

the SCREE

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

June 2012

Volume 55 Number 6



Contents:

Spicing Things up with Pepper Peak,
Flying High with Bird Ridge

McHugh Peak with Munchkins

What do the Mountains Know?

Peak of the Month: Peak 3950

Monthly Meeting:

Wednesday, June 20 at 6:30 p.m.

Program:

Skiy Detray will present on his attempt of
the Norwegian Pillar on the Great Trango
Tower in Pakistan's Karakoram Mountains.

*"Wilderness is not a luxury but a
necessity of the human spirit."*

----Edward Abbey

The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

www.mtnclubak.org

"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 third Wednesday of the month at the BP Energy Center, 900 East Benson Boulevard, Anchorage, Alaska
www.akpeac.org/conference/BPEC_map_06-04-03.pdf

June Program

Skiy Detray, a four-year veteran of the Yosemite Search and Rescue team and the Alaska Air Guard Pararescue team, will present on his attempt of the Norwegian Pillar on the Great Trango Tower in Pakistan's Karakoram Mountains. Although they did not summit, the team endured several multi-day storms and spent 23 days on the wall. The whole adventure--from mingling in the Pakistani culture to enduring storms on the portaledges--was certainly unforgettable.

**Cover Photo: Frank Baker on the summit of Pepper Peak.
Photo by Frank Baker.**

Contents

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Flying High with Bird Ridge**

McHugh Peak with Munchkins

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Peak of the Month: Peak 3950

Article Submission

Text and photography submissions for the Scree can be sent as attachments to mcascree@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 25th of the month to appear in the Scree. Do not submit material in the body of the email. 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 captions with photos.**

Hiking and Climbing Schedule

June 23 – July 1: Bomber Traverse. An opportunity to learn and practice basic mountaineering skills while traveling in the Talkeetna Mountains. We'll also do some hut maintenance. Note: this trip does not fulfill any of the requirements of the MCA BMS merit training program. Experienced MCA members are needed to help with this trip. Contact trip leader Greg Bragiel unknownhiker@alaska.net for more information.

August 6th to August 11th, 2012:

Lake Clark National Park Twin Lakes. Setup base camp at upper Twin Lake and go on day hikes exploring the area. We'll also visit Richard Proenneke's cabin, author of One Man's Wilderness and film "Alone in the Wilderness." To sign up contact Don Hansen at donjoehansen@msn.com or phone 243-7184.

Don't forget to check the Meetup site and the Facebook page for last minute trips and activities. Or, schedule one that you want to organize.

Climbing Notes

Kevin Ditzler reported that this spring he and Jay Claus climbed Celeno Peak (13350) and Ocypete Peak (13550) in The Twaharpies from the Canyon Creek Glacier. Before their ascent Celeno Peak might have been the highest unclimbed peak in the United States.

Geographic Names

At its April 12 meeting, the USGS Board on Geographic Names approved the renaming of the Sixtymile River to the Sixty Mile River to conform to the spelling that the Canadian government uses. The Sixty Mile River rises in the Mertie Mountains and flows northeast to the Yukon Territory and then trends southeast to its mouth at the Yukon River between Dawson and Stewart River.

At its May 10 meeting, the USGS BGN approved the renaming of Rat Island to Hawadax Island. Rat Island is in the Aleutian Islands northwest of Amchitka Island and southeast of Kiska Island. The island had been infested with rats following a 1780 Japanese shipwreck until they were eradicated in 2009 using rodenticide. The name Hawadax is reportedly the traditional Unangan name and means "those two over there," "entry," or "welcome."

On-line? – click me



For best viewing of the Scree on a monitor using Adobe Reader, click on 'View' and 'Full Screen.'



The Mitre as seen from Pepper Peak.
Photo by Frank Baker.

Spicing Things up with Pepper Peak, Flying High with Bird Ridge

By Frank E. Baker

Climbing south-facing slopes like 5,423-foot Pepper Peak above Eklutna Lake and Bird Ridge along Turnagain Arm have become annual rites of spring for this scrambler. In April they provide a nice sun break after the long winter and serve as good conditioning hikes for summer endeavors.

When I headed up the Twin Peaks Trail April 19 about 10 a.m., the trail was frozen, but punched with deep holes that three hikers had made a

week earlier. On that day my hiking buddy, Pete Panarese, and I had climbed up on the ridge leading to Pepper Peak, but didn't summit. We couldn't believe that this trio would go all the way up the trail and back down, post-holing up to their thighs.

So on this sunny day, a week later, I returned on a solo trip. I skirted around the frozen holes as I worked my way up to the first wooden

bench. From there I left the trail and headed straight up the mountain, seeking as many snow-free areas as I could find. I carried snowshoes with me, but dreaded the return trip on the Twin Peaks Trail because I knew it would be soft in the afternoon. My snowshoes would be falling into all those holes!

It wasn't difficult to avoid snow as I worked my way up the west ridge, sometimes dropping a little to the south. A couple of times the snow was firm enough to walk on. At about 4,000 feet I stashed the cleated snowshoes, but I still had crampons if needed. On years when the snow has been firm enough, I've followed the edge of the ridge all the way to the summit, using crampons and an ice axe. But even up higher, the snow was soft, so I skirted to climber's right (south) to avoid it.

It took me about five hours to reach the top from the parking lot. I didn't think that I had slowed down much over the years, but at home I looked over my climbing log and about 20 years ago, I made it up there in about half the time! Even

when my daughter climbed it with me 16 years ago at the age of 10, I was quite a bit faster.

There was snow everywhere as I took in the 360-degree views that included Bold and Bashful Peaks to the south, The Mitre and all the big "B" peaks; and looming in front of me, West and East Twin Peaks. To the north and east, beyond Pioneer Peak, I could see a faint outline of Mount Marcus Baker and other big mountains caked in glacier white.

There had been a lot of sheep sign on the way up, but the only ones I spotted were way over to the northwest on the flanks of Mount POW/MIA. I spotted a goshawk as well as a golden eagle, wondering what they might be eating, considering there were no parka squirrels out and about.

On the descent it took me about an hour to reach the wooden bench on the Twin Peaks Trail, put on my snowshoes, and begin the dreaded thrashing. Just as I anticipated, the snow was soft and all of the deep post holes wanted to swallow the front of my snowshoes. Not good for a guy with a bad knee! I admit to blurting out a few expletives to the three who post-holed the trail into oblivion. From the top it took me about 2-1/2 hours to reach the parking lot, when it should have taken about half that time.

Reaching High on Bird Ridge. A week later I ventured up Bird Ridge on yet another gloriously sunny day. I began this hike about 10 a.m. and it wasn't long – perhaps about 800 feet above the highway – that I began running into a lot of snow. Fortunately, there was a hard-packed trail through increasingly large stretches of deep snow. I asked three hikers, young women, if they thought the trail would hold up until mid-afternoon. They didn't know. Another thousand feet up the ridge I asked a couple of other hikers the same question. They didn't know either. I dreaded the idea of post-holing down the mountain with a knee that HATES slamming straight down!

I carried my snowshoes all the way to the top because I wanted to head out on the ridge to Bird Ridge Overlook. A friend warned me about avalanche danger off the northwest side, and I had no intention of going down that way. I planned to stay on the ridge. The snow was really deep and in some spots very soft as midday approached, even with snowshoes. I thought about the midday warm-up and decided not to go all the way. I picked a spot to have lunch about half a mile out on the ridge. Ptarmigan were everywhere and quite unafraid of my presence.

Luckily, the hard-packed trail through all of the snowfields remained firm as I made my descent back down the ridge about 3 p.m. wearing shorts and a short-sleeved shirt. It was one of those bluebird days that we all treasure.

On the way back down, racing veteran Barney Griffith zoomed past me on the way up the mountain. He was apparently on a training run for a host of competitions this summer – including Seward’s Mount Marathon, Crow Pass Crossing, and the Matanuska Peak challenge.

After spring jaunts up Gunsight Mountain (6,441 feet); Pepper Peak (5,423 feet) and Bird Ridge, (3,505 feet) I felt ready to try something bigger as summer unfolds – perhaps Cantata Peak in the South Fork of the Eagle River drainage. For me it’s always a building process. And if I feel strong enough, I’ll see if I can summit Bold Peak for the eighth time. Lastly, I’ve hung onto my dream of having Richard Baranow push me up Bashful Peak before I get too old.

Chronologically, I’m not as old as the MCA’s Tom Choate, but in mountain years, I feel a LOT older. Does anyone know where his fountain of youth is located?



Timothy Gruhn and Hannah Gruhn on the summit of McHugh Peak. Photo by Steve Gruhn.

McHugh Peak with Munchkins

By Steve Gruhn

For a little over five years I’ve been writing the Peak-of-the-Month column in the *Scree*. I wanted to share one of these peaks with my 11-year-old niece and 8-year-old nephew, Hannah and Timothy Gruhn). The north ridge of McHugh Peak, the February 2011 Peak of the Month, seemed like a good candidate to initiate them into the local mountaineering fraternity.

Legally accessing Chugach State Park in this area has been problematic for decades, but there is now legal parking for about five vehicles at the end of Honey Bear Lane. To reach Honey

Bear Lane, take Rabbit Creek Road to Clarks Road and then turn south on Kings Way Drive at the end of the pavement. Turn left on Snow Bear Drive, right on Black Bear Drive, and left on Honey Bear Lane. The parking is in a cul-de-sac at the very end of Honey Bear Lane. Signs indicate that parking is limited to the east portion of the cul-de-sac because the remainder serves as a fire-engine turnaround.

Setting out from Honey Bear Lane at about 2,100 feet around 9:45 a.m. on May 24, we hiked up the snow-covered trail, following some old footprints. The kids made good time walking through the snow. The temperatures were in the 40s, it was drizzling, and there was a 20-knot breeze. There was a little balking when the route steepened. Thinking these weren’t ideal conditions, I told them that we couldn’t change the weather, but we could change our attitudes. They seemed to adopt this mantra. And once we reached the east-facing, snow-free slopes, they merrily scampered along the trail. When they reached the rock shelter atop the first high point at about 3,200 feet, they wanted lunch. It was 10:15. Such is hiking with children.

We rested and ate for a while and continued south along the undulating ridge. They ran down the scree in the trail, hiked on the packed snow, and romped across the tundra. Hannah admired the different hues of the flowers – purples, yellows, and blues – and Timothy admired the clouds that cloaked the city below him. At every high point they wanted to know if they had reached the top.

After an hour and a half of walking, we stopped in the lee of a large rock at about 3,800 feet and had lunch. Hannah wanted to return to the rock shelter for lunch because she thought it was a neat feature to explore. Timothy recalled it as a “rock couch.” After lunch we proceeded south toward the summit. After hearing some plaintive whimpers about turning around, fatigue, hunger, and coldness, I reminded the children about Uncle Steve’s three rules – no whining, no crying, and no complaining. One of the kids

smiled and quoted them back to me; the other didn't smile and proceeded to break all three rules. Such is hiking with children. But by 12:30 we were at the base of the summit block.

I told the kids that they didn't have to climb up the rocks to the summit, but if they wanted to, I would show them how they could do it. Hannah shook her head when I asked if she wanted to go to the summit. When I asked Timothy if he wanted to go to the tippy top, he looked upward, studied the route, and then nodded. I showed Timothy the crack to ascend and I followed him upward, showing where to place his hands and feet. Within two minutes he was touching the summit at 4,311 feet. Not to be outdone by her younger brother, Hannah now wanted to join us at the top, so I showed her how to ascend and soon I was taking a picture of both of them on the summit. The summit was particularly memorable for Hannah because from that vantage we were able to see Rainbow Peak (3,543 feet), which she and I had climbed six days earlier. She marveled at how high we were above Rainbow Peak.

We descended the summit block one at a time. Ice complicated our descent and the kids grew cold. Because of his short stature, Timothy had difficulty using handholds and footholds, so I got below him and showed him where to place his hands and feet until we were down off the rocks. I returned to lead Hannah down. Being taller, she had a much easier time descending the rocks. By now, though, both kids were violating all three of Uncle Steve's rules.

I had them jog down the flats to our lunch spot where once again we hid in the lee of the rock to eat and drink and warm up. Once fed and out of the wind, both kids perked up. The jogging had warmed both of them and they had stopped violating Uncle Steve's rules. I told them that they were doing well and that we were headed back to the car and that I was proud of both of them for having good attitudes and for having reached the summit. Hannah was more interested in returning to the rock

shelter than the car, though. We had fun descending the ridge and the kids jogged much of the way. Both kids were all smiles. At the rock shelter Hannah grabbed a bite to eat, but Timothy and I continued our descent. Timothy tripped in the snow and tumbled. I told him he looked funny descending that way and we both laughed. Soon Hannah was jogging past us and

glissading down the final snow slope into the trees. Timothy and I joined her at the car at about 3 p.m. Both kids were all smiles – gushing about their experiences, proud of their accomplishments, and talking enthusiastically.

On the drive home they both asked when we could go hiking again. Such are the joys of hiking with children.

What do the Mountains Know?

By Tom Choate

Gazing up at the grand peaks surrounding me,
Hulking, stolid and mute,
I wonder what they know?

Do they know we are looking at them?
Or realize our admiration and love?

Can they detect the instant glimpses
Of passengers in overflying planes,

Or the constant, questing gazes
Of passing mountain goats and eagles?

Can the mountains hear the yodel of joy
Or curses of the climber in anguish?

Are they aware of the screams and cackles
Of the ptarmigan defending pieces of their
surface?

Do they feel the vibrating rumble of thunder
Or the electrifying shock of a lightning bolt?

What do they feel as the ice expands in cracks
And drops chunks of rock onto moraines
below?

They must know they are being ground away
And the rocks of their bodies are being plucked
out.

How could they not know the terrifying
earthquake
That twists their bodies and breaks their
cliffs?

Perhaps these massive mountains
Are feeling within a time scale
Too lengthy for our comprehension.

I know there must be a soul in there,
A power I can feel, if I pause and open all
my senses.

This is the power which makes my fingers tingle
As I run them lightly over the rock.

Some would call this communicating with God,
And others say it is the embrace of Mother
Earth.

But I really want to understand:
What do the mountains know?



Ann Farris hiking on a long ridgeline.
Photos by Ed Plumb

Peak of the Month: Peak 3950

By Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Ray Mountains

Borough: Unorganized Borough

Drainages: Little Salt Creek and Twentymile Creek

Latitude/Longitude: 65° 44' 15" North, 150° 22' 26" West

Elevation: 3950 (+50) feet

Prominence: 900 feet from either Peak 4105 in the Dreamland Creek and Squaw Creek drainages or Peak 4416 in the Tozitna River drainage

Adjacent Peaks: Peak 3608 in the Squaw Creek and Twentymile Creek drainages, Peak 4105, and Peak 3395 in the Side Creek drainage

Distinctness: 800 feet from Peak 3608

USGS Map: Tanana (C-1)

First Recorded Ascent: May 29, 2010, by Dan Carlson, Ann Farris, and Ed Plumb

Route of First Recorded Ascent: East ridge

Access Point: Yukon River Bridge on the Dalton Highway

On May 28, 2010, Carlson, Farris, and Plumb set out to trek to Kilo Hot Springs. Starting out in the late afternoon in packrafts from the Yukon River Bridge on the Dalton Highway, they floated downstream for about 20 miles, battling strong afternoon upriver winds and a threatening thunderstorm. When they reached an indistinct ridge about three miles below the mouth of Little Salt Creek and nearly two miles above Kalka Island, they paddled to shore and deflated their packrafts. From that point, at an elevation of about 250 feet, they began their 45-mile hike to the hot springs, hiking up a steep boulder field to the high country above timberline. At about 1800 feet they reached the tundra-covered ridge crest that they would follow for two days. At 2 a.m. they camped at the first dry spot that they found above timberline.

On the move at 6:30 a.m. after about four hours in the sack, they continued westward. Their route led across undulating tundra-carpeted ridges pockmarked with tussocks and sprinkled with granite tors to Peak 3395. The day was hot and the mosquitoes ubiquitous. Descending Peak 3395, they continued westward through the remote, scenic mountains, dropping to a 2850-foot saddle and climbing up to Peak 3950 via its east ridge.

They descended to the 3050-foot saddle between Little Salt Creek and Squaw Creek, and continued westward, sidehilling at times. Enduring the heat of the day, they climbed both Peak 4105 and Peak 4015 (in the Big Salt River and Tozitna River drainages), crossed the Big Salt River, and climbed Peak 3012 (in the Big Salt River drainage). At 1 a.m. they camped west of Peak 3012 and east of Halu Creek. A brown bear had followed them earlier in the day, but didn't bother them that night.

Up at 6 a.m., they continued westward, crossing Halu Creek. Later that day they reached Kilo Hot Springs where the rendezvoused with

friends who had flown to a dry ridge about five miles west of the hot springs and hiked down to join them. After soaking in the hot springs' multiple pools with different temperatures, the crew crossed the Kanuti Kilolitna River and hiked up to the Piper PA-12 Supercruiser at the ridge. They flew back to the Yukon River Bridge on May 31, covering in 30 minutes what they had traveled in two and a half days.

The information from this article came from my correspondence with Ed Plumb and from his blog at <http://edplumb.blogspot.com/>.



The group enjoyed soaking in the hot springs.



MCA Board Meeting Minutes April 4, 2012

Members Present: Tim Silvers (President), Randy Plant (Treasurer), Mark Smith (Secretary), Directors: Jim Sellers, Vicky Lytle, Brian Aho, John Recktenwald

1. Website updates – Tim created a new page on the website titled “Front Range Highpoints”.

2. Kit DesLauriers Presentation – John asked that we consider having an information table at the event. **Brian** offered to get MCA materials there in conjunction with the AMRG.

3. Group Memberships – Denali NPS rangers requested pricing for a group membership, indicating that was the only way their organization could pay. Consideration was given as to whether this should be made generally available, how to price it, and how to control who within the group is covered. All members present voted in favor of offering the Denali NPS rangers a one-year group membership on a trial basis. Recommendation was made that the group tell us the number of people to be covered and provide their names. Suggestion was made that it be priced at approximately \$15 per person.

4. Library – Mark reporting contacting the person responsible for collections at the UAA/APU Consortium Library. She expressed interest in housing a portion of the collection and requested a list of titles. **Brian** to distribute spreadsheet for cataloguing the collection to board members, who are encouraged to go to the storage facility and help with the inventory. **Jim** has a contact at the Loussac Library with whom he'll check as to whether they would be willing to accept a portion of the material.

5. Equipment – **Tim** will inventory the equipment, which is housed at Arctic Self Storage. He suggested that we seek donation of shelving approximately 4' wide, 2' deep and 6' tall.

6. Insurance – **Jim** provided additional information requested by the broker. He expects to hear back soon with a price quote

7. Benefit sharing with other clubs – No activity.

8. Fred Beckey Presentation – **Tim** recommended booking another speaker for May. If Beckey is available, we can find another time and venue for him.

9. Social events - **Vicky** said that two younger members on the Bomber traverse trip indicated they would like to see a regular social meeting. Board members noted that Facebook and Meetup are available to members for the purpose of arranging such events.

10. Huts - **John** will enter Marcin's information in the hut committee report. **Vicky** suggested that we count the number of hut users over a period on the Eklutna traverse from entries in the logbooks. **Greg** will contact **Tim** with suggestions of changes to the hut descriptions on the website.

11. **John** discussed ideas for approaching the Samoan community to get young people involved in the outdoors. **Tim** suggested that the MCA would not want to do this in an official capacity.

Next board meeting: TBD: Wednesday, May 2 or Wednesday, June 6.

---Mark Smith, MCA Secretary

Hut Inventory and Needs

If you are headed to one of the huts, please consult the notes below to see what needs to be carried to the huts or fixed. Huts should have all the necessary tools and supplies to make common repairs. If you notice damage and have time to fix it yourself, that would be greatly appreciated. Also, it would be great if several people would choose their favorite hut and volunteer to lead the maintenance efforts for that hut. **Greg Bragiel** is doing a fantastic job as the MCA Huts Chairman, but it would make his job a lot easier if there were more volunteers coordinating maintenance for some of the huts. If you can help with that or any of the items listed below, please contact **Greg Bragiel** huts@mtclubak.org.

- **All Huts** - MCA members are requested to adopt a hut, help out with maintenance and keep the Huts Committee informed on what is happening there. Also, please encourage any non-members at MCA huts to become MCA members. All huts need updated membership applications and club business cards.
- **Pichler's Perch** – **Urgent! Five-gallon bucket needed for human waste system** along with updated human waste system instructions. More wag bags. Please look for the missing 5-gallon bucket around the hut and in the rocky area and glacier to the northwest.
- **Hans' Hut** – Lantern mantles, Lantern globe 288C043, pliers, hammer, 5 gallons of Coleman fuel, more trash compactor bags and wag bags, updated human waste system instructions.
- **Rosie's Roost** – The 35-gallon human waste blue barrel is missing most likely to the north of the hut. If you see it, please drag it back to the hut if at all possible, or let **Greg** know where it is located for a helicopter pickup. **Until the barrel is replaced, all human waste must be packed out!** Rosie's also needs barrel tie-down bungs, wag bags, trash compactor bags, ladder, caulk, three or four blue foam sleeping pads, 1" wood batten strips, three

more gallons of Coleman fuel, updated human waste system instructions.

- **Mint Hut** – Will be closed June 13-17 for painting and repairs. Find, repair, and replace first floor window guard. Paint loft. Kilz to stop mold growth. New log book. **Human waste barrels are filling with urine. Don't urinate in them!!!**
- **Bomber Hut** - Exterior wood needs to be scraped and painted, two Coleman stove/lantern pump repair kits, lantern globe 288C043, Paint scraper, one gallon of safety red oil paint. Shall we paint east/west face of hut red to make it easier to see from a distance?
- **Dnigi Hut** - Toilet needs poop chute repairs. Five-gallon bucket liner to be installed. Toilet door needs to be painted. Toilet door needs additional hinge to be installed. Lantern mantles and lantern globe Powerhouse 690A048C needed. Hut windows leaking. Recommend caulking and painting OR replacing window guards that do not pool water and snow!
- **Scandinavian Peaks Hut** - Outhouse needs securing, find door and replace. Exterior painting touch up needed especially door frame and deck. Second floor window has ¼-inch gap – may be best to fix with weather stripping. **Use care when closing window!**
--Thank you. **Tim Silvers**, MCA President

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			Board member	Jim Sellers	360-2560

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

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address at right. 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. Articles should be submitted by the 25th 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.

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