore of Upper Reed Lake super crowded – not surprising on a gorgeous Saturday evening. We greeted our neighbors and told them about our adventure, and the important lesson we had been reminded of: never fully rely on a phone!

Constant Change: Backpacking in Gates of the Arctic National Park

Text by Colleen Alexis Metzger



*View to the southwest from day two campsite along the Anaktuvuk River.
Photo by Colleen Metzger*

We planned, and planned, and planned. But Alaska didn't care. The plan was to fly into Anaktuvuk Pass and hike to the Dalton Highway, getting picked up near Galbraith Lake. We had planned the trip for early June after much debate and discussion – we wanted to avoid hunting season, escape the nightmarish midsummer mosquitoes, and evade the heat of late summer. But the spring of 2018 crept along, too slow and too cold, and as we watched the weather reports up in Gates of the Arctic National Park, our plan seemed less and less feasible. All the mountain passes we would need to cross in order to reach the Dalton Highway were still deeply laden with snow. We envisioned post-holing through rotten, thigh-deep summer snow. We imaged thundering avalanches spilling all that unstable snow down on us. And we finally made the call – we couldn't safely make it to the Dalton.

A week before our trip, Shane Docherty, Maureen Peterson, Brian Cox, Mike Mitchell, Janetta Norvel Smith, and I scrambled to change our plans. We canceled the shuttle from the Dalton, booked a re-

turn flight out of Anaktuvuk Pass, decided upon a less-dangerous-sounding out-and-back trek, and re-thought all the gear we had packed – it sounded still wintry above the Arctic Circle. On June 6, 2018, we left Fairbanks and landed at the teeny “airport” in Anaktuvuk Pass. We filled our water bottles at the sink, used a flush toilet one last time, and were soon crossing the John River, trudging up the gravel pit, and striding across the tundra away from town.

We hiked out of town through a virtual bone yard, caribou antlers and bones strewn *everywhere*, watching the colorful smear of Anaktuvuk Pass slowly recede behind us. All the bones were unnerving at first – some antlers were deliberately staked into the ground, posed like macabre cairns. The rolling tundra looked flat and welcoming as we marched ahead – no moraines, loose scree, or cracked glaciers to navigate there. But I soon realized the inviting blanket of tundra grass was mischievously bumpy and uneven. The ground was an ankle-snapping trap of spongy tussocks interspersed with marshy, damp pockets that slurped legs calf-deep into chilly, mucky wa-

ter. The day was sunny and clear, the barren landscape spiked with caribou bones gorgeous, but my gaze kept straying to the ground, watching each step to avoid a twisted ankle.

We made good progress across the tundra, until we arrived at our first major obstacle, the Anaktuvuk River. That early in the season

it was still primarily sheeted in ice, but we found an open area and strapped on our water shoes. I have jumped into glacial lakes, crossed icy rivers, but nothing has been as spectacularly painful as crossing the Anaktuvuk River. The river wasn't that deep – maybe knee-deep at worst – and there were multiple sandbars braided across the river where our feet got a break from the cold. But within moments of walking into the river my feet were numb; soon they felt separate from my body, swollen chunks of meat my chilled legs

were balanced upon. Something heavy brushed my calves, and I realized it was dinner-plate sized shards of ice gliding downstream. Rocks filled my water shoes and they could have been slicing my feet to ribbons, but I felt nothing but a screaming numbness clawing from my feet up into my skull.

When I collapsed on the other side of the river and tried to warm my swollen, numb feet I told my friends that I wasn't doing that river crossing ever again. "We have to live out here forever," I announced with finality.

I hobbled along on my throbbing foot-stumps, enjoying the sun and the easy breeze, and soon we found a charming campsite with a view of the river. As soon as we dropped our packs, I ran into the brush to go to the bathroom. When I headed back into camp, everyone was staring at me.

"What?" I asked, confused. *Had they all been watching me poop?* They all pointed in the direction I had come from. A brown bear was lumbering down the mountain right toward my bathroom. He

was a safe distance away, but it brought surging forth my great fear of dying with my pants around my ankles.

But at least we could see any bears that might draw near. The wide-open tundra combined with the nearly-solstice sunshine 100 miles north of the Arctic Circle meant it was so warm and so bright

it was hard to sleep. Due to the unusually cold weather forecasted, I had packed my four-season tent and warmer layers than usual. But even at 2:00 a.m., the sun was California-afternoon-beach-party-bright, and my tent felt like an oven. That made sleeping rough, but was glorious for hiking.

Day two was another sunny day, and we found an all-terrain vehicle trail that kept us free from the ankle-destroying bumpy tundra. We were able to hike briskly, still winding along next to the Anaktuvuk River. There were

fewer and fewer bones scattered the farther we got from Anaktuvuk Pass, and fewer hunters tooling around on their Argos (coincidence?). We were heading toward Ernie Pass and were making good time. Our plan was to head into the pass, and then do some day hikes from there. The second night we spread out next

to some low, rolling mountains, including one shaped uncannily like a boob.

Day three dawned chillier (I actually got *inside* my sleeping bag for the first time), but was sunny and breezy again by the time we struck out hiking for the day. *We found a hidden backpacking gem*, I thought, elated. The sun had shone brightly against a perfect blue sky for three days straight. Aside from the chilly water crossing, it seemed more summery than Anchorage on its best day. *I am coming here to camp every summer*, I decided.

Three days of comfortable hiking in a tank top with no mosquitoes dive-bombing me was all it took to convince me Gates of the Arctic was a secret land of constant summer.



*At "Whale Camp" in the sun.
Photo by Colleen Metzger*



*Waking up to snow at "Whale Camp."
Photo by Colleen Metzger*

And if the decadent weather wasn't amazing enough, we also saw a wolf. I had only seen one wolf in the backcountry, just a streak sprinting across the Ballfield near O'Malley Peak. But this wolf was right next to us. The Anaktuvuk River was still laden with ice, melting and cracking into brilliant blue chunks. We could see open water, but the bulk of the river was buried in the deep, glacier-blue ice. So this wolf was drinking from the bit of exposed river when he caught sight of us. In his effort to escape, he leapt up on the ice and got his forepaws onto the top of the ice. But he didn't quite make the leap and his back legs pedaled desperately against the slick ice, failing to gain purchase. He looked like a cartoon character. He fell back into the water, then leapt at the ice again and again, growing more frantic. It was the most impressively ungraceful thing I'd ever seen.

The wolf finally ran downriver, found a lower section of ice, and successfully launched himself onto the ice. He skittered feverishly away, crossing the river and running up the opposite hill. Finally convinced he put enough distance between him and us, he lay down, panting, to examine us.

After we saw the wolf, we entered a whole new valley. We did have to re-cross the Anaktuvuk River to head toward Ernie Pass, but it was more braided and therefore less deep and bone-chillingly cold. We found a rock formation that looked like a whale, pretty much the only sheltering element in the valley, and decided camp there for the next two days.

The next morning dark gray clouds were knitted low overhead. Usually any clouds in the sky dissolved by the time we hit the trail, but on day four the clouds lingered overhead as we trekked toward Ernie Pass, leaving Whale Camp behind, our daypacks blissfully light. The terrain was, as ever, damp, marshy, and bumpy; the ATV trail had long since disappeared. Travel slowed down due to several water crossings, but we barreled on, eager to reach the Continental Divide. We all raced eagerly toward the Continental Divide, until we crossed it and realized ... Earth looks totally the same on both sides of the divide. Refusing to be disappointed, we took overly dramatic, goofy photos to celebrate. After the Conti-

ental Divide we inched along a steep gorge, finally dropping low, low, low into the Valley of Precipices. The day was waning, and we could just peek down the Valley, but if we kept walking we would hit the North Fork of the Koyukuk River and the actual Gates of the Arctic.

It was a long day, about 14 miles, so although wanted to keep exploring, we had to head back to Whale Camp. As we trekked back, fat raindrops started to spatter against us. Unavoidable in Alaska, I guess. My head down, still keeping an eye out for deadly tussocks, I appreciated the crazy foliage of the tundra: rubbery tube plants that looked like dead, witchy fingers, fluffy humps of grass with

round flowers bobbing on the end of long, delicate stems that looked uncomfortably like sunken heads of Dr. Seuss characters and made me feel like I was squashing their little heads with each step, and downy stalks with purple octopus tentacles curling around them. The tundra foliage always seemed like it should only exist under the sea or in a bizarre dream. It stayed cool and rainy for the whole hike back, and I was suddenly very happy to return to a four-season tent.

The next morning I unzipped my tent to find the ground carpeted white with shimmering snow. The wind was whipping, and when I climbed out of my tent, the snow flurries hammered my face like gravel. Between the cold and the snow and the wind, our plan for the day went from having a chill day hike to spending the day hunkered in our tents. At one

point I clawed out my tent and saw the underwear I had washed the day before frozen solid, thwacking stiffly in the wind, icicles hanging off the crotch.

The next morning it was still snowing, the rolling mountains now fluffy white mounds. We packed up camp and started to head back toward Anaktuvuk Pass. On our return we hiked the opposite side of the valley, taking leisurely side trips into the deep canyons lining the route back to civilization. We found a scenic canyon to camp in that provided a nice windbreak, so we decided to set up a base camp for two nights so we could do some day hikes.



*"Boob mountain" in the background.
Photo by Colleen Metzger*

Early on day seven, I started awake. It was pitch dark, and something was *ssssshing* against the side of my tent. My whole body went rigid with fear: *bear?* I slowly unzipped the door and peered out, just as a slab of snow sloughed off my tent and crumpled to the ground. Sunlight blazed in, and I realized simultaneously that a) my tent was buried in snow and b) it was 8 a.m., but the snow had kept my tent dark as deepest night. An overnight blizzard had transformed our canyon into a winter wonderland. We bundled up and went hiking up our canyon, which was now trimmed with long, fierce icicles. The rocks in the river looked like sleeping polar bears, piled high with fluffy snow. The canyon ended with a waterfall crashing into a small, perfectly-round pool fringed with ice. Freezing or not, it looked so appealing, so clear, so lovely that I peeled off my clothes and plunged into the icy bathtub, treading water as long as I could stand the cold.

I met up with everyone else down on the gravel bar by the river, where the leisurely hike had ground to a halt when everyone realized that the gravel bar was littered with fossils. The group was sifting through the rubble, pulling up rocks stamped with ancient creatures and foliage.

We spent the next few days working our way back toward Anaktuvuk Pass at a causal pace. We had prepared for grueling days to make our original goal of the Dalton Highway, but our adapted plan wasn't nearly as arduous as we were used to. We made sure to take long lunches, to clamber over unique features, and really appreciate the landscape of the Gates of the Arctic.

Day nine I went to bed with the sun shining hard, and I hoped the end of our trip might be as sunny and warm as the first few. But when I clambered outside my tent to pee early in the morning, damp, sticky snow clung to the sides of my tent. We had planned to start hiking at 9 a.m., but waited until 10:30, crossing our fingers that the snow might slow down. When it didn't, we gamely geared up and trudged forward, the route totally socked in. *At least the cold had frozen the marshy tundra*, I thought, forcing myself to be merry. The lumpy tundra was a lot safer and drier frozen.

When we hit the shore of the Anaktuvuk River, my toes curled involuntarily at the memory of the icy water crossing. I assumed the cold weather would make the return crossing even worse. But blessedly, the cold had slowed the massive flow of water, and the river, while chilly, was much lower and easier to cross than it had been previously. And the deadly ice chunks were no longer zooming downstream and bashing into our legs. I mean, I wore socks this time and my feet were still useless lumps by the end. But it felt slightly less terrible than before.

Day ten we trudged back into Anaktuvuk Pass. We spent time exploring the town, which didn't take long. We ogled the price tags

at the small store in town – \$11 for a carton of soy milk and \$17 for a jug of Simply Orange orange juice. We also marveled at the kindness of the clerk, who had his roommate drive a cell-phone charger over on his ATV so we could take turns charging our dead phones. We bought candy so tough it had probably been on the shelves for years, and a bag of Doritos that was closed with masking tape (sounds like the unpressurized airplanes means the bags explode and they simply tape them shut and plunk the bags on the shelf for sale). The museum was closed. The restaurant was closed. The library was closed. Anaktuvuk Pass didn't seem like a wild place to spend the weekend. We set up camp in town near the airport, where we ate stale Doritos, went to bed early, and prepared to return south of the Arctic Circle, where it was warm and dry. We had a great trek in the surprise winter of the endless summer, but I was ready to head home.



Janetta Norvel Smith, Brian Cox, and Maureen Peterson in the blizzard.
Photo by Colleen Metzger



From left: Brian Cox, Maureen Peterson, Shane Docherty, Mike Mitchell, and Colleen Metzger at the Continental Divide.
Photo by Janetta Norvel Smith

Le Grand: Grand Teton (13770 feet), Teton Range

Text and photos by Wayne Todd



Eastern aspect of the Teton Range with Grand Teton at right.

Certain peak names conjure up images, from actual pictures, experience, or readings. These include Denali, Rainier, Whitney, and the Grand. The latter I wanted to climb, though not because of the naming history.

The Teton Range, and the Grand Teton, were named by French fur trappers and *teton* meant teat, or more politically correct, breast, in French. I suspected those men had spent too much time trapping together and not enough time socializing, or at least exploring the flanks of the Grand. The Shoshone people called the mountains *Teewinot*, which meant many pinnacles.

Knowing a climb of the Grand involves some rock climbing, I enlisted the company of an avid rock (and ice climber), Pat Schmalix. So on a cold, dark, stormy August night ... OK, it was actually just dark when Pat picked me up at the airport in his custom Chevy RV van. We bantered with proper greetings, "My mom never told me to accept rides with strangers in vans," to which Pat replied "But I have candy." I was in.

After "some" driving, to me as a passenger, he always drove (I volunteered), maybe "a lot" of driving to him,

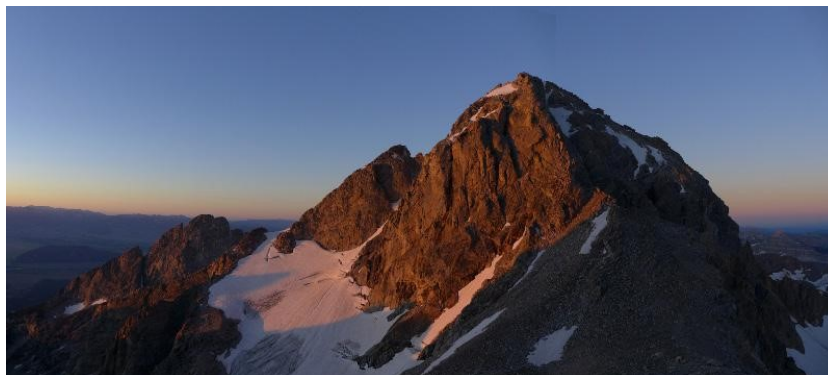
we find ourselves in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, which is named ...

We were at the Jenny Lake Ranger Station an hour before opening the following day, as we didn't have a camping permit. The morning was crisp, clear, and it was enjoyable chatting with others waiting in line. There were also popular trails, so not all of the few dozen waiting wanted Grand permits. Soon we were being assisted by one of the very helpful rangers and seemingly too easily, we have the camping permit desired, Moraine Camp for two nights, and the mandatory bear can (but oddly, not mandated wag bags, for Moraine only).

We spent the day climbing at the Rodeo Wall (thanks, Teton Mountaineering, for beta), a scenic crag just above the Snake River. More correctly, Pat climbed and I climbed and flailed, especially

when others arrived. And later there was the strewing out of gear for deciding what and who-carries-what packing.

The next morning we parked in the **grandiose** Lupine Meadows parking lot and hiked out the Valley Trail. The trails in the Lower 48 were impressive; for sustainability, signage, grade,



Northeast aspect of Middle Teton as viewed from the base of Grand Teton.

and maintenance (good enough even for **grand**parents and **grand**-kids). The **grand**eur included trailside flowers (perhaps some **grandiflora**) and as we gained some elevation, the lakes at the base nestled in forest and then panning away to prairie. One right trail exit, then left exit and then we had a **grand**standing (bustling) mountain stream on our left, and more wildflowers. We didn't hear much **aggrand**izing from descending climbers on the Teton mountain-specific trail. I was a bit surprised as to the number of people and impressed that probably 40% were women.

After some switchbacks with still ongoing scenery, we leveled out and entered the Moraine camping area. Right off we spotted a **grand** site (OK, last **grand** word, I swear), that was quite level with prolific rock walls, not too far off the main trail, and within ¼-mile of running water. In addition to watching the hikers, we also saw numerous ravens, songbirds, and friendly, plump marmots. That camp consisted of a vast field of barrel- to house-sized boulders.

The star display was mesmerizing, but not enough to keep us up and out of the tent. Speaking of which, we used Pat's Big Agnes Fly Creek 2, which was fine for two smaller folks, but Pat was not smaller. But, it was actually fine even with a medium and small person.

Hiking by headlamp at 5, our lights shined along with numerous others, from our camp, the camp below (Platforms), and the camp above (Saddle). There was enough civil twilight by the fixed lines to pocket them. That section was fairly easy and resolved how people ascended the seemingly vertical rock from afar (foreshortening). We noted two huts in the Lower Saddle, and a sprinkling of tents, but you'd really want a great rock wall or bomber tent to camp there.

The trail was easy to follow, but we also tracked where others above were going. Once in the main gully, there seemed to be numerous ascent routes. We wanted to traverse over to the upper Exum Ridge, but as we ascended the main gully, between having no idea where to traverse and elevation issues, we acknowledged

that the Owen-Spalding was our route of the day. The sunrise was gorgeous and the dusky light on Middle Teton led to "more than one" picture. I tried to be discreet with the shutter clicking, as not everyone appreciated pictures of themselves.



Pat Schmalix taking a break below the Black Dike that splits the north-east face of Middle Teton while on the approach to Grand Teton.

At the upper saddle, a strong, brisk wind had a family of four clothing and roping up, though, as this was just routine for them. At the Belly Crawl minutes later, in deeper shade and wind, we got stopped at a traffic jam. It was approaching butt-ass- cold and even with long underwear, two light puffers, and a garbage sack (not too proud to pull that out of my pack), I was still shivering. The youngest of the family was 10 years old. Didn't know what I was doing at 10, but it definitely wasn't anything like that. That stopped adults from whining about the cold.

There was a brief discussion as to who was leading, but not wanting to add to the jam cluster, Pat led and once we got moving, he was on a mission, and very efficient. The Belly Crawl was a bit overhyped, though it would definitely be fatal if one were to fall there. It was more like a hunched walk with hands on a rock rail. We got passed by a couple soloists. Really, they were going to down-climb that?

As he warned, the father of the family stepped in just as I stepped out of holds. Pat saw an opportunity to pass a team with a different exit and we got to flatter rock. He led out again up a chimney with ice smears, which also sported an old piton, then up large boulders. Above that, we left the rope for the mini-hike to the summit.

Just to be moving again was a relief and then on the upper ridge we got direct sun with warmth and then on top there was much less wind. Dang, fantastic views and a reasonably warm hangout and there was no storm threat (even though we were on top early enough to avoid lightning danger). And it was bluebird. That peak was much higher than its body-part neighbors, though some of them looked craggier with the pocket glaciers and snowfields. Below that, luscious lakes butted against the peak bases, with a forest



The bustle of activity on the trail from Moraine Camp.

boundary and then the expansive skin-hued flats.

I ask a female guide as she headed down with clients, "How many times have you climbed the Grand?" She responded, "About seventy!" We were off shortly after, rappelled parallel to them, and after brief reconnoitering, queued in line for the main rappel. Chatting with her again, she guided all over, including Alaska. Exum Guides was so kind, and practical as to leave a main rope for the rappel. Which was great as it was a 50- to 60-meter rappel. That explained how the soloists so nonchalantly passed by earlier.

Hiking down the gully, one quickly realized that one couldn't descend just anywhere. There was also rockfall consideration of those below, and in search of hiking poles, I ended up presumably off route to the left. Somewhere I squeezed through a rock hole, possibly the needle? And then found sunglasses on a rock pedestal. It was good to get back in the main gully and in the sun again, then without wind, so we took a deserved break (and delay). A couple we'd seen previously stopped to chat and were quite grateful for Ritz crackers, as they were day tripping the Grand with just energy packets. From Wisconsin, they were much appreciating steeper terrain.

At the lower saddle, we found the famous garden-hose water source. The pikas around there were large, and brave; I wondered if they'd become carnivorous. Back at camp, we checked out the recently vacated cave site, which would be great in high winds, but more suitable for bivouacs. A fox trotted by, up there for human food or a possible pika or marmot? Camp entertainment also included frequently resetting the middle tent pole, as a side wind frequently offset it. As the guide and French clients hiked by, I blurted "*A demain*," an odd flashback to unused French. And we didn't see them the next day.

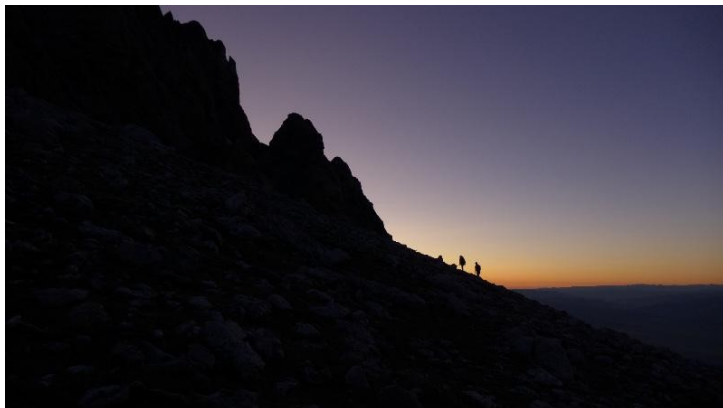
We were in bed fairly early, but didn't really appreciate our proximity to the main trail, as most parties, including very early the next morning, stopped nearby for a break and chatting. Somewhere we overheard a daughter was climbing the Grand while her father was guiding it.

We were hoping for a sunshine with warmth on the tent morning, but the sun didn't make it around the south ridge of Disappointment Peak until almost 9, just before we hiked down. Then it was quickly warm, and accenting all the trail flowers and scenery. Forget-me-nots, moss campion, and Indian paintbrush were some plants I recognized from Alaska. We encountered plenty of folks that day, also, more so as we merged to the bigger trails. Pat politely stepped off trail for almost every ascending person.

Back at the ranger station, they didn't know how many folks really climbed the Grand because of commercial permits and day trippers not needing permits. On our extended day trip, I'd guess around 40 per day. We were able to shower at the American Al-

pine Club Climbers' Ranch, my first visit despite being a long-term member. Later we burgered it at Liberty in Jackson Hole, which is named ... (look it up).

If you'd like an awesome rock-climbing partner for a trip who does all the driving and van cooking and ... Pat's number is, "HA, good luck with that."



Above: Fellow mountaineers approaching the Grand Teton climbs.

Below: The long rappel with fixed rope.



Pat Schmalix (left) and Wayne Todd enjoying the views and warmth on the summit of Grand Teton.

Peak of the Month: Peak 6355, Saint Elias Mountains

Text by Steve Gruhn, photos by Earl Redman

Mountain Range: Saint Elias Mountains

Borough: Haines Borough

Drainages: Jarvis Glacier, Little Jarvis Glacier, and Saksaiia Glacier

Latitude/Longitude: 59° 23' 20" North, 136° 25' 33" West

Elevation: 1937 meters (6355 feet)

Adjacent Peaks: Mount Henry Clay (7405 feet), Peak 5768 in the Jarvis Glacier and Little Jarvis Glacier drainages, and Peak 5725 in the Little Jarvis Glacier and Glacier Creek drainages

Distinctness: 866 feet from Mount Henry Clay

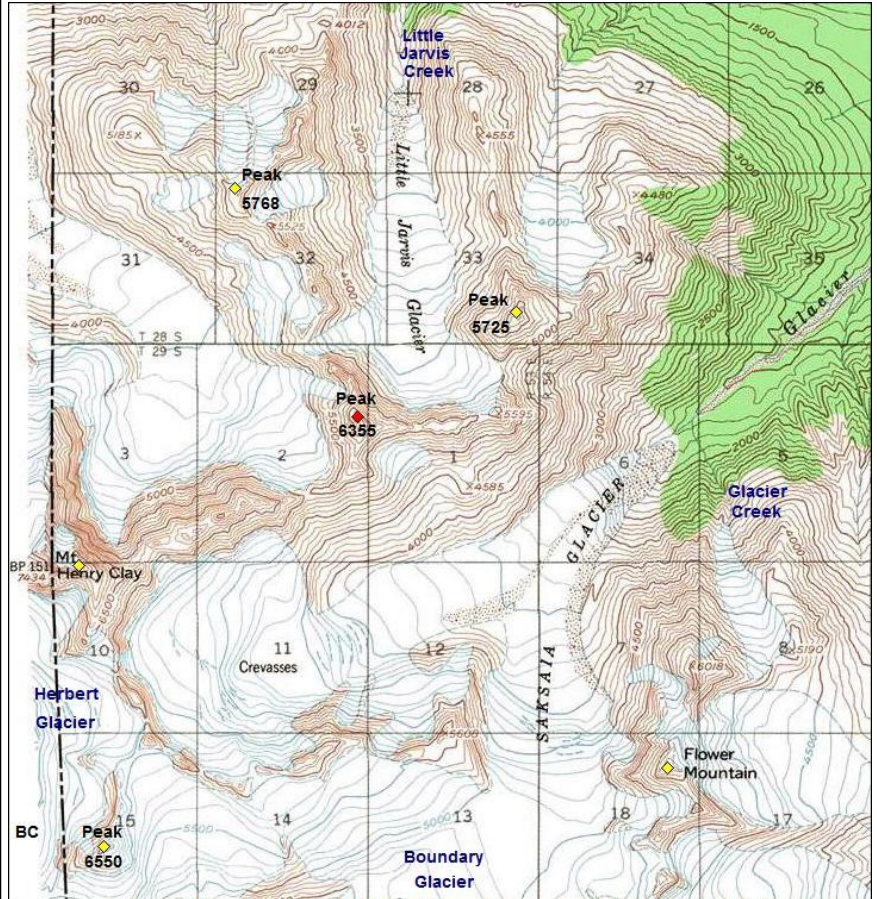
Prominence: 866 feet from Mount Henry Clay

USGS Map: 1:63,360: Skagway (B-4); 1:25,000: Skagway B-4 NW

First Recorded Ascent: August 1984 by Earl Redman and another fellow

Route of First Recorded Ascent: South ridge

Access Point: 5489-Foot saddle between Peak 6355 and Mount Henry Clay



Map created with TOPO!® ©2003 National Geographic (www.nationalgeographic.com/topo)

In an effort to create a geological map of the Skagway (B-4) quadrangle, Earl Redman traveled throughout the Klehini River region near the Canada border southwest of the Haines Highway in the summer of 1984. In August of that year, Redman and another fellow were flown via helicopter from the 33-Mile Roadhouse on the Haines Highway east of Big Boulder Creek and west of Little Boulder Creek to the 5489-foot (1673-meter) saddle east-northeast of Mount Henry Clay. Redman described the landing site at the col as a one-skid touch-down.

From the saddle Redman and his partner conducted geological work as they hiked and scrambled northeast and then north up the south ridge of Peak 6355 to its summit. They continued nearly



*South aspect of Peak 6355 (at center).
The east shoulder of Mount Henry Clay is at left.*

a mile down the east ridge of Peak 6335 to a 1728-meter (5669-foot) point, where they turned around and ascended the east ridge of Peak 6335, reaching the summit a second time in the same day. They then descended the north-northwest ridge of the peak to a 1682-meter (5518-foot) point where they were picked up by a helicopter and returned to the 33-Mile Roadhouse.

Later that same month Redman had been conducting

geological work along Little Jarvis Creek and then was airlifted by helicopter to a landing site north of the 1227-meter (4026-foot) point on the north-northeast ridge of Peak 5768 between the Jarvis Glacier and the Little Jarvis Glacier. From that point he hiked solo up the ridge to Peak 5768 and continued southeastward along the snowy ridge to Peak 6355, still wearing the Xtratufs he'd

been wearing along the creek bottom. He descended the northwest ridge to the same 1682-meter point where he was again picked up by a helicopter and returned to the 33-Mile Roadhouse. He described the northwest ridge of Peak 6355 as a hike, except for the spires in the quarter mile north of the summit, which required a bit of scrambling. Afterward a Canadian geological party mused about the Xtratuf tracks, calling Redman "the gumboot man."

I don't know of any other ascents of Peak 6355.

The information for this column came from my correspondence with Earl Redman.



East ridge of Mount Henry Clay as seen from the south ridge of Peak 6355.

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

December 17, 2019 at 5:30 p.m., 3900 C Street, Suite 900

Roll Call

Mike Meyers (President) - Present
Gerrit Verbeek (Vice-President) - Present
Jordan Haffener (Secretary) - Absent
Katherine Cooper (Treasurer) - Present
Tom Meacham (Director) - Present
Jonathan Rupp Strong (Director) - Absent
Lila Hobbs (Director) - Present
Andy Kubic (Director) - Present
Heather Johnson (Director) - Present
Nathan Pooler (Director) - Present
Visitors:

Scribe: Gerrit Verbeek

Committee Reports

President (Mike Meyers)

- MCA Shirts – Someone want to lead this task up?
 - Nathan Pooler to lead this effort
- Alaska Mountaineering and Hiking appreciation – spoke with them, they love the idea of a summer barbecue parking lot thing.
- December 3 meeting with Kurt Hensel

- Even with a Special Use Permit we will still have to give Kurt a heads up prior to event.
- SUPs in Chugach State Park are for heli-ops (heli operator has to have CSP license/trails/events over 20).
- If the trip is free to participants, then SUP is free.
- Hatcher Pass: under 50 – nothing/over 50 – Division of Mining, Land, and Water.
- If hut guiding allowed, how many people/nights/trips per year/time of year/money?
 - ◆ Put some amendments in the participation permit to put focused dates that they can use the huts (i.e., Tuesday through Thursday) or guided parties have to become MCA members.
 - ◆ Need to go through the remaining boxes to try and locate our permit for the huts. Katherine will give the remaining boxes to Tom.
- Communication within club
 - Listserv – Maintaining the Listserv for now, but not paying to archive sounds good as a plan to move forward – unless the board moves to eliminate the Listserv in the future.
 - Is Meetup worth the continued expense if we have a number of other ways to reach MCA members, including the members-only Listserv?

- Meetup is approximately \$200 per year, or \$98.96 every six months. It currently has 988 members (it is not MCA members only) and has a few partner posts (including some that got responses) in the past year – but seems to average one post every two months or so. That means we're paying approximately \$30 for each post to be available, haha. That is not to say that it couldn't be a great resource if we decided to use it, we consistently get new members on there (recently has been one or two per week). We are paid through January 2nd.
(<https://www.meetup.com/TheAlaskaMountaineers/>)

Vice President (Gerrit Verbeek)

- Gear budget.
 - Instead of purchasing gear, reserve budget for AMH rentals for trip leaders who need equipment.
 - Alternatively: evergreen gear with raffles.
- *Action – Garrett – Check with Jayme Mack for what gear we need for Icefest.
 - Work on a plan to consolidate, liquidate old gear.
- Christmas party – Matanuska Brewing double-booked us, so we switched to Pizza Man. More than 60 attended?
 - Pizza was \$750 (Mike and Gerrit made a judgment call after \$500 was spent).
 - Mount Baldy hike – four people.
- *Action – Heather to send thank you letter to Pizza Man.
 - How involved do we want to get with supporting visiting alpinists in the 2020 Alaska Range season? Couch-surfing and ride-share lists?
- *Action – Create a signup flyer and present it to members to get a feel for interest.
 - Speaker for January – Luc Mehl – Human-powered exploration.

Secretary (Jordan Haffener)

- MCA general meeting reservations are up to date.
- Board meeting locations reserved for future meetings at BP Energy Center.
- Curtis Townsend.

Treasurer (Katherine Cooper)

- Budget submitted to *the Scree* and will run in *the Scree* for two months. Voted on at January meeting.

Liability Committee (Tom Meacham)

- December 3 meeting with Kurt Hensel.
 - Even with a SUP we will still have to give Kurt a heads up prior to event.
 - SUPs in CSP are for heli-ops (heli operator has to have CSP license/trails/events over 20).
 - If the trip is free to participants then SUP is free.

- Hatcher pass: under 50 – nothing/over 50 – Division of Mining, Land, and Water.
- If hut guiding allowed, how many people/nights/trips per year/time of year/money.

Parks Advisory (Tom Meacham and Ralph Baldwin)

- Tom is planning on attending the next Parks Advisory Committee meeting.
 - Was unable to attend.

Trips Committee (Needs chair)

- January – Icefest event in either Caribou Creek, Knik Gorge, or Hunter Creek
 - Mike and Nathan to work on this.
 - Martin Luther King Day weekend could be a good time to do it – Sunday, January 19, 2020.
- February – February 28 to March 1 – Serenity Falls Hut – sage request for the hut submitted, but we have not yet paid.
- March – Heather to lead and coordinate – Turnagain Tailgate.
- April – Eklutna traverse trip led by Mike (tentative).
- May – MCA R.A.C.E [Recreational Alpine Cooperative Event].
 - Mandatory to have a partner - Capped at 25 teams of two – contact Division of Mining, Land, and Water.
 - Two groups:
 - ◆ Beginner - Race to Bomber.
 - ◆ Advanced - Race to Bomber, then Holden, and back to Bomber.
 - Intentions for an overnight.
 - Going to keep working the plan.
 - Cost: \$20 discount for members.
 - Will need required gear list.
 - Will need to develop a plan to reduce liability – i.e., forecast plan, safety plan, gear and skill requirements.
 - AMH for beacon/shovel/probe rentals.
 - Plan to be set and reviewed by February.
- June – Summer Solstice Campout on Flattop Mountain.
- July – Hub meet-up to break into side trips – event format over rigid trip format.
 - Powerline Pass, Rabbit Lake, Rainbow Ridge.
- August –
- September – Matanuska Icefest.
- October –
- November –
- December – Christmas Party.

Training Committee (Gerrit Verbeek)

- Crevasse-rescue training – December 7 and 8 notes.
 - 18 Students, five instructors.
- One student requested a certificate of completion.
 - Hand out certificate per request basis.

- AMH wants to donate a box of older gear – contact Renee.
- Gerrit received two Tracker 2 beacons and other avy gear from a friend who is moving

Scree (Steve Gruhn, Dawn Munroe)

- Monthly submission deadline by the 11th of each month.
- Reach out to APU/UAA Outdoor Studies/Journalism to get volunteers? Design principles and real world experience.

Huts Committee (Jonathan Rupp Strong, Greg Bragiel, Cory Hinds, Vicky Lytle)

- Ten-year master plan has been approved.
- Hut instructions signs – with specific warning on fires/lack of oxygen (CSP meeting).

Awards Committee (Tom Meacham, Charlie Sink, Max Neale)

- Nomination announcement has run in *the Scree* for two months. Any award nominees?
- Call a meeting in January.

Communications Committee (Lila Hobbs)

- Check in on website - Form, Facebook Link, Meetup, Calendar RSVP.

Calendar Committee (Mike Meyers, Lila Hobbs, Vicky Ho, Andrew Holman)

- Calendars available at AMH, Black Diamond, SkiAK, REI, Hoarding Marmot.
- Calendars are almost gone.

Mentorship (Lila Hobbs, Katherine Cooper)

- Need more mentors.

Library (Gwen Higgins)

- Charlotte Foley deserves recognition at meeting.

Date and Location of next Board Meeting

- General: January 8, 2020, 6:30 to 9 p.m., BP Energy Center.
- Board: January 15, 2020, 6 to 8 p.m., BP Energy Center.

General Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2020, 6:30 p.m. at the BP Energy Center

- Katherine Cooper thoroughly explained the proposed 2020 budget and it was brought to vote:
 - Approved – All.
 - Rejected – None.

Announcements

- Gwen Higgins is taking over as MCA librarian role
- Gerrit Verbeek – call for volunteers to help with the influx of mountaineers coming in during Alaska Range season by offering to provide ride-share/home-share/etc. Gerrit has a sign-up list for interested people.
- Andy Kubic – Recreational Alpine Cooperative Event – May 8 through 10.
 - Needs volunteers – sign-up sheets available for volunteering for different committees.
- Greg Bragiel – call for volunteers to help on the upcoming scout’s mountaineering trip. See January *SCREE* for details on the trip and speak with Greg if you are interested in helping out.
- A volunteer is needed to travel to Rosie’s Roost to confirm hut dimensions for material specifications and ordering for this summer’s re-skin project.

Upcoming Events

- January 11, 2020 – Hatcher Pass Avalanche Center Avalanche Rescue Workshop. Will be held at the Gold Mint lot at 11 a.m.
- January 19, 2020 - Mike Meyers and Nathan Pooler to take out about 10 people for a day of ice climbing. Event details will be loaded to facebook soon.
- February 14 through 16, 2020 – Valdez Ice Climbing Festival.
- February 29, 2020 – Serenity Falls Hut ice-climbing weekend.
 - Space for 13 people.
 - Parking permits for those interested.

Choate's Chuckle - Tom Choate

A: He heard there was a toe-jam problem!

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Mike Meyers	mcmeayers24@msn.com	Director 1 (term expires in 2020)	Jonathan Rupp Strong	202-6484
Vice-President	Gerrit Verbeek	903-512-4286	Director 2 (term expires in 2020)	Lila Hobbs	229-3754
Secretary	Jordan Haffener	Jordan.haffener@gmail.com	Director 3 (term expires in 2021)	Tom Meacham	346-1077
Treasurer	Katherine Cooper	209-253-8489	Director 4 (term expires in 2021)	Heather Johnson	hjohnson@mdausa.org
			Director 5 (term expires in 2021)	Andy Kubic	andy.kubic@gmail.com
			Director 6 (term expires in 2021)	Nathan Pooler	Nathan.lee.pooler@gmail.com

Annual membership dues: Single \$20, Family \$30

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address below. If you want a membership card, please fill out a club waiver and mail it with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you fail to receive the newsletter or have questions about your membership, contact the Club Membership Committee at membership@mtclubak.org.

The Scree is a monthly publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Articles, notes, and letters submitted for publication in the newsletter should be emailed to MCAScree@gmail.com. Material should be submitted by the 11th of the month to appear in the next month's *Scree*.

Paid ads may be submitted to the attention of the Vice-President at the club address and should be in electronic format and pre-paid. Ads can be emailed to vicepresident@mtclubak.org.

Missing your MCA membership card? Stop by the monthly meeting to pick one up or send a self-addressed, stamped envelope and we'll mail it to you.

Mailing list/database entry: Katherine Cooper—209-253-8489 - membership@mtclubak.org

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Hans Schlegel—hans.schlegel@live.com or hcc@mtclubak.org

Mentorship: Katherine Cooper and Lila Hobbs—mentorship@mtclubak.org

Huts: Greg Bragiel—350-5146 or huts@mtclubak.org

Calendar: Vicky Ho—512-470-8640 or hovcky@gmail.com

Librarian: Gwendolyn Higgins—library@mtclubak.org

Scree Editor: MCAScree@gmail.com Steve Gruhn assisted by Dawn Munroe (350-5121) dawn.talbott@yahoo.com

Web: www.mtclubak.org

Find MCAK listserv at <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/MCAK/info>.

*Maureen Peterson, Brian Cox, Janetta Norvel Smith, Shane Docherty, and Mike Mitchell along the Anaktuvuk River on day three of their trip to Gates of the Arctic National Park.
Photo by Colleen Metzger*

Mountaineering Club of Alaska
Box 243561
Anchorage, AK 99524-3561