

# the SCREE

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

August 2015

Volume 58 Number 8



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**Monthly meeting: 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, August 18, at the McHugh Creek Trailhead  
CHANGED VENUE and FORMAT.**

*"Mountains have a way of dealing with overconfidence."*

*- Hermann Buhl*

# 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 Tuesday, August 18, at the McHugh Creek Trailhead.

For the MCA Membership Application and Liability Waiver, visit

<http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=members.form>.

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## Cover Photo

Paul Muscat, James Kesterson, and Glenn Wilson (left to right) descending the summit ridge of Spectre Peak with Lincoln Peak above the clouds in the distance.

Photo by Joe Stock

**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 24th 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 oriented photo for consideration for the cover. Please submit captions with photos.

## CHANGED VENUE and FORMAT.

**Monthly Meeting: Tuesday, August 18, at 6:30 p.m.** at the McHugh Creek Trailhead, followed by a hike to a climbing area. Hikers, climbers, and wannabes are welcome.

## Hiking and Climbing Schedule

**September 25-27:** MCA Ice Festival at the Matanuska Glacier. Contact Jayme Mack at [jaymelynnemack@gmail.com](mailto:jaymelynnemack@gmail.com) for details.

**September 27-29:** Glacier Creek mountain climb. Come join the fun of wading the icy Matanuska River and exploring the wilds of Glacier Creek after the ice festival. Typically this is a hiking trip with some possible scrambling. Destination may be a first ascent. Class D. Leader: Cory Hinds; email [chinds100@gmail.com](mailto:chinds100@gmail.com).

## In Memoriam

Don Liska passed away on December 26 at the age of 85. Don made three first ascents in the Saint Elias Mountains. In 1966, with Fred Beckey, Eric Bjornstad, Art Davidson, Herb Staley, and Jim Stuart, he made the first ascent of the South Summit of Mount Seattle (10350) and in 1974 with his wife Alice, he made the first ascents of The Guardian (11105) and Mount Watson (12516). Mike Allen, Larry Dauelsberg, and Walt Gove were also in the first ascent party on Mount Watson.

Adam Helman died on January 9 at the age of 54. Adam made three first ascents in the Saint Elias Mountains. In 1995, with Mimi Bourquin, Joe DeMarsh, Marc Flexer, Stephanie Harold, Ben McLuckie, Howard Petrie, Justin Steil, Tom Weiner, and Mike Wessels, he made the first ascents of Berwick Peak (9978) in the Jefferies Glacier drainage, of Mount Mildred (10150) in the Jefferies Glacier drainage, and of Thunderbunny Peak (9838) in the Baldwin Glacier drainage.

Online? Click me!



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



## **Letter to the Editor: Western Chugach Peaks Completion: Restated**

I feel compelled to respond to veiled criticisms that I did not complete the Western Chugach Peaks (WCPs) because I did not climb the same bump as Richard Baranow on the plateau of Peak 4360. *[There has been some discussion as to which peaks should be included in the Western Chugach Mountains. I have defined it as all peaks with at least 500 feet of prominence south of the Knik River Valley and west of the East Fork of the Twentymile River. Mr. Baranow has defined the peaks as all peaks with at least 500 feet of prominence south of the Knik River Valley and west of the West Fork of the Twentymile River. There is a three-peak discrepancy between these two definitions.]*

I climbed Peak 4360 and Whitecrown Peak in March 2014. In the summer of 2014, I completed the WCPs, the first person to do so (despite two recent mass-media articles implying otherwise). It was noted in the August 2014 *Scree* and, at the suggestion of another, a short article was submitted to the *American Alpine Journal*. This seemed an adequate way to celebrate the culmination of a fun, challenging, and rewarding endeavor.

The suggestion that I have not completed the peaks of the Western Chugach Mountains is disappointing and meritless. There is a historical precedence to credit those who, in good faith, have summited a peak, even if subsequent surveys reveal the highest point to be elsewhere. For example, in 1966 Vin Hoeman was the first to complete the 50 state highpoints. This accolade has not been revoked despite later surveys revealing some state highpoints to be elsewhere.

In addition, due to the dynamic medium of snow when coupled with wind, it is possible Mr. Baranow observed different relative elevations on Peak 4360, as his visit was well over a year after mine. Further, the measurement tool used, a barometric-pressure watch, is neither accurate nor reliable in measuring slight elevation differences (nor are recreational GPS units).

The WCP summits will be an evolving list as more areas are surveyed and mapped in detail, and as glaciers recede. When these peaks are covered with snow they may vary significantly in elevation.

In the spirit of mountaineering fellowship and camaraderie, I commend Mr. Baranow for his successful completion of the WCP without the help of motorized transport beyond normal trailheads; it is a laudable achievement. I'm sorry he does not reciprocate the sentiment.

Wayne L. Todd

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### **Pichler's Perch Renovations Completed** **Text and photo by Cory Hinds**

The Pichlers Perch renovations were completed without incident Wednesday, June 24, through Saturday, June 27. The weather was not great but it was O.K. to get the job done. The selection of food and beer was excellent, which helped keep up the morale. Tom Choate dropped puns on us from start to finish, and was in fine form the whole time, including readings of Robert Service and a thorough botanical survey of the flowers near the hut.

Below is a photo of the hut nearing completion. This is the same metal jacket that was installed at Hans' Hut two years ago, and it should protect the hut for many decades.

Special thanks to Stan Olsen and Ross Noffsinger for the technical selection of materials, arranging for donated materials, and directing the field execution. Sally Balchin provided excellent cooking and general enthusiasm (including the raging bonfire). Harry Hunt's carpentry skills saved at least a day's work. Miguel Anaya and I enjoyed the hike in and out, then biked the Eklutna Lakeside Trail. Others were shuttled via helicopter.

Helicopter operation cost \$7,525, only a bit more than the estimated \$7,000. With the savings on donated materials, the overall repairs should be under budget. As we did last time, we may want to assemble a poster to thank our sponsors Rainproof Roofing, Arctic Insulation, etc.



*The crew was Stan Olsen, Sally Balchin, Ross Noffsinger, Harry Hunt, Tom Choate, Miguel Anaya, and Cory Hinds.*

# Isto is Not: “Climb and Hike” in the Romanzof Mountains

Text by Glenn Wilson

Photos by Joe Stock

I'll never get tired of hearing Joe Stock and Paul Muscat tell stories about a trip they took in 2009 to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge when they climbed Mount Chamberlin and floated the Hulahula River north to the Arctic Ocean. In 2009, Mount Chamberlin in the Franklin Mountains was considered to be the highest peak in the Brooks Range. Recently, though, Mount Isto in the Romanzof Mountains of the Brooks Range (also in the refuge) was determined to hold that position. Joe and Paul took that as a good reason to return, so they started cooking up a scheme to go and climb Mount Isto from the Jago River. And with no shortage of other peaks in the area from which to choose, this seemed like a worthwhile peakbagging destination. Joe (Stock Alpine LLC, [www.stockalpine.com](http://www.stockalpine.com)) would plan and guide the trip. Logistics assistance from Dan Oberlatz (Alaska Alpine Adventures) and local peak information from Steve Gruhn completed the preparations. James Kesterson and I joined in, and our team of four was set for an 11-day climbing and hiking adventure. Although Joe and Paul had both been on wilderness excursions north of the Arctic Circle before, this was a first for James and for me, and the idea of going to a place where the sun doesn't set added a new level of intrigue. As it turned out, we didn't end up attempting Mount Isto, but we climbed other exciting peaks and explored some wild places.

On June 8, 2015, we were flown in by Wright Air Service in a Helio Courier, a bush plane made for short takeoffs and landings. We landed on a patch of tundra in the upper Jago River valley at a point directly across the river from Isto Creek, Scree—August 2015

at an elevation of 2930 feet. After caching some of our supplies, we started hiking in the rain with provisions for eight days. We camped the first night about three miles down the valley on the west side of the river where the Schwanda Glacier drainage meets the Jago River.



*Wright Air Service pilot Matt Johnson and his Helio Courier in the Jago River valley.*

On Day 2 we worked our way up the Schwanda Glacier drainage and continued up a branch to the west. We made our high camp at an elevation of 5000 feet on a low ridge just across the creek from the north ridge of Spectre Peak (Peak 8625 on the Demarcation Point (A-5) USGS map, two miles east-northeast of Mount Isto). It took a while to find a spot in the rock rubble that would be flat enough for our tent platform.



*James Kesterson, Glenn Wilson, and Paul Muscat (left to right) ascending the north ridge of Spectre Peak.*

Day 3 was a reconnaissance day for a route up Mount Isto. Our goal was to search for a shortcut to the upper part of the unnamed glacier on the northwest face by going over a saddle high on Mount Isto's north ridge from the unnamed glacier on its north-northeast face. We climbed west up the canyon a couple of miles southwest from camp to a vantage point where we could see the route to the saddle, and we determined that the slope was too avalanche-prone. But there was a clear view of a route up Spectre Peak. We all said, “Let's climb that!”

We were up early on Day 4. After a breakfast of granola and instant coffee we headed out to climb Spectre Peak. Above our camp we ascended a face just below the north ridge. This was more direct than the alternative of taking the glacier on the west side of the ridge. For much of the first 2,000 feet, we scrambled up steep scree, before we found ourselves on a snow



covered slope alongside a thin rock ridgeline for another 800 feet. That led to the final 800-foot climb up the summit ridge, where we roped up and threaded a narrow path between the cornice on our left and steeper unstable snow on the glacier below us to our right. On the summit we found a register that had been placed there by Tom Choate in 1999. This peak was first climbed in 1992 via the south ridge by Walt Rogers and Dennis Schmitt who gave it the name Igiq Tatqoq (Inupiaq for Shadow Peak), but the name wasn't published at the time [see the November 2013 *Scree*]. It was climbed again from Isto Creek by Tom Choate in 1999 and given the name Spectre Peak after the Brocken spectre shadows he saw during his ascent of the east ridge [see the February 2000 *Scree* and the November 2013 *Scree*]. On our ascent, we thought of a nickname for the peak. We called it Screepik (genuine scree) after the seemingly endless scree slope we ascended on the lower part of our route and the Inuit word "pik" meaning "genuine." It had been snowing most of the way up and the wind was blowing hard at the top, so we didn't stay long. For our descent route, we took the glacier on the peak's north face by staying close to the edge near the rock along the west side of the north ridge. Small crevasses were easy to spot and avoid. After a long day, we got back to camp to find several inches of fresh snow on the ground. The snow and chilly temperatures gave us hope that we might avoid being attacked by mosquitoes on this trip.

It was still snowing lightly on Day 5 when we set out again to scout for a route to Mount Isto. We continued farther west from our vantage point of Day 3, looking for another way to the Arey Glacier. We attained a glacier-covered saddle on the north ridge of Mount Isto about two miles north of the summit. From there we could see that the route was complicated by recession

of the Arey Glacier and active avalanching on steep snow slopes. It appeared that Mount Isto was not something we would attempt on this trip, but this was a fun, long day of hiking and climbing on varied terrain.

We moved camp a mile down the canyon on Day 6 to be closer to the Schwanda Glacier drainage. We set out to do reconnaissance after lunch, and climbed a 2,000-foot slope of boulders and loose talus, looking for a possible route up Contact Peak. Instead, we spied Peak 7470, which looked inviting. It stands prominently about 5,000 feet above the Jago River on a high ridge where the view opens up to the expansive coastal plain. We understood from Steve Gruhn that Peak 7470 had no record of a previous ascent. As we climbed to a saddle west of the peak, we were on rock that was mostly talus made up of dark schist. On the rock surfaces

were small bright rosettes and other intricate formations of white gypsum, the weathering products of sulfide minerals within the schist. We could smell the sulfide minerals when the rock was struck by the metal tips of our trekking poles. Partway across the saddle, we crossed a fault contact between the schist and weathered granite that would lead us to the summit. We paused as we contemplated the geologic forces that created the mountains all around us. James climbed on ahead alone. When we reached the summit, he said that he had been thinking about his infant granddaughter, Lincoln Oxrieder, who was lost recently to a sudden illness. For a moment, we all felt the spirit of the small child. With views

of snowy Brooks Range peaks, the majestic Jago River valley, and the Beaufort Sea, this became Lincoln Peak.

We slept in until about 8:00 a.m. on Day 7. We hadn't returned



*Paul Muscat on a snowy night in high camp.*



*Glenn Wilson, James Kesterson, Paul Muscat, and Joe Stock on the summit of Lincoln Peak with the Arctic Coastal Plain and the Beaufort Sea in the background.*



to camp until 10:30 the night before, after a long and steep descent from Lincoln Peak. One feature of summer in the arctic, we learned, is you don't worry about getting back before dark. After breakfast we packed up for the hike back to where we had landed the first day. On our way down the Schwanda drainage, we saw a Brooks Range grizzly run across the creek to the other side of the canyon. These are some of the most truly wild bears that exist and they are accustomed to living in their remote wilderness. If they hear humans in the distance, they tend to run away, as this one did. He made good time traversing a steep scree slope, moving much faster than we could have on the same terrain. He stopped a few times and sat down to look at us for a minute before running on. When we arrived back at the meadow where we had started our trip, we retrieved our cached supplies. We anticipated the French press coffee we would have with breakfast the next morning rather than the instant coffee of the previous several days.



*Joe Stock compares his boot print to the paw print of a Brooks Range grizzly bear.*

James, Paul, and Joe took a leisurely sightseeing hike up the valley on Day 8 to explore the region where two large forks of the river merge into one, and they hiked a ways up the eastern fork. Lingering effects of a minor pre-trip injury kept me in camp for the remainder our time there, but I enjoyed the spectacular views from within the huge valley. That evening, after they returned, what had been a gentle breeze most of the day turned into a very strong wind and blowing fog coming up the valley from the north. We figured we'd retreat to the tent and wait it out before trying to cook dinner, but it never let up and it began to rain off and on. Eventually, hunger set in, so we

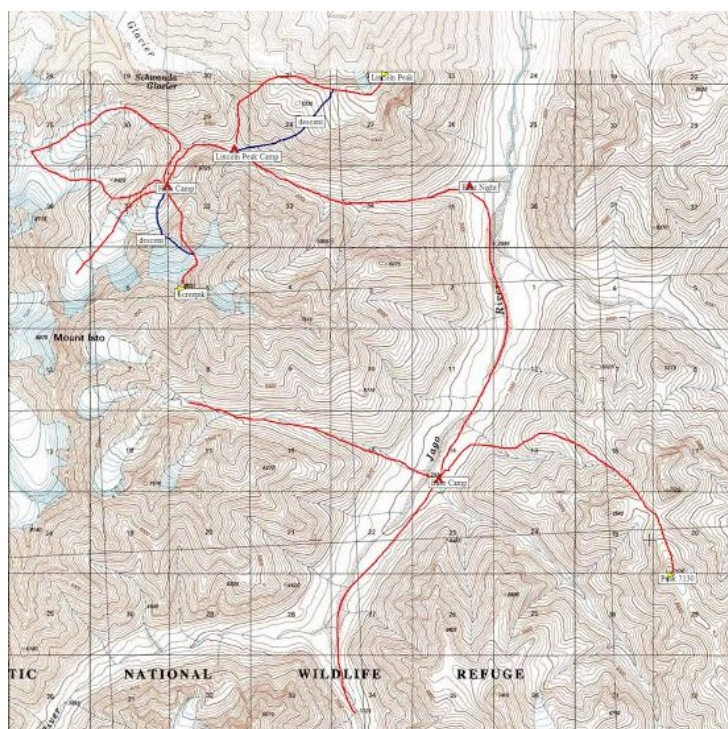
made a dash for the dining tarp and quickly gobbled down what we could find that didn't need cooking. It rained that night, but it cleared up by morning.

On Day 9, James, Paul, and Joe headed up a grassy ridge on the east wall of the valley in search of peaks to climb. From a high ridge, they climbed on scree and snow to the summit of Point 7130. Along the way they photographed wildflowers and observed some curious mineral veins in the rock formations.

Paul and Joe hiked up Isto Creek on Day 10 while James and I spent the day around camp. That evening we enjoyed our last great base-camp dinner. The next day our flight with Wright Air Service came in at 11:00 a.m. as planned, and we were ferried in two trips to Arctic Village. We spent a few hours there before catching our flight back to Fairbanks.

A couple of years ago, the four of us had a blast climbing peaks in a place where detailed guidebooks hadn't been written. We just showed up with basic information, explored, and climbed what looked challenging and the most fun. This trip was like that. In Joe's itinerary, the entries for most days had only said "Climb and Hike." The idea of sunlight around the clock added to the sense of freedom. Although Mount Isto had eluded us, the peaks we did climb provided lots of excitement on talus, snow, and glaciers. And we were touched by our experience on the summit of Lincoln Peak. The remote wilderness surroundings in the Brooks Range were absolutely spectacular and made for a great arctic adventure.

See more photos on Joe's website: [www.stockalpine.com/posts/arctic-refuge-mountaineering.html](http://www.stockalpine.com/posts/arctic-refuge-mountaineering.html).





# Wasabi Quartetto – Four Climbs in the Alaska Range

By Team Wasabi: Kei Taniguchi with Junji Wada

I had visited Alaska several times before, but what was extremely luxurious this time was that we didn't meet anyone during our month-long stay on the Ruth Glacier. That luck gave us superior time we could face each other, to nature, to earth, or to a mountain more directly. Without any noise, we could choose our lines with purer feeling and could touch severe, but beautiful, nature.

## "Prelude" – Mount Dan Beard, south face variation / V, snow and ice / seven hours

1-1/2 hours from our base camp, we crossed the bergschrund on the right side of the south face to start. We climbed a snow-and-ice gully with some rock bands, using snow pickets, rocks, cams, and ice screws. On the right side of the headwall, we crawled up a chimney to an icy plateau that led to the summit.

## "Concerto" – Peak 11301, East Spur, east face to Point KJ / AI4+, M5+R / 18.5 hours



*East Face of Peak 11301. "Concerto" follows the line on the left and "Sonatine" follows the line on the right.*

The lower couloir was filled with rotten ice and rock and dry snow. When the sun rose and shone on the upper wall, an avalanche started through the couloir. We climbed the upper rock wall with wide cracks, slabs, chockstones, loose rocks, and ice. It was a very enjoyable mixed route. The last part was a snow-and-ice wall to Point KJ, Peak 11301 East Spur.

## "Nocturne" – Mount Dan Beard, east face / WI4, AI5, M5 / 12 hours

Avoiding seracs, we chose the route from the very right side of the east face. We climbed an ice gully to a rock-and-snow face, and then to the icy ridge. At the very top part, we needed to



*Route of "Prelude" on Mount Dan Beard's South Face*

cross a huge crevasse, which is the Alaskan route we enjoyed. Descent was to our "Prelude" under a full moon. [*Ed. note: It's likely that Taniguchi and Wada climbed the same line or intersected "Sideburn Rib," the 2007 route climbed by Gareth Hughes and Vivian Scott (see pages 156 to 158 of the 2008 American Alpine Journal).*]

## "Sonatine" – Peak 11301 East Spur, east face to P3 / WI4, M4 / 10 hours

This face is invisible from anywhere. We researched several times and also needed to time our travel to avoid avalanches. But it was a very beautiful ice line to the upper couloir with side rocks. From the top of the ice couloir, we had five pitches of fun mixed climbing to P3.



*Route of "Nocturne" on Mount Dan Beard's East Face*

**Data**

Dates: April 21 – June 6, 2014

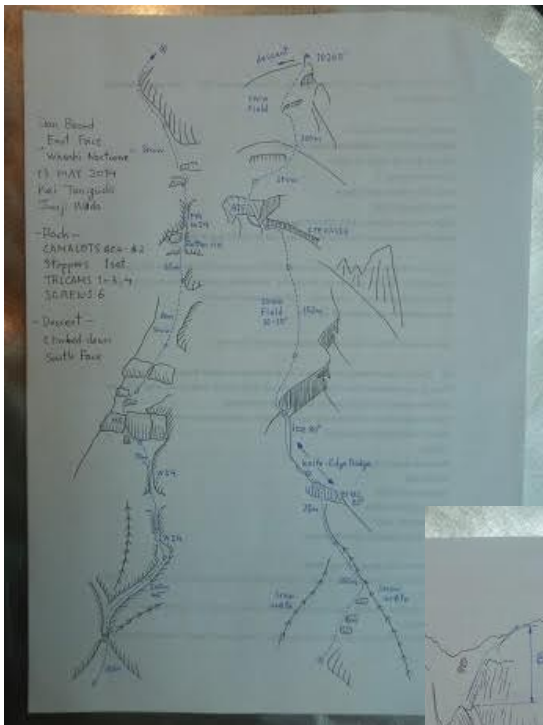
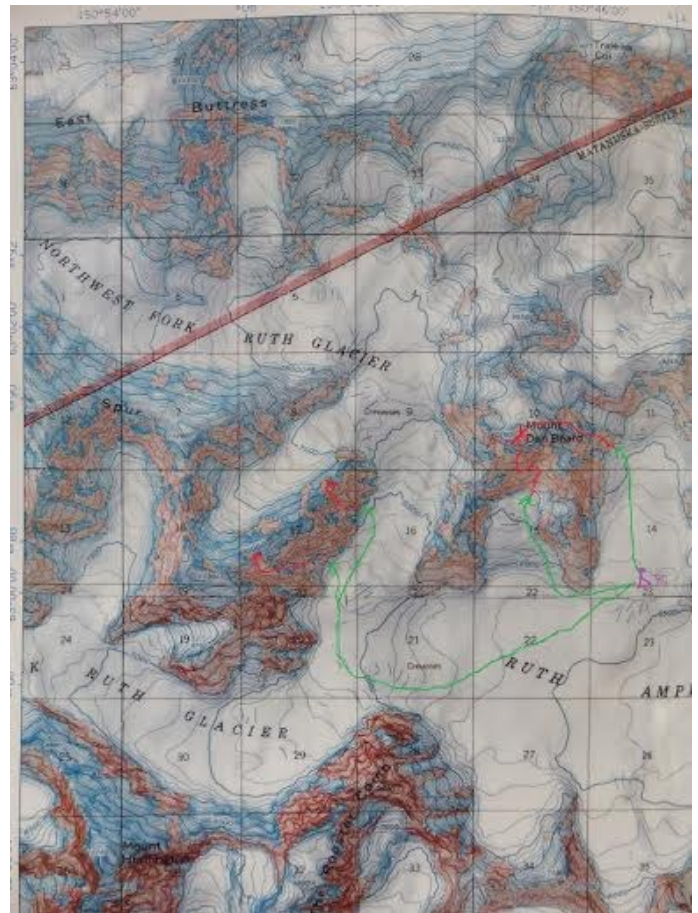
Team: Team Wasabi 2014 (Kei Taniguchi and Junji Wada)

Place: Denali National Park / Don Sheldon Amphitheater, West Fork of the Ruth Glacier

New routes and variations:

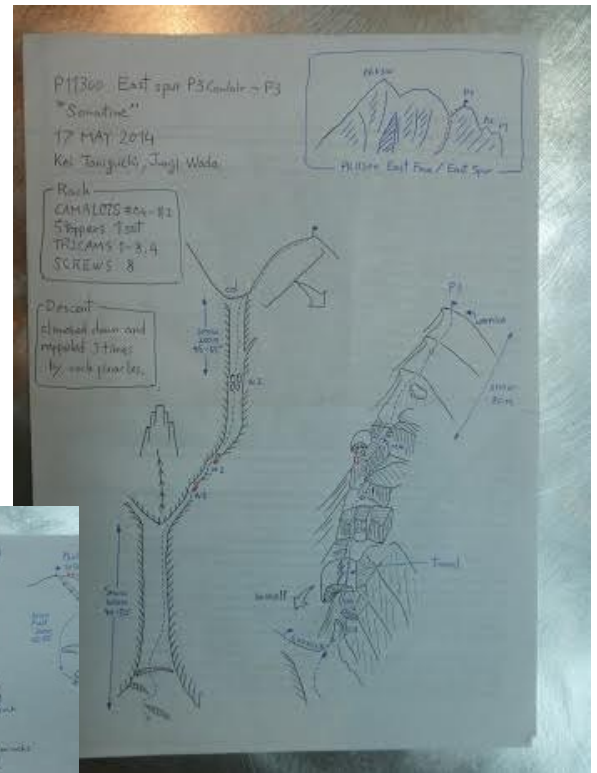
- Mount Dan Beard (10,260 feet) South Face variation "Prelude" / V, snow and ice / seven hours
- Peak 11301 East Spur, Point KJ "Concerto" / AI4+, M5+R / 18.5 hours
- Mount Dan Beard East Face "Nocturne" / WI4, AI5, M5 / 12 hours. [Ed. note: This route likely repeated or intersected "Sideburn Rib."]
- Peak 11301 East Spur, P3 "Sonatine" / WI4, M4 / 10 hours

Gear: Two 60-meter ropes, 3 or 4 snow pickets, 8 ice screws (one 19-centimeter, four 16-centimeter, three 13-centimeter), 3 pitons (K2, A1), rocks #4 to 11, Camalot # 0.4 to 2 or 3, tricams #1 to 3 or 4, 12 alpine draws, 5-millimeter rope, bivy sack, jetboil stove.



Topo of "Nocturne"

Topo of "Sonatine"



Topo of "Concerto"





## Tiehacker Mountain: Small, Medium, or Large

Text and photos by Wayne L. Todd

With Kevin Downie, Randy Howell, Stefan Nüchter, and Carrie Wang

May 17, 2015



*Stefan Nüchter, Kevin Downie, Randy Howell, and Carrie Wang (left to right) with Mount Ascension in the background.*

As we drive into low-cloud-draped Seward, with snow level even below cloud line, my hiking choice for the day (and a two-hour drive) seems like a bust. Due to the time, we decide against alternate plans and try Tiehacker Mountain anyway.

The difficulty of Tiehacker is negotiating all the trails down low. As we were here last fall with the Meetup Group we have good recollection of the proper route (mostly, or some of us part of the time). The last key is to make a left turn onto a foot trail off of an all-terrain vehicle trail that already looks to be going the correct direction (mountain/east). (Driving directions: east on Bear Lake Road, east [right] on Tiehacker to a cul-de-sac.)

The trail is dry (and still steep!) amongst the tall firs and spruce. Along with Carrie Wang, Kevin Downie, Randy Howell, Stefan Nüchter, and me, we note fresh, very large bear tracks also ascending. Excitement at possibly seeing a bear (partly on Stefan's account as he is visiting from Germany) turns to concern when we also see a very small bear track. As we transition out of tree line at 1700 feet, the dry trail abruptly

disappears under deep snow. Glorious views of the Seward area appear through dissipating clouds. The bear tracks continue up the snow and become glissade tracks. We imagine the spectacle of bears glissading. Above brush line, the tracks trend left out



*Wayne Todd's boot next to a bear track.*

of view. We also are poop guides for Stefan, pointing out bear, ptarmigan, sheep/goat droppings, etc. A bald eagle floats the thermals at the nearby steep edge.

Initial snow travel is reasonable even without snowshoes, (at least if you're not breaking trail and don't fall waste deep in a soft spot), but after also losing the narrow snow-free edge, we don snowshoes. We are impressed by the quantity of snow and second-guess ourselves about not bringing skis. The views all around are gorgeous under now-blue skies, and to the east the nearby snow-clawed rugged peaks are stunning. Stefan mentions this reminds him of the Matterhorn area, just smaller scale.

From below, a few short steps toward the top look to be steeply problematic and someone had said crampons could be left at the cars (me). The snow goes well, though, with kicked steps and soon we're standing next to the summit cornice. With such raw views, the previous year's high turnaround point (in poor weather and very limited visibility) is fully rationalized. We face east for a sun baking and view absorbing lunch.

Various snowshoe skiing and snowshoe glissading are employed on the descent. Stefan adapts well to his first time on snowshoes. The bald eagle soars over a few more times.

Tiehacker: one that made railroad ties for the railroad. The ties were made in three different sizes.

This hike is only seven miles round-trip with about 3,900 feet of elevation gain, so even with snowshoes this can be a six-hour outing.



*Bear glissade tracks.*



*Stefan Nüchter, Kevin Downie, Randy Howell, and Carrie Wang (left to right) with South Resurrection Peak in the background.*



## Quick Hit: The Diamond Wall to The Pinnacle

Text and photo by Cory Hinds

On June 13 Cory Hinds and John Giraldo completed an ascent of the Webfoot Prospect from the Toto Buttress to The Pinnacle at the Archangel area near Hatcher Pass. After biking in, we climbed the route "Toto" (bypassing what we understood to be the original route on the top pitch, because we heard it was runout and we were scared), passing the area of new rockfall on the right, crossed the saddle at the top of the Green Gully, traversed left on ledges, and climbed the upper wall to the ridge on an existing route (unknown). The team then hiked and simul-climbed the ridge to The Pinnacle (no rappels).



*John Giraldo approaching the summit of The Pinnacle with the ridge in the background.*

There were four or five pitches on The Pinnacle, and we belayed at existing anchors. John led a key traverse to the ridge via a scary right-slanting foot ledge. The weather was absolutely perfect and we got an eyeful of mountains at the top. One 35-meter rap to the west from an existing sling anchor west of the summit put us onto terrain from which we could walk off to the saddle and down.

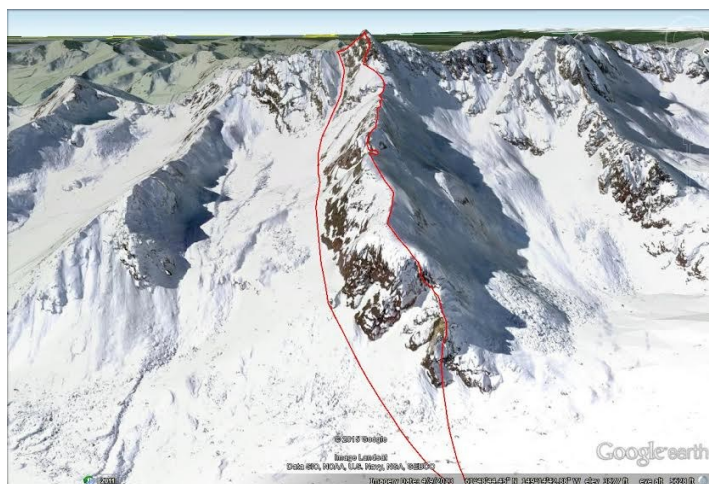
Our round-trip time on the route was 12 hours. The collaboration was excellent on this day because John had climbed "Toto" and the Upper Wall and Cory had climbed The Pinnacle. Both recalled enough to keep things on course. This link-up had been done several times before and was not a first ascent.

A very important strategy for rehydration was leaving several beers in the creek for the end of the climb! (This strategy is also

nothing new...) The ride out was much faster, having nothing to do with the beer, as it was almost all downhill. Archangel Road was still closed.

A cool part of this story is that John was a student of an MCA rock-climbing course taught by Cory and others seven years ago at this same area. John is now one of our top alpinists, having established new routes in the Alaska Range and Revelation Mountains. John has agreed to "pay it forward" and helped teach the MCA rock-climbing course in late July.

Gear suggestions: cams and nuts and long slings. Double cams to #3 and one #4. We used a single 70-meter rope.



### Trivia

### Mountain Goat Geography Quiz

By Tom Choate

1. Which of these 13,000-foot American and Canadian peaks is the highest?

Answers on page 23.

A. Mount Marcus Baker (AK)

C. Wheeler Peak (NM)

E. Mauna Loa (HI)

B. Mount Waddington (BC)

D. Kings Peak (UT)

2. Which of these 14,000-foot North American peaks is the highest?

A. Mount Shasta (CA)

C. Longs Peak (CO)

E. Mount Wrangell (AK)

B. North Palisade (CA)

D. Pikes Peak (CO)

## “Mandarin Mounty” on Seraph

Text by Rick Vance



*Route of "Mandarin Mounty" on the East Face of Seraph.*

*Photo by Chris Thomas*

Chris Thomas and I climbed a new route and completed the first ascent of Seraph in the Revelation Mountains on April 14th. The peak was named in 1967 by Dave Roberts during the first expedition to the range. According to Clint Helander, Roberts and team attempted the peak but did not summit. Below is a rundown of our trip:

We flew to Anchorage on April 4th with a poor weather forecast for the Revs, and rumors of Clint Helander and company being pinned down in a snow cave for nearly two weeks. The forecast held true, and after a week made up of waiting around Anchorage, multiple Super Cub flights, and hanging out at the R and R Hunting Lodge we're able to fly into the range on Friday, April 10. We did some reconnaissance on the way in, and settled on the Revelation Glacier for our base camp due to poor landing options near our other proposed objectives.

Upon arrival we found dry climbing conditions, with many of the ice smears we'd targeted in photos being nonexistent. Then it proceeded to snow, relegating us to base-camp duties and the occasional scouting mission until Tuesday, April 13, when

we first attempted a route on the east face of Seraph, which we came back to complete the following day.

Our route ascends an obvious weakness in the east face of Seraph that is approached by crossing an ice fall then hanging glacier below The Angel. We attempted the route on April 13, but were turned around by heavy snow and sprindrift after the first technical pitch (there is a long section of steep snow at the bottom). True to form for the weather in the Revs, the skies cleared shortly after our retreat, so we decided to return the next day with the tricky approach dialed. The crux came low on the route, clocking in at WI 5+ A2, and was followed by several pitches on sustained 5.10 rock. We climbing somewhere in the neighborhood of 15 full-length pitches with a lot of simul-climbing in the middle, and a significant amount of snow/ridge climbing on either side of the technical pitches. Overall the route went pretty quickly with the approach beta gathered the day before, and we were camp to camp in somewhere around 17 hours.

We spent the next day resting in base camp, eating bacon and reindeer sausage, and drinking a cocktail that Chris invented





*Rick Vance following 5.10 rock just past the crux.*

*Photo by Chris Thomas*

consisting of warm Tang and Canadian whiskey. We have decided to name the route in honor of this stroke of genius, the “Mandarin Mounty,” especially given that Mandarin Mounties were integral to our survival in the coming days.

The next day the weather took a turn for the worse, and around midday it got quite windy. By sundown we had abandoned our cook tent, which was destroyed shortly thereafter, and spent the next 36 to 40 hours holding our main tent up against the worst winds I've ever experienced. The wind walls we built were completely eroded away and during our brief time out of the tent both of us were dumped by gusts. We sat through the worst of it holding onto the tent's internal poles, ready to be thrown out at any moment, jackets and boots on with the satellite phone in my pocket.

Eventually things calmed down, and with our climbing weather window gone, we decided to ski/walk the 20-plus miles down the glacier to the Big River and finally back to the R and R Hunting Lodge to wait for Rob Jones. This, in and of itself, was a fun little adventure, made even better by the modern comforts Rob's managed to bring to this remote spot.

We would like to thank the Mugs Stump Award and Rob Jones of Hesperus Air Service. This trip would not have been possible without their support.



*Chris Thomas leading the crux.*

*Photo by Rick Vance*

## “Illusions of the Raven” on The Mooses Tooth

Text by Skiy DeTray



Route of “Illusions of the Raven” on the East Face of The Mooses Tooth with each of the two bivies marked by an X.

Photo by Skiy DeTray

In early May, Alik Berg and I traveled to the Ruth Glacier deep in the Alaska Range and established a new route on the East Face of The Mooses Tooth. Our route, “Illusions of the Raven” (WI4R 5.9 A4, 1,500 meters), took the steepest and most direct line up the massive headwall. This new route was located 500 feet to the right of David Lama’s and Dani Arnold’s 2013 climb “Bird of Prey” (5.10 M7+ A2 90°, 5,000 feet) [*Ed. note: See Lama’s article in the December 2013 Scree*], and was on the same wall as Jim Bridwell’s and Mugs Stump’s iconic 1981 climb “The Dance of the Woo Li Masters” (5.9 WI4+ A4, 5,000 feet) [*Ed. note: See Bridwell’s article on pages 1 through 8 of the 1982 American Alpine Journal*].

On April 23<sup>rd</sup> Talkeetna Air Taxi dropped us off at a remote and serene base camp under sunny skies and beautiful weather. Immediately apparent, the East Face of The Mooses Tooth dominated the far end of the breathtaking Buckskin Glacier. Ominous and intimidating, this formidable feature had my stomach doing summersaults, yet my body was alive with nearly palpable energy. I was gripped by fear, but also embraced and welcomed the focus of the warrior. After carving out a home base on the glacier, we did a reconnaissance day trip up the lower snow slopes to check conditions and assess the bergschrund. The results were promising; solid névé and a stable

snow bridge suggested a way to cross the bergschrund, providing probable access to the goal.

From the base we could see the route up and close through our spotting scope; the towering granite above us fractured with a beautifully obvious line. This line held great promise, but had a few blank sections, which had us a little concerned. Alik thought we could “always drill a few bat hooks and/or rivets, if need be,” confirming that we were indeed thinking in a very similar way.

Two days later we packed up five days of food and fuel and decided to go for it. Twelve hours after starting we found ourselves 2,000 feet up the lower slopes, a fabulous mix of committing snow, rock, and ice. Our start began in the same place that Kevin Mahoney and Ben Gilmore began on their 2004 route “Arctic Rage” [*Ed. note: See Gilmore’s article on pages 24 through 31 of the 2005 AAJ*], as well as where “Bird of Prey” had its start. Knowing that Kevin and Ben climbed the route in full storm conditions over the course of three days gave me a lot of confidence knowing The Mooses Tooth could be climbed up and down in a full winter storm, should conditions like that present for Alik and me.

And so it began. Our first camp was Beak Camp. Beak Camp was so named for its structural integrity! After much effort constructing a stellar tent platform from a 50-degree knife-edge



ridge, I asked Alik, "How does the anchor look?" Alik, from his tie off point 10 feet above, calmly and matter-of-factly responded, "It's a single large beak." "What?" I protested. Alik, in his consistently cool and calm demeanor casually responded, "It is all we got, and trust me, it's bomber." Normally I would have second guessed the call, but since Alik could waltz A4 and had climbed the gigantic and sheer 1,000-meter El Capitan over 30 times, I relaxed, as I completely trusted his judgment.

After a night at Beak Camp we awoke to a grim-looking low-pressure system. Six inches of wet snow had fallen as we slept, and there was no end in sight. We climbed one more pitch and decided to pull the plug and go down, fearing the headwall would be caked with ice and snow in these exceedingly heavy conditions. We rappelled the lower snow gully in very demanding conditions. Spindrift avalanches beat us up pretty good. That being said, I stayed warm and dry in my Teruna Gore-Tex fortress, one less thing to have to be concerned about as we considered a change in our plans. We kept our nerves cool and calm, returning to the base of the mountain eight hours after starting our descent. As it turned out, our weather experience was a freak Alaska low-pressure cell and the very next day the sun was out and beaming. It seemed that we made the wrong call to come down.

Slightly frustrated and back in camp my head swirled with uncertainty, with so many of the unanswered questions that accompany alpinist adventures. Would we get the weather? Would the line connect? Could we find a safe passage? In an effort to find center again, I thought to myself, "This is the heart of hard alpine climbing," adapting and overcoming not only to the challenges of the mountain, but also to the fears and doubts in oneself.

And so we recharged and refueled. Two days of lounging,  
Scree—August 2015

resting, and eating lots of delicious food had us chomping at the bit for another go. We would climb with an ACR rescue beacon, but would not take a communication device, so we would not be able to receive weather updates. The weather was supposed to hold for three or four days, but looked uncertain beyond that.

At 3:30 on the morning of May 2<sup>nd</sup>, I woke to the horrible sound of my watch alarm. Ear buds went directly into my ears and the smooth music slowly brought me into the present. I was



*Alik Berg leading midway up the headwall.*

*Photo by Skiy DeTray*



*Skiy DeTray leading the 11th A3 belayed pitch on "Illusions of the Raven."*

*Photo by Alik Berg*

anxious, but was also acutely in tune with my inner voice. I felt focused, concentrated, and deliberate. We made the three mile flat ski in and began the ascent of the lower snow slopes by 6:30 a.m. We were back to Beak Camp by 8 p.m. and slept well. The following day I set out on new ground. The pitch was cerebral and challenging; I rated it A3. It took me a grueling six hours to complete; interestingly, it required a four-system crack switch and a few pendulums. This took us to within a pitch of the well-known David Lama bivy, which was halfway up the wall and precariously perched upon a giant snow mushroom. Before making camp, Alik was excited to make as much progress as possible on the steep granite. Like a boss, he quickly dispatched the pitch to the Lama bivy and then charged two more pitches. Alik kept his focus, putting some of his El Capitan speed-climbing tactics to good use to short fix off a three-piece natural anchor while I jumared and cleaned the pitch.

Upon further inspection, the Lama bivy on the snow mushroom proved to be luxurious and very safe feeling. We slept like babies!

We awoke at 3:30 a.m. once again and squeezed out the lactic acid in our bodies by drinking instant coffee and relishing a dehydrated breakfast. The 365-meter wall loomed above, steep and often overhanging. We were hoping the climbing would be mostly free dry tooling (M3,

5a to M7, 6c) but the rock was too steep, loose, and gritty and forced us to aid climb. Luckily Alik and I had each climbed over 30 El Cap routes and were right at home on hard aid. We were armed with a double set of cams and nuts, a few tricams, four lost arrows, six beaks, and three knife blades. The climbing was never easy and kept us on edge, hovering right around A3 to A4 for the entire headwall. My first A4 pitch looked easy from the steep belay, but I soon realized I was deep into very technical terrain. I looked back at my last good piece of protection, a #2 camalot placed 15 meters below and far to the right of me. The rock was reminiscent of shark's teeth – sharp, jagged, and broken. I had both ice tools precariously placed behind loose blocks. My right crampon was firmly placed in ice while my left foot balanced in an etrier that was preciously attached to a small cam in an expanding flake. I take a moment and take inventory of my thoughts and emotions. I felt surprisingly calm and collected, like a seasoned sailor in a big oceanic storm. In that moment I felt that all of my previous 20 years honing my mountain craft were paying off. I was very thankful to have climbed routes like the Reticent Wall A5 on El Cap, and R-rated free classics in Eldorado Canyon. That said, I was having doubts, and wondered if it's getting too dangerous and perhaps it's time to quit, or find a new way around this crux. I took a deep breath, stood tall, and placed a small beak. I bounced it twice with body weight and felt good about it. I stood up and placed another beak and repeated. Finally I was able to reach a perfect cam placement in solid rock. "Aughhhhh!" I yelled out. We had unraveled a key part of this puzzle!

At 1 a.m., 19 hours after starting from the lower bivy, we were perched at a hanging belay. "I think we should keep pushing," Alik said. I, on the other hand, lobbied for a quick bivy in the lightweight bat hammocks we had brought along. Alik was passed the point of caring and grudgingly agreed with me. We crawled into the single-point hammocks, cursing and wrestling. I managed to pop the valve off my Therm-a-Rest and also shredded the left sleeve of my new down coat against the coarse rock. This had me cursing and yelling up a fury! I pulled my bag up around my hips to my belly button and called it good. I awoke

an hour and a half later, shivering in the -28 degree Celsius temperatures, did a few abdominal crunches to get warm, and then drifted off to sleep. An hour later Alik asked, "What are you doing up there?" "I am freezing my butt off!" I responded. Neither of us obviously sleeping well, we agreed to continue the climb. The quick "bat nap" actually left us fairly rested, and I proceeded to climb an A3+ pitch that took four hours. Then Alik took over and led a crazy A4 pitch that sent him for a 40-foot winger! Amazingly the crack system connected and we didn't need to place a single bat hook or bolt for the entirety of the route! We topped out the headwall 33 hours after leaving the Lama bivy. It's now 4 p.m. on the 5th and snowing lightly. Worried the precipitation would only get worse, we decided to go for the summit. We made the right choice, as slowly the clouds dropped away to the valley floor and we were left with beautiful clear Alaskan skies. Engaging ice and snow led us to the summit plateau by 4 a.m. We took a moment to relish the moment and take in the panorama. It was such a very cool feeling to know so few had stood on this hard-to-attain summit plateau.



*Skiy DeTray enjoying a quick brew up and brief nap before starting the 27-hour descent.*  
Photo by Alik Berg

Previously lower down on the route, I had managed to drop my rappel device. As it stood now, with 50 hours of sleep deprivation under my belt, I was trying to remember how to construct a carabiner brake rack. At each belay stance I had to break down five carabineers and then build it back up again. Standing back atop the headwall after visiting the summit, we rested our beaten and battered bodies for a few hours. Worried the weather might have been moving in, we opted to rap the route as soon as possible. We descended for the next 27 hours straight, making 26 rappels in total. We were hallucinating something fierce. Amazingly we were able to keep our focus and I felt we were well within our safety margins. What was the limit? Perhaps we could have gone three more days without sleep. By the time we made it back to base camp, we had been on the move for 80 hours! The next day was spent lounging around camp completely and totally knackered by lactic acid and lack of sleep. As casual conversations transpired, we soon realized that while on route we were both hallucinating ravens, and so the name. ("Illusions of the Raven" WI4R 5.9 A4 R, 5,000 feet, May 2 to 7.)



# “Otter Water Boogie Man” on Kooshdakhha Spire and “Lichening Bolt Buttress” on Peak 2328

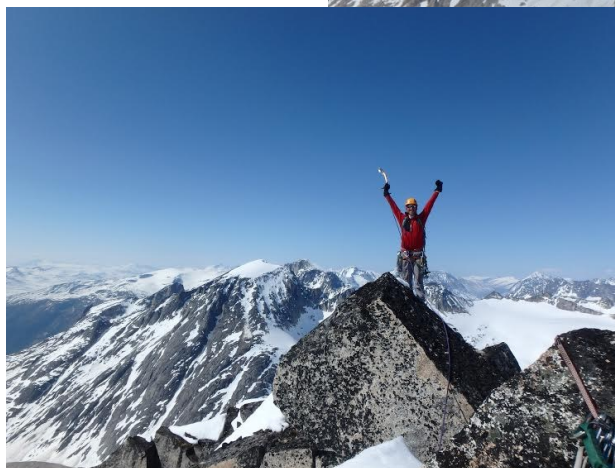
Text and photos by Max Fisher

During a spell of excellent northern weather from May 18th to May 31st, Erik Bonnett and I climbed two new routes in the southeastern Alaska/northern British Columbia Coast Mountains, traveled over kilometers of glacier, bashed our way through slide alder and devil’s club, and paddled some awesome continuous Class 3-4 whitewater for 3-1/2 days in packrafts.

Our first objective was returning to Kooshdakhha Spire (7300 feet) and climbing the 600-meter north-facing rock spire. We landed on May 18th, set up camp, and got geared up for an attempt on the 19th. We set out early and made quick work of the previous pitches (up to 5.10) we had climbed on our attempt last year [Ed. note: See the July 2015 Scree]. We entered new terrain and continued climbing until 11:30 p.m. (sustained 5.10/10+) before stopping on a small diving-board ledge to rehydrate and shiver for four to five hours before continuing. We climbed six more pitches (sustain 5.10/11- with some aid) to the summit! After honoring Cory Hall on the summit by spreading some of his ashes, we spent the next few hours making our way back to our camp. After 37 hours on the go, we arrived back in camp stoked with our achievement! [Ed. note: Will Wacker reported that Brian Delay and he climbed the 7550-foot main summit in April 2004, dubbing it Mount Agony. Other than a brief mention in the July 2015 Scree, their ascent had been previously unreported.]

“Otter Water Boogie Man” 5.11- A1 V, 600 meters, May 19-20th, 2015

After a few days chilling in camp under perfect skies we loaded our packs and rafts and trugged into northern BC in search of another climbing objective. We found it, the highest point of an unnamed ridge line that reaches 2328 meters. We climbed the run-out lower slabs (up to 5.10) for three long pitches to a large ledge and then climbed up the middle of the main buttress (from 5.6 to 5.11-), aiming for what looked like a lightning-bolt-shaped feature, to a beautiful final headwall pitch (5.9+). On the summit we descended to the southeast and did two rappels to the glacier on the east side of the ridge and walked back to camp. We arrived back in camp after 16 hours on the go, again psyched on another cool route! [Ed. note: Will Wacker reported that in April 2004 Brian Delay and he climbed Peak 2328 via a different route. Their ascent had been previously unreported.]



Erik Bonnett on the summit of Kooshdakhha Spire.

“Lichening Bolt Buttress” 5.11- IV, 400 meters, May 24th, 2015

After relaxing in camp, we decided to make our way to the river and start floating back to the front country. We navigated a short icefall and were off the

glacier in one long day.

At the headwaters of the Nourse River, we dragged our boats over a frozen lake, did a short portage, paddled across another lake and then paddled continuous Class 2-3 whitewater for the rest of the day. When we came to a monster horizon line, we started another portage. The next day we paddled more awesome whitewater that steepened up and offered continuous Class 3-3+ paddling with some class 4+/5 rapids we walked around, which included two beautiful canyons that would be excellent in a kayak! The next day would again be filled with wicked whitewater and also bring us to the end of our trip.



Erik Bonnett pulling into new terrain on Kooshdakhha Spire.

# Eagle River Alpine Rock Climbing: New Route on the West Buttress of Mount Yukla

By Cory Hinds

The campsite, campfire, and company were perfect. But it was 1:00 a.m., June 6, and time to get some sleep. Already we had stayed up too late. Earlier in the evening the four of us had hiked the 6 miles from the Eagle River Nature Center to our comfortable camp at Icicle Creek, then watched as the late-evening sun set on the rock wall we were going to climb. I had planned to get to bed early so we could get up early, but then someone started a fire and a bottle was passed around. The party was started, so we let it play out.

It had rained the day before and the weather was somewhat unsettled. Some spitting rain and variable wind pushed the smoke around. Between the stories and lies, a plan was agreed for our adventure. In short: hike the ramp, climb to the top of the wall, and then walk off down the ridge. If the route did not go, we would be ready to rappel back down. Not as sporty as starting the technical climbing from the base of the wall, but a reasonable goal, which would allow us to move fast with plenty of time to figure out the descent.

When the alarm went off, I noted that the tent was dry, and I didn't remember hearing rain on the tent. Maybe the rock would be dry! We were up by 7:30 a.m. or so, ate our breakfast, hung our food bags in a tree, and were on the trail at Alpine-9. After walking about 10 minutes, Richard Baranow pointed out a suggested approach to the scree slope, and then let us go first. Right into a swamp! Sometimes the advice you get from your friends works out; sometimes it doesn't. This time it led to wet feet. We soon realized we should have stayed on the trail another five minutes, as the dry trail led directly to the slope we wanted to climb. You can bet that we didn't let Richard forget it. "I've lived in this valley all my life, blah, blah, blah." Didn't help us in the swamp!

But Richard's experience did help us get lined up on the climb. He had been up the ramp before and knew it was accessible. This helped us focus on the objective without losing time. We ascended the scree slope, trying to stay on the larger rock that stayed put – easier said than done. Sweating, we regrouped at the beginning of the ramp after about an hour. Once on the ramp, there were sheep trails to follow and the going was easy. We started the technical climbing from somewhere near the middle of the

ramp where the upper wall appeared to lay back. The reference point on the ramp was a lone spruce tree. Richard scouted ahead and confirmed that we were several hundred



*Aaron Gallagher and Alex McCready climbing the first pitch above the ramp.*

*Photo by Richard Baranow.*

feet before the spruce tree.

The rock on the wall above the ramp was surprisingly solid. Some loose rock here and there, but pretty clean. We were excited! As we got ourselves ready, Richard made a hard decision not to climb. He had a bad ankle and knew it might not be feasible; his climb up the scree slope had confirmed it – a hard decision, but the right one. So we would climb as three, with the leader taking up two ropes and belaying the others simultaneously. We took two 60-meter ropes, a 9.5-millimeter and an 8.0-millimeter, and had Richard carry the rest of the ropes and gear back with him.

Starting at about 1,600 feet elevation and wasting no time, we got into the climbing with some interesting moves and diagonal ledge system right off the ramp, 5.8 or 5.9 moves or so, then up a shallow corner. Cracks accepted cams and nuts with reasonable spacing. At the top of the corner, I moved to the right and up to a good stance and placed a solid angle piton. The ring of the metal told me it was solid; what a great sound! Aaron Gallagher and Alex McCready moved up quickly and joined me with no problems. After the first pitch, we were able to find easier terrain. Luckily, both Aaron and Alex are



extremely competent and comfortable on the rock and we were able to move quickly and efficiently up the wall.

The second pitch was a left-angling traverse over easier ground, then up a step to a small, grassy ramp – relatively easy, but exciting. The third pitch brought us to the second major ramp system, where we anchored to a medium-sized cottonwood tree at the base of the final wall. The fourth and fifth pitches had interesting moderate climbing (up to 5.7 or 5.8, maybe).

Near the top of the fifth pitch, the rope caught a loose rock and it dropped on Alex's hand. She reported that her hand went numb at the time. Luckily, she was able to move around and finish the pitch without the use of that hand. Thankfully, she was tough and her hand uninjured, and she regained use of the hand during the following rest period at the belay.

After a couple of interesting moves off the belay, the sixth pitch brought us to easy ground on the broad ridge. At this point, at about 2,500 feet elevation, we were happy to finally change out of our climbing shoes and back into our more comfortable approach shoes. The wind picked up a bit, so we put on jackets and enjoyed the view for a while.

Stowing one rope, we simul-climbed a bit on the other rope, heading up and toward the Icicle Creek drainage until the terrain flattened out. Here we took off and coiled the ropes, removed harnesses, and stowed the climbing gear in our packs.

Poking around and staying as close as comfortable to the edge of the face, we soon picked up sheep trails heading our way. They were wild! Twisting, turning, switchback scramble, slide, repeat. But in short order we were descending the ridge, losing elevation quickly. I vaguely recalled ascending this trail with my partner James Dietzmann on an attempt on the full west ridge (which has been climbed and soloed at least three times already).

An interesting feature we ran into on the way down were several "crevasses" in the rock near the edge of the face. We believe these cracks were caused by sections of rock slowly "falling" toward the edge of the cliff, perhaps still finding equilibrium after glacial retreat. Some were quite deep. We decided to stay "upstream" of these cracks.

One final exposed scramble descent put us into the forest on safe ground and we soon descended to the mouth of Icicle Creek where it exits the steeper slopes. Following the south bank of the creek, we were back at camp in 10 minutes or so. The entire descent had taken only about one hour and we were back in camp by a very civilized 4:30 p.m.

We spent the rest of an enjoyable afternoon eating, drinking, and recapping the adventure. Reflecting on what we had just completed, we agreed that the climbing was interesting, relatively easy, but challenging enough, depending on route selection, and there were many different routes and variations that could be climbed. We had climbed a new route, but it was convoluted and somewhat unremarkable except to the three of us enjoying the adventure. We figured that we could climb a different route or variation every weekend for years! Certainly climbing the entire wall from the base instead of starting on the ramp would be a worthy goal; maybe it had already been done? The base camp at Icicle Creek was perfect—flat areas for camping, water right there, sheltered from down-valley winds, and open views of the big mountains and rock walls on either side.

Alex's family Kris, Peter, Jordan, and Annie showed up in the late afternoon with a deluxe camping setup, including hot dogs and marshmallows and we all had a good time until late in the evening. Sunday morning we hiked out, satisfied with a good adventure with good friends.



*From left, Alex McCready, Aaron Gallagher, and Richard Baranow and the wall. The ascent was on the skyline; the descent was on the vegetated ridge left of the wall.*

*Photo by Cory Hinds*

## “Black Roses” – First Ascent on Devils Paw’s North Tower

Text by Roger Schäli

May 23, 2015

Roger Schäli and Simon Gietl completed the first ascent of “Black Roses” on Devils Paw’s North Tower in British Columbia. The climb up was accomplished in 19 hours, the down-climb in 5 hours. The name of the route comes from the big, black flecks both climbers noticed on the wall.

Throughout the years, my friend Heli Putz had often talked excitedly about Devils Paw, which he knows well from his years as a ski-guide in this region. Devils Paw is the majestic frontier mountain between Alaska and Canada, about 30 kilometers east of Juneau. This time he managed to persuade us to go and give it a look.

Together with my friend and climbing partner, Simon Gietl, and with the support of guides Heli Putz and Ed Shanley, a warm, generous, and friendly local guide, we walked to Devils Paw, where we set up our base camp.



*Roger Schäli below Devils Paw's North Tower.*

*Photo by Simon Gietl*

our bivouac gear while keeping our fingers crossed that we wouldn't have to spend more than one night on the face!

The next morning, Monday, the 18th of May, the adventure started. We were faced with difficult route-finding challenges,



*Simon Gietl climbing "Black Roses" on Devils Paw's North Tower.*

*Photo by Roger Schäli*

But the strong morning sun and steep snowfields prone to wet snow avalanches wouldn't allow for a long rest. We made our way back down the steep unknown descent through the west wall of Devils Paw to our base camp, where Ed and Heli welcomed us with chocolate and tea. This had been a real “museum-day,” as I call the very special days that I put into the museum of my life memories.

And with the first morning light we reached the summit of Devils Paw's North Tower: a very special moment for me, since it was very probable that no one had been here ever before. After a happy hug, Simon and I sat down silently, letting the moment sink in. Almost three years have gone by since Simon and I found ourselves together on Arwa Spire, and here I was again with my “little brother,” as I call Simon, sitting silent and breathless on a summit.



*Simon Gietl ascending Devils Paw's North Tower.*

*Photo by Roger Schäli*



## “Black Roses” on Devils Paw’s North Tower

Text by Simon Gietl



*Roger Scháli and Simon Gietl below the west-facing rock walls of Devils Paw's North Tower.*

*Photo by Roger Scháli*

In May 2015, together with my friend Roger Scháli and Heli Putz, I traveled to Juneau. Two months previously, when Roger had asked me whether I had the time and the desire for a new project with him on Devils Paw, I couldn't refuse. It had already been some time since I had traveled with Roger, and I looked forward to more good times with him.

From Juneau, with a 20-minute flight over the gorgeous white glacial landscape, we reached our destination, where we set up camp. We were impressed with the northwest edge of Devils Paw and decided that afternoon to check out the ascent and climb the first few meters. After a comfortable, hour-long ski tour, we reached the bergschrund, where the climbing began. After climbing up and over a crumbly divide, we arrived right at the pitch. After about 150 meters of easy climbing, we decided to end our investigations and climb back down to camp.

After a starlit night, a new day greeted us. We set forth again with our project and planned to ascend the beautifully formed, unclimbed edge over two days. Because we wanted to reduce the weight we carried to a minimum, we took only a light tent for bivouacking and left the sleeping bags behind.

Above the slab terrain, we finally reached the beginning point of the tower. There the climbing really began. Again and again we had to ponder the situation and figure out which way would best lead us upward. Zigzagging, we ascended further through cracks and narrow dihedrals. So as not to endanger the belayer, the lead climber had to watch out especially for loose pieces of rock, some of which were as large as a refrigerator, only waiting for a chance to fall. Having arrived on the top of the first tower, we took a break and discussed the further course of the

route. The first third of the tour was already behind us. The temperature was perfect, so after the break we moved quickly. In the middle of the tour, the sun began to shine down on our faces from a bluebird sky. Since the last part of the edge was covered in snow and ice, rivulets of water were always streaming down over the cliff. These complicated the climbing. Twice we had to cross a small waterfall, which gave one of us a pretty nice shower.

When we finally reached the top of the second tower, we stood in the snow, but in less complicated terrain. In a suitable spot, we took the opportunity to dry ourselves out a bit in the sun and to fill our water bottles.

In very wet snow, the route continued further until we finally decided to bivouac 120 meters under the summit. We dug a small platform, where we finally set up our tent. The day ended with a fairy-tale sunset. The view was grandiose and we were overwhelmed with astonishment. Just as it started to become darker, we zipped up our tent and wished each other a good night. We slept in moist clothing, without sleeping bags, which was not exactly cozy. Hardly had we fallen asleep, when the alarm went off. It was 2:00 and we started to move very slowly. We boiled water and treated ourselves to a real man's



*Base camp at the foot of Devils Paw.*

*Photo by Simon Gietl.*

breakfast: our last chocolate bar and some gummy bears that Heli had given us.

Hard to believe, but it took an hour and a half before we were ready to begin. The day had already begun, so we didn't need our headlamps anymore. A long traverse to the right led us finally to a little chimney, which offered us a place to rest in the steep summit wall after two pitches of mixed climbing. For the first time, we thought we might actually be able to make it to the summit!



*Simon Gietl ascending Devils Paw's North Tower.  
Photo by Roger Schäli*

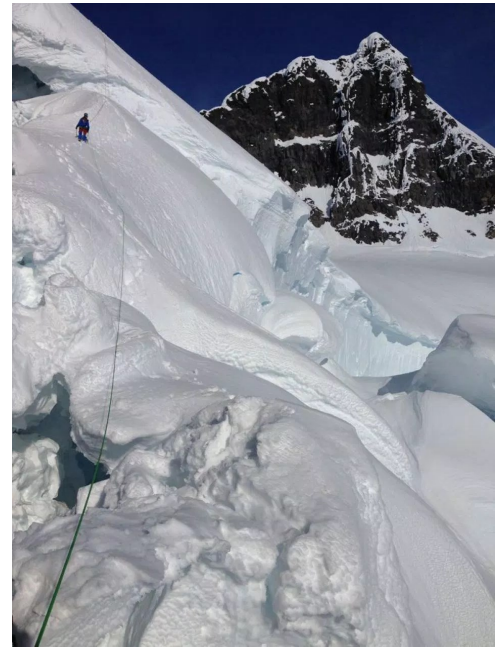
traverse, we didn't remain long on the summit. We descended the first 50 meters backwards until the terrain became steeper and we decided to rappel down. After 60 meters of rappelling, we descended again, simultaneously, until we reached the lower end of the rise and we stood on the glacier. Carefully, we sought the best way through the crevasses, until we finally ended up in a dead end. An 8-meter-high crevasse prevented us from continuing, and so there was only one possibility to go on. We buried a bag filled with snow above the overhanging lip of the fissure and rappelled ourselves slowly downward. After a few suspenseful snow bridges, we stood again on a part of the glacier with few crevasses, which bode well for us. We came directly to the southeast notch,

It was with tremendous joy, which was written on our faces, that at 6:30 we finally stood a short time later on the highest point and embraced each other! Berg heil!

Since it was clear to us that the descent on the other side of the mountain would also be challenging, and the sun already shone on the eastern slopes, which we would later have to

where we had planned our further descent. From above, we couldn't see whether the ridge led to the foot of the wall, near to where we had set up camp. We chose the only possibility for the descent and climbed slowly down the frozen ridge of snow, without a rope, with intense concentration. We did not allow ourselves any false steps. Small stones, which fell without obstacle down the steep, 800-meter ridge clearly foretold the possible consequence of a mistake. The conditions became steeper until we finally set two hooks with which to rappel ourselves down. Then we set forth again with the descent over the snow and after further rappelling, we finally reached level ground. We were overjoyed.

In this moment it was clear that we had achieved our goal. We were greeted with a bar of chocolate by our two friends, Heli and a local named Ed Shanley.



*Simon Gietl descending the glacier below Devils Paw's North Tower.  
Photo by Roger Schäli*

Again and again, I caught myself looking in the direction of Devils Paw and could hardly believe that roughly six hours earlier we had been standing on the summit!

#### **Route information**

*Route:* "Black Roses"

*First ascensionists:* Roger Schäli and Simon Gietl, on May 18 and 19, 2015

*Character:* Crack and dihedral climbing

*Difficulty:* 6c/A1 M4

*Protection:* The route was secured with two hooks, which were set into the wall exclusively with removable protection.

*Climbing time of first ascent:* 19 hours, 5 minutes



*Route of "Black Roses" on Devils Paw's North Tower.  
Photo by Roger Schäli*



# Peak of the Month: Hale-Bop Peak

By Steve Gruhn

**Mountain Range:** Kenai Mountains

**Borough:** Kenai Peninsula Borough

**Drainages:** Butcher Creek and Mills Creek

**Latitude/Longitude:** 60° 37' 32" North, 149° 26' 4" West

**Elevation:** 4970 feet

**Prominence:** 720 feet from Peak 5050 east of Summit Lake Pass

**Adjacent Peak:** Peak 5050

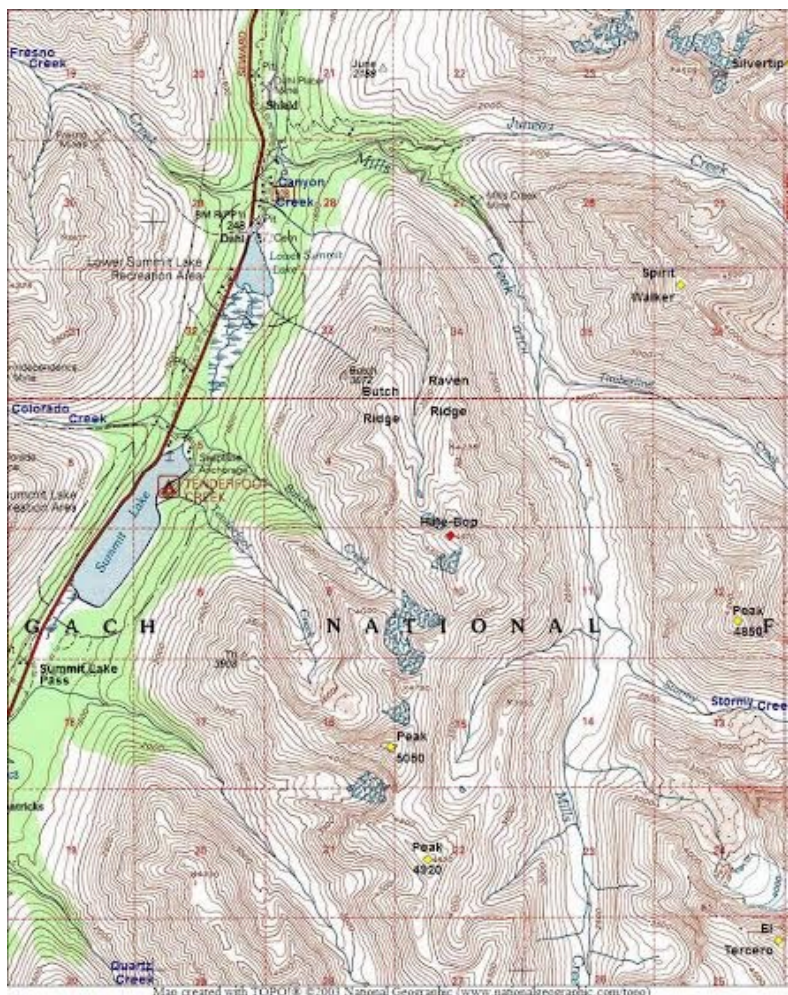
**Distinctness:** 720 feet from Peak 5050

**USGS Map:** Seward (C-7)

**First Recorded Ascent:** 2006 by Bob Sutherland

**Route of First Recorded Ascent:** Unknown

**Access Point:** North side of Lower Summit Lake



The name Hale-Bop appears on the Chugach National Forest Avalanche Information Center's Common Names Map of the Summit Lake Area and is likely derived from Comet Hale-Bopp, which was visible to the naked eye in 1996 and 1997.

Although the area has received attention from prospectors, skiers, and hunters for decades, the earliest record of an ascent of Hale-Bop that I've come across is that of Bob Sutherland's 2006 ascent.

On December 24, 2010, from the parking area on the north side of Lower Summit Lake, Keith Sanfacon ascended Butch Ridge, Hale-Bop's north-northwest ridge, to the summit. He carved

turns on his descent down the southwest face to Butcher Creek. It was a sub-zero day and he had to ski quickly across the flats between Summit Lake and Lower Summit Lake in order to stay warm.

The information for this article came from my correspondence with Bob and Keith and from Keith's blog at:

<http://skierboyz.blogspot.com/2010/12/hale-bopp-december-24-2010.html>.

## Answers to Geography Quiz 1

1. Which of these 13,000-foot American and Canadian peaks is the highest?  
E. Mauna Loa, Hawaii, 13,379 feet
2. Which of these 14,000-foot North American peaks is the highest?  
C. Longs Peak, Colorado, 14,255 feet

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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 24th 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](mailto:vicepresident@mtclubak.org).

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