

# the SCREE

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

March 2009

Volume 52 Number 3



**"Let me ride and visit the lovely mountains."  
~Li Po**

**Monthly Meeting  
Wed, March 18 @ 6:30 PM  
Matt Hage presents the West  
Buttress of Denali fast and light.**

**Wonderful High Tatra Mountains  
Polar Bear Encounter  
Tyrant's Tor, POM**



# The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

*"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"*

Join us for our club meetings the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month at the First United Methodist Church, 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue and G Streets next to the ConocoPhillips Building (you may use marked parking after hours).

Contact information is provided on the back page or visit us on the web at [www.mcak.org](http://www.mcak.org).

**Cover photo:** Lucia Hlavinova in the Tatra Mountains, Slovakia. Photo by Dean Carman.

**Article Submission:** Articles and photos are best submitted on the web at [MCAK.org](http://MCAK.org). You can also attach a word processing document to an email. Due to formatting problems please do not submit material in the body of an email. We prefer articles that are under 1,000 words. To get on the cover, a photo should convey the feeling of mountaineering and show human endeavor.

## Contents

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**Tyrant's Tor, peak of the month**

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## Hiking and Climbing Schedule

March 11 - Full Moon Hike up Harp Mountain

This is a Class C full moon hike up Harp Mountain (5,001') in the South Fork Eagle River drainage. The summit offers incredible views of both the South Fork and North Fork of the Eagle River drainages, especially when bathed in the soft glow of moonlight. Depending on snow depth and conditions we may need snowshoes, definitely crampons, ice ax and/or trekking poles. Please be comfortable using this gear before you come as this is not a good place to learn. Also bring layered clothing appropriate for the weather conditions. Plan on approximately 3 hours round trip, possibly less if the snow isn't deep. To sign up, contact Amy Murphy at 338-3979 or via e-mail:

[hayduchesslives@yahoo.com](mailto:hayduchesslives@yahoo.com).

March 14 – Arctic Valley to Bird ski tour

Class D, 25 miles, 2000 feet elevation gain, Backcountry skis with skins, avalanche gear, and headlamp required.

Tom Dolan, 223-1308, [paradoxx@gci.net](mailto:paradoxx@gci.net)

March 19 to 27 – Mt. Marcus Baker expedition

Class E, Climb the tallest mountain in the Chugach expedition style. Glacier travel and crevasse rescue experience are required. R/T airfare is \$350. Leaders: Randy Howell and Stan Olsen, sign up at the MCA meeting, questions to [chowellr@gci.net](mailto:chowellr@gci.net)

March 28 – South Fork to North Fork Eagle River ski

Class C, 15 miles, 2000 feet elevation gain, South Fork of the Eagle River trailhead up over Hanging Valley and down the North Fork of the Eagle River to Logan Circle Road. Backcountry skis with skins, ice ax, crampons, avalanche gear, and headlamp required.

Tom Dolan, 223-1308, [paradoxx@gci.net](mailto:paradoxx@gci.net)

April 4 – Center Ridge, Turnagain Pass ski tour

Class B, 10 miles, 1200 feet elevation gain; backcountry skis with skins, and a headlamp required.

Tom Dolan, 223-1308, [paradoxx@gci.net](mailto:paradoxx@gci.net)

July 19 – August 1 Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Class B/C. The trip may include elevation gains over 2,000 feet on day hikes. Destination will be Cane Creek to Red Sheep Creek. Set up food cache at Red Sheep Airstrip along the East Fork of the Chandalar River. Fly from there to Cane creek Airstrip drop off. Spend a week in the Cane Creek drainage and backpack back to Red Sheep Airstrip food cache resupply and spend the 2nd week in the Red Sheep Creek drainage. Leader: Don Hansen, [donjoehansen@msn.com](mailto:donjoehansen@msn.com).



# Wonderful High Tatra Mountains

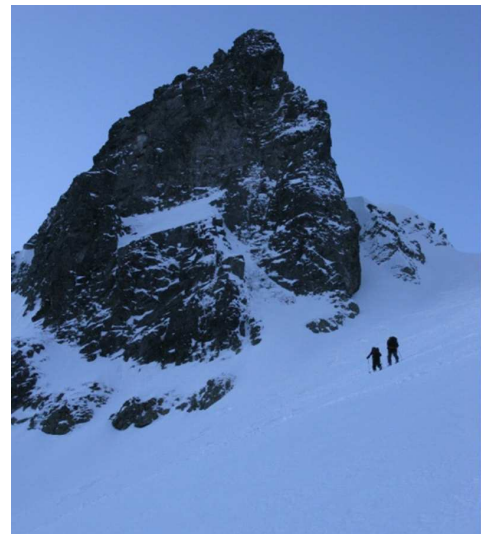
by Lucia Hlavinova



Dean Carman Visits Lucia in Slovakia

It is a sunny winter day in Poprad. Poprad is a little mountain city below the highest mountains in Slovakia, the High Tatra Mountains. Dean Carman and I decide to make a ski trip to Lomnické Sedlo ski resort. It is the steepest slope in Slovakia. We have nice weather; just sometimes, fog covers the shining sun. We are skiing, having fun, taking pictures and suddenly they close. It is the end of opening hours. The day goes unbelievably fast. We ski down to the town of Tatranská Lomnica and we find some good fresh snow to ski. So we skin up again and there we meet a guy. I am the first one up starting to talk to him. Just a skier as we are. Nice guy. He leaves, Dean comes and we take off the skins and hurry down the slope again. We are down, the sun is setting. We meet the guy again. He invites us to the Zbojnická Hut in the Tatras for the weekend to do some backcountry skiing with him. We have not decided on the place yet. Thinking about this idea longer, it seems to be more and more interesting to us. The weather is getting better, the snow conditions are the best in the last 10 years as we heard. So let's go.

It is Saturday morning. We meet Andrej, the guy, and we skin up the road. After a few hours of hard work we see the hut – a nice wooden hut under huge peaks and deep gullies. We get a room, actually a mattress and a little locker. We just put down the backpacks and go to check some slopes close to the hut. On the way up, we see lots of trucks, lots of crazy skiers having fun. Now, we go to do the same, do new tracks on the untouched snow. We jump up and down the slope screaming from happiness.



We see a mountain goat on the way back to hut. It is looking for some grass under the snow.

The first day is almost over. In the hut we have dinner and beer. Having drinks we are asking guys about good



places to go ski the next day. We get an idea for our second day. There is a pass named Prielom, so we go there and we see later what we ski. Now it is bedtime. Good night.

Oh, the night. When you sleep in the room with another 15 people, mostly guys. For sure, more than one is snoring. Oh well, you always have to think about it; next time I'll bring ear plugs.

Finally, the morning; It is nice and sunny in the mountains again. Let's eat a good breakfast to be strong on the way to the pass. There are some people in front of us making tracks. It is steep way up. By the end we put the skis on the backpack and hike to the top. Here we are, it's windy and cold here. Take a picture; put skins down, skis on and hurry for the adventure.



On the ridge we enjoy the sun, take pictures, talk to the guys and then we go for our second ride. The first part is steep, we jump off the ridge and are slowly finishing at the end. We are tired. It's lunch time now. Slowly we come to the hut, where we eat lunch and then we have a nap by the table. We cannot go back to our room, so the bench is also good for our tired bodies. Andrej leaves sooner for some reason and we are resting for a while longer. As people know me, I never have enough, I always want more, so it is today again. Two runs for today is not enough. I need more to be totally dead. With all our stuff we go to Priečne Sedlo and ski down the most steep gully ever with very icy snow. It melted down from the sun during the day and froze in the afternoon shade. I regret I decided to take this last run. It killed us. On the trail below the gully Vladka wait for us. Vladka is our friend, who also visited Alaska last summer. She is from Poprad.



We are full of emotions, decide to go for one more run. Right next to this pass we just skied, there is Svistovy Peak waiting for us to mark its face. So we hike up. It's very hot down here compared to the pass. It's spring in the mountains - no wind, no cloud, no tourists yet, as is normal in Tatras, but not this time of the year. We enjoy it. Just the skiers are here. As we go up we find ice close to the top of the ridge. Dean makes it without problems, but I am having trouble. I am stuck in the middle of the ice on the rock. I cannot go either up or down. Dean and some Polish skiers come to help me. Andrej has no problem going up. Oh, those guys, do just girls have always trouble?



We finished the run to the town below the mountains, had a big dinner and nice quiet sleep in Poprad.



# Polar Bear Encounter

by Marcin Ksok



**Marcin below the Summit**

It felt good to be setting camp in the Organ Creek valley, at the base of Polar Bear Peak. It took Greg Encelewski and I a few tries to reach this spot and actually have a prospect of getting to the summit. The weather was good and we both felt strong, even after the trek from the Eagle River Nature Center and the battle of the alders on the lower slopes of the mountain. We followed our route from a previous attempt up Heritage Falls and the frozen Organ Creek. Unfortunately, this time things started melting out and the approach turned out to be more difficult. Nevertheless, the hardest part was behind us, and we kept hearing other voices from high up on the glacier, this meant only one thing - there might be a trail to the top.

During dinner our camp was visited by two girls whose tent was pitched at Heritage Falls camp. After a long day, they were returning from an attempt, leaving behind a step ladder almost to the summit. In the early morning, Greg and I were making good progress utilizing the nicely hardened footprints left by the girls. Unlike our last attempt, the weather was holding, keeping us in good spirits.

After reaching the Polar Bear Glacier we studied the debris left behind by an avalanche that had ripped across the face few weeks before. The fracture line reached high up the slope, almost to the rocks, the chances of anything sliding again were slim and I felt safe. At first the angle was quite low, increasing as we gained elevation. Before reaching the first rocks of the summit block the tracks ran out, forcing Greg to work a little harder. He made it up the first scramble over slippery rocks, covered by loose snow. We roped up;

Greg led out, placed a picket and clipped into a fixed anchor below the final, narrow gully. Taking a breather, we swapped leads, admired the views, and checked out the way ahead.

**Greg on Top**



This was the part we both had waited for. Heading up I encountered slippery, snow-covered rock; although I had ice screws, there was no ice to be had. Halfway through, I placed a tricam, feeling quite confident. I did not see the need for overprotection. Toward the top the chimney narrowed, forming a body-width dihedral with lack of handholds or solid snow, but in a few moves I reached the low-angle summit slope, built an anchor and belayed Greg up his final 30 meters or so.



The summit was fairly warm and still. Not finding any rappel anchors, I tied our two ropes together, slung a large boulder and off we went. On a side note: only one rope is necessary for the retreat, unaware of that we ended up lugging an extra one. On the way down to the Eagle River we took the trail instead of the creek, crossed shin deep water and slogged back to the Nature Center. It was a long way back, mission accomplished,

there was no summit to look forward to, no goal to be attained, and we were tired and ready to eat a full meal. The miles grew longer, time dragged on, but finally the Nature Center appeared. I can't say that I wasn't exhausted, and from Greg's face I read that he felt the same, but finally our long standing goal was accomplished.



## Peak of the Month: Tyrant's Tor

by Steve Gruhn



**Tyrant's Tor Looms behind Bill Spencer as He Returns to Point 7450, Photo by Tim Kelley**

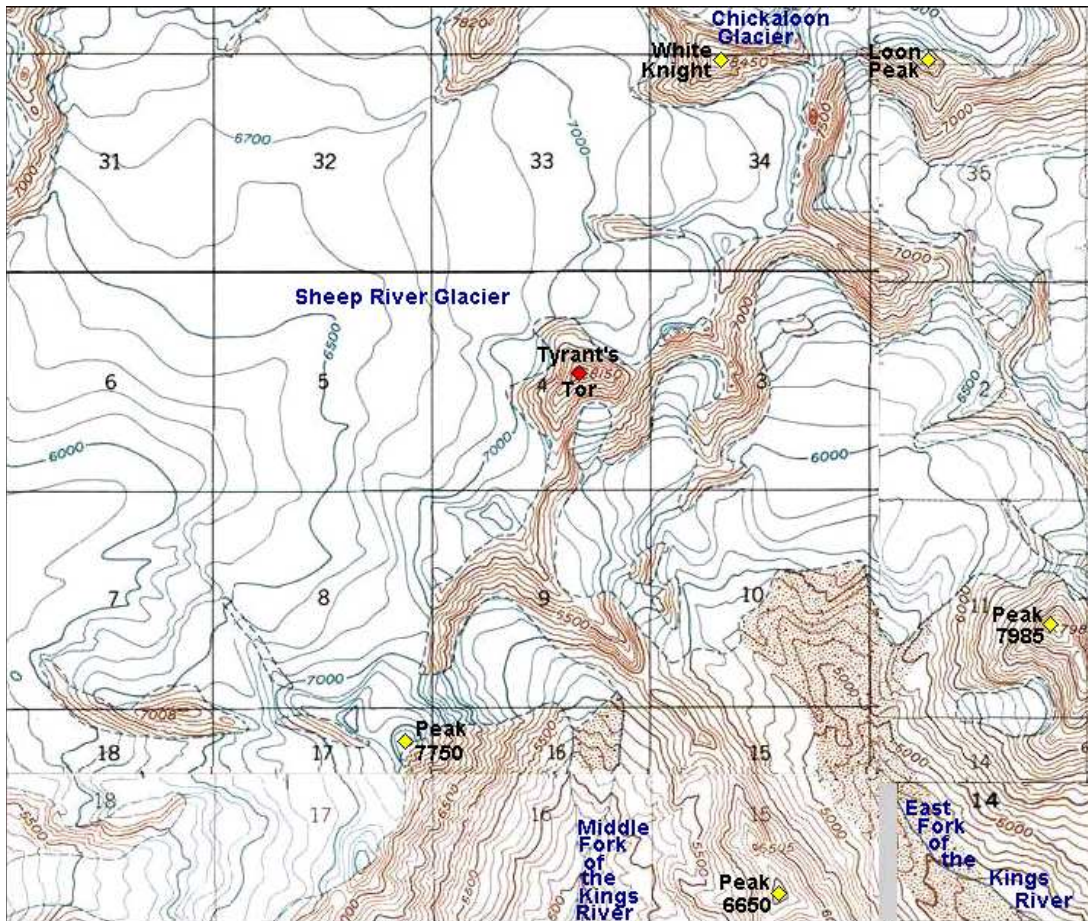
Mountain Range: Talkeetna Mountains  
Borough: Matanuska-Susitna Borough  
Drainage: Sheep River Glacier and East Fork of the Kings River  
Latitude/Longitude: 62° 1' 34" North, 148° 32' 41" West  
Elevation: 8150 feet  
Prominence: 800 feet from White Knight (8450)  
Adjacent Peaks: White Knight, Peak 7750 near the Sheep River Glacier and the Middle Fork of the Kings River, and Peak 6650 near the East Fork of the Kings River and the Middle Fork of the Kings River

Distinctness: 800 feet from White Knight  
USGS Map: Talkeetna Mountains (A-4)  
First Recorded Ascent: July 13, 1994, by Tim Kelley and Bill Spencer  
Route of First Recorded Ascent: South ridge  
Access Point: Permanente Trail near Mile 71.8 of the Glenn Highway



**Tim Kelley (left) and Bill Spencer on the Summit of Tyrant's Tor, Photo by Tim Kelley**

In mid-July 1994 Bill and Tim wanted to climb their first 8000-footer in the Talkeetna Mountains and they wanted to do it without the use of aircraft. So, they set out on mountain bikes up the Permanente Trail near the Kings River. After 13 miles they waded the East Fork of the Kings River and took a right at a trail junction. The new alder-choked trail led them up 1000 feet of switchbacks and then back down several hundred feet of switchbacks to the East Fork of the Kings River after three or four miles. Unable to cross the river at that point, they traveled upstream a couple miles until they found a place to ford the stream. Back on the south side of the East Fork, they continued upriver, following remnants of an old trail until they reached the confluence of the Middle Fork and the East Fork of the Kings River. After crossing the East Fork yet again they followed the Middle Fork upstream to an elevation of about 3500 feet where they bivouacked for the night.



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

The next morning they continued up the Middle Fork of the Kings River, crossed a rock glacier, and proceeded north to an unnamed glacier at the head of the Middle Fork. Leaving the glacier, they climbed up the crumbly slopes of a 7450-foot point to overlook the Sheep River

Glacier. From that point they followed the edge of the Sheep River Glacier northward to a 7150-foot col. Heading north from the col along a ridge, they encountered crumbling rock all the way to the south summit, the higher of the two summits of Tyrant's Tor.

Finding no sign of previous ascent, they built a cairn and left a register in a bottle. Tim named the peak Tyrant's Tor because the peak is at the head of the East Fork of the Kings River and because of the apt description of Tor, the Welsh word for "a high pile of rocks." Their descent was via their ascent route to an elevation of about 5000 feet in the Middle Fork drainage where they made their second bivouac. They hiked and biked back to the highway the next day.

I know of no other ascents of Tyrant's Tor. Tim's trip report appeared on pages 4 through 6 of the November 1994 *Scree*.

## Geographic Names Corner

The U.S. Geological Survey's Board on Geographic Names posted the quarterly review list on its website on February 26, 2009. Among the five proposed names in Alaska, there are three that might be of interest to mountaineers

1. The name Slope Mountain is proposed for a 4010-foot peak in the Sagavanirktok River and Tulik River drainages of the Endicott Mountains in the North Slope Borough at 68° 44' 32" North, 149° 3' 58" West. The peak has a prominence of 1435 feet. The name reportedly has been in local use for 30 years and was published by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Snow and Ice Data Center in 1995.

2. The name Ursinus Glacier has been proposed for a tributary glacier of the Harvard Glacier partially in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough at 61° 21' 57" North, 147°

35' 7" West. The name was proposed to honor Ursinus College in Pennsylvania.

3. The name Waugaman Mountain is proposed for a 6720-foot peak in the Dry Creek, Glacier Creek, and Threemile Creek drainages of the Alaska Range in the Denali Borough at 63° 58' 2" North, 147° 32' 12" West. The peak has a prominence of 2270 feet. The name was proposed to commemorate William Waugaman (1915 - 2003), Alaska State Senator, hunter fisherman, and master guide who owned several camps along the Wood River, into which both Glacier Creek and Threemile Creek flow.

[http://geonames.usgs.gov/domestic/quarterly\\_list.htm](http://geonames.usgs.gov/domestic/quarterly_list.htm)

Steve Gruhn



# Mountaineering Club of Alaska

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Annual membership dues: Single \$15, Family \$20

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 Treasurer. The Post Office will not forward the newsletter.

The 'Scree' is a monthly publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Articles, notes and letters submitted for publication in the newsletter should be submitted on the web at [www.mcak.org](http://www.mcak.org) or e-mailed to the Scree Editor. Articles should be received by the monthly club meeting (third Wednesday of the month) to be 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.

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

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