

# the SCREE

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

December 2012

Volume 55 Number 12



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Active Holidays in Alaska

The Whale's Tail

Eagle Glacier Peak Bagging:  
Roost Peak, Golden Crown,  
Finch Peak, and Bunting Peak

Califourteenia Dreaming

Peak of the Month: Peak 2550

### Monthly Meeting:

**\*\*Changed to Wednesday,  
December 12, at 6:30 p.m.**



**Program: Holiday Potluck Dinner  
Bring a side dish/dessert/salad (see  
page 2) and 10 to 15 digital photos.**

*"It is trips like these, to places previously little known  
and explored, that I start to value my being."*

--- Anže Čokl

# 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 December 12 at the BP Energy Center, 900 East Benson Boulevard, Anchorage, Alaska

[www.akpeac.org/conference/BPEC\\_map\\_06-04-03.pdf](http://www.akpeac.org/conference/BPEC_map_06-04-03.pdf)

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## Cover Photo

**Anže Čokle speedflying in the Revelation Mountains. Photo by Žiga Fujan.**

## December Holiday Potluck

**Remember! It's on the SECOND Wednesday of the month this year, December 12th at 6:30 p.m. at the BP Energy Center. The MCA will provide Moose's Tooth pizza and non-alcoholic beverages. Bring your own tableware.**

Members may bring the following based on the first initial of their last name: A-I side dish; J-S dessert; T-Z salad.

Members may also bring 10 to 15 digital photos or short video clips to share.

## Membership Renewal

Annual memberships expire at the end of December. You can renew your membership at an MCA meeting or go online to download a membership application.

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

## 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 the month to appear in the next issue of the *Scree*. Do not submit material in the body of the email. We prefer articles that are under 1,000 words. If you have a blog, website, video or photo links, send us the link. Cover photo selections are based on portraits of human endeavor in the outdoors. Please submit captions with photos.

## Correction

Paul May wrote to correct an editor's note in the May *Scree*. He did not build the cairn atop Schoppe Peak aka Peak 2484 aka Pristine Peak; in May 2001 he merely re-built the one that he found there. He first climbed the peak's north ridge to its summit in the 1990s.

## Hiking and Climbing Schedule

### Eagle River Valley Ice Climbs (North Fork)

Richard Baranow is leading a MCA Ice Climbing Trip (day trip) Saturday, December 8th back in the North Fork of the Eagle River Valley. You must have prior ice climbing experience, bring your own partner and gear. Climbs are rated WI3-5. More details to come. Contact Richard at 907-694-1500 to sign-up.

### Winter Solstice Flattop Mountain Sleepout:

December 21, 2012. No leader.

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

## On-line? – click me



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



**Bor Šumrada climbing the lower, easier angled part of the Sleepwalker. Photo by Anže Čokl.**



**Bor Šumrada and Grega Ažman on the ridge after climbing Sleepwalker. Photos by Anže Čokl unless otherwise noted.**

## Active Holidays in Alaska

By Anže Čokl

### Freeapproved Team of Slovenia on an Adventure to the Little-Explored Corner of the Revelation Mountains in Alaska

Alaska had been on my mind for years, but somehow other remote and unclimbed mountains have been getting in the way for the past couple of years. Only after visiting a military-supervised area in Kokshall Too on the Kyrgyzstan-China border and making a couple of first ascents on then-virgin peaks had Alaska finally come in focus.

As with every adventure, I wanted this one to be as remote and away from the beaten tracks as possible. Exploring websites and reading journals for a few months, the Revelation Mountains looked more than promising in all regards. Once the general objective was set, more information was needed to decide where exactly to actually go. With special maps not easy to access in Slovenia, I mostly planned using Google Earth, which actually proved very handy, though quite inaccurate at times. To our knowledge all but one of the mountains were still unclimbed. Prior to flying in, we had investigated thoroughly for what little information we could find in the *American Alpine Journal* and different online reports, trying to find a spot in the Revelations that was least visited. After the trip a Revelation Mountains veteran himself bumped into us in Anchorage and we did a short interview for our documentary, whilst analyzing maps and confirming our hopes of untouched peaks to be correct.

After (literally) thousands of emails exchanged between the rest of the 10-person team from our

sports club, April came and we were about to depart on one of our greatest adventures!

After countless hours spent flying, layovers at airports, and transfers, we at last set foot on the Alaskan soil on the other side of the globe – Anchorage Airport. Arriving at midnight, we wanted to see ourselves at the glacier as soon as possible, so we continued our already long journey onward to Talkeetna

through the night, stopping for an hour to buy additional provisions for life on the glacier.

The sunrise found us shivering and wandering around Talkeetna, when a nice young lady invited us all in. She was so nice and the place so cozy, we decided to stay there instead of the previously planned bunkhouse at the local airstrip.

Talkeetna Air Taxi gave us instructions on how to pack, weigh, and deliver equipment to the airstrip the following day, our minds already airborne from huge expectations. It had been a wonderful day with blue skies and zero winds. At last the two planes hired for the flight to the glacier took off just before midday. We were now literally flying toward meeting our dreams.

An hour and a half of the best panoramic flight of my life saw us landing on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April on a remote glacier in 30 centimeters of powder snow. [Ed. note: This glacier was the southern branch of the Hartman Glacier and was named the *Freeapproved Glacier by the party.*] Looking at



**Anže Čokl speedflying and Grega Ažman snowboarding.  
Photo by Žiga Fujan.**

the surroundings, I immediately realized we were in heaven. And the almost-record-snow-dumping season with 280 centimeters of fresh snow atop glacier ice added to our already boggled senses.

We unloaded just a tad less than a ton of provisions and climbing and camera equipment. A few minutes later after quick goodbyes, both airplanes took off with the roaring sounds of the machines being our last sense of the modern civilization. We were now on our own, hundreds of miles from anywhere that the majority characterizes as civilized.

But the renowned unstable weather pattern kicked in soon. Except for the four perfectly sunny days (two on arrival and two before departure), the skies were mainly overcast with clouds and many days in a row had a common pattern – cloudy with occasional snowstorms in the morning and improving after noon, with sunny spells and blue skies after 4 p.m. till sunset. We

quickly adapted and seized all but 3 of the 17 days spent on the glacier in total.

After setting up basecamp, making a 54-meter wall all around our tents and kitchen area, as well as digging linking tunnels below our tents, our little glacial village looked like a huge construction site, with its own quarry to a side where we cut snow blocks. That's what happens when the majority of the team are engineers. We were, however, confident that our finessed basecamp would have survived any kind of foul weather Mother Nature had to offer.

We explored the glacier from top to bottom and managed to climb a few nice lines. We mainly ascended most logical lines through couloirs, gullies, and ridges to the virgin peaks. There were too many ascents to describe them all, but a brief overview of those contemplated by myself and that offered a tad more climbing in very changing conditions are worth sharing.

We headed out to explore the easily accessible cirque just north of basecamp and climbed an easy new line "Old Horses Route" (70°/40-50°, M4, 600 meters, Ažman, Čokl) to the top of the gendarme on the ridge. We abseiled the top part and down-climbed the adjacent snow couloir on our descent. While still descending, we already eyed new routes we wanted to do the following days.

After days of weather too bad for any serious attempt other than skiing above basecamp and climbing shorter routes, time came for something bigger.

The "Final Frontier" (V/3-4, 1,100 meters) followed the most obvious snow and ice line to the corniced summit. The route was awfully exhausting due to deep powder snow for the first, easier angled part of the climb up to 50° (100 meters to the bergschrund and 200 meters to ice). After the initial slopes a couple of pitches of hard, black ice with short vertical sections took Grega Ažman and myself to the upper part of the route, simul-climbing snow and ice up to 65° with the biggest threat coming from the sun heating the snow-loaded slopes above and a large family-house-sized cornice overhanging above the line of the ascent. We summited a new peak, naming it Freeapproved Peak (8765 feet) in deteriorating weather. After a short break, we quickly started our descent and down-climbed most of the time, abseiling over steeper ice parts on V-threads.

Climbing winter alpine terrain in three is always fun, so Grega and I took Bor Šumrada along with the big benefit of additional pair of legs for wading through deep snow below and above the bergschrund as well as safe(r) and better filming on my part. The idea of this trip was, as always, to make another documentary of our adventure. I really devoted a lot of my time and energy to filming, battling with additional hassles by added weight and bulk of the cameras and accessories.

We started in the obvious couloir, then immediately headed straight to the summit via a thin gully system only to be blocked by unconsolidated and overhanging snow, where we had to make a detour and climbed to the left over good, but not easily protected, granite to regain snow and ice to the remainder of the route with the crux just below the summit – an overhanging and badly protected (slabs) 10-meter chimney, packed with sugar snow and absolutely blank rock. Returning from the summit was a story in itself as there was no ice or rock protruding anywhere – it was all wind-loaded snow. After discussing all options, we down-climbed terribly the snow-loaded ridge for one rope length and on the third try dug out a granite boulder on which



**After bailing due to deteriorating weather, Žiga Fujan leaps over a bergschund.**

we used to start our abseils down to regain our line of ascent and then continued down climbing and abseiling to the big descent couloir. The new route Sleepwalker to Windy Peak (ca. 2350 meters) goes at V/4, M5, 700 meters.

Beside the described routes, many others were climbed, but of a less technical nature. Most interesting were also steep ski and snowboard descents as well as – to our knowledge – the first speedflying proximity flights in the area.

The area truly offered some first-class mixed climbing and perfect granite as well as great and exposed ski lines. The only problem being weather and conditions – we found snow in the deep shade of couloirs not-yet consolidated at

this time and other parts very dry. Spindrift runnels/lines, on the other hand, were perfect neve, but it was an exception. This year was supposed to have record snow accumulation and if there was less snow, climbing would have probably been much more rock/mixed-oriented with greater technical difficulties.

With our adventure in Alaska slowly coming to an end, our hearts warmed again with thoughts of those who missed us most back home. Some really nasty weather was about to hit the area and pilots notified us over satellite phones that it was time to leave or be stranded for days. With our food supplies getting scarce, we chose to leave a day earlier than initially planned.

While taking down tents and getting equipment packed, I paused and looked around me in awe. Totally taken in by surroundings, it was time for me to recap. I was glad and grateful for the insanely great experience that our team had gone through on this trip. Alaska is my new favorite adventure place to date, far exceeding most of what I've seen, traveled to, or climbed on. And I'd been around a *lot*. It simply is an amazing, silent, and remote place and I hope to return to these secluded places again in my life. Be it exploring, climbing, skiing, or a mix of all three.

It is trips like these, to places previously little known and explored, that I start to value my being. It is moments like those, when there are only you with your best friends, standing atop a once-virgin mountain, relying on skill and experience to get back down and solving the riddle as it unfolds. Those are the moments I know I am living. And if somebody asks me what would you die for – my answer is easy.

*[Ed. note: During this expedition Valentina Mravlje, Urban Igljč, and Dušan Huč made an alpine ascent of the 45° southwest ridge of Little Ant Peak (6865 feet) between the Hartman Glacier and the Freeapproved Glacier and Bor Šumrada, Janez Rutar, and Matej Pobežin made an alpine ascent of a 700-meter, 55° gully on the north side of the west ridge of Three Peak (7450±50 feet) about two miles southeast of Little Ant Peak.]*

Complete statistics and some fun facts:

New routes climbed: 12

Steep routes skied: 5

Ski-mountaineering outings: 7

Speedflying flights: 3

Expedition budget: 45,031 Euros

Basecamp altitude: 5039 feet

Time spent for cooking/melting snow: 510 hours

Volume of melted snow: 4.7 cubic meters

Water volume we melted from snow to drink and eat: 1,360 Liters

Average temperature in tent while sleeping: -8 °C

Click on this link to view the Aurora Polaris movie trailer:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqfv2FSgDs>



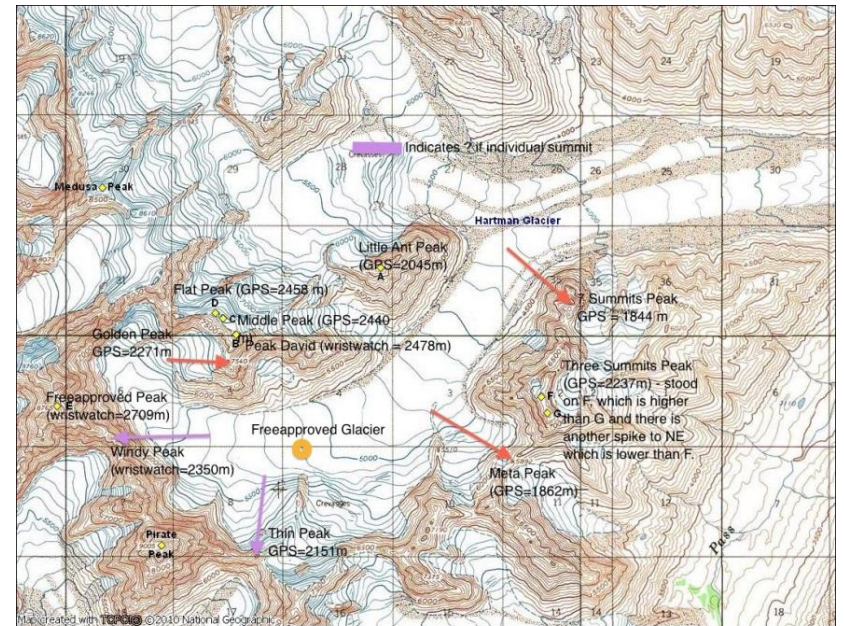
**Grega Ažman about to summit Freeapproved Peak.**



Bor Šumrada starting the lookout for abseil possibilities.



Boštjan Virc making his first turns skiing the Slovenian Couloir on the southwest slopes of Peak David. Photo by Jani Rutar.



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

0.0 0.5 1.0 1.5 2.0 miles  
0.0 0.5 1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 3.5 km

17°  
06/08/12



**Nik Koblov and Dmitry Maskoff rejoicing on the Backside Glacier in Denali National Park.**  
Photos by Joe Stock.

## The Whale's Tail

By Joe Stock

Between the Ruth and Tokositna Glaciers lies a piece of land shaped like the tail of a whale. Denali Ranger Tucker Chenoweth showed this feature to me. "It's the best ski tour I've ever done," he told me. Tucker has done a few tours, so I listened, except my first trip to the Whale's Tail was not on skis.

**August 25 to September 2, 2011**

Dan Oberlatz at Alaska Alpine Adventures signed me up for a 10-day backpacking trip to the Whale's Tail with Nik Koblov and Dmitry Maskoff. These are two super-nice Russians living in New

York City. I'd been on two previous trips with Nik. Those trips were on skis. I'd never guided backpacking. I'd barely backpacked in Alaska. But with these tough guys, the trip was more like mountaineering, which made it easier.

Over 10 days we hiked the heck out of the Whale's Tail. From our landing on Backside Lake, down through the Tokosha Mountains, back up to the Backside Glacier. We climbed

many peaks, took thousands of photos, laughed, and wondered about skiing these tundra slopes and between the granite walls.

Perhaps most memorable were Dmitry's diggers. An hour from the landing zone, Dmitry fell hard and sliced his shin to the bone. We doctored that up. The next day, Dmitry nailed the ground again. This time the shale gorged his palm wide open, two inches long and deep. We glued and bandaged that up and kept walking. Falling that hard must be a big city thing, something to do with sidewalks. Walking for another week with a gory wound must be a Russian thing.

Our flight the last morning was at 10 a.m. Dmitry and Nik wanted to climb a mountain before our 10 a.m. flight. They decided we'd do it before coffee. Lack of caffeine is a safety concern, but I was outvoted. We climbed the peak and made coffee to drink on the plane.

See more photos of backpacking the Whale's Tail at: <http://www.stockalpine.com/posts/denalis-whale-tail.html>.

**April 13 to 17, 2012**

Mid-April is Cathy's birthday and our wedding anniversary. Either I'm in the doghouse, out in the mountains with a bunch of stinky dudes, or I'm scoring huge points with Cathy. This year I scored huge with her while skiing the Whale's Tail.

We'd watched the marginal forecast the entire previous week. At 9 a.m. on Monday the forecast tipped to the good side of marginal. Talkeetna Air Taxi said to be ready for a 3 p.m. flight. We filled our backpacks (never pack too early or you'll jinx yourself) and drove to Talkeetna. As daylight



**Cathy Flanagan on the spine of the Whale's Tail, high above the Tokositna Glacier.**

sifted from the Ruth Gorge, we skied down around Mount Dickey and camped below the granite wall and 747 Pass.

Over the next four days we skied along the spine of the whale, sometimes crossing bowls or making runs to the bowls below. We'd stop each day at 12 noon to camp, before the snow mushed into an isothermal avalanche party. The last night we camped on the Susitna side of Tokosha Gap, looking down toward Talkeetna. Our last day was 10 hours of crust skating, snowmachine trail skiing, four hours of hitching, then an hour of burgers and beer at the West Rib in Talkeetna.

See more photos from skiing the Whale's Tail at: <http://www.stockalpine.com/posts/whale-tail-ski.html>.



**Skiing toward the Tokosha Mountains on the spine of the Whale's Tail between the Ruth and Tokositna Glaciers.**



**Cathy Flanagan skiing toward Tokosha Gap in the Tokosha Mountains.**



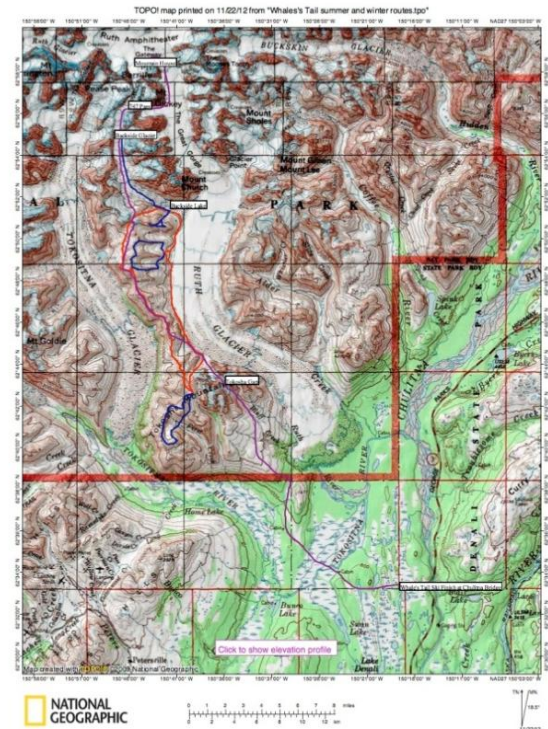
**Cathy Flanagan hitching a ride back to Talkeetna on the Parks Highway after skiing the Whale's Tail.**



**Cathy Flanagan at camp on the spine of the Whale's Tail between the Ruth and Tokositna Glaciers with Denali in the background.**



**Nik Koblov and Dmitry Maskoff hiking above the Ruth Glacier toward the Tokosha Mountains on the Whale's Tail between the Ruth Glacier and the Tokositna Glacier.**







Dave Hart skiing down the Eagle Glacier. Roost Peak looms above him with Golden Crown in the sunlight on the right. Photo by Jeannie Wall.

## Eagle Glacier Peak Bagging: Roost Peak, Golden Crown, Finch Peak, and Bunting Peak

By Dave Hart

It's funny to describe one of my more memorable trips into the Chugach State Park as a consolation prize. But that's what happened when my Montana friend Jeannie Wall and I spent 48 hours on the upper Eagle Glacier in May 2012. We were on our fifth day of weather hold in Anchorage, waiting to fly into the Canadian Saint Elias Mountains. Tuesday morning, May 15, dawned clear, so we drove to Girdwood itching to go somewhere. By 9:30 a.m., Alpine Air had dropped us off at an elevation of 5600 feet at the head of the Eagle Glacier one mile east of Goat

Mountain and south of the Chugach State Park boundary. We had our sights set on four remote peaks in eastern Chugach State Park, including perhaps the most remote – Finch Peak (6100 feet). It was only a month prior that Wayne Todd, Carrie Wang, Galen Flint, and Ross Noffsinger had climbed these same four peaks while on an Eklutna Traverse trip. It was during this trip that Wayne became the fourth person to have climbed all 120 peaks in the Park, following Jim Saylor, Wendy Sanem and Richard Baranow. Ross showed me maps, photos, and videos of their trip, which spurred my interest in visiting.

It was still very much winter in the Chugach Mountains, following a record snowfall. We headed north and broke trail through powder 4 miles downhill to 3700 feet where a glacier drained from the east off the west face of Bunting Peak (6585 feet). We headed right and climbed steeply at first through a few crevasses, then leveled out and continued 2 miles to our camp at 5400 feet in the basin between Roost Peak (6600 feet) and Bunting Peak. We made camp at 12:30 p.m., and were off toward our first objective, Roost Peak, by 1 p.m.

We skied south from camp and gained the north ridge of Roost Peak at 5800 feet, ditching our skis on the glacier. Here the wallowing began, sometimes waist deep. We roped up for a few pitches of running belays, but by 3:30 p.m. we were on top enjoying a rare sunny Chugach day. Jeannie regretted not hauling her skis to the summit, as there's a nice west-facing gully that drops 500 feet from the summit to the glacier below. We retraced our tracks to our skis by 4 p.m.

We skinned to the 6050-foot pass just northeast of Point 6375 en route to Golden Crown (6600 feet) to the south. I booted down the punchy south slopes of the pass while Jeannie got in some turns. We then contoured south to the base of Golden Crown's northeast ridge at 6000 feet again swapping skis for crampons. We booted up, arriving on top at 5:30 p.m. Up and down was a breeze on the hard, rimed snow. By 6:30 p.m., we were post-holing up to the 6050-foot pass where we strapped on our skis for a final speedy run back to camp. We were brewing up dinner by 7 p.m. enjoying the memories of a great day in the mountains.

Wednesday dawned another stellar day. We had a longer day in store to climb the second two peaks – Finch and Bunting. We woke at 5 a.m. and were skinning up glacier by 7 a.m., this time heading 1 mile northeast of camp to the 5850-foot pass north of Bunting Peak. We crested the pass at 8 a.m., and were surprised by the topography as we looked down east onto the Finch Glacier. While the map shows a gradual glacier ascent on either side of the pass, reality finds the glacier melted out on both sides. The slopes were especially steep on the east side of the pass.

The Finch Glacier is bisected by many large crevasses, domes, troughs and generally confusing topography. Jeannie and I roped up for the 2-mile sking downglacier to 4300 feet at the base of the north slopes of Finch Peak. We avoided a couple spooky crevasse sections and found safe travel. Navigating in a whiteout would be a much different proposition. The safest and standard route up Finch, if there is such a thing on a seldom-climbed peak, is the northeast ridge.

Finch's direct north face is overhung with seracs and riddled with debris. Easy skinning led from 4300 feet through potential avalanche terrain on the northern slopes of Finch to the northeast ridge crest at 5400 feet. We replaced skis with crampons and roped up for a couple hundred feet of narrow, exposed travel. The difficulties ended at a nice belay rock at 5600 feet. From there, easy step-kicking led the final 500 feet to the summit, where we arrived just before 1 p.m. Wolverine tracks came up from the south over the summit and continued straight-line down the north face. I'd love to be a wolverine.

We headed down, reversing the tricky ridge. I enviously watched Jeannie clip into her AT gear and link effortless turns for the mile descent to the valley floor. I was in my mountaineering boots and skis, and struggled down the slope with only



**Jeannie Wall skinning back up the Finch Glacier en route to Bunting Peak. Photo by Dave Hart.**

a few crashes. We regrouped at 4300 feet and started the grind back up the glacier toward camp as the heat of the day turned the Finch Glacier into a boiling cauldron. At 5300 feet we left our morning route and instead veered left to the south directly toward our final goal, Bunting Peak. Rolling topography made it challenging to choose the optimal route, but we ended up at 6100 feet on the northwest shoulder of Bunting without too many detours. Again, good weather made this possible. The northwest face of Bunting looked to be an enticing ski, but we were a bit nervous of

the recent snow and wind loading. Instead, we traversed east, ditched our skis and booted directly up the north ridge, arriving around 5 p.m. The day was getting long, and we could see our camp a scant 1 mile below us. We did not linger as we were still unclear how we were going to descend to camp.

We retraced our tracks to 6100 feet, from where a prominent cleft in the ridge led to a gully dropping due west to the glacier below. We down-climbed this short, but steep, gully, then put our skis back on for the quick descent back to camp. We arrived at 6 p.m., just in time for dinner.

We woke at 5 a.m. Thursday, wanting to reach the helicopter pickup point by 9:30 a.m., before the sun softened the now crusty glacier. We were off by 6:30 a.m., our skis barely denting the styrofoam crust. That made our morning descent much easier, especially through the steeper crevassed section below. We were back at 3700 feet on the

Eagle Glacier, putting on our skins by 7:30 a.m. An hour later we took a break to call Alpine Air on the satellite phone to arrange a 9:30 a.m. pick-up. By 10 a.m., we were sipping lattes in Girdwood.

Some may lament our use of helicopters to access this corner of the Park. But for those not opposed to air travel, it offers the distinct advantage of allowing one more certainty on weather and snow conditions. Regardless, these peaks make for a good introduction to the more technical snow and glaciated peaks in Chugach State Park and beyond.



Alpenglow on the ridgeline.  
Photos by Wayne L. Todd.

## Califourteenia Dreaming

By Wayne L. Todd

After our dismal summer, I was lured into Dave Hart's fourteen-thousand-foot (14K') peak quest by the promise of sunshine, warmth, good rock, peakbagging, and camaraderie. Logistics fell into place, and I was onboard a flight to Los Angeles. Dave's trips are quite focused and very efficient; deplane, rent a car, drive, get permits, and hike in on day one. The overall plan breaks the trip into two phases. For the first phase, Stu and Ross are off climbing Charlotte Dome and Mount Conness while Dave, David, and I are busy elsewhere, and for the second phase we'll be one larger group.

Phase 1, Day 1 continued. I'm soon absorbed in photographing new and different berries, flowers and plants along the sunny, Shepherd Pass Trail.

Lizards punctuate "hey, we're not in Alaska anymore" and the large fir and especially the massive bristlecone pines further confirm the notion. Hiking from 6,000 feet with five-day packs sets a steady but not quick pace. As the ranger warned, this trail is not to be dismissed due to the significant elevation gain and regain. Headlamp time quickly follows dusk at Alpine Meadows Camp but soon a bright round night light busts over a ridge, casting large shadows beyond the trees. (The intensity is enough to affect sleep for the next week).

Phase 1, Day 2. In the early morning we move to Shepherd Pass (12,000 feet). Under sunny skies again, we pick a spot next to an alpine lake above tree line. After quick tent set, we boulder hike the north ridge of **Mount Tyndall** (14,018 feet). From on high, numerous blue lakes accentuate the surrounding peaks. The standard route for Mount Williamson is in close view. Two couples are also on top, including Pat and Merry from Bishop, with whom we pleasantly mix with over the next two days. Descending the northwest rib is faster, more direct, and less hazardous for falls (but has higher rockfall danger). On return a "cute" marmot is noticed around camp.

Phase 1, Day 3. A 5 a.m. start, under crisp blue skies. After low-angle hiking, boulder hopping, and a few cliff bench undulations, we clamor up the shaded standard gully. Earlier, we'd passed a solo climber who'd already been awake for a day, having driven from Los Angeles and hiked non-stop from the trailhead. After a fun hundred-foot Class IV chimney, we welcome sun warmth. Pat and Merry join us on the leeward side of the **Mount Williamson** summit (14,375 feet). On the return to camp, a nude lake rinse is refreshing and brisk (but warmer than Alaska). While we were gone the no-longer-cute marmots sampled our food through a Kevlar bear bag and extensively pierced a Kevlar critter bag. A few hours later, the non-sleeper slumbers by.

Phase 1, Day 4. A later start, under of course blue skies, finds us on a counter-clockwise ascent of **Mount Barnard** (13,990 feet, highest non-14Ker in California). We pass through a forest of huge bristlecone pines, most of them deceased, twisted, grooved, posing by sparkling lakes. A steep wall, tiered by numerous benches, makes for fun and independent routes to the



Wayne Todd, Dave Hart, and David Stchyrba (left to right) on Mount Tyndall. Mount Williamson is in the background.



**Ridge traverse on Starlight Peak.**

south ridge. David and I hang out on the cool windy summit as Dave heads back to camp. David and I then climb **Trojan Peak** (13,947 feet) on the return. A steep traverse around the stunning Lake Helen of Troy contrasts the hazards of the large unstable boulders. When we return to camp it is now vacant except for our tents as weekend's affect backcountry numbers. Today, the marmots even removed rocks to once again ravage our food. Fortunately the talk of a marmot posse does not come to fruition.

Phase 1, Day 5. A break-free hike out under cloudy skies (what?!) gets us to the car in one third of our ingress time. In Bishop, we cleanse, shop, permit, and visit Galen Rowells' Mountain Light Gallery (a very worthy stop).

Phase 2, Day 1. After a logistical meeting with fatigued Ross and Stu and breakfast at Jack's, we drive to 9,800 feet. Now quasi altitude fit, we steadily ascend to Bishop Pass even with four days' food, technical gear and bear cans (take

that, marmots!). The scenery is studded with numerous small green lakes, pine forests, and sunshine (i.e. gorgeous), and understandably we meet numerous hikers. From Bishop Pass, Dave, David, and I travel easily toward Thunderbolt Pass until the car-to-house-sized boulder field. We lose each other in the maze. Five hundred feet below the pass in Palisade Basin, we claim a double tent site with water. Marmot poop is prevalent. After various guesses as to their arrival time, we welcome Ross and Stu sooner than expected with loon calls. Another tent is wedged in, and climbing stories are traded.

Phase 2, Day 2. Out by headlamp over boulders, we converge on the main gully for **Thunderbolt Peak** (14,003 feet). We scramble and belay right of the choked gully (Indiana Jones boulder, IJ3) then hike and minor scramble to the summit ridge, cognizant of rockfall danger above one another. A steeper 30-foot belayed section leads to just below the serious 10-foot summit block. We encourage Stu up this 5.9 lead. Cheering from on high reveals a climber perched on the Milk Bottle (looks like a phallus) on Starlight Peak, countering our summit percher. While belaying members to the top, we witness a splendid, almost 3D Spectre of the Brocken. Below the summit, huge boulders allow different caving routes to the rappel spot. A two-foot garter snake is found on the descent at 13,000 feet. Bats dart around camp at dusk.

Phase 2, Day 3. A 6 a.m. start, under clear skies, has just enough light for a headlamp-free start on **Starlight Peak** (14,200 feet). The others explore a route through another Indiana Jones boulder pile (IJ3M2) in the main gully while I pucker climb to the right. Luckily my route ties back into the main gully. The group belays through their boulder cave route. More gully hiking, a right turn into a gully of minor scrambling, then various Class III routes collect us at the north ridge into the welcome first direct sun of the day. Various Class IV routes lead along the ridge, a rappel into a gully below the summit, and we're rope free

again. The next pitch (a Class IV chimney), seeming rope worthy from below, is safely free climbed on the solid rock with numerous holds. At the Milk Bottle, we count on Stu to lead the 5.6 summit block. Ours are the only cheers heard today. A ballsy stand-on-the-tip-of-the-spire precedence is set. Luckily no one falls. Clouding skies concern us about a safe technical descent. We mostly retrace our ascent route, except lead around the opposite side of one gendarme, which turns out to be no easier. We note numerous tents now in Palisade Basin. After a 12-hour day, the evening brew is more satisfying. The clouds dissipate, and evening alpenglow on the rock massif segues to star and satellite watching and politically correct male talk.

Phase 2, Day 4. Stu is out early for other obligations. A more-direct descent from Thunderbolt Pass avoids most of the boulders. A



**Return traverse on Starlight Peak;  
Milk Bottle at the top.**

chat with some ascenders gleans their plans for a ridge traverse of all the nearby peaks. I'm spooked by a large deer at 20 feet blended in with the rock. A brave chipmunk at Bishop Pass entertains as we regroup. Clouds intensify as we hike out and it actually rains as we drive off (excellent timing for us, not for other climbers).

Phase 3, Day 1. A dark, slow, jolting, and at times-steep drive gets us to the Red Lake Trailhead at sunrise. The four of us joked enough about snakebites that we are now actually concerned. The already-warm lower barren valley transitions to brush thickets with streams, a deer and fawn, stands of bristlecone pines, and then the turquoise 'Red' Lake, backdropped by the muted rainbow-colored steep ridged **Split Mountain** (14,058 feet). With the mountain topped with dark clouds and increasing wind, I doubt we'll summit. With just day packs, we move readily along, though with almost 8,000 feet to gain over 15 miles, pacing is key. Above the lake, the splendor melts to rock and boulder fields, and one gully, all the way to the summit. Views from on high are rewarding and mostly unobscured. We had made it. This was Dave's last California 14Ker and last 14Ker in the Lower 48!

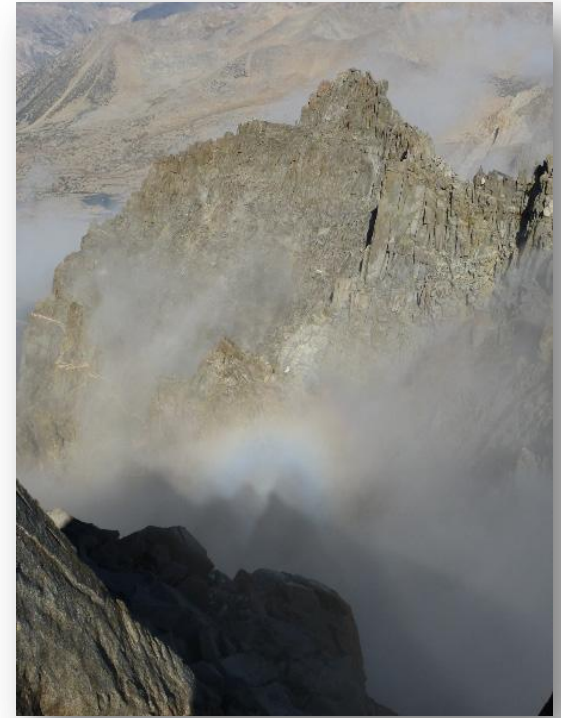
At a stream under now sunny skies, I relish a foot soaking, though am disappointed at no takers for a Red Lake plunge. During the hike out, numerous lizards dash away, though no snakes are seen or heard all day.

Promise fulfilled.

By Wayne L. Todd  
August 31 to September 10, 2012  
With Dave Hart, Ross Noffsinger, Stuart Parks,  
and David Stchyrba.



The not-cute marmot.



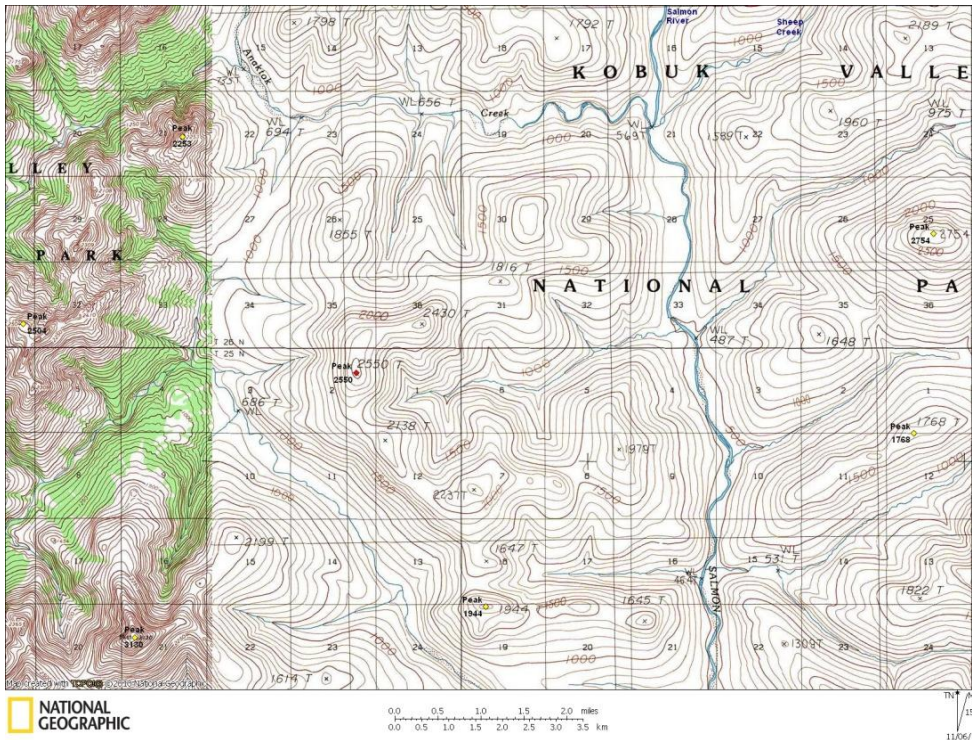
Spectre of the Brocken and Thunderbolt Peak.



Split Mountain.



Bristlecone pines near Split Mountain.



# Peak of the Month: Peak 2550

By Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Brooks Range; Baird Mountains

Borough: Northwest Arctic Borough

Drainage: Salmon River

Latitude/Longitude: 67° 35' 51" North, 159° 56' 19" West

Elevation: 2550 feet

Prominence: 1600 feet from Peak 3380 in the Anaktok Creek and Nakolikurok Creek drainages

Adjacent Peaks:  
Peak 1944 in the Salmon River drainage and Peak 2253 in the Anaktok Creek drainage  
Distinctness: 1100 feet from Peak 1944  
USGS Map: Baird Mountains (C-2)  
First Recorded Ascent: August 14, 1975, by Patrick Pourchot  
Route of First Recorded Ascent: Southeast ridge  
Access Point: West side of the Salmon River at the 480-foot level

In the early to mid-1970s, the now-defunct federal Bureau of Outdoor

Recreation sent multi-disciplinary teams to inspect over 50 river systems throughout Alaska and survey them as potential candidates for the National Wild and Scenic River Program.

In the third week of August 1975, Pat Pourchot led an inspection of the Salmon River in the proposed Kobuk Valley National Monument to evaluate the area for inclusion as a national monument and as a wild and scenic river.

On August 13, 1975, Pourchot and five companions were shuttled in a helicopter from Kiana to a large gravel bar on the west side of the 480-foot level of the Salmon River, approximately six miles downstream from the confluences of Anaktok Creek and Sheep Creek with the Salmon River. The one-way trip from Kiana took about 30 minutes.

At 12:15 p.m. on August 14 with the temperature at 70 °F, Pourchot left camp for a solo inspection of the tundra and upland areas of the Salmon River drainage. He found the hiking easy, particularly on ridge tops, which were covered by rock and alpine tundra, and was able to travel at a pace of about 3 miles per hour. He headed west and reached Point 1978 by 1:30. By 2:45 he had reached Point 2237. He then began to hike the southeast ridge of Peak 2550, arriving at the summit at 4 p.m. He described the views as exceptional and impressive. He descended by hiking the northeast ridge to the Salmon River and then following it downstream to his camp, arriving at 6 p.m. He found the last mile or two to be brushy, boggy, and hummocky. In all, he had hiked about 10 miles.

Leaving the next day in a 17-foot aluminum canoe, two single folding Klepper kayaks, and a double folding Klepper kayak, the party began to float the Salmon River to the Kobuk River and then downstream to Kiana. They arrived in Kiana on August 21.

In 1978, Kobuk Valley National Monument was established. With the national monument designation came a ban on helicopter landings. Alternative means of accessing the area would need to be employed to repeat Pourchot's trip. In 1980, partly due to Pourchot's inspection, the Salmon River was formally designated as a Wild River.

The information for this article came from Pourchot's "Field Report – Salmon River Inspection, August 13-21, 1975," posted at <http://www.outdoorsdirectory.com/boating/arl/salmon.htm> and from my correspondence with Pourchot. Photos from Pourchot's trip are stored at the UAA Consortium Library in the Alaska Resource Library and Information Services (ARLIS) Section.

# Mountaineering Club of Alaska

## PROPOSED 2013 MCA BUDGET

|  |   | Proposed<br>for 2013 | Current<br>for 2012 | Approved<br>for 2012 | Percent<br>of Budget |
|--|---|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>REVENUE</b>   |   |                      |                     |                      |                      |
| Membership Dues  | <i>received during calendar year</i>                    | \$8,000.00           | \$6,309.07          | \$8,000.00           | 79%                  |
| Scree subscriptions  |   | \$250.00             | \$271.38            | \$250.00             | 109%                 |
| Training   | <i>BMS, ice climbing, rock climbing, other</i>          | \$8,000.00           | \$7,706.24          | \$10,500.00          | 73%                  |
| Photo Calendar   |   | \$3,000.00           | \$1,383.00          | \$3,000.00           | 46%                  |
| MCA Products: T-Shirts, Patches, Etc.                        |   | \$0.00               | \$0.00              | \$0.00               | -                    |
| Other - Interest on Accounts                                 |   | \$150.00             | \$84.89             | \$150.00             | 57%                  |
| Other - Donations, etc                                       |   | \$0.00               | \$55.00             | \$0.00               | -                    |
| <b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>   |   | <b>\$19,400.00</b>   | <b>\$15,809.58</b>  | <b>\$21,900.00</b>   | <b>72%</b>           |
| <b>EXPENSE</b>   |   |                      |                     |                      |                      |
| Training   | <i>campsite, access fees, instructors, trip leaders</i> | \$5,000.00           | \$3,239.06          | \$7,000.00           | 46%                  |
| Scree  | <i>postage, mailing, printing</i>                       | \$2,300.00           | \$1,811.84          | \$2,300.00           | 79%                  |
| General Meeting  | <i>rent, refreshments, entertainment</i>                | \$2,000.00           | \$1,244.30          | \$2,000.00           | 62%                  |
| Administrative   | <i>supplies, PO box, web site, ads, travel, misc.</i>   | \$2,200.00           | \$518.77            | \$2,200.00           | 24%                  |
| Hut Construction & Maint.                                    | <i>materials, supplies, hut equipment, lease fees</i>   | \$10,000.00          | \$2,083.89          | \$4,000.00           | 52%                  |
| Insurance  | <i>reincorporation fees, insurance</i>                  | \$1,500.00           | \$0.00              | \$1,500.00           | -                    |
| Club Equipment   | <i>climbing gear, misc equipment</i>                    | \$500.00             | \$425.68            | \$500.00             | 85%                  |
| Library  | <i>new books, periodicals, Scree binding</i>            | \$1,000.00           | \$522.86            | \$1,000.00           | 52%                  |
| Other:   | <i>miscellaneous expenses</i>                           |                      |                     |                      |                      |
| Photo Calendar   |   | \$2,600.00           | \$0.00              | \$2,600.00           | -                    |
| MCA Products: T-Shirts, Patches, Etc.                        |   | \$0.00               | \$0.00              | \$0.00               |                      |
| Other - Awards   |   | \$400.00             | \$285.00            | \$400.00             | 71%                  |
| Other -  |   | \$0.00               | \$0.00              | \$0.00               |                      |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>   |   | <b>\$27,500.00</b>   | <b>\$10,131.40</b>  | <b>\$23,500.00</b>   | <b>43%</b>           |
| <b>DUE TO (FROM) RESERVE</b>                                 |   | <b>(\$8,100.00)</b>  | <b>\$5,678.18</b>   | <b>(\$1,600.00)</b>  | <b>(355%)</b>        |
| <b>CASH BALANCE - All Accounts</b>                           |   |                      |                     |                      |                      |
| Beginning Balance - January 1, 2012                          |   |                      | \$32,609.86         |                      |                      |
| Increase (decrease) during 2012                              |   |                      | \$5,678.18          |                      |                      |
| Current Balance for 2012                                     |   |                      | <b>\$38,288.04</b>  |                      |                      |
| Checking - Credit Union 1                                    |   |                      | \$16,196.67         |                      |                      |
| Money Mkt and CDs - Credit Union 1 (.75 - 1.89%)             |   |                      | \$20,464.69         |                      |                      |
| Savings - Credit Union 1 (.7%)                               |   |                      | \$414.47            |                      |                      |
| 18-month CD - in trust for hut lease - Northrim Bank (1.25%) |   |                      | \$1,162.21          |                      |                      |
| Petty Cash   |   |                      | \$50.00             |                      |                      |
| <b>Ending Balance -</b>                                      | <b>Revised 10/20/12</b>                                 |                      | <b>\$38,288.04</b>  |                      |                      |

# Mountaineering Club of Alaska

|                |                 |              |              |                   |          |
|----------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|----------|
| President      | Jayne Mack      | 382-0212     | Board member | Greg Encelewski   | 360-0274 |
| Vice-President | Galen Flint     | 650-207-0810 | Board member | Charlie Sink      | 258-8770 |
| Secretary      | Kelley Williams | 310-2003     | Board member | Andy Mamrol       | 717-6893 |
| Treasurer      | Seth Weingarten | 360-9128     | Board member | Elizabeth Bennett | 952-9661 |
| Past President | Tim Silvers     | 250-3374     |              |                   |          |

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

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

The 'Scree' is a monthly publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Articles, notes and letters submitted for publication in the newsletter should be emailed to [MCAScree@gmail.com](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.

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@mtnclubak.org](mailto:vicepresident@mtnclubak.org).

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

Mailing list/database entry: Seth Weingarten – [membership@mtnclubak.org](mailto:membership@mtnclubak.org)

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Vicky Lytle - [hcc@mtnclubak.org](mailto:hcc@mtnclubak.org)

Huts: Greg Bragiel - 569-3008

Calendar: Stuart Grenier - 337-5127

Scree Editor: [MCAScree@gmail.com](mailto:MCAScree@gmail.com) Steve Gruhn (344-1219) assisted by Amy Murphy (338-3979)

Web: [www.mtnclubak.org](http://www.mtnclubak.org) (change your address here)

Mailing list service: [MCAK@yahoogroups.com](mailto:MCAK@yahoogroups.com)

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