

# the SCREE

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

August 2013

Volume 56 Number 8



Monthly meeting:

6:30 p.m., Wednesday, August 21

Program: "Tibet, Bhutan, and Yunnan: In  
search of the Himalayan Iceworm" presented  
by Roman Dial

"Somewhere between the bottom of  
the climb and the summit is the an-  
swer to the mystery why we climb."

*-Greg Child*



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Peakbagging in the Saint Elias Mountains  
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Peak of the Month: Peak 1950



# The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

[www.mtnclubak.org](http://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 meeting at 6:30 p.m. on August 21 at the BP Energy Center, 1014 Energy Court, Anchorage, Alaska.

<http://www.alaskageology.org/graphics/meetingmap.gif>

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## Cover Photo

Joe Chmielowski working his way up to the north ridge of Kings Mountain. Photo by Todd Kelsey.

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## Article Submission

Text and photography submissions for the *Scree* can be sent as attachments to [mcascree@gmail.com](mailto:mcascree@gmail.com). Articles should be submitted by the 25<sup>th</sup> 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. 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 orientated photo for consideration for the cover. Please submit captions with photos.

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## Proposed Geographic Names:

The Domestic Names Committee of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names has released its quarterly review list of proposed geographic names. Included in that list are proposals to rename the Black River on the Porcupine Plateau as the Draanjik River and to name a 4698-foot peak in the Lake Grosvenor drainage of the Aleutian Range as Mount Petersen. Comments may be directed to the U.S. Board on Geographic Names, Domestic Names Committee at [BGNEXEC@USGS.gov](mailto:BGNEXEC@USGS.gov).

Details are available at [http://geonames.usgs.gov/domestic/quarterly\\_list.htm](http://geonames.usgs.gov/domestic/quarterly_list.htm) (click on Review List 414).

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The MCA wishes to recognize instructors Will Burton, Austin Hess, Eric Berglund, and Tom Choate for dedicating their time and talents during the 2013 MCA Summer Mountaineering Trip from July 6 to July 14, 2013.

Many thanks, Greg Bragiel

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## Hiking and Climbing Schedule

- ⇒ **August 5-11, Lake Clark National Park, Twin Lakes.** Set up base camp at Upper Twin Lake and go on day hikes, exploring the area and visiting the former cabin of Richard Proenneke, author of *One Man's Wilderness* and film "Alone in the Wilderness." To sign up, contact Don Hansen at [donjoehansen@msn.com](mailto:donjoehansen@msn.com).
- ⇒ **September 25, 7:00-9:00 p.m., BP Energy Center, 900 East Benson Boulevard:** All potential or registered participants are required to attend this mandatory MCA Ice Climbing School Meeting and Gear Inspection. Participants are required to bring their harnesses, boots, and crampons to this meeting for inspection. Late registration is available at this meeting for \$90 (doesn't include membership fees, equipment rentals, transportation, or food). Contact Jayme Mack at either (907) 382-0212 or [mcaicefest@gmail.com](mailto:mcaicefest@gmail.com).
- ⇒ **September 27, 6:00 p.m. - September 29, 5:00 p.m.:** Annual MCA Ice Climbing School on the Matanuska Glacier. If you have never climbed ice and want to learn or if you have already been ice climbing and want to improve upon your skills this weekend is for you! Contact Jayme Mack at either (907) 382-0212 or [mcaicefest@gmail.com](mailto:mcaicefest@gmail.com).

Online? Click me!



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

# Peakbagging in the Saint Elias Mountains

By Dave Hart

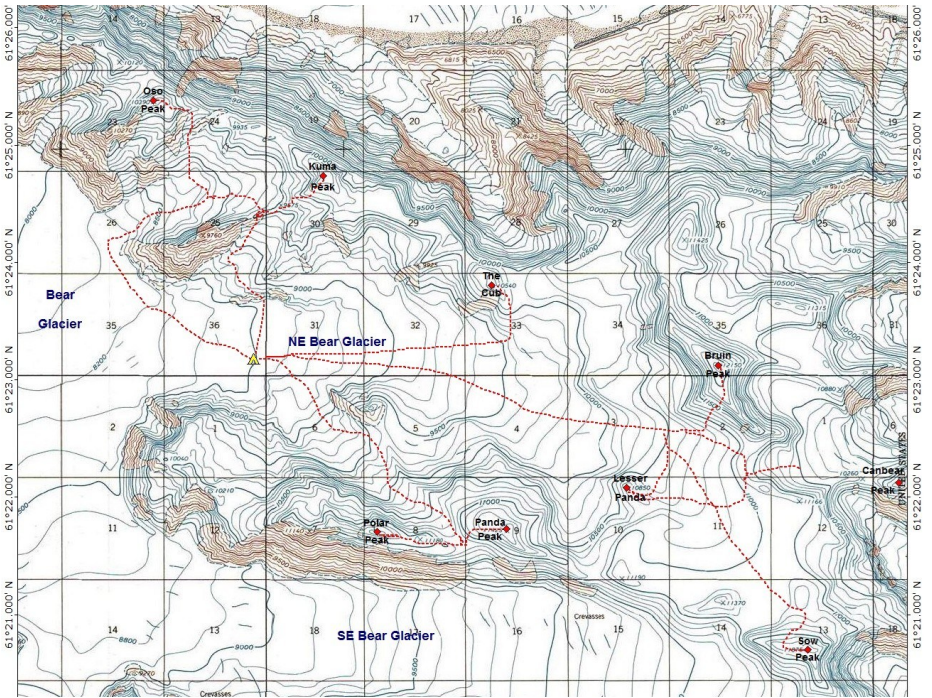
One of the most important things I've learned from my 31 expeditions into the Wrangell and Saint Elias Mountains is that flexibility and patience are paramount to climbing in Alaska. Ben Still, Greg Encelewski, and I had been waiting in Anchorage seven days for flying weather when we finally got the call from Ellie Claus at Ultima Thule Outfitters. "Can you be in McCarthy in the morning for a 9 a.m. pickup?" Of course! We hopped in the truck and drove all night.

Galen Flint and her friends Hannah North and two others weren't so lucky. They spent the week camped at the Ultima Thule airstrip waiting for weather before deciding to head home. Galen called me, and we quickly invited Hannah and her to join us. We were now five. Our destination was an unexplored valley on the Bear Glacier surrounded by eight 10,000- to 12,000-foot unclimbed peaks.

Sunday, May 19: Paul Claus met us in McCarthy with his 1,000-horsepower turbine Otter. I've flown with Paul on 25 expeditions since 1994, and I never tire of these flights. The weather was improving, but our destination north of Mount Bear was still socked in. We diverted to the Ultima Thule lodge 80 miles up the Chitina River. After dinner Paul asked, "Can you all be ready to fly at 7 a.m.?" Of course!

Monday, May 20: Alarms went off at 6 a.m. Bluebird. By 6:30 a.m. our gear was in the Otter. Wheels up before 7 a.m. As we gained elevation we could see snow plumes on the higher peaks, lenticulars on Mount Bear and clouds near the Bear Glacier. Not good. "We will be lucky to get you all on the ground today with this 90-knot headwind," Paul warned. Fate was kind, as Paul managed to set us down at 8,500 feet on the Northeast Fork of the Bear Glacier, 6 miles from the Yukon border. It was 5 °F and sunny at 7:30 a.m.

We had base camp set up by 11 a.m. Our plan was day tripping over the next two weeks, climbing as many of the eight nearby unclimbed peaks as possible. After lunch we decided to try the closest one. At 1 p.m. we roped into our two groups: the Ladies and the Boys. We skinned east, upglacier 2-1/2 miles to the base of the south ridge of The Cub (10,540 feet).



We swapped skis for crampons at 9,800 feet. From there it was a pleasant 1/2-mile hike to the rounded summit. We had our first views of the six other peaks we would climb over the next week. We leisurely wandered back to our skis and unroped for the 15-minute ski back to camp, arriving at 6 p.m. (The Cub, 10,540 feet, south ridge, 6 miles, 2,100 feet, 5 hours.)

Tuesday May 21: Up at 6 a.m. Our plan was to ski up the small valley south of camp to try Panda Peak (11,425 feet) and Polar Peak (11,350 feet). Hannah wasn't feeling well so she and Galen opted out for the day. The Boys skinned out of camp at 8:40 a.m. By 11:30 a.m. we reached the 10,850-foot pass 3 miles distant. It looked to be a great ski back to camp through fresh powder and few crevasses. We switched to crampons and headed up the easier and closer Panda Peak. Thirty minutes later we reached the top, impressed with the view of the massive north face of Mount Bear (14,831 feet). It's amazing this fourteener gets such little traffic with fewer than 10 ascents since its first in 1951. We wandered back to our skis and onto Polar Peak at 12:45 p.m. A few tricky crevasses slowed our progress, but by 2:15 p.m. we were on top looking down to our camp. We radioed the Ladies to find Galen skiing up our tracks. And there she was, a tiny dot halfway up the valley. We reversed our route back to the saddle, stripped our skins, packed the rope, and began what would be



the best ski run of the trip, a 2,400-foot mellow powder run. We quickly met Galen and suggested Panda Peak would be a safe solo hike. Up she went, while the Boys continued to camp hooting and hollering, reaching it 15 minutes later at 3:15 p.m. (Panda Peak, 11,425 feet, west face; Polar Peak, 11,350 feet, east ridge, 8-1/2 miles, 3,500 feet, 6-1/2 hours.)

We hung out in camp that afternoon enjoying grilled quesadillas and sunshine. We watched Galen carve perfect turns back to camp two hours later after her solo ski up Panda Peak. Hannah was feeling better, and would be joining us the next day.

Wednesday May 22: Up at 6 a.m. By 8:20 a.m. we were skinning upglacier toward the main objective of the trip, Bruin Peak (12,150 feet [Ed. Note: *This peak was originally called Klutlan Peak on bivouac.com and in the July 2013 Scree*]). The northwest and southeast ridges looked fun, but long and narrow. We opted for the direct south face. By 11:30 a.m. the five of us were at the 10,600-foot base. There was a bit more serac exposure and blue ice than expected. We spent an hour discussing options before agreeing on the left side of the face, just east of the southwest rib.

The Ladies opted to ski tour in the upper basin, explore the route to Canbear Peak (10,750 feet) and end up on Lesser Panda (10,850 feet). Ben broke trail and led us through the lower face as fast as he could to get past a short serac exposure.

From there, 40-degree slopes wandered up the cauldron of reflective south-facing slopes. We were so hot. At 11,500 feet we entered a small basin where the walls steepened on all sides. Ben trended right across a small ice slope, setting pickets for running belays. He finished up a 300-foot, 50-degree ice face to lower-angle slopes above, again protecting with pickets.

The final ¼ mile was a pleasant hike up rolling slopes, a welcome change. We arrived on top at 3:30 p.m. The seldom seen Mount Natazhat (13,435 feet) was visible due north across the Klutlan Glacier. Fond memories of my 1996 trip there flooded back. We could also see the Ladies sitting atop Lesser Panda watching our progress. We chatted with them on the radio and wished them a safe ski back to camp.

Our ascent took longer than expected, so we didn't linger. We retraced our steps to the 300-foot ice face and set a belay. "I should have brought my hammer," Ben remarked as he pounded in his alpine axe with the adze of his ice tool. "Oh, crap," Ben said just as I offered my hammer. The head of his alpine axe had sheared off. Only 2 inches of shaft was visible from the slopes. Well, this would be interesting.

Ben went first, down-climbing with a single tool in one hand and the remaining head of his alpine axe in the other. Slow and steady, Ben placed pickets every 100 feet with Greg following.

I came last, and within 20 minutes we were all back into the basin. Another 30 minutes found us at our skis, very thirsty. What we thought would only take a couple hours took 4-1/2 hours. We spent 30 minutes drinking the water we had each left behind, and enjoying the evening views. At 5:30 p.m. we clipped into our skis for the 25-minute coast downglacier. A great day. (Bruin Peak, 12,150 feet, south face, 10 miles, 3,650 feet, 9 hours and 40 minutes.)

Thursday May 23: We were getting a bit tired and sun-soaked. We opted for an extra hour of sleep and woke at 7 a.m. Our goal for the day



Greg Encelewski, Dave Hart, Galen Flint, and Hannah North skiing up the Bear Glacier en route to The Cub. The east sides of Mount Bona and Mount Churchill (left to right) dominate the skyline. Photo by Ben Still.



*Greg Encelewski, Dave Hart, and Ben Still on top of The Cub. The north faces of Mount Natazhat and Mount Riggs (left to right) dominate the skyline. Photo by Ben Still.*

was a group ski ascent of Sow Peak (11,875 feet). This was the farthest peak from our camp, but also the easiest. We were skinning upglacier by 9:40 a.m. By 12:30 p.m. we had returned to the base of Bruin Peak, eying our tracks to the summit. It was again baking hot. Only three more miles across the upper basin. Sow Peak looked close, but never seemed to get closer. We finally arrived at the 11,100-foot base just before 2 p.m. We clicked our heel elevators into high position and cruised up the last ½ mile to the top. By 2:45 p.m. we were all gathered on the summit.

Sow Peak offered perhaps our most stunning views of the trip. We could see 15 peaks over 14,000 feet, representing 60 percent of the 25 fourteeners in the Canadian and Alaskan arctic. We could see Mount Logan and King Peak along with Mount Saint Elias on the coast to the south, and as far north-west as Mount Blackburn, a view spanning 250 miles. It was a sea of peaks, with the eastern slopes dropping away toward the Alcan Highway 50 miles distant.

We spent 30 minutes enjoying the scenery and taking photos. But by 3:15 p.m.

we were off, anticipating the 7-mile, 3,400-foot descent to base camp. The summit dome proved fun skiing, with the glacier below an easy cruise. Our five-hour ascent took only 45 minutes to return. By 4 p.m. we were back in camp planning our next day's adventure. (Sow Peak, 11,875 feet, north face, 7 miles, 3,400 feet, 6 hours and 20 minutes.)

**Friday May 24:** Today was to be a shorter day with an attempt of Oso Peak (10,390 feet). After a wonderful egg-and-potato-burrito breakfast from Galen and Hannah, we all left camp at 10:45 a.m. Greg led us across the glacier to a side valley approaching from the north. Oso Peak was invisible from camp, so our route was as much exploration as anything. By noon we had reached the 9,500-foot pass southwest of Kuma Peak (10,450 feet).

"This doesn't look good, guys," Greg said as he peered over the other side of the pass. Indeed, a steep drop-off and massive crevasses blocked our route off the pass. "Let's hike up this rocky knob and take a look," suggested Ben. We scrambled up to see another pass 100 feet farther east. "There just might be a way through here," we thought. Greg led out with skis on our packs across a couple large bridges.



*Greg Encelewski and Dave Hart approaching the 9,500-foot pass on the southwest ridge of Kuma Peak. Photo by Ben Still.*





*Galen Flint heading out for an afternoon ascent of Kuma Peak. Photo by Dave Hart.*

Twenty minutes later we had our skis back on heading east into the glacier valley spilling from the south slopes of Oso Peak. It was certainly not the most direct route, but it worked.

The Ladies were about 30 minutes behind. As we waited for them, we wandered over to the 8,800-foot base of Oso Peak. Our first clouds of the trip started to build, and the light was quickly turning flat. Nervous about the unknown exit from this new valley, we opted to descend while the visibility still allowed, and return the next day. As it turned out, the descent was very easy. We waited for the Ladies at the 8,100-foot base of the valley and then started the 1.5-mile slog back to camp. By now the sun had returned and we baked in the heat, arriving at camp at 3 p.m. (No summit, 4-1/2 miles, 1,400 feet, 4-1/2 hours.)

Saturday May 25: We were anxious to head back up Oso Peak. The Ladies had other intentions of enjoying a rest day. The Boys left camp at 9 a.m., retracing our tracks on the morning crust. By 10:30 a.m. we had returned to our 8,800-foot high point. We continued on, skiing through old avalanche debris, and then started skinning up the southeast chute toward the east ridge. The spring corn freeze/thaw cycle had begun. Skinning up the crust was tricky, but we knew worthwhile for the descent in a couple hours. We ditched our skis at 9,900 feet when the snow turned to ice.

We cramponned to the summit by noon. It was windier than previous days, making lounging uncomfortable. Our position

afforded great views of the five peaks we had climbed over the prior week, plus a couple more we still might try.

We returned to our skis, ditched the rope, and clipped in for 1,100 feet of steep hero corn snow. Wonderful run. Back at our 8,800-foot rest stop Ben suggested, "Why don't we run up Kuma Peak while we are here? It's just right there." Great idea! We re-roped and skinned back up to re-trace our descent route from the day before.

We reached the 9,500-foot pass by 2 p.m., ditched the rope, and donned crampons. The 1,000-foot southwest ridge of Kuma Peak is narrow with great views

of the valley and surrounding peaks. A few very narrow crevasses kept our focus, but other than that we simply kicked steps for the next 45 minutes. By 3 p.m. we were celebrating our seventh summit in six days. Although Kuma is just below the 500-foot prominence threshold to be recognized as an official peak, it was equally rewarding.

We could see camp two miles below us and radioed greetings to the Ladies. We descended to our skis quickly in spite of the sticky wet snow. The ski to camp was fun, as always, and we arrived at 4 p.m. (Oso Peak, 10,390 feet, southeast face; Kuma Peak, 10,450 feet, southwest ridge, 8 miles, 4,050 feet, 7 hours.)

Sunday May 26: After six days of climbing in the sun, the Boys were ready for a rest day. The Ladies repeated Kuma Peak, leaving at 9:30 a.m. under patchy clouds.

The Boys re-leveled our tent platform, as the intense heat over the past week had severely melted out much of camp. We watched the Ladies summit Kuma Peak around noon, and they returned to camp at 1:30 p.m. The weather forecast was for increasing clouds over the next few days with Wednesday as the last good day. We called Ellie with Ultima Thule and booked a Wednesday flight. We'll try Canbear Peak tomorrow.

Monday May 27: Alarms went off again at 6 a.m. By 8:20 a.m. our quintet was skinning back up toward Bruin Peak, from

where we would drop over a pass to approach Canbear Peak. A pleasant headwind kept the heat down. We skied unroped so everyone could travel at their own pace. It was a Zen-like pleasant morning ski with each of us in our own world. We reached the northern 11,150-foot Canbear pass by 11:20 a.m. We roped up and followed the ridge crest south for ¼ mile to the lowest spot of Canbear Pass. From here we were already 400 feet higher than the summit, an odd approach. We still had to drop 900 feet to a 10,260-foot pass before heading up the final slope to Canbear Peak. As we descended we found ourselves in a basin overhung by massive cornices and avalanche debris to the northwest, then seracs and debris to the

south, all interspersed with wall-to-wall crevasses barring our way. A very unfriendly place. We quickly discussed our position. We could likely navigate the crevasses with time. And we could likely zip through the serac exposure

quickly on skis. But the simultaneous hazards were troubling.

We decided the risk is too great and headed back up to the pass, disappointed, but in agreement. Canbear Peak would remain unvisited. We returned to Canbear Pass at 1:30 p.m. and spent an hour enjoying the view. The last 5-mile ski to camp took 20 minutes, arriving at 3 p.m. In retrospect, one could safely approach Canbear Peak by descending the ridge to the northeast from Point 11,166 to the 10,260-foot pass. (Canbear Peak, 10,750 feet, attempt, 12 miles, 2,900 feet, 6 hours and 40 minutes.)

Tuesday May 28: We woke our final morning to light snow and spotty clouds. We spent the day playing cards and packing for our flight home. By 6 p.m. clouds started building. By 8 p.m. it was snowing hard. Our window seemed to be closing. Would we make it out tomorrow? Our morning pickup seemed in question.

Wednesday May 29: Alarms went off at 6 a.m. Bluebird! Not knowing exactly when Paul was going to arrive, we started packing. "I hear a plane!" Ben says at 6:30 a.m. I turn on the radio. "How long until you are ready?" Paul asked. I said 5 minutes. Moments later Paul taxied his Otter into camp. We

were off by 7 a.m.

The flight out was spectacular, flying over Mount Churchill, the Russell Glacier, and the Nizina River. Thirty minutes later we were at the McCarthy Airstrip and our cars. I'm always amazed at how quickly the transition from mountains to civilization occurs at the end of a trip



*Dave Hart and Greg Encelewski descending into the pocket glacier northwest of Canbear Peak. Canada's Nesham Glacier is below, with the foothills of the eastern Saint Elias Mountains beyond. Photo by Ben Still.*

like this. We snapped a few photos and hit the road.

Our Bear Glacier peakbagging adventure offered easy and safe terrain up a handful of unexplored peaks. We managed seven first ascents, though Kuma Peak has insufficient prominence to be an official peak. Each of these peaks has several other safe and slightly more challenging routes for those wanting to explore the area. I can still hear Canbear Peak beckoning visitors up its virgin slopes now.



## Mount Laurens

*By Graham Zimmerman*

Mark Allen and I have just arrived back in Talkeetna, Alaska, after an excellent and fruitful expedition into the Alaska Range on which we made the first ascent of the Northeast Buttress (V AI4, M7, A1, 4,650 feet) of Mount Laurens (10,042 feet), off the Southwest Fork of the Lacuna Glacier. Mark states that it is “his favorite Alaskan adventure thus far into the range.” A combination of an adventurous approach, exploratory alpinism, and challenging climbing gave the trip a fabulous flavor.

in 1997 where he ascended the Southwest Ridge of the peak in a push, solo. He reportedly named the peak Laurens after his son. This appears to be the only other ascent of the peak, which lies very predominant on the ridge line running south from The Fin, between the Yentna and Lacuna Glaciers. We have begun referring to this group of peaks running south from the Fin as the “Fin Group;” other than Laurens it also includes Voyager Peak (12,213 feet, first ascent [FA] 2011 Al-



*Mark Allen climbing ice on the Northeast Buttress of Mount Laurens. Photo by Graham Zimmerman.*

The positions looking out over the range were of the most marvelous either of us have witnessed.

We flew with Paul Roderick of Talkeetna Air Taxi into a new landing strip in the Rampart Range between the Lacuna and Kahiltna Glaciers and then approached two days up the Lacuna to the confluence with the Southwest Fork (~14 kilometers distance). Our research has shown that we were the first people to visit this area with climbing intentions and possibly the first people to visit the Southwest Fork at all.

The only information that we were able to ascertain on the peak Mount Laurens was from Paul Roderick who flew Austrian-born climber Thomas Bubendorfer into the Yentna Glacier

len-Zimmerman), Bat’s Ears Peak (11,044 feet, FA 2008 Gilmore-Turgeon-Wilkinson), and another unclimbed peak (10,020 feet).

Mark and I first sighted the very impressive east face of Mount Laurens while making the FA of Voyager Peak in 2011. At that point we coined it “The Mastodon Face” and have continued to refer to it as such.

Between May 9th and 15th, Mark and I made two attempts on the very precipitous East Buttress of Laurens, getting turned around both times after 1,500 feet of climbing due to blank overhanging walls and very dangerous climbing on an unformed ice hose.



On the evening of the 20th of May, we started up the northeast buttress. The first half of the route was comprised of difficult mixed sections separated by long sections of excellent steep ice and snow climbing. At the top of this section we bivied on a beautiful prow. The second half gained a steep snow arête that we ascended to the confluence with the north ridge. We continued up the ridge to a second short bivy on top of a bump in the ridge. This bivy was superb affording excellent views of the Alaska Range, including of Mount Foraker, Denali, Mount Hunter, and Mount Russell. The ridge both before and after this bivy involved wild, unprotected climbing on steep snow in and around huge gargoyle cornices.

The ridge led to the summit plateau where we were caught in a very cold wind-storm that forced us to hunker down for three very uncomfortable hours in our tent to wait for the short Alaskan night to abate. With the coming of the sun, the wind died and we were able to climb one final pitch of 70-degree snow to the summit.

It seems that the summit of Laurens had not formerly been ground-truthed and we were able to take care of this with our GPS and altimeter. We found the summit to be 10,042 feet. The descent was taken down the southern margin of the east face following a series of couloirs. We made 12 rappels on ice, snow, and rock and were then able to down-climb steep snow for another 2,000 feet to the glacier.

The route took us a total of 67 hours – 59 hours up and 8

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*Graham Zimmerman at the second bivy on the Northeast Buttress of Mount Laurens. Photo by Mark Allen.*

hours down. We then rested for a day and a half before skiing back to our landing strip.

We would like to thank our sponsors Outdoor Research, Julbo, Sterling Ropes, Second Ascent, Boreal, Petzl, CiloGear, La Sportiva, and Black Diamond.

# Bold No More: Enough of One Mountain

By Frank E. Baker

I'm a firm believer in never giving up. But I also think it's important to know when to quit. I refer here to a mountain that has captured my attention and imagination for 20 years. It's 7,522-foot Bold Peak that towers over the south end of Eklutna Lake.

I first climbed this Chugach peak in the summer of 1993 after a work associate and MCA member, Mike Miller, told me there was a non-technical way up its steep flanks. It's called Stivers' Gully, named after Alaska mountaineer Bill Stivers, who pioneered the route in early September 1969.

My first climb was solo and I did it in a long day. Eventually, I would summit Bold Peak seven more times, sometimes with friends. And through the years, those climbs have been getting longer and longer – the most recent of which with Pete Panarese took about 20 hours.

Here's what it takes if you opt for the Stivers' Gully route, which involves circuiting the mountain and climbing it from its south side:

- 10-1/2-mile bike ride along the Eklutna Lakeside Trail to the East Fork of the Eklutna River;
- 2-mile hike along the East Fork Trail to Tulchina Falls cutoff, then about 1/4 mile to beginning of Stivers' Gully;
- 6,600-foot ascent to summit covering four miles, about one-third of it in steep gully of unconsolidated rock that slips under foot.

Then, of course, there is the return trip. Sometimes I've camped near Bold Airstrip and made it a two-day outing. That's actually the sanest way to do it, since you can take your camping gear in by bicycle or motorized vehicle with relative ease.

**Key features:** At about 2,500 feet, near the top of the steepest part of the gully, there is a fixed rope. I don't know who maintains it, but it comes in handy. This section can be deceptively dangerous, especially on the descent. After a near-serious fall about three years ago – caused by my ice axe getting tangled in the rope (I had it clipped into my pack) – I learned to throw the axe to a point below and be free of it altogether. Having it attached to my pack on the ascent has never been an issue.

From the top of the fixed rope you ascend a steep grassy area for about 500 feet until you come to a plateau that I call "The Loft," at about 3,000 feet. This area offers a great view of East Fork Valley and across it, a jagged mountain called The Mitre. A few parka squirrels that inhabit this spot are always looking for a handout. From this point you go back into the gully, but it's not nearly as steep as you wind around and down to another green, grassy area that I call "Heavenly Valley." It has some streams running through it and makes a great bivouac location.

From here, if you are early enough in the year, i.e., May or June, you will have snow to walk upon rather than the jagged tangle of unstable rocks. After ascending about 2,000 feet more on mostly gradual terrain, you'll enter a pass at about 5,000 feet that offers your first glimpse at Bold Peak from its back, or southern side.

From this point you take an abrupt left turn (north) and progress another 1,500 feet to a wide saddle at 6,500 feet, where you're greeted with your first glimpse of Eklutna Lake and Knik Arm. On this saddle is where I spread the ashes of my friend, Dave Gahm, who died in 2008 of natural causes during a Kenai Peninsula canoe trip.



Pete Panarese on the bike ride to the East Fork of the Eklutna River. Photo by Frank Baker.





Frank Baker on Bold Peak's summit at 7,522 feet. Photo by Pete Panarese.

Then, mostly hugging the ridge, you go right or northeast and follow the ridge all the way to the summit, sometimes slipping around farther right (east) to avoid steep sections. The higher part of the mountain is south-facing and generally clear of snow by mid-to-late June.

The 360-degree view from the summit is breathtaking. And for me 7,500 feet above sea level is literally breathtaking, since I never was very good at altitude. There were too many smokers in our home when I was a child and for part of my adult life, I was also a smoker.

On Bold's 7,522-foot summit you are higher than most of the mountains around, with the exception of Bashful, Baleful, Bellicose, and a few other Chugach peaks. Far off to the northeast you'll see the perennial white slopes of Mount Marcus Baker, the Chugach Mountains' granddaddy at 13,176 feet. The birds-eye view of the Eklutna and Whiteout Glaciers is unforgettable.

**A wealth of experiences:** I've bivouacked on Bold's summit twice, been stung by a bee on my right eyelid once while on top; heard deep-pitched humming sounds (comparable to what some call the "Taos Hum"), been buzzed by a raven right at the top and had to carry my dog most of the way back from Bold because he gave out after summiting.

While most of my climbs were solo, friends accompanied me on a couple of climbs. My son David climbed it when he was 14 years old with some friends and me. I've been up there on crystal-clear days, rainy days, snowy days, and I can't rightly say what drew me back so many times over the years. Perhaps it was because I knew it was a big mountain that I could climb safely.

It took me a while to learn that the nearby glaciers control the weather around Bold Peak and that forecasts for Anchorage don't have much validity. On clear summer days, I've found, a very early start (4 a.m.) is prudent because clouds often form around the peak by midday.

On numerous trips along Eklutna Lake, the East Fork of the Eklutna River, and up Bold Peak, I've seen moose, bear, sheep, goats, coyotes, and a lot of birds; including eagles, hawks, snow buntings, and ptarmigan. I've come right up on mountain goats in the narrowest part of Stivers' Gully, and somehow they managed to maneuver onto the cliffs and get away from me. I always dreaded meeting a bear in the gully, but fortunately it never happened. I did hear of someone having that experience, however. I'm not exactly sure how it turned out – except that they lived to tell the tale.

One thing that bothered me in recent years was that with the advent of digital phones, there is now no service high on Bold. I used to routinely call my wife with my hulky old gray analog cell phone from the 6,500-foot saddle that overlooks Eklutna Lake, and anywhere along that ridge all the way to the top. Not so any more. The signal just doesn't reach that far. I'm not sure why the analog phone worked -- perhaps it could still function with a weak or reflected signal.

Those attempting the peak should be good mountain scramblers, have plenty of stamina, be prepared with proper foot-gear and clothing; and know how to pace themselves. Good balance is a must to negotiate all of the loose rock. There is plenty of water along the route. With care and preparation, Bold Peak can become a treasured sanctuary for you as it was for me for more than two decades.

Eagle River's Pete Panarese and I summited Bold Peak June 17, 2013, at 9 p.m. under crystalline, clear-blue skies. The temperature was at least 65 degrees. We stayed on top for about an hour before heading down. This year the top was mostly covered in snow. On some years there are patches of green grass and even a few flowers. A huge cornice always lingers on the mountain's top at its northernmost edge. Take care not to venture out onto it, as the fall would be non-stop for thousands of feet.

I looked around the summit one last time. "Part of me," I thought, "will always remain up here."

## Peak 4738

*Text and photos by Wayne L. Todd, with Carrie Wang and Tim Griffin*

Hiking gingerly up the Cottonwood Creek trail alongside, rather than through, downed trees, devil's club and various shrubbery is a stark contrast to a bushwhack hike of some years ago from Tustumena Lake. The trail, allowing a faster pace, is also helpful in lessening the onslaught from mosquitoes (mossies).

We're in the middle of a "sea kayaking" trip on Skilak Lake. Under the tutelage of Tim Griffin, we camp by the trail. A fancy lodge is nearby if that's more your style. Unfortunately, Tim is kayak- and shore-bound due to injury.

Patches of snow and mud line the trail up high despite the continuing clear and hot weather. At brush line (2,000 feet) the trail tapers and splits. We go left, appreciating the above-forest lake view. The alpine plants are in full blossom, with lousewort being the most stunning. I decide to photograph all the different flowering plants, which the mossies take advantage of.

After a small rise, we enter the "valley of stunted trees." The stands of poplar and spruce top out at head height, making Carrie and I feel like giants (quite unusual). The standard-height alder are the tallest trees around. After crossing the small valley, we opt for a route adjacent to snow as we only have Whippets. Where do all the mossies come from? I don't understand how there can be so many in an area mostly void of animals and even plants.

With increasing angle and slowing pace, I need a break from the

bugs, so I lie on my back in the snow (the "caribou method"). Here I cool off, have a protected back, and can fully view and counterattack. Whilst rewarding, the counterattack is truly futile.

On top we have a grand view of Skilak Lake and of the still half-snow-covered terrain to the south. With more time or faster pace, many peaks could easily be visited by ridgeline. The mossies are checked by a stiff breeze, but flies fill up the ranks.

A west ridgeline then boot snow glissade makes for a quick descent. Two caribou cross above. We make good time on the slotted sunlit trail descent, but still have flying company. A chilling lake dip to cool off and de-sweat is so refreshing I go in for another.

Paddling across glass-smooth water, with easy conversation and sunny views all around, and NO bugs, is a very pleasant way to wind down a trip.

June 9, 2013

6 hours, 10 miles, 5,000-foot gain, moderate terrain.



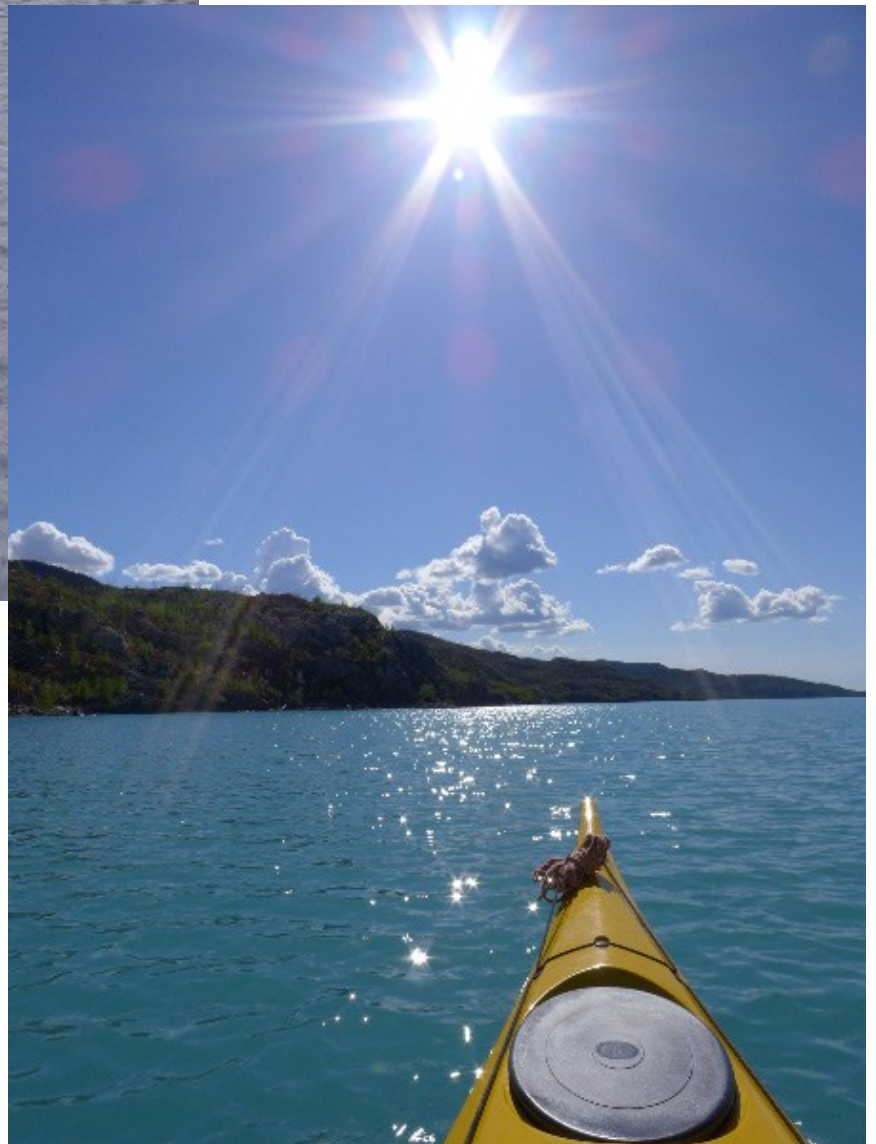
*Carrie Wang approaching Peak 4738.*





Above: Carrie Wang on top with Skilak Lake to the north.

Boot glissade



Right: Paddling Skilak Lake.

## Corvus corax caecus (Blind Raven)

Text and photo by Wayne L. Todd with Carrie Wang

June 30, 2013

We postpone our climb a day due to weather, but the next day's forecast is updated to more of the same. We go anyway.

The Crow Pass Trailhead is quiet, even the mossies are absent (cool temperatures, fog, after party sleeping?). Despite limited visibility we

continue for the workout and maybe weather improvement. Wildflowers along the trail shine in our nearby-only views. By the pass, there is already talk of turning around due to strong wind and only 100-yard visibility.

I'm feeling the desire to continue despite numerous logical reasons not to. A few skiers round the corner, then a larger group carrying skis. We chat long enough to learn they've been on a 15-day Eklutna Traverse (I should have inquired as to their MCA membership) and the Raven headwall still has a bergschrund crossing. That's just enough "knows" to continue (I'm presuming we can follow their tracks up the Raven Glacier).

Roped and cramponned, we follow the plow-like ski tracks up the Raven Glacier. Other than a couple brief glimpses to one half mile, we now see only 10 yards ahead. Higher on the glacier, I quit making snow Xs warning of the inch- to body-width crevasse crossings because of their frequency. Below the headwall, even more socked in, we see they boot packed, rather than skied, the headwall. Sweet, we not only have a route over the two bergschrunds, but also have steps (albeit rather short ones). Maybe we'll break through the cloud layer and have a peak protrusion vista?

From the top of the headwall, I angle right and continue up steep snow (sections on the headwall and here top 50 degrees). Despite extremely limited visibility, I am confident of reversing our route with snow tracks, GPS points, general direction, and terrain. The snow varies from ice lenses to knee-deep, wet snow. Noise on rocks to our immediate right is probably from goats, but we can't even see 30 feet. The moisture-entrained wind is quickly dampening our clothes. I'm more than ready to top out and head back and so continue to check the altimeter and GPS. Finally, I



*The crowded Crow Pass Trail.*

see a small cornice, which is a good sign. Topping the cornice, we're blasted with a 30- to 50 mile-per-hour wet wind, but I see a snow-free cairn and tapering slopes to either side.

Perhaps my shortest summit visit, we stay only long enough to layer up, take a picture, GPS, and unrope. Quick down-climbing even drags on.

We re-rope for the headwall/bergschrund descent (the snow bridges will soon be gone). Out of the blasting wind and off the steep snow, I now relax. It's a mindless process following our tracks downglacier.

As we exit the glacier and de-gear, visibility improves to reveal folks on the blue ice. They don't exude confidence in their skills and I comment to Carrie Wang, "Perhaps we should just stay here and wait for a rescue" (we are both Alaska Mountain Rescue Group [AMRG] members).

Back on the Crow Pass Trail, we encounter many hikers. Despite the beauty of the area, I'm ready for a new area to explore. Seven and a half hours, 5,500 feet, and 11 miles after starting, we're back at the car feeling satisfied yet frazzled and tired.

As we sit down to pizza, a rescue group callout ensues and we find ourselves driving back to the Crow Pass Trailhead four hours after our previous departure. The inlet tide is outgoing again, the clouds are in turmoil, the kite surfers are out en masse...

We, now 15 AMRG members in 5 teams, hike to Crow Pass and descend to the flats to assist a seriously injured hiker. Luckily the subject is airlifted out in the wee hours and we re-ascend the pass (still very windy) and hike back to the trailhead (along with the subject's friends), arriving at 4 a.m. (12 hours after we drove off the first time). Everyone is tired and sleep deprived. Carrie safely drives us home after a 23-hour, 9,000-foot, 20-mile day (napping not allowed). Luckily we were never rained upon. (The subject makes a full recovery.)

Climbers who ventured out high enough the previous day were rewarded with peak protrusion vistas. I hope our next outing has mountain vistas along with flower views, and no follow-up.



# Kings Mountain

By Joe Chmielowski



*A 360-degree panoramic view of Kings Mountain. The summit ridge is narrow with gendarmes, loose rock, snow, and long drops and is best climbed in winter. Photo by Joe Chmielowski.*

**Date:** June 14, 2013

**Trip Time:** 16 hours total (3 hours driving round trip, 3 hours rafting/logistics, 10 hours climbing up and down)

**Party:** Two climbers (Josef Chmielowski and Todd Kelsey)

**Elevation:** Starting elevation 800 feet at the river; 5,809-foot summit

**Difficulty:** Tough 5,000-foot vertical gain (1,000 feet of bushwhacking followed by 4,000 feet of very loose scree)

**Weather:** Excellent (sunny, 75°F)

**Starting Point:** Mile 74.5 of the Glenn Highway

**River:** The Matanuska River was at 140 percent of normal flow rate due to several weeks of hot weather.

**05:30** Awoke, finished preparing my gear that I had packed the night before.

**06:00** Todd picked me up at my house and we stopped in Palmer for some coffee and quiche. I know, real men don't eat quiche, but our choices were limited at 6:50, and believe it or not, this broccoli-infused quiche tasted really good. Plus, we knew we were going to need some serious protein to get us up Kings Mountain.

**08:00** Parked car at gravel parking lot at Mile 74.5 on the Glenn Highway. There is a large boulder adjacent to the river at this location. We then inflated Todd's handy-dandy two-person JPW Culebra Paddlecat raft and donned our dry suits. The river was ripping due to several weeks of hot, sunny weather melting the Matanuska Glacier as well as the snow-

pack. According to the internet, the discharge was 140 percent of average.

**08:20** The river crossing looked a bit hairy, but Todd got us across safely. We paddled to the large island and then walked the raft upstream. We paddled to a second smaller island and then walked upstream again. Finally we paddled across the narrow, but deep and very fast, channel to the cut bank and found a great landing spot to pull out the raft. I personally thought the river crossing portion of the expedition would be the toughest, but Todd's high-quality gear and expertise made this the easiest portion of the whole trip.

**08:45** Started hiking...or so we thought. The river "bank" is not really a bank at all. It is a cliff covered with a bit of moss and grass that starts at the water level. Undeterred, we climbed about 100 feet up before turning back due to an impassable cliff. There were no handholds because the rock is largely covered by moss, but when it is exposed, it peels off easily. So we headed back down, traversed right and went up again. No luck. More traversing further right, up again, no luck. We went left, and then extreme left, but the cliff got worse. After 1 hour of exhausting route finding and bushwhacking, we admitted defeat and donned the dry suits and climbed back into the raft.

**09:40** The decision to get back in the raft was not an easy one, because the river has a bend in it and we could not see any sort of landing ahead of us. Plus, the current is very strong and is cutting into a 100-foot vertical cliff. It was a bit of a gamble, if there was no landing spot behind this blind curve we might get swept past Kings Mountain and we would not be climbing this day. Heck, who knows, maybe we would end up back in Palmer for some more of that broccoli quiche. Once



Joe Chmielowski enjoying a break on the beautiful "Cabin Ridge." Photo by Todd Kelsey.

again, Todd's expertise saved us and once we paddled around the corner we found a small 10-foot-wide place to land. The ONLY place to land probably in the next ½ mile. This should put you directly across the river from the large boulder at the parking lot. Keep this in mind because on your descent through the trees, this boulder is your only landmark.

**09:45** We secured the raft, removed the dry suits and donned our backpacks for our second bushwhacking and route-finding attempt. This time we could actually see some vegetation that had been bent over perhaps due to an old rock slide or small avalanche. We used this as a steep, and still very difficult, route up the river "bank." Note, this section is 1,000 vertical feet of bushwhacking with very dense devil's club and alder (most of which mysteriously seems to be rotten and spontane-

ously breaks off if you attempt to use it as a handhold). I recommend wearing some thick leather gardening gloves for this section of the climb up and down. You will be happy you brought them, because I later removed about 15 thorns (2 more are still imbedded in my fingertips). The only good news on this portion of the hike was that there were no mosquitoes. This is mind-boggling because they were really bad in my backyard in Anchorage, so I naturally expected them to be worse here. In fact, I brought my 100% DEET bug-juice on the trip (you know, the kind that melts hiking/climbing gear and rafts), but did not use it once.

**10:45 (Latitude 61.76050° North, Longitude 148.5324° West, Elevation 1,528 feet)** After an hour of hard work, we arrived at a beautiful ridge with birch and spruce trees. It looked like the perfect place to build a cabin, so I called it "Cabin Ridge." At this point, take note of the large boulder across the river at the parking lot and make a good mental note of your location on this ridge. This can potentially be very difficult to find your way back down through the vegetation to your boat. If you can't find your boat when you return, traversing along the river "bank" is not an option. GPS this point or lock it into your memory or you will hate life upon your return. We took a 10-minute break here and thought about how to get to the foot of the large scree slide (see photo on page 17) visible from the road.

**11:00** We were prepared for another hour of hellish bushwhacking to get to the toe of the scree slide when I noticed a small game trail. While looking at the mountain, move climber's left and you will intersect a game trail that may also be utilized by humans. Regardless, we walked on this great trail about 800 feet and it took us exactly to the base of the scree. What luck! Now we started climbing in earnest. As an aside, in my opinion, there are three types of scree: 1) good stuff – about the size of marbles or golf balls. It acts like snow because you can kick steps as you climb up and surf it coming down. It is like butter and quite lovely. 2) consolidated/compacted scree, which has a lot of fines and clays and after the winter snow it is more set up like concrete in patches. This



is not so good. 3) bad stuff – this scree is typically bowling-ball - or melon-sized and is hypersensitive to motion. It is delicate and requires great concentration and balance to navigate. Furthermore, there is a high probability of sustaining some sort of ankle/knee injury. As you might guess, Kings Mountain scree is type #3 up the entire mountain. It is extremely slow going up, and usually not surfable coming down (we found a couple of 300-foot patches to surf). So if you think you are going to cut time off on the down hike, you are wrong. This is the toughest scree I have climbed in the Chugach Mountains due to its large size, sensitivity, and vertical gain (4,000 feet of this stuff). I highly recommend two trekking poles with large ski baskets to keep the tips from going in between the rocks. Also, stay to the extreme climber's left of the scree, as sometimes moss/grass/weeds anchor in some of the rocks.

**12:00 (Latitude 61.75577° North, Longitude 148.5189° West, Elevation 3,182 feet)** We arrived at the top of the main scree chute where it begins to neck down into a proper couloir. Here we took a 15-minute break and pondered whether to continue up this main couloir that might take us right to the top, but had quite a bit of ice in it. We were also worried about any sort of waterfall or mini-cliff that might be in it and then we would have to down-climb and waste time. Ultimately, we chose to move climber's left about 500 feet, which took us to two small gullies. We chose the first ("Joe's Gully") of the two gullies because it was closer to our rest spot and seemed less steep. The gully to the left ("Todd's Gully") is larger, but had a small waterfall/cliff that we weren't sure we could navigate. So, with some route-finding we scrambled up Joe's Gully and it took us along the base of a large cliff. It turns out that Joe's Gully merges into Todd's Gully at the top.

**13:00 (Latitude 61.75495° North, Longitude 148.5130° West, Elevation 3,700 feet)** Mother Nature is funny, and at this point, for some reason – there were mosquitoes!? Not swarming, but enough to raise the question, why are they here at 3,700 feet and not in the thick vegetation by the river? Regardless, we started hiking, hoping for a compact/consolidated ridge walk, but we were sorely disappointed. The hypersensitive bowling-ball scree only seemed to worsen and steepen. At one point I found myself in a rock avalanche about 15 feet wide and 15 feet long with coffee-table-sized rocks.

**14:00 (Latitude 61.75281° North, Longitude 148.5082° West, Elevation 4,591 feet)** Took a small

break and captured GPS data. On this note, we were not using a proper GPS – I typically don't bring one into the mountains because you kind of know where you are right? But Todd had his cell phone with a GPS app so he used it to capture waypoints. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of cell phone GPS data points, but I include them in case anyone wants to replicate our route.

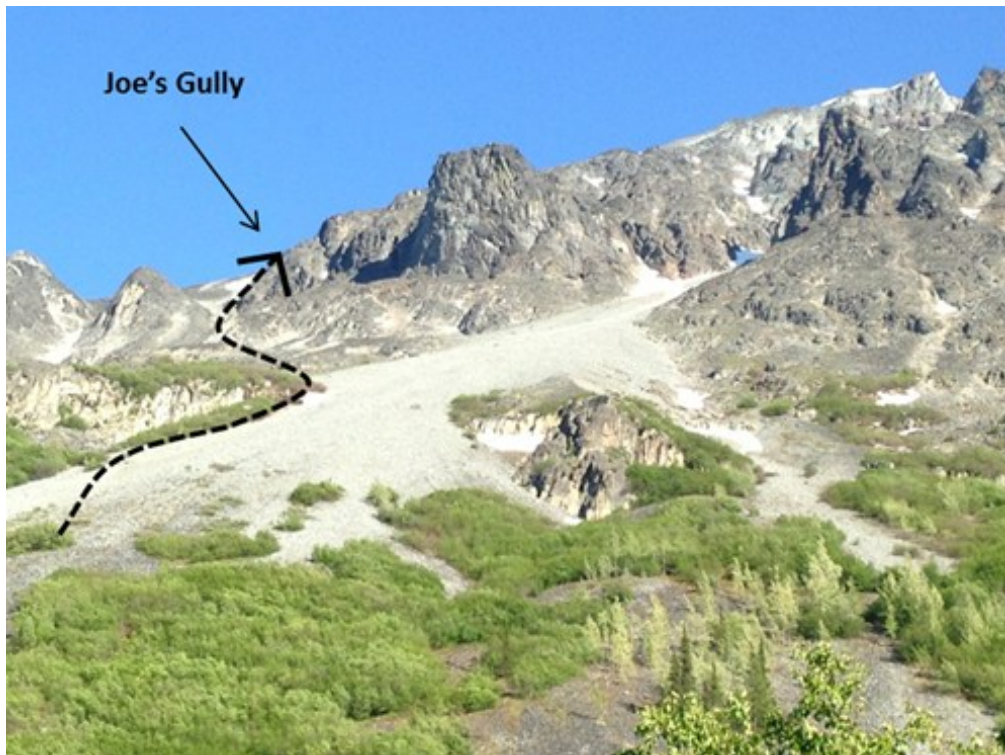
**15:30 (Latitude 61.74852° North, Longitude 148.5082° West, Elevation 5,673 feet)** We finally made it to the summit...not quite. We made it as far as we were going to go without rope or climbing protection. The proper summit is a rather nasty piece of work, as it is extremely steep on both sides with a lot of exposure. There was not enough snow to kick into for comfort, and even with rope and protection the rock was shattered. I have a high tolerance for scrambling and heights, but the last 100 vertical feet was best left unclimbed. I think it would be easy in the winter with good snow cover. Note that



*Joe Chmielowski near the base of the scree slope. As much as possible, we stayed climber's left on the scree gully. Photo by Todd Kelsey.*

the photos tend to flatten out the image so that the reader might be thinking, "that looks easy." But trust me; you need rope and protection if you are considering a summit attempt. I think it is akin to climbing Pioneer Peak and pushing onward to the second summit.

**16:00** We enjoyed about a half hour break at the top and chomped down a few Shot Blocks and took pictures. The view of Granite Peak, Skybuster (aka Ice Cream Cone Mountain), and Castle Mountain was amazing. There were still zero clouds, but there were one or two mosquitoes for good measure. We started down at 16:00 and we arrived at the top of Joe's Gully at 17:00. At this point, make sure to



stay close to the cliff as you start down and look for a grass ramp that will take you up and out of Joe's Gully. We continued slowly down the long scree patch, found the game trail and arrived at Cabin Ridge at 18:00.

**18:00** At Cabin Ridge, we followed the game trail a bit more downriver and determined that it goes to a lake. We backtracked and found the point that we had attained when we originally climbed up. This is key, make sure to look across the river for the large boulder. Work your way through the devil's club and alder and when possible, use this boulder as a guide back to your raft. If you don't intersect your raft initially, you will have a very tough time traversing along the river's cliff edge. As it turns out, our route-finding was perfect (due to luck, not skill) and we came within 10 feet of the raft. Although at this point, I had many more thorns in my hands and some in my crotch region from devil's club stalks that sprang up suddenly as I walked over them (I pondered adding a medieval codpiece to my hiking list or maybe just reinforcing the crotch of my Mountain Hardware pants with duct tape).

**20:00** We quickly donned the dry suits and easily paddled across the river to the island and then back to the roadside riverbank. We walked the raft up, deflated it, and I brought the car around. We hit the road at 21:00 and were back in Anchorage at 22:30.

**Recommendations:**

- 1) Climb Kings Mountain in March or April while there is ice on the river (should save an hour each way with-

*We stayed left in the main scree gully and then worked our way into "Joe's Gully." Photo by Joe Chmielowski.*

out having to deal with rafts, etc.). Also, you won't have to deal with devil's club or touchy scree. Plus, the summit should be easier and safer to navigate. It is true that you will have to break trail through snow, but that will be quicker and easier than dealing with boats, devil's club, and scree. See a good write-up with photos on the internet by Billy Finley, the link is: [www.akmountain.com/index.cfm/2006/03/04/King-Mountain](http://www.akmountain.com/index.cfm/2006/03/04/King-Mountain).

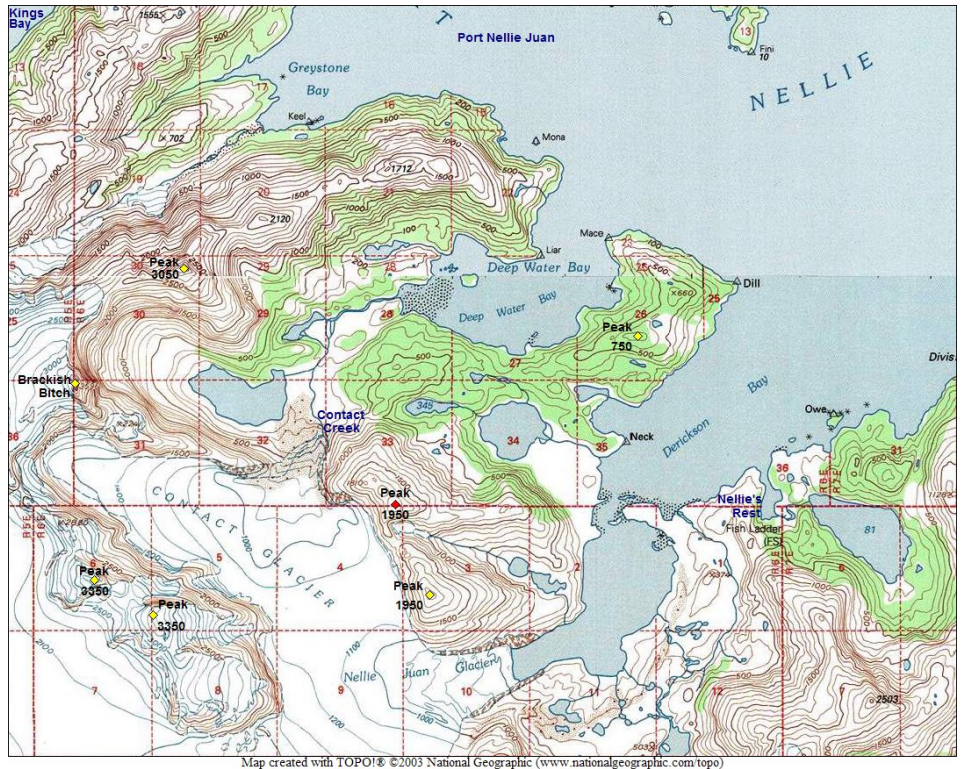
- 2) If you do insist on climbing it in the summer (who would do that?), then make sure to bring: thick leather gloves, two trekking poles with snow baskets, and plenty of water (our 3-liter camelbacks ran out on the down-climb). Also, check on the river conditions because it can be a tricky crossing and tough to find a landing spot on the opposite shore.
- 3) Try taking the main couloir all the way to the top. When we were near the summit, we noticed that this had an easy way out near the top, so I think it is probably the best way to go. If you choose this route, crampons, two axes, and some protection should safely get you through it (after about July 1<sup>st</sup> the snow is completely melted out). This could easily save two hours.



# Peak of the Month: Peak 1950

By Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Kenai Mountains  
Borough: Unorganized Borough  
Drainages: Contact Glacier and Derickson Bay  
Latitude/Longitude: 60° 28' 23" North, 148° 24' 25" West  
Elevation: 1950 (±50) feet  
Prominence: Either 500 feet from Peak 1950 in the Nellie Juan Glacier drainage or 800 feet from Peak 3350 in the Contact Glacier and Nellie Juan Glacier drainages  
Adjacent Peaks: Peak 1950 in the Nellie Juan Glacier drainage and Peak 750 in the Deep Water Bay and Derickson Bay drainages  
Distinctness: 500 feet from Peak 1950 in the Nellie Juan Glacier drainage  
USGS Map: Seward (B-4)  
First Recorded Ascent: July 26, 1993, by Paul May  
Route of First Recorded Ascent: Unknown  
Access Point: Derickson Bay



The August Peak of the Month, Peak 1950, is the northernmost of a pair of 1950-foot granite peaks that rise between Deep Water Bay and Derickson Bay.

On July 26, 1993, Paul May climbed this peak from his sailboat anchored in Derickson Bay.

On July 21, 2011, Tim Kelley and Tammy Thiele climbed to the summit via the north ridge from the south end of Deep Water Bay. They had previously attempted the northwest ridge from the west end of the bay, but were turned back by cliffs. From the summit Tim ran to the southern Peak 1950 and then back to the northern peak.

The information for this article was obtained from Tim's article titled "Little Guys, Multiple Tries ... in Prince William Sound," which appeared in the February 2012 *Scree* and from my correspondence with both Paul and Tim.

*Tim Kelley ascending the north ridge of Peak 1950. Photo by Tammy Thiele.*





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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](mailto:MCAScree@gmail.com). Articles should be submitted by the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month to appear in the next month's *Scree*.

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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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