

**ISSUE INCLUDES**

**Xanadu Peak and The Albatross  
Peak 6402  
Tetlin Peak and Peak 7040  
The Unicorn and Pegasus  
Kenai Mountains Traverse  
Heritage Falls Trail Maintenance  
Peak 4850  
Clean - Science Glacier  
Peak A-111  
“Thumbs Up”**

# the **SCREE**

**Mountaineering Club  
of Alaska**

**December 2017  
Volume 60 Number 12**



**The December 19 meeting is  
the MCA potluck at the Pioneer  
Schoolhouse at 437 East 3rd  
Avenue and will begin at 6:00 p.m.**

“

**The first fall of snow is not only an event, it is a magical event.  
You go to bed in one kind of a world and wake up in another  
quite different, and if this is not enchantment then where is it  
to be found?**

**- J. B. Priestly**

”

# The Mountaineering Club of Alaska [mtnclubak.org](http://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.”*

**Cover Photo:** Glenn Wilson, James Kesterson, and Paul Muscat (right to left) descending after aborting an attempt on Double Peak. Photo by Joe Stock

**Scree Editor:** Dave Hart

**Scree Layout/Design:** Paxson Woelber

## December Meeting

The December 19 meeting is the MCA potluck at the Pioneer Schoolhouse at 437 East 3rd Avenue and will begin at 6:00 p.m.

Folks are encouraged to bring something to share, and a thumb drive of 10 to 15 photos that will play during the meeting.

## CHOATE’S CHUCKLE

**Q:** *What phrase could be used to describe both a frightened new climber and an ice climbing route on a waterfall?*

**A:** *A drip that froze up*

## Climbing Notes

Will Wacker emailed the MCA that Mike Miller and he had climbed Peak 4288 and Peak 4677 (named Rave Peak on bivouac.com website), both in the Lynn Canal drainage of the Chilkat Range. We hope to have a trip report in the future from this trip.

## CONNECT WITH THE MCA



Check the Meetup site and Facebook for last minute trips and activities.



## Proposal to Increase Family Membership Dues from \$25 to \$30

The MCA Board is proposing to increase the family membership cost from \$25 to \$30. This will be voted on at the December membership meeting. Individual membership rates will be unchanged at \$20.

**Article Submission:** Text and photography submissions for *the Scree* can be sent as attachments to [mcascre@gmail.com](mailto:mcascre@gmail.com). Articles should be submitted by the 19th 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.

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## Beta, Google, Guidebooks, and the Search for Adventure

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It used to be that early explorers and climbers had to find their own way in the mountains. There were limited or no guidebooks, trip reports, or other trip planning beta-tools available. Only through astute exploration assisted by word-of-mouth advice could one summit the more difficult or remote peaks and routes in a particular area.

As the many forms of climbing have become more mainstream, an increasing number and sophistication of trip planning and guidance beta-tools are becoming more prevalent. Simple Google searches lead to myriad trip or route reports, complete with photos, videos, and annotated maps to help plan a trip. Satellite phones, InReach communicators, and GPS mapping devices pre-populated with GPS tracks often assist climbers during their trips.

This writing is more of an observation, than judgment. I am a huge proponent, both as a user and a contributor, of websites such as [www.summitpost.com](http://www.summitpost.com), [www.peakbagger.com](http://www.peakbagger.com), [www.listsofjohn.com](http://www.listsofjohn.com), [www.cascadeclimbers.com](http://www.cascadeclimbers.com), and other sites designed to help share both positive and negative trip experiences among climbers. I also love sitting down with a paper guidebook and learning about a new area. And who doesn't enjoy watching YouTube videos of new and exciting climbing areas to explore? But I still have concerns that new climbers risk losing appreciation of the true adventure they are seeking, and instead rely more on these beta-tools than their internal skills and judgment.


I caution climbers, especially newer ones, to use these beta-tools strategically and sparingly. I will almost always pre-load a GPS track on my iPhone GAIA base map before heading out on a trip, in case bad weather moves in, darkness sets, or I get off route for some other reason.

But I also bring a paper map. I also always carry an EPIRB, InReach, or other emergency communication device in the same way I carry a bivy sack or avalanche transceiver. But I plan to not rely on these devices unless an emergency requires their assistance.

Different folks have a different tolerance for pre-planning, or lack of pre-planning before heading on a backcountry trip. I find it interesting that 10 or 20 years ago, I was far more rigorous in pre-planning a climbing trip, when there were far fewer beta-tools available. Today with an embarrassment of tools to help pre-plan a climb, I seem to have lost interest in knowing everything I can about an upcoming climb.

As with any of the methods and techniques climbers use, there is often no right or wrong answer as long as one doesn't meaningfully affect the next person's experience.

*The Scree* welcomes other points of view on the use of trip planning beta-tools.

- Dave Hart 



# Xanadu Peak (7160 feet), Northwest Face, Arctic Knight (IV 5.11+ R) and The Albatross (5565 feet), Direct Southeast Face, (IV-V 5.10+)

## A Trip to the Arrigetch Peaks, Brooks Range

**Text by Vitaliy Musiyenko**

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The news of being hired to work in the emergency department of a large trauma center was bittersweet, knowing that my friends Brian Prince, Adam Ferro, and I had a planned trip to Alaska to climb in the Arrigetch Peaks, only four months after my orientation was supposed to begin. A few months prior we had received the Mugs Stump Award, which granted us funds to cover most of the travel expenses for the expedition, yet I was fully prepared to encourage my friends to split my share of the grant and go on a trip of a lifetime without me. Asking for a vacation such a short time after getting hired was not mentioned in “Impressing the New Boss for Dummies,” yet sending her the official release of the grant and stacking shifts worked magically and I was granted 19 days off.

Having read about the Arrigetch in a David Roberts book early in my mountaineering career made me aware of the remote range with large granite spires. Even though I always had a strong desire to see the range with own eyes, it was hard to dedicate so much time for a place known for unstable weather, a place more than 3000 miles away, when the mountain range with the best granite and most stable mountain weather is a few hours away in the Sierra Nevada. Especially for someone not interested in being bored in a tent for days while the storms are raging. Getting a new job was a blessing in this regard, as I loaded my phone with study material and brought a book with much to learn about critical care nursing. As long as we were not going to get eaten by a grizzly bear, it would be a good trip with good friends.

Working with a minimum amount of time one would need to go on such an expedition did not allow much time for screwing around. The same day I flew to

Anchorage we drove north to the town of Coldfoot in a long push. Unfortunately, it was raining and we had to wait a few days before we could fly out to the base of the mountains. We don't have much advice for accommodations in town, as the only hotel there seemed too expensive and instead, we crashed in an abandoned building. The local ranger station provided us with the permit, bear-proof canisters and amusement in form of educational presentations every evening.

When the weather allowed us to fly in, we learned that the biggest sandbag of the trip was the approach up Arrigetch Creek. Brian thought the approach to the base of the West Face of Xanadu Peak would be five miles. How bad could that be? Because it rained heavily for several days in a row before we arrived, the water in the river was so high that we couldn't cross the creek separating the small island on which we had landed and the land. It took us about two hours to wander around looking for a crossing, giving up on that idea and setting up the Tyrolean traverse to get our packs across. After that, we hiked toward Arrigetch Creek, hoping to find the trail, through bushes, and across several other creek crossings. We were happy to finally find the trail, but to call it a trail would be misleading. It was more of a muddy groove with water running through it. Traveling anywhere else would be hell, so that was our best option. After walking for a few hours, I was in doubt it could be five miles to the base, as Xanadu still looked very far away. Later in the trip, we realized it was more like 15 miles, not 5.

On the second day of the approach, we saw a peak named The Albatross. Although not something we planned for, it was a striking granite spire with what had



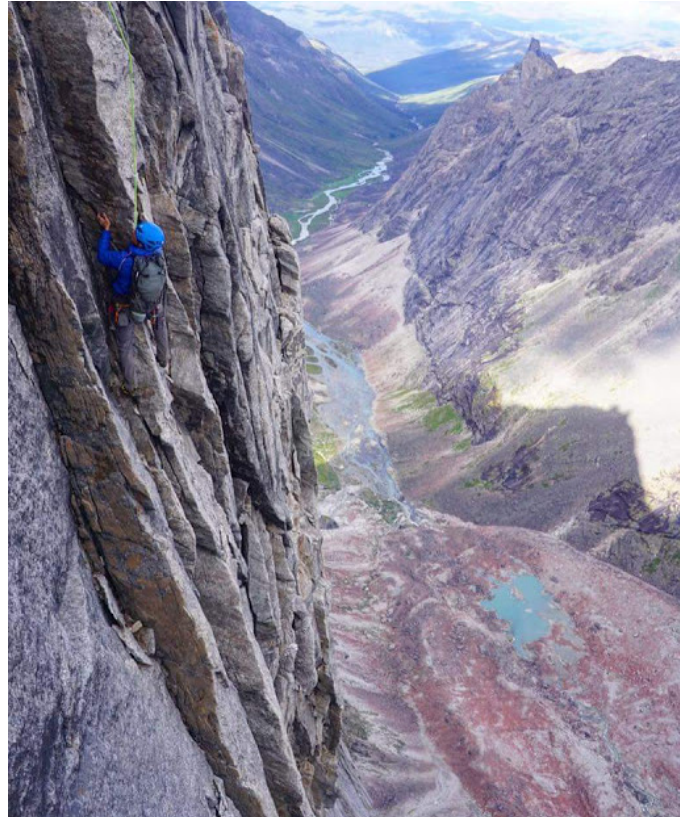
**The Albatross reflecting in a small glacial lake as seen from the approach. Photo by Vitaliy Musiyenko.**

to be an exhilarating summit block. Soon after passing beneath it, we were in a raging thunderstorm and had to camp short of the pass we were hoping to climb over before we could attempt Xanadu. In the morning the rain ceased, yet the pass was covered in clouds and still invisible. On our side of the pass, the beautiful southeast face of The Albatross was being illuminated by the sun. We adapted to the conditions quickly and set off to find a direct line up it.

We climbed all sorts of terrain, from solid alpine rock with fun, pumpy moves to dangerous overhangs with



**Adam Ferro leading on The Albatross. The summit spire overhangs the face, looming above Ferro. Photo by Vitaliy Musiyenko.**



**Adam Ferro following one of the upper pitches on The Albatross. Photo by Brian Prince.**

flakes stacked like a house of cards, waiting for someone not careful to give them a good pull. Since all three of us had a good amount of experience climbing varied terrain in the past and trying to stretch our 70-meter ropes to the limit on every pitch, we made a relatively quick ascent, as not much time was lost for route finding. The route up the Direct Southeast Face was approximately 1700 feet with difficulties to 5.10+, which meant the wall was actually taller than the northwest face of Xanadu, which on the map appeared taller than it was because of several hundred feet of slab below the base of the wall. The cooperating weather resulted in incredible summit panorama. Dark and intimidating Northeast Face of Xanadu, called the Grayling Wall to our right. Walls, spires, and an imposing ship-like prow formed the sunlit granite ridge to our left. It was one of the most exposed, scenic, and memorable summits for all three of us, with the views our photographs did not give proper justice to. On top, we found a summit register with only signatures in it being those of the men who did the first documented ascent of the formation [Ed. note: Art Bacon and George Ripley; see pages 68 through



**Route of “Direct Southeast Face” on The Albatross.  
Photo by Vitaliy Musiyenko.**

74 of the 1970 American Alpine Journal]. Since then, it is believed at least two parties topped out on the incredible peak [Ed. note: Lorna Corson and Norm Larson via the east side of the South Face on July 20, 1993 {see page 146 of the 1995 AAJ}, and Katie Mills and Nick Pappas via “The Eye of Sauron” on the north buttress on July 12, 2016 {see the December 2016 Scree and page 132 of the 2017 AAJ}].

Long summer days allowed us to return to camp, make dinner, and fall asleep before it got dark; in mid-August it got dark for only a couple of hours. All three of us were physically beat from a tough three-day stretch, yet the following morning the weather was clear enough. A few hours after we got back from climbing The Albatross, we decided to load up on coffee and attempt the northwest face of Xanadu. Although we didn’t have the much-desired energy, we got over the two passes and to the base of the wall in good time. By then the wind had picked up and the clouds thickened, yet we found a 70-meter, five-star corner and climbed three-and-a-half more pitches before the first drops of rain with a healthy

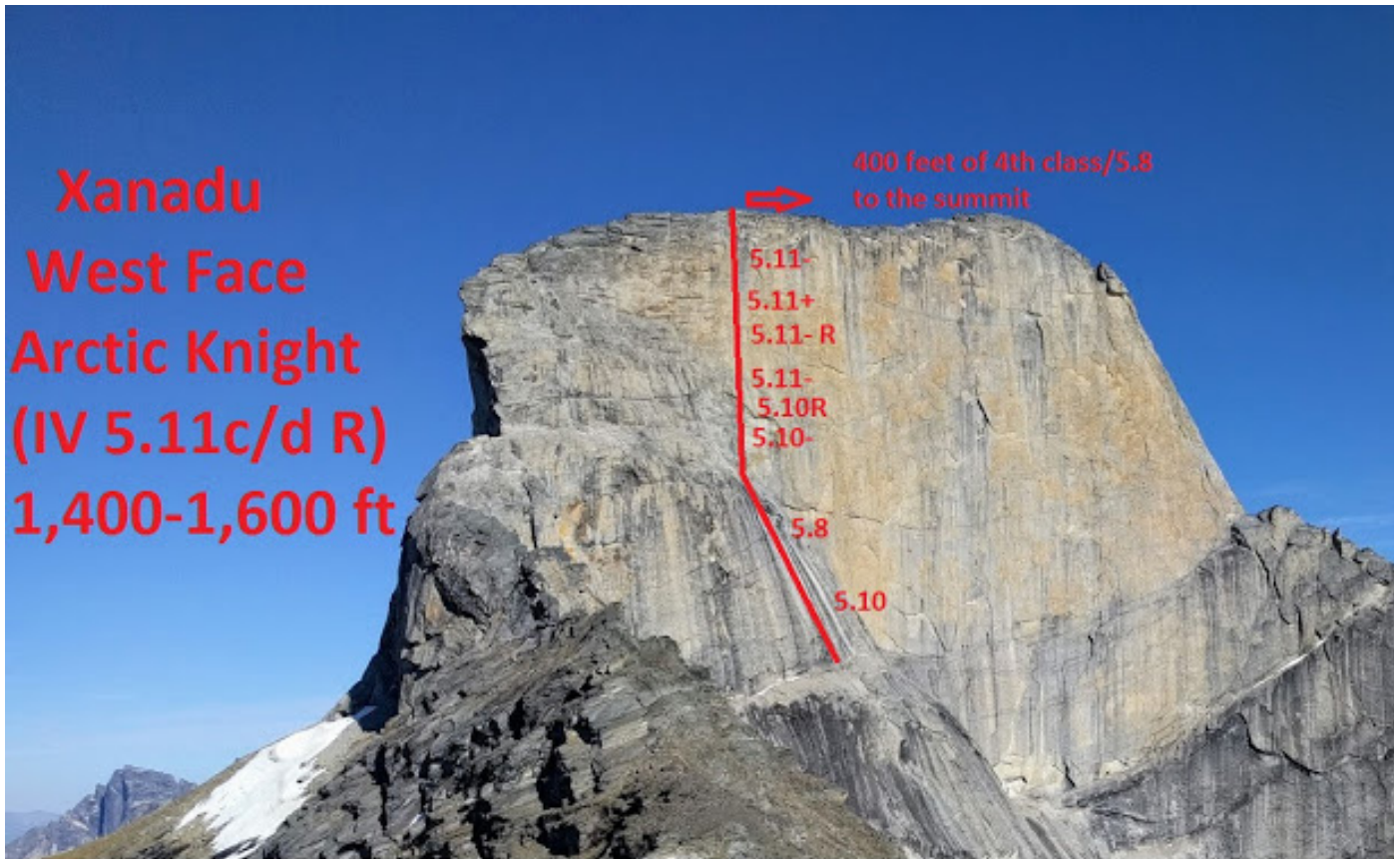
dose of arctic wind forced a retreat from about halfway up the wall.

After that, we were tent-bound due to intermittent rain. Without an accurate forecast and with our provisions running out, we could not come up with a great plan of action. Things were simplified after two days when we had only half a day’s worth of snacks and a dinner left. It was not raining that morning, but the clouds surrounded the mountains. We could have hiked out and bought another week’s worth of food from the airstrip or hiked 2,000 vertical feet over the pass, attempted to climb, and hiked out to the airstrip to get food after. We chose the latter.

Receiving the Mugs Stump Award inspired us to climb in the style we thought the late Mugs Stump would have preferred, one which would challenge us the most and allow the mountain a fair chance to defeat our attempts - alpine style, no fixed ropes, as little as possible fixed gear. Midway up the wall, the difficulties picked up. We were able to get past several runouts with potential for serious falls without placing bolts, and cruxes up to 5.11+ went free; most memorable was one that required finger lock camping over a big roof. Doing all that with frozen fingers and climbing in a whiteout provided more drama than most would want on a remote alpine route, but after about seven pitches of climbing, most of which were full 70 meters, we were standing on top of the wall and only had the final ridge traverse left to get to the summit. About 400 feet of simul-climbing took us to the top of the route we later dubbed the “Arctic Knight” (IV 5.11+ R). Although happy with the result, the thick clouds



**Northwest aspect of The Albatross. Photo by Vitaliy Musiyenko.**



Route of “Arctic Knight” on the West Face of Xanadu Peak. Photo by Zeb Engberg.

and freezing winds didn't allow us to see much or stay long. It was a shame the weather did not cooperate, as the wall had great rock and amazing climbing that would have been much more fun without screaming barfies. Because we had to get down from the wall, get down to camp, pack it, move it five miles down the valley, hike all the way out, pick up seven days worth of food, and hike back to camp, the true crux of this day was endurance and willpower. The last several hours were horrible, as we found our food cache at dusk and it started to rain heavily. By the time we returned to camp after sunrise, we were very tired, drenched and ready to ask grizzly bears to end our suffer-fest if we saw them nearby.

Unfortunately, our effort did not convince the weather gods to let us have a few more days of good weather to climb. Instead, I studied and got weather windows big enough to pick blueberries, which were actually very tasty! It rained for several days in a row and climbing was out of the question. The forecast for the following several days was horrible, too, so we asked our pilot to pick us up four days earlier than originally

planned. The stars aligned for us one more time - instead of sitting in a soggy tent, we hooked up with Brian's stepdad who had enough free time to take us flying in his small airplane and to take us salmon fishing for a few days. All of us had an amazing time, especially Adam and me since neither of us had ever caught fish that big. It was a great addition to our trip and I was happy to bring a few pounds of smoked salmon for my mom when I traveled home to the Central Valley through San Francisco. Even though we got only two O.K. climbing days, compared to my first trip to the final frontier, the full Alaska experience was outstanding. I appreciate the support of the Mugs Stump Award, my generous manager, great partners, challenging days in the mountains, blueberries, fishing, learning to operate a plane, and not getting eaten by a bear - we might have to plan another trip to Alaska! 📍

*[Editor's Note: Additional photos and information from the trip can be found at <https://vividrea1ity.blogspot.com/2017/09/a-trip-to-arrigetch-brooks-range-ak.html>.]*

# Peak 6402, Chigmit Mountains

## Expecting the Unexpected

**Text and photos by Joe Stock**

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**G**lenn, James, Paul and I needed an adventure. A place with no information. Where we could go and just see what happened. We asked our man Steve Gruhn for trip ideas. From a list of options, we picked a remote corner of the Neacola Mountains, a sub-range of the Aleutian Range. A region I'd neglected since 2011.

We didn't go to the Neacolas.

My wife refers to us as The Boys. Glenn Wilson is a retired geochemist from Oklahoma. This trip marked 20 years of mountaineering together. Our first trip was to Mount Baker in Washington. James Kesterson and I first climbed together on Denali, 15 years ago. James has retired from his wife's art gallery, and now adventures with her around the U.S. Paul Muscat is a neurologist from Maine who has an obsession with Arctic survival stories. Paul and I had our first trip 10 years ago to Mount Chamberlin in the Arctic Refuge. Since then, in various combinations, we've also been to Mount Marcus Baker, Mount Bona, Iliamna Volcano, Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Mount Logan, the central Talkeetna Mountains, Mount Isto, and now, somewhere in Alaska.

What ties us together is our love of remote mountains. But perhaps more so, is our ability to enjoy each other's company, for weeks in a row, in close quarters, especially when things are not going as planned.

So we had plans for the Neacolas. To climb some peaks with no information. On the first day, at Sportsman's Air Service at Lake Hood, we checked the FAA weather cameras with owner Joe Schuster. They showed marginal weather and no clear answer how to manage it. Schuster said, "It's your call." Arghh! That means I'd foot the bill for a botched flight. Flights to the middle of nowhere Alaska are not cheap. "It's your call," also means we'd be landing

somewhere, and having an adventure.

Sportsman's' main gig seems to be shuttling heli-skiers and supplies out to the Tordrillo Mountain Lodge in winter and shuttling hunters and supplies to lodges in summer. On the dock were pallets of skinned beaver carcasses, waiting to be transported to the lodges for bear-baiting. Despite the marginal weather, I jumped into the Super Cub with pilot Ben Knapp to scout the landing for the rest of the crew. As we entered the Neacolas the Cub bucked like a bronc in the pounding wind. Our first choice landing zone wasn't happening. Ben turned the Cub east, toward Cook Inlet, and we looked for another landing zone.

Things were not going as planned. Just the way I liked it.

As I've become adapted to the vagaries of Alaska backcountry, I've learned to enjoy selecting a base camp on the fly. Just looking out the window, pointing over the pilot's shoulder and saying into the headset, "Right there!" I've learned that trips are not supposed to go as planned in Alaska. If they went as planned, it wouldn't be an adventure. And it wouldn't be Alaska.

From the Cub window, I spotted a distant, broad, glacial ridge bathed in sunlight, surrounded by small peaks and the water of Cook Inlet below. Ben landed the Cub.

By some dose of luck, back at Lake Hood, minutes before getting on the plane, I downloaded a low-resolution map of the entire Neacola and Chigmit region onto my phone. When I located myself on the phone, I learned we were actually in the Chigmit Mountains, near the Double



**Glenn Wilson, James Kesterson, and Paul Muscat (right to left) ascend an unnamed glacier en route to attempting Double Peak.**





Joe Stock photo

**James Kesterson (left) and Glenn Wilson descend a ridge south of their camp. Double Peak is at center and Peak 6402 is at right.**

Glacier. Oh yeah!

For the next week we climbed peaks every day. All of them with no sign of humans. I didn't even get to practice Leave No Cairn tactics. Sometimes we could see the oil and gas platforms in Cook Inlet, looking lonely and isolated, like miniature versions of the North Sea platforms. Other places we could see the Drift River Oil Terminal, vulnerable and small in the volatile outwash of a semi-active Redoubt Volcano. But mostly we felt isolated. Way out there.

Although we climbed every day, it mostly rained and snowed and blew. I guess that's the necessary weather for 4000-foot mountains to be cloaked in thick glacier ice.

How did we manage the marginal weather? By utilizing our highly tuned BS-ing skills. Hours and hours of BS-ing. Like only longtime friends can do. We talked about trips we'd shared, projects at home, and war. I asked them about business. James told me, "The first rule of is business is get the money." Noted! If we ever lacked a topic, we could bring up our mortifying president and our pulse rates would elevate and our faces turn red with disgust. But then, if the static buzz of rain on nylon silenced, we'd jump out of the tent and go climbing. We lost count of the peaks we climbed. Many small bumps

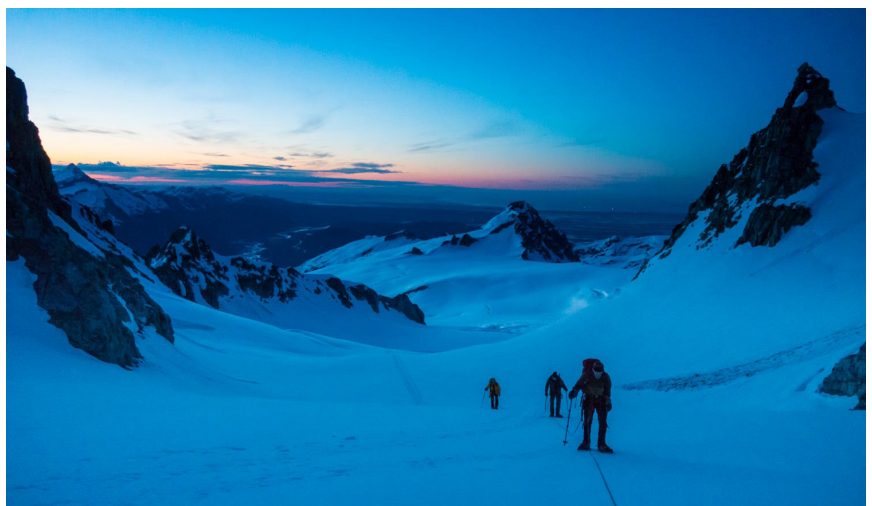
on ridges, but some stood high and isolated, surrounded by glacier.

Our most significant peak was the first known ascent of Peak 6402. From the summit we looked out on deep green valleys, distant cold glaciers, fog over the inlet, and nothing else. A feeling of remoteness that is normal for Alaska addicts, but intimidating for most mountaineers around the world. The feeling that you're on your own, and if you need a rescue, then you better start rescuing yourself.

On our last day we woke at 11:30 p.m. for a crack at Double Peak. At 6818 feet, Double Peak looked down on the entire region. We climbed to within a few hundred feet of the summit, but were pushed back by crevasses and avalanche conditions.

After a week of climbing many summits, and hours of fascinating conversation, we flew back to Anchorage over the Cook Inlet tidal wetlands and duck-hunting shacks.

I get nervous when I have multiple successful trips in a row. Like I'm going to jinx myself by having too much nice weather or good snow stability. With this trip, I learned that every trip is a success with best friends. Thank you, Glenn, James, and Paul. I can't wait until our next installment! 🕒



**Glenn Wilson, James Kesterson, and Paul Muscat (right to left) make a pre-dawn attempt on Double Peak.**

# Tetlin Peak (8365 feet), Southwest Face, and Peak 7040, Southeast Ridge

## Mentasta Mountains, Wrangell – Saint Elias National Preserve

**Text and photos by Dave Hart**

**T**etlin Peak is the highest peak in the Mentasta Mountains, and its 5215 feet of topographic prominence ranks 56th of Alaska's 64 ultra-prominent peaks. It is located at the headwaters of Lost Creek, accessed by a relatively easy 10-mile hike north from Mile 31 of the Nabesna Road in the Wrangell – Saint Elias National Park and Preserve. Interestingly, the USGS topographic map labels only nearby Noyes Mountain (8147 feet) along the entire 30-mile spine of the Mentasta Mountains, effectively ignoring Tetlin Peak's stature.

Paul Andrews and I were planning a trip to climb Mount Isto, highpoint of the Brooks Range, in July 2017. Weeks of Brooks Range storms had us looking for alternate plans. The Wrangell – Saint Elias area was forecast to be beautiful the first weekend of August, so we called my friend Dan Glatz to join us on a three-day climb up Tetlin Peak. Limited information on the peak added to its allure.

We left Anchorage after work on August 3, stopped for Tok Thai Food in Glennallen, and arrived at the trailhead

after six hours in time for a nice campfire before bed. The only casualty was driving my peak-baggin' minivan across Lost Creek and hitting the rear bumper on the steep cut-bank drop. The plastic side panels all popped off their clips, and the rear bumper and back-up light were dinged up a bit. Nothing that zip



**Our GPS track up Lost Creek to the western Peak 7040 and eastern Tetlin Peak. Our 4900-foot camp was at the track junction.**

ties couldn't fix back at home. The next morning we began our 8-mile hike to our camp at 9 a.m. The first six miles generally followed the ATV trail along Lost Creek with three calf-deep river crossings back and forth up Lost Creek. At Mile 6 (4000 feet) the canyon pinched closed, forcing us to ascend 400 feet up the left hillside to traverse above the narrow canyon walls. Easy sheep trails allowed access to the upper valley 1-1/4 miles upstream. Campsites were difficult to find in the steepening terrain. We ended up camping at 4900 feet, 400 feet above the valley floor at 3



**Paul Andrews and Dan Glatz five miles up Lost Creek. Tetlin Peak is the summit at right.**



**Dan Glatz crossing Lost Creek 5.5 miles from the car. Tetlin Peak visible just right of center.**

p.m., north of where the three Lost Creek tributaries join at Mile 8. We had a beautiful campsite with great views, though the nearest water was a 20-minute round-trip hike back to the valley floor.

We set up our two tents with views of both Tetlin Peak to the northeast and Peak 7040 to the northwest. As it was still early, Dan and I decided to hike up Peak 7040 before dinner. We took a water bottle and windbreaker and headed out around 4 p.m. Our goal was the southeast ridge. A quick descent to the easy creek crossing led to sometimes arduous scree up the final 2000 feet to the summit. By 5:30 p.m., we were on top, where we took photos and a quick nap. The views of Tetlin Peak, Noyes Mountain, and the entire Lost Creek/Trail Creek headwaters were impressive. We even had peek-a-boo views of the giant, glaciated Wrangell Mountains to the south. We made a quick descent down the huge scree fields and wandered back to camp by 7 p.m. for dinner. We were also treated to views of dozens of sheep in the upper valley throughout the afternoon and evening.

August 5 dawned perfect for our hike up Tetlin Peak. We started hiking around 9 a.m., hoping to intersect a water supply without descending to the creek bed. That was a poor decision. We ended up well above and beyond

any water, even though the USGS map showed the creek extending a mile farther up-valley. Young Dan offered to jog down valley half a mile to fill up all our bottles, while Paul and I sheepishly continued on, which was nice. Easy tundra travel transitioned to a loose rock glacier at 5500 feet. Two miles out of camp at 6600 feet Dan caught back up to us where the slope steepened to its natural angle of repose of approximately 40 degrees for the entire final 1700-foot climb to the summit. This unconsolidated scree rivaled the worst of our Chugach scree. We spent over two hours ascending this last half-mile. But, what a beautiful position we had. The higher we climbed the more giant, glaciated Wrangell Mountain peaks we could see to the south. We crested the summit at 1:30 p.m. in shorts and T-shirts without a breath of wind. It was the best weather day of the summer.

We spent 90 minutes on top enjoying the warm sunshine and views before heading down. The entire Wrangell Mountain giants popped before us including



**Dan Glatz heading up the lower southeast ridge of Peak 7040 on a bluebird afternoon. Camp was across the creek on the right.**

Mount Blackburn (16390 feet), Mount Jarvis (13421 feet), Mount Wrangell (14163 feet), Mount Sanford (16237 feet), and a host of smaller glaciated peaks on the Nabesna Icefield. The steep descent was not difficult, but we took great care not to trundle rocks on each other. We were somewhat reassured wearing our helmets. But our ice

axes and crampons seemed comical in our backpacks. We didn't know if we would be forced onto the glaciated north side of the peak and require these tools. We hated the thought of getting so close and failing due to lack of equipment.

We arrived back in camp at 6 p.m. in time for a big dinner. We lounged in camp until dark, then hit the sack. Sunday came with continued great weather, but we couldn't rest too much as we still had a six-hour drive back to Anchorage after we got back to the car. Our hike out was uneventful from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. We got back to the car, surprised at how hot it was. The van thermometer said 76 degrees.

Several hours later we stopped for a Mexican-food dinner at Ernesto's in Glennallen, where it topped 80 degrees as we sat outside in the sunshine. Our Alaskan summer had finally come, and gone, over a single weekend.



**Paul Andrews and Dan Glatz stop for lunch at 8000 feet on the upper southwest face of Tetlin Peak. Camp was on the grassy bench at the outlet of the valley below. Mount Wrangell (14163 feet) and Mount Sanford (16237 feet) are visible in the distance.**

The Mentasta Mountains are a fun, remote, and uncrowded gem to explore. Spending a few more days climbing other peaks in the area, and continuing the loop hike out Trail Creek would be a great add-on to an already wonderful trip.

GPS track for Tetlin Peak and Peak 7040: <http://peakbagger.com/climber/ascent.aspx?aid=844471>.

Additional photos and videos from our trip: [https://www.facebook.com/david.hart.988926/media\\_set?set=a.1545099008843787.1073741877.10000311085926&type=3](https://www.facebook.com/david.hart.988926/media_set?set=a.1545099008843787.1073741877.10000311085926&type=3).

The National Park Service has several helpful handouts on Lost Creek, Trail Creek, and other trails accessible along the Nabesna Road: <https://www.nps.gov/wrst/planyourvisit/nabesna-road-trails.htm>.

Additional references can be found in the September 2007 *Scree* where Wayne Todd described a five-day traverse of Tetlin Peak with Carrie Wang by the Lost Creek and Trail Creek loop. The October 1972 *Scree* had a trip report from John Michaud, documenting how he and Jim Carter climbed Noyes Mountain. 📍



**Dan Glatz and Paul Andrews just below the summit of Tetlin Peak, looking northwest to Noyes Mountain.**

# The Unicorn and Pegasus, Peak 5850, and Peak 5250

Kenai Mountains, August 5-7, 2017

Text and photos by Wayne L Todd

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**W**hile searching for new peaks to climb, I find The Unicorn. Who wouldn't want to climb The Unicorn? Working on access and routes, the obvious route (#2) is up Falls Creek (near Moose Pass) and then a loop of twin Peaks 5850, then Peak 5250, then Unicorn. I climbed west 5850 in 2000 with Kathy Still and a young Az Sellers.

Remembering that bicycles didn't seem extremely useful on my previous trip, Carrie Wang and I opt for boot hiking all the way during our three-day trip August 5 through 7, 2017. We leave the parking area\* by the railroad tracks after 6 p.m. In contrast to many of the Matanuska Valley all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trails, this one is in excellent shape and well signed (due to being an old mining road and work by the U.S. Forest Service). As we steadily gain elevation, glances into the neighboring brush really makes us appreciate trails. Just before the end of the ATV section (Mile 3), two younger males sporting athletic clothing drive down on an ATV.

At the "No ATVS ..." sign we take the "obvious" straight-ahead trail (whoops), dismissing the hard-right and down-left trails. This trail soon dissipates into alpine. We continue on as the traveling is quite reasonable, minus short, sporadic mini-willow and alder patches and "it's just not that far up the valley." Whilst crossing a grassy field, we decide to stop due to the hour and proximity to a clear stream. Falls Creek is silty. Evening light on Peak 5250 and The Unicorn is dreamy, but I'm visually scouting for an obvious route on the latter.

An early-morning start has us rain-gearred, dew-'shwhacking fairly serious brush (BW3), which I find highly annoying, partly because I have a nagging feeling there's a trail around somewhere. We cross Falls Creek, but find the brush no better (alders, cow parsnip ...). Some of the upper foliage is photo-opportunistic though: Sitka burnet backed by false hellebore and ferns. The plan quickly modifies to climb vertically to exit the brush zone. Whippets are such a



Carrie Wang and some old mining equipment.

useful tool for steep, vegetated terrain.

The next major feature is the looming summit (false summit #1, actually). Knowing the elevations keeps expectations in check. We temporarily move a three-goat family from their perch. After two false summits and three and a half hours from camp, we take a long break on west Peak 5850. Views range from mellower ridge-possible hikes to the west, to serious snow-only practical climbs to the east and south.

The register I left in 2000 is filled with water and even the Ziploc has water. Surprisingly, the pages (including a "3-D") dry out nicely. I suspect the paper-lined lid is the culprit, so remove the remaining paper. Only two other parties have signed in since 2000. One of them is Ranger Tom Graham who left his phone number (censored,

you'll have to climb the peak to get the number) and the quote, "Any woman who makes it up here is hot, give me a call." I know of at least two, and they're both partnered.

The hiking to the east summit of Peak 5850 is slowed from loose round rock and "slicer" rock, and sufficiently steep, that we avoid potential trips. Just below



**Carrie Wang descending Peak 5850 (east). Peak 5250 is in the foreground at right.**

east Peak 5850, an odd large pile of rock rests below a small ice sculpting. A brief break on top includes more expansive peak views and a register drop.

The traveling surface improves beyond and at the first saddle, segues to excellent and then even a trail, at some point with a boot track (the ATV guys?). Two bluish lakes dot the gray bowl below our right. The closer we travel to Peak 6050 (Trident Peak), the more impressive and daunting it becomes. Perhaps it has been climbed from the Snow River side? *[Editor's note: See the October 1969 Scree for a report of the first ascent of Trident Peak.]*

On Peak 5250 we are glad to put the Peak 5850

ridge well behind us. The day is still gorgeous; the breeze is pleasant, but we're now light on water. The drop to the west saddle is easy and quick. The deep valleys surrounding us look beautiful, but I suspect would be nightmares to travel.

The Unicorn is now only 1.5 miles distant, and 1200 feet of gain. Gotta do it. The first ridge section is good traveling on large rock with vertical stacked sides. And a water pool by snow! Excellent. A drop in the saddle leads to steeper traveling, which requires working both sides of the ridge. Ptarmigan Lake sparkles from below. An earlier plan was to climb The Unicorn from the lake, but that would be serious, sustained steepness for thousands of feet. Numerous places where we think we're blocked, there's always a reasonable sneak. There is some disparity between the 100-foot contour map and reality.

A lone goat on the shaded side is not concerned about us slow bipeds. And poor guy(?), he's radio collared and dual ear tagged. I hope he's not an outcast from all his jewelry. Another off-ridge traverse and then, yes! Easy walking down to a saddle below the summit. We traverse to intersect a natural up "trail," actually a geological stairway, but the angle is less than seen from afar, due to foreshortening.

I'm psyched to be on The Unicorn. Fantastic views (now including Kenai Lake) and good weather, and it's not that late in the day. I joyously unfurl my Pegasus (scarf) on The Unicorn. Carrie is more excited about finding a direct way off toward camp, so she scouts down the ridge. We know the north side is a serious cliff.



**Carrie Wang approaching Peak 5250.**



**The Unicorn from the east.**

The glass-jar register lid is rusted on. With Carrie's help we barely get it open. The contents inside are mostly dry, even from 1985 (perhaps old tech registers are better). I lip-balm the lid, so I'm hopeful it will be more open-able for the next party.

We're still not sure the west/direct route will go, but we bite and head northwest down the ridge next to a serious cliff. We're hoping a partially viewed gully will go. If not, maybe the sub-ridge just north of that. If not, we're hiking back up and reversing the ridge.

At the gully we find continuous snow, but fairly steep snow. That would be great if we had crampons and not Kahtoolas, an axe in addition to the Whippet, and helmets. I initially kick steps, using both Whippet and de-basketed pole, which works well in soft snow, but the snow quickly gets firmer. We can possibly use the rock snow interface in sections but ... Carrie takes over and intensely kicks steps. We slowly work our way down, mostly on snow, some snow



**The exit valley.**

rock interfaces, and don't move directly below one another. After some tense minutes we're down to jumbled rock. Whew! Hiking out this rock-covered remnant glacier, it looks like the sub-ridge would have gone as well.

The temperature increases as we descend and shade becomes preferred to direct sunlight. Our glistening tent from below comes into view. A possible trail is viewed on this side of the gorge, but the alpine traversing is pleasant enough, so we stay high until no longer practical. Monkshood are prolific.

Dropping to leveler terrain and brush, we stumble upon a good trail. We follow this lickety-split back to the grass field our tent occupies. After creek rinses and dinner, we snuggle into bags.

Early morning we awake, expecting rain or seriously cloudy skies as per forecast, but instead it's bluebird.

We hike the dewed good trail all the way out to the ATV trail. This is the left branch when facing up-valley at the sign. Serious large, metal/iron pieces of grader blades, pulley wheels and such are slowly getting vegetated alongside the left trail. Our only human encounter is a middle-aged-plus miner-looking man riding up trail on a low, wide-tired motorcycle.

**Ingress:** 2-1/2 hours, 4.5 miles, 2100 feet

**Loop day:** 12+/13- hours, 9+ miles, 5900 feet

**Egress:** 2-1/4 hours (seriously, I can't believe it's only 1/4 hour faster than our ingress).

\*Turn east from the Seward Highway onto Solars Road in Crown Point, cross the tracks, park next to brush. Walk the road a few hundred yards to the "No Parking" trailhead. Don't take any alternate trails along the way, such as Ptarmigan Lake or Crown Point Mine. (A fence just beyond the trailhead is made of repurposed structured timber with threaded wood spikes. If anyone knows the original use I would also like to know).

Most efficient loop: stay on upper valley trail as long as practical then cut perpendicular across valley and climb up, or reverse. 📍

# Kenai Mountains Traverse - Fueled by Pizza, Peachy-O's and a Giant Gu

September 4, 2017 (Labor Day), 18.2 miles, 11,100 feet, 8.5 hours

Text by Joe Nyholm

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After two solid weeks of rain in Seward, I was making plans to escape the rain on a long weekend when Miles Knotek had the idea of a Kenai Mountains traverse. This area has intrigued me for a long time due to growing up in Hope for 10 years and the fact that I have run the Resurrection 50- and 100-mile races multiple times and always thought the ridges looked heavenly. Miles also just ran his first 50-miler, so was used to long, fast pushes in the mountains. The third member of our party was Lars Arneson, who earlier this year set the record on the Chugach Front Range 5000-foot Peak Linkup in 18 hours (crazy fast!).

Our day started very promisingly with blue skies on the drive from Seward to Hope. We left a car at Summit Creek and had Miles' dad drop us off at the end of Palmer Creek Road. From there our day of elevation change began; we started up to a bowl on the south side of Peak 4350 and two turquoise blue alpine lakes. We continued south up into another bowl and planned to ascent the eastern scree field to begin our ridge traverse. In that bowl, we ran into a stone built throne and what looked like a sacrificial altar. Creepy!

From the ridge, we traversed to Peak 4851 along a steep glacier-carved bowl. It was also there that we ran into a constant westerly wind and saw incoming clouds that would ruin our blue-sky day. The travel along the ridge to Frenchy Peak (5079 feet) was fun and straightforward, although rockier than we expected (a theme that would continue). With the clouds, we only had to double-check our maps once when we found a glacier that we hadn't expected to come across.

From Frenchy Peak we were in and out of clouds until Robinson Mountain (4750 feet), although we did manage to spot a plane crash site. At that point



Foggy ridge climb near Frenchy Peak. Photo by Miles Knotek

the clouds left us and we gained a spectacular view of the Pass Creek drainage and the somewhat ominous looking north face of Double Top North Peak (4650 feet). The next peak on the ridge was also 4750 feet high and the ridge was a fun near-vertical cliff on the north side and had many goat-bed outcroppings as we made our way forward.

The next section of ridge was where we saw all of the wildlife we would see on the trip, a black bear and two goats on opposite sides of the ridge we traversed. That was also the section where Miles found two caribou sheds



Looking northeast toward Robinson Mountain from Peak 4750, with Caribou Creek on the left and Pass Creek on the right. Photo by Joe Nyholm



and tied them to his pack and looked somewhat like a ninja with them on his back. There the ridge travel ended temporarily as we had to cross the pass over to Double Top North Peak. That was arguably the hardest part of the trip, as it was a 2,000-foot climb on mossy tundra slopes where the tundra would rip away and have us slide back a step or two. We managed to avoid the north face, but still encountered a brutally steep boulder field near the top. At the summit we encountered a substantial summit cairn.

It was at that point where one of my decisions came back to haunt me. Due to climbing up Eagle Peak two days prior, I was not totally prepared gear- or food-wise for this trip; I grabbed the only food I could find on the way out of the house, a giant 15-serving size monster Gu! Fortunately (or unfortunately) it was my favorite flavor, salted caramel. I have to point out that this was not my usual choice, as I have run a few ultra-marathons and I usually tend toward real foods. Lars' choice of food seemed to be a never-ending supply of pizza, and Miles chose to be fueled by Peachy-O's. Needless to say, the Gu was starting to not sit well and was turning into a huge gut bomb, but we pushed on.

From Double Top North Peak we finally put our



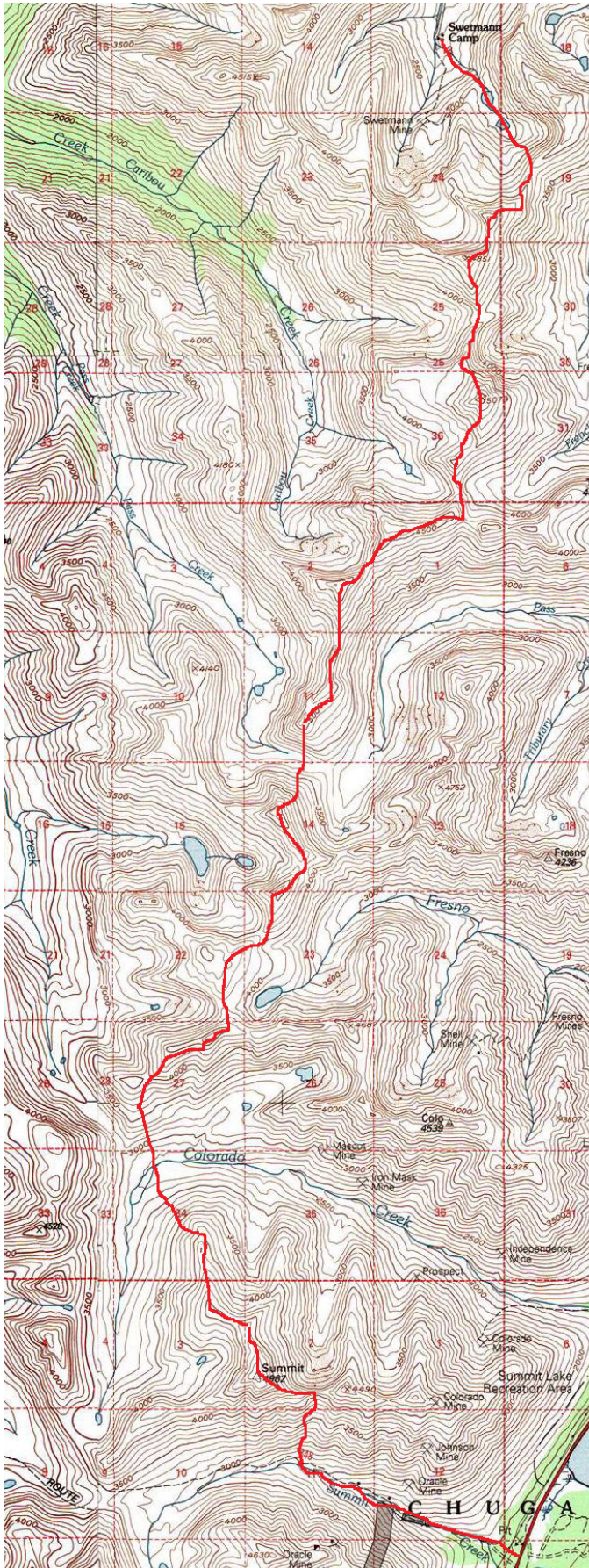
**Grassy rolling ridge running. Photo by Joe Nyholm**

wind gear on and had an easy ridge walk on talus to Double Top South Peak (4650 feet). Next, we decided to descend and side-hill over to the next Peak 4750. That was an easy section and gave us our first water source on the route. That was the most rugged peak on the route and consisted of three craggy summits with overhanging peaks that looked like they would fall apart if any weight was added to them.

From there we had to make a decision of where to cross Colorado Creek. Because Miles put the trip together,

**Ridge above the Pass Creek drainage. Photo by Miles Knotek**





Palmer Creek to Summit traverse route.



Looking down into the Fresno Creek Drainage.  
Photo by Lars Arneson.

we let him choose the point. I was hesitant, though, because previously in the summer I had gotten a taste of Miles' route-finding skills on a heinous bushwhack off of Goat Mountain that involved lots of alder rappelling. But this time the crossing into brush line was high enough that we could piece together a brush-free route.

The next climb was our last, but it ended up being our biggest, and it started out with a near 50-degree grassy-slope climb. The rest of the climb to Mount Summit (4982 feet) was milder and flew by. At the summit we found a broken register and a wooden star platform. At that point we were all tired (except maybe Lars) and chose to take the ridge toward the Seward Highway until we found a decently soft scree field. The scree brought us to the Summit Creek Trail, which we were able to run out to the highway relatively quickly.

Overall it was a great day in some new territory. Although some of the summits around there had no history of being climbed or proof of previous ascents, it is hard to believe they were unclimbed due to the number of mines in the area. And I now hate caramel-flavored Gu. 📍



Peak 4750 above Colorado Creek and Fox Creek.  
Photo by Joe Nyholm.

# Heritage Falls Trail Maintenance

## Eagle River Valley, Western Chugach Mountains

Text and images by Dave Hart

Chugach State Park offers a wealth of hiking and climbing opportunities. However, the number and distance of officially maintained trails is relatively small compared to the almost 500,000 acres of Park land. With the exception of the Anchorage Front Range trails, easy access is generally limited to the Eklutna Lakeside Trail, Peters Creek Trail, Crow Pass Trail, South Fork Eagle River Trail, Indian Valley Trail, and Bird Valley Trail. This limited trail network preserves the wilderness feeling of the Park, and many would suggest adds to the value of the Park.

For those looking to climb some of the 120 peaks in the Park (defined by 500-foot prominence), especially the larger ones off the beaten path, the limited trail system can pose a challenge. In my early years I bushwhacked up my fair share of valleys to reach some of the bigger peaks. But the more time one spends in the Park, the more one learns of historic hunter, climber, and game trails. This

unofficial and unmaintained trail network makes access to many valleys and peaks far less daunting. Dishwater Creek, Icicle Creek, Twin Falls Creek, Watchman Valley, East Fork of the Eklutna River, and other valleys have unofficial trails that make access far easier.

Heritage Falls is another one of these high-mountain access points for Polar Bear Peak (6614 feet), Organ Mountain (6980 feet), and my nemesis Compass Butte (5390 feet). I coordinated a day hike with Per Pedersen, Dan Glatz, and Gerrit Verbeek to clear brush from this Heritage Falls trail on October 28, 2017. Five years prior Per, J.T. Lindholm, and I made a similar trail clearing foray. It seems that a five-year cycle is the appropriate span to keep the alders and deadfall at bay.

We left the Eagle River Nature Center by headlamp in the 7 a.m. darkness. By 8:50 a.m. we were crossing the frigid calf-deep Eagle River, 5-1/2 miles upstream of the Nature Center. After a quick snack, we put our loppers and hand saws to work. The trail followed the right (west) side of Organ Creek for several hundred yards before veering right

(west) into the forest. We followed the existing, yet overgrown, flagged and cut trail the entire distance, adding additional orange flagging and cutting countless alders and several deadfall from the path. At 1000 feet elevation, the trail turned left (south) and climbed steeply for another mile to timberline just above 2000 feet. Eventually, the trail led to grassy slopes above, which we followed to around 2700 feet before traversing left (southeast) back toward the Organ Glacier valley.

Be aware that this final steep half mile of the route is good in the summer or fall, but in winter and spring is likely to be snow loaded and potentially dangerous from avalanches. My several previous



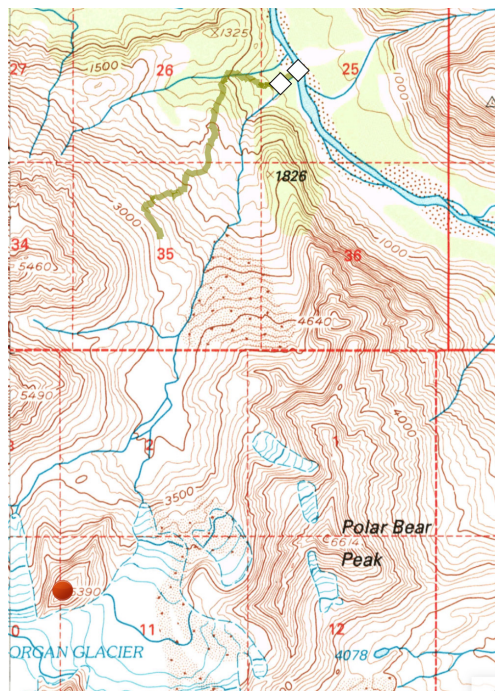
GoogleEarth image looking southwest into the Organ Creek drainage. GPS track marking the brushed Heritage Falls Trail.

spring ski trips into the Organ Glacier valley found me leaving this route around 2000 feet and contouring through the brush left (southeast) directly to the Organ Glacier valley lower than the route shown in the attached map.

Our total distance from Eagle River to our high point was just under two miles and 2100 feet of elevation gain. We spent seven hours, round-trip, clearing trees, alders, and brush both going up and coming down the Heritage Falls trail, plus the two hours hiking each way to and from the Nature Center. We got back down to Eagle River at 4 p.m., and back to our car at 6 p.m. after 11 hours and 15 miles of travel.

This newly brushed trail should make spring and summer ascents of Polar Bear Peak less daunting at least for a couple years until Mother Nature starts taking back the trail.

I've uploaded our Heritage Falls trail GPS track here: <http://peakbagger.com/climber/ascent.aspx?aid=890227>. 📍



GPS track marking the brushed Heritage Falls Trail.

# Peak 4850, Rock Creek, Whistle Ridge

## Amphitheater Mountains, Alaska Range

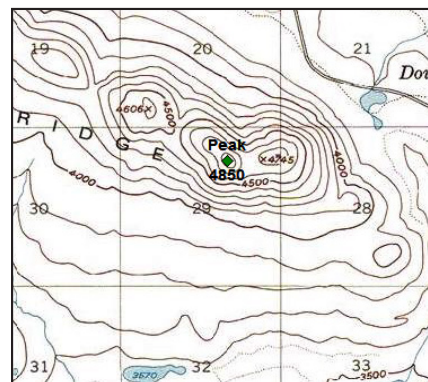
**Text by Steve Gruhn**

On the morning of Monday, September 18, I left Mile 30 of the Denali Highway for a quick jaunt up Peak 4850 on the east end of Whistle Ridge. In September 2016 I had climbed Peak 4716 on the west end of Whistle Ridge with Dave Hart and his son Tate (see the October 2016 Scree) and at that time I looked four miles to the east and contemplated climbing Peak 4850.

I was on the Denali Highway with a brief opportunity to stretch my legs, so I started from near Mile 30 of the Denali Highway where a bend in the highway came close to Whistle Ridge about a mile and a half west of Downwind Lake. The elevation at the highway was about 3775 feet. Hiking through the willow-studded tundra was pretty quick. I headed for a rock field that was visible from the highway. The rocks were easy enough to cross at first, but as I began hiking up steeper slopes, my pace slowed to prevent myself from twisting an ankle. A band of white rocks stretched across the face just below the ridge crest. I aimed for the right side of that white band. Just over a half hour from leaving the highway I was on the broad, level, rock-strewn summit. Two large cairns – one overlooking the north face and one overlooking the south – were present. I didn't observe a register in either cairn, but I didn't dismantle or extensively investigate them.

The views of the snow-dusted Amphitheater Mountains, High Valley, Glacier Gap Lake, and Phalarope Lake captivated me. Osar Lake gleamed to the southwest. A gentle breeze kept the white socks at bay. Wilderness spread out in all directions. I reveled in the beauty and the experience.

All too soon, though, I headed downward and retraced my route to the highway, having stretched my legs and gotten my heart pumping and blood flowing. If only every Monday morning could get off to such a wonderful start. 📍



# Clean

## Science Glacier, Chugach Mountains

**Text by Leah Fortson**

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I recall looking down the Science Glacier in the Chugach Mountains. This is where I first learned to climb. The first moment I roped up for glacier travel and the first time I swung an ice tool. It was also the first time I stepped over a crevasse, saw a teammate punch through and lunged back to self-arrest, and the first time I cried in fear on a mountain. These Chugach Mountains taught me self-confidence, peace, and humility. For the past few years, I've feared I changed them.

It hasn't escaped me that, though I love wild spaces, my daily habits harm them. This feels unfair and at times impossible to resolve. I fly across the country for school. I shop at grocery stores. I buy disposable items. Every day I work to make adjustments, but it seems inconceivable to meaningfully minimize my resource footprint. Should I drop out of school so I have time to



**Evening light on the Science Glacier. Photo by Leah Fortson.**

grow my own food? Should I not visit family over holidays or change to a degree program in-state? It seems that inevitably my life will melt the glaciated spaces I most love. The valley where I first tied in.

I can only hope that awareness of my actions will lead to intentional decisions and eventually larger change. For example, remembering the new hoodie I want takes 175 liters of water to manufacture and also remembering the elation I feel each summer seeing salmon return to healthy streams. Perhaps one day I will prioritize zero-air travel and no packaging, but for now I console myself by smiling at the tiny positive impacts I do make. But I still wonder and know that this isn't enough. 🌱



**On the Science Glacier viewing east, down Mount Fafnir's upper slopes, with Mount Haley on the right. Photo courtesy of Leah Fortson.**

# Peak of the Month: Peak A-111

By Steve Gruhn

<b>Mountain Range</b>	Alaska Range; Hayes Range
<b>Borough</b>	Unorganized Borough
<b>Drainages</b>	Northeast Fork of the Susitna Glacier and Turkey Glacier
<b>Latitude/Longitude</b>	63° 33' 45" North, 146° 46' 26" West
<b>Elevation</b>	8550 feet (± 50 feet)
<b>Prominence</b>	1130 feet from Peak 8930 in the North Fork of the Susitna Glacier and Turkey Glacier drainages
<b>Adjacent Peaks</b>	Peak 8930 and Peak 8451 in the North Fork of the Susitna Glacier and Turkey Glacier drainages
<b>Distinctness</b>	820 feet from Peak 8451
<b>USGS Maps</b>	1:63,360: Mount Hayes (C-6), 1:25,000: Mount Hayes C-6 SW
<b>First Recorded Ascent</b>	This peak might be unclimbed.


In the 1960s Vin Hoeman wrote the rough draft of a book about the mountains of Alaska and the Yukon Territory. After Hoeman died in an avalanche on Dhaulagiri on April 30, 1969, leaving the book unfinished, his widow, Grace Hoeman, took up the task and worked toward completing the book. Upon her death in an avalanche near the Eklutna Glacier on April 12, 1971, work on the manuscript ceased. For over 30 years the unpublished manuscript languished in the MCA's Vin Hoeman Library. Eventually, the MCA donated the manuscript to the University of Alaska Anchorage/Alaska Pacific University Consortium Library where it is now housed in the archives and special collections section.

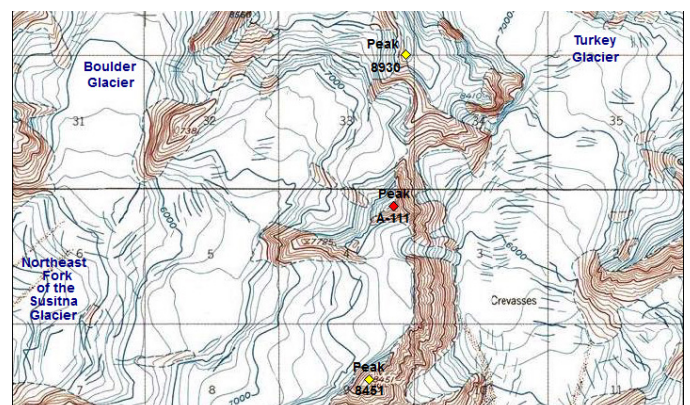
Among other topics, Hoeman's unpublished manuscript identified a few hundred unclimbed peaks that he thought would be worthy of an ascent. Because the number of such prominent peaks was large, he cataloged them by mountain range and incorporated the first letter of that range into his naming scheme.

One of the peaks Vin Hoeman identified as worthy of climbing was a sharp 8550-foot summit in the Northeast Fork of the Susitna Glacier and Turkey Glacier drainages of the Hayes Range, a sub-range of the Alaska Range. He called this mountain Peak A-111, the first letter being a reference to the Alaska Range. Hoeman wrote that Peak A-111 was a small, but sharp, peak that offered ice routes from the west and could be climbed in conjunction

with Peak A-110 (a 10910-foot summit now called Bricole Peak on bivouac.com) by a southern approach, but would be best early in the year, as the Susitna Glacier was heavily crevassed (referencing David S. Roberts' report of Don Cook Jensen's crevasse fall on the Susitna Glacier).

More than 48 years after Vin Hoeman's death, I do not know of a single attempt to climb Peak A-111. Yours could be the first.

The information for this column came from Vin Hoeman's unpublished manuscript archived in the Grace and John Vincent Hoeman papers at the UAA/APU Consortium Library; from <https://bivouac.com//MtnPg.asp?MtnId=35736>; and from David S. Roberts' report titled "Alaska - Hayes Range," which appeared on pages 21 through 23 of the 1965 *Accidents in North American Mountaineering*. 



**Where can you get a 'thumbs' up' from your climb?  
Stay tuned to the next *Scree* issue to find out!  
Photo by Wayne L. Todd.**



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**Adam Ferro and Brian Prince  
on the sub-summit of The  
Albatross. Photo by Vitaliy  
Musiyyenko.**

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