Canadian Alpine Journal

2022


no room for error
Elevating the standard
of outdoor equipment.
MOUNTAIN
HARD
WEAR

Mountain Equipment Company

Emma Contaoe
MEC Climbing Ambassador

Photo: Ted Hesser | Fitz Traverse, El Chaltén, Argentina

In extreme environments—where each foot needs to be placed with caution, every move executed flawlessly—there is no “just because.” Every step of Mountain Hardwear’s design process is approached as if it’s a matter of life and death. Because to the climbers who use this equipment, that’s exactly what it is.

MOUNTAIN HARDWEAR®

Patrons of the Journal

— PATRON —

MEC

www.mec.ca

— BENEFACTOR —

MOUNTAIN HARDWEAR

www.mountainhardwear.ca

— PARTNER —

ARC'TERYX

www.arcteryx.com

— SUPPORTER —

Banff Mountain Film & Book Festival

www.banffmountainfestivals.ca

— FRIENDS —

The Eric Brooks Memorial Fund

Donald C. Morton

Mike Wild

Roger Wallis

Peter Muir & Shona Connelly

— CONTRIBUTING ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA SECTIONS —

Vancouver

Saskatchewan

Manitoba

Vancouver Island

Ottawa

Thunder Bay

Toronto

Whistler

Prince George

Montréal

Edmonton

Okanagan

Squamish

Saint Boniface

Outaouais

The Canadian Alpine Journal

Volume 105, 2022

Features

Cover: Alik Berg nears the summit of Mount Logbard during the first ascent of Bogdar in the St. Elias Mountains. Photo: Maarten van Haeren

Previous Page: Base camp on the rapidly melting sea ice of Inuksuit Fiord on Baffin Island. Photo: Erik Boomer

Table of Contents: Ryan Richardson (leading) and Dylan Cunningham on pitch two of Diamonds are Forever on Mount Louis in the Canadian Rockies. Photo: Craig McGee

Back Cover: Sarah McNair-Landry approaches Nuksuklorolu Pinnacles in Inuksuit Fiord on Baffin Island. Photo: Erik Boomer

Contents

The Canadian Alpine Journal, Volume 105, 2022

ISSN 0068-8207 — Copyright 2022 The Alpine Club of Canada

EDITOR — Sean Isaac
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR — Jacqueline Louie
COPY EDITOR — Lynn Martel
FRENCH EDITOR — Anne Ryall
LAYOUT & PRODUCTION — Zac Bolan

The opinions and information contained in the *Canadian Alpine Journal* are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the positions of either the editor or The Alpine Club of Canada. While we attempt to check the articles for accuracy as best we can, it is not possible to do so authoritatively in all cases. Please use caution regarding ratings, route information, etc.

INSTRUCTIONS TO CONTRIBUTORS

The *Canadian Alpine Journal* welcomes contributions in English or French. Submissions can be made via email to **caj@alpineclubofcanada.ca**. For further information on submitting text and photos, please refer to the guidelines at **www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/CAJ**.
Submission deadline is February 1, 2023

ACC Board of Directors

President — Isabelle Daigneault
Secretary — Richard Campbell
Treasurer — Cam Deller
Vice-President, Access & Environment — Lael Parrott
Vice-President, Activities — Frank Spears
Vice-President, Facilities — Jim Gudjonson
Vice-President, Mountain Culture — Zac Robinson
Vice-President, Sections — Steve Traversari
Vice-President, Services & Athletics — Toby Harper-Merrett
Honorary President — David Toole
Executive Director — Carine Salvy

For information about ACC sections, please visit:
www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/sections/

The Alpine Club of Canada
P.O. Box 8040, Canmore, Alberta T1W 2T8

PRINTED IN CANADA

Editorial

Captain and Crew

THIS IS MY 15TH YEAR as captain of the *SS CAJ*, and what a voyage it has been steering this majestic vessel. Did you know that *The Canadian Alpine Journal* is our country's second-longest-running publication after Maclean's magazine? A flagship of the Alpine Club of Canada, the *CAJ* is a permanent record of domestic climbing. Its pages represent the ACC's commitment to document all things that pertain to Canadian mountain culture, including exploration, science, history and art. The collection of adventures within each journal are a marvel that have remained afloat despite world wars, depressions, pandemics and, the most threatening of all, the digital age.

The *CAJ* is a vital conduit between writer and reader, adventurer and audience. As editor, I have the honour and privilege to bring the stories of modern-day explorers to life. When I stepped into this role in 2007, I thought I would be here for five years, maybe 10 tops. Well, was I ever wrong! A decade and a half later, I still very much enjoy the process of contacting contributors, collecting submissions, editing stories, sorting images, proofing layouts and revelling in the finished product.

Like a ship, the *Journal* depends on an experienced and qualified crew to ensure smooth sailing. I am very fortunate to have such a team in my copy editors, graphic designers and proof readers. Among that team, kudos must be paid to one crew member in particular—Helen Rolfe. Helen has been the contributing editor from day one of my job. I relied heavily upon her skill and expertise as a professional copy editor, and I have learned more about the English language from working with her than in all my schooling. After 14 years of sleepless nights worrying about *CAJ* commas, Helen has stepped down from her role as second-in-command to pursue other opportunities. I will be forever grateful for her support and guidance. We all owe Helen a huge debt of gratitude for her years of commitment to the *CAJ*.

As Helen departs, Jacqueline Louie steps forward to assist me at the helm, and together with Zac Bolan (layout and production), Anne Ryall (French editor) and Lynn Martel (copy editor), we will continue to navigate the *SS CAJ* through the uncharted seas of Canadian mountaineering.

—Sean Isaac

The Alpine Club of Canada's National Office is located on Treaty 7 territory and on the traditional lands of the Stoney Nakoda Nations of Wesley, Chiniki and Bearspaw; the three nations of the Blackfoot Confederacy—the Pikani, Kainai and Siksika; and the Tsuu T'ina of the Dene people. Treaty 7 territory is also shared with the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III. Before the signing of Treaty 7 and prior to the establishment of provincial boundaries, this region was also used by the Ktunaxa and the Maskwacis peoples. *The Canadian Alpine Journal* acknowledges the past, present and future generations of these Nations who help us steward this land, as well as honour and celebrate this place. The *CAJ* further acknowledges and recognizes that the activities of the ACC reaches across all of Canada's First Nations, Métis Homelands and Inuit Nunangat, and for this we are grateful.

In the Spirit of
JOHN LAUCHLAN

Maarten van Haeren

Alik Berg on the first ascent of the southeast face of Hubsew Peak. Photo: Maarten van Haeren

Advanced base camp on the Seward Glacier below the south face of Mount Logan before the attempt on I-TO. Photo: Maarten van Haeren

"Can we go yet?!" one of us asked during our forced isolation. No storm-bound tents here, but a COVID-19 pandemic still in full swing. Our trip to the Yukon started with a 14-day quarantine in Whitehorse, after a two-vehicle convoy from Canmore in early April, 2021. During our Whitehorse stay, the weather had turned from –30 C to an amazing high-pressure window, with no end in sight. Fortunately, the Yukon quarantine only required us to remain within the city limits and outside of dwellings, which allowed for plenty of fresh air and time to go running and skiing. During this time, we were able to prepare our food using curbside pickups, resulting in excellent basecamp meals weeks later. As it turns out, quarantine is also a great way to prepare a team for spending six weeks together on a glacier.

With the John Lauchlan Memorial Award limiting the 2021 award to Canadian objectives, we applied for and received a grant for an expedition to the east side of Mount Logan, Canada's highest summit. As Canada's only expedition fund specific to alpine style climbing, the John Lauchlan Memorial Award has supported many expeditions to the Greater Ranges as well as within Canada, including several expeditions to the Hubbard Glacier (1998 and 2000). Early in 2021, Alik Berg, Ethan Berman, Pete Hoang and I had agreed to still partake in the trip, even if a quarantine was required in Whitehorse. However, we had not taken into account the possibility of good weather during our quarantine, or our ensuing eagerness. In the St. Elias Mountains, any good weather opportunities are either time to climb or time to fly. The idea of quarantining away this good flying weather really started to gnaw at us around day 11. Our schedule of getting up late and going to bed late was liberally applied during the remainder of the trip.

In addition to our firm belief in fast-and-light alpinism, we opted for a well-stocked, stationary basecamp below the east ridge of Mount Logan. This would allow us to attempt a wide variety of objectives in our preferred style, whilst providing a good place to wait out weather and recover on rest days. More importantly, it meant motivation stayed high throughout the trip. A well-stocked basecamp seems like nirvana after several days climbing in the hills.

Despite the lack of check-ins from provincial employees, we sat out our quarantine to the hour. We were excited to finally move up to Silver City, the airstrip north of Haines Junction. Icefields Discovery has a long history of flying into the St. Elias Mountains. Upon arrival, our pilot, Sherpal, informed us we were the second team to fly into the range this season. The only other customer they had had so far was an all-women team (Pascale Marceau and Eva Capozzola) attempting the Lucania-Steele traverse, which they completed in early May, becoming the first all-women team

Maarten van Haeren follows the first pitch of Bogdar on Mount Logbard. Photo: Alik Berg

to summit Mount Lucania. Unlike popular Alaskan objectives, it is hard to receive accurate weather reports from teams on the glaciers. The 1967 Helio Courier plane we used, while reliable, has a much lower takeoff weight than the Twin Otters used in Alaska, which in turn required more trips for our well-stocked basecamp. From Sherpal's observations, the snowpack was around average, despite a big snow year in the Whitehorse area. After weighing our supplies for six weeks amongst three flights, we went to bed the evening of April 20 hoping the strong winds would abate by the morning.

The good weather returned the next morning. After a booster pack start of the cold Helio Courier, our flight took off and we got our first views of the St. Elias Mountains. Sherpal landed us at around 2,000 metres on the Hubbard Glacier, approximately seven kilometres away from the start of Mt. Logan's East Ridge. Once the drone of the last airplane shuttle subsided, we were the only humans for more than 50 kilometres in any direction.

With our team assembled and the weather holding, we hastily dug in our base camp. Since we were keen to take advantage of the remaining good weather, we packed for a 10-day East Ridge mission and went to bed. Being accustomed to three- to four-day packs, we felt 10-day packs were heavy enough. Over the next eight days, we climbed when it was cool and siesta'd when it was hot. Eventually, we climbed to 4,900 metres, where we spent our highest night of this foray. The altitude caught up to our team, and we descended to our previous camp, "das Eishaus." This camp was situated in a crevasse and provided good protection from wind and snow with lots of room to walk around. After a rest day at 4,200 metres, we saved the blustery day for our descent back to base camp. The East Ridge of Mount Logan lived up to its reputation as a world-class alpine climb. The position and surrounding landscapes were incredible.

Over the next week of good weather, we had

Big in Japan on the south face of Mount McArthur.
Photo: Pete Hoang

the opportunity to climb several new routes on Mount Logbard and Mount McArthur, giving us a good taste of the worst and best rock, respectively, the area had to offer. Mount Logbard (3,609 metres) clearly falls outside of the igneous rock boundary, with loose sedimentary rock. After an early start from base camp, Alik and I skied to the base of the triangular southwest face. A nice pitch of ice climbing with rock gear placed us in the upper snow gully. We tried scrambling the ridge due to its poor rock quality, but eventually stuck to the ridge to gain the upper glacier. Some of the rock climbing sections were similar to Rockies choss. Spectacular views of the north face of Mount McArthur and the entire east side of Mount Logan greeted us on the rimed summit. After the obligatory summit photos, we descended the west ridge snow slopes down to the McArthur-Logbard pass (descending the route of the first ascent (Chilton-Condon-Prohaska, 1993), previously misreported as the east ridge). We named our route Bogdar, after some confusion over the name of the peak. Strange to think this prominent summit only received its first ascent in 1993, though considering the surrounding peaks, perhaps not so strange. Despite some other aesthetic potential routes on Mount Logbard, they are hard to recommend due to the likely lack of rock quality.

A few days later we split up into two teams for a day of climbing on Mount McArthur (4,389 metres), Canada's 13th highest peak. Despite having almost a dozen routes on its south face, there is only a handful of climbers who have been to the proper summit. Given the location of our ascents, neither of our teams visited the summit. Climbing Basecamp Buttress with Pete will remain a highlight of our adventures out there. Picking an unknown, striking

Bogdar on the south face of Mount Logbard.
Photo: Maarten van Haeren

Basecamp Buttress on the south face of MacArthur Peak. Photo: Pete Hoang

line from the ground and exploring an undulating ridge holds a special place in my climbing career. The intrigue of figuring out an elegant line along alpine features will be a lifelong draw to the mountains for me. As I finger-locked and stemmed 5.8 in my 6,000-metre boots, I might have wished for my rock shoes. I know Pete was wishing for his rock shoes as he climbed the crux pitch—a wet slab to a small roof. When our ridge rejoined the main rock walls of Mount McArthur, we opted for the snow gully instead of the direct rocky finish.

Our route ended on a bump along McArthur's east ridge, with the main summit towering another 1,000 vertical metres and several horizontal kilometres. Instead, we opted for the closest couloir at hand and started our down climb. Several twilight rappels at the bottom had us back on the glacier. We hoped Alik and Ethan would find our descent tracks, as they were several hours behind us on their own route, Big in Japan. They were grateful for the quesadillas we left them in the mess tent as a midnight snack.

With the exception of Mount Logbard, neither of the routes we climbed on McArthur reached a proper summit. This provided entertaining discussions throughout the following days. Since rest days are usually pretty quiet, there is plenty of time to discuss your next meal, or pick apart the nuances of climbing ethics. The validity of climbing an interesting line in the mountains without reaching the proper summit seems somewhat unimportant, upon reflection in the front country. While thin red lines on good photographs are appealing, after an ascent, the partnership of the rope is what remains in my memory. I feel grateful to share these adventures with good friends. Equally important, we all remained good friends post-expedition, despite spending eight weeks together in close quarters.

IN ORDER TO TRY any of the lines on the south side of Mount Logan, we deemed it necessary to return to the East Ridge once more and acclimatize further. The prospect of a mixed weather forecast and windy acclimatization sounded a bit grim to Pete. He elected to stay in basecamp for some self-reflection and watching the migratory birds. Over the next three days, Alik, Ethan and I regained our highpoint at the edge of Logan's summit plateau. After an undecided (and rather late) morning on May 11, we set off from our 4,750-metre camp (the Ice Palace) to the main summit of Mount Logan. High winds and cold temperatures kept the doubt in my mind throughout the summit day. Not until we reached the col between the main and east summit did it feel like we had a good shot at summiting, though we were late and dehydrated. From there, several false summits led to the final summit ridge. Seeing the final part of the Hummingbird Ridge trend into the highest point of Canada from the south reminded me of the enormity of the landscape.

As the Yukon sun set, we looked from the summit across the glacial plateau, the Seward and Hubbard glaciers and the five highest peaks in Canada. After getting down to the col where the King's Trench and East Ridge routes split, we brewed up in the final rays of sun and walked back to our crevasse camp into the night. Our alpine-style approach did not allow us to spend much more time up high, so after a rest day we descended the East Ridge to base camp. After our day of descending and skiing back, Pete welcomed us with our final Mexican meal night, complete with tacos, guacamole and Gatorade margaritas. Base camps and good friends are great.

After only a few days of rest, our basecamp became relatively busy. Friends of ours (Kirk Mauthner and Isobel Phoebus) were flying in for their East Ridge ascent and traverse of Mount Logan, which they completed over 22 days. After welcoming them into our camp, we quickly unloaded and reloaded the aircraft. Making use of the plane's availability, Alik, Ethan and I got flown over to the Seward Glacier, below the daunting south side of Mount Logan. Sherpal had never landed on the Seward Glacier before and picked a good spot several kilometres south of Mount Logan and east of the Hummingbird Ridge. After dropping us off, Sherpal picked up Pete from base camp and they returned to the Silver City airstrip.

The south side of Logan is the largest alpine wall I've ever seen. The history and aura of this aspect of the mountain is legendary, with almost all routes unrepeated. Starting from around 2,000 metres, all routes on the south aspect end well above 5,000 metres, with the Hummingbird Ridge finishing directly at 5,956 metres on the main summit. During our first evening on the Seward Glacier, we were fortunate to see the entirety of the south face, including our intended route on the southeast face. I-TO was originally climbed in 2010 (Okada-Yokoyama) and was a huge tour-de-force by the Japanese team, culminating in the east peak of Mount Logan over three days of climbing. On May 18, despite our relatively short weather window, we set off toward the face. Closer to the wall, the approach was briefly threatened by enormous seracs from multiple sides. Due to route finding and hot temperatures, we arrived at our first bivy quite late in the evening. We ran into the remnants of Jack Tackle's cache at this bivy. Tackle had tried the line of I-TO twice before. The next day was supposedly our best weather day, and we were intent on using it. On the morning of day two, we had a snow fluting traverse for breakfast, which took us into the main couloir of the route. Around noon, clouds started to form and light flurries began. Our world quickly changed to small spindrift sluffs, and within minutes larger spindrift sluffs. During my last lead of the day, we were fully engulfed at times, looking for a way out. The ledge we saw in our photos proved to be a 50-degree snow slope with hard ice beneath. This was the most exposed I'd ever felt in the mountains, and a rappel descent seemed quite unpleasant and unsafe with avalanches roaring down the gully. Luckily, Alik suggested we stay put for the night and wait to see what the morning would bring. After a failed snow hammock, we elected to hack out a horizontal ledge to lay down our pads and have a spindrift-filled sleep. Fortunately, the next day dawned with mixed clouds, with occasional spectacular views of the Seward Glacier

and its surrounding peaks. With the deteriorating forecast in mind, this weather window allowed us to retreat from the route. Alik led more than 15 rappels, all without leaving a single piece of gear or cord by using no-threads, snow bollards and downclimbing. All that remained was some breakable crust back to our camp. When the heavy snow came the next day, we felt fortunate to have turned around when we did.

The walk back to base camp was uneventful but beautiful. Vast glacial expanses could be seen on all sides, while we walked around the southeast corner of Logan. We ascended a low col instead of Water Pass to return to our Hubbard Glacier camp.

Once we had rested and refueled at base camp, Alik and I went for one final climb, this time up Hubsew Peak (3,569 metres), the prominent summit along lower Hubsew Ridge. We had determined from our flights and maps that there was one remaining unclimbed aspect of Hubsew, though views of the face had eluded us so far. We skied up the valley south of the peak where we were finally able to see its southeast face. Despite a high ratio of skiing terrain on the face, we were keen to explore it in the morning. Due to some seracs in the upper cirque, we camped a few kilometres down valley. The next morning, we started up snow, climbed some brief sections of ice and eventually crossed a crux rock band to the upper bowl. There, we ascended more snow and névé to join the east ridge of Hubsew Peak (Chilton-Condon-Prohaska, 1995). A moderate descent was found via the southwest ridge to a col, which took us back into the glacial valley below and our camp.

By this time, we had come to terms with the fact this would likely be our final climb of the trip. After a few more days in basecamp, the prospect of eating freeze-dried meals and no more climbing had us reach out to Sherpal for a flight back to civilization. While we certainly enjoyed some great climbing experiences, we also found new depths in our friendships and our mountain experiences. As Grant Statham wrote in the 1998 *Canadian Alpine Journal*, after receiving the inaugural John Lauchlan Award but not climbing their main objective: "However, this failure served only to further inspire me and reinforce what is most important and continues to give me direction: it's not the mountain, nor the route on it, but the spirit that feeds these objectives which defines who we really are. More than anything, I'm proud to have carried the spirit of John Lauchlan into the mountains and to have thought about it a lot"

Acknowledgments

The team would like to thank the John Lauchlan Memorial Award for its generous support of the expedition. The expedition was also supported by The North Face Canada and Arc'teryx.

Summary

Bogdar (III AI4 5.3 50°, 1000m), southwest face, Mount Logbard (3609m), St. Elias Mountains. FA: Alik Berg, Maarten van Haeren, May 2, 2021.

Big in Japan (V AI6 50°, 1500m), south face, Mount McArthur (4389m), St. Elias Mountains. FA: Alik Berg, Ethan Berman, May 5, 2021 (not to summit).

Basecamp Buttress (IV AI3 5.8 60°, 1000m), south face, Mount McArthur (4389m), St. Elias Mountains. FA: Pete Hoang, Maarten van Haeren, May 5, 2021 (not to summit).

East Ridge (V 60°, 2500m), Mount Logan (5959m), St. Elias Mountains. Alik Berg, Ethan Berman, Maarten van Haeren, May 8–13, 2022.

Southeast Face (III AI3 60°, 1000m), Hubsew Peak (3569m), St. Elias Mountains. FA: Alik Berg, Maarten van Haeren, May 26, 2021.

About the Author

Originally from The Netherlands, Maarten van Haeren has found his home in the Canadian Rockies. Living in Exshaw, Alberta, he works as an ACMG Alpine Guide year-round. During his time off, Maarten enjoys long walks in search of new routes in the mountains. He is supported by The North Face Canada.

The Southeast Face of Hubsew Peak.
Photo: Maarten van Haeren

Last Icy Stand

Zac Robinson

On may 15, 2021, under a clear and windless sky, Alison Criscitiello and I skied out onto Mount Logan's glaciated summit plateau. From the Yukon mountain's base, it had taken us and two friends—Rebecca Haspel, a geologist from Calgary with a serious talent for self-propelled adventure, and Toby Harper-Merrett, a Montreal-based climber and vice-president of the Alpine Club of Canada—nine days to reach this 20-kilometre-long expanse of snow and ice. At 5,000 metres, we were finally on the so-called "Roof of Canada." From the edge of the massif's high tabletop, Mount Logan's various subpeaks rose before us, adding depth and shadow to the dazzling white-and-blue expanse. To the north, a sea of mountains and ice stretched out before us as far as the eye could see. The view was as breathtaking as the rarefied air.¶

Rebecca Haspel (foreground) and Alison Criscitiello ascend the final steps to Mount Logan's main summit. Photo: Zac Robinson. Courtesy of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society.

Mount Logan from the northeast, with its long glaciated upper plateau visible on the skyline. Photo: Robert Postma

But, we hadn't the luxury to appreciate the scene. For we had just learned, via satellite communication, that the stable, high-pressure weather window we had enjoyed for much of our ascent was closing. At best, a couple of days remained—enough, perhaps, had our goal been to quickly tag the top, wave a flag and descend. But, that wasn't the objective. We had come in service of science, to investigate climate and change at Canada's highest elevations and to lay the necessary groundwork for a future visit to drill for, and collect, ice samples from the mountain's summit plateau. After two years of planning, six months of training and 14 days of pandemic quarantine in Whitehorse, we were now, finally, exactly where we needed to be. And, time was suddenly against us—as if climbing Mount Logan wasn't hard enough.

Located deep within Kluane National Park and Reserve in the southwestern corner of the Yukon, and within the traditional territories of the Kluane and White River First Nations, Mount Logan stands unrivalled in physical mass, and perhaps in mountain grandeur. The massif boasts the largest base circumference of any non-volcanic mountain on Earth. Twelve distinct peaks rise from its summit plateau. Its many sawtooth ridges rake moisture—like "a cosmic comb," as Paddy Sherman described it—from the almost countless, year-round storms produced over the Pacific Ocean. Average summer temperatures on the summit plateau are sub-zero, and tremendous snowfall in the region produces an area of glaciation smaller only in size to those found in the polar regions of Antarctica and Greenland. Few places on Earth are as high, cold and remote as Mount Logan. All told, it's a coveted prize for climbers around the world—and a unique site for studying climate change.

THE GENESIS OF OUR INITIATIVE was decidedly less elevated. Our story begins far from Mount Logan in the flat parkland expanse of central Alberta, on the floor of a university laboratory, in a warm puddle of ancient water. The New York Times called it "An Ice Scientist's Worst Nightmare."

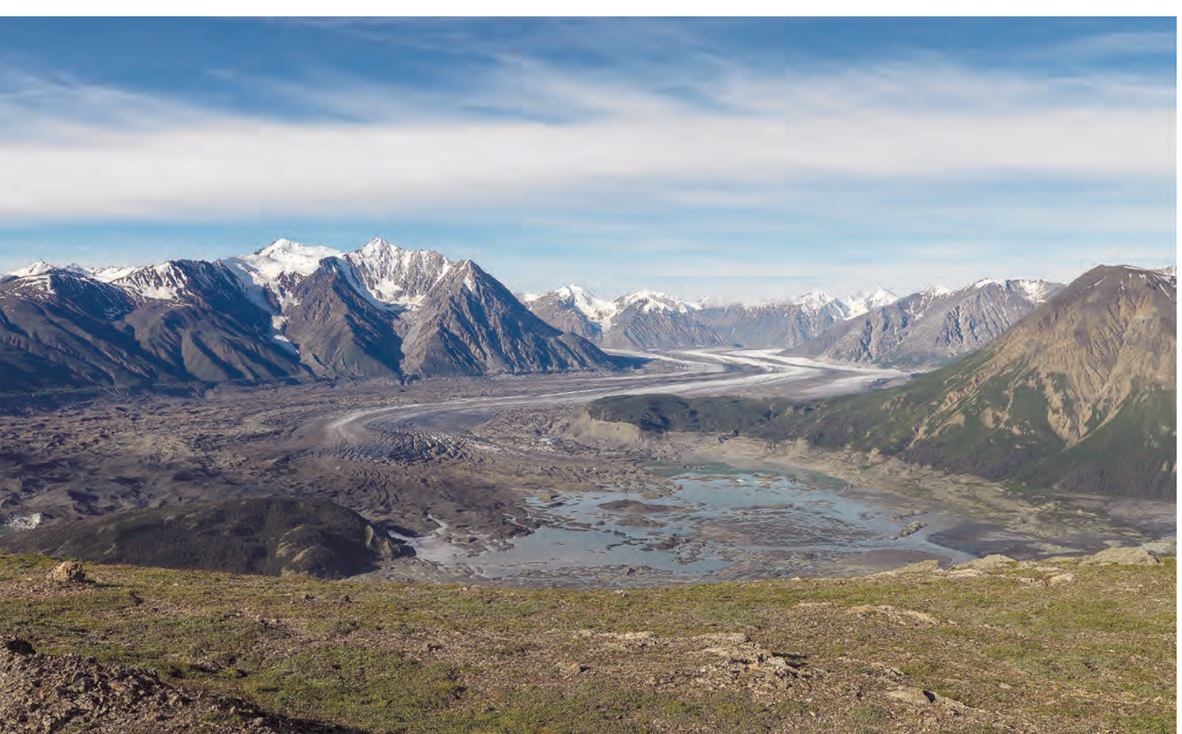
Ice cores hold climate secrets of long ago. The long, cylindrical cores drilled from glaciers in high mountain and polar regions preserve information—gas bubbles, pollen, dust particles, trace elements and isotopes—that scientists can use to reconstruct the Earth's past climate and air composition. The techniques to analyze ice cores, and the range of information that can be extracted from them, are always advancing, so the collecting and archiving of these icy records is vitally important.

A catastrophic freezer malfunction in 2017 at the brand-new ice-core lab in Edmonton's University of Alberta damaged or lost roughly 10 per cent of its samples. The facility had been custom-built to house the world's largest collection of ice cores from the Canadian Arctic, and the meltdown was heart-wrenching for the institution, its researchers and the wider scientific community. Among the damaged samples was the oldest ice-core record ever collected from the north Pacific region—drilled in 2001 and 2002 by a team of federal government scientists on Mount Logan's plateau—on a wide, glaciated saddle between Prospector's and Russell peaks. The sample, retrieved from drilling 180 metres deep, to bedrock, had provided scientists with a window into 16,000 years of climate history, making it one of the most valuable non-polar, high-resolution records of atmospheric climate change for the region.

In the incident's immediate aftermath, unrelatedly, the university hired Alison Criscitiello to manage the new ice-core facility. The Boston-born, MIT-trained chemist knew what it took to collect cores in extreme, hard-to-get-to places. She had drilled across the Canadian Arctic, in Greenland and in the Antarctic. As a climber, she would also soon come to know Mount Logan, successfully ascending the peak herself in spring 2018. Could anyone who knows Criscitiello—cool, resourceful, energetic-to-the-max (the type of person who happily runs marathons, daily)—believe for a minute that plans for an ice-core rescue mission weren't soon to follow?

I first met Criscitiello at a coffee shop near the university's campus early in 2019. We yakked about parenting, mutual climbing friends and our own research projects. All grin with tight curls suspended just below her distinguishing beanie toque, she explained how advances in modern-day ground-penetrating radar could help her and her team locate an even better drilling site on Logan's plateau and thus yield a superior ice core.

But, that important radar work would require an initial expedition to the mountain. For my part, as a historian, I also hoped to return to Mount Logan to try to repeat a series of photographs taken up high during various mountaineering ascents over the past century. The comparison of images, old beside new, might reveal something, I figured, about climatic warming at high elevations. My objective took a historical view. Criscitiello's was all forward-looking. Both projects revolved thematically around change on Canada's highest peak. We cheerily resolved to team up.



But, within eight months, as the first wave of the global COVID-19 pandemic swept the country, all designs for a 2020 expedition—like pretty much everything else—ground suddenly and stunningly to a halt.

THAT RAPID CHANGE is occurring today across the Yukon's glaciated landscape is hardly a surprise. It's well known that the rate of temperature change—caused by increasing levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere—is amplified at high latitudes. This was driven home in 2010 when researchers first compared aerial photographs from the Canadian Land Survey in the 1950s with modern-day satellite images and found that of the 1,400 glaciers surveyed a half-century ago, 300 had disappeared. And nearly all others had shrunk. "It's a regional thinning rate that is greater than almost all other glacier and ice-cap regions," said geophysicist Nick Barrand, one of the study's co-authors.

There is growing evidence those rates of warming are also further amplified at elevation, meaning that the world's highest mountain ranges are warming more rapidly than their surrounding lowlands. That's a double whammy for Canada's high, northern mountains. And this appears to be the case for Mount Logan, at least according to a 2020 study that used an array of meteorological data to show that the air near the mountain's top was warming more rapidly than at its lower slopes.

Could we see this change on the mountain's upper slopes? On its snow- and ice-encrusted summit? Repeat photography would get us part of the way, but it wasn't until 2020—our sedentary year of unhappy low-lying postponement—that another line of investigation rose up before us. And this one, too, had a history.

In March 1975, Gerald Holdsworth, an eminent ice-core scientist who had long worked in the Canadian Arctic, penned an article for the *Canadian Geographic Journal* titled "Taking the measure of Mount Logan." It neatly laid out a near century-long preoccupation among surveyors and climbers to determine the exact height of the Yukon's St. Elias Mountains. "An element of mystery often surrounds regions of very high altitude," wrote Holdsworth. "Mount Logan, the highest point in Canada, is no exception."

That mystery was finally laid to rest in 1992, when an expedition sponsored by the Royal Canadian Geographical Society established Mount Logan's official height, with the use of GPS technology, at 5,959 (+/-3) metres above sea level. In that year, the GPS—or global positioning system, a project initiated in 1973 by the U.S. Department of Defense—was still three years away from being fully operational. This meant the 1992 team, equipped with early-generation GPS receivers, had to carefully time their summit bid to coincide with the position of satellites orbiting far overhead. It was a remarkable feat. The expedition was a signature commemorative event for the 150th anniversary of the Geological Survey of Canada, as well as Canada's 125th birthday.

Since then, GPS technology has advanced significantly, especially in terms of its ease of use, reliability, accuracy and ability to process data. Today, high-quality receivers pick up all non-military signals from the much larger global navigation satellite system (GNSS). That system encompasses the U.S. GPS, Russia's GLONASS, the European Union's Galileo and others. Combined with advances in data processing and analysis techniques, today's receivers provide incredible all-weather positions, including measuring the height of mountains within several centimetres. Modern instruments can also record data 24 hours a day. And with significant improvements in the modelling of sea level under mountains (the theoretical surface known as the geoid), elevation measurements are even more accurate.

For all of these reasons, Michael Schmidt, a long-time geophysicist with the Geological Survey of Canada and the indomitable team leader of the '92 expedition, asked us if we'd be willing to remeasure the height of Mount Logan's main summit using modern GNSS receivers. And "it

The terminus of the Kaskawulsh Glacier in Kluane National Park and Reserve, Yukon. Here, landscape change is clearly evident between 1900 and 2012.
Top photo: James McArthur
Bottom photo: Eric Higgs, Mountain Legacy Project

would not be surprising," Schmidt added, "to see a difference from 1992 as a result of the variability in summit snow and ice over time."

AS THE SPRING OF 2021 drew near, and despite continued waves of pandemic concern, the possibility of an expedition to Kluane National Park and Reserve improved. International travel restrictions, however, necessitated adjustments to our group's composition and size. The four American ice-core scientists on Criscitiello's team had to withdraw because of the border closure. We quickly looked closer to home for assistance and enlisted our friends Rebecca Haspel and Toby Harper-Merrett. By mid-April, our team of four was happily holed-up in a Whitehorse rental unit to fulfil a two-week quarantine period, which we spent organizing and repacking gear, familiarizing ourselves with various scientific gadgets and keeping active as best we could.

The topic of change was central to much of our quarantine conversation. In particular, a contemporary aerial photograph enflamed our imaginations, and our concern. A day after arriving in the still-snowy Whitehorse, Conrad Janzen—a Parks Canada visitor safety specialist from Banff who was participating in helicopter-rescue training with Kluane Park staff—shared with us a rare bird's-eye view of the upper portion of Mount Logan's King Trench route. It was the route we were planning to ascend to access the mountain's upper plateau. The image came with a message: "things are changing." What used to be one or two potentially show-stopping crevasse systems across this portion of the glaciated ramp-route, now looked like four or five. And, the snow cover was remarkably thin. We shared the image with Schmidt, who now lives in Kluane's gateway village of Haines Junction, not far from our staging area on the shores of Łù'àn Män (Kluane Lake). "I am totally amazed by the changes from 1992," Schmidt responded in an email. "If you can believe it, we simply slogged up through the snow, wound our way around very few crevasses, with the return ski down cranking turns the whole way with no concerns at all!"

Alison Criscitiello and Rebecca Haspel measure ice depths on Mount Logan's summit plateau.
Photo: Zac Robinson, courtesy of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society

Top: A north-facing 180-degree panorama from the summit in 1950. Photo: André Roch, Swiss Alpine Museum,

Bottom: The same view repeated in 2021. Photo: Zac Robinson, Mountain Legacy Project

Schmidt's snowpack observations were echoed soon afterward by Sian Williams, the seasoned, second-generation outfitter at Icefield Discovery, a full-service air-charter company that has been transporting climbers to the base of Logan for decades. "Twenty years ago, we'd often have to dig out our five-metre-high cache marker out on the divide," noted Williams of the central accumulation zone that feeds a whole hub of glaciers in the region. "Now," she says, "we rarely get over two metres [of snow]."

While the image instilled a healthy dose of trepidation, it also gave us an upper hand, at least as far as navigation went. Once on the mountain, we often referred to the photograph, and with it, our journey thus proceeded happily, the first day morphing into the next, as we pushed upward on skis, roped together, laden with heavy packs and sleds. We relished the physicality of it all, of finally being able to move after our prolonged delay. Eight days and three camps later, we were dug in comfortably just below Prospector's Col, a small granite gap on the upper route and the entryway to the plateau.

It was here that we received the news that the weather was changing for the worse. Haste was now required, or risk getting stuck high on the mountain, exposed with little protection for an indeterminate period of time. There's nothing quite like necessity to bring about efficiency. Strong, capable and supportive climbing partners help, too.

What ensued was a three-day barrage of methodical precision, a triaging of tasks and of committed teamwork, with all eyes glued to the horizon nervously watching for massing clouds. We built our fourth and highest camp not far from the 2001–02 ice-core drilling site and fortified it with snow blocks to protect our tents from winds. A scheduled heli-drop of survey equipment—by an immensely talented pilot, using supplemental oxygen—went off without a hitch. Spin drift from the rotor blades had hardly settled before we were taking turns dragging a 100-megahertz ground-penetrating radar system in a grid pattern,

15 football fields wide, back and forth across a portion of the plateau to discover the area with the greatest ice depth. Most people take a rest day before a summit attempt. We played high-altitude tire-pull. All in the name of science.

Our second full day on the plateau, and our last, brought moderate winds. But with reasonable visibility and no signs of imminent doom, we departed our camp in the early morning harbouring high hopes, a camera tripod and two GNSS receivers. It's a long and mostly flat trip from the western side of Logan's plateau to its main summit on the far eastern edge. We didn't even see the main summit until midday, after carefully side-hilling for hours around Philippe Peak (or West Peak, as it's sometimes called), the second-highest summit on the massif. I kept the receiver batteries in the chest pocket of my inner jacket to keep them warm since the temperature never rose above –25 C. But the winds remained moderate, and so, at the base of the main summit, we quickly took stock, abandoned our skis in favour of crampons and walked together up the final narrow snow ridge to the highest point in Canada.

Our time on Mount Logan's summit was short—no more than 25 minutes. It was just enough time to let the GNSS receivers collect the data to get an accurate height measurement, repeat some historical photographs and slap a few high-fives. I lingered on the top longer than the others, trying in vain to shoot a clear 360-degree panorama, as the famous Swiss mountaineer André Roch had done when he summited during the mountain's second ascent in 1950. But alas, mists were rolling in from the south, my camera's shutter was sticking and my fingers were cold.

Happy but weary, we returned to our high camp 13 hours after leaving it. Our overall sense of urgency wouldn't really dissipate, though, until we exited the plateau itself the next day, just as cold winds rose and temperatures plummeted. Skis permitted a rapid descent. We were soon tent-bound with little visibility on the lower mountain and would have to wait for a week before the plane could pick us up. We counted ourselves lucky.

Toby Harper-Merrett pulls a 100 megahertz ground-penetrating radar system in a grid pattern between Prospector's and Russell peaks. Photo: Zac Robinson, courtesy of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society

CHANGE. ADAPTATION. RESILIENCE. These are now perhaps the dominant leitmotifs of our times, ingrained in public and private consciousness, far and wide, as a result of the immense and immediate challenges brought about by the global pandemic. Climate change brings with it even greater challenges for Canada and the world. And, its effects are already visible everywhere, mostly.

Upon our return from the mountain in June 2021, we sent the summit data recorded by the GNSS units to Natural Resources Canada in Ottawa for analysis. The results put the summit height at 5,957 metres above sea level, a difference of two metres from the 1992 measurement. Is the mountain now two metres shorter? The data shows this isn't actually the case. In fact, the ellipsoidal height—the elevation above the reference surface used by GPS—is, amazingly, within a mere 20 centimetres of the 1992 measurement, testament to the extraordinary efforts made by the '92 team. The two-metre difference instead comes primarily from an updated sea-level reference surface and geoid modelling in the area, the current thinking on where the average ocean's surface would lie, if extended inland underneath the massif. Ultimately, though, the change is trivial, not least because the snow depth on the summit is varying all the time.

In view of potential remaining errors in the latest geoid model, due to the ruggedness of the surrounding topography of Mount Logan, it is estimated that the height of 5,957 metres is accurate to—you guessed it—within two metres.

Repeat photography from up high tells a similar nickel-and-dime tale. For instance, the icy landscape André Roch gazed out upon from the main summit nearly three-quarters of a century ago was, beyond the weather and the seasonal variance (his image was taken in mid-June, ours in mid-May), remarkably close to what we found. Even the feathered riming and crystalline wind lips adorning the summit ridge seemed to match up.

But it's the very lack of visible change up high on Mount Logan's cold snowy reaches, the sheer resilience of this icy stronghold amid all the pronounced changes occurring down slope and beyond, that's worth notice—and quickly, too. It's the other reason Alison Criscitiello seeks to return in the spring of 2022. Preliminary results from our radar survey show ice depths out on the plateau in excess of 300 metres. That's old ice, containing a datable climate record stretching back as far as 30,000 years.

It may also be "last ice," in the same way that the region known as the Last Ice Area, spanning the top of Canada and Greenland, is predicted to retain year-round sea ice much longer than elsewhere. But just as with the Last Ice Area, "much longer" on Mount Logan is increasingly looking like not that long at all. And so the race is on to document—and learn from—30,000 years of climate history before even Mount Logan begins to give in, the melting ice releasing the earth's secrets before we have a chance to learn from this last icy stronghold.

Toby Harper-Merrett, Alison Criscitiello, Rebecca Haspel, and Zac Robinson at Camp Two. Photo: Zac Robinson, courtesy of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society

---

About the Author

Zac Robinson is a historian and Associate Professor at the University of Alberta. He currently serves as The Alpine Club of Canada's Vice President for Mountain Culture and, along with Lael Parrott and Dave Hik, is a co-editor of the Club's annual State of the Mountains Report. This essay first appeared in Canadian Geographic March/April 2022.

Pangea

Duncan Pawson

Were we making a mistake?
Is this a waste of money?
Would we even be able to climb?
What if it is poor rock quality?
What if there are no features?

Doubts loomed in our minds, but the ever-present thought of an unclimbed, unexplored valley triumphed over all logic.

Harlin Brandvold on pitch seven of the Lizard King attempt. Photo: Nick Hindley

In August 2019, Harlin Brandvold, Nick Hindley, and I had aspirations to explore the Waddington Range. Unfortunately, those aspirations were quickly abandoned after an unexpected summer storm deposited more than a metre of snow the week before our departure. Backup plans quickly ensued. Harlin remarked that he had been doing some "flying around" on Google Earth, exploring the undocumented walls of British Columbia's Coast Mountains. In his exploration, he landed upon a valley in northern B.C., southwest of Kitimat in Foch-Gilttoyees Provincial Park (53°57'35"N, 129°14'04"W). Harlin, Nick and I eagerly crowded around the computer exploring the minute details of rock as best as was possible from satellite imagery. The valley looked promising, and we made this our new objective.

With nothing more than satellite imagery and a few accounts of the general area, none regarding the specific valley we intended to visit, we drove up to Terrace, B.C., where we had a helicopter booked to fly us in. The pilots confirmed that they too knew of no one else who had come to the valley before. We made the nervous flight in.

We peered anxiously out the window of the Bell 206 LR Long Ranger. Logging roads wove intricate paths through forests and over hills. As we journeyed further, the landscape took on a more rugged nature. Glaciers abounded, despite the relatively low elevation. Unassuming rock faces began to rise out of underlying forests, tickled by blue-green alpine lakes and streams. The climbing prospects seemed uninteresting. Our crackling voices could be heard through the communication headset. Not much was said. Then, like a sentinel standing watch over the valleys beyond, a large rock wall rose proudly out of an alpine lake. The Cirque, as we called it, would later become the objective of the 2021 John Lauchlan Award expedition [see page 68].

Excitement brewed. Minutes passed and the helicopter made a sweeping turn as it descended. There before us was the valley we had scoped. Our minds swirled as we tried to comprehend the terrain around us. Our eyes darted in all directions. Everywhere we looked was another rock wall, each with as much potential as the last. The pilot dropped us off. After a good bit of celebration, silence ensued and stillness took over.

There is a glacier at valley bottom, covering a good portion of the valley, and culminating in a moraine lake filled with icebergs that have detached from the glacier. Glacier-clad peaks create an amphitheatre of thunder as seracs calve under gravity's pull. The numerous rock walls are all heavily featured, and would each earn their respective names over the course of our time in the valley. On the south end of the valley, guarded by the valley glacier, sits the north face of Gilt Peak (1,893 metres), or Nautilus Wall as we dubbed it. Estimated at upwards of 1,200 vertical metres, it is the largest wall in the valley, watching over its children. Its northeast ridgeline is massive, hosting a plethora of climbable features itself. Off its northwest flank is the approximately 700-metre Extinction Wall. This wall, too, is mostly north facing, capped with glaciers that bleed water down the face in several spots. On the opposite side of the valley sits the south-facing walls. Cambrian Wall, a smaller feature between Chiq Peak (1,741 metres) and Gilttoyees-Ecstall Pass, is estimated at 500 metres tall. Just east of Cambrian Wall sits the south face of Chiq Peak, which includes some of the steepest walls in the valley.

Duncan Pawson on pitch five of Disaster Fauna.
Photo: Nick Hindley

At the centre of the face lie the two Primordial Buttresses, each about 600 metres in relief. Further east of the buttresses is an unnamed, heavily featured ramp about 450 metres tall. Northeast of this, lay a series of rock walls directly overlooking the lake, including the Mastodon Knuckle, named for obvious reasons.

Our overexcitement and big wall inexperience took hold of us. We scoped out the routes we wanted to try and the "easy routes" to warm up on. The following day, we proceeded to sandbag ourselves on what we thought would be a quick run up Cambrian Wall. Thirteen hours later we were bailing after encountering deteriorating rock quality and increasingly challenging terrain eight pitches up, in the dark. We bolted anchors as we went down, doing 70-metre rappels when necessary. Twenty-one hours after leaving camp, we returned with a new perspective of the valley—things there are big, really big. We scoped our high point from camp and were maybe two pitches away from a logical end on easy terrain that could possibly be scrambled to the top. We named the effort Flight of the Dodo in honour of our jerry-style attempt up the face. The climb follows weaknesses up the obvious cleft, out onto the central pillar, and then up the centre of the face to just below where the angle kicks back to what looks like scrambling terrain.

Our deceiving, foreshortened perspective was exacerbated by the lack of trees in the valley for size reference. That, combined with the fact there are no truly small walls, hinders the onlooker from performing a subconscious, relative comparison of size.

Over the next three days, we diverted our attention to, arguably, the most striking line in the valley - the first line we had noticed upon landing. A single, clean-looking line, running from base to summit up the centre of the 700-metre Extinction Wall. The line cuts through two notable roofs before widening and finishing through a v-notched weakness. Again, fooled by inexperience, unrealistic expectations and euphoric excitement, we

Harlin Brandvold on pitch seven of Disaster Fauna.
Photo: Nick Hindley

plodded up three pitches of slab toward what we figured was a hand crack that would get a bit wider in sections. As it turned out, our splitter line was actually a 10- to 15-centimetre dyke with an active stream running down its back.

Rather than set our sights on another feature, we pressed on, oddly stoked by the turn of events and the adventure that was sure to come of it. Several pitches up, at a three-metre roof, the stream became a waterfall. The portable speaker was cranked to full volume for this pitch. As Ozzy screamed his War Pigs anthem, Harlin aided through the drenched, mossy overhang. A good bit of metal goes a long way. The next pitch, I squeeze-chimneyed and aided my way through vertical wetlands. Thoughts flickered between bailing and continuing, between disgust and enjoyment. Lacking confidence in my submerged anchor, Nick was put on lead while labouriously jugging my fixed line, towing an extra static rope, hammer drill, bolts, iron and other gear. After building our anchor station, he hauled the pigs while I belayed Harlin. All told, it took eight hours from Harlin finishing his previous lead, to joining us at the anchor for the night.

Portaledge set up and dinner ready, delirium ensued. Our only recollection of eating or drinking anything that day was at breakfast 21 hours earlier when we had a granola bar, apple and some water. In hindsight, the lack of water throughout the day under high output doesn't make sense. Though maybe we absorbed enough water through our skin to make up for it.

That night we discussed our game plan. A serious storm was forecast to roll in during the upcoming days, which threatened to transform the face into a 700-metre bigwall waterfall. Combined with the knowledge that we were less than halfway up the wall, the uncomfortable nature of squeezing three people into a two-person portaledge, and our dwindling enthusiasm for another vertical swim gala, we opted to bail the following day. We named the incomplete attempt Lizard King, a striking line from afar, which vertically bisects the face of Extinction Wall. An additional 400 metres of vertical, wet chimney climbing await any future adventurers who may aspire to finish the line.

The storm left us tent-ridden for three days and ultimately put an end to the climbing. We passed the time reading, drinking, and playing poker with our assortment of gear. The next weather window provided our only opportunity to get out of the valley in time to meet the obligations of life. Besides, there is only so much poker one can play with three people in a two-person tent.

As we flew out, the massive walls fading in the distance, each of us knew, although left unspoken, that this would not be our last glimpse of this beautiful valley. It wasn't until six months later when the inklings of a second trip started coming together. Unfortunately, 2020 had other plans and our desire to return would have to be postponed by another year. With 2021 shaping up to be just as uncertain as 2020, we were thrilled to get the green light from B.C. Parks and the local Gitga'at First Nation to return. We were set for a rematch.

ENTERING THE VALLEY AGAIN provided a familiar sense of awe and wonderment, although this time there was a marked difference. There presented no sense of uncertainty about the would-be quality of the experience. We knew the valley was exceptional. However, feelings of angst and nervousness arose because of this knowledge. The walls are big, the objectives intimidating. The area is remote and devoid of most of the large flora and fauna typical along the Southwest Coast. The few large mammals we do see only present themselves for a moment, and then vanish into the valleys beyond; these too, teeming with immeasurable granite walls and fissured glaciers. The animals that remain couldn't care less about us or our food cache. Their shyness projects an air of disdain. We are the outsiders here. If our goal was not to seek out rocks, one may be correct in describing the area as desolate. A valley laden with stone, the spaces between filled with rock of their own—for two weeks it would be our home. The emotions toggle between euphoria, excitement, doubt, fear, respect, curiosity and nostalgia. The climate is colder, and it rains more. Part of us wonders what we're doing here, but then we remember this is all part of the adventure. We came here because of the wild nature of this place—to climb new, beautiful routes on walls of immense scale, and to share in that experience. The desire comes not from familiarity, but from the joy of discovery, in the company of friends.

This time, we chose a more apt warm-up—a mild angling ramp up the smallest unique feature in the valley. Aside from the onslaught of black flies, the day went as well as we could have hoped. Twelve pitches from the ground and we were at the top of the feature in six hours. The route itself was mostly low angle with the occasional 5.8 pitch. We named the route Planktonic Relationships for its mostly rambling character while not actually going anywhere significant. While fun in its own right, the route also provided the morale boost we had hoped for. The notion that we could confidently scope and select a line without too many surprises had us setting our sights on bigger objectives.

For the rest of the trip, Harlin and I experienced the repercussions of the black flies' feeding frenzy from the day prior. Ankles, calves, necks, wherever the flies could competently launch an assault, would leave an inevitable and exceptionally large swell. Our jealousy of Nick's apparent immunity often led to frustration. We knew the bugs were bad from the last time, but our rosy retrospection had neglected to remind us just how bad they were. During a rainy rest day, Harlin even experienced flu-like symptoms as a result of the bites. From then on, bug nets were donned and pants remained tucked into socks while climbing.

We deliberated about what our next objective would be. Prior to the trip we figured we would finish Flight of the Dodo and Lizard King. However, counter to present-day trends, the snowpack and glacier at valley bottom were significantly higher than two years prior. Not only was Lizard King more soaked than usual when we arrived, but it now involved crossing questionable snow bridges and traversing beneath calving ice. We considered it "out". Flight of the Dodo was a great route, and we intended to finish it, but instead we prioritized another feature on the left Primordial Buttress, off the south side of Chiq Peak.

Nick Hindley, Duncan Pawson and Harlin Brandvold on top of Disaster Fauna. Photo: Nick Hindley

During a one-day weather window, we went for a day trip up to the wall to investigate the route's potential. We climbed three pitches that day, each of which were the best three pitches we had climbed thus far in the valley. We fixed ropes to our high point and set lines for hauling gear. As the rain pattered in the valley the next day, we patiently and enthusiastically dipped into our supply of fun and games—Jameson whiskey and Fireball paired with crib and Yahtzee. We were antsy to hop back on the wall and see what more it had to offer.

Following the rain, a potential five-day weather window provided us with ample hope to commit to the objective. We carried and hauled multiple bags over talus fields to a 300-metre snowfield and up a 100-metre wall to the base of the climb. In addition to the laborious effort of getting the pigs over multiple roofs and slabs, we sheathed our static haul line and broke one of the trigger stays off our new #6 C4 cam,

The south aspect of Cambrian Wall and Chiq Peak:
(1) Flight of the Dodo
(2) Disaster Fauna
(3) Planktonic Relationships
Photo: Duncan Pawson

which had been placed on the outside of the bag to save space. The schlepping and hauling took the whole day. Drained, we settled for a rather uncomfortable bivy at the base of the wall. The intention was to establish a high camp on the wall the following day, but the climbing was going well and we had enough static line to fix a nylon highway to the base. That, in combination with the already difficult hauling up to the start of the climb, gave us the justification we sought to stick with the bivy-at-the-base setup. We did, however, improve our sleeping arrangements.

The next two days had us roaring with excitement. The line weaved its way over impeccable rock with unique features we had not before seen in granite, including chicken heads, pockets and bizarre, undulating formations. As we got higher on the wall, a tricky slab traversed into a splitter hand crack, which led us to just before the steepest and hardest pitch. Harlin was up. With music blasting, he bat-hooked his way through the blank section of wall, into a unique finger crack that cast aside the major question mark we had from the ground. Our optimism grew. That day, Nick led us to our highpoint, battling the rain and wind we had hoped wouldn't show. Harlin and I shivered and cuddled to stay warm while Nick climbed. The rain had us leave our bivy setup and sent us back to our tents at valley bottom. Cautiously optimistic about our progress thus far, and with superb weather the following day, we figured that was our day to push to the top.

We jugged the nine pitches we had previously climbed and continued upward. By this point, the style of the route changed drastically. The climb was now much more blocky with more vegetation and some loose rock. Pitch 10 had Nick and me hugging the anchor as Harlin knocked loose a toaster-sized rock that detonated into several fist-sized rocks on its descent toward us. Surprisingly, not a single piece of shrapnel hit us. The incident had us thinking more carefully about our belay positions for the following pitches. Five more pitches up similar terrain and we reached the top of the buttress. Ecstatic, content and a hint emotional, we didn't linger long, wanting to make it back to our bivy before dark. The remaining terrain to the summit of Chiq Peak looked like a mild scramble. That night the usual celebrations took place with a good amount of hot slop in the Jetboil paired with a surprisingly good mix of Jameson and Fireball.

The following day, we worked on free climbing the remaining pitches that had not yet been freed, enjoying the serene rays of sunshine and tranquil whispering of the wind. All but the bat-hook pitch eluded a free ascent, although we are confident a slab master could pull it off. We drilled a bolt to replace the need for a hook in the hopes that a second ascent will become a reality. The route was named Disaster Fauna and climbs the prow of the left Primordial Buttress.

With only one more day of sunshine before the incipient rain, we got word to the heli pilot for an afternoon departure the next day. We spent the better part of the day unschlepping our bivy setup and packing up base camp. Mixed emotions filled our hearts as we would, once again, have to say goodbye to this beautiful valley that had given us refuge over the past two weeks. The weather had cooperated long enough to grant us success and offer us this experience. The pattern of leaving early owing to the inevitable rain was expected—although this time we left with a sense of accomplishment and a chapter closed. The question of whether we'll return weighs heavily. With no immediate or planned intentions to do so, the valley holds a special place in our hearts and minds. Places such as these cannot be forgotten, nor long ignored.

We named the area Pangea, owing to its prehistoric aura and our mutual interest in prehistory. This place is mega and holds many, many untapped lines. The largest wall in the valley, Nautilus Wall, faces north and is upwards of 1,200 metres tall. Its imposing nature over the valley is hard to fathom and exceptionally difficult to comprehend from a photo. Every wall is large with undeniable potential for grand adventures. The majority of the rock is of very high quality and quite featured. The scene is set by glacier-clad peaks towering over a glacier-filled valley bottom. The area's scale and backdrop is stunning. The neighbouring valleys offer similar landscapes with endless potential for exploration. We implore others with the means and desire to check out this special place and contribute to its history. The edges of the globe have been filled in, but creases remain.

Acknowledgements

The 2021 expedition received financial support from the Neil Mackenzie Adventure Grant offered by the UBC Varsity Outdoor Club.

Summary

Flight of the Dodo (III 5.10, 8 pitches, 350m), Cambrian Wall, Foch-Gilttoyees Provincial Park, Kitimat Ranges, Coast Mountains. Attempt: Harlin Brandvold, Nick Hindley, Duncan Pawson, August 12, 2019.

Lizard King (IV 5.10 C2, 8 pitches, 300m), Extinction Wall, northwest flank of Gilt Peak, Foch-Gilttoyees Provincial Park, Kitimat Ranges, Coast Mountains. attempt: Harlin Brandvold, Nick Hindley, Duncan Pawson, August 13–15, 2019.

Planktonic Relationships (II 5.8, 12 pitches, 450m), southeast face of Chiq Peak, Foch-Gilttoyees Provincial Park, Kitimat Ranges, Coast Mountains. FA: Harlin Brandvold, Nick Hindley, Duncan Pawson, August 16, 2021.

Disaster Fauna (IV 5.11- A0, 15 pitches, 600m), Left Primordial Buttress, South Face of Chiq Peak, Foch-Gilttoyees Provincial Park, Kitimat Ranges, Coast Mountains. FA: Harlin Brandvold, Nick Hindley, Duncan Pawson, August 17–22, 2021.

About the Author

Duncan Pawson grew up in Cochrane, Alberta but now lives in Squamish, B.C. Working a full-time job as an engineer, he spends most of his free time climbing, skiing and exploring the Coast Mountains and surrounding areas.

INTERPRETATION

Pete Hoang

Photography is a projection, and contrary to the common belief that one simply captures reality, I believe that the moment we decide to take a photo, the naked truth disappears. Between choosing when to pull out the camera, the light, angles, the photos we curate and process, we gradually direct a narrative, revealing an intent before any captions appear.

Early in my photography career, I saw climbing as the most badass sport, where athletes would play with danger in the wildest locations—anything else was simply benign and boring. My photography reflected this with a heavy emphasis on hero shots, the type where one would use vast expanses and power poses. This wasn't to impress other climbers as much as it was me telling the world that they should pay attention to this sport.

That romance eventually faded and the story of my partners shifted into view. There are amazing climbs out there, but nothing happens without a passionate soul. Belays, transitions or moments in camp were opportunities to tell my partners' stories. I think this was the moment when I realized that photography was less of a capital T truth, and more of an interpretation. Portraits require very careful curation between frames to pick your perfect moment to represent them, and it's limited to my impression of an individual. I can perhaps understand a person in the context of climbing, but never fully know them. This whole experience is mixed in with my personal relationships, and suddenly the idea of why a person is the most important aspect of climbing becomes much messier. So, in the context of climbing, portraits left my focus for a time.

Throughout the process of climbing and photography, I battled with the competing interests of both, but climbing won out more often when I moved to the Bow Valley. Whatever photos I took here were in service of climbers and reinforcing my image as one, too. I wanted to show how chaotic climbing could be, and the power of the human spirit to persevere in hostile locations. Spindrift, saturated clothing, the mess of gear, head down, slogging, it's hard to take out a camera in these moments, but the difficult times and effort represented the rawest form of climbing and felt closer to an uncontested truth. However, a day is rarely completely filled with sustained intensity (quite the contrary actually), so it's easy to overstate an effort, and sadly, my apparent need to be validated as a climber also influenced everything that surrounded my camera for a time. The freedom I loved from climbing and photography began to dissipate as I began to work for both.

So, more than anything, my photography is a story about myself and my developing process through climbing—what I valued at the time, my relationship with my partners, and what I thought the actual act of climbing meant.

About the Author/Photographer

Hailing originally from Ontario, Pete has made Canmore, Alberta his home base. His most recent mountain adventure was a new route in the St. Elias Mountains, supported by the John Lauchlan Memorial Award [see page 6]. Though Pete mountain bikes more than he climbs these days, a large part of him will always love what climbing's brought to his photography.

Josh Smith works the moves on Seventeen Stitches on Blood Wall in the Madawaska Valley. Short and easy approaches in Ontario mean you get more time to concentrate on either the climbing or the shooting. Photo: Pete Hoang

2019. Will Gadd on the first ascent of Wung Fo in China while shooting for the National Geographic film project. It felt strange shooting ice without any snow around. Photo: Pete Hoang

2019. Michelle Kadatz climbs up to a crowded belay on Premonition in the Ghost Wilderness Area along the eastern slopes of the Canadian Rockies. I used a lot of foreground in the shot to assist with the claustrophobic feeling. Photo: Pete Hoang

2019. Brette Harrington bails off of Andromeda Strain on Mount Andromeda at the Columbia Icefield. A common frustration with alpine climbing is the combination of frozen gloves and fine motor movements.
Photo: Pete Hoang

2020. Dylan Cunningham sets up a rappel while retreating from a new route attempt on Goat Mountain in the Canadian Rockies. My toes and fingers suffered frostbite damage for several months after.
Photo: Pete Hoang

The North

Inuksuit

Sarah McNair-Landry

THE DARK BLUE OCEAN contrasted with the chunks of white ice, continually in motion as the currents and wind swirled them around. Over the next weeks, we watched the sea ice crack and break apart. During this breakup season, the ice becomes untravellable—too thin and separated to ski or snow machine on, but still too congested to travel by boat. Essentially, we had gotten ourselves stuck in Inuksuit Fiord until early August. With 45 days of food, climbing gear and kayaking gear, this is exactly where we wanted to be.

Erik Boomer and I had left the small community of Clyde River in late June and skied the 100 kilometres hauling our gear in our whitewater kayaks into Inuksuit Fiord. Already the ice was full of cracks; the smaller cracks we could leap across with a running start, while others required our kayaks to shuttle gear across. The sun and rain switched on and off, taking turns to dissolve the ice.

After five days skiing through puddles of water formed on top of the ice, with soggy feet we happily stepped onto dry land and pitched our modest home. The landscape around us had been scoured by glaciers. Moraines bordered us to the south, while the impressive Nuksuklorolu Pinnacles towered to our west, and glaciers clung to the higher elevations. We shared our beach with a family of geese, who took up residence across the glacial creek.

The weather was unusually cold and alternated between rain and snow, testing our patience. We kept ourselves busy on rainy days scouting for potential routes to climb. Four previous groups had climbed in Inuksuit Fiord, including Jon Turk in 1989, and more recently the Pou brothers. We set our sights on several new routes, as well as several established routes.

Now, you might think that because we are climbing in Baffin, that we are amazing and experienced climbers. This is not true. We are still learning the ropes. Baffin just happens to be home. And what better place to learn how to big wall climb than my own backyard?

With one sunny day in the forecast, we headed out to climb the smallest, southernmost of the Nuksuklorolu Pinnacles (and let's be honest, the least impressive). A long scramble and lots of easy, loose climbing led to a few pitches of good quality climbing—a clean slab with a very thin crack that led to the final pitch with a nice roof to hand-crack finish (5.10 A0).

We couldn't find any info about this route being climbed, and there was no cairn on top (or signs of previous climbers), but it very well could previously have been climbed. We had initially wanted to link up and traverse onto another tower; however, once at the summit, we noticed the bridge connecting them was rotten rock with no protection, and our egress would also become more complicated with each traverse. So, we high-fived and bailed.

A beautiful arête west of camp caught our attention. Only accessible by a three-hour paddle, we found some great, sustained 5.10 climbing on good rock. We climbed about nine pitches before the thick clouds and rain moved in and it

Sarah McNair-Landry on pitch five of Hotel Monica.
Photo: Erik Boomer

Erik Boomer approaches Nuksuklorolu Pinnacles. Photo: Sarah McNair-Landry

got late, so we retreated, but hope to finish this climb one day.

Next, we decided to repeat an "easy" grade IV 5.8 route on the Nuksuklorolu Pinnacle Middle that was first climbed in the '80s, and then repeated by a friend, Jon Turk in 1989. We had already hiked up and climbed the first couple of pitches of the route, but the route had been dripping wet, still with piles of snow on the ledges. We headed back a second time, with our fingers crossed for drier rock. Steep pitches were broken up by steep ledges. We zigzagged our way up, often arriving at impasses and having to turn around to find an alternate route. Although there were a few beautiful perfect pitches, we climbed a lot of sustained awful, wet, mossy chimneys and cracks.

Nearing the top, after 36 hours on the go, we came to a final impasse (at least for us) and decided to rappel. After talking to Jon Turk and Gray Thompson, we are still not clear where their original line was, but we are positive we were not on it. But, we did spot a pod of beluga whales swimming in the ocean below.

Our final climb, we followed a Pou brothers' route called Hotel Monica (6B+). The route follows a beautiful crack line to the top of the White Wall, overlooking glaciers and Perfection Valley. The route was our favorite of the trip, providing great climbing—until the final pitch. We missed a tricky downclimb traverse and instead continued straight up a hard crack system.

Next, we packed up our kayaks and headed inland in search of new rivers and waterfalls that have yet to be paddled. Ocean paddling, portaging and lake paddling, we slowly made our way over a pass and continued upstream. Progress was painfully slow, with heavy kayaks loaded with 20 days of food and supplies. Having only scouted the rivers on Google Earth, we weren't quite sure what to expect. Once we arrived, a crazy weather system with heavy rains caused the rivers to rise about a vertical metre overnight. The clean, blue river became an indistinguishable brown, causing us to hunker down and wait for the river to settle. One day later, the river dropped back down and was again navigable.

The grueling portaging paid off. Our route linked together four different rivers, all with huge waterfalls and exciting rapids. The highlight was a river we nicknamed "Awesome River" with a beautiful 12-metre free falling waterfall, followed by an impressive 20-metre explosive waterfall that Erik paddled.

Summary

Southeast Ridge (5.10 A0, 1000m, 6 pitches of climbing), Nuksuklorolu Pinnacle South (69°46'53.13"N 69°32'43.74"W), Inuksuit Fiord, Baffin Island. FA: Erik Boomer, Sarah McNair-Landry, July 3, 2021.

Road to Nowhere (5.10+, 270m, 9 pitches), northwest arête (69°48'35.78"N, 69°44'4.39"W), Inuksuit Fiord, Baffin Island. Attempt: Erik Boomer, Sarah McNair-Landry, July 22, 2021.

Hotel Monica variation (5.10 A1/2, 300m, 7 pitches), southwest face, White Wall, Inuksuit Fiord, Baffin Island. FA: Erik Boomer, Sarah McNair-Landry, July 31, 2021.

The 100-kilometre ski approach from Clyde River to Inuksuit Fiord. Photo: Erik Boomer

Harmony and Grit on Lucania

Pascale Marceau

On April 26, 2021, Eva Capozzola and I became the first female team to reach the summit of Mount Lucania (5,240 metres), Canada's third tallest mountain. This gem is nestled deep in the St. Elias Mountains of Kluane National Park and Reserve in the Yukon. Lucania lies in the shadow of its famous neighbour, Mount Logan, Canada's tallest peak. Due to its remoteness and difficulty, this lesser-known peak does not see many footsteps.

People often ask, why Mount Lucania? Bradford Washburn and Robert Bates' gripping story of its first ascent in 1937 certainly gives the mountain a mystical allure that provides an enticing canvas for discovery and exploration. Simply put, it is a path less travelled. It is remote and wild, less scripted than many other climbs. The thrill of discovery is strong, and that fills my soul. Lucania stands at the end of a prolonged route, so we were afforded the time to learn her rhythms, to move in harmony in her world. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, Lucania is a beautifully aesthetic climb in a breathtaking part of our country.

We have also pondered, does it matter that it was all-women? I was not sure going into it, but have since learned that it was deeply meaningful to me. The dynamic we had as just two women, looking out for each other, trusting and believing in each other created a space that invited us to step up. It was empowering. There was space to feel bold, confident and to trust our decision-making while encouraging the other to assess risk. We had 21 days to connect and to be present with each other, Lucania and with our own bodies and minds. What we found was humility and grace and just the right amount of grit—a magical recipe that brought ease to the difficult hours.

Eva and I barely knew each other before we started the climb. After meeting for coffee once through a mutual friend, we casually agreed to go on an adventure together someday. It was fall 2020 when I reached out to Eva about partnering up for Lucania. We certainly both felt some trepidation about undertaking such a committing project with someone we had not yet shared demanding circumstances. How would we mesh? Could we problem-solve effectively? Would we even have fun? Due to the pandemic, we only had the opportunity to ice climb together for one day. All our preparation was over video chat. It wasn't until we were self-isolating in Whitehorse that we got to know each other.

Pascale Marceau works along the Steele Traverse. Photo: Eva Capozzola

Our two-week quarantine turned out to be a silver lining. We discovered that our motivations and values were aligned. The rare downtime allowed for focus, methodical preparation, deep conversations and set a calm tone for the expedition, a stark contrast from the typical format where team members come screeching in, join up for a chaotic gear sort then jump onto a glacier plane. The feeling of trust in our systems, in our preparedness, in our skills and experience instilled a tranquil confidence. We were ready. Once we got on the mountain, all we had to do was embrace what was ahead and move forward.

On April 15, we landed on the Upper Donjek Glacier (2,734 metres) and started moving. As we made our way toward Mount Steele, which presents itself before Lucania, we were graced with incredible weather—something I'd never seen in my three years of obsessing over the meteorological patterns of the area. Ours was not a smash-and-grab mission; we were prepared to live on the mountain. Our route required this approach, which is a key reason we chose it. First, we pulled sleds on skis, and then as the terrain steepened, we transitioned to crampons. Finally, we reached a more technical point where it was time to set aside the sleds and start double-carrying our supplies. This meant that we would scout the terrain ahead, carrying on our backs all the food and fuel we would need, deposit our precious cargo, return to our last camp and then relocate the tent the next day. We were following the "climb high, sleep low" acclimatization strategy. This route would see us above 4,300 metres for more than two weeks. Together with early spring cold temperatures, all this made for physically taxing conditions. Nonetheless, the more we progressed, the better we felt. The body and mind are made to move, to make decisions and to adapt. We were exactly where we wanted to be, we felt challenged yet at ease.

We ultimately reached the crux, the Steele Traverse, a technical section that would require a single carry, meaning we would have our heaviest packs while moving through steep terrain with significant exposure. Separated by our rope length and unable to hear each other through the fierce wind, we dug deep, each of us in our own mental world of focus, making sure every step was meticulously placed. This was it. We were committed to the effort, fueled by an attitude of possibility. Finally, the ground leveled out as we reached the plateau between Steele and Lucania. We made it together. On day 12, we shared a serene moment on the summit.

Pascale Marceau and Eva Capozzola on the summit of Mount Lucania. Photo: Eva Capozzola

Of course, we had the typical hardships that come with any mountaineering expedition of this magnitude. Most days were long and hard. We had tough route choices to navigate. We broke into hidden crevasses. We crossed formidable bergschrunds, faced wind and whiteout exposure. We carried 30-kilogram packs, pulled 60-kilogram sleds. We pitched out near-vertical blue ice, got really hungry and had various body aches to contend with. But all these hardships paled in comparison to what we discovered in the landscape and within ourselves.

We found flow, harmony, beauty and grace. Lucania allowed us passage into its world of snow and ice. We carry forward a calm confidence with us now and forever. We recognize that we are privileged to have been welcomed by the mountain, to have melded with her landscape and to have forged a bond with this hidden gem and ourselves.

The West Coast

Sun and Sanctuary

Kris Mutafov

EMERGING FROM THE DENSE FORESTS of Northern Vancouver Island are mountains of orangish hue, proud and confusingly barren. The trees and shrubs claw their way up the sides of the colossal structures. Visitors are seldom seen.

I first travelled the Tlupana Range in 2018, with two friends, Cassandra Riedstra and Zander Grubac. It was more of a "guidebook tick"—one of those obscure trips that you commit to, with little knowledge of what lies ahead. We had heard some very promising things from a mutual friend, which initially gave us the inspiration to drive five hours from the southern Island to this mystical zone that none of us knew anything about. I remember one black and white photo from the guidebook sticking out—the ridgeline was sleek, the mountain shape perfectly pyramidal.

We made it in and out, summiting Mount Grattan (originally named Pyramid Peak), and driving back to Nanaimo in one day. I swore I would return. The energy of the place absolutely captivated me, and I dreamed about it in the swirls of winter.

In the late fall of 2019, Cassandra and I made another trip up to the "Sanctuary," as we would come to know it as. We went in with intentions of summits and glory, but ended up in more of a dream state—almost unbelievable beauty soared at every moment in the November sun. We scrambled around a camp in a giant basin called "Shangri-La," and I imagined lines up every cliff I would probably never put up.

My third trip to the Sanctuary was the one that really put everything into motion. Keely Sifton and I went in with high hopes of establishing a new route, but an October set of rolling cloud banks kept every piece of rock at an unsettling level of wet. However, this didn't mean we left with any less inspiration. In fact, we both put canvas prints of the range in our houses, and repeatedly made a pact to put up a new line the following year.

FAST FORWARD TO AUGUST 10, 2021. We are fully loaded with climbing gear, camping gear and other goodies. It's go time. Keely and I are feeling ready to climb something big. Kevin Black is joining us in the vehicle. He brings with him a drone and other photography gear to hopefully capture some of the ascent. John Relyea-Voss, another friend, plans to join us the next morning because of a conflicting schedule.

Driving from Nanaimo to the approach road takes somewhere in the range of five hours. The road is paved until Gold River, at which point you turn onto a well-maintained gravel road toward the tiny town of Tahsis. Somewhere, hours later along this road, a completely inconspicuous and non-obvious patch of grass marks the approach road to drive up Perry Creek valley, which is the fastest approach to Peter Lake, our base camp.

Keely has brought a roll of flagging tape along, partly for us, and partly for John. She drapes a long piece at the start of the very overgrown, deactivated spur. With a laugh and a Sharpie she writes "Kmart bushwhack"—a joke from an auto-correction of "heinous bushwhack" in a group chat.

Kris Mutafov on the first pitch of Knock Your Crocs Off. Photo: Kevin Black

Keely Sifton enjoys a rest day on Peter Lake with Mount Grattan behind. Photo: Kevin Black

The flagging tape doesn't lie. Immediately after leaving the maintained gravel road, the alders and salmonberry engulf the vehicle. I quite literally mean engulf when I use this word. Driving the road requires faith in yourself, and faith in the road surface, that you are still driving in the correct spot. It's slow going, and tenuous. But this time, we laugh more than we white-knuckle the wheel. It is Keely's second, and my third time driving the road. I know that the branches flailing around the sides of the car will leave mild scratches, but I also know the car will get through it.

At various intervals, we stop and put up flagging tape banners with encouraging messages for John like, "Keep going, road is paved up ahead!" or "Starbucks in 2 km." The alders get bigger, and soon, Keely's vehicle is ducking through a literal tree tunnel, just big enough to get through. I feel like I'm entering some otherworldly portal. Finally, we reach our parking spot. Only another one or two kilometres of road walking now.

It's hot. Really hot. I mean, it's been a rough year for B.C. so far with the heat dome and several other heat waves. That doesn't make it any easier to hike in 32C with heavy packs, up a bushy logging road, though. Our ropes hang off our backs as we trudge uphill on the rocky surface.

When we leave the road, a bit of chest-deep bushwhacking through a cut block takes us down to Perry Creek. The red huckleberries and the mountain blueberries are fantastic, big and juicy, and we snack heartily.

The approach is almost as exciting as the climb itself. Even though it's the fastest way up to the Sanctuary, Perry Creek canyon is technical and full of surprises. I actually figured out the easiest way to navigate its cavernous depths on the first trip in 2018. Cassandra, Zander and I went in Crocs and waded through ankle- to knee-deep water in the middle of the creek, instead of bothering with the bad bush on either side. We did this today as well. There's only one spot where we have to hike up through the trees around a waterfall, but then it's back into the creek.

While wading, bizarrely angled cliffs careen around us on either side. In some spots the canyon walls are vertical to overhanging. The cobble in the creek starts turning into large boulders, and we have to pull some 4th- to low-5th-class moves on steep corners as we navigate around the wedged stones. Climbing these wet holds in Crocs with large climbing packs is somewhat ridiculous, but also laughably practical. More technical moves are everywhere. Hopping across a deep pool, delicately edge traversing. One boulder in particular is blank and the only way to get over it is to use a human crutch to push the leader up.

Finally, our efforts to grovel up this canyon are realized, and we climb out of the final set of rock slabs, cresting into the Sanctuary. Alava Lake greets us, shimmering in an emerald-blue colour. Grattan is visible, leagues above us still. Glacial rivers create the ever-present distant sound we all come to know in the mountains. It's so hot that we all immediately go swimming in the inviting water.

Kevin loses his sunglasses, and we cheer him on from shore. On his fourth attempt, he dives extra deep, and comes up holding the sunglasses, but calls out for help. I know something is wrong. We scurry to bring him to shore, and it becomes clear that his eardrum had burst. His world stabilizes after some time, but it will affect him for the rest of the trip. He hikes in pain and discomfort.

An hour later, on a technical downclimb through a gully, I disturb a nest of wasps. It's shocking to me, and I get stung several times. I don't know what goes through my head, but I let go, and begin sliding. Keely and Kevin will tell me later that they didn't think I was going to stop, and instead plunge 50 metres down into the gully's bottom. Somehow, I catch myself on a root.

The going is stressful afterwards. I feel as though I had a genuine near-miss, and I believe Kevin feels the same. By the time we roll up to base camp at Peter Lake, the sun is sinking, and I feel melancholy. I don't know if I will be in a proper headspace to put up the route, and I'm worried for my friend as well. I lie on the rock beds and stare up at Grattan's south face. I don't know if I want to do this, I think on repeat. I drift off, my mood changing a bit as I laugh to stupid stories.

We are all surprised when a holler comes over yonder the next morning. John has made almost unbelievably good time to base camp, given his independent route finding. His approach has been much less eventful than ours. We don't waste any time in the act of cooling off. It's already getting insanely hot. We change into bathing suits, and Keely begins inflating her giant pink flamingo she brought up. Reggae music turns on. We all jump off little cliffs into Peter Lake. I'm overcome by this rest day. I'm so used to suffering in the mountains, that sometimes I forget you can have relatively normal-style fun up here as well. The baby blue water is almost too vivid to be true—it feels more like an icy Caribbean Sea than an alpine lake.

Keely and I do a bit of scoping, and decide that the original line we were looking at is incredibly steep and has seemingly poor protection. Through the binoculars we imagine another line to the right, with a more appealing angle throughout. A few sections look dubious and weird, noticeably the first pitch, but this variation is most definitely possible.

Our camp life is stellar. It's so remote here that we would be shocked to see another party come up and share our real estate with us, so with

Kris Mutafov near the summit of Mount Grattan. Photo: Keely Sifton

style, we personalize our camp to include a large tripod structure built from nearby logs, and a tarp thrown over top of it for some much-needed shade. The wind plows through camp, and in a tragic moment, the pink flamingo sails across Peter Lake. Keely heroically runs around in her Crocs to save it. Classic alpinist problems.

The rest day is almost over. I am feeling hesitant and nervous still as I cook pita pizzas atop the Pocket Rocket stove. The cams, the nuts, the pitons, the harnesses and the ropes sit beside us on the rock, beckoning for the morning. Deep starry skies are brilliant out here, far from light pollution, far from people. We drift off to the Perseids meteor shower streaking the sky.

The morning comes in with a warm breeze and a late-summer haze. That prickly adrenaline is already coursing in, because I know now that we are definitely going for it. No holding off anymore. Click. Click. Click. I rack the cams to my harness one by one. Soon we are hiking around the lake.

It's not far, and it takes only half an hour to reach the base of our route—well, almost the base of our route. A pesky snow patch has created a bergschrund that is wide and gaping, and we must do a weird, sketchy and wet traverse through the depths between the rock and the snow. With that complete, now we're ready to start.

John and Kevin are waiting down below on the talus near the lake shore. Keely has me on belay. I'm looking up at the first pitch with a mix of dread, ferocity and resignation. I can't hesitate for too long. It's so brutally vertical and intimidating. I'm looking at what should be a bolted sport pitch. I start climbing.

Five metres up, I traverse awkwardly to the right to plug double cams in an unstable flake. I quest on another few metres. My heart is exploding by the time I finally get a few good pieces of protection in the main crack. Now I'm in the flow, placing gear and pulling myself up the rock. The climbing is hard, cryptic and engaging up blocky black and grey glacial polished basalt. The crux is slightly overhanging, and I am genuinely pumped in an awkward layback crack. I tell Keely to watch me. Somehow, I pull through, and charge the last 15 metres to a very acceptable belay point with two pitons and a cam. I'm pretty rattled by this immense 60-metre 5.11 first pitch, and I nearly consider bailing. The terrain above does look like it eases though, and that is my saving grace. I look at base camp while Keely follows, and I hear echoes of laughter from the rest day before. Different types of fun, I keep repeating to myself.

The next couple pitches are significantly easier and more solid. Keely leads a nice 5.8 that brings us to a sloping ledge, where we are able to let our minds breathe for a second before continuing. Now it's a 4th class ramble up orange flowy lava rock. This perfect scrambling leads to some more delicate low 5th class.

There's a problem, though. We've entered the sun. At this point, it is nearly noon, and the south face has become extremely hot. We both started with a litre of water, but the incredible exertion in the early pitches has meant we've had to drink nearly two-thirds of it already.

Another pitch. I'm getting so hot my mind feels it's melting. I can feel my skin baking. My shoes are oozing to my feet. I take them off periodically so my toes don't burn. Route finding is starting to become not fun, but desperate. It's as if the sun is an enemy that we must fight to escape. No belays are in the shade. I'm climbing like an angered animal up these 5.7 pitches and relaxing in every bit of darkness I can find in tight chimneys or nooks. Keely has become quite silent, and I can tell she is hurting, too.

Just when things are getting seriously dangerous, we find a very small cave in an outrageous position, high up on the face. To get into this cave's shade, we have to climb up on small uncomfortable edges into a slot. Miraculously, in the very back of the cave, the smallest water trickle is coming from some moss. Because of the severity of the situation, we are forced to spend over an hour in this cave, slowly gathering a bit of water and cooling our core temperatures down.

At last, we feel good enough to keep going. We are able to laugh about how obscene this situation is. I lead a very cool pitch through a slot break between a headwall and an expanse below. We start to wrap around the side of the mountain, drawn in by tantalizing shade on the east side. I think our route takes this detour mostly due to the sun; however, the aesthetic is also great. Upon poking our heads around the side to the southeast aspect, a beautiful, huge chimney corner reveals itself. It isn't hard, only 5.4, so we simul-climb most of the 150 metres or so in shaded heaven.

From the top of the mega-corner, the summit is in sight. We take our pictures, scramble over and tag the register. We're out of water again. Both headachy and exhausted, we plod down the west ridge. A couple of rappels land us on the col. I crack a smile, and we rush over to a water pool. I feel like James Franco in the movie "127 Hours" as I literally drink straight from the pool for more than a minute. Keely finishes nearly a litre from the Nalgene. It's over. We are alive again.

Singing and hustling, we ride the complex and bushy ridge back to base camp. By this point, it is super late, and the moon has come out. I yell down to camp once we are in shouting distance. Kevin and John are filled with relief, since they have begun to get really nervous. We all sit on the rocks and recap the day.

The next morning, it's time to head out of the Sanctuary once again. We say goodbye to Grattan. I thank the mountain for safe passage. We double-check our camp spot until it is indistinguishable from when we first arrived. It is important that places like the Sanctuary remain undisturbed. The splendor disappears as we rappel down Perry canyon, and with battered bodies, we wade home in our Crocs.

Knock Your Crocs Off on the south face of Mount Grattan. Photo: Kris Mutafov

Summary

Knock Your Crocs Off (5.11-, 600m, 15 pitches), south face, Mount Grattan, Tlupana Range, Vancouver Island. FA: Kris Mutafov, Keely Sifton, August 12, 2021.

Heavy Fuel

Will Stanhope

IT'S MORE OF AN EYRIE than a ledge—a small perch more often visited by falcons than human beings. The first ascentionists dubbed it Martini Pinnacle, and the routes in this neck of the woods hint at mind expansion with the help of external sources: Getting Down on the Brown, Bombay Sapphire, Gin and Juice. The climbing too, is just as mind-bending as the substances those climbers alluded to.

This particular zone, the Western Dihedrals of the Chief, is a complex place to become familiar with. Steep, accordion-like features mashed tightly together describe it well. Beyond the climbing, it's simply a beautiful place to be. One can gaze out and relish the many moods of Howe Sound, or as it's known to the Squamish Nation, Átl'ka7tsem. The rock here is, at times, streaked burnish orange. I wonder if it's from the incessant afternoon wind and sea salt blasting off from the ocean for millennia.

In August 2019, I snapped my finger in a moment of inattention followed by an instinctive, but ill-advised, lurch at the rope. "The bone looked like a bag of smashed potato chips," said Dr. Saunders, the surgeon at Lions Gate Hospital in North Vancouver. Three surgeries and eight months of rehab followed. Thanks to the miracle of modern medicine, my mangled claw turned into a hand again. For Dr. Saunders, and all the physiotherapists who helped me, I couldn't be more grateful.

As I've experienced before, there's a kind of post-traumatic paranoia after a serious injury. As Neil Young once wrote, the past is such a big place. We are, after all, the sum of our experiences. But there's health in movement, and therapy in motion. I needed a challenge to push me again, beyond the burden of nervy experiences in my past.

And, as if on cue, the Chief provided. I'd been staring at a slender pinnacle of overhanging granite for years from the Grand Wall but lacked the locality data necessary to truly differentiate what I'd been seeing. When I rappelled into it, I took a photo and texted it to my close friend Colin Moorhead.

"Do you know what this is?"

"It's called Stellar System," he responded. "An old Hirvonen-Moorhead aid line."

That made me smile. Squamish pioneers Kai Hirvonen and Colin had seen something unique and climbed this beauty via aid years ago. So often in climbing there exists a continuum of inspiration and shared vision that resonates through the decades.

The crux pitch of the route seemed too runout to climb without an extra bolt. I asked Colin and Kai if they'd mind me adding one. As I suspected, they didn't, but some compulsion kept me from pulling the trigger on the hammer drill as I hung in my harness, bit pressed to the granite. I just couldn't do it. The route was too beautiful, and the gear was there—if barely. Adding a bolt to the pillar felt like whipping out a can of spray paint at the Vatican, or defacing a Totem Pole. Just unthinkable. I slid down the rope on my rappel device, accepting my fate. I'd climb it as is or not at all.

I toyed around on the pitch on top rope throughout the summer, recruiting every friend I could to belay, try the pitch and enjoy the perch. The movement was unlike anything I'd ever experienced. It felt like wrestling an overhanging fridge using ultra-specific body positioning. I half-heartedly tried it on lead a couple of times and found myself wracked with nervous tension, my mind struggling to get over the big exposure, bizarre movement and sparse gear. In late September, with a bleak low-pressure system lingering in the long-term forecast, I recruited one of the steadiest mountain men I know, Ian Welsted, to hold my rope while I truly went for it on the sharp end.

"Here we go," I croaked to Ian as I left the belay. I focused on my breath, tried to squash the butterflies and find a rhythm with the rock. At the commitment point, I carefully plugged in two cams, shifted my body around the corner and aggressively slapped the right arête with an audible smack to keep in balance. Here the climbing went from vertical to wildly overhanging. Old quotes swam in my subconscious. "Drop into your own head and go on the adventure," said Eric DeCaria years ago in Indian Creek. This style of climbing is less about overpowering a pitch and more about submitting wholly to the experience.

What an outrageous place to be, I thought to myself, with my left foot in a subtle heel-toe cam, right foot on a small bulbous ripple, gently fiddling in a micro cam, right hand squeezing the arête. Upward progress meant scurrying my feet up the pillar as fast as possible and wildly slapping each side of fridge with all my strength. Tired, but not quite out of gas, I clipped the final piton and backed it up with a micro-wire, chalked up and once again returned my focus to my breathing. The final deeply insecure sequence culminates in a lurch for a ledge, way above the pin and shallow nut. A fall at the top would be gigantic if the gear held. If it didn't hold, it might be catastrophic.

Lacking the energy to climb the final moves safely, I downclimbed to my gear and retreated, defeated for the year. I had tried hard, and surpassed my previous highpoints by a large margin, and by the time Ian and I were on the ground, for some reason I felt more content than disappointed.

As we shuffled into the forest, I pondered the meaning of all of these granite mental games. Maybe there's a pride to be won in the act of pushing our boundaries. Less of a chest-thumping ego boost and more of a quiet confidence that stays with us as we walk down other roads in life. Little snippets of wisdom are gifts from the stone. Fear doesn't have to own us. We are capable of more than we think. I'll be back.

Postscript: I brought my old friend Sonnie Trotter up there and he concluded that the phantom, dangerous fall was perhaps all in my head. Emboldened by the words of a man who has tread that line as much as anyone, I managed to climb it on an unseasonably cool August day with my ever-patient girlfriend, Whitney Clark, holding my rope.

Arriving at the rim at dusk I was drenched in sweat and cramping badly in my forearms and hands. After coiling the ropes, I walked barefoot over to my favourite vantage point on the rolling slabs looking south. The highway snaked to Murrin Park, and the dark green, choppy waves blackened as night set in—an age-old view enjoyed by so many.

Will Stanhope on pitch four of Heavy Fuel. Photo: John Price

Sometimes it seems almost serendipitous that one discovers a perfect climb that can push you out of your comfort zone, and also out of a rut. After mulling that thought over, I made my way to the dark forest, feeling the lattice work of granite crystals and lichen under my toes. Feeling connected, feeling grateful. Hail to the Chief.

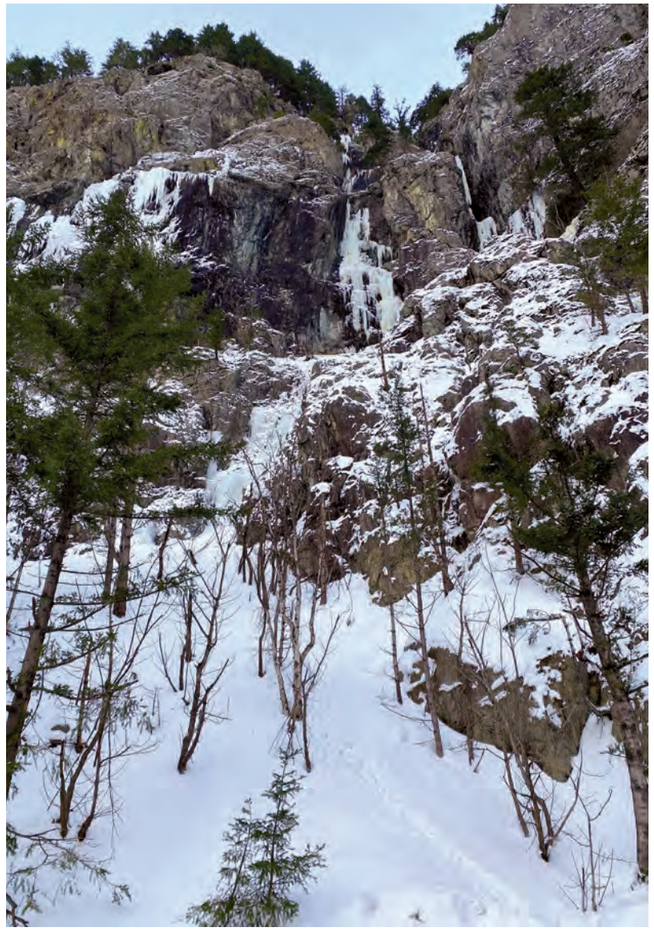
Summary

Heavy Fuel (5.13+ R, 8 pitches), Western Dihedrals, The Stawamus Chief, Squamish. FA: Will Stanhope, August 19, 2021.

Jade Warrior

Brent Nixon

Ballin' The Jack in Fraser Canyon. Photo: Brent Nixon



WE WERE LONG READY for some ice. The season had already begun a month ago in the Rockies and all we could do was stare at the forecast and hope for a glimmer of Arctic air. It was a long, wet fall; it always is on the Coast. Rock season ended in October with the monsoons, and our Vitamin D levels were falling faster than time slots booked at the Hive. Then it finally happened.

I texted Sean and then Facebook messaged him, then Instagram messaged him to be sure communication was certain. His thrifty cellular plan is hardly reliable, and I've learned to be redundant in my communications with him. Pirating Wi-Fi is an art, and this man attended years of art school. The Arctic outflow was forecast for Boxing Day, and we both had time off over New Year's. In my mind I thought, perfect timing—a few days of cold will allow the ice to grow.

Given the unusually cold conditions, we set our sights on the Hope and Fraser Canyon region. It had the potential to rival Canmore, given a cold enough weather window. So much unclimbed ice exists there, mostly due to the short window to actually climb it and the Duffy/Lillooet-centric mindset. The Fraser Canyon is a bonanza of ice for the savvy and wily West Coast climber.

We braved the black ice on the Trans-Canada, rolling into Hope at 8 a.m., and turned north toward the Fraser Canyon. Our necks craned out the window marvelling at the feast of ice flows littering the cliffs. Going on a whim, we looked for some rumoured-to-be-unclimbed ice near the Yale Tunnel. Jackpot! We found a cirque of ice just above the highway near the tunnel entrance. At giddying speed, we tied our boot laces, shouldered packs and marched up the slope to the ice. Literally 15 to 20 minutes above the truck and we were racking up for the first pitch.

Sean took the first lead of plastic WI2+. He ran the rope out 50 metres to a small, protected stance where I joined him. Looking up from below, it was hard to tell whether the ice was continuous, where it went, or whether it would go. Climbed that first pitch though, and the line unveiled itself. An impressive, steep WI5 second pitch led up 45 metres to a perfect, sheltered cave belay. The third pitch had a big question mark. Looking at it, the WI5 ice continued up for about 20 metres and then thinned out into a steeper, overhanging pencil of chandeliered ice and we still could not see what the topout was.

"Let's see what this is about," I said as I started up the third pitch. Assessing and reassessing and calculating each movement to plan for the unknown. Screw in that ice blob then commit to the pillar, I said in my mind. I knew I would keep going as long as I could find reasonable pro. My foot stemmed out onto a decent rock hold as I took a stance to test the pillar. Thud, thud. Experience recognized the sound. The pillar spoke to my senses and said it was solid. Conditions were excellent. The sun was just kissing the ice, making it slightly plastic. I barber pole spiralled up the overhanging pillar—one foot stemming out to rock and the other gently finding purchase in the fragile ice. A spray blob allowed my right foot to rest on the other wall while I sank a screw.

Topping out the pillar landed me on a small, off-balance stance, slightly pushed out by the steepness. I was at the end of the ice with no belay, but the corner continued. Another five metres and I could belay on a nice ledge with a solid tree. Five of my favorite pitons clanged on the rack. What a perfect occasion to use one. I twisted in the corner and fought to hold on while searching for a pin placement. The rock was compact and chossy. I settled on a marginal placement, wedged myself into position and very poorly tried to hammer in a Lost Arrow with my Nomic hammer. Terrible. It went in half way, and I was done playing. I tied it off, hooked a rock hold with my pick, stemmed my mono point into a small seam and reached up with my other tool to hook some frozen gravel.

Soon, I was belaying off a tree in warm sunshine, snapping photos of Sean and marvelling at his technique. "I never knew you were so flexible," I joked. He looked up and laughed, and yelled his signature, "You're crazy!" This is when a loud train thundered by on the tracks below and the name came to us—Ballin' The Jack—an old expression used to describe a fast-moving freight train (Jack) just givin'er (ballin').

Brent Nixon on pitch three of Jade Warrior. Photo: Steve Janes

following the december Arctic outflow, winter seemingly went into radio silence for two weeks. Temperatures on the Coast warmed, and I set my sights on the higher, colder Duffy region north of Pemberton. Shreddie (WI6) is a local test piece on the Duffy that doesn't always form and has one of the few bolted mixed climbing variations on the Coast.

Mixed climbing has never really been embraced in West Coast ice climbing culture, not like in the Rockies. I've climbed a fair amount of mixed in the Rockies, and I could see enormous potential on the Coast. Likely due to the shorter season, coastal ice climbers are seemingly happy just to get on ice, but I wanted to change that, and I knew just the partner to help me.

Steve Janes is an ice climbing machine. He is perpetually psyched to climb ice, even though he lives on Vancouver Island and has to take the ferry over to Horseshoe Bay, then drive three hours north to the ice. I messaged him, but he was already in Lillooet climbing - but was free on the weekend and wanted to stay longer. We hatched a plan.

Left of the main ice of Shreddie is a steep rock wall leading into reliably forming ice daggers and a hanging curtain. I think we both saw the line and imagined what could be. The initial plan was to climb Shreddie itself and then rap down and bolt a mixed line. However, the ice was a proper waterfall gushing water. We would have been soaked climbing through it, so instead I suggested bolting the rig on lead. Steve looked a little surprised and then nodded and said, "I'll belay you, dude."

I racked up with the drill over my shoulder and a pocket full of bolts. Stemming off the bottom pillar, I got a good hook then proceeded to hold on and sink the first bolt. I worked my way up through the choss placing bolts and shaking out to alleviate the pump. The route got harder as I got higher, with the holds becoming farther apart and the rock steepening. The last three bolts before ice, I had to place on aid because I couldn't find holds. Over the weekend we finished bolting the route but could not redpoint it.

I spent the next few weeks trying to find a partner for the send. Steve already had climbing trips lined up, but the season was ending, and I was dying to go back. I returned once with Mohammad Pahrbod, but the weather was too warm, and the ice curtain fell apart when I touched it. Finally, I partnered with local rope gunner Gabriel Viel-Côté. Conditions were excellent. Rumors circulated in Squamish that it was too warm for ice, but I ignored social media, knowing the Duffy is an ice box.

We got an early start from Vancouver and were in the parking lot at the base by 9 a.m. Conditions were good at –8C. Soon we were at the belay cave staring up at the line of shiny bolts. I warmed up placing the draws then lowered and rested while Gabriel took a rip. Consensus was it felt hard but doable.

On my second try I made it through the crux and was pumped out of my mind but could see the line of holds and sequence to get to the ice. Mentally, this is when you drop the clutch so to speak or put it in a lower gear for the win. I exhaled hard, shaking the pump out of my forearms and lunged for the next hold. My tool hooked a solid edge, and I wasn't letting go—squat then stand into a lock-off then reach for the next hold. Out of the corner of my eye I saw the ice dagger behind me and roundhouse kicked my mono point above a cauliflower.

As I rested there elated, stemming between rock and ice, I realized it wasn't over. There was still some hard, overhanging ice to climb. I transferred over onto the dagger slowly, carefully pecking pick holds as I made my way up into a Bombay corner between larger daggers and then transitioned out onto the easier hanging curtain. Hero sticks in plastic WI5 ice led to an excellent flat perch on top where I yelled, "Off belay!"

Jade Warrior was the name Steve and I gave to the route. It seemed fitting, as the climb required going into full battle mode, and the rock band known as Jade Warrior is one of Steve's favourites.

Summary

Ballin' The Jack (WI6+, 140m, 3 pitches), Fraser Canyon, Coast Mountains. FA: Brent Nixon, Sean Draper, December 31, 2021.

Jade Warrior (M9 WI6+, 100m, 3 pitches), Shreddie area, Duffy Lake Road, Coast Mountains. FA: Brent Nixon, Steve Janes, February 26, 2022.

In Plain View

Max Fisher

the sixth highest mountain on Vancouver Island, Mount Albert Edward (2,093 metres) is likely one of the most travelled. In the summer, it is attempted more than any other mountain on the Island, and in winter, it is regularly skied in a day. I often wondered why folks hadn't headed in there to climb the northeast face in winter. Access is straightforward, mostly a long, flat walk or ski to Circlet Lake, ascending the ridge, dropping off the ridge into the northeast bowl, walking to the face and climbing it. For being in plain sight from a ski resort, it would be reasonable to assume that someone should have climbed it before.

Alas, in winter no one had climbed the northeast face, or the northwest face either, for that matter. So, on February 15, Gabo Mancilla and I decided to head in there in the afternoon and sleep in Syd's Cabin. Our plan was to climb the face the next day and head home. We told Ryan Van Horne, Liam Gilchrist and Kris Mutafov our plan, and they decided to come in too and check out the northwest face.

We all woke around the same time and started our day from the hut. Soon after, we were up on the ridge getting blasted by wind as the sun was rising. Once we dropped into the bowl, we were on the lee slope and enjoying being out of the cold wind. As we walked across the cirque, we admired the numerous beautiful ice routes on the left; however, the challenge with these beautiful lines is the cornice that caps almost the entire ridge above. As we got closer to our intended line, Ryan, Liam and Kris headed over to climb Mount Regan and then ramble up the northwest face of Albert Edward.

Gabo and I kicked steps to the base of our route, geared up and started up an aesthetic ribbon of AI3 ice for 60 metres to complete pitch one. With a steeper but shorter second pitch—15 metres of AI4—we were on a big snow ramp that we traversed up and right for 100 metres to another ribbon of ice we followed to the top. As we pulled onto the ridge, Ryan, Liam and Chris were chilling after soloing the northwest face. We hung out enjoying the 360-degree views of the Island Alps before heading back to our skis and sliding our way back to the Mount Washington Ski Resort and our awaiting cars.

Summary

Northwest Face (AI3, 280m), Mt. Albert Edward, Vancouver Island Ranges. FA: Liam Gilchrist, Kris Mutafov, Ryan Van Horne, February 16, 2022.

Riquezas en La Vista (AI3+/4, 250m), northeast face, Mt. Albert Edward, Vancouver Island Ranges. FA: Max Fisher, Gabo Mancilla, February 16, 2022.

The north side of Mount Albert Edward:
(1) Riquezas en La Vista
(2) Northwest Face
Photo: Ryan Van Horne

Apex Predator

Tom Wright

DESPITE BEING WELL KNOWN to the local climbing community and easily accessible, new route development on the Fluffy Kitten Wall remains intermittent, and there is still a lot of potential for new lines. Located in a subalpine cirque below the northeast flank of Mount Habrich, most climbers visit for the popular Wonderful Thing About Tiggers (5.10d, 6 pitches) and then leave, never to return.

Knowing this, in August 2021, Colin Moorhead, Robbie Thibault and I headed up there with no real plan other than to escape the midsummer heat. We spent some time eyeing the wall for potential new free climbs before deciding on a plumb line right up the centre of the cliff.

Robbie began by leading up the first pitch of Cat O'Nine Tails, 50 metres of rambling up a chimney/groove system. From there, our proposed route would cut right and follow a mysterious route from the 1970s—an unknown 5.9 A0—before venturing into new terrain.

I led the second pitch, following an easy granite staircase to a steepening hand crack that ended at the base of an eye-catching, long corner crack. Robbie took the reins again, cleaning the crack of much vegetation as he progressed, finishing with a bold slab traverse out right to a belay (we later added a bolt that future ascents will appreciate).

Colin had been hanging back in support mode until this point, his eyes locked in on the prize pitch above us. I was all too willing to hand the ropes over to him, intimidated by the steep crack systems above, the best free climbing line uncertain. In his element and pulling from years of ground-up new-routing experience, Colin put in a valiant effort. Cleaning the rock of mud and lichen while continuing to onsight the steep 5.11+ cracks, he unfortunately came up short right below a prominent ledge 55 metres above us.

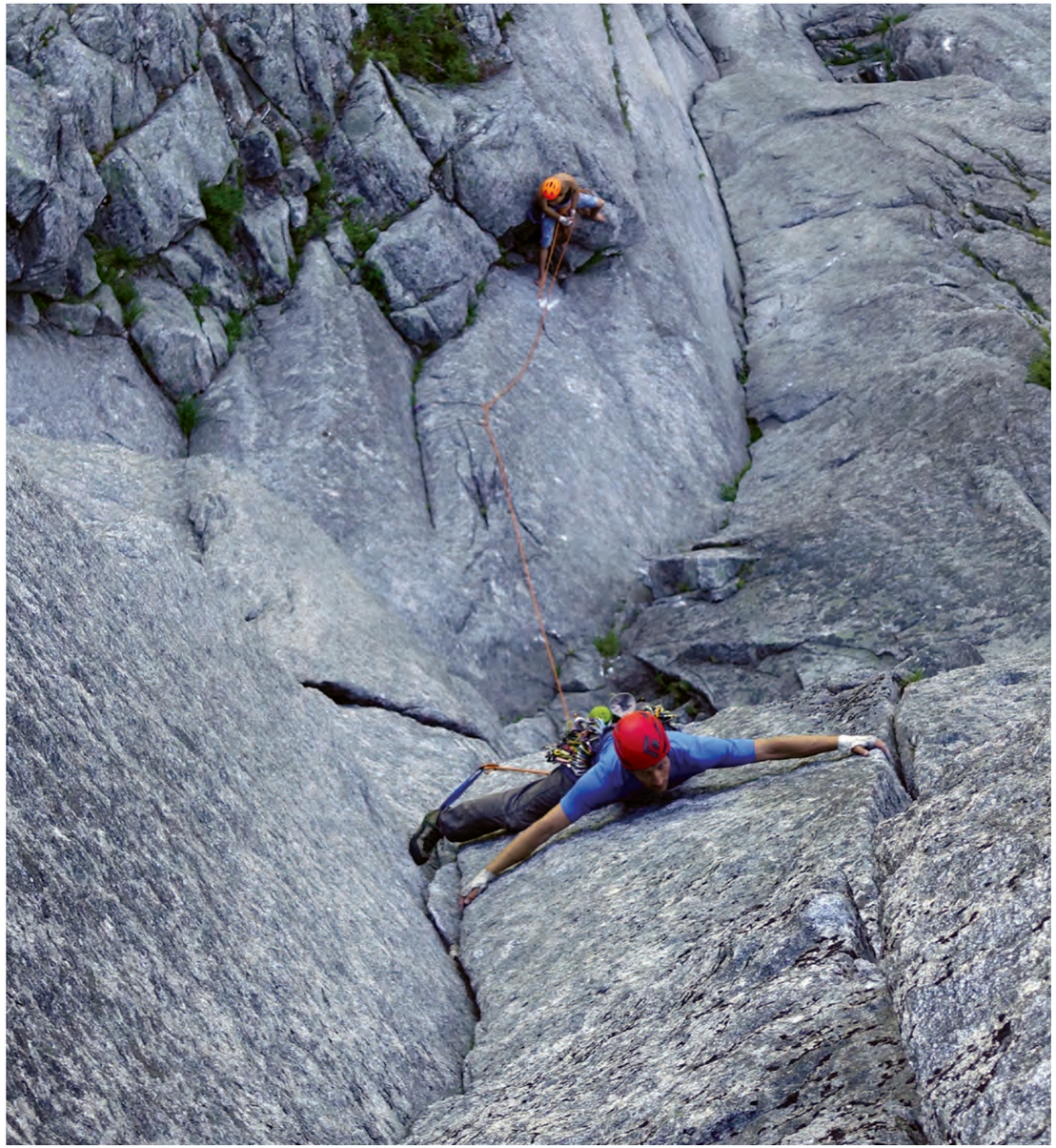
As we joined him on the ledge, I gulped while looking up at the pitch above. A technical, slabby sealed-shut groove awaited. This would be my first challenging ground-up lead, and it didn't look straight forward. I climbed upwards, weighed down by the unfamiliar feeling of the drill, bolt kit and pitons on my harness. I was quickly out of my element and soon hung on a shallow micro-cam placement I managed to excavate. The natural protection vanished, and I was able to stand high on the small cam to drill the first bolt. Another bolt followed before I managed to traverse left on small crimps to easier ground. The poor protection continued, however, and I took great pride in banging in my first piton before finishing the pitch, relieved to have done my job and not have let the team down.

Robbie finished the day with another impressive ground-up free-climbing effort up the final overhanging crack before a vertical bushwhack to top out the cliff. We rappelled off, doing some extra cleaning along the way, finally getting home after an 18-hour day.

Two days later we were back, with Olivier Ouellette joining the crew so we could climb in two groups of two. We all free climbed the route with no falls and celebrated, Squamish style, with ice-cold beers on the bank of the Stawamus River.

Summary

Apex Predator (5.11c, 7 pitches), Fluffy Kitten Wall, Mt. Habrich, Coast Mountains. FA: Colin Moorhead, Robbie Thibault, Tom Wright, August 12, 2021.



Robbie Thibault on pitch four of Apex Predator.
Photo: Tom Wright

Moon Dog Arête

Max Fisher

AS WE WERE PACKING GEAR late into the night at Mike's basement suite in Squamish, we each had a moment of "Wowza! That's a lot of cams!" or "We have enough bolts, right?" We didn't really know anything about what we were getting into, except that we were going to attempt a big alpine wall in the remote mountains of the central British Columbia coast on the eastern boundary of Foch-Gilttoyees Provincial Park. We had come across a photo of the wall taken from the air by a team climbing nearby in 2018, and knew of one successful expedition to climb the mountain by John Clarke in 1998.

On August 1, Ryan Van Horne and I got on the ferry from Vancouver Island and drove to Squamish to meet Mike Loch to do a mass gear sort before heading north. With the forecast looking wet for about five days, we decided to just drive up there and see what would happen. After buying food and a few more pieces of gear, we hit the road.

We rolled into the town of Smithers the evening of August 3 to overcast skies and scoped out our takeout point by Jesse Lake, which was accessed by logging roads outside the town of Kitimat to the southwest. Our plan was to hike and packraft out Jesse Creek after the climb. While exploring the logging roads, we found an ATV trail paralleling the right side of Jesse Lake that we were both surprised and psyched about.

We hunkered down for a few days in Smithers getting to hang with Drew Lieterman before heading to Terrace for our flight. Unfortunately, Drew had an ankle injury and was unable to join us on the expedition as planned.

Once the weather finally settled on August 7, we flew in by helicopter and got dropped off at the unnamed lake below Moon Dog Arête. Our flight was awesome. We got a great look at the terrain we were going to encounter and a good look at what we were calling Moon Dog Arête (unnamed on maps). We were all a bit taken aback by how devoid of natural features it was, with very few cracks anywhere.

Once unloaded at the south corner of the lake, we established base camp about 1.5 kilometres from the start of the wall. From there we shuttled a load of gear to the base to get a better look, and climbed three pitches of very polished slab using a mix of free and aid climbing. With such featureless rock, we needed to place bolts to keep ourselves safe.

The next day, we pushed the rope up three-and-a-half more pitches. Again, we encountered a mix of aid and slab, placing bolts for protection when necessary. At this point, we were getting into a huge section of mossy slab that covered up to at least half the wall. We found a spot to set up the pods and hunkered down for the night. It rained for the next few days, and we got quite wet. We decided not to climb in the rain as bat hooking up dirty wet slab wasn't how we wanted to climb this feature.

After some serious chats about whether we should keep going, the decision was made to go down. Poor weather and our short amount of remaining time played a huge role in our decision. With the speed we were going at, we didn't think we could climb the feature in the style we wanted to (as free as possible) and that it truly deserved. In the end we climbed six-and-a-half pitches and placed 17 bolts.

We packed up our soggy gear and started our descent to base camp. After arriving, we started organizing and packing to shuttle a load down the valley. In the late afternoon, we started walking with our heavy packs, found a nice gravel bar to drop our gear and headed back to camp. The next morning we loaded our remaining gear into the packs and headed down the valley. After two more days of shuttling loads (14 kilometres in total), we made it to Jesse Creek and where we would start packrafting. We loaded our boats and started the 20-kilometre float. It was a great class-II paddle almost all the way to Jesse Lake. After reaching Jesse Lake at about 8 p.m. on August 14, it took two more hours on trail to reach the truck.

The Foch-Gilttoyees are a magical coastal mountain zone with heaps of potential.

Mike Loch and Max Fisher below Moon Dog Arête and their highpoint. Photo: Ryan Van Horne

Acknowledgements

This expedition was supported by the John Lauchlan Memorial Award.

Squamish Ice

Sam Eastman

I had the pleasure of climbing two new routes this past winter in Squamish. It was an exceptional season while it lasted, with massive amounts of ice forming throughout the corridor. Tim Emmett and I made plans to return to our favourite spot in the Squamish Valley, named the Wild West Wall. The previous winter, in February 2021, we climbed a new route with Paul McSorley that followed the major corner weakness on the wall. We figured out after the fact that it had been tried by Guy Edwards and Andrew Boyd decades ago. We were able to put it together for three pitches, creating Wild West [see *CAJ*, 2021, vol.104, p.86].

In later December 2021, during an exceptionally cold snap, we returned for the harder-looking right-hand wall. Tim's truck read –20C when we arrived at the parking lot. It was chilly, but we couldn't believe our eyes when we arrived at the base. A 120-metre wall of barely formed madness. The first half looked hard. The upper half looked really hard!

Tim was nice enough to let me have the first pitch, a wild 50 metres of ice petals that I needed to hook rather than swing at. Just before the belay, I cut both feet off of the ice and used a heel hook on a large ice roof. I felt like Sylvester Stallone in Cliffhanger, but probably looked like a beginner boulderer. I brought Tim up to the belay, we exchanged gear, he gave me a sly smile and started up the next pitch. Tim climbed for 70 metres through a wild mixture of massive cauliflowers and poorly bonded ice.

Midway through the pitch, his screws and draws froze together, rendering them useless. It was so wet, yet cold enough that almost everything froze immediately. Tim is an absolute technician, barely swinging into the fragile mushrooms. It was a pleasure to watch. We rapped off and met our good buddy Tmac at the trucks. He had brought some beer out for us. What a legend! We called our new route Medusa (WI6+, 120m).

A few days later, Jia Condon spotted some ice in a deep corner on the Slahanny. We went to investigate, but didn't find much. On the walk out, we saw some danglers in a corner that looked too good to be true. They sat directly next to Luke Neufeld's route, the Barbarian (5.13d). I was intrigued.

I enlisted Niall Hamill for the mission. Niall looks kind of like a Viking and is a really experienced winter climber. Niall broke trail to the top of the Slahanny, and we started rapping into what we thought was the line. When we finally saw the ice, we couldn't believe it—massive bronze daggers hung from a roof. It looked like a harder version of Cathedral Ledge's Repentance in New Hampshire's White Mountains. We rapped to the bottom and started climbing. Niall began off with a nice long warm-up ice pitch, which led to the goods—a steep pillar to an improbable roof. It looked really hard, but we had the drill. Niall let me take the overhanging crux. It was a great experience of steep ice to an overhanging chimney. Transferring daggers directly above the belay was a bit spooky, and I was glad to get to some overhanging rock to finish the pitch. The gear consisted of short ice screws and the occasional bolt. I'd never encountered ice that overhung before.

Niall finished the day off with an M5 pitch, and we topped out in the dark. Niall galloped down the approach, while I mainly slid and fell, thus the name Jungle Warfare. Our route is graded M6 WI5/6. It's an exceptional day out on a very large wall. Every time I drive by, I still can't believe it. Thanks to Jia Condon and Luke Neufeld for all of the beta.

Summary

Medusa (WI6+, 120m), Wild West Wall, Squamish, Coast Mountains. FA: Sam Eastman Tim Emmett, December 31, 2021.

Jungle Warfare (M6 WI5/6, 3 pitches), Slahanny, Squamish, Coast Mountains. FA: Sam Eastman, Niall Hamill, January 2, 2022.

Sam Eastman on the first pitch of Medusa.
Photo: Tim Emmett

Diedre Ice

Tony Richardson

"I don't think so, Jia," was my first response when he called me to climb Diedre the next day. We had already had a mythical ice season, nabbing the elusive U-Wall Drool and perhaps the second accent of Echo Gladness along with some other fun first ascents in Jia's backyard. (He literally has a crag with waterfall ice flowing down it in his backyard). But, sitting in a traffic jam caused by intermittent rain/a blizzard on my way back from the Duffy, I couldn't believe Diedre would still be in condition by the next day. However, Jia insisted and I agreed to humour him.

The classic Squamish Apron rock climb, Diedre, was first done as an ice route in the winter of 1971 by Bob Funk and Neil Humphrey at WI3 R. It has had at least one previous repeat, in 1976 by Scott Flavelle and Dick Mitten, who only found one piece of protection in the two long pitches.

We met at the Apron parking at 7 a.m. the next morning. I still wasn't convinced, but it was cooler that night and it hadn't actually rained in town, so up we went. As we scrambled through the forest, I noticed that the snow was still pretty powdery. Maybe there had been some sort of inversion, I thought to myself. We didn't follow the actual summer rock line of Diedre, but went straight up the bulging slab where you exit the approach scramble. As we roped up at the last tree, I was pleasantly surprised to see a lot of ice and even some loose snow above us. It must be delaminating or rotting out underneath, I mused pessimistically.

The first few metres of climbing before crossing Diedre on the sickle ledge around the first stance was the thinnest, requiring some light tapping and minimal gear. As I climbed higher, it became progressively fatter, and I couldn't help but think, This is pretty good. And as I built the station on a good screw and a little cedar at the overlap about 65 metres up, I thought, Heck, this might go.

Jia grabbed the screws and launched up the next pitch, sinking a couple of good blues in before disappearing over the bulge. The rope kept going until it came tight, and I started climbing. It couldn't have been more flowy with perfectly laminated clear ice to the right of the corner for the tools and chalky névé in the corner to the left for perfect kicks. I noticed Jia had even managed get a long green screw in the fat ice flowing over the wall on the left as I approached the final step. It was at this point that I yelled up to Jia, "I stand corrected! This is really good!"

A classic coastal top-out of a few moves on slightly decomposing ice, a cedar-bough pull and drytool hook over a branch put me on Broadway. We high-fived, had a smoke and laughed at how absurdly perfect it was, then started walking down. Jia had stuff to do, and it was getting noticeably warmer by the time we got back to the trucks, so I decided the only thing to do was a quick solo victory lap before it was really done. Less than 20 minutes later, I was back at the top for a second time that morning. It was the perfect way to round out another sweet season of coastal ice. The moral of the story is never doubt Jia, when he says the ice is good.

Sam Eastman belays Tony Richardson on some backyard ice in Squamish.
Photo: Jia Condon

F$&# Cancer

Rich Prohaska

If you look back into *CAJ* back issues from the '90s, you will see my name written in some stories from grand adventures—some exotic, some local, some fun and some suffering, too. During the last stages of one particularly long trip, I had a discussion with my regular climbing partner, Jia Condon, about what enduring such a trip will add to our lives. We agreed after skiing and climbing 45 days in a row that everything else we do in life will be a breeze, and as far as mountaineering trips were concerned, we were right. In terms of expeditions, I've had some that were more scary, more dangerous and maybe even more rewarding, but none needed more determination than my current "adventure."

As my life changed with marriage, ménage and mortgage, I was challenged in different ways. Living a life of the daily grind was tough but normal. My mountain life goals tapered off in favour of guiding and family. That was finally starting to change as the kids were becoming adults and also becoming my climbing partners. I had big hopes and plans for returning to the grand ranges of the world with my daughter, who shares the same passion as you, the reader.

In the spring of 2019, things changed. I was beginning a new challenge—not in the mountains, but in my own body. It was a mountain that has no top, no summit cairn, no chains to clip and no chance of a first ascent. I was diagnosed with stage 4C colorectal cancer. As I learned more about cancer, I found that each of us contains around 30 trillion cells, and that they are constantly being broken down and new ones are built. When an error is made that cell may be altered in such a way that it does not act like a normal cell, and does not allow itself to be recycled into a new cell. It just replicates and grows. When we have the upper hand, we call ourselves cancer free. When the cells are large enough or numerous enough to be detectable, we call it cancer.

For the last three years, my life has revolved around the cancer I have and how to reduce those nasty cells to a minimal number. Every day, I thank God for the grit and determination built in me during my mountain time. With several surgeries, 14 months of chemotherapy, natural medicine, elimination of toxins, rest, prayer and many other methods, I have kept the cancer at bay. Not only that, I have gained back some weight, strength and confidence to climb on—literally.

This past February, Jia called and motivated me to climb some ice. After a day on the Duffy and a day mixed climbing around Another Day at the Office, Jia noticed some new ice formations on the Blackcomb Glacier ski out. The approach was via Spanky's Ladder with one line between Sapphire and Diamond bowl at 1,860 metres. The climb was mostly ice with a couple of chockstone bulges (WI3+, 35m). Just to the right was another one that Jia led (WI 2+ M4, 35m). We named them Cheesy Drip Right and Cheesy Drip Left. A few days later he found another one in the Calvin and Hobbes area and slightly higher at 1,900 metres. Two almost vertical steps resulted in F$&# Cancer (WI3, 35m).

Thank you to Jia, for your eagle eyes, and for your motivation to get me off the couch and to Blackcomb for continuing reliable climbing fun.

Jia Condon on Cheesy Drip Right.
Photo: Rich Prohaska

Vancouver Island Report

Lindsay Elms

Millions of Worms on the north peak of Matchlee Mountain. Photo: Kris Mutafov

In the 1988 Vancouver Island Report for the *CAJ*, Sandy Briggs wrote: "The fact that recent issues of the *CAJ* ring with a deafening silence about mountaineering on Vancouver Island may have led you to imagine that there is nothing going on here." He wrapped up his report by stating: "Climbing on Vancouver Island has been picking up steam in the last few years, … but there is still room for exploration." Well, I am excited to say that the billy is still boiling and producing steam and doesn't appear to be running dry if you read not only this year's report, but also the reports from previous years. Even the pandemic hasn't curbed exploration of the Island's mountains. In each of the mountaineering disciplines, there are names that continue to dominate the scene, but they are encouraging newcomers to either join them, or find their own mojo on the rock and ice. In this year's report, there are some young climbers new to the scene repeating established climbs and now producing their own hard routes.

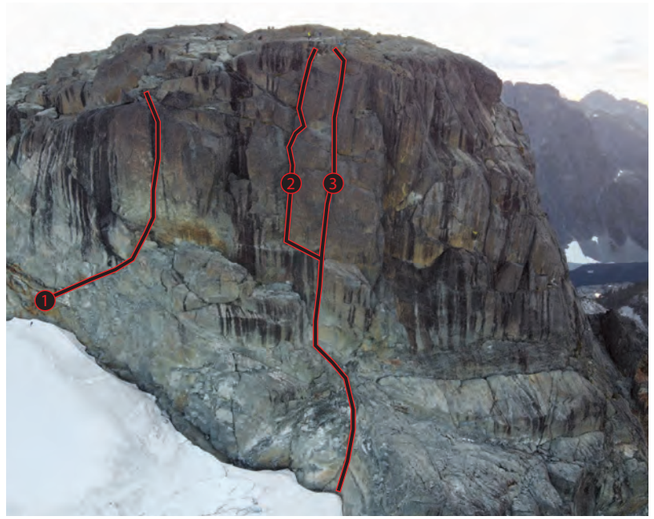
On January 16, the perennial trio of Danny O'Farrell, Steve Janes and Garner Bergeron climbed two new mixed routes on the steep wall to the right of the climber's trail near the ice box on Mount Arrowsmith: Master of Puppets (M4, WI4R, 80m) bolted on lead and For Whom the Bell Tolls (M6, WI5, 70m) bolted on rappel. On the same day, Randy Brochu attempted a solo winter ascent of Conuma Peak but was thwarted by the weather, however, the next day Jason Peters drove out and together they reached the summit, recording the peak's first winter ascent. A week later, Stefan Gessinger, Andrew Welsh and Evan DeVault climbed Flat Top in the Mackenzie Range via Canoe Creek.

Throughout the spring and early summer, a number of remote, obscure peaks on the Island's western side and north end received attention. On February 9, Rich Ronyecz and I climbed Kainum Mountain north of Atluck Lake. Andrew Schissler and Philip Stone spent a couple of days (Feb 2021) skiing an unnamed peak near Mount Romeo and Mount Juliet, which they appropriately named Capulet Peak. On April 4, Matt Lettington and Phil Jackson were joined by Jes Garceau and Dustin Hirschfeld and recorded the first ascent of Mount Renwick in Tahsish-Kwois Provincial Park. On July 3, Valerie Wootton and I made a rare ascent of Castle Mountain near Port McNeill and the following day made the first recorded ascents of Kilpala Peak North and South. Two weeks later (July 20) Valerie Wootton, Rich Ronyecz, Steve Kowal and I climbed Santa Cruz de Nuca Mountain, the highest peak on Nootka Island. Nootka Island is of significant interest, as it was the site of the first European colony (the Spanish in 1789) in what would eventually become British Columbia. The mountain was named after the Spanish settlement of Santa Cruz de Nuca near the Mowachaht First Nations summer village of Yuquot. A week later (July 27), Val and I made the first recorded ascent of Magee Peak west of Gold River. This was followed on September 1 by the first recorded ascent of Frisco Peak at the head of the Neesook River, and the next day Cala Tower. The spectacular Half-Dome-like north face of Cala Tower had been attempted by Max Fisher and Philip Stone earlier in the winter, but still awaits an ascent.

On April 17, Mitchell Baynes, Stefan Gessinger and Jonathan Skinnider set out on a 10-day, 80-kilometre ski traverse through Strathcona Park. After being dropped off by a friend at the end of a logging road below the Carey Lakes, the three skied southwest toward the Aureole Snowfield and Mount Celeste. They continued south past Mount Harmston, Shepherds Ridge and the Central Crags at the head of Flower Ridge, and then around the Mount Septimus/Rosseau massif, Cream Lake and on to Bedwell Lake, where they picked up a food cache. They then skied onto the summit ridge of Mount Tom Taylor and continued southwest to Mariner Mountain. From Mariner Mountain they continued south for a day and then turned west, traversing Penny Mountain and Holey Mountain, finally reaching Abco Mountain. It was a heinous descent to the mouth of the Moyeha River at the head of Herbert Inlet, where a water taxi picked them up.

Mike Ness (leading) and Lindsay Ness on pitch three of Hummingbird on Nomash Slabs. Photo: Kyle Bourquin

In April, the peaks of the Prince of Wales Range received a lot of attention, especially Mount Kitchener and Needle Peak. With the road to the mini-hydro on Canoe Creek west of Port Alberni allowing quick access to the Mackenzie Range and Canoe Peak, it was an ascent of The Cats Ears from this side that had often been discussed. On May 12, Barry Hansen and Rich Priebe hiked up to the dam and then accessed the hanging valley to the west of the peak. Although snow in the valley



The east face of the Comox Glacier summit block:
(1) Unkindness
(2) Conspiracy
(3) Cracked Theory
Photo: Kyle Bourquin

was nicely consolidated, it was the thick bush and the micro-navigation that was time consuming. The pair eventually reached the summit, however, it ended up being an 18.5-hour trip car-to-car. Partially inspired by Rich and Barry's ascent, a week later Darb Erickson and Will Krzymowski decided to attempt The Cats Ears from the Triple Peak trailhead at the head of the Marion Main, the ascent from this direction having been achieved only twice before. Three times, they optimistically felt they were approaching the main summit only to see another peak beyond, but finally ran out of time and turned tail. Theirs wasn't the last attempt on The Cats Ears, as Rod Szasz and Rick Ronyecz also made an attempt via Canoe Creek, but ultimately, they too ran out of time. On May 16, Matt Lettington, Phil Jackson and Dustin Hirschfeld made the first recorded ascent of Kwois Peak and this was followed two weeks later by Rich Ronyecz and me. On May 18, Liam Gilchrist, Kurt Schluessel, Keely Sifton and Kris Mutafov climbed a new route on the north peak of Matchlee Mountain, which they called Millions of Worms (5.8, 140m).

The X-gully on Mount Septimus saw several ascents in May, including the first snowboard descent, by Josh Overdijk, from the summit on May 25. Markus Rannala completed the Adder Mountain to 5040 Mountain traverse (40 kilometres) in 13 hours. Also in May, Casey Matsuda, Kyle Bourquin, Laurel Frost-Mitchell and John Relyea-Voss climbed Mount Colonel Foster from the south. On June 18, Josh Overdijk day-tripped Crown Mountain, climbing a new route, While The Empress Is Away (5.9, 100m).

Over the July 3-4 weekend, Michael Ness, Kyle Bourquin and John Relyea-Voss bolted a new 15-pitch sport route on the Nomash Slabs called Hummingbird (5.11c or 5.10 A0). It shares the first pitch of Taledega Highbank and then goes right, eventually topping out on an area of the slabs not previously climbed. On July 28, Ryan Murphy and David Benton opened up a new five-pitch route, Wild Onions, on the newly developed Bonanza Bluffs southeast of Beaver Cove. It appears this was one of the first times a drone was used on the Island to gather information on the route. The access trail to this bluff starts at the second pullout past the 21-kilometre mark on the Kokish Main, and is marked with orange flagging.

On August 10, Kris Mutafov, Keely Sifton, Kevin Black and John Relyea-Voss trekked into the Mount Alava/Bate (Tlupana Range) and Mutafov and Sifton put up a new line on the south face of Mount Grattan, Knock Your Crocs Off (5.11-, 600m, 15 pitches), on August 12 [see page 55]. A little further northwest in the Haihte Range, Thunderbird (V 5.10, 1000m, 22 pitches) continued to receive attention with an ascent by Samme Bateman-Hemphill and Tyler MacLachlan on August 13. The two then bivouacked on Nathan Col and the next day established a new multi-pitch route on Merlon Mountain via the northeast ridge (5.9, 520m) and then traversed south over the central and south peaks, calling the route The Brontosauras Traverse.

In 1896, Rev. William Bolton and his small party, who were making a north-to-south traverse of Vancouver Island, climbed Snowsaddle Mountain, which was on a drawing they had of the area. Unfortunately, they didn't get to enjoy the view as they encountered inclement weather. One hundred and twenty-five years later, over the July 31 weekend, the mountain saw what was probably only its second ascent, by Phil Jackson, Matthew Lettington, Dustin Hirschfeld and Jes Garceau from the head of the Benson River.

However, the most outstanding climb of the year, by Josh Overdijk, was the enchainment of all of the peaks encompassing the Elk River, including King's Peak, Elkhorn Mountain, Elkhorn South Mountain, Rambler Peak, Slocomb Peak, Mount Colonel Foster, Volcano Peak, Puzzle Mountain and Wolf Mountain, over three days in early August. In 2014, Mike Boyd and Josh completed the traverse in a single push, inspired by Greg Foweraker and Peter Croft's 1986 attempt. This time, Josh wanted to do it solo and in reverse. Beginning at the Crest Creek Crags, Josh climbed through the night summiting Wolf and Puzzle Mountains, and then took a short nap. Early in the morning he topped out on Volcano Peak, then traversed around Volcano Lake and descended into Butterwort Creek. This was followed by the traverse of Mount Colonel Foster and Slocomb Peak. At Elk Pass he took a four-hour nap and then climbed Rambler Peak via the south ridge and descended the north ridge. He continued over Elkhorn South Mountain and then up the south ridge on Elkhorn Mountain in the setting sun. He traversed Elkhorn in the dark and was greeted by the sunrise on King's Peak. After 60 hours, Josh reached the bottom of the King's Peak trail where it joins Highway 28, a few kilometres east of Crest Creek Crags.

In August, John Relyea-Voss, Kyle Bourquin, Laurel Frost-Mitchell and Casey Matsuda headed up to the Comox Glacier with heavy packs to climb on the untouched east face of the summit block. On August 23, the four climbed Conspiracy (5.10a, 115m, 6 pitches) and the next day John, Kyle and Casey climbed Cracker Theory (5.10a, 100m, 5 pitches). On August 25, Kyle and Casey climbed Unkindness (5.10d, 30m). These are the first technical routes on the red basalt rock of the summit block.

The ACC Vancouver Island section started posting trips again on its website in the summer, but reminded members to be mindful of social distancing. Naturally, many were excited to finally get back into the mountains with their friends. Slide shows continued to be well attended through Zoom, and almost once a month there was a presentation. One presentation had folks getting up in the early hours of the morning in Germany to log in. Unfortunately, the club was unable to resume trips with the Inter-cultural Association due to COVID-19 restrictions, but members are looking forward to resuming their connections in the new year. The youth section also had plans curtailed but managed two trips: a family week at the section's summer camp at Griswold Pass, consisting of 15 young people between the ages of eight and 18, and a character-building trip to the section's Hišimʸawiƛ hut on 5040 Peak. They encountered heavy precipitation and so were unable to achieve their objectives, but still loved being in the mountains. Finally, only one person completed the Island Qualifiers this year. John Relyea-Voss became the 46th recipient of the award, which was first presented to Rick Eppler in 1986.

Although at the end of 2021, the Omicron variant of COVID-19 is sweeping across the country, it is not likely to be found hidden in any crevices of the mountains, so climb on but be safe.

Wild Onion on Bonanza Bluffs.
Photo: Ryan Murphy

The Interior

The Light Slinger

Stephen Senecal

BETWEEN 2019 AND 2020, Aaron Harris, Mark Dalgliesh and I established several new high-quality alpine climbs in the Mulvey Group. Our focus was a new route on Mount Dag and new routes on the West and East Wolf's Ears. This area sees steady new-route development, primarily at the hands of a small group of locals. There are still vast quantities of untouched rock, but careful route selection is required to avoid the local white kitty litter and find a line of connecting cracks.

Robertson Basin is easily accessed using the Gimli Peak trail. Once in the alpine on the established trail, you can leave the trail heading due east aiming for an access notch near the Wolf's Ears. Robertson is a lovely alpine basin containing several aesthetic climbing peaks, some nice looking three- to four-pitch walls, many big boulders and two glassy tarns with some good camping options. This area is out of Valhalla Provincial Park, but tread lightly, as usage of the area is increasing rapidly. Climbers will be most excited about the Wolf's Ears, two gneiss towers that present the basin's best climbing opportunities.

The line of The Howler caught my eye during almost every previous trip to climb established routes on the Wolf's Ears. A steep face with an obvious corner at the top and some question marks at the start. In August 2019, my main alpine climbing partner Aaron Harris was keen, strong and inspired by the line. We set up a beautiful camp on smooth rock slabs next to an alpine tarn and quickly got to work on a new line up the steep south face of the East Wolf's Ear. My history with new routing in the Valhallas has shown me that if it looks like it might need a bolt or two, then bring a drill. You rarely get lucky and find sneaky protection. Splitter cracks are rare in this range and the face climbing is often very good. So up we went, drill short fixed to a tagline, connecting great face climbing on bolts, some incipient cracks, the odd roof pull and finally a nice moderate corner to the top. Two days of effort and we had established a fine, new alpine route with a simple approach and easy rappel descent.

The West Wolf's Ear has seen the lion's share of recent route development with a handful of modern routes completed by David Lussier and friends. In general, the rock is quite good, the approach is simple and the descent is straightforward. In early September 2020, Mark Dalgliesh and I followed discontinuous cracks and corners between Helix and The Gift up the centre of the south face with the intent of aiming for a nice-looking splitter. Thinking we'd hit some blank sections of rock, we loaded up a haul bag with a drill, bolts and other goodies. Strenuous hauling through the first low-angled pitch had us cursing at our fat piggy haul bag, which in the end wasn't needed. We got to our precious splitter, and it was a beautiful finger crack that ate gear—totally worth the effort to get there. The route finished off with some nice corner climbing and an easy, but exposed, scramble to the summit. We named our route The Pack after our cumbersome haul bag that turned out to be the crux of the day.

Mark Dalgliesh on pitch three of The Pack on Wolf's Ears West. Photo: Stephen Senecal

Mount Dag is the unsung gem of the Valhallas. While most folks enjoy Gimli, with its gentle approach, plentiful routes and beautiful shape, Dag sits deep in the Mulvey Basin with a long, tedious approach and a remote, wild atmosphere. Aaron Harris and I had repeated the lone free route on the wall Riding Skinfaxi in August of 2019. We loved the feeling of a hard, multi-day climbing adventure, right in our own backyard. Soon after repeating that route, we were drumming up a plan to return and attempt a new route on Dag's north face. Midsummer 2020 came around and we had good fitness, a great forecast and all the stoke. The Dag approach is not simple, especially with big packs. Lots of tedious slab scrambling, up and down route finding and the beloved down-falling through alder and berry bushes—all made somewhat enjoyable with plenty of huckleberries and the potential for a surprise grizzly bear encounter. Having done the long apron approach the year before, we knew where not to go and soon found a pleasant 4th- and low-5th-class route up the easy stuff. The apron ends at the Smorgasbord Ledge, perhaps the finest bivy ledge on Dag complete with snow/water access, great sleeping nooks and a host of friendly packrats. This ledge carves across the main north face of Dag and gives easy access to three of the four established routes on the wall.

Aaron Harris at the sitting bivy at the top of pitch seven on The Light Slinger. Photo: Stephen Senecal

With the afternoon to eat, drink and recon, we walked around craning our necks looking for the most inspiring line. In the end, after much debate, we settled on a new line smack in the middle of the face. Despite the dark- and wet-looking appearance, the line seemed to have enough corners and features for a good free-climbing attempt.

The next day was full of fun climbing with just enough spice, wetness and route finding to keep us entertained and laughing. A sprinkle of rain was a nice touch. With many pitches to go and fading light and energy, we settled on a very small bivy ledge for the night. The biggest two sections of our ledge accommodated one sitting climber each and proved to be a lovely spot to slump over and stare at the stars for six hours. We continued to the top of the face the next day, climbing mostly hard 5.10 pitches, placing the odd piton, dropping the odd piton and revelling at some of the Valhallas' best rock.

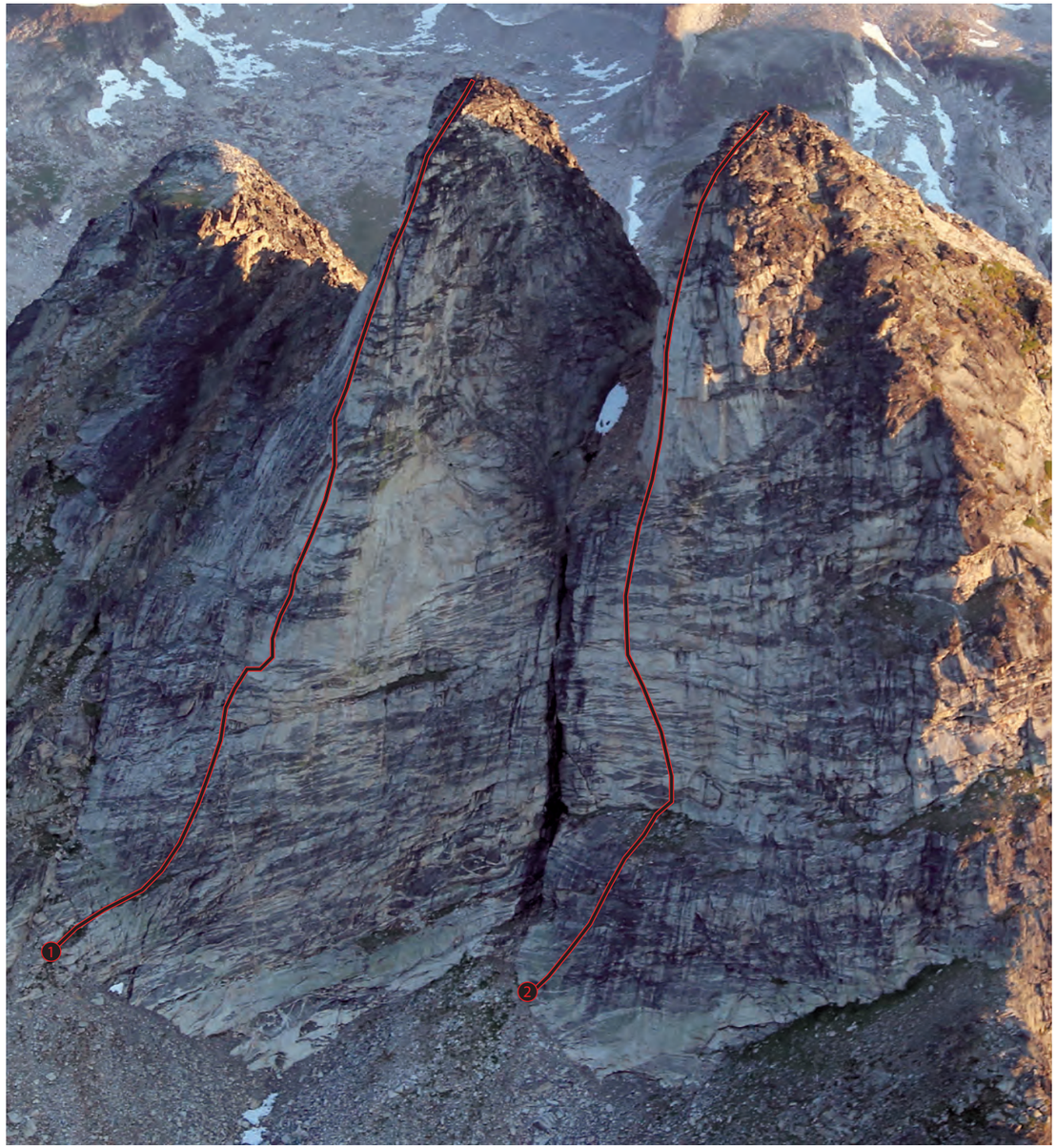
In Norse mythology, Dag, or Dagr, is the divine personification of the day. Dag rides his horse Skinfaxi through the sky, circling and illuminating the earth. Thus, we named our route The Light Slinger. After spending a total of four nights on Dag, some cold, some rainy, we feel the arrival and departure of the sun on this north face has always been a powerful moment.

Summary

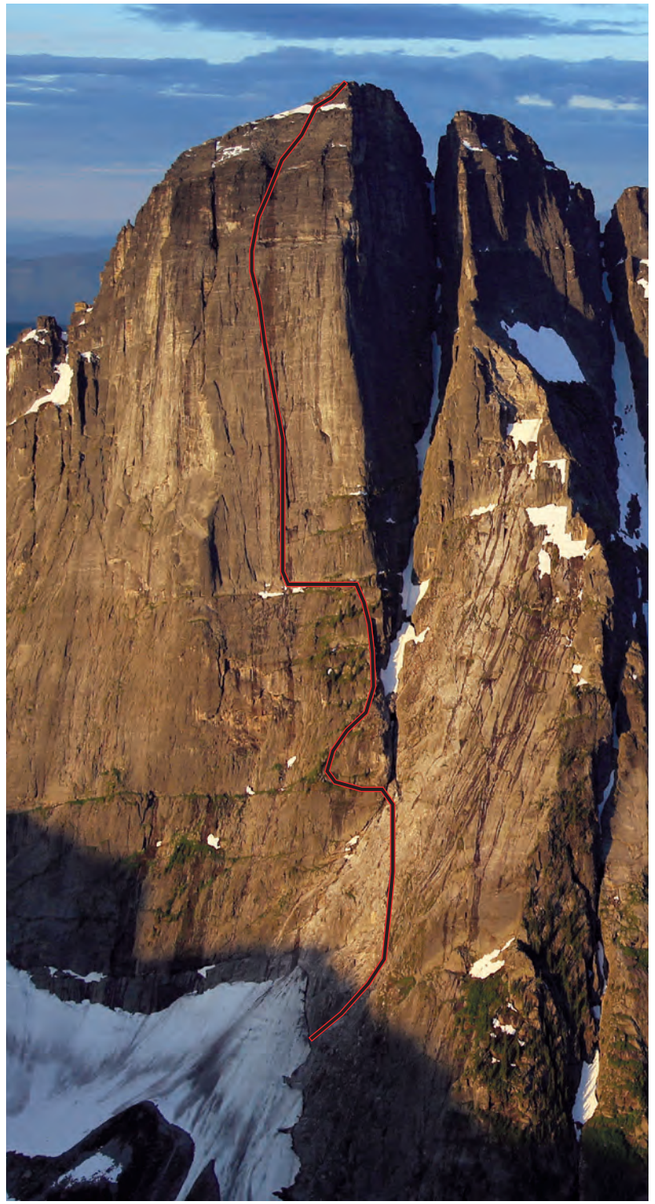
The Howler (5.11b, 200m, 6 pitches), south face, East Wolf's Ear, Valhalla Range, Selkirk Mountains. FA: Aaron Harris, Stephen Senecal, August 30, 2019.

Rack: Cams from #0 to #4 Camalot (double #0.3 to #2), nuts, 14 runners, 60-metre rope and tagline if hauling.

P1: 5.7, 30m. Climb out of the right side of a shallow cave to a ledge with a small tree. Climb up from the right side of the ledge with good protection to the slab above. Climb easily up the slab to a large, boulder-strewn ledge with a two-bolt anchor.



The south face of Wolf's Ears:
(1) The Pack (2) The Howler Photo: Douglas Noblet



The Light Slinger on the north face of Mount Dag.
Photo: Douglas Noblet

P2: 5.11b, 35m. Move the belay seven metres right of the bolted anchor to the base of a right-facing corner. Look for the bolt high above. Climb the corner to two spaced bolts above. Clip bolts and trend left into a left-trending roof. Pull the roof at its end to a stance and a hidden bolt. Make a tricky move into another left-trending roof and a final crux move (bolt) to a good ledge with a two-bolt anchor.

P3: 5.10d, 28m. Pull a tricky move above the belay to an open-book corner. Climb up and through a bulge to a bolt and a stance. Climb boldly up and right to stacked pillars and a two-bolt belay below a roof.

P4: 5.11a, 30m. Traverse left along the wide crack (dirty and chossy but easy) toward a cave. At the cave, step right onto blocky terrain. Climb up onto the slab above, clipping two bolts. Continue up the slab to a thin crack (piton). Crank through techy moves clipping another bolt and passing a big scary flake to a great ledge with a two-bolt anchor.

P5: 5.10b, 30m. Climb up the left-facing corner to under the big chockstone until it's possible to move left and climb cracks on the face. Climb back right through a bulge to a good ledge with a two-bolt belay.

P6: 5.8, 20m. Continue up the left-facing corner until it's possible to move right into another left-facing corner. Climb this to a large ledge with a bolt and sling belay. Scramble to the summit.

Descent: Six single-rope rappels down the route.

The Pack (5.10c, 250m, 5 pitches), south face, East Wolf's Ears x, Valhalla Range, Selkirk Mountains. FA: Mark Dalgliesh, Stephen Senecal, September 6, 2020.

Rack: Double set of cams to #2 Camalot and singles of #3 and #4, nuts, 14 runners, 60-metre rope.

P1: 5.6, 30m. The route starts about 20 metres right of Helix. Walk the Helix ledge past one boulder and belay a few metres right of the boulder under a roof. Pull a bulge above the boulder, then follow flakes aiming for the base of a broken left-facing corner and a nice belay.

P2: 5.10a, 50m. Climb up left of the corner, avoiding the chossy quartz corner. Some gear can be found in the small overlaps left of the corner. At the bulge, pull carefully around the corner to the right and trend right to a nice left-facing corner. Climb this to its end and trend right to the base of a nice crack. Pull through a steep section (crux) and up to a good belay below a nice splitter.

P3: 5.10c, 30m. Climb the splitter finger crack. At the roof, move right and then back left to pull the roof. Climb up past a piton to a good belay on a sloping ledge out left.

P4: 5.10a, 50m. Traverse a few metres left from the belay and climb into the left-facing corner system. Climb up the nice corner system until just below some roofs and chimneys where it is possible to climb up and right to a big ledge and good belay. This pitch could easily be broken into two. Mostly 5.8 with one tricky move.

P5: 5.6, 50m. Climb a couple of steps above the belay and then stem your way out of a small alcove to gain the ridge crest. Scramble along the ridge crest to easier terrain and belay

Descent: Descend the west ridge in two 25-metre rappels or some 5.5 down climbing.

The Light Slinger (ED 2 5.11b, 900m, 13 new pitches), north face, Mount Dag, Valhalla Range, Selkirk Mountains. FA: Aaron Harris, Stephen Senecal, July 31–August 2, 2020.

Rack: Double set of cams to #3 Camalot, one each #4 and #5 Camalot, nuts, runners, 60-metre rope, small pitons and hammer.

P1: 5.10, 55m. Starting from the centre of Smorgasbord Ledge, climb rambly terrain to a long left-facing corner then up this to a good ledge on the right.

P2: 5.10, 30m. Climb the left-facing corner above the belay to a ledge. Traverse the ledge five metres to the left to another left-facing corner. Exit the corner up easy, but runout, face climbing to a belay at a ledge.

P3: 5.10-, 35m. Traverse to the left side of the big roof, climb around the roof and make a short step down and left into a right-facing corner. Climb up this and trend left to a good ledge below a big right-facing corner.

P4: 5.10, 35m. Pull a roof in the corner. Continue up the corner to a stance on some blocks. Might be wet in the early season.

P5: 5.11-, 40m. Continue up the corner to a stance where the corner splits.

P6: 5.10-, 50m. Climb up the right-facing corner, which turns into a left-facing corner that is followed to a blocky ledge.

P7: 5.11-, 50m. Climb some techy moves up the open-book corner. The climbing eases into hand cracks and some easy face climbing to the base of a long right-facing corner (sitting bivy).

P8: 5.10, 45m. Climb the right-facing corner with good stemming and good gear. Belay on easier terrain.

P9: 5.10+, 40m. Continue up the corner with good stemming and good gear. Pull around a bulge with some loose flakes on the right. Gain a ledge and head five metres to the right to a belay (small gear and knifeblades).

P10: 5.10+, 35m. Head up a small right-facing corner above the belay. Transfer up and left to another right-facing corner. Climb up this to easier ground and the White Whale Ledge (good bivy).

P11: 5.10, 40m. Move the belay 15 metres to the left. Pull through some steep terrain or avoid it on the left. Climb a long ramp to an open-book corner right of some big roofs. Belay at a good ledge.

P12: 5.9, 50m. Move right from the belay to a right-facing corner. Climb up this to a big boulder-strewn ledge and belay on the left as you crest the ledge.

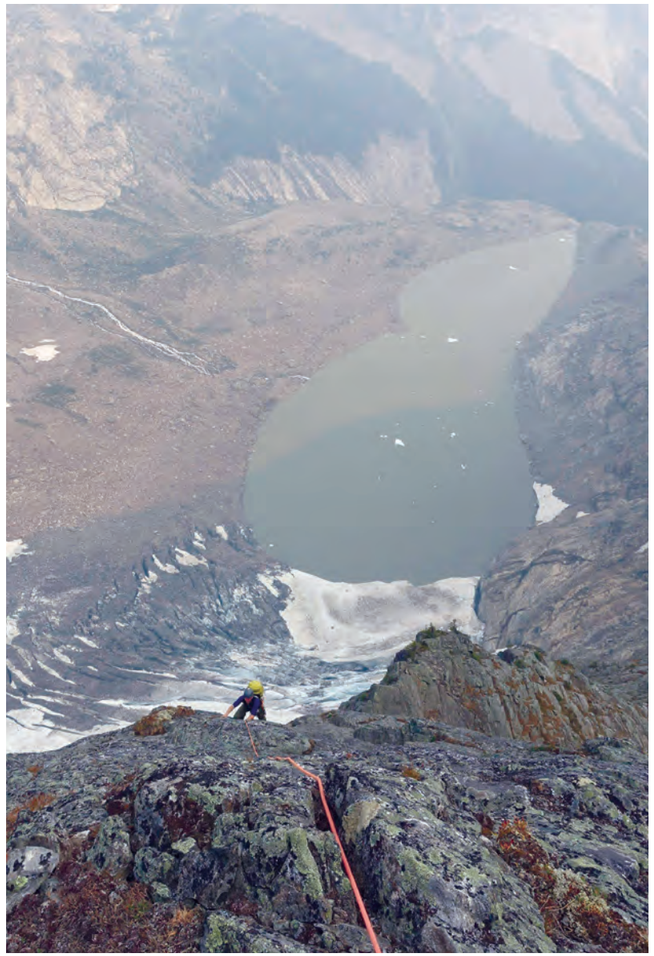
P13: 5.6, 65m. Scramble up the easy groove on the right up to one final short move through a small step. Scrambling leads to a good belay, then 4th-class scrambling leads to the east ridge and on to the summit.

Descent: Descend the broad south ridge of Dag. After about 250 metres, the ridge narrows and becomes quite steep. Look to the right (west) for cairns and a short 5th-class step down a chimney. Rappel or solo down this step and continue down scrambly terrain to the Robertson Basin. Ascend up to the notch just south of the Wolf's Ears into the Gimli Basin.

Grady Train

Dan Rohn

Dan Rohn on the lower third of Grady Train. Photo: Shep Howatt



AROUND REVELSTOKE, the ridgelines of Burnham and Grady in the Monashee's southern Gold Range are iconic. While the area is frequented by skiers in the winter months, there doesn't seem to be as much climbing activity in the summer. I first explored the Gold Range two summers ago when Adam Zok and I climbed the stunning and rarely travelled traverse along Stegosaur Ridge from Mount Niflheim to Mount Thor. Mostly soloing low- to mid-5th class and rappelling along this exposed sidewalk in the sky, the crux climbing involved four to five pitches in the 5.8 to 5.9 range from the deep notch between Andvari and West Thor. We were both super excited after our first climbing adventure in this local alpine playground.

I came back this past year at the tail end of the heat dome in early July with my partner Abby Ryplanski. Most of the trip was spent approaching climbs and then immediately retreating to camp to seek refuge from the never-ending thunderstorms. Like clockwork, these would roll in as soon as one of us started up the first pitch of a climb. We managed one successful morning of climbing two new pitches around 5.10- up the west ridge of Frigg Tower, followed by the east ridge of Mjollnir Tower (Mavis and Robert Bauman, Rob Blaue, 1989). We'd talked about climbing the north ridge of Burnham (Bowers-Ellis, 1995) or Frigg Newton [*CAJ*, 1985, vol.68, p.58], but the weather didn't allow us to hop on anything too committing. After staring at the prominent north ridge on Grady for the whole trip, I knew I had to come back later in the summer to give it a try.

Pierre Hungr held the 2021 Backcountry Mountaineering Camp on the shores of a hanging lake across the valley from Mount Grady. The heat dome that brought blue skies at the start of the season was the cause of a brutally smoky July and August. I kept in touch with Pierre about conditions up there, and finally a weather/smoke window lined up with my schedule. I asked my buddy Shep Howatt (a generation ago our parents were climbing together), who didn't have to think twice, and we timed our approach to conveniently arrive at camp just in time for gourmet enchiladas. Not only did we score dinner, but Pierre and Natelle generously had tents with proper mattresses for each of us. Even with these creature comforts, neither of us slept well as we kept thinking about exposing ourselves to the icefall and the unknowns of the route. Or, maybe the lack of sleep was due to gorging on a luxurious alpine feast.

Grady Train on Mount Grady. Photo: Alan Jones

At first light we scurried across the lower glacier underneath the recently active upper icefall to the base of the north ridge. Overall, the climbing went relatively smoothly, other than a tender left hand after Shep accidentally

Dan Rohn and Shep Howatt on the summit of Mount Grady. Photo: Shep Howatt

kicked off a rock while leading the third pitch. The north aspects here aren't renowned for their rock quality. Some pitches were slow going, with us managing loose rock and alpine gardening for gear placements. Other pitches were quicker because there were clearly no placements available to slow us down.

The steeper sections of the route proved to be better rock quality and fun climbing on featured gneiss, although the gear was often run-out. The position was amazing, with dramatic rock towers, pristine alpine lakes and a rumbling glacier below. The north couloir between Grady and Burnham, which was first skied recently [*CAJ*, 2021, vol.104, pp.26–33] was continuously echoing with falling rock and ice as we worked our way up the ridge. The final headwall was the biggest unknown and it looked daunting from lower on the ridge. It turned out to climb and protect well at a similar grade of 5.8 to the previous cruxes on the route.

Throughout the day the smoke started rolling back in, and by the time we were on top at 6 p.m., we were robbed of any views. After radioing into camp that we'd managed to make it up (we had an audience all day), we started downclimbing and rappelling the east ridge. A bit more scrambling around the south side of Burnham, and we were able to take our harnesses off just as it got dark. That night we slept under the stars as the beautiful August air rained ash on us. Of course, we finished the adventure the next day with a classic Monashee bushwhack—at least gravity did most of the work.

Summary

Grady Train (TD- 5.8, 850m), north ridge, Mt. Grady, Gold Range, Monashee Mountains. FA: Shep Howatt, Dan Rohn, August 14, 2021.

Access the base of the ridge by crossing the lower glacier underneath the upper icefall. (P1–4) Climb the left-hand weakness (not the ridge's larger central weakness) roughly 80 metres west of the north couloir (Gold Card Couloir). Difficulties to 5.8 with loose rock and marginal gear bring you to lower angle terrain above. Then climb low 5th- and 4th-class terrain for approximately 200 metres trending right toward the larger central weakness. A notch is reached between the central weakness and a small northeast-facing gully. (P5–7) From the notch climb up and left onto mid-5th class slabby terrain. Continue until the angle begins to increase again. (P8) Climb a left-facing corner system to a belay below a small tree/shrub. (P9) Climb right onto the face of the ridge and then up to a prominent ledge. (P10–12) Continue along the path of least resistance directly up the middle of the face. Difficulties to 5.8 on solid rock but run out in places. Then scramble approximately 150 metres of 4th-class terrain to the base of an obvious "tooth" feature. (P13–14) Climb around the left side of the "tooth" to the base of the upper headwall. Belay at the notch between the headwall and the tooth. (P15–17) Enjoyable climbing directly up the headwall to the summit with difficulties to 5.8.

Balm of Gilead

Steve De Maio

"STEVE, YOUR DOPAMINE LEVEL is in the tank; almost non-existent." I knew that dopamine was known as the feel-good neurotransmitter—a chemical that ferries information between neurons that the brain releases, contributing to feelings of pleasure and satisfaction as part of the reward system. "The good news is, any dopamine that you do get, you use very efficiently." Further to that, he began to explain the electronic impulses of my brain. "You will notice here that your brain is locked in this one area, so much so, that other areas of your brain are undernourished. And, the place that your brain is locked, is a very dark place. You're an interesting case. It's lucky that you have so many other resources in your life. Most people with their dopamine levels as low or nonexistent like yours, as well as having their brain locked in such a dark place, have already committed suicide." The doctor stopped with that, made eye contact with me for a moment and then said, "You know, if we gave you the street drug ecstasy, you would know what it feels like to be a normal person for a couple of hours."

I suppose I took this information in in the same way that I would attempt to deal with a toaster-sized block that has shifted under my hand on steep, loose limestone—calmly get my weight on my feet, pry the block loose and attempt to push it off to the side so it missed the ropes and my partner.

I asked, "So do you think rock climbing and risk sports have helped me manage these issues through the years, providing me with a sense of wellbeing?"

"Absolutely," he answered and he moved on to the next items.

IN 2014, I WAS TURNING 50, my kids were 11 and 14 that summer. I had been retired from serious rock climbing for more than a decade, and I was on the leeward side of having to quit ultra-distance trail running because of extreme hip arthritis and pain. We were at our cabin at the Outback Resort in Vernon, B.C. on Lake Okanagan. The kids were in the swimming pool. I had taken the boat out and scoped the small granite crags on the water's edge a few weeks before. They were not high, but they extended for hundreds of metres, and there were many outcrops. In all, there was more than 1,000 horizontal metres of water-washed granite within a 10-minute walk of our cabin. I was leaving the pool with an old pair of windsurfing booties in my hand. My son asked, "Where are you going, Dad?"

I laughed and said, "I am going to go and see if I can find some trouble." This was my first foray

Steve De Maio on the Ragged Edge Cliff section of Balm of Gilead. Photo: Breanne Fleming

at working the long series of granite traverses over the water on Lake Okanagan.

I must say, this granite exploration kept calling me like a siren. My days of exploring new ground high on a windy alpine crag were long in the past and way beyond my psychological and physical capacity, but this waterline granite was extremely engaging with some self-possession, and an appropriate challenge. There was loose rock, but there was also excellent rock. Some of the climbing was 3rd class, but some of it was harder than I could climb. Much of the climbing had me smiling as I moved with rapture over granite that has been water scrubbed for 10,000 years by waves and wind. Further, some of it was definitely old school—5.6 or 5.7 terrain over shallow water that was no-fall terrain. I was rusty, and my body moved stiffly, but my brain was filling with happy drugs that I had not experienced in a long time. I began to get into the dance of climbing, and the bliss of moving over stone.

For the first few years, I was just climbing in neoprene windsurfing booties and was swimming around hard sections along the 300-metre outcrop that I later called The Ragged Edge.

The Ragged Edge has got a bit of everything, something for everyone, really—everything from 3rd-class scrambling to 5.11 boulder problems. The two 5.11 cruxes are boulder problems over deep water, or deep enough water to take falls into. There are also some necky sections, six to eight metres up, which have bad landings over rocks or shallow water. That said, these can be easily swum around or waded by.

In 2018, I decided to designate an old pair of rock shoes for the wet work on the route. A young gun, 20-year-old boulderer and soloist Sean Wilson, saw me working it, and he joined me on one outing. Sean did some impressive and bold pioneering on the route, climbing several sections that I had been too chicken to attempt due to bad landings or shallow water. I managed to follow all of his "leads" except for The Traverse of the Goats. It's a bold section about eight metres up above shallow water. It is 5.8ish and loose. I have backed off it twice so far.

While Sean was climbing across on the grassy choss-covered ledges at the end, he was still high up, and I could see his descent line—a loose 5.5 wall that he would need to down-climb. I soloed up and cleaned the loose rock off his descent line. When the old, gray-haired guy with a bad hip got up to the young gun we had a special moment above the rocky landing. I said, "Sean, you are one bold fellow, with exceptional skill." And then I continued, "There is an old saying, however, that there are old climbers and bold climbers but no old, bold climbers. You have demonstrated boldness and skill here. You need to make sure it doesn't kill you someday." He listened quietly. It was clear he was quite comfortable in this element.

Sean and I both fell off the Spiderman Sequence. It remained the last five metres to be climbed on the whole of the traverse. Sean left for work, so I spent the next few weeks attempting it.

The Spiderman Sequence was right at the edge of my current climbing capacity. I had fallen off it about 30 times in the few weeks before. I was rehearsing the moves one sunny evening when the crag was bathed in alpenglow, and I re-tweaked an old rotator cuff injury trying the powerful iron-cross move. I should have stopped and let it rest, but it was the end of the season, and I was so close to making the final link up. I sat on the ledge for about half an hour. I shut my eyes and the sun shone through my eyelids; my whole body felt warm. My brain was alive with the last hour of moving over stone. Surely, there is a Balm in Gilead! I would have one more shot at it. The moves were fluid, and for about a minute, I moved like a younger man, the rock felt comforting, and comfortable, and I flowed through the Spider-Man sequence almost lightly. My hip didn't bite, and my shoulder didn't twinge. My brain smiled. Out of the corner of my eye, a black raven stopped its pecking and left its stick-covered ledge above, to head west across Okanagan Lake and disappear over the horizon.

I continued exploring the other crags and outcrops of the waterline granite in 2020 and 2021. The climbing was definitely a little on the esoteric side. It has an adventurous feel, yet the commitment level is quite low, since you can literally just swim or walk home at almost any moment. In addition to the 300 metres on The Ragged Edge, I added more than 700 metres of terrain as I explored north, bringing the whole area to 1,000-plus metres

Nick Leblanc swan dives over Steve De Maio as he traverses the Rocky and Marie Cliff section of Balm of Gilead.
Photo: Karen Snyder

of climbing. I have given names to each of the individual crags north of the Ragged Edge. They are: Boston Slab (5.10), Rocky and Marie (5.11), The Jaws of Paradise (5.11 S), Fools Gold (5.8 S), Golden Age (5.10) and The Raven (5.9 S). The climbing to date ranges from 3rd class up to 5.11. I am delighted to report there are some sections I was unable to climb as they were just too hard for me. These are given the S grade, where I swam around the difficult parts. I suspect they could be 5.12 or maybe even harder. There is a really blank section over deep water on the Jaws of Paradise cliff that could attract some of the "hard crowd." There is incredible potential for more hard boulder problems along the length of these crags. The whole thing, even if you go fast and have rehearsed it, all takes about three hours (and that's with me swimming around some the harder sections.) It's like a long alpine route lying on its side. Of course, I have also spent afternoons working away at one cliff, or even just one hard problem. Part of the fun of this area is that you can still climb here in summer when it is 35 C. You just jump in the water to cool off, and shoes and hands dry out fast in the heat.

In June, 2021 we sold our cabin. On my last day there, I finished exploring the last of the crags, The Raven. My hip was giving me grief, and I climbed up to about 5.9 and swam around the harder parts. As I sat atop the last piece of rock, I pulled off my wet rock shoes and closed my eyes. The sun filtered through my eyelids and there was a wall of rose red filling my peripheral vision. I could feel the rough rock under my feet, my shorts dried in the heat, and for a moment, the abrasions no longer stung, my hip was quiet and my shoulder was serene. Yes, there was a Balm in Gilead.

Antipodean Buttress

Alex Geary

WHEN STANDING ON THE SUMMIT of Mount Tupper, I'd always been intrigued looking down the north side and wondering what the climbing would be like. One buttress in particular that stands out leads to the west summit of The Camels, and as far as I could figure, nobody had ever tried climbing it. North-facing rock routes are always tricky to get in good condition, especially when there is a huge bergschrund to start the route. I'd made tentative plans to try it with a couple of different partners in the past, including making it to the parking lot and turning around due to fresh snow.

This time a good weather window appeared in late June, still early in the season so I was hoping the bergschrund would be easy to cross. My friend Penny Goddard happened to be available and was keen to check it out, so we headed up to camp on the Tupper Glacier.

In the morning we went to strap on our crampons for the approach and I realized I'd done an Alex Honnold and brought my fully automatic crampons that wouldn't fit on my boots. I managed to improvise a couple of attachments with some Dyneema slings, figuring we would only need them for the approach. Luckily, we were able to find a relatively easy spot to step across the 'schrund onto the rock, so the improvisation worked.

Penny Goddard tops out on Antipodean Buttress. Photo: Alex Geary

We followed the line of least resistance up the lower half of the buttress, swapping leads and generally avoiding difficulties on the right with some zigzagging on ledges. From the snow slope in the middle of the route (not present later in the season), we climbed the upper section of the buttress pretty directly, with short, steep sections up to 5.9. It might be possible to zigzag around and avoid most of the difficulties. As seems to be the norm in Rogers Pass, the rock can be very difficult to read. Sometimes a steep wall looks impossible but turns out to be easy when lots of big, positive edges appear as you start moving up. At other times it is the opposite, where a low-angled section looks easy but turns out to be blank, smooth quartzite.

Upon reaching the west summit, we decided to take the Tupper traverse ledge to get back to the west ridge, which was my first time following the ledge in its entirety. Although a little quicker than climbing up and over the summit of Tupper via the east ridge (the way I went the last time from the top of the Camels), it's certainly not trivial, with lots of exposed and scrappy scrambling, a rappel or two and one very exposed, awkward step that we belayed. Apparently, similar to much of the terrain in New Zealand, Penny was right at home as I slowly crawled across the steep grass, slabs and loose rock. If doing it again, I would choose to climb over the summit of Mount Tupper as I think it's more enjoyable and less stressful.

As for the name—Penny being from New Zealand and myself being from Australia—Antipodean Buttress seemed fitting.

Summary

Antipodean Buttress, (D+ 5.9m, 400m), north face, The Camels, Rogers Pass, Selkirk Mountains. FA: Alex Geary, Penny Goddard, June 25, 2021.

Antipodean Buttress on the north face of The Camels. Photo: Alex Geary

Trikootenay Traverse

Douglas Noblet

ON JULY 23, 2020, Dean Richards and I set off on a 10-day summer traverse in the Purcell Mountains. About a year prior, I had skied 390 kilometres through the Purcells from Creston to Quartz Creek near Golden. This time, we were going from the Canal Flats area to Argenta, about 80 kilometres in distance.

The trip started in a cutblock above Whitetail Lake with a faint trail leading to the subalpine and easy ridge walking. We camped at a lake near Mount Saint Maur. In the morning, we walked over the summit, then followed ridges and wildlife trails to the west. After dropping below the ridge, we followed more awesome wildlife trails, with a bit of scrambling to arrive at Barn Lakes.

The following morning brought a light north flow with cool crisp air. We finished climbing to the col just north of Barn Mountain and dropped to a lake below. After contouring south, we dropped to valley bottom, then up to some small lakes four kilometres south of Pert Peak. Camp was by a small tarn at the top of Frying Pan Creek. A herd of stampeding elk woke us up to another clear, cold morning. Easy ridges to the southwest began our day with, once again, a network of wildlife trails to follow. We spotted a wolf and a few whitetail deer. We then summitted a peak just north of Mount Peechee via its east ridge, mostly easy scrambling with a section of 4th class. After enjoying some time on the summit with clear skies and light winds, we descended south and then west along some convoluted terrain to finally camp above a small lake just north of Trikootenay Peak.

In the morning we descended to the Dutch-Carney creek col. A short and steep bushy climb north led to a plateau with beautiful alpine tarns. We spent the rest of the day contouring around the north side of Saffron Peak, taking a high route on snow above treeline. After climbing to a col northwest of Saffron, we dropped to the Saffron-Christine col (Toby Creek headwaters) to camp.

The morning was once again bluebird, and we descended to the west below Mount Christine to the marshes below Griswold Peak. Wildlife trails in the forest effortlessly led us through what we expected to be quite a bushwhack. This was where our summer trip intersected my winter ski traverse. After contouring the bug-infested marshes to the north, we climbed up to the mostly frozen Eagle Nest Lake and camped near the lake.

The following day, we day-tripped to the summit of Griswold Peak—three hours of easy 3rd class via the south ridge with a short au cheval section that can easily be bypassed. We enjoyed bug-free, bluebird views of Mount Toby and the heart of the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy.

After two nights at Eagle Nest, we were off to a buggy early morning. We climbed to a col west of the lake and descended to Greasy Rocks Creek, crossing it on a nice log. Thick bush up and out of the valley led us to the summit of Mammary Peak, via the north ridge. From there, we descended to camp at Lake Bonny Gem.

Waking up to another clear day, we worked up to the McLeod-McLanders col and down toward some small lakes exploring limestone bands. Continuing west up Bacchus Ridge to the summit of Mount Beguin, we camped just south of Winters Peak.

On our last day, we wrapped around the south ridge of Winters, then moved west along some nice meadows to Heart Lake. We hiked out the Heart Lake trail to get picked up at the parking lot.

Technical gear wasn't required, which kept my base pack weight to 10 kilograms. Food was another kilogram per day, making the starting weight about 22 kilograms. The route we followed covered 80 kilometres and 8,500 metres in elevation gain. Nearly every time we expected a bushwhack or a crux, a game trail provided the most efficient way through. It was truly a special way to explore the southern Purcells.

Dean Richards on Griswold Peak. Photo: Douglas Noblet

The Rockies

Stringing Up the Lights

Taylor Sullivan

WHILE OUT ON A LARCH RUN around the Lake Louise group a few weeks prior, I had spotted an obvious line of ice starting to form high on the north face of Mount Temple. It was hiding behind the north ridge, out of sight from the highway. Living in the area for several years, I didn't recall ever seeing that ice before.

I took a few pictures and carried on with my run, letting my mind drift off during the flow state to that of dreams and experiences on Temple, romanticized visions, fueled by the classic tales of Canadian hard men I've been reading about for years. It is hard not to be inspired running in the shadows of these mountains.

Once I got home, I spent the next few nights combing through the *CAJ* archives and any guidebooks that mentioned the north face of Temple. I found a lot of cool climbs, but nothing that matched what I had seen. I reached out to a few friends to see if anyone would be dumb enough to join me for a long cold day dodging serac fall on the grand nordwand. Needless to say, everyone seemed stoked on the idea, but hands weren't shooting up to join. Until Chris Petrauskas asked me if I would be interested in trying the Elzinga-Miller route on Temple's north face. I sent him the pictures, told him the idea, we discussed our options, and the next day I was finishing work and driving straight up to Lake Louise for a quick nap and early start. Our plan was fast and light for the Elzinga-Miller: one 50-metre alpine rope, a single rack, small selection of pins and a light set of screws if we decided to go for the new line.

Starting the walk up toward Lake Annette, we caught up on what had gone on in our lives since we'd last talked. We fumbled around in the boulder field below the face for a while, then eventually turned the headlamps off to let our eyes adjust. A hundred or so metres in front of us, the snowy, white lines of the Dolphin Couloir became visible against the black mass of the north face.

Suited up and ready, we set up below the first rock bands that lead into the tail of the Dolphin. Chris moved up through a pitch of Scottish mixed-style climbing (M3) as the sun began to rise, and I took us simul-climbing through two easier rock bands before entering the easier steep snow of the couloir. I coiled up the rope and began putting in the staircase. Just as we turned in the couloir toward the main body of the Dolphin, another band of rock stopped us. Chris soloed up through it, dispatching it with ease. I followed suit but found it to be much more difficult to commit to the moves and struggled hard.

After reaching the top of the step, Chris confessed to being in the best climbing shape of his life, and I admitted to being in probably the worst I've been in years. At least my cardio was on point. We would work our strengths to our advantages: he would lead the harder pitches, and I would run up the easier ground. I quickly turned and began doing my part to put the boot-pack in up the rest of the Dolphin.

Soon we got a full view of our intended line. I turned down to Chris and yelled, "It looks like a big Cascade Falls! We'll be up it in like two hours!" I was maybe a bit overly optimistic.

Taylor Sullivan near the top of the Dolphin on the north face of Mount Temple. The ice smears of Stringing Up the Lights lead through the headwall above, which is capped by the summit serac. Photo: Chris Petrauskas

Chris Petrauskas traverses the bench in search of easier ground to reach the upper ice smears.
Photo: Taylor Sullivan

At the nose of the Dolphin, we pulled out the full rack and took in the fresh October air. The larches were still in full show—golden hills against crystal blue sky, and snow-capped mountains as far as the eye could see. There are few better perches in all of the Lake Louise group than high on the king's throne. Conditions were perfect, the day was young and we were full of ambition. A short pitch of awkward drytooling had us out of the Dolphin and up toward the lower reaches of the line. But we had a decision to make: escape left to the ridge for easier terrain or begin vision questing toward the beautiful tongue of ice weaving its way through the face above. We opted for the latter.

We managed a few pitches of thinly smeared ice on chossy slabs (M3R) with some simuling to stretch out our 50-metre rope to reach anchors that were hard to find but generally of good quality once discovered. Just below the main ice flows, Chris led out on a tricky pitch. He tried scratching up right next to the belay but ended up traversing a bench out further looking for easier ground. Eventually, the rope came tight, and it was time to simul again, but the rope came too tight for me to traverse out to the easier ground. I could feel Chris on the other end and had to commit to the challenging moves right from the belay. I made a few moves that were harder than I would have liked and ended up on thin ice over slab again.

Soon after I was hit with a shower of ice and sluffing. I tucked my head in and thought to myself, It's the serac, you stupid idiot. I looked down and to my left, and through the shower, I saw a large boulder bounce off a ledge. I closed my eyes, waiting for the hit. A cam came whizzing down the rope to my harness along with a bunch of slack. Had Chris taken a whipper? I had no idea what had happened. We were committed to the face with a 50-metre rope and too small a rack to bail. A rescue or retreat from our position would be a very serious endeavour. I was yelling but received no reply. With no other option, I started climbing. Eventually, the slack got pulled in as I trudged up through a small snow field and heard Chris yell, "On belay!" Once I got to him, Chris explained that a large rock had come pinballing down from above. He had to duck to avoid it.

As darkness began to creep in, we agreed that the next section would be one pitch, since we couldn't see any sheltered belays. Chris set off on what would be the crux pitches of the route. This was high-quality mixed climbing high up on the Eiger of North America, and there could be no greater venue. A few suspect screws tied off was sufficient mental protection in icy quartzite cracks. Thankfully Chris found a protected belay midway up below a chockstone that was out of our view from below. This bent the flow of ice from the right side of the gully to the left side.

The next pitch was amazing mixed climbing that had us stemming between rock and ice. At one point I was able to kick both feet into the ice, wedging my back into the rock and going hands-free for some relief from growing fatigue and screaming barfies. That rest move though cost me all of the down filling in the right arm of my belay parka. As I started climbing, all of the feathers came whirling out, filling my nose and throat with each deliberate breath as I tried to pull the crux of the route out of the corner system and around a roof—a hazard I had never considered before.

From the top of the crux, several more pitches of WI3/4 ice brought us to the steep snow and ice slabs below the serac. Just under the serac, we trusted a snow bridge and pulled over some glacial ice onto the north glacier of Mount Temple. Clear skies, high winds and a full moon illuminated the high peaks of the Rockies with a silver blanket. I could see Mount Forbes to the north, clear as day. The lights from the village far below reminded us that we were not done yet.

A short-lived moment of false relief came and went. The summit looked so close and easy, but it was midnight, and we were absolutely spent. I put my head down and started off toward the large crevasse to find a snow bridge. Trench warfare at its finest as I waded knee to waist deep through the snow for a few minutes. Lying face down sucking snow, I pondered what mistakes I had made in life to get me to this spot. I repeated this process until we arrived at the crevasse. A finer trench I may never dig. It could be seen from the highway the next day.

I slumped down in a protected wind lip just below the summit and pulled the rope in as Chris followed. We had a quick snack, fist bumped and began our descent. Luckily, I had done the scramble route while on my run a few weeks earlier so I was quite familiar with it. Chris had never done it though. Like two drunkards, we stumbled down the southwest slopes. I was starting to hallucinate. I kept seeing ravens and bears coming at us from the slopes below and only when I stood still and focused would they turn into rocks.

About halfway down we found a good protected spot from the wind to boil half a litre of water each. I dry heaved a couple of times, and we both drifted in and out of consciousness for a few precious minutes. We soon stumbled down to Sentinel Pass, where I was finally warm enough for the first time in some 15 hours to take off my belay parka and heavy gloves. We sat down again to sort our layers and gear. I asked Chris if he could remember any of the climb. He couldn't remember a thing and neither could I, except for a few significant moments. I ate the half slice of Domino's pizza I had left. From here we were home free, just a 13-kilometre limp back to the cars through Paradise Valley with the shadow of the north face looming above us. As we got closer to the road, the sun rose on us for a second time.

When we got to the parking lot, a guy packing up his camera gear asked us if we had made it to the lake for pictures. "Yeah, we got a pretty good view of it." I dropped my pack on the ground and struggled to get my boots off my feet. I was so weak, it took both hands to turn the key to unlock my car door. I turned to Chris, "This is probably the most fucked I've ever been." Two hours later I was back in Calgary, only half an hour late for work to string up Christmas lights.

Chris put it best: "In an age of mountain athletes and professionals, the fact that a fulltime accountant and a Christmas light rigger can still put up a quality line in a setting like the north face of Mount Temple shows just how many incredible and accessible routes can still be climbed, and anyone can dream of climbing them."

Summary

Stringing Up the Lights (WI5 M4R, 1300m), north face, Mount Temple, Canadian Rockies. FA: Chris Petrauskas, Taylor Sullivan, October 17–18, 2021.

Taylor Sullivan follows high on the headwall during the first ascent of Stringing Up the Lights.
Photo: Chris Petrauskas

Three Routes

Ian Welsted

Over the past few years, I have been looking for terrain to introduce people to my favourite type of climbing: moderate, naturally protected lines of weakness up rock faces in the winter. I was excited to find a line of weakness to the left of Mixed Master, mostly due to the iconic nature of the venue. Lake Louise is no less iconic, so a line up a gully on Mount Fairview, straight across from the much-climbed Louise Falls, was just as appealing. The exception was a striking line of ice that had been whispered about intermittently for years on the tall north wall of Mount Vaux, close to my home in Golden. Thankfully, I had strong friends to call on in order to complete these three climbs.

Alik Berg on pitch three of Western Névé on Mount Vaux.
Photo: Ian Welsted

In March 2021, Alik Berg and I climbed a long line of thin ice and incredible névé on the northwest face of Mount Vaux. Craig McGee told me they had flown by it and described it as a WI5 pillar pouring right off the top of the ridge. Fortunately, it wasn't that steep at the top, and only vertical for a few short stints, as there was a distinct lack of good screws to be had. As I had been only guiding WI3 for the military up until a week before the climb, it was polite of Alik to rope gun all of the steep ice.

What it did have was the best névé climbing I have ever experienced in the Rockies—maybe because it is further west than most of the Rockies' classic alpine routes. We found single-swing sticks in both thin ice (often between 5 to 10 centimetres) and squeaky snow. If I had known about the prominence of the peak, reputed to be the greatest rise above the Trans-Canada Highway of any peak in the Rockies, I might have followed Alik for the last rope length to the whited-out summit.

Three years ago, Sam Eastman and I started a drytooling project up a prominent corner crack 20 metres left of the uber-classic Mixed Master. On the first go, Sam sped up it with a bolt gun in hand and found that it mostly went on gear—my preferred style of climbing. We followed natural weaknesses—drytooling, as there was not a whole load of snow on the route that time around—leading to a lot of tenuous slab climbing between the obvious cracks—thankfully, all at a moderate grade.

It took three seasons to complete the climb, since I wanted the longer days of spring to stand a chance to get up the seven pitches of climbing. With an active work schedule guiding in the middle of the season, I would leave the project until April, by which time the sun had usually melted off any snow or ice, leaving only a moderate rock climb. On one attempt, Uisdean Hawthorn and I got to the bottom of the last pitch by 10 p.m., but the sight of retreating headlamps from the Weeping Wall next door killed any possible psych to keep going.

In January 2022, I came up with a different tactic. I invited Raphael Slawinski along, which inevitably resulted in the climb going much more quickly and being completed. I apprenticed in mixed climbing under Raphael, so it seemed appropriate to share the complete climb with him. This route took time to finally complete, because the spring sun burns off any snow, leaving a dubious looking rock climb. Astringent Alpine has been drytooled in its entirety save the last pitch, but mixed conditions make it safer and more enjoyable.

I met Justin Guarino when he contacted me for a day of alpine guiding via Instagram. I asked the usual questions of a new client: his experience with alpine and mixed climbing, his preferred grade, his goals and potential objectives. When we were kept out of the big mountains by weather and instead went drytooling on Loder Peak, I quickly realized he had significantly understated his abilities. When I looked into things further, it turned out he was one of the strongest young climbers and guides from North Conway, New Hampshire, the centre of eastern U.S. climbing. When I in return visited the White Mountains for the Mount Washington Valley Ice Festival, I was exposed to the local ethic of climbing hard without bolts—and then not really telling anyone about it. As Mark Synnott noted in introducing Justin and friends for the main slideshow of the festival, the climb they were going to present was worthy of a Piolet d'Or nomination. The only issue was that they are so understated, probably nobody was going to hear about it.

On Justin's second visit to the Rockies, I decided to try out a line I had spotted across from Louise Falls on the lower flanks of Fairview Mountain, a half-hour approach from the Chateau. Justin might have climbed super hard in Alaska but had a healthy appreciation for apprenticing into Rockies mixed, so seemed pleased with the route choice. Ryan Patteson also joined us for the ascent. I had met Ryan while approaching Professor's Falls earlier in the season. He was soloing, and I was guiding, and we quickly hit it off when he told me how much he had enjoyed doing the second ascent of Astringent Alpine.

Uisdean Hawthorn on pitch four of Astringent Apprentice.
Photo: Ian Welsted

The three of us headed up the first few easy pitches finding turf sticks and good quartzite. By around 2 p.m., we were looking up at a chossy-looking, wide corner-crack pitch that Justin and I both agreed we didn't want anything to do with. Ryan, being a weekend warrior, had the hunger and dispatched the somewhat runout pitch with ease. By darkness I was tromping up an easy snow gully to rappel by the lights of the Chateau Lake Louise.

Ryan Patteson on pitch five of Tourist Turf. Photo: Ian Welsted

Summary
Western Névé (M5 WI5R, 800m), northwest face, Mt. Vaux, Canadian Rockies. FA: Alik Berg, Ian Welsted, March 5, 2021.

Approach: Work up Finn Creek through copious deadfall and a thin snowpack near valley bottom giving way to better travel higher up. Idyllic bivy sites can be found amongst some large boulders at treeline directly below the route (three to four hours). The slopes below the route are windward and often stripped down to gravel. Avalanche hazard is mainly limited to some small pockets that must be crossed near the base (one hour from the bivy to the base of the route). Overhead hazard is limited to ledges and gullies on the route itself. Although fed by the Hanbury Glacier, there is no serac hazard on the route.

Gear: Single set cams to #2 Camalot, nuts, selection of pins, 12 screws including three to four stubbies, 70m ropes are ideal.

P1: M4, 30m. Begin up easy ground on the left, then traverse back right into the main corner. Move up five metres and step right to a belay (fixed rap anchor).

P2: WI3+, 35m. Step right and climb a fine ice runnel to ledge. Move left to a belay.

P3: M5 WI4+, 45m. Step down and left into a left-facing corner with a ribbon of thin ice on the left wall. Climb this past a small overhang and continue up the ice runnel above to the next snow ledge.

P4: WI3+, 70m. Climb good rolling ice and continue up the snow gully above for another 30 metres to an ice-anchor belay.

P5: M3 WI3, 350m. Follow the path of least resistance to the upper ice strip. Mainly 3rd- and 4th-class terrain trending right then back left.

P6–8: WI4/5 R, 180m. Climb three long pitches of thin ice and névé. Protection is not always adequate and mainly in rock. Cross a small snow bowl to the base of the upper ice tier.

P9–10: WI3–4, 100m. Continue up thicker, aerated ice to the top. Half an hour of straightforward glacier travel gains the summit.

Descent: Reverse the route in 12 70-metre rappels.

Astringent Apprentice (M5, 300m, 9 pitches), Weeping Wall, Canadian Rockies. FA: Sam Eastman, Uisdean Hawthorn, Raphael Slawinski, Ian Welsted, January 30, 2022.

P1: M5, 50m. Start 20 metres left of Mixed Master in a right-facing corner. A fixed pin is 15 metres up then a fixed Spectre at 30 metres, followed by one bolt next to heart-shaped block. Head up and left to a two-bolt anchor.

P2: M3, 50m. Go left up a shallow gully and snow slope to two bolts and a fixed pin, then belay above big snow slope five metres out left on an ice flow in the back of a small niche.

P3: 3rd class, 30m. Traverse left on snow slope to a fixed angle piton below a very obvious right-facing corner (pitches two and three can easily be combined).

P4: M5, 60m. Three metres up, a fixed nut and beak placement protects slabby moves into the crack. A #5 cam protects the awkward squeeze at 30 metres up, or better yet, climb on the outside and protect with a small cam. Continue up the snow gully above to a vertical wall. Save knifeblades for the anchor.

P5: M4, 15m. Traverse hard right on a ledge past a fixed knifeblade to the next gully right finishing at a fixed nut anchor.

P6: M4, 30m. Go straight up to the base of next steep wall. A fixed silver piton on left wall marks the belay.

P7: M4, 55/65m. Climb up and left to a face crack protected by three bolts then amble up the snow slope above to a tree of choice.

P8: 3rd class, 25m. Move the belay up the gully above to a two-piton anchor in back of small niche.

P9: M5, 55m. Climb the weakness above with a fixed silver piton on right above a bulge at 15 metres. Belay from trees at the top.

Descent: Rappel route with 70-metre ropes or rappel Mixed Master.

Tourist Turf (M4 R, 250m, 8 pitches), Mt. Fairview, Lake Louise group, Canadian Rockies. FA: Justin Guarino, Ryan Patteson, Ian Welsted, April 9, 2022.

Approach: Skin up the snow cone between Kaleidoscope Pinnacle and Rockfall Wall. The climb is defined by lower angled ledges leading up and left from a triangular snowfield aiming for a very obvious upper snow-filled gully. The first pitches trend left aiming for a ledge system below a steep wall. Spot the corner/chimney system that has a large grass clump at the top, which is the bottom of the upper gully.

P1: M3, 30m. Start up the easiest of the snow ledges then belay on higher ledges.

P2: M4, 35m. Head left up ledges and steeper steps to belay at bottom of right-trending snow gully.

P3: M3, 40m. Ascend the snow gully making a hard left on a snow ledge to belay at a right facing overlap/corner with a steep wall above.

P4: M4, 45. Either climb the steeper wall straight above or as on the first ascent, move the anchor right 15 metres on a ledge with a small step-down to a right-facing corner system of black rock with face cracks. Continue on easier ground to belay on a triangular grass pinnacle out left from the corner system.

P5: M4 R, 80m. Traverse left far enough to spot a corner/chimney that is 50 metres above and has a large clump of grass protruding from its right side. Face climb up and right to a good stance in the chimney, then continue up and right above gear in the corner to top-out at the grass sticks.

P6: M3, 40m. Easily chimney eight metres above the anchor into the snow gully. Tromp up the gully keeping in mind snow falling onto your belayers.

P7: M4, 50m. Head for the very obvious large chockstone at the top of the gully. It is actually a five-metre sideways roof featuring large blocks, so moving the belay up to a more sheltered stance in the gully just below the roof might be preferable. Good protection through the roof traverse. Pull around the right side with good feet.

P8: 4th class, 40m. Walk up the snow gully to the top of the route.

Descent: Rappel the route.

Tourist Turf on Mount Fairview. Photo: Ian Welsted

The Hand of God

Raphael Slawinski

1982. ON APRIL 2, Argentine forces invaded and occupied the Falkland Islands (a.k.a. Las Malvinas), and the next day South Georgia, British islands that Argentina considered its rightful territory. Just three days later, Britain dispatched an expeditionary force to take back what had been a British colony for more than a century. In the end, British aircraft carriers and Harrier jets prevailed, and after nearly a thousand people died, the islands returned to British control. History doesn't record whether the king penguins and elephant seals inhabiting South Georgia were consulted about which country they'd like to live in. Given how humans have treated other species from time immemorial, it seems unlikely.

1986. ON JUNE 22, Argentina and England were playing in the quarter-finals of the FIFA World Cup in Mexico City. The match was still goalless when, a few minutes into the second half, Diego Maradona leapt for the ball that had been cleared toward the English goalie. However, instead of heading it into the net, he nudged it in with his fist. The English furiously protested, but none of the referees saw what had happened. Afterward, Maradona quipped that he had scored the goal "a little with his head, and a little with the hand of God." Argentina went on to win the match and the World Cup.

Hand of God on Mount Murchison. Photo: Raphael Slawinski

THE LOW DECEMBER SUN was starting to skim the shoulder of Epaulette Mountain across the valley. As I paid out the rope, I watched blue shadows creep upward from the depths. For now, though, I was still in sunshine, warm enough to belay bare handed. Less and less of the 70-metre rope remained at my feet until, when there was only a metre or two left, I removed the belay screws and scrambled up behind the pillar. I was standing there, tools at the ready, when I finally heard a distant shout that might've been "Secure!"

Five days earlier Diego Maradona died of fast living. My climbing partner grew up in South America, where Maradona was a god. As a kid, like most other boys his age, he had wanted to be a football star. On the long drive home, we talked about the infamous goal that some had seen as revenge for the Falklands. The route practically named itself, all the more so since one or two holds at the crux might have been improved a little with the pick of an ice tool, and a little with the hand of God.

We came back a week later on a clear but cold day. With Juan bundled up at the belay in puffy jacket and pants, I started up the second pitch wearing as many layers as I thought I could still reasonably climb in. Fortunately, while we were still struggling to stay warm in cold shade, the crux third pitch was already bathed in glorious sunshine. From my belay behind a skinny pillar atop the third pitch, Juan stretched the rope to the top of the climb. The intense solar radiation made for comfortable belaying and soft ice, but also meant I pulled out some of Juan's screws by hand.

Raphael Slawinski starts up pitch two of Hand of God. Photo: Juan Henriquez

The Hand of God climbs the obvious dagger a few hundred metres left of Cosmic Messenger on Mount Murchison. It's been suggested that it might've been climbed in the '90s by Serge Angelucci, but we didn't find any evidence of previous traffic. If it had indeed been climbed back then, it'd be an impressive and futuristic ascent before M-climbing and power drills.

Summary

The Hand of God (M7 WI5, 135m, 4 pitches), FA: Juan Henriquez, Raphael Slawinski, December 1, 2020.

P1: M3, 25m. Scramble up an ice shield and some cracks above. Mantle awkwardly onto a ledge below a steep wall and traverse left to a bolt and gear belay.

P2: M6, 25m. Drytool the right-facing corner above the belay past a fixed pin. From where the corner peters out, trend right past bolts to a two-bolt belay below the dagger.

P3: M7, 15m. Crank over the roof above the belay using some long reaches. Continue up the dagger to a small cave behind a free-standing pillar. This pitch is entirely bolt protected, but the belay is from screws.

P4: WI5, 70 m. Swing up the vertical pillar to a lower-angled ice hose on sun-affected ice to the top of the cliff. Ice screw or slung block belay.

Descent: Make a long double-rope 70-metre rappel from a V-thread back to the cave behind the pillar, then a shorter one to the ground.

The Elusive Storm

Maarten van Haeren

A LOUD "PSSSSSSHHHT!" emitted from my sleeping pad, as my butt quickly reached the scree below. When we left the parking lot that morning, I had imagined a lakeside campsite, not the scree slope we were currently bivied upon. It was October 2015, and I had been invited to come alpine climbing with two local, under-the-radar climbers, Ian Welsted and J. Mills. I fixed my sleeping pad and went to bed with butterflies in my stomach over our next day's adventure. We had initially wanted to attempt the infamous 1988 Wallator-Thomas route on the northeast face of Storm Mountain. However, the appealing line of ice further right provided enough of an excuse to not try that historic route. An early start, squeaky névé and waterfall ice plastered on alpine walls saw us getting to the summit [*CAJ*, 2016, vol.99, p.132]. After our ascent of Canoeing to Cuba, I was very grateful to have been a part of the team, slowly gaining insight into the dark art of alpine mixed climbing. Little did I know then how rarely things line up: weather, conditions and partners. I had no idea how special a day we had had, or that these guys would remain my friends for years to come.

Maarten van Haeren tops out on the northeast face of Storm Mountain. Photo: Ian Welsted

Seven years later, Ian and I teamed up again to attempt a repeat of the Wallator-Thomas route. Ian had recently returned from a summer in the Karakorum, attempting a new line on K2. I had returned from an expedition to Mount Logan and spent the remaining summer training to pass my ACMG Alpine Guide exam. I like to think we were both ready for a home-range adventure with limited logistics. Like Canoeing to Cuba, the Wallator-Thomas is located on the northeast face of Storm, located across the Bow River and Trans-Canada Highway from the more well-known Castle Mountain. Unlike Canoeing to Cuba, the Wallator-Thomas reportedly involved sections of aid and tricky mixed climbing. Despite being among the leading climbers in the 1980s, Wallator and Thomas still required multiple days to top out the wall. Ken Wallator was known for his bold style, so the A3 grade given by the first ascensionists was something to ponder.

While the start of the Wallator-Thomas was easy to find, the exact line beyond the end of the snow gully was elusive. The continuation of the gully looked like it would be more at home as a bolted drytool cave route. Since the guidebook vaguely describes them climbing the righthand wall, we continued trending up and right. Fairly quickly, we surmised we had missed their line and were on our own line. We continued our leads since we were more fixated on having an enjoyable alpine experience rather than repeating the route. At the first reasonable weakness upwards, I led the physical crux of our route—a corner-gully feature that deposited us a bit closer to more snow walking. We continued up the natural weakness, more snow leading to an enjoyable chimney pitch, until we were deposited on a protruding rib feature.

The next pitch featured the psychological crux of the route, which Ian carefully pieced together.

The northeast face of Storm Mountain:
(1) Wallator-Thomas
(2) van Haeren-Welsted variation
(3) Canoeing to Cuba
(4) Kogarashi
Photo: Maarten van Haeren

What initially looked like a pitch of snow climbing turned quite nasty, quickly. The snow was a mere cover for terrible choss with small rocks frozen together, rather than cohesive rock. This shallow groove culminated in a short rock arch. While this provided the first real protection, more looseness was stacked in the arch. A steep move at the top of the arch found Ian at a comfortable but tricky-to-build belay. This type of climbing (off-vertical, snowy rubble) is hard to grade, and harder to recommend. Fearing more of the same above, I took off on the line of least resistance (with some traversing) to the corniced ridge. While the snow was still not great, it was nothing like the previous pitch. This eventually deposited us one gully to the left of Canoeing to Cuba.

Our descent was down the north ridge, which we had previously used as a descent. Below the permanent snow patch, we reused our rappel anchor from seven years earlier. After this rappel, we continued down the ridge until it was possible to traverse skier's right back to the glacier below the northeast face. Just like when we had descended from Canoeing to Cuba, we were aided in finding the correct descent by recent goat tracks. At times, the goat-direct-descent was not possible without ropes, so we used the human walkaround. Eventually, the goat tracks guided us down to the glacier. Much had changed since Ian and I had first climbed on Storm, but the relief of reaching camp after a day in the hills remained the same. Perhaps a third time will be the charm for my attempts at the fabled Wallator-Thomas route. Despite not knowing him well, I always imagined Ken would have been happy to hear his line remains elusive.

Summary

Variation to Wallator-Thomas (IV M5 (M4 R)), northeast face, Storm Mountain, Ball Range, Canadian Rockies. FA: Maarten van Haeren, Ian Welsted, October 19, 2021.

Just a Nibble

Brette Harrington

AMONG THE SKYLINE of giants around Lake Louise is a hidden gem—Mount Niblock (2,976 metres), a broad peak fanned above the evergreens, hiding from me in plain sight all year. I pulled my car over on the highway to take a closer look. Bands of black limestone shrouded the mountain's northeastern aspect, revealing its steep cliffs amid an otherwise white face.

On March 13, I soloed the lower northwest ridge into the upper north face in an 18-hour round trip. I brought along a half rope and some pins and wires for self-belaying. I climbed the final 200 metres or so using a self-belay loop to get through the cruxes of the climb.

Nearly a month later, on April 16, I returned with Dylan Cunningham to try the unclimbed northeast face. We left the Lake Louise parking lot on skis, traversed under Mount St. Piran (2,649 metres) and zigzagged up through the forest to the basin below the face. Here, we made our camp for the evening. Photos from my previous mission showed minimal overhead hazard compared to the other mountains in the area, where spring cornices hung heavy.

We began climbing by headlamp at 2 a.m. Dylan led us through a series of thin ice steps and deep facets. Navigating the fickle ice atop loose rock consumed more time than we had anticipated. Dawn had arrived by the time I took over the lead. The ice transitioned into tiers of WI4 and eventually into a 45- to 50-degree snow slope above. About 150 metres of snow led to the base of the rock bands where the face became vertical.

Brette Harrington on the lower ice of Just a Nibble. Photo: Dylan Cunningham

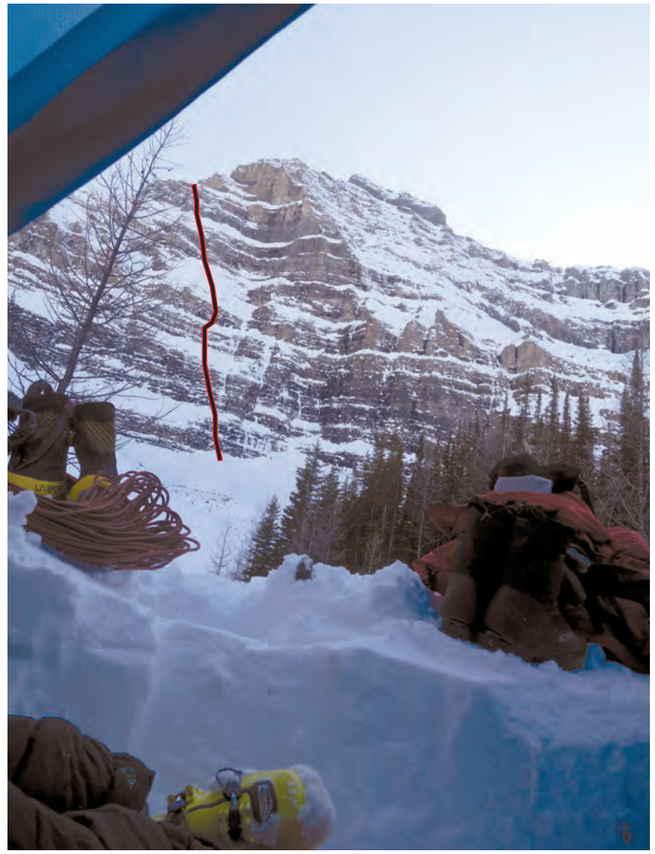
I slipped into my rock shoes, clipping my boots and crampons to my harness, and started up. The dark rock was fragile and splintered, making for very delicate, insecure climbing. After a few metres, I managed a beak placement and lowered back to the belay in search of a safer passage up. I switched back into boots and crampons and began to traverse left. Soon I came upon a shallow chimney, which invited me up with one more transition into rock shoes.

Dylan led through the trickiest mixed section of the route—a bouldery overhang on insecure pick placements. I moved dynamically, cutting my feet as I seconded the pitch. We graded it M6.

Next came a compact low-angled slab patched with snow. I pasted my feet on the rock, but the snow melted underfoot and refroze into verglas. This was one of the most unique experiences I have encountered in the mountains. The climbing was no harder than 5.6, but the foot placements were coated in ice, making any downclimbing impossible. I admit that I was quite afraid, unable to find a single placement of gear, knowing that the anchor below was an array of questionable pins. I angled toward the eastern skyline, where I landed a lucky strike and slung a frozen chockstone as my first piece of protection. Luck is a generous gift one cannot count on receiving, yet we rely on it every time we start up a big mountain.

The sun hung low on the horizon as we intercepted the northeast ridge. Complex terrain still loomed above to reach the true summit a couple hundred metres up, and the descent down the northeast ridge looked equally complex. Knowing that daylight was short, we chose to begin the descent while we had enough light to access the avalanche-prone snow slopes by light.

Friends from Parks Canada flew overhead by helicopter, waving hello from the windows as we rappelled the ridge. As the ridge rounded into the basin via a west-facing col, we opted to bum-slide the snow slope leading back toward camp on the north side. We cut away a small cornice to test the stability, then launched into the slide. We were back at our camp by twilight, packed up and skied to the Lake Louise parking lot by 10 p.m.



Just a Nibble on the northeast face of Mount Niblock. Photo: Brette Harrington

Summary

Northwest ridge (M3), Mt. Niblock, Lake Louise group, Canadian Rockies. Brette Harrington, March 13, 2021.

Just a Nibble (5.10- WI5 M6, 500m), northeast face, Mt. Niblock. FA: Dylan Cunningham, Brette Harrington, April 17, 2021.

The Odyssey

Luka Bogdanovic

THE PURSUIT OF CLIMBING to me is synonymous with the pursuit of adventure. The places you see and the things you experience high on big wall faces or buried deep in nearly inaccessible backcountry valleys are something special. Adding to these experiences is the knowledge that the vast majority of the population will never stray off the beaten paths, leaving the uncharted and rarely visited gems for the few of us willing to venture into the unknown.

As my climbing career has progressed over the years, I have found myself pursuing more and more obscure objectives, knowing that it would be a certain escape from the crowds—a day with just myself, the mountain and the people I was with.

Yet while these days were almost always satisfying in their own right, there was an increasing itch to not only explore something seldom travelled, but to explore something never travelled. To truly discover a patch of Earth that no human being had laid hands (or ice tools) on.

Expanding my skillset from rock climbing and mountaineering to full technical ice climbing a few years back only exacerbated this desire. I would climb one classic ice route after another, imagining what it might have been like for the first ascensionists who wandered through that valley decades prior, only to stumble upon jaw dropping routes like Hydrophobia or Nemesis.

Once I had exhausted easily accessible classics and brought my ice climbing game up to a level where I was comfortable leading most ice, I found myself spending early and late season days wandering through the less-travelled regions of the Rockies. Piecing together blog posts, trip reports and random articles from across a variety of sites, I would spend evenings drawing up potential approaches on Google Earth and guessing where there might be a hidden cache of beautiful blue ice frozen in some obscure drainage.

One area that seemed like a good candidate was the north shore of Lake Minnewanka. Extending almost 20 kilometres from end to end, Lake Minnewanka's western end is a tourist hotspot year-round, while the distant eastern shore, where the lake feeds into the South Ghost, rarely sees a soul. While the South Ghost is home to dozens of classic and well-documented ice routes, the Lake Minnewanka side of the valley has seen little traffic over the years, likely due to the approach alone taking close to three hours.

One February weekend in 2021, I decided it was time to commit some time to exploring and testing my hunch there was still new ice to be found around the lake. It didn't take much convincing to bring along my friend and climbing partner, Shawn White, who was just happy to be out for a day in the mountains, albeit with a 20-kilogram bag on his back.

Arriving at the Lake Minnewanka parking lot at a leisurely 10 a.m., we slid our way down the snow onto the lakeshore and stepped onto the ice. It's always a spooky feeling stepping onto a large body of frozen water, and despite knowing that the ice was easily over 60 centimetres thick and strong enough to support a dump truck, our first few steps were fairly timid. As we trekked across the lake without a defined purpose, we passed the familiar drainage of Hammer Horror (WI4+) and arrived into the realm of the unknown. The excitement built as we looked around scanning for anything that might reveal clues to ice hiding somewhere. With no traction devices on our mountaineering boots, progress across sections of bare ice was slow as we stuck to the snow-covered shoreline.

After about two hours, we passed the final documented route on the southern side of the lake, Vanilla Ice (WI2) and stared down another 10-kilometre stretch of flat frozen water and snow surrounded by rock faces heartbreakingly devoid of ice. After a brief discussion, Shawn and I identified an arbitrary point a couple of kilometres further down the lake and decided that would be our turnaround spot for the day. As we approached the halfway mark of our journey to nowhere, I caught a glimpse of the unmistakable blue hue of waterfall ice about halfway up what looked like a narrow snaking canyon. I pointed it out to Shawn and immediately we began speculating as to what it might be and whether we could get a better look at it from a different angle.

Unfortunately for us, almost the entirety of the width of the lake separated us from the mouth of the canyon in question and we were running out of time if we wanted to return to the car in daylight. None of this mattered though, as I knew we would be back the second I caught a glimpse of what I was almost certain was an undiscovered route.

Elated, we fought our way back through the hurricane-like winds that Lake Minnewanka is known for, and began creating an action plan to return and see exactly what we had found. Subsequent research and an online conversation with one of the first ascensionists of the only other published route in the area (Nietzsche Stick, WI3) all but confirmed it.

It was go-time, except for the issue of figuring out how we were going to get there and back with a full kit of gear on our backs while maximizing the daylight available to us for whatever ice route lay hidden in that canyon. Walking was not ideal, since we could be looking at a potential three-hour approach, or more.

Skates were an option, but unlike Shawn, who had grown up as a true Canadian kid playing hockey, I was entirely useless on skates. Skis could work, but would depend heavily on how much snow coverage was on the lake ice. We finally settled on fat bikes with studded tires, appropriate for every terrain surface we could run into and likely the fastest option.

Meeting up with Shawn at 5 a.m. on March 21, we found ourselves back at Lake Minnewanka almost exactly four weeks after our initial scouting trip, due to the difficulty of sourcing bikes coupled with life's delays. This time, however, the lake looked fairly different. Shrouded in morning

Luka Bogdanovic approaches pitch two of The Odyssey. Photo: Shawn White

The **Rockies**

Shawn White tops out on pitch seven of The Odyssey.
Photo: Luka Bogdanovic

mist, most of the snow coverage present weeks earlier had been blown clear, leaving bare and often perfectly smooth ice in its place. We dragged our bikes out of Shawn's truck and got them onto the lakeshore.

I have done a lot of approaches to climbs in my life, and I can confidently say that this one ranked near the top. As we started biking across the lake, the morning fog started to dissipate and the rising sun began to wash over the valley. We were two people alone on a 20-kilometre stretch of frozen alpine sea, bathed in the rays of the morning golden hour as we tore across the black ice at a slightly terrifying speed.

In almost exactly an hour (including some stops to admire our surroundings on the way and look for more potential routes), we made it to the lake's north shore and the mouth of the drainage.

Stashing our bikes, it was time to continue on foot. Luckily, travel through the drainage was very straightforward, and in about 10 minutes, we were face to face with the initial small step of ice leading into the canyon. We were both giddy with excitement. We had absolutely no idea what lay ahead, but were very eager to find out. I frantically geared up first, and patience never having been one of my key qualities, I fired up the first easy step of ice while Shawn was still putting his crampons on.

About eight metres of easy WI3 ice later, I was looking further down the snaking and narrow canyon, imagining what we would find next. Shawn followed up and we proceeded to ramble our way through more small steps of ice interspersed with chockstones, fallen trees and boulders we had to navigate around.

As we topped out on another small step, a narrow ribbon of ice came into view. After a quick discussion, we decided there was no harm in roping up for this section, and I got the honour of the first lead. Fun and engaging climbing for the grade of WI3 on chandeliered ice got us through the ribbon and into low-angled, easy rambling.

At this point, we had already determined this was a route worth climbing. It was long, varied and in a spectacular setting, while being very moderate in difficulty so far. As I soloed through the fourth pitch past a cool split boulder feature and topped out, I yelled down to Shawn in excitement, "Wait until you see this!"

Over a hundred metres of ice climbed so far and we had just gotten to what looked like the best pitch yet. It also turned out to be the only visible part of the route from across the lake that we had seen on our recon trip.

Two 20-metre pitches of steeper WI4 ice were separated by a nice belay ledge. I led the first, Shawn took the second and both felt relatively similar in difficulty. Alas, this is where the fun seemed to end. As we looked further up the drainage from the top of what would be the sixth pitch of this route, we saw gently sloping ground and narrow canyon walls giving way to more open terrain. But since we were already up this far, it couldn't hurt to continue further and be certain that this was the end of the adventure.

As we slogged up the creek and surmounted a couple of small steps of rock and fallen trees, we approached a beautiful 50-metre headwall that had the faintest sliver of ice up high. There was nothing on that headwall that we could climb that day, but in the right conditions there might be a worthwhile mixed route ripe for the taking.

As luck would have it, however, we did find more ice. Not on the headwall, but another couple hundred metres up the slope perpendicular to the drainage. It didn't look big, but there was zero chance we would leave without investigating. I powered up the scree-covered hillside with a thin blanket of snow overtop, Shawn behind me. Snow slowly gave way to ice and I was once again kicking my front points into a potentially never-before-climbed pitch.

As the angle kicked up, I assessed my energy as well as the quality of the ice and decided that roping up once more would be better than attempting a few steeper moves solo. I found a tiny but adequate cave to set up a sheltered belay and anchor, had Shawn join me and then set off up a few metres of steep curtains while tied in. A couple of steep moves would normally be trivial, but I was glad I had the peace of mind of being attached to a rope as I pulled up and through the crux of the pitch with waning energy levels.

As I topped out on the seventh and final pitch, I knew we had come to a very definitive end. The route terminated in a tiny cave, with ice giving way to sheer rock, indicating that this flow originates from somewhere deep inside the porous limestone face. I belayed Shawn up to me, and as we both sat down on the flat ledge of ice within the cave, we knew we had found something special. Looking out at the afternoon sun washing across Lake Minnewanka, we briefly discussed how unlikely it would be that a route like this would have been climbed before but remained unknown to the community.

As we started our descent, we discussed potential names, settling on The Odyssey as a nod to the epic journey this had been. True to its name, the adventure continued all the way back to the car as we fought fierce headwinds trying desperately to stay upright on our bikes. Shawn did a much better job of this than I, as I got knocked over on three separate occasions by the wind. Thankfully the only thing that hurt was my ego.

I hoped that The Odyssey would become a Rockies modern classic so it was with great delight that I parsed through photos and trip reports of others repeating the route immediately after we published its details, including a party approaching on skates. With a drive time of less than 90 minutes from Calgary and an approach of about an hour in the right conditions (skis, skates or bikes depending on snow coverage of the lake) this route is very approachable for a moderate ice climber, has short but enjoyable crux pitches and lots of rambling easy ice for a full value day.

Rockies Report

Ian Welsted

WHETHER IT WAS the late effects of the COVID-19 chill, or a very smoky summer, 2021 was not the most active year in the Canadian Rockies.

In late winter, on March 5, Alik Berg and I climbed a foamy, sticky ice strip on the northwest face of Mount Vaux (3,310 metres) with Berg continuing to the summit for Western Neve (WI5 R M5, 800m). A treeline bivy positioned us the next morning for a few vertical ice pitches, which led to 300 metres of moderate mixed ground, followed by 250 metres of technical ice before reaching the northwest ridge and a stroll to the summit in a storm. About a week later, Berg teamed with Uisdean Hawthorn to make the coveted second ascent of the Mount Wilson test-piece Dirty Love (V M7, 500m). They first climbed Totem Pole (WI5, 200m), before linking it into Dirty Love for a 26-hour, 1,700-metre car-to-car outing. Three days later the team added Amnesiac (WI5 M7, 500m), a first ascent of mixed ledges to sustained ice pitches on the northeast face of the east subpeak of Mount Whymper, visible from the Radium highway [*CAJ*, 2021, vol.104, pp.122-124].

Also in March, Luka Bogdanovic and Shawn White cycled 11 kilometres along the north shore of Lake Minnewanka to a drainage holding the incredible find of The Odyssey (WI4, 200m, 7 pitches). With its remote, yet easy to reach location, requiring only a 15-minute hike up the drainage following the bike approach, the south-facing route is bound to become a popular yet adventurous moderate outing [see page 108].

In mid-April, Merrick Montemuro, Sebastian Taborszky and Paul Taylor headed to Moraine Lake and found a striking line of ice in the bowl left of the Perren approach to Mount Fay. On the right-hand side of the spectacular wall below the Fay Glacier, they climbed Play with Fay (WI6, 345m). The same team added Last Harvest (WI3/4, 110m) across Hector Lake from the Icefields Parkway near Orion Falls on April 20, at the end of the ice season.

Brette Harrington and Dylan Cunningham aimed for the headwall at the top of the northeast face of Mount Niblock, where on April 20 they came away with Just a Nibble (5.10 WI5 M6 R, 14 pitches). With technical rock sections climbed in rock shoes after mixed ground leading to the side of the headwall, they climbed to the northeast ridge, descending it without tagging the summit. There remain other possible routes to the summit [see page 106].

The summer alpine scene seemed particularly quiet. In July, Alik Berg and Juan Henriquez added a major new summer line to the huge east face of Mount Chephren. Smoke and a Pancake (5.11-, 1100m) was climbed over two days, and takes the buttress between the winter routes The Wild Thing (WI5 M7, 1300m) and The Dogleg Couloir (M7 A1, 1300m) on good quartzite for the first 600 metres and the upper 500 metres, alternating between limestone and shale ledges. At the end of the summer, Berg and Maarten van Haeren completed the first traverse of the Trident Range outside Jasper. They began with the northeast ridge of Peveril Peak, the technical crux. The next day they completed Vertex Peak, Majestic Mountain and Mount Estella, and on the last day they went over Manx Peak, Terminal Mountain, down to Marmot Pass and finally over Marmot Mountain, all on quality quartzite. Navigating counter-clockwise through the range, the team covered approximately 16 kilometres in the two days.

Dylan Cunningham had quite a summer. First, he climbed Smokeshow (IV 5.6 45°, 850m) on the northeast buttress to the north summit of Mount Mummery on the far western flank of the Rockies north of Golden, B.C. with Tanya Bok. This was at the end of The Alpine Club of Canada General Mountaineering Camp in mid-August, harkening

Ryan Richardson on pitch eight of Diamonds are Forever. Photo: Craig McGee

Juan Henriquez on the first ascent of Smoke and a Pancake on the east face of Mount Chephren. Photo: Alik Berg

back to an adventurous time in that venerable institution. On a more technical level, he also snagged the third ascent of the Cheesemond route on the east face of Mount Assiniboine (V 5.9 A2, 1200m) with Ryan Richardson.

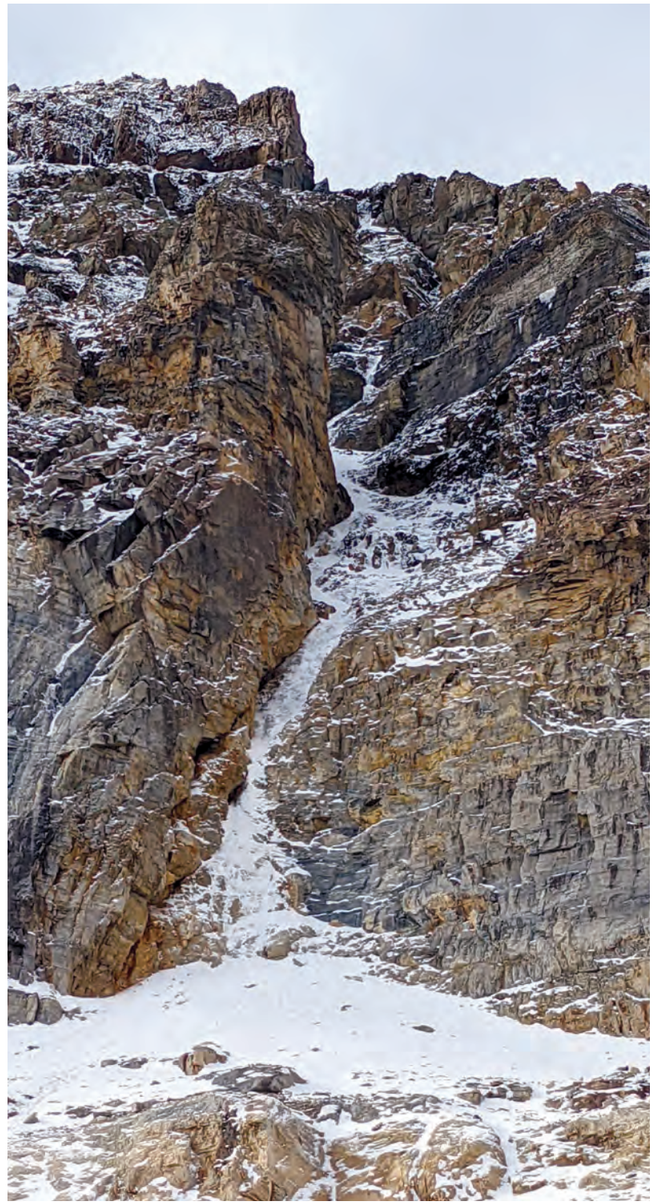
Over the summer Craig McGee, along with Cunningham and Richardson, established Diamonds are Forever (5.12-, 10 pitches), which ascends the east face of Mount Louis to finish on the right-hand edge of the prominent diamond formation the mountain is known for. Starting just to the left of the Holeczi-Slawinski route, this new mixed protection line can be continued to the summit of Louis or rappelled with two ropes.

On October 5, Ryan Leavitt and Patrick Jones climbed a new rock route on a likely unclimbed peak, Elevator Tower #2, east of Elkford in the southern Rockies. They climbed 12 short pitches of loose rock up to 5.8 and placed bolts for anchors due to the rock quality.

The first new route in winter conditions, in October, was a moderate line on Mount Whyte, above the Lake Agnes teahouse. Whyte Noise (AI3 M4, 430m) by Sebastian Taborszky, Austin Goodine and Paul Taylor became an instant classic. A few thin ice pitches led to a romp up a snow couloir to a moderate mixed exit to the ridge and the summit block, and was quickly repeated by a few parties looking for early winter climbing. Also in mid-October, but of an entirely more dangerous and striking nature, Chris Petrauskas and Taylor Sullivan held their breath for serac hazard and climbed "a beautiful 10-pitch, mixed/ice line on the left side of Mount Temple's north face headwall." Stringing up the Lights (WI4+ M3+ R) is severely threatened by seracs, climbs to the right of the Elzinga-Miller route and was the first new route on the famous north face since 2008 [see page 95]. In October, Van Haeren and I headed up the north face of Storm Mountain looking for the mythical unrepeated Wallator-Thomas route, but veered off right onto easier ground when confronted by vertical cracks. Our route is a variation that holds many ledge and corner systems. It led to M5 climbing and a snowed-up slab [see page 104]. There are almost endless variations possible to the four existing routes on this face.

In a more conventional vein, Sebastian Taborszky and Bruno Pierre Couture climbed a three-pitch mixed route in Field just to the left of the thin ice of Big Sexy Yodel. Aggravated Turtles (WI5+ M6, 130m) was also quickly repeated by a few parties and is a great option when the ice next door is unclimbable, which is often the case.

Finally, in late January, I finished a moderate drytooling project, which follows weaknesses to the left of Mixed Master [see page 98]. Astringent Apprentice (M5, 300m) was started with Sam Eastman, then climbed to the last pitch with Uisdean Hawthorn, and finally climbed in good mixed conditions with Raphael Slawinski.



Whyte Noise on the north east face of Mount Whyte. Photo: Sebastien Taborszky

2021 Mount Mummery GMC

David Dornian

THE ACC'S 2020 General Mountaineering Camp was planned, permitted, staffed, organized, organized again, re-ordered, delayed, downsized, adjusted and eventually—after many emails, video conference calls and expert opinions—postponed until the following year. It was the first time since inception that the more than 115-year-old camp had missed a summer.

We saw a wide variety of opinions during the period after the announcement of the cancelation and received a lot of suggestions, criticisms and grudging acknowledgement from members who were maybe imagining that the GMC would somehow be proof against what they were experiencing down in the pandemic-embattled valleys. Sadly, another COVID-19 wave was on the way. The camp was not to be.

So, in July of 2021, when we eventually landed our first group of participants on the moraine east of the Mummery Glacier, it felt like a privilege and a party, all at the same time. On the Saturday exchange days, the most jaded veterans from previous years would light up as they stepped out of the helicopter, anticipating new friends and peaks. There was more hand sanitizer than beer in the camp, but the glacier ran like a river past the tents.

The southeast ridge of Mount Helmer.
Photo: Andrew Dunlop

For a location so close to Golden, B.C. and walkable in less than a day from the road head, there is a scarcity of mountaineering history associated with the Mummery Group: a handful of ascents since a camp years ago and passing skiers descending from the icefield in winter/spring. Mount Mummery itself proved unreachable from our base camp—a welter of open crevasses on the lower glacier were interesting to explore for the sake of entertainment, but took so long to navigate on the approach—proven over a number of tries early in the summer. All one-day attempts defaulted to an endless hopscotch tournament. Another year we would have considered a fly camp or bivy site in that direction, but we were feeling that perhaps people weren't ready to crowd each other that much just yet.

We did regularly climb most of the other high points visible from the camp, and a few out beyond the skyline as well. A commute up the rock face immediately north of the tents that we dubbed Mountain Goat Mountain (MGM) was established and a few hand lines fixed to get groups up and onto the Freshfield in shorter order. From the top, Barlow (3,143 metres), Helmer (3,068 metres) and Gilgit (3,122 metres) could be accessed in a relatively straightforward manner, along with Cairns (3,108 metres), a much more ambitious walk. Picking a line ascending northwest from the camp up the Mummery Glacier got you to an evolving bergschrund crossing and then a south-facing snow slope that brought parties to a col between Gilgit and Nanga Parbat (3,270 metres), the east ridge of which proved to be the most continuously exposed and—OK, scary-looking—of the routes we regularly climbed during the summer.

The upper Mummery Glacier with Mount Mummery on the left.
Photo: Christian Schlumpf

Heading out northwest across the Mummery put you on the glacial ice descending from Jones Peak and a couple of other high points along the crest between Karakal (or Mummery North, depending on the guidebook). This route saw almost daily traffic throughout the summer and once you had your sandwich out at the height of land, you faced endless views to the west, or else rather limited views toward nothing but forest fire smoke and the void, kind of depending on the day. A simple right or left turn from the saddle could put you on a summit in 45 minutes.

A highly-featured cliff in the canyon behind the tents was set up as a rock school, and this provided all kinds of off-hour amusement and relaxation throughout the summer. Along with the walk-in crevasses just over the moraine from our tents for ice schools, and millwells and waterfalls and the lake near the toe of the ice to the southeast for hiking and exploring, it all made for full weeks.

We had a new set-up for the kitchen that allowed the guests to interact with the kitchen more. The food was dependably awesome. All-in-all, it made for a pretty fine place for a summer's programming.

The East

La Saison de glace au Québec

Ian Bergeron

ON DOIT LES HAUTS FAITS DE cette saison à un petit groupe de grimpeurs motivés. Leur exploration du secteur de la Haute-Moisie, sur la Côte-Nord, est certainement digne d'intérêt. Inspirés par les photos d'un ami pilote d'hélicoptère, Jean-Philippe Bélanger, Charles Roberge et Yan Mongrain ont décidé d'aller explorer l'endroit. Comme le train qui dessert ce coin du monde était hors service à cause des restrictions de la COVID-19, ils ont fait appel à leur ami Michel Séguin d'Héli-Boréal pour se rendre au site de la Haute-Moisie. Il faut étudier une carte pour comprendre à quel point l'endroit est reculé, à environ 120 kilomètres au nord de Sept-Îles.

Sur place, les trois partenaires constatent l'ampleur du site et des projets. Une grosse ligne bien évidente les attire, mais ils sont tous intimidés. Leur première grimpe sera donc Patte blanche (WI5, 180 m), qui tire son nom des quatre loups aperçus sur la rivière Caopacho. « Nous trouvons des conditions difficiles : une glace très dure et cassante s'offre à nous. En fin de compte, cette voie qui devait nous donner confiance nous a plutôt fait douter », écrira plus tard Jean-Philippe Bélanger.

Leur deuxième ouverture sera La Tanière (WI5, 170 m), une voie raide et soutenue dont la première longueur se termine dans une grotte, d'où son nom. Cela fait probablement aussi référence aux hurlements des loups la nuit précédente, qui ont terrorisé deux des grimpeurs. Le troisième, ayant retiré ses appareils auditifs, n'a rien entendu et a dormi d'un sommeil de plomb.

Après une journée de repos, l'équipe est d'attaque pour entreprendre la pièce de résistance : Maïkan (WI6+, 150 m). Dès les premiers coups de piolet de Charles, ils comprennent que l'objectif sera ardu. Jean-Philippe Bélanger écrira à son retour :

> Charles m'avouera plus tard qu'il a failli renoncer dès le départ. Au premier relais, je me sens intimidé. Je sais que ce qui s'en vient est pour moi. Je veux seulement partir en tête et m'enfermer dans ma bulle. Après quelques mètres faciles, je me faufile à travers un trou de glace et je découvre à quoi j'ai affaire. Yan est curieux et me demande « De quoi ça a l'air? » Ma réponse : « 'Y a pas de mot pour décrire ça! » Une succession de passages improbables sur des blobs de glace plâtrés sur la roche. L'escalade demande habileté, endurance et créativité dans un environnement en trois dimensions. Je termine ma longueur sous un énorme toit de glace formé par un pilier cassé. La suite est incertaine et nous a causé bien des maux de tête en analysant la voie de la rivière durant les jours précédents. Finalement, contre toute attente, Charles trouve un tunnel à travers les stalactites du toit, qui lui permet d'accéder à la grotte de glace derrière la base de la dernière longueur. Yan entreprend la dernière longueur et creuse à son tour un troisième trou, ce qui lui permet de passer directement de la grotte au rideau vertical de la fin de la cascade.

Toujours sur la Côte-Nord, Nicolas Ouellet, Vincent Demers et Patrick Gagné sont allés visiter Nipissis, qu'ils ont aussi atteint à bord d'un hélicoptère. Initialement, le trio avait comme objectif

Jean-François Girard dans la voie Olympique Métal, secteur de la Mer de glace. Photo : Carl Darveau

La voie Maïkan, dans la Haute-Moisie.
Photo : Charles Roberge

de parcourir les lignes existantes. Après quelques grimpes, ils ont observé une ligne de glace blanche qu'ils croyaient brûlée par le soleil. Ils ont tout de même visité l'endroit et se sont rendu compte que la glace était en fait de très bonne qualité. Après avoir rapidement grimpé les trois longueurs en WI5, ils ont nommé leur réalisation Les Voûtes. « C'est une belle option un peu moins soutenue que ses deux cousines, Chercheur d'or (WI5) et Le Filon (WI5+) », a rapporté Patrick Gagné. Ce dernier et Vincent Demers ont aussi profité de leur visite pour ouvrir Jour de repos (WI4+, 70 m). Comme son nom l'indique, la journée devait être consacrée au farniente, mais il semble que l'appel des cascades l'a remporté.

Au début de janvier, Jean-François Girard et Carl Darveau sont retournés dans la Vallée Bras-du-Nord pour explorer une ligne tentée sept ans auparavant, mais qu'ils n'avaient pas terminée à cause des conditions climatiques trop chaudes. La météo favorable de la saison 2021–2022 a permis au duo de réussir leur objectif, qu'ils ont nommé Olympique Métal (M10 WI5+, 80 m). Leurs images de la voie enlèvent le doute sur sa nature soutenue et difficile. On y aperçoit clairement un long dévers, et un toit imposant qui semble infranchissable. Pourtant, après sa première tentative, Carl Darveau avait raconté : « J'ai réalisé que toutes les prises étaient présentes pour le gravir. »

Cette année, c'est Jeff Girard qui s'est chargé de la première longueur. Elle a nécessité plusieurs essais en raison de la minceur de la glace et de la difficulté générale de ce passage. La deuxième longueur en glace a été l'affaire de Darveau. Deux jours à peine après l'ouverture, Dzao Plamondon a effectué la seconde ascension.

Le duo Girard–Darveau a récidivé en fin de saison avec un retour au pic de l'Aurore en Gaspésie. Tous deux semblent apprécier la roche douteuse de l'endroit, ou bien est-ce la couleur orangée de celle-ci qui leur apporte une dose de vitamine C pour combattre le scorbut de la fin de l'hiver ? Toujours est-il qu'ils y ont effectué La Peau du dragon (M8+ WI5, 185 m). Les deux premières longueurs en mixte mènent à un « festival de choss » en M6+. Le passage clé est certes la quatrième longueur — en M8+, WI5 —, que Jean-François Girard « a gravi comme sur les écailles de la peau du dragon, tel un chevalier dominant sa bataille ardue », selon le compte rendu de Carl Darveau.

The Landmark

Steve Charlton

MANY CLIMBING AREAS have unclimbed routes that are so obvious they acquire a name prior to being climbed. One such route is The Landmark, located at Mount Olympus in northwestern Ontario's Orient Bay corridor. The striking line can't be missed as you drive north from Nipigon on Highway 11.

In the late '90s, local pioneer Shaun Parent had indicated that perhaps another party had previously tried the route. When Randy Reed climbed the first pitch by aid solo in 1998 at a grade of 5.9 A2, he reported finding no sign of any previous party. Randy and I moved away from Thunder Bay, but I kept thinking about this route and wondered if anyone had completed it. I got in touch with the local climbers in 2006 and asked if anyone had pushed the line higher. Surprisingly, no one had been up there. Jody Bernst and I returned in September 2006 to push the line to the summit. We only managed to complete the second pitch and a portion of the third. The drill ran out of juice after the first bolt, and I hand drilled two more bolts before time ran out. I needed to return to Thunder Bay in time to catch my flight home.

Over the next 10-plus years, Jody and I fell away from serious climbing, and Randy moved west. In 2016, I saw an article by Brandon Pullan in *Gripped* about the area. Jen Olson had free climbed the first pitch onsight at a grade of 5.11+ R. I reached out to Jen regarding her ascent. She indicated that she had only climbed the first pitch, but had thoroughly enjoyed surviving the experience, and gave us permission to improve the protection. "Please bolt this route in a way you feel makes it accessible and adventurous," she offered. Speaking to Jen renewed my interest in completing the climb. I established several routes in the immediate vicinity of The Landmark over the next few seasons, but never completed the main prize.

In 2020, I noticed several online posts by Peter Song regarding rock climbs in Orient Bay. I reached out to Peter and asked if he wanted to join me for a week in August of 2021 to work on new routes and finish old projects, one of which was The Landmark.

In August of 2021, Peter and I spent a week in the area with plans to complete it. We added one bolt to the first pitch, eliminating the potential ledge fall and the R rating. We returned a couple of days later to complete the climb. Peter free climbed the first pitch as well as the second, a 5.10 off-width crack. I climbed the third pitch on aid placing bolts for free climbing. The route now stands as an open project and the pitches go at 5.11+, 5.10- and 5.12 A0, then finishing on the final 5.10a sport pitch of Courage Highway. Almost 25 years after the route was first attempted, it remains one of Ontario's most obvious unfinished projects.

Summary

The Landmark (5.12 A0, 95m, 4 pitches), Mt. Olympus, Orient Bay, Ontario. FA: Steve Charlton, Peter Song, August 25, 2021.

The Landmark on Mount Olympus in Orient Bay.
Photo: Steve Charlton

Prairie Rock

Katee Pederson

"There's climbing in Saskatchewan?" This was a question I heard time and time again after telling friends I was headed on a nine-day climbing expedition in my home province. With no documented roped climbing in Saskatchewan, I wasn't surprised by the need to explain the northern half of this Prairie province is covered in granite and limestone—part of the Canadian Shield.

This region is a canoe tripper's heaven. I'm not the only one who has spent hours studying the rock faces while paddling, wishing I had gear with me to climb. Our team of seven women—Ada Krahn, Ashlyn George, Courtney Hancherow, Kristen Moore, Sabrina Heywood, Sarah Hicks and me—all grew up in different towns across south and central Saskatchewan, and have a love for both paddling and climbing. We came together with the goal of exploring the potential for outdoor climbing in Saskatchewan, and what the sport's future could look like in the province. We had heard rumours of river guides in the 1980s taking clients to boulder on cliffs, and others regretfully admitting to scrubbing a face clean of lichen, only to find it wasn't a great wall to climb.

Ashlyn George rappels Flight of the Eagle on Lower Foster Lake in Northern Saskatchewan. Photo: Katee Pederson

We put sustainability at the forefront of our plans, understanding that this was not our land to alter in any permanent way. In addition, we would be naive to think we would be the last to want to climb along these routes. We knew we would be setting a precedent for those climbing after us.

Our canoe route was chosen with a number of factors in mind. We didn't want to overcrowd an already popular area, but we also wanted to avoid choosing a location so far off the map that the logistics prevented future visits. The Foster River seemed to mark the perfect balance while including just the right amount of whitewater to keep the paddling portion exciting as well. We had a few people question our choice of river, convinced from their memories that there was no rock to be found along its shores, but contour maps and other promising reports encouraged us to go for it.

Meeting in the small town of Missinipe—a five-hour drive north of Saskatoon—our team travelled by float plane to the middle of Lower Foster Lake. Most canoe groups start at the mouth of the river at the very south end of the lake. But, we were enticed by the stacked contour lines surrounding the northern half of the lake. While it's common for the glacier-formed rock faces in the area to be more sloped, we were thrilled as the plane descended and we could see vertical cliffs in every direction.

The clifftops in this region are typically accessed by vegetated slopes. The amount of moss and lichen present makes the faces less than ideal for traditional lead climbing. On our first day we were able to build a large anchor utilizing a 60-metre rope and three trees set back from the cliff. The rock we chose to climb was cleaner than other faces in the area because it was significantly overhanging. We were each able to attempt the 5.11 route. Sarah and Sabrina climbed it successfully, naming it Flight of the Eagle in honour of the eagles that soared overhead, with Sarah completing the first ascent.

Our first day set a great tone for the rest of the trip. We were ecstatic to put a route up so early on and were eager to see what else we could find. We learned what to look for from our canoes on the water when eyeing potential faces. We discussed ways we could limit our cleaning and footprint. We also realized how long it would take to scout locations, build anchors and give everyone a turn to climb. We had seven-and-a half days remaining before we'd be picked up on Eulas Lake, and it would take six full days of paddling to get there. We knew that we'd be pressed for time to fit in climbing as well.

Unfortunately, the rain set in on day three, just before we arrived at our next potential climbing spot. The rock was too wet and covered in more lichen than we expected. Though we could see some promising routes, it would take a lot of cleaning to make it climbable. We figured it was for the best that the rain was preventing us from making such a noticeable impact on a rock face.

The next five days seemed to blend together. The weather changed from cool and rainy to warm and sunny. We rotated canoes, getting to connect with and learn from each other. We honed our decision making as a team and progressed as whitewater paddlers as the rapids increased in difficulty. We set up camp, filtered water, cooked meals, shared cocktails and did it all over again. We paddled 12-hour days, scouted and manoeuvred dozens of rapids, and portaged just as many.

We were intrigued by a number of cliffs along the way but the situation was never quite right to build an anchor and try them out—it was raining, it was too late in the day, there weren't any good trees to anchor from, there was too much lichen, the rock was too brittle. It seemed like we had a lot of excuses. I think the biggest influence was the picture painted in our minds from a guide who had returned from the Foster River just days before we set out. He had told us of a spot at the south end of Eulas Lake with a 10-metre face that was perfect for climbing. We were determined to get there with enough time to climb.

On the morning of our eighth day, we loaded up our climbing gear and daypacks and set off for the cliffs at Eulas Lake. Rounding a bend to where they were marked on our map, Ada called out "I don't know guys, I don't think it's worth it," as we all laughed at her sarcasm. This crag, perched on a collection of boulders separated by lake water, was everything we had dreamed of and worth every paddle stroke to get there.

We immediately got to work. We first wrapped a sling around the horn of a three-metre boulder. We named the 5.7 route Bonnie and Brian. Our main objective was a 20-metre 5.10 route. The trees above this line were easier to build an anchor from than on our first day. We were able to get it set with relative ease and named the climb Nice Tarp. We enjoyed the challenge of a significant crux at the beginning, with solid moves and beautiful exposure as we progressed.

When we debriefed on our last night together, we had clearly established there is great potential for the future of outdoor climbing in Saskatchewan. It won't look the same as other regions with well-established crags that are easy to access, but the adventure of getting there is part of the fun. As potential for traffic picks up, conversations need to be had with local Indigenous communities and trappers about visitors using the land in this way. A set of climbing ethics for the region needs to be created and made available, and a group of climbers needs to come forward to monitor and maintain the area for both safety and sustainability.

Acknowledgements

This trip was made possible through the ACC Jen Higgins Grant for Young Women and with support from Churchill River Canoe Outfitters.

Foreign

The Elusive Hawk

Bronwyn Hodgins

"FOLLOW THE DIRT ROAD NORTH, past the tiny village of Los Remotos, to the end of the road. You'll find an elderly hermit there by the name of Luciano, living in the wall of the wash. His hands are crusty like a lizard's skin, weathered from years under the blazing sun. He's friendly enough. He'll sort you out with a donkey and show you the way. But be warned, strange things happen out there in the desert. Legend tells of shape shifting horse people, the Nahuales—horses by day, human by night." Homero points Jeff Jackson to the north and bids him good luck.

Jeff finds the hermit, as Homeros had described, and that evening he and his partner Ben Fink set up camp among giant boulders. The 300-metre orange wall looms steeply above them as they excitedly drift off to sleep. *What's that?* They wake in the night to see the hillside speckled in lights. Peering through binoculars, it looks like people carrying lanterns? Spooked, they cower in the boulders all night, barely sleeping a wink. In the morning the hillside is filled with grazing horses.

AFTER SEEING THE HORSES in the 1990s, Jeff returned for three seasons and established ground-up El Gavilan (5.13a, 300m). Spanish for The Hawk, the route was continuously overhanging and sustained, with seven pitches at 5.12 and two at 5.13a. For more than a decade, El Gavilan remained unrepeated, despite attempts by world-class climbers, including British climber Leo Houlding and Americans Andrew Bisharat, Boone Speed and Dan Merski.

In an article following their attempt, Bisharat wrote of a strange light that appeared out of the darkness: "Whiteish-blue, bright and hovering. Suddenly, it jumped across the zenith, stayed there for a bit, vibrating dementedly, and zipped back to its original spot." [*Rock and Ice,* 2009] It came back each night. They called it the visitor.

Finally, in 2013, Alex Honnold supported by Josh McCoy claimed the second free ascent. Six years later my husband, Jacob Cook, and Tony McLane made a (mostly free) ascent of El Gavilan and established ground-up a new mixed line, Super Blood Wolf Moon (5.11+, 300m). I was incredibly intrigued by the elusive El Gavilan. When I asked Jacob about it, he said, "Incredible route! Scary bolts!" So, the following winter I headed south with Savannah Cummins, intent on replacing the bolts and then having a go at the first female ascent.

We teamed up with Josh Janes, who'd generously been given bolts by the American Safe Climbing Association (ASCA), and on our first mission out to the cliff we managed to re-equip nearly half the route. Sav and I returned alone to continue the work, but the temperature dropped to near freezing and a thick fog moved in. Wandering around on the summit trying to find the top-out, we heard the snap of a twig. We paused. I looked to Sav, eyebrows raised in curiosity. We could just make out a dark body in the mist. As we followed it, the fog lifted slightly and revealed a herd of about 20 wild horses. We stood mesmerized, watching the elegant beasts graze in

Bronwyn Hodgins on pitch eight of El Gavilan.
Photo: Savannah Cummins

Bronwyn Hodgins on pitch seven of El Gavilan. Photo: Savannah Cummins

the eerie dim light. After about 10 minutes, the fog thickened and shrouded the horses in mystery once more.

Several days later I headed back, this time with Sav, Kiersa Koepnick and Nolan Smythe. We'd been warned not to drive out there after dark: "Bad people from the city hide in the desert. It isn't safe." We should have listened. An hour into the dirt track, we got a flat tire. No problem, we had the tools. Or so we thought… The wheel had one lug nut that could only be removed with a specific key. We checked our phones: no service. It was well past dark, and I suddenly felt very scared and helpless. *What do we do?* For another hour, we tried to pull the lug nut off with a wrench, but it was no use. Left with little choice, we open bivied beside the road.

"CARRR!" I woke abruptly to Kiersa's shout. Bright lights were coming down the road—many lights, multiple vehicles. They stopped a hundred metres short and then a dozen men with machine guns slung over their shoulders were moving through the cactus toward us, shouting in Spanish and combing the desert floor with their powerful torches.

I froze, staring wide-eyed at the armed men above me. Nolan reached for his glasses, and the man above him flinched. *Do they think he's reaching for a gun?* Glasses on, Nolan thrust his hands above his head. "Amigo, amigo!" he stammered. I did the same. A man who seemed to be in charge spoke in broken English, "Not safe here." I felt a small wave of relief. *They want to help us.* We learned that the officers are on a call for further up the road. "Is it a fight?" we asked. "Bigger," he struggled to find the words, "bigger and guns." The officer agreed to drive us to a nearby farmhouse to use the landline. Our friend Chuy, a local in Hidalgo, would come to help us. The sun would rise soon, and with it the dark terrors of the night would disappear.

Sitting in El Potrero Chico the next day, I felt distraught. I was scared and ashamed of ending up in what could have become a much worse situation. Why hadn't we brought the InReach? Why hadn't we noticed the lug nut key was missing? Why had we driven out there at night? Why am I risking so much just to climb a cliff!? But it didn't have to be so dangerous if we made better decisions, right?

Sav, Nolan and Kiersa headed home to Utah, but all I could think about was El Gavilan. Was it possible to still squeeze in an attempt? I knew of one person who might be down. I'd met Ben Perdue in the campground a few days earlier. I sent him a text. Am I being crazy?

La Popa:
(1) Super Blood Wolf Moon
(2) Los Naguales
(3) El Gavilan
Photo: Jacob Cook

Over two days I climbed El Gavilan with Ben jugging faithfully behind me. Part of me knew this mission was crazy. I was exhausted from the police encounter, and I'd have to lead several of the pitches on the old rusted bolts. In the end, my arms failed me at the final roof. I hung on the rope utterly defeated, suspended in the little bubble of light cast by my headlamp. *It's over. I can't do it, not this time. I'll aid through and get us to the summit.* On top it was cold and had started to rain. My watch read 1 a.m. I looked over at Ben and started to laugh, then gave him a big hug. "Thanks for joining me on this ridiculous desert adventure. Now let's get the hell outta here!"

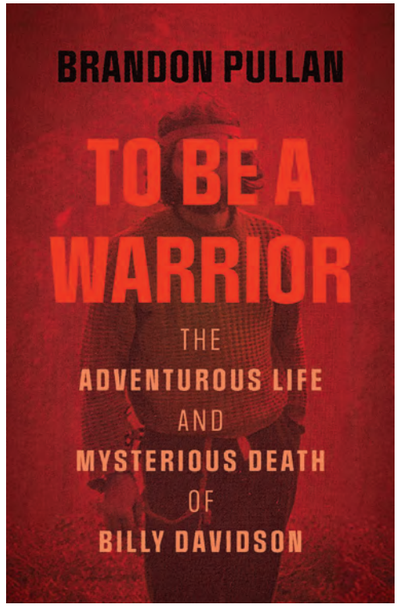
TWO YEARS LATER, Sav and I returned to El Gavilan, and, with a solid support team, we finished replacing all of the old bolts. On December 21 and 22, my good friend Kelsey Watts and I made the first female ascent, swinging leads with no falls for either of us. I was smiling ear-to-ear as I belayed Kelsey up to the summit at sunset. What a perfect conclusion to this epic saga, and I couldn't wait to share the beta so that more climbers could come out to this now not-so-elusive cliff.

Summary
El Gavilan (5.13a, 300m, 9 pitches), La Popa, Nuevo León, México. First female ascent: Bronwyn Hodgins, Kelsey Watts, December 21–22, 2021.

Reviews

To Be a Warrior: The Adventurous Life and Mysterious Death of Billy Davidson

Brandon Pullan (Rocky Mountain Books, 2021)



Travelling from Calgary in accomplished climbing company, Billy Davidson found himself in Yosemite's Camp 4 overhearing a conversation about the North America Wall—then considered the greatest rock climb in the world. It was the fall of 1970, and it was Billy's first trip to Yosemite. Members of the Calgary Mountain Club considered him their best big wall climber. Valley protagonist and Green Beret surgeon, Dan Reid, was looking for a partner for the route that was first climbed in 1964 by legends Robbins, Chouinard, Frost and Pratt, all of whom were at the top of their game. Davidson compared himself to these legends and came to the specious conclusion that they were "only human." Equipped with 35 kilograms of water and food for eight days, three ropes and more iron than he had ever seen, Davidson sought to apply everything he had learned in the Canadian Rockies—hardly the granite crucible. Halfway up the wall, they weathered the same four-day storm that caught Harding and Caldwell in bat tents high on the first ascent of the Dawn Wall. Neither party accepted a putative rescue. Davidson mastered the intricate nailing that led them through such features as the Cyclops Eye to the top. In the psychedelic spirit of the times, he summarized the route as a "real mind blower" in a letter to fellow Yamnuska activist Urs Kallen.

Davidson brought Yosemite tactics to the Bow Valley. Returning from two years in Switzerland, Kallen met Davidson for an early morning coffee in Calgary before heading to push the route they provisionally called the Super Direct. In the style of major new routes in the Dolomites, it was meant to follow the distinct prow that falls "as a drop of water would" from the apex of Mount Yamnuska. Brian Greenwood and Tim Augur respectfully bowed out of the project, leaving the pair to establish the crown jewel on the most coveted big face in the Bow Valley. CMC Wall makes its presence manifest in morning or evening light when viewed from the Trans-Canada Highway.

A few years later, Davidson would move to the coast to embark on a life of adventure in and amongst the tides and coastal storms of the Pacific Ocean. His chosen craft was the double kayak, *Ayak*, which saw him through months without human contact.

To Be a Warrior reconstructs Davidson's life from the time his mother dropped him off in 1953 at Woods Christian Home (a shelter for disadvantaged children in Calgary) along with his siblings, never to see them again, to his blazing presence as a big wall climber and to his decades-long exploration of the Inside Passage. Davidson's need for solitude and self-reliance became absolute as he grew older, as did his artistic sensibilities and his skills as a paddler. He travelled in a world without GPS and reliable weather forecasts. He learned to live off the land as he built a series of now-legendary camps heading up the coast past Bella Bella. Once he established his life in ocean waters, he seldom spoke of his adventures in the mountains. He became a parent, but never adopted parenthood as a driving factor in his life. Coastal storms, low clouds moving in from the west, the view of the mountains afterward would be the forces that drove him from one camp to the next.

The Billy Davidson who speaks to us through Brandon Pullan's telling is a fearless figure, equally comfortable in a Pacific gale as when pitons shifted on him on a high-consequence aid-pitch. His fearlessness was matched by the need to stand in relation to the natural world unmediated by human companionship. The world of solitude that he chose to live in as a mature adult stands in counterpoint to the garrison-like world of steel-framed bunkbeds he grew up in.

Pullan also tells us about the places Davidson occupied in unremitting solitude through his visual art, which he learned locally on the coast. Some of those paintings are reproduced alongside portrait photos, annotated topos and charts. Largely dispersed among those who knew him, Davidson's body of work reassembles the emotions that drew him ever deeper into a world largely governed by tides that rose from swell upon swell.

Pullan is able to tell us how Davidson spent his days, turning to decades, in his chosen wilderness. He reconstructs the moods of the landscape and the thoughts that may have brought sustenance to Billy's spiritual being. *To be a Warrior* brings an enigmatic figure to the fore of Canadian climbing history. Surely, there are others, whose stories have yet to be told.

—Tom Valis

Snow Nomad: An Avalanche Memoir

Alan Dennis (Friesen Press, 2022)

Snow nomad is an irreverent romp through the world of avalanche control and, in this book, no one is safe from Alan's pen. Alan Dennis has spent 50 seasons working in avalanche control on four continents, and his stories are remarkable. He introduces us to many interesting characters and is not afraid to explain why he liked them or why he did not. He has a quirky writing style—light, unconventional and almost conversational. At the same time, he has a very distinctive voice, and it works.

Personally, Alan is a soft and gentle person and charmingly innocent, a bit of a rarity in a macho world. He has a contrarian point of view, however, and is often at odds with others.

His early travels in Australia and across Asia show that he has a high tolerance for adventure. By the early '70s, he found himself working in avalanche control on some of the biggest jobs in the world. The terrain above the Granduc Mine Road and at Bear Pass is huge, and the slopes on the Milford Road in New Zealand are even bigger. Not a certified guide or an engineer, Alan didn't take any snow and avalanche courses until he was well into the business. He was hired to do these jobs with no credentials or training and just figured it out as he went along.

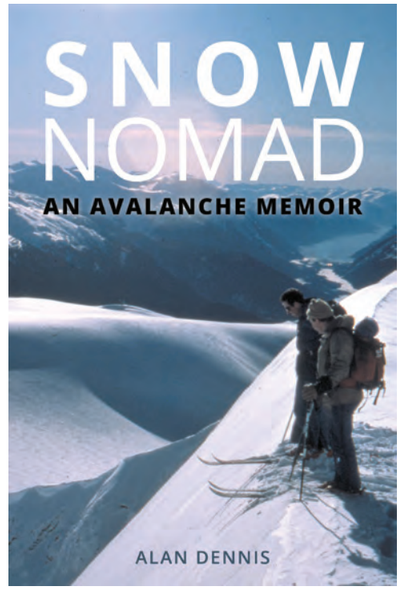
The seven years he spent working for the Canadian Avalanche Association in Revelstoke contribute a very interesting chapter to the book, particularly if you know the people in the story. This was a very difficult time for Alan, and he reveals some of his feelings and opinions. Some people might squirm a bit reading about themselves.

Alan and I spent a couple of months working together in the Cairngorm Mountains of Scotland, where I was his field assistant. I got to know him well and was always amazed at the affection the locals showed for him. He was truly loved. I enjoyed this section of the book as I knew almost everyone involved, and I knew the area. Working for the Scottish Avalanche Information Service was a good period in Alan's life.

His job in Veladero, near the border of Chile and Argentina in the Andes, was outrageous. The camp was at 3,800 metres, and the high point on the road was at 4,800 metres. Truly a wild, fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants adventure.

This is a very personal book, almost a confessional. It is humble, heartfelt and humorous, a bit like Alan himself. He very bravely reveals himself on its pages. I really enjoyed the read and recommend it to anyone interested in winter sports and snow safety. I am sure it will annoy many of the old guard in the industry, but perhaps that is Alan's goal.

—Chic Scott

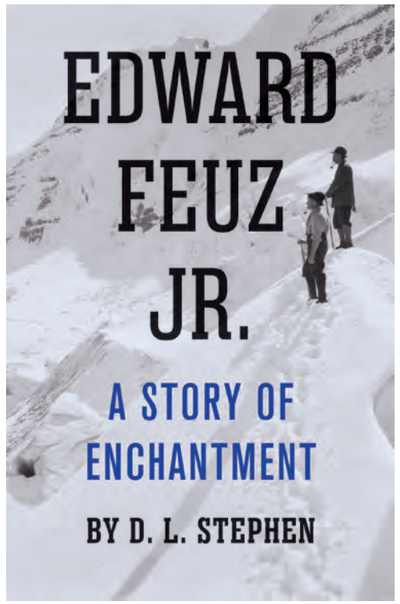


Edward Feuz Jr.: A Story of Enchantment

D.L. Stephen (Rocky Mountain Books, 2021)

The Canadian mountaineering tradition has its layered origins in the role of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) and Swiss guides, and Edward Feuz Jr. (1884–1981) was, with little doubt, one of the most significant Swiss guides of first-generation Canadian mountaineering. The beauty and joy of Donna Stephen's biography of Feuz Jr. is the way she intricately threads together both Feuz Jr.'s compelling mountaineering life, and her connection with Feuz and his wife. This means Edward Feuz Jr. is both a biography of Feuz, and also an autobiography of Stephen's journey into the enchantment and magic of mountain life.

Edward Feuz Jr. is both a companion book, and yet also takes a deeper dive into the Swiss guide ethos than the earlier book, *The Guiding Spirit* (1986), by Andrew Kauffman and William Putnam. The focus, of course, of Stephen's biography of Feuz Jr. means that such a biographical and focused approach is inevitable. Many of the first-generation guides are aptly mentioned, some more legendary than others in Canadian mountaineering culture. But, the evocative beauty of this biography is the way that Stephen not only highlights Feuz Jr.'s multiple first ascents, significant guiding skills and legendary status, but also his personal, private and family life, in addition to his unique personality. Stephen had access to this side of Feuz Jr., given the fact her family, for decades, had a ripe relationship with the Swiss guides, but mostly with Edward and his wife, Martha.



The history of the Swiss Edelweiss Village (a heritage site but presently threatened by developers) in Golden, B.C. is told in tender detail, and the tensions between many of the Swiss guides and the CPR is recounted in an equally candid manner. The early years in Canada for the Swiss guides and their families were most difficult. The more temperate and urbanized alpine life in Switzerland was quite different from the frigid Canadian winters of interior B.C. and sheer lack of basic amenities. Stephen is certainly not shy about sharing, in poignant detail, many of the challenges faced by Feuz and other Swiss guides in Golden in the early decades of the 20th century. The ample collection of photographs in the book of Feuz Jr. and friends (including many with Donna Stephen's friends and family) make for a generous and inviting approach to balance the engaging textual aspect. The black and white photos are a fine visual journey into the emerging generations of Canadian mountaineers in the Golden, Rogers Pass, Yoho, Lake Louise and Lake O'Hara paradises, worthy of many a repeated trip and trek.

I quite enjoyed the bounty of this book for many reasons. Living in the Swiss Alps from 1972 to 1974, I spent much of my time near Interlaken where the Feuz family is originally from. Many of the mountaineering legends of the Canadian Rockies, such as Bruno Engler, Lizzie Rummel, Georgia Engelhard, Conrad Kain, Sepp Renner and Ruthie Oltmann, have whispered a great deal of mountain lore and wisdom to my soul. I have also spent time at the Swiss Edelweiss Village in Golden and chatted with Jean Feuz Vaughan when she was still alive.

The final chapter, "Edward's Girls," lingers on the climb that Donna, her sister (Cindy) and Sepp Renner (Seppi) made to the summit of Mount Tupper in Rogers Pass in 2005 to celebrate Feuz's ascent of the peak decades before. The journey is worth the read, many an animated moment as step by step, challenge by challenge, rock by rock, photo by photo, the lengthy trek is made to the summit of the demanding peak. Seppi, the faithful guide and mentor, in many ways, is the younger version of Edward Feuz Jr.

There are many reasons for a browse of *Edward Feuz Jr.*, but there can be no doubt it is very much a story about the enchanting world of mountaineering culture, seen through the life of Edward Feuz Jr.

—Ron Dart

How to Ice Climb!

Sean Isaac and Tim Banfield (Falcon Guides, 2021)

It might seem odd for the guy who wrote the last major book on how to ice climb (i.e. me) to be the one reviewing Sean Isaac and Tim Banfield's excellent new book, the simply titled *How to Ice Climb!* It's especially odd as the updated edition of my book is years late, so I should really be working on my book and not reviewing other people's work. But, I did the sensible thing and stole a copy of their book (well, Sean dropped it off at my house with a smile). Because Sean is one of the top ice climbing guides, educators and writers on the planet, I knew it would be good—so good it'll likely save me days on my book. And, it didn't disappoint at all.

Sean has been ice climbing more than 30 years, but he's also been teaching, guiding and writing actively most of those years. Time spent on ice equals ice climbing knowledge, and Sean has a huge amount of time banked. He commonly teaches or guides more than 70 days each winter, and teaching ice climbing is how you really learn to do and communicate it well.

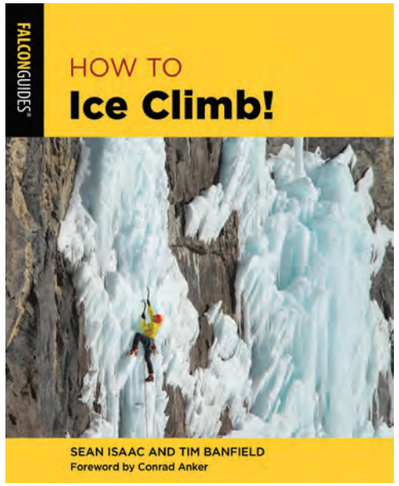
And that's why this book is so good. You can tell right away that Sean teaches, a lot. The information is extremely well organized—no easy thing to do when covering the basics to high-end mixed climbing, belaying to crampon selection. I really like the chapter on planning your day and managing common hazards.

Tim Banfield's photos are a huge reason this book shines. Tim also ice climbs a tremendous amount, in addition to being a professional photographer, and you can really see he understands how to shoot the topics that Sean shares. The photos are wondrously crisp, clean and seem almost like studio shots in the wild. Plus, there are a lot of really great "combat" photos from Tim's vast collection (Has he shot more ice climbing than anyone? Maybe…). I really liked the before and after shots of climbs of ice routes formed, then collapsed.

The authors also present more modern but lesser-known techniques, such as fixed-point lead belays with a thorough and understandable explanation. Grant Statham, a legendary climber turned legendary avalanche professional, does a really good job of covering avalanche hazard, and the book again pushes recent trends to bring avalanche gear and understand what is way above you.

This massive book (280 pages) clearly represents an equally huge leap forward in ice climbing instruction, but it's traditional to find things to complain about when reviewing books, so I'll try to find a few. Sean reliably does a great job explaining the "why" behind the systems and techniques, and I love the deep education instead of "Do it this way, period." So when he doesn't hit the "why" it's surprising. There are a few statements like, "Always use a friction hitch backup when rappelling" that could do with a little more explanation as to why. I suspect this comes from Sean teaching novices a lot, where rules need to be made, but much of the book has such great expert level info in it that these statements stick out.

There's a training section written by Steve House of Uphill Athlete renown, and it's interesting, but it was little bit of a letdown to me. In my experience, the best training for any activity is doing it, followed by doing the activity closest to it. If you're a runner, then run. Climbers should climb. Steve takes a more weight-room perspective, and misses aerobic training completely, which is also critical for most ice climbers. Climbing sometimes requires specific strengths, but, without movement skills, strength is meaningless. Modern training tools, such as drytool walls and home "pl'ice" walls are missing as well.



But you can't write a book this comprehensive without the odd bit of static in the knowledge transmission, and honestly this book is a huge leap forward. I'd recommend all ice and mixed climbers buy a copy and get stoked to go ice climbing.

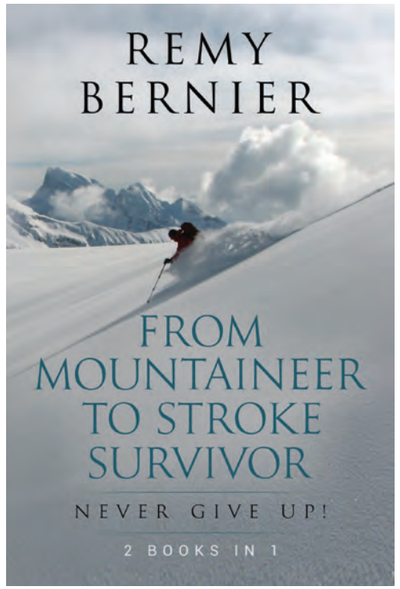
—Will Gadd

From Mountaineer to Stroke Victim: Never Give Up!

Remy Bernier (Olympia Publishers, 2021)

The recent publication—*From Mountaineer to Stroke Victim: Never Give Up!*—by Remy Bernier is an account of how an exploded brain aneurysm forever changed the life of a man who was a hardcore outdoor adventurer. At the age of 27, having already climbed a string of high-altitude peaks and while training to be a mountain guide with the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides, Remy Bernier suffered a stroke that would paralyze the right side of his body and relegate him to a wheelchair for the rest of his life. His book details the remarkable story of how he has adapted to a situation that may well have driven others to insanity or suicide.

At the beginning of the book, Remy is clear with his readers that he is not an accomplished author and that, in tribute to his unique style, he has chosen not to accept writing assistance from either the publishers or editors. In addition, English is not Remy's native language and his paresis requires him to type with a single finger. As a result, the manuscript is rife with spelling and syntax errors, strange chronologies, repetition and unusual turns of phrase. There is a prologue after the epilogue and Parts 1 and 2 follow Parts 3, 4 and 5. It is often very challenging to grasp his meaning and sequence of events. It is fractured writing in honour of a fractured life. However, his initial proclamation around unique style is a full-frontal dare to the reader to see past the literary chaos to the bigger picture of what it has been like to have to reshape and reframe his entire existence. From energizing ability to crushing disability. From liberating independence to infuriating dependence. The single-mindedness that underpins his writing is the same determination that has driven him to practice kung fu, create a series of videos, practice a variety of art forms and hold onto his dreams despite his significant deficits.



If you accept his challenge and read on, you will find a story replete with some eyebrow-raising mountaineering excursions, self-deprecating humour and lessons in grit in a life that swings between battling medical and municipal authorities and finding measures of peace in music, art, sports and drugs. In two places, Bernier cleverly inserted short sections from legendary author and mountaineer Chic Scott, both of which provide some welcome outside perspective. Some aspects of his daily life are possibly too detailed to be of great interest to most; others are excruciatingly intimate, reminding us that a human being still resides within that broken body. There are brief allusions to a suicide attempt and some memories of having been committed to a psychiatric unit that also shove his humanity front and centre, but the overriding sense of it all is a redefinition of the word tenacity.

Many tales of triumph over tragedy lead toward some climactic event that underscores the power of human will: climbing a major peak, winning an impossible race or finding fame as a motivational speaker. That is often the siren call to keep reading in order to feel better about the hell the subject has been through. You will not find that in this book, because Remy's entire post-aneurysm life is a triumph in the making. He holds tightly to dreams of love, notoriety and accomplishment, and while the odds are stacked strongly against him, we are left with the sense that, whatever the ultimate result, the victory lies in the continued battle to secure his place in the world.

—Peter Tucker

The Zone: Rediscovering Our Natural Self

Rob Wood (Rocky Mountain Books, 2022)

Climbing pioneer Rob Wood has written an impactful and compelling personal manifesto with his new book, *The Zone: Rediscovering Our Natural Self*. Wood's latest foray into self-discovery is both nostalgic and forward thinking in its philosophy, as he reminisces about past adventures and the wisdom gained from each. With every chapter of the book, Wood breaks down and analyzes the fundamental elements that have made his journeys either successes or failures, ultimately concluding that the intense focus of climbing or risk-taking adventure can be applied to how we live our lives and connect to our planet.

Having just been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, Wood is clearly on a path to collate and disperse his philosophy for the benefit of others, with the ultimate goal of saving our natural world while we still can. Throughout *The Zone*, the common thread that binds all of the anecdotes is humankind's innate connection to nature and how it is being lost with every successive generation as they lose contact with the land, self-nourishment and the understanding of interdependent ecosystems.

Wood's theory of how "flow" is directly related to the universal, intellectual and metaphysical connection of all living things is not a new philosophy, but has been practiced by many Indigenous cultures for millennia. What makes his view and interpretation unique is how there is empirical and scientific evidence that backs it up. Similarly, in a test of faith, Wood describes how his own experiments in utilizing his ability to find and maintain the "zone" have enabled him to overcome some of the physical challenges of Parkinson's. With the same intense focus he used when encountering life-threatening situations in the mountains now applied to his recently restricted body, he is able to procure movement and control his own physique, thus bypassing the need for prescriptions and chemical treatment.

By Wood's own admission, he feels this same intense focus not only benefits the physical well-being of individuals, but in turn will also contribute to the well-being of the universe. Taking humans out of the prison of societal conditioning to treat themselves and the planet is exactly what Wood suggests, and proves is possible, when given enough attention. As the author describes himself: "Being in the Zone is not, then, the addition of some mysterious sixth sense so much as a breaking free from the heavy constraints of inappropriate, culturally conditioned thinking that prevents accurate perception of and appropriate response to the natural, spontaneous flow of universal intelligence, which can teach us how to live more sustainably and be more alive, conscious and loving."

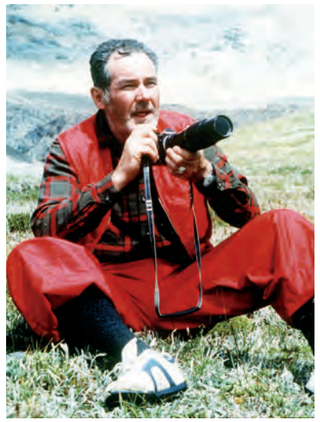
So what's the value of mountaineering exactly in Wood's philosophy, beyond the exceptional attention and focus needed to overcome fear and survive? Wood suggests that the very act of mountaineering itself is straying from societal norms, a subculture that embraces the unknown and pushes comfort levels so as to entertain larger existential conversations. Climbing mountains was Wood's deliberate, "conscious attempt to reconnect with the spontaneous flow of nature's intelligent order."

Put into our present-day context, *The Zone* couldn't be a more timely publication, with daily reminders of planetary distress, climate change and societal unrest following a global pandemic. This short, meaningful manifesto is not only forward thinking, but essential reading for anyone who loves mountains and the outdoors. There are nuggets of wisdom here that can only be described as integral to the survival of humankind and indeed the planet itself, all presented by one of Canada's most humble, unsung heroes of mountaineering.

—Joanna Croston

Remembrances

Glendon Webber Boles
1934–2022



Glen boles, a much loved and respected member of the mountain community, died in Cochrane, Alberta, on January 13, 2022 at the age of 87. Glen devoted his life to the mountains—as a climber, as an artist and as a generous friend of other mountain lovers.

Glen joined the Alpine Club of Canada in 1960 and that same year was also a founding member of the Calgary Mountain Club (CMC). A prolific climber, he summited almost 600 peaks during his long career. Born in St. Stephen, New Brunswick, on July 5, 1934, Glen loved to play sports and roam the woods as a child. He also loved to draw and had a talent with pencil and paper.

He came west to Calgary in 1953 and within a few years was working as a draftsman for the City of Calgary Waterworks Department. He would spend all his professional life with the City, retiring in 1991 after almost 36 years of service, the last 18 years as waterworks planner.

Glen was introduced to climbing by Heinz Kahl in 1957 on Yamnuska. Not long after, they climbed Mount Robson together. In the '60s, Glen pioneered several difficult new routes, including one on the north face of Mount Edith with Brian Greenwood (1961) and another with Greenwood, Charlie Locke and Joe Farrand on the north face of Deltaform Mountain (1968). But, Glen's finest mountaineering achievement was the first ascent of Good Neighbour Peak in the St. Elias Mountains of the Yukon (1967) with the Alpine Club of Canada's Yukon Alpine Centennial Expedition.

Glen was also a member of The Grizzly Group, a band of about eight keen mountaineers who climbed together on weekends throughout the summer for several decades. With these companions, Glen explored the Canadian Rockies from end to end and made hundreds of ascents. Glen attributed his enjoyment in the mountains to the freedom to explore, to keep fit and to think young.

A fine photographer, Glen always carried two cameras, one for colour and one for black and white. He amassed an impressive collection of images, which he shared freely with other climbers looking for new routes or with guidebook authors looking for sharp images. When he retired, he turned his hand to his artwork. His pen and ink drawings and acrylic paintings have become much prized and can be found in many collections. Glen's exquisitely detailed artwork captures the magic of the alpine.

With Bill Putnam and Robert Kruszyna, Glen collaborated to create the *Climbers' Guide to the Rocky Mountains of Canada, South* and with Putnam and Roger Laurilla he produced a book called *Place Names of the Canadian Alps.* In 2006, working with Gill Daffern at Rocky Mountain Books, Glen created a beautiful volume of his photographs and art called *My Mountain Album.*

But, the love of Glen's life was his wife. Liz. Glen married Elizabeth Hansma in 1965, and they spent 56 wonderful years together. Liz loved the mountains too, and they hiked and skied together and sometimes climbed a peak. Glen volunteered as a Ski Friend at the Lake Louise Ski Resort, and the pair spent most of their weekends during the winter months on the slopes. For many years, they came to the ACC Mountain Guides Ball and the CMC Annual Dinner, where they looked very beautiful and classy—Liz in a fine dress and Glen in his tuxedo.

When Glen retired in 1991, he and Liz moved to the town of Cochrane, about 20 kilometres west of Calgary, where the pair soon became active members of the local community. In 2013, the Town of Cochrane voted Glen Ambassador of the Year, and from 2014 to 2020, Glen was voted the best artist in Cochrane by the local paper. On November 29, 2013, the Town of Cochrane dedicated and named part of the town trail system the Glen Boles Trail.

Glen was honoured as Patron of the Mountain Guides Ball in 1993, was elected an honourary member of the ACC in 1996 and served as the Club's honourary president from 2005 to 2009. He was also an honourary member of the Calgary Mountain Club and the American Alpine Club and was the recipient of the Bill March Summit of Excellence Award in 2005.

But, beyond all these honours, Glen was simply a good man with a kind heart, who never spoke ill of anyone. Glen made many friends and spread sunshine wherever he went. He will be greatly missed.

—Chic Scott

Albert Parke
1933–2022

An ironman of whatever he undertook: an athlete throughout life, an astute and demanding high school science teacher, an avid environmentalist in later life, an outstanding alpinist and ski mountaineer, a dogmatic Alpine Clubber and volunteer participant and many other pursuits, Bert, as he preferred to be called, was unstoppable at any job in which he was involved. Very strong convictions on any matter, be it political, environmental, rules of the game or sport, organizational (formal or informal) and committee participation on a broad array of matters was typical throughout his life. As an athlete for more than 70 years, he began as a track and field star in high school and ended in medal performances at the British Columbia Senior Games. He was a sprinter and a long jumper, and in the latter, set the B.C. high school record of 6.72 metres in the 1950 finals, a record for several years hence. After high school, it was commercial league ice hockey, an activity he pursued stretching into his late 70s. He became a hardcore climber at about the same time, joining the ranks of the ACC Vancouver Section in the late 1950s and finally winding down the tough stuff in the late 1960s. He continued his climbing on easier objectives into the 1980s.

Bert worked on the "green chain" piling lumber off the sawmill conveyor belts for a few years before going to the University of British Columbia to do teacher training courses. Concurrently, he raced sports cars at the nearby Westwood Track. One student summer job saw him as an assistant on the Athabasca Glacier research project in 1960 working with ACCers Stan Paterson and John Fairley—a connective pursuit to his scientific career. Otherwise, mountaineering was the main outside interest at the time, and from their research camp on the ice they ascended peaks on their one day off per week. The best was on Andromeda where a steep snow and ice shoulder beckoned. They sprinted up it to the summit ridge, traversed along a flat summit contemplating a traverse to Mount Athabasca. Dangerous, loose rock and sliding snow stymied the idea and instead they swung to a line that directed their descent to the Saskatchewan Glacier far below. They forded the river downstream of the glacier to reach the old military road on the opposite side at 9 p.m. They walked out to the highway - and with no traffic to pick them up, over the course of the early morning hours, continued on foot to the Icefield Centre. Finally, an obliging snowmobile driver gave them a lift back to the research camp, slightly late for ice coring work on the glacier. It was the first ascent of the classic Skyladder route.

Bert's teaching career began and ended at high schools in Burnaby. To say it was not thorough would be an understatement, with his weekends and summers were focused on hardcore ascents with a few friends of similar tastes, primarily, Vince Bauer as his usual partner. One of his notable tough ascents was on a prominent spire guarding the western entrance to Marble Canyon in the Pavilion Ranges, called Chimney Rock in the guidebooks. Not the first but it was one of the earlier ascents of

this very impressive tower. In the 1970s, he shifted his attention to Vancouver Section committee work, but his involvement began in 1966 helping with the construction of the Vancouver Section cabin at Whistler, leading to a decade on the Section's Cabin Committee. He also became the custodian of the Lake Lovely Water cabin, which at the time was under national ACC ownership. The intense mountaineering eased into weekend participation on section trips, and his last significant club event was the Clendenning Range summer camp in 1980, which was bedeviled by unreliable helicopter logistics.

Bert was a very enthusiastic ski mountaineer during these early years. A typical and frequent ascent was Mount Baker, clearly visible from his kitchen window. At about 6 a.m., he would be on his way to the U.S. border, and in the early morning, would park his car at the Glacier Creek trailhead, hiking or skiing to Coleman Glacier. By about noon he would be at its head, on the col, ready to ascend the steep Roman Wall to the summit, reaching it by early to mid-afternoon. By then the slope had hopefully softened in the direct sunlight for his usual steady ski descent back to the col. The remaining descent was an easier weave around crevasses and with a final cruise to the glacier's edge and the trail back to the parking area. Bert would be home by 8 p.m. or earlier. He did this day trip several times, and often alone.

Other activities in the 1980s included helping Bill Tupper with his annual Wedgemount Glacier survey, taking a usual multi-day summer alpine trek and attending the annual early autumn section ascents in the Coquihalla Ranges. In the 1980s, the access to many of those peaks involved using the abandoned Kettle Valley rail line. The route caught everyone's attention from Hope to as far east as Nelson, B.C., and was soon to become a significant part of the TransCanada Trail.

In the early 1990s, Bert chose early retirement from the teaching grind and moved to Shuswap Lake. There he refocused his interests, letting his ACC membership lapse. Hockey resumed at Salmon Arm, weekly tournament golf replaced mountaineering and conservation issues became paramount. But, consistent dense cloud cover on the lake in winter was frustrating and noisy summer neighbours from points east became unbearable, if not the last straw. He soon moved to a new home on Logan Lake, on the very sunny Interior Plateau locale southwest of Kamloops to find relief.

A brighter horizon put him near the mountains to enjoy easy ascents in the Coquihalla and several treks into the southern Chilcotin Ranges. Local forestry cutting and all-terrain vehicle abuse were big issues in the area, which increased his activism and led to participation on several committees and a membership in the Highland Valley Outdoor Association. Trail construction for summer use and cross-country skiing in winter were his escape valve from the endless controversies. He also cycled the nearby rail trails, and the rail section between Coquihalla Lakes and Brookmere had two large washouts necessitating detours onto the four-lane highway. These obstructions became an annual task to fix. With a group of other seniors each spring, and after the winter erosion cycle stopped, they reconstructed a new path or rebuilt the original path through each washout. Bert was one of the enthusiasts to restore the trail so that hikers and bikers on the TransCanada Trail could avoid a noisy highway detour. Over the course of 10 years, Bert was there with shovel, pick and sturdy rake working with the other seniors on the rehab. His last visit was at age 87.

A visit to his home left one in awe. Maps and conservation posters adorned the walls and some of his panoramic photography was at the entrance way. On the back deck, a 200-millimetre mirror telescope could be set up to look at various celestial bodies in stable state. It was mounted on a stage, moved slowly by a motor to counteract the rotation of the Earth's axis. And on his dining room table, there were always several editions of various scientific magazines. *Scientific American* was his favourite, not exactly easy reading, but he devoured each article, regardless of the science, very astutely. He used his scientific acumen wherever he went with his mountaineering. Missing, or not yet found, is a list of all his alpine endeavours. He never published any of it, and let's face it, he was a bit of a loner. Word of mouth, over the decades, has exposed a bit of the legend. Not to be forgotten was a very solid decade of enthusiastic work for the ACC, and for that, he deserves our recognition and thanks.

—Karl Ricker

Karl Winter
1939–2021

Karl winter died on December 31, 2021. With his passing, we lost one of our most distinguished ACC members—a quiet doer, a skilled climber and a man committed to mountain rescue. He was a member of the ACC from 1961, joining soon after arriving in Canada from his native Germany. Karl was committed to helping people in distress and also joined Vancouver North Shore's Mountain Rescue Group. His quiet accomplishments were noted by others and within three years of his arrival, with no English, Karl was teaching mountaineering and leading Club outings.

During this period, Karl was fortunate to meet Mary McGoran. They both happened to be travelling to Whistler. She very astutely recognized Karl was both capable and good looking. They married in 1965 and had two sons, Greg and Warren, who grew up and eventually married, giving Karl and Mary four active grandkids.

I first met Karl at the Kulshan Cabin on Mount Baker during my first search and rescue operation. The year was 1966, and I, being new to mountain rescue, was tasked with ferrying supplies to the cabin, to support the search for the four people connected with the Vancouver General Hospital who had failed to return from their climb. I was the last person to speak with the missing party, as I was also on Mount Baker that weekend with the Club. The morning sky was red, and I soon learned why.

It was dark on the stormy mountain when the cabin door opened and in walked a giant of a man caked in ice, having spent the day high on the mountain. Karl was frustrated that he had not been able to find the four climbers, but he would eat and go to bed so he could continue the search the next day. Karl's commitment to helping his fellow mountaineers prevailed, and he stayed until the four were found, sadly deceased.

Karl and Mary attended the opening of the Tantalus Hut, and Karl spent many weekends climbing in the area. On one weekend, a climber suffered a broken leg. Karl carried her all the way down the trail to the Squamish River, crossed the river and delivered her to the ambulance waiting at the trailhead.

His strength and dedication were demonstrated by his self-rescue on Denali. He and three others were trapped for days in a snow cave just below the summit due to extreme conditions. They were in a terrible situation. The group decided to gamble on Karl's strength and asked him to climb down to a cache, in chest deep snow, where he finally found their tent. He tied a string of fuel bottles, sleeping bags and some food on a rope and returned to the snow cave. Rescuers from Anchorage, Alaska got to them some days later and flew them out to hospital.

A little later in 1965, Karl and others responded to a newspaper ad asking for volunteers for a Civil Defense Group. The meeting at the North Vancouver RCMP office was the inauspicious start of what is now known as the North Shore Rescue (NSR). Karl, along with Dave and Gerry Brewer, were the co-founders of the NSR, and Karl was the group's first team leader.

It became clear, after the NSR's first major call in 1968 for a fatal accident on the north face of Goat Mountain, that the team needed to change its focus. He subsequently took the group of "bushwhackers" as he called the other local members, to the beginnings of what would become a well-known and respected mountain rescue group.

In 1967, Karl was invited to join the ACC Centennial Expedition to an unclimbed peak in the Yukon, to be named Mount British Columbia. In reading the *CAJ* report from the expedition, it is obvious that his personal efforts, in extreme conditions, made it happen.

Karl was a compassionate person. When climbing in Nepal, he noted how many young men wanted to come to Canada. On his return, he and Mary decided to sponsor a young Nepalese fellow. They brought him to Canada and guided him during the following years to become a citizen.

While climbing Mount Kilimanjaro, Karl noted how poorly equipped the local mountain guides were. At his own expense, Karl gathered and sent two substantial shipments of surplus NSR equipment to help his new African friends.

Over the years, Karl and Mary began a very demanding activity as St. Bernard dog breeders. Their success was recognized by the Smithsonian Institute, after they received many international awards as leading breeders of these wonderful dogs.

During these many years of service with NSR, Karl participated in the transition from doing everything the "hard way" to the utilization of all of the new technological advances in equipment, safety gear and helicopter use. Many owe a debt of gratitude to Karl for his efforts.

Karl's climbing accomplishments included many of the major peaks on six of the seven continents. There are numerous stories that illustrate the character of Karl and his many accomplishments. I for one was lucky enough to have Karl join us at the Jim Haberl Hut, where he would help with hut maintenance during the day and tell stories to the mountain rescue course participants after dinner. As I look at the painting of the Tantalus Hut and pictures of the Haberl Hut hanging in my home, I cannot forget the contributions and commitment of Karl Winter to the ACC and mountain rescue. Karl, my friend, may you rest in peace.

—Ron Royston

Andrew Abel
1990–2021

Passion. commitment. humility. If I had to pick only three words to describe my friend Andrew, it would be these. Andrew possessed each of these in abundance and in doing so, inspired all those close to him, including friends he climbed with over the years.

On May 30, 2021, my dear friend Andrew and his best friend, Nathaniel Johnson (1992–2021), passed away in an avalanche while climbing Mount Andromeda. Many lives have been touched by the loss of Andrew and Nate, and they are deeply missed by family and friends.

The act of tying into a rope with a climbing partner is symbolic. It signifies the start of a connection between people, and a commitment that no matter what ensues, you have each other's back. During the long days chasing adventure in wild places, you get to know your friends well. You see them at their best, their most resilient and triumphant, and at their most patient and compassionate. You see them overcome many difficulties to strive further and, in that moment, become the best version of themselves. We cannot hide our true selves in the most trying of moments.

I saw Andrew demonstrate all of this and more in the time we spent climbing together. Andrew was the most understated, well-rounded and talented climber I have had the pleasure of climbing with. It was a joy to watch him fully embrace the challenges climbing can provide us. His balanced energy, subtle confidence and joy for the day was infectious. Climbing with Andrew made me want to always give my best and contribute the same passion to the day that he gave.

It would be impossible to talk about Andrew's climbing without stating his unrelenting dedication to Mount Yamnuska. He loved rock climbing on that face more than anyone I know, and for many years spent most rock multi-pitch days getting after the routes that Yamnuska provides. I smile writing this, as we shared many laughs talking about his love of Yam. There was neither a better nor more motivated partner to rope up with than Andrew when climbing at that cliff. To him, Yamnuska provided all the possible adventure you could want when rock climbing in the Canadian Rockies.

Andrew's love for the mountains was not seasonal. When the temperatures started to drop, I would always look forward to his messages stating how excited he was about winter climbing. We enjoyed many winter days climbing together. Multipitch ice, mixed and cragging days, bolts, gear, and even long, speculative walks with heavy packs without climbing—all of it. Andrew was a friend we could all rely on for any type of adventure. He was an excellent ice and mixed climber. As technically solid as they come, competence before confidence always, and he loved it. He truly embraced being invested in the absolute moment, a skill required to excel when leading difficult ice and mixed climbs. He quietly believed in himself, no matter the challenge faced in those moments. He believed he possessed the ability to do these difficult things, yet also respected the environment he was playing in and its impermanence. In this same way, he encouraged his friends and believed they too could fulfill their potential in the mountains if given the opportunity.

To truly have faith in others, and effectively communicate this so they believe in themselves too, is a powerful thing, another quality Andrew had. I reflect fondly on the many times spent with him working our projects together and the moments he positively impacted my actions. I know he had this effect on many others as well. Andrew's belief in others was a testament to the commitment he had for his friends. He was passionate and loved being in the mountains, and he loved being there with good friends. When we spoke about soloing, he told me he was not interested in climbing alone because he preferred to enjoy these moments with friends. He believed in the power of shared challenges in the outdoors, and how this can positively impact people's lives beyond climbing.

Andrew and I became friends because of a shared goal to guide. He was years ahead of me in experience, so it was amazing to see him realizing his goals and starting to make waves in the profession. We spoke often about running our own courses together someday and how we could encourage people to get into the mountains and learn the necessary skills. It is no surprise that Andrew started to make huge contributions in the rock guiding profession. He aspired to continue into alpine guiding, which without a doubt he would have excelled at. His passion for sharing outdoor experiences made him a natural leader and mentor. Andrew was a leader that people wanted to follow and learn from, because he empowered them to see what they were capable of.

He spent many days guiding in the David Thompson area of Alberta. Through this grew a desire to create new climbing routes for others to enjoy. Andrew developed many new routes and climbing areas for both the winter and summer disciplines. He loved David Thompson Country, and nothing would have made him more content than knowing that people are stoked to climb his routes. When he started opening winter routes at the new Mythos Crag, he would message me every day about the latest happenings there, about various new mixed routes he wanted me to come climb, and how excited he was to create climbs for all abilities. He has certainly left his mark and succeeded in this goal. Those of us who have spent time with Andrew on new routing missions will recall with affection his enthusiasm for exploring new terrain and the potential that exists.

What I respected most about Andrew was his humility. He was genuine and there was no façade. What you saw was exactly what you got, and he was truly authentic, both as a climber and a friend. He had a wicked sense of humour too, and we shared a lot of laughter together. He did not shout for attention, instead worked away at mastering his craft and for this, received the respect and admiration of his peers. Andrew was a highly capable mountain athlete, and we could pack lots of climbing into a day, but he was also keen on quality conversations with his friends and always open to discussing the difficult moments we can all relate to: mental health, grief, self-doubt, striving to be a better person and the risks/rewards of a climbing lifestyle. He did not shy away from difficult conversations, differing views or alternate perspectives on life. The days spent climbing together were great, but it is this part of my friend I miss most of all.

Andrew: As the months have gone by, I have realized the only thing bigger than the devastating impact of losing you, has been the positive impact you have had in my life. It has truly been a pleasure to know you, and the impression you have left from our times together is long lasting and all encompassing. With that, I understand that you are always present and that by being outside, enjoying moments in the mountains, I am in your company, surrounded by your infectious and adventurous spirit. Rest easy, my friend.

—Tiffany Carleton

Claude Bérubé
1956–2021

Eastern climbers have lost one of their great pioneers. Claude Bérubé left an ineffaceable mark in northeast climbing history. In P*ushing the Limits: The Story of Canadian Mountaineering,* Chic Scott wrote that Claude Bérubé is "modest and highly respected … the bridge between the pioneer days and the modern era."

An avid explorer, in the 1970s Claude climbed in the Charlevoix and Saguenay regions in the province of Québec. He made notable ascents of some of the region's most iconic cliffs. In 1973, the Mont Gros Bras quickly became one of his favorite playgrounds as he participated in the opening of Hals Und Beinbruch (5.8, 230m), La Panoramique (5.6, 200m), Li-Do (5.10b, 110m) and Rencontre (5.10b, 200m).

During that same period, 1973–74, Claude pursued his explorations to the Haute-Gorge-de-la-Rivière-Malbaie. Accompanied by his fearless partners, Stephan Frick, Louis Babin, Léopold Nadeau and Jean-Luc Pittion, they opened some of the park's most classic routes: Sens Unique (5.10R, 250m), La Pitoune (5.10, 300m), La Grande Allée (350m) and Brunante (350m).

Claude was always in search of the most vertical and tallest routes. Naturally, he turned his attention to the famous Cap Trinité. In 1974, Léopold Nadeau and Bérubé opened the ultra-classic Les Grands Galets (5.12d, 300m). (An aesthetic route in the middle of the Cap Trinité massif, it was freed by Jeff Beaulieu and Jean-Pierre Ouellet in 1999). The following year, in 1975, Claude opened Le Ver Solitaire (5.9, 300m), solo. Then, in 1976, with Alain Hénault and Régis Richard, Claude made the first winter ascent of the Cap Trinité over five cold, hard days.

Obviously, one cannot satisfy himself solely with rock climbing when living in Québec. Again, Claude and his buddies paved the way, with big winter adventures. In my humble opinion, what made Claude Bérubé a legend was his opening in 1977 of La Loutre (V WI5, 350m) with Regis Richard and Jacques Lemay. Stéphane Lapierre, author of *Guide des Cascades de Glace et Voies Mixtes du Québec*, wrote: "La Loutre became the first route of this scale in eastern North America." This daring first ascent turned heads, and every climber from the east quickly converged on the region in hopes of capturing such a feat, clearing the way for the ascent of the famed Pomme d'Or by Kurt Winkler and Jim Tierney a few years later. Ice climbing legend Jeff Lowe wrote in his book *Ice World*: "In Québec, Claude Bérubé and Regis Richard climbed the 1,000-foot La Loutre in 1977 completely free, signaling the beginning of the Canadian dominance of waterfall ice."

Eventually, the east became too small for Claude. He aspired to higher and bigger things. In Yosemite he teamed up with the Swedish climber Goran Hellstrom, and the pair quickly climbed The Nose, Salathé Wall and did the first clean ascent of Leaning Tower in 1976. "We were quick compared to the standards of the time. To us, this rock was so much better and cleaner than what we had back home," said Bérubé in an interview for the movie, Sens Unique. Later, in the '90s, he travelled north to Baffin Island where he joined forces with Ben Webster and François-Guy Thivierge to open the southwest face (VI 5.9A2) on Mount Thor. Also on Baffin, he made the first ascent of the eastern ridge on Mount Mjolnir.

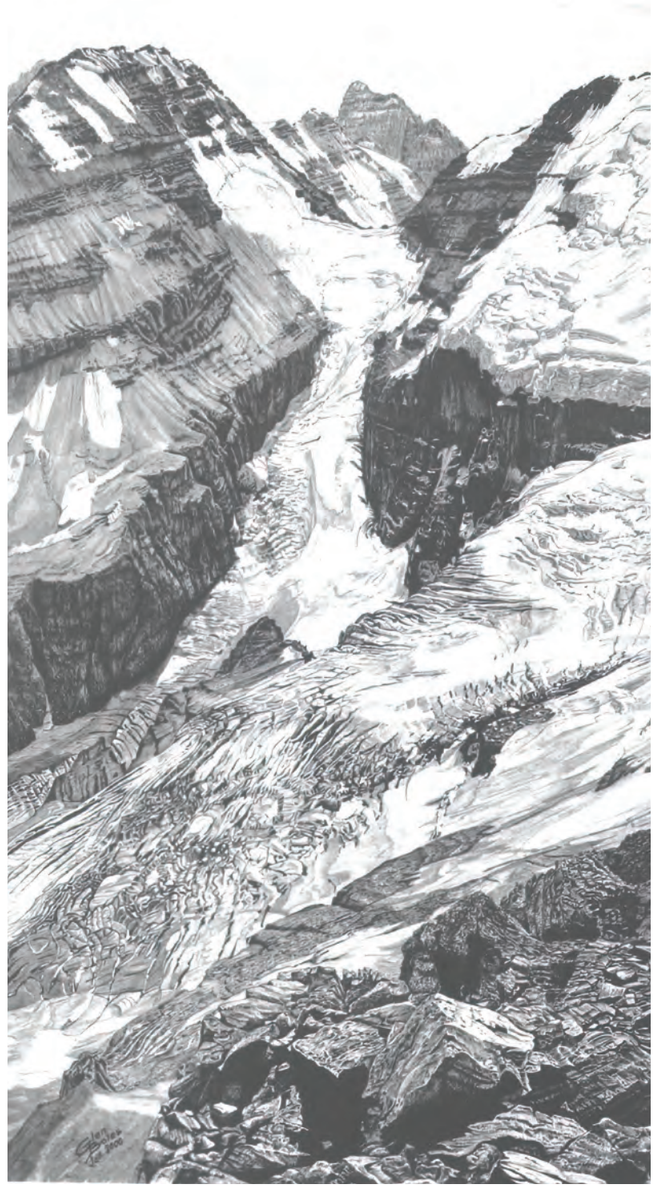
Claude was also tempted by the world's highest peaks with trips to Patagonia and the Himalayas. In 2000, he once again teamed up with Ben Webster for a bid on Everest. This time they were accompanied by François Bédard and Benoit Robitaille. Despite not reaching the summit, the team achieved a very respectable 7,860 metres.

Beyond his personal feats and notable first ascents, his biggest legacy in the climbing world will be his impact on following generations. Countless climbers were influenced by his "the best way out is via the top" style. Yannick Girard often talked about Claude and how he transmitted his love of the Charlevoix region to others. Louis Rousseau, Yannick and I attended a dinner at his place in 2013 where he recounted many stories from here and abroad. Never was he bragging or talking about ratings. It was all about the experiences he had lived in the mountains. His eyes glowed with his joy of sharing memories.

Stéphane Lapierre recently wrote: "If you go to the Cap Trinité, or La Malbaie, and listen very carefully, maybe will you hear the echo of his laughter, which still reverberates throughout the mountains."

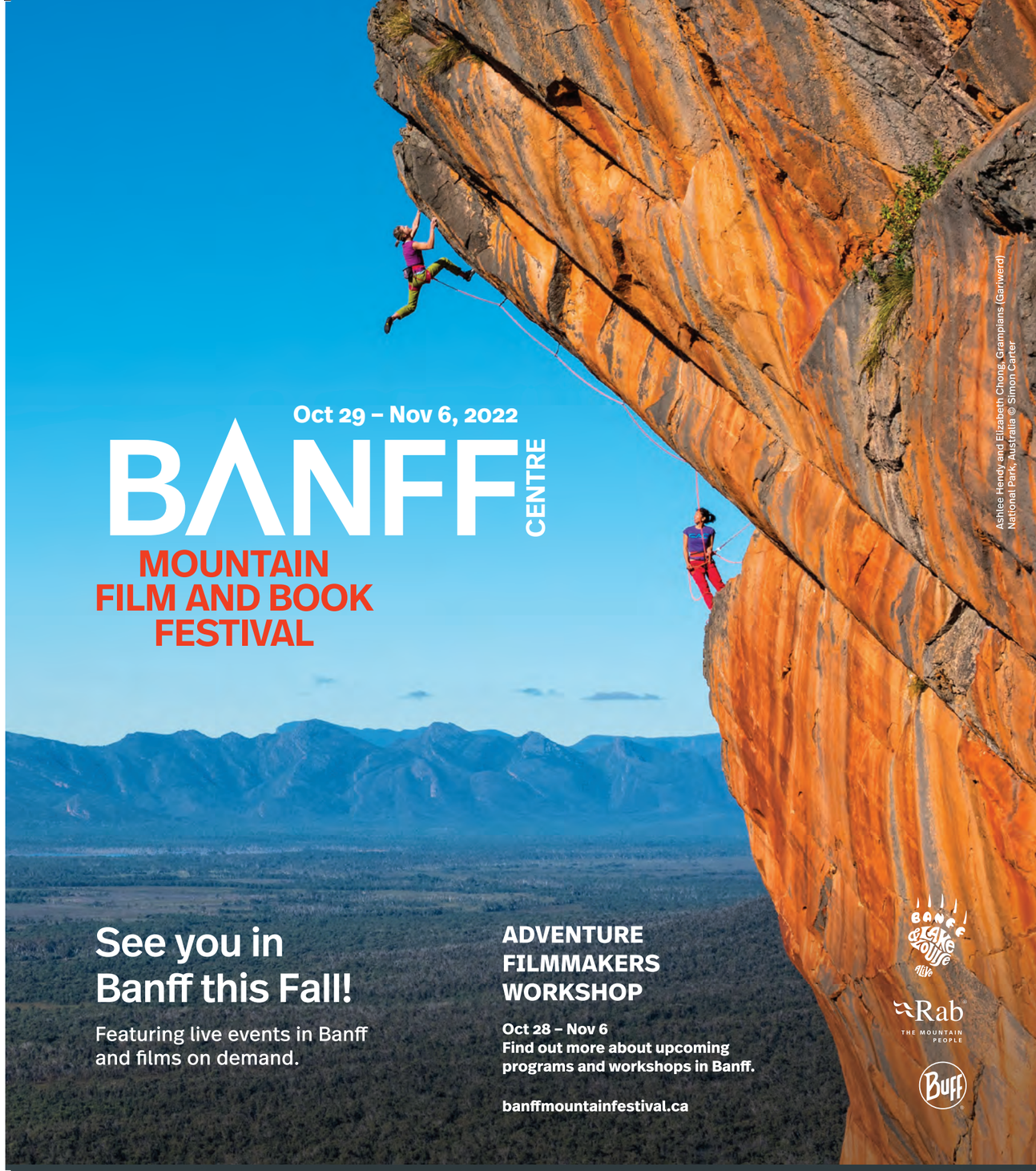
Off belay Claude.

—Ian Bergeron



Abbott Pass, pen and pencil drawing by Glen Boles

Index



Paul Mcsorley traversing between the endless gendarmes on the SW Ridge of Mount Waddington, BC

Photo: John Price