

Island Bushwhacker

Volume 45 | Issue 10 | Dec, 2017



*Snowy Big Jim
Photo by Natasha Salway*

ACC VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION

Social Events

The club has a monthly slide-show presentation at the Swan Lake Nature House, 3873 Swan Lake Road, Victoria, BC on the second Thursday of each month, except in July and August. The doors open at 7:00pm, and the show starts at 7:30pm.

Web Information

Web site: accvi.ca

Webmaster: webmaster@accvi.ca

Executive Meeting Minutes

Available on our meeting archives.

National ACC Office

For new memberships and renewals, changes of address or other details, and booking huts, contact the ACC National office directly.

www.alpineclubofcanada.ca

info@alpineclubofcanada.ca

403 678 3200, or P.O. Box 8040

Canmore, AB, T1W 2T8

Annual Membership Dues

Single \$53 Family \$75

Youth (19 and under) \$38

The Island Bushwhacker Newsletter

A monthly (except July and August) publication of the Vancouver Island Section.

Newsletter Editor: Mary Sanseverino, 250 592 4677,

newsletter@accvi.ca

We encourage submissions of items of interest to our membership, including news items, announcements, and short articles, along with photos. Email your submission by the 25th day of the previous month.

Advertising shall be accepted at the discretion of the editor. All advertising shall be for products or services of direct interest to our membership.

Our Motto

1. COME BACK ALIVE
2. COME BACK FRIENDS
3. RESPECT THE LAND
4. HAVE FUN
5. GET TO THE TOP
(IN THAT ORDER!)

UPCOMING EVENTS

South Island Christmas Party, Friday, Dec 15. Our seasonal celebration with good food, great music and excellent company at the home of Tom and Pam Hall in Victoria.

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Reminder to Members:

Keep your [membership](#) up-to-date, so to as to be covered by the ACC's liability insurance. Keep your [contact information](#) current on ACC National's site, as it's from this master list that we download our email addresses for mailouts.

Join the ACC-VI's [Facebook group](#).

You don't have to be a Facebook member to see this page.



Upcoming Slideshows, Presentations, Meetings and Get-togethers

Christmas Party. Fri, Dec 15. The South Island Christmas party is scheduled for Friday 15 December at 6.00 pm at the home of Tom and Pam Hall. Please RSVP to hall.pnw@shaw.ca by Monday 11th December so we can cater accordingly!

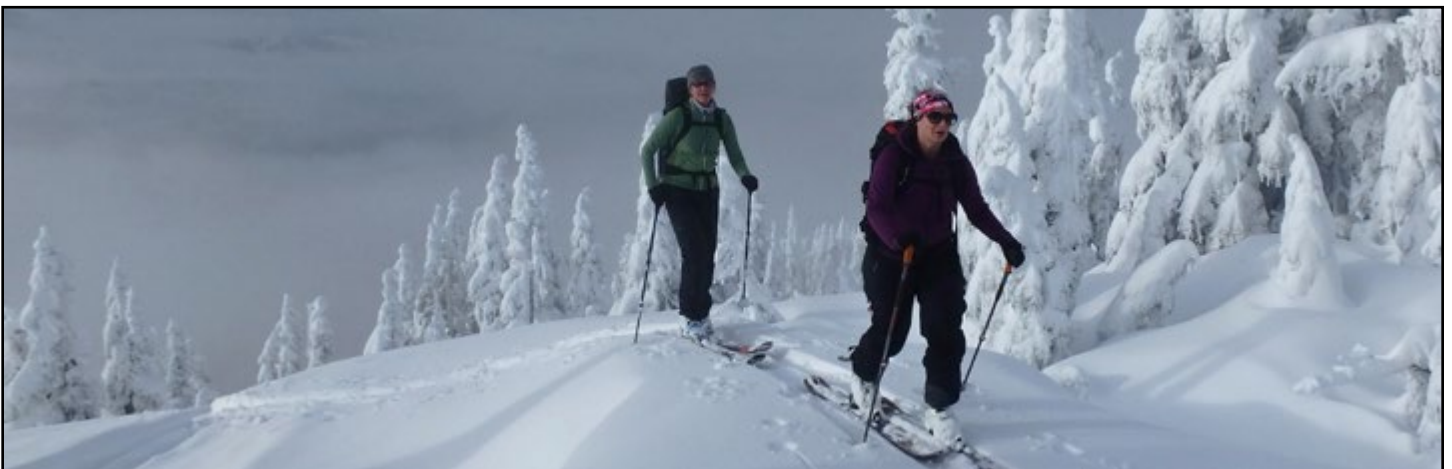
Slideshow, Thu, Jan 11, 2018. Dave Fishwick presents *The Haute Route – Chamonix to Zermatt on Skis*.

Come on a photo/story telling adventure with Dave Fishwick.....The plan: Six days, five huts, three countries and lots of vertical meters – Ski tour from legendary French Mountain town of Chamonix across the backbone of the southern Alps to the foot of the Matterhorn in Zermatt, Switzerland. Fueled by cheese, bread, sausages and beer. Just buy a plane ticket and improvise from there...what could possibly go wrong?

Victoria Slideshows are at Swan Lake Nature House. Doors open at 7:00 pm, the show starts at 7:30 pm. Tea and goodies by donation. Everyone is welcome!

Mark your calendars - it's almost time for the AGM

AGM weekend at Mt. Washington, Jan 26 - 28th, 2018. Our 6th annual AGM weekend based in the comfort of the Vancouver Island Mountain Centre at Mt Washington alpine resort. See the Chair's report on pg 16 of this newsletter for more info.



Mt. Washington ski. Photo by Sandy Briggs

Upcoming Trips

Full information for all trips is located online at [ACC-VI Trip Schedule](#). Each trip listed here links to the [Trip Schedule](#). Click individual trip links for full info.

Check the [Trip Schedule](#) often for new offerings!

<i>Date</i>	<i>Trip</i>
Dec 2, 2017	<p>Click for full info: 10 hour hike in 8 hours. Sooke hills on a time budget! (C2)</p> <p>'Tis the season for a little high speed bush thrashing in the Sooke Hills. For people with some previous off trail hiking experience who enjoy maintaining a steady pace all day Contact Gordon Kyle at elgordonk@hotmail.com</p>
Dec 3, 2017	<p>Click for full info: Mt Braden S-N traverse (B1)</p> <p>S-N traverse of Mt Braden in the Sooke Hills. Total distance 15 km with 800 m cumulative elevation gain. Estimated time 7 hrs. Contact Dave Suttill at suttill@shaw.ca</p>
Dec 15 - 16, 2017	<p>Click for full info: Hidden Peak (C5)</p> <p>Hidden peak exploratory trip, hopefully C5, December 15/16. Winter bivy and potential for steep snow/rock. Contact stefangessinger@gmail.com</p>
Dec 16 - 17, 2017	<p>Click for full info: First Turns: A ski trip to Mount Cokely (B3) with an Apres-Ski Social</p> <p>Come celebrate the opening of the ski season on the Island. We'll do a day trip on Saturday to Mount Cokely, and then join us in Lantzville for an apres-ski potluck party on Saturday night. Event organizer: Kara Aschenbrenner and Brianna Coates. Contact aschenbrennerkara@gmail.com</p>
Dec 23, 2017	<p>Click for full info: Solstice hike</p> <p>Escape the crazy season in town and join us in the hills – we may even tag a final VI-150. It's time to celebrate the fact that the days are getting longer. Afterwards we will gather in a pub for some seasonal cheer. Contact Erich Schellhammer at erich.schellhammer@gmail.com</p>
Dec 29, 2017 - Jan 1, 2018	<p>Click for full info: New Years at Mount Cain **Trip Full**</p> <p>Spend 3 nights in the Kapitany Suite and enjoy the resort and/or surrounding back-country and ring in the new year after a day in the snow. (No waitlist available). Contact sinclair.skafti@gmail.com</p>
Jan 1, 2018	<p>Click for full info: Mt. Arrowsmith Katzenjamer</p> <p>Start the year off right with a climb to the summit of Mt. Arrowsmith via Judge's Route. Crampons and ice axe (and practice using them) are needed for this one. Joint trip with the Island Mountain Ramblers. Contact Clarke Gourlay, clarke@cheeseworks.ca</p>

Jan 27, 2018	<p>Click for full info: Not Another ACC-VI Trip up Mt Elma! (B2)</p> <p>Ski tour to depart from the VIMC at 9:00 a.m. We will not be going up Mt Elma nor other more distant peaks. We should be back in ample time for appies, dinner before the AGM.</p> <p>Contact Scott Collins at scottcollins@shaw.ca Tel: 250-743-4472</p>
Feb 4 2018	<p>Click for full info: Mount Cokely Ski Tour, Rousseau Chute (B2)</p> <p>Mount Cokely Ski Tour, Rousseau Chute - weather / snow conditions dependent.</p> <p>Contact Andrew Pape-Salmon, apape@shaw.ca. Tel: 250-592-7017.</p>
Feb 16 - 18, 2018	<p>Click for full info: Valentine's Day Ski Weekend at Mt Cain! (B2)</p> <p>Stay at Mt Cain Cypress Cabin for the nights of Feb 16-17. Potluck dinner on Feb 17</p> <p>Co-leaders: Christine Fordham & Scott Collins</p> <p>Contact Scott Collins at scottcollins@shaw.ca Tel: 250-743-4472</p>
Mar 24 - 30, 2018	<p>Click for full info: Bow-Yoho ski tour</p> <p>A 5-6 day ski tour across the Wapta icefield,, Yoho and des Poilus glaciers. We will stay at the Bow, Guy and Stanley Mitchell huts. For experienced back country skiers with AST1 and crevasse rescue experience.</p> <p>Contact Catrin Brown, catrin@shaw.ca</p>
May 18 - 22, 2018	<p>Click for full info: May Long Weekend in Leavenworth Wa</p> <p>Come to Leavenworth Washington for an extended long weekend based out of the Eight-Mile Campground in Icicle Canyon. The Leavenworth area is known for it's fantastic climbing on great-quality granite, featuring mostly trad climbing with numerous moderate multi-pitch adventures. The area also has fantastic hiking (and is the access to the Enchantment Range), mountain biking, and white-water kayaking.</p> <p>Contact Alois Schonenberger at alois.accvi.trips@gmail.com</p>
June 10 - 17, 2018	<p>Click for full info: City of Rocks Idaho</p> <p>Last year, 16 ACC members made the trip down to City of Rocks reserve in Idaho for a fantastic week of climbing in the sun. Back by popular demand, another trip is being organized this year! A number of participants in 2017 were not climbers and enjoyed a week of hiking in the area, enjoying beautiful trails and scenic views. This included the opportunity to summit a few nearby non-technical mountains.</p> <p>Contact Alois Schonenberger at alois.accvi.trips@gmail.com</p>



Mountain Education

ACC-VI offers a wide variety of courses aimed at giving our members the technical and safety skills to get out there in the mountains. Courses are open to ACC members in good standing only. You are welcome to join the section if you would like to enroll in one or more of these courses.

Full information for all courses is located online at [ACC-VI Trip Schedule](#). Each course listed here links to the [Schedule](#). Click individual course links for full info.

Check the [Schedule](#) often for new educational offerings!

<i>Date</i>	<i>Course</i>
Dec 02 -03, 2017	<p>Click for full info: Intro to Backcountry Skiing (B2). Full</p> <p>Learn the basics of backcountry skiing in this workshop. Open to telemarkers, alpine tourers and splitboarders. We will cover equipment, snow travel and unique features of winter in the backcountry. Participants should have at least AST1 (or be enrolled in an AST1 course). Saturday we will go over the basics and then Sunday we will go for a tour into Strathcona Park. Accommodation at Vancouver Island Mountain Centre included. Contact: mhofmannskis+bcski@gmail.com</p>
Dec 16 - 17, 2017	<p>Click for full info: AST Level 1 Mt Cain</p> <p>The Avalanche Skills Training One is an introductory avalanche course designed for individuals with little-to-no avalanche related experience. Students will learn to recognize avalanche terrain, gain the skills to initiate and manage a self rescue, have a basic understanding of how weather contributes to avalanche hazard, be able to understand and interpret avalanche bulletins and the hazard scale, be able to interpret and utilize the Avaluator card, and learn basic analysis of layers in the snowpack.</p>
Jan 13 - 14, 2018	<p>Click for full info: Intro to Winter Camping C3</p> <p>This is a Introduction in to winter camping. This workshop will teach the skills you will need to spend a night in the back-country during the winter. This workshop is welcome to all forms of transportation, from AT skiers, to splitboarders, and snow shoeing. Contact: Colin Mann (Trip Leader) Natasha Salway (Co-Leader) Email: colin.mann.accvi.trips@gmail.com</p>
Jan 27 - 28, 2018	<p>Click for full info: AST Level 1 during the AGM at Mt. Washington</p> <p>The Avalanche Skills Training One is an introductory avalanche course designed for individuals with little-to-no avalanche related experience.</p>
Feb 17, 2018	<p>Click for full info: AST Plus</p> <p>For many people, taking the step from avalanche skills training to actually getting out touring in the backcountry can be a bit daunting. This course bridges the gap from theory to practice.</p>
Mar 3-4 and Mar 10 -11, 2018	<p>Click for full info: AST Level 2 Mt. Cain</p> <p>The Avalanche Skills Training Two is an advanced avalanche course which takes a closer look at how avalanches form and how to manage more complex terrain. We delve deeper into the snow pack and learn how to apply different tests to help gain an understanding of snow stability and strength. Transceiver training moves into the realm of multiple beacon searches and how to solve these sometimes complex searches. AST1 or equivalent required. Participants should be intermediate skiers.</p>

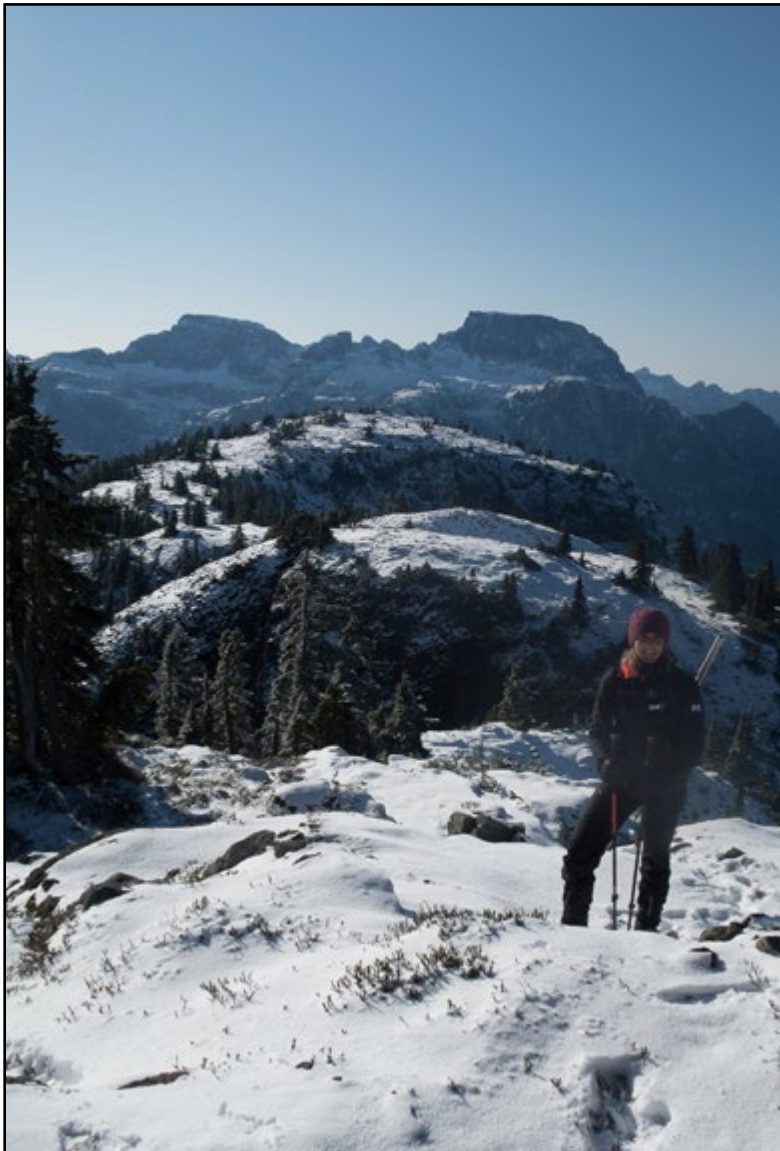
Kids and Youth Program

The ACC-VI Kids and Youth Program was founded by Harry and Nadja Steiner in 2008 as a way to introduce the mountains to their kids. Trips included many gummy bear breaks and friends. Over the years the original cohort matured into youth leaders that led the younger kids and adults alike.

Over these nine years 56 trips/events were offered of which 21 were mountaineering trips, 11 climbing, 11 skiing, and 9 hiking. Members of the group summited Mount Albert Edward three times, Jutland twice, Kings Peak twice, and Cokely, Becher, Tom Taylor, and Sutton Peak once.

The tradition continues, and recently we've been building quinzhees, climbing, and skiing. During these trips we teach the kids about safety, trip planning, route finding, and mountaineering. To find out what the group is up to, please check the [trip schedule](#). The Kids and Youth Program uses the Band app: <http://band.us/#!/band/63347796>.

Please contact kidsandyouth@accvi.ca to request an invite to Band or ask any questions. The current Program Coordinator is Derek Sou.



The only [Vancouver Island 150](#) entry for November!

Shannon Tagseth standing on the summit of Genesis Mountain - Mts Shchoen and Adam in the background.

Party of 4: Shannon Tagseth, Matthew Lettington, Brian Swain, and Phil Jackson.

Photo by Matthew Lettington.

Vancouver Island 150

A 2017 ACC-VI Project

We did it!! Well over 150 summits! There is only one more month to go - how about bagging a few more (wouldn't 200 make a nice round number - certainly easy to remember!).

The definition of a summit seems to be endlessly contestable, so let's try to avoid controversy and follow these guidelines. A recorded peak can be any Vancouver Island or Gulf Islands peak that is:

- listed in: "A Guide to Climbing and Hiking in Southwest BC" Bruce Fairley
- listed in: "Island Alpine" or "Island Alpine Select" Philip Stone
- listed in Lindsay Elms' island peaks data base, which can be accessed from:
<http://islandmountainramblers.com/resources/vancouver-island-peaks/>
- listed in www.summitpost.org
- a named wilderness summit on a topo map (i.e. excluding those that are developed)

So this what you do:

1. Choose a peak to climb that has not yet been recorded in the project
(Check out the [Vancouver Island 150 Google Map](#) to see what's been recorded so far)
2. Go out and climb it..... and have a happy time
3. Take a summit photo of the summiteers
4. Record the date, name and lat/long coordinates of the summit, names of the summiteers, a few notes about your trip (say a max of 250 characters for the notes).
5. Follow the upload instructions at [Vancouver Island 150](#) and you are away to the races.
6. Repeat steps 1 – 5.

Simple and fun - keep an eye on the evolving interactive [Vancouver Island 150 Map](#).

Stats as of Dec 1, 2017

Summits in January: 2	Summits in May: 27	Summits in Sept: 11
Summits in February: 12	Summits in June: 35	Summits in Oct: 6
Summits in March: 11	Summits in July: 32	Summits in Nov: 1
Summits in April: 23	Summits in August: 33	

Total as of Dec 1: 193 Summits

Thus far the [Van Isle 150 map](#) has been viewed 6249 times!
As of Dec 1 there are 260 photos in the [ACC-VI Van Isle 150 album](#)!

(Technical note: don't forget to refresh your browser to see the latest map - not sure how to do it - check out "[how to force refresh your browser](#)".)

The Ten Essentials

The third in a series by Walter Moar

The Ten Essentials

1. Hydration
2. Nutrition
3. Insulation
4. Sun Protection
5. Illumination
6. Navigation
7. Shelter
8. Fire
9. First Aid Kit
10. Repair Kit

The *Ten Essentials* should be carried on all hikes, even if you're heading out for a day hike. You never know when you – or someone else – will end up in a situation where these items suddenly become very important. A twisted knee or some bad navigation can quickly turn an easy hike into a challenge.

5. Illumination lets you accomplish what you need to do after it starts to get dark. In the winter it's common to start and end in the dark, and at any time of year it gets dark early in thick forest. Hand held flashlights are not particularly suitable for hiking, and are definitely no good when climbing or using an ice axe. Headlamps are definitely the way to go.

While it's possible to spend over \$600 on a headlamp, or buy something that you can control with a smart phone, there are many reasonably priced options. Some features to consider are:

- Reactive lighting – senses when less light is needed and dims the headlamp accordingly.
- Variable brightness – most headlamps have a variety of brightness settings, plus strobe.
- Red light mode – for use in crowded huts and hostels, or to protect night vision when outdoors.
- USB-rechargeable battery – great for charging in the car, and can usually be replaced by three AAA cells.
- Low battery indicator – lets you know when your batteries are about to run out.
- Water resistance – a necessity in our climate.



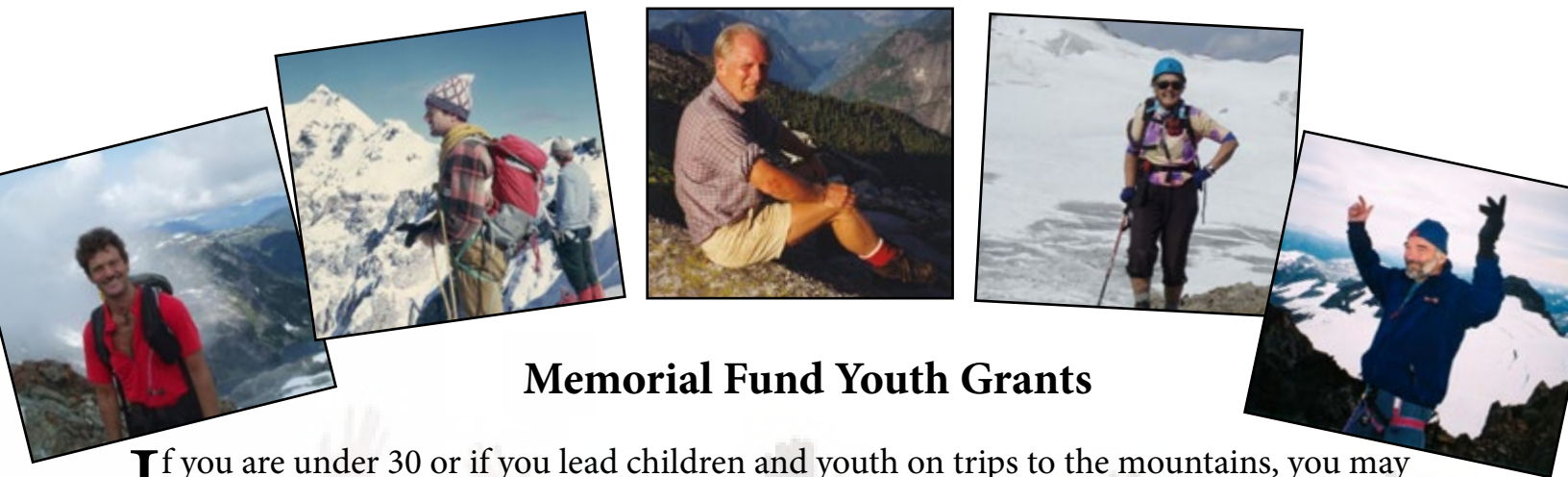
Always carry spare batteries, and be prepared to swap them out in the dark – a lighter or cell phone can provide light if you need it. If your activity absolutely requires a headlamp, think about carrying a spare that uses the same type of batteries.

6. Navigation gets you from A to B, and then hopefully back to A again. Far too many searches happen because people get lost and don't have the equipment and skills to get themselves back on track.

Always carry a map and compass, and have the skills necessary to use them. The idea is to always know where you are on the map. If you can't read a map or remember which way to set the declination on a compass, you are going to have a hard time using these items if things go wrong. These items do not require batteries, and topographical maps printed on plastic are very durable.

A dedicated Global Positioning System (GPS) device is a great addition to having a map and compass. It can be used to confirm your location on a map, allow you to set way points before or during a trip, and allow you to backtrack your route if you get lost. Although cellphones have GPS capabilities, their battery life is not very long and should be conserved for use as an emergency communication device.

Most important when navigating is the use of common sense. Know your route and what to expect, and be able to recognize when things are not right. Knowledge and experience are important factors when navigating, and build up quickly when the skills are used often.



Memorial Fund Youth Grants

If you are under 30 or if you lead children and youth on trips to the mountains, you may qualify for a \$1,000 grant to undertake alpine expeditions. Check out the “[Memorial Fund/Youth Grants](#)” page on the ACC-VI website and apply before January 31, 2018.

Since it started in 2009 the Fund has disbursed \$5,875 to six different youth groups in the alpine:

- 2010 - \$1,200 for the Brooks Peninsula Expedition (**Gillian Nicol, Cory McGregor, Cody Gold, Derek Cronmiller**)
- 2012 - \$250 for first ascents on the SW Buttress of Mount Arrowsmith (**James Pierzchalski**)
- 2013 - \$1,400 for a General Mountaineering Camp for youth at Mount Matchlee (**Harry Steiner**)
- 2013 - \$600 for a first ascent of North Needle Peak in the Great Bear Rainforest (**Christina Service, Laura Grant, Vernon Brown**)
- 2015 - \$925 for a study of weather conditions and climate change at 20 remote fire lookouts in the Rockies (**Kristen Walsh**)
- 2016 - \$1,500 to purchase climbing gear for a First Nations youth rock climbing camp near Ucluelet (**Carlos Mack**)

The Memorial Fund welcomes donations in honour of mountaineers such as those whose lives are celebrated on the website. Donations are tax-deductible and are matched by the Vancouver Island Section. Please see the Donations section of the “[Memorial Fund/Youth Grants](#)” page and consider making a donation before the end of the year.

For additional information please contact geoff.bennett@shaw.ca.



In Memoriam

*Top row - L to R: Charles Turner, Dave Tansley, Viggo Holm, Gerta Smythe, Herbert Harzan
Bottom row - L to R: Richard Eppler, Roger Neave, Sydney Watts, Larry Talarico*

Trailrider Program

ACC-VI Trailrider Program Volunteers Needed!



*The Vancouver Island Section's
Trailrider Program assists people with
disabilities to enjoy the outdoors.*

To volunteer please contact
Caroline Tansley, Coordinator.
Tel. 250-886-8038.

Email: trailrider@accvi.ca

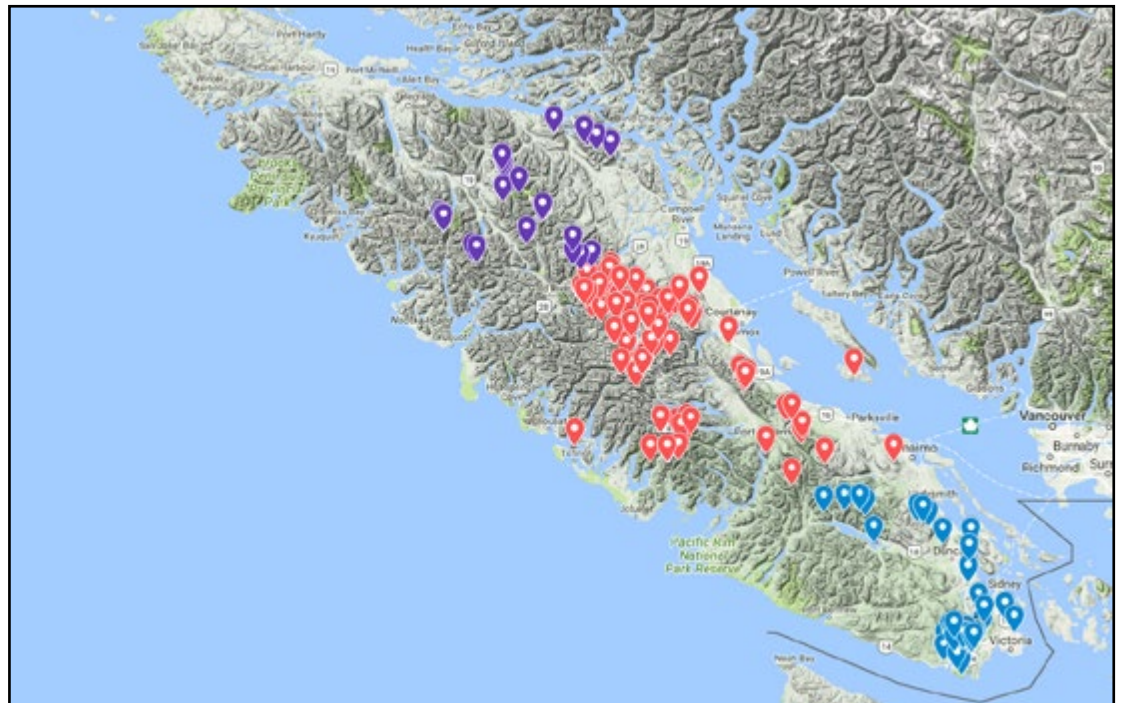
More info at:

[www.facebook.com/groups/
trailrider.accvi](https://www.facebook.com/groups/trailrider.accvi)

ACC-VI Vancouver
Island 150:

*Click on the map
to see where people
have been going!*

*Lots of places to
check out!*



Executive Episodes:

A quick update of ACC life from the chair's chair.

Our hut at 5040 Peak gets its first taste of snow

It was a race against the clock as the weather took a dive from balmy sunny days to heavy snow at the start of November. Volunteers pushed hard to complete the essential work on the outside of the hut to make it weather proof for the winter months. The hut is now locked and waiting for activity to restart in the interior in the spring.



Photo by Chris Jensen

With equally good timing, just as things started to go quiet up on the mountain for the first time in months, our hut champion extraordinaire Chris Jensen, had a 'big birthday'. So it was a perfect chance to celebrate his milestone and the completion of this phase of the project with a gathering of friends and family in town. And with a cake worthy of the occasion.

For more information, photos, videos and comments, go to the [5040 Peak hut Facebook page](#). Although things will be quieter now for the next few months, do feel free to keep in touch with the volunteer coordinator, Nadja Steiner, via huts@accvi.ca

BMFF

Our annual hosting of the Best of Banff Mountain Film Festival took place to a sell-out crowd at the University of Victoria on 26 November. As our major fund raiser of the year, the success of this venture enables us to plan new projects and make commitments for next year. And equally importantly, it serves as good publicity for our broader community, as was evident from the interest shown in our booth. No doubt, a rolling display of photos of the hut construction added to the enthusiasm. Our sincere thanks go to Lissa, Cedric and Krista Zala for putting this entire event together so competently.



Happy Birthday Chris!

Vancouver Island 150

Of course we did! As the year comes close to an end, our tally of peaks climbed during 2017 is well above the anniversary number. Mary Sanseverino has done a great job keeping the map and photo collection up to date throughout. If you haven't seen it recently, it's really worth checking it out as it provides a fun and photographic journey through our collective adventures this year.

<http://accvi.ca/programs/vancouver-island-150/>

And the year isn't over yet, so keep that total rising. We will celebrate all of this with some silly prizes during the AGM weekend in January.

Member news

Val Wootton continues to make steady progress from the serious leg injuries she sustained while climbing in the Haihte range in the summer. With typical spirit, she is already working out ways to be able to take part in the ski season before full mobility is restored. Her story of the rescue reveals several lessons learned, especially about different communication devices. Lindsay Elms has taken this experience to prepare a short presentation to update us all on this rapidly changing technology - we will find a forum to share this soon. Meanwhile our very best wishes to you Val as you continue your journey back to full activity.

‘Tis the season

The up-island folk are leading the way, and have already enjoyed their Christmas party on 25 November. Many thanks to Clarke Gourlay and family for hosting what was apparently a fun evening with 50 people representing four different clubs – ACC-VI, AVOC, the Ramblers and CDMC. (Skill testing question on what those acronyms stand for to follow).

The south-island Christmas party is scheduled for Friday 15 December at 6.00 pm at the home of Tom and Pam Hall. Please RSVP to hall.pnw@shaw.ca by **Monday 11th December** so we can cater accordingly. Details will be sent by email.

AGM weekend

Our 6th annual AGM weekend at VIMC Mt Washington will be held on 26 – 28 January 2018. The 40 available beds in the Centre were snapped up quickly on word being sent out, but we are able to have some overflow sleeping so I can still add your name for that. And of course, everyone is welcome to join in the weekend’s activities and the AGM on Saturday 17 January at 7.00 pm no matter where you are staying. Let it snow.

Executive event

The executive met on November 15th and will meet again in early January. The administration page of the new website is being updated and will have copies of the minutes of executive meetings and AGMs. Talking of the AGM.....now is a good time to consider whether there is a role you might like to play in the executive in 2018. See the separate message here from Mike Hubbard, the nominations committee. And please feel free to speak to any of the executive about your potential interest, questions etc.

**Happy trails
Catrin Brown**

Catrin@shaw.ca | chair@accvi.ca



*ACC-VI Hike:
Mysteries of the Sooke Hills #2
Nov 25, 2017*

Who was swimming in Grassy Lake?

*Mystery solved - Roger Taylor (left), and
Mike Whitney (right), are always up for
a challenge - this time it was going for a
swim.*

See more at on the [ACC-VI Facebook Page](#), or click on the photo to go right to the images.

New Leaders Wanted

<http://accvi.ca/trip-leaders/mentorship-program/>

The Leadership and Mentorship Committee is looking for members who would like to take part in our Mentorship Program. If you are a new trip leader or someone who is interested in becoming a trip leader for our section, this will be a great place to learn under the guidance of an experienced mentor. This is the first step in formulating our new Mentorship Program.

Please email us at mentors@accvi.ca if you are interested in taking part. You can also keep an eye on our website <http://accvi.ca/trip-leaders/mentorship-program/> for future updates.



Lunch break at Snow School -- 2017 ACC General Mountaineering Camp in the Selkirks

Call for Nominations for the 2018 Executive

Mike Hubbard

Mike Hubbard is the nominating committee for the new executive to be elected at the AGM at Mt. Washington on January 27th. If you are interested in volunteering for a position or in proposing anyone else let Mike know at jmhubbard@telus.net or by phone at 250 888 8370.

More images from the ACC-VI 2017 photo competition



*Honourable mention in the
Winter Activity category:
Catrin Brown*

Catrin says: "May 30, 2017
10.50 pm. Our tent on the
Hubbard Glacier in the St Elias
Mountains NE of Mt Logan
in the Kluane National Park
and Reserve. The lull before
the storm that chased us out of
there the next morning".

All images in the 2017 photo
competition are now available
online at the [ACC-VI website](#).
Be sure to check out the show!

!!Deal Alert!!

The great folks at [Ski Tak Hut](#) in Courtenay have offered us a deal of 20% off all backcountry ski rentals for all ACC-VI members with a valid membership card. Membership card must be available at time of rental to receive this discount. Great for all the folks who are thinking about getting into backcountry touring this winter.

Things To Rent:

- Touring Skis (skins and poles)
- Touring Boots
- Avalanche Transceivers
- Probes
- Shovels
- Snowshoes

The Loneliness of the Antiquated Ski Tourer – A Wistful Return to Early Season Skiing in the Rockies?

by Scott Collins

During the period Nov. 11-23, I made a trip to the Canadian Rockies for the purpose of getting in shape for the imminent ski touring season, having suffered through the previous one in poor condition for a variety of reasons, in part related to illness. Though to be honest, with only one day of skiing available in Cobble Hill earlier this year (I even have pictures from the top of the snowy summit of Cobble Hill Mtn.), one might be forgiven for never being in shape for ski touring since there is so little of it available nearby?

Anyhow, I arrived at the Lake Louise hostel on Nov. 12 and noticed that while the area around Pipestone Ck. and the village was quite bony and even dry here and there, there was snow in the forecast for the following week. On the other hand, a glimpse of Whitehorn summit revealed more snow fence than snow, and though the resort was open, only four lifts were operating – none of which offered access to Temple Lodge and the Skoki area beyond. The Fish Ck. fire road also looked quite doubtful – one could skin up it – but you would be walking down most of it :-)

So, the following day I settled for some skinny skiing along the track-set and groomed (but paved) Moraine Lake Rd. If you wish to visit the lake, you need to leave such luxuries behind (roughly at km 8) and brave a downhill run through several avalanche tracks to reach the lake (11 km from the start). Due to the lack of grooming, a change in aspect and an increase in temperature, coupled with the fresh snow, this last portion was a veritable cake walk.

Figure 1: Sketch of Moraine Lake Rd. just at the end of the groomed portion complete with warning sign. Aspect change is quite noticeable on a sunny day!
See <http://skierbob.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/DSC02063.jpg> for a photo of the area.



Ordinarily, the solution would be simple – stop, scrape off the wax and try something else – but I forgot my wax kit at the trailhead (curse the vagaries of old age) and so dragged myself down the slope as best as possible – with me vs. my skis leading the way! I arrived at the lake and lodge to find myself alone, except for some crazy young Europeans on bicycles with fat tires; I was not impressed by their track making efforts ;-)

The return (uphill) portion was made somewhat less unpleasant

by the donning of skins – which I had remembered to bring with me. Unfortunately, unlike phat skis (more later) the skins only cover about 2/3 of the base and so caking was still an issue. Anyhow, 22 km was quite nice for the first day, even though I didn't break any speed records.

The next day involved a 16 km ski “down” to and past the Great Divide along another track set road. You can continue on to the Lake O'Hara parking lot but I saw little point to this - having been there recently (in the summer with our local section ;-)) and so retreated after “bottoming” out on the road past Ross Lake. This day I

had no problems with the wax and even managed to drag my kit along with me – but I noticed I was moving somewhat slowly in relation to other skiers, and not just the skate skiers either (I am afraid this efficient means of transport eludes me and my bad knees). On the other hand I was skiing on 210 cm Europa 99s with a 54 mm wide waist and 64 mm wide tips, as well as carrying a pack of ca. 9 kg (not to mention the 100 kg of dead weight in the form of this erstwhile skier) so the frictional forces really add up!

Anyhow, I was sufficiently impressed that the next day I went to Sunshine Village, paid \$44.00 for the gondola and chairlift ride up Strawberry (ouch!) and shuffled off to Quartz Ridge with my AT gear (ca. 10 kg extra – oomph!) in tow. Perhaps, because it was a weekday, and the weather somewhat unsettled, I found the area around Rock Isle Lk. deserted, and with no skin tracks to be seen anywhere in the windswept meadows :-)

So, I ended up breaking trail (boot top ski penetration or worse) and out of an abundance of caution kept well away from the wind-loaded slopes coming down off Quartz Ridge. In fact, I went up a gladed hill to the lee of those slopes thinking that would be really safe - only to discover one had to (steeply) descend said hill to pick up the normal route to the col.

Figure 2: Sketch of a groomer at work on the old road between Lake Louise and Lake O'Hara. There is a shelter off to the right that is hidden in this view.

See "[travelswiththesmile](http://travelswiththesmile.com)" for a photo of the area.

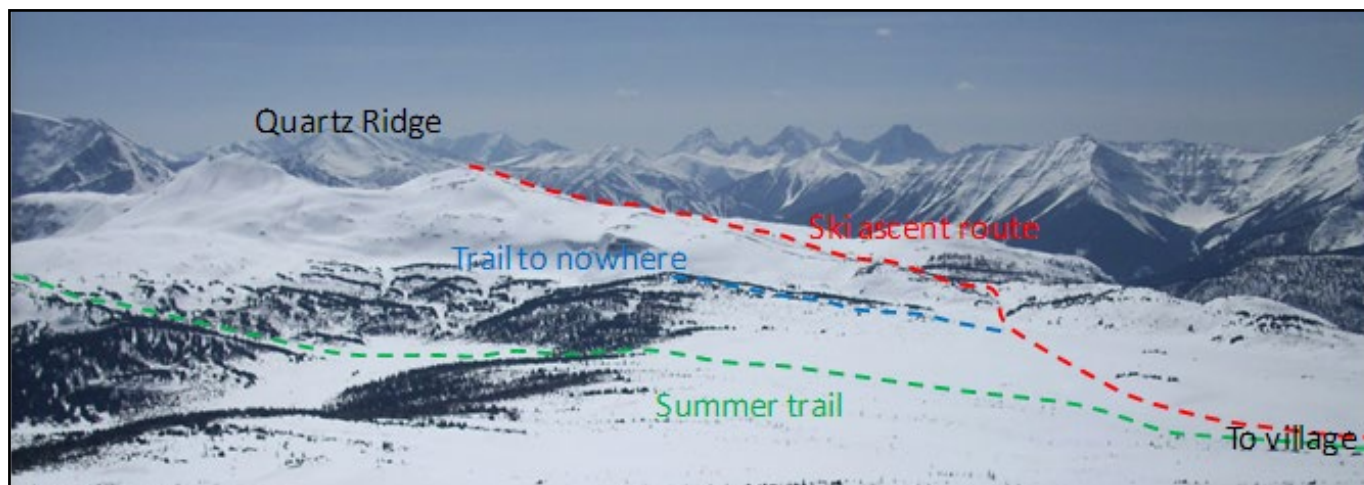
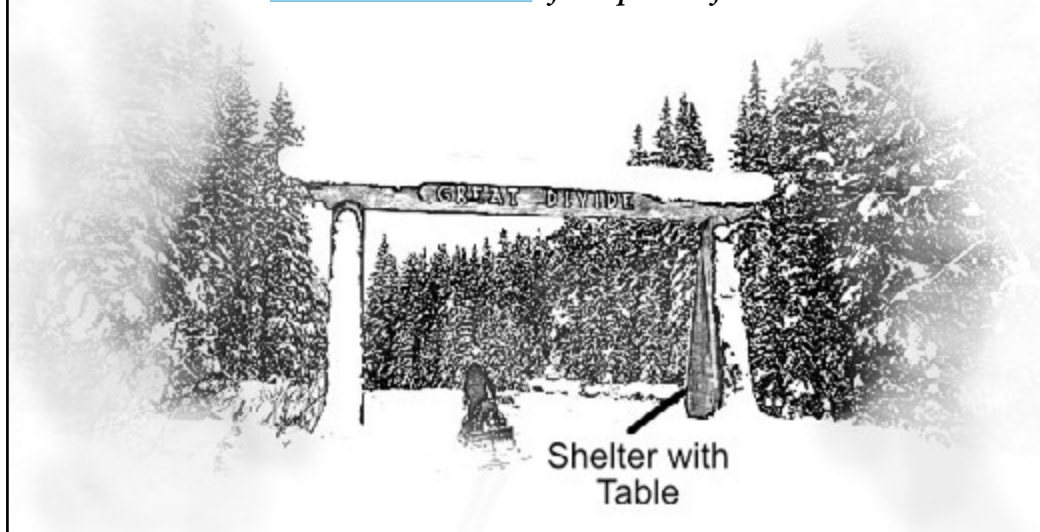


Figure 3: View of Quartz Ridge from near Brewster Rock (based on <http://drandkc.blogspot.ca/2009/08/sunshine-and-quartz-ridge-in-summer.html>).

At this point (ca. 12:30 and 2 hours of trail breaking into the tour with the col still some distance away) it had started to snow and the wind was filling in for a blow so I (slowly) retreated to the village, leaving behind my skin track to nowhere. My only hope is that it too would fill in before the next tourer mistakenly started up it, thinking it led somewhere interesting?

The next day was, in theory, a rest day or to be precise, the amount of odiferous polyester laundry had piled up to the point where something had to be done about it. After that, I ventured off to the railway station at Lake Louise only to discover, that two Parks Canada folks in skidoos had just track set the Tramline, a route that starts at the Bow River and climbs to Lake Louise by the route an old trolley used to run on in days gone past. I thought to myself – Gee! This might offer a pleasant downhill run and so proceeded to skin up it in my AT gear (carefully avoiding the carefully set classic ski tracks). After crossing the Moraine Lake Rd. it seems the Parks Canada folks had given up grooming, and moreover the terrain was mainly flat at this point so I turned around shortly after heading up this section of un-groomed trail.

In the end, though the run definitely trended downhill (at an average 10% grade perhaps), there was enough rolling/flat terrain that it seemed prudent to leave the skis/boots in walk mode with the heels free. I proceeded to give my best imitation of classic (skinny) skiing on AT gear and this should be avoided – I invariably end up with matching instep blisters (thanks be to Scarpa for this serious boot design flaw!) and this time was no exception.

The next day involved a return to skinny skiing if only to recover from the friction blisters. Here, I returned to the Moraine Lake Rd. and skied up to Paradise Valley, intent on skiing to Lake Louise via the Fairview trail and then perhaps another loop before returning to the car. Well, this involved (light) trail breaking from the start once leaving the road (one legacy of the Harper government – we are lucky to have any Parks Canada employees left), and a very nice ski through the forest and meadows to the lake, punctuated by several, large downed trees (hence one suspects the lack of grooming – thank you Stephen for your service to our country!).

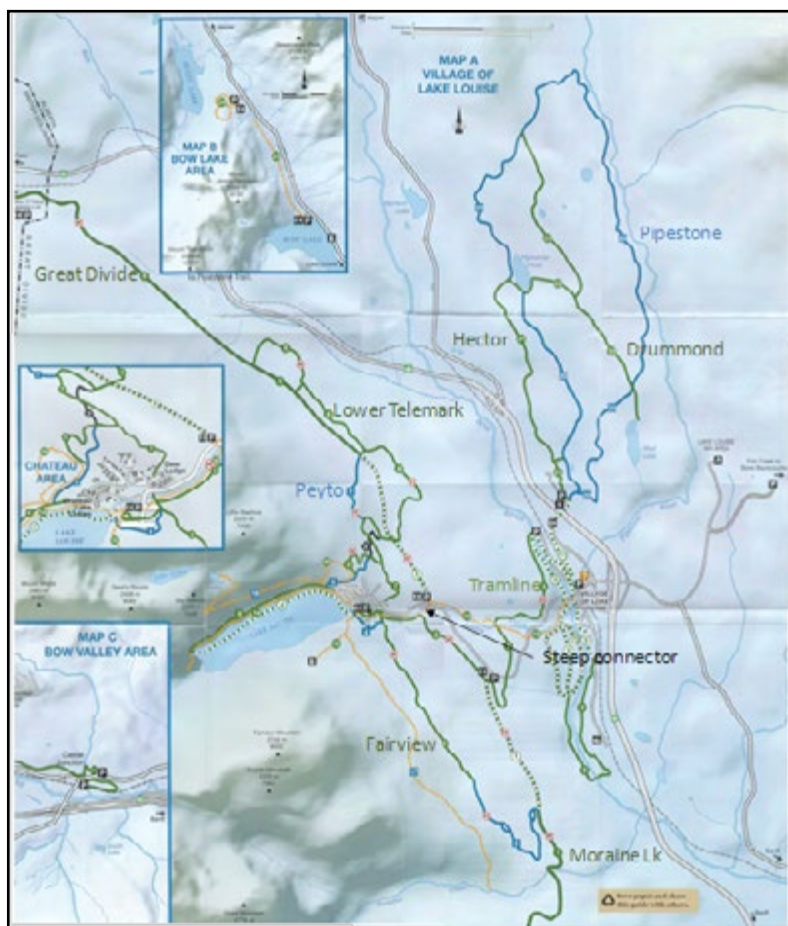


Figure 4 – Nordic Trails in the Lake Louise Area – Map courtesy of Parks Canada Information.

Unfortunately, there is no shelter for skiers at the lake (aside from the rather large and obvious heated one in the form of a chateau ;-) so lunch was consumed unceremoniously near the large parking lot for the unwashed (i.e. non-hotel visitors and other interlopers). I then headed off down the Peyto trail – which now involved heavy trail-breaking and to the point where I eventually slapped the skins on to negotiate the roly-poly bits. At least there were no downed trees to cross! I eventually emerged on the Great Divide road and seeing that the planned return loop via the Telemark trail was also untracked, I simply returned by the former – besides it was getting late and starting to snow again!

Now, the original intent of this trip was to ski off the lifts during the week, and tour on the weekends (or when not skiing downhill) but if you do some accounting so far, you will recognize that my first week started off mainly backwards. So, Saturday morning was spent figuring out what to do with what remained of Saturday. A brief foray up to the Fish Ck. trailhead revealed that the road was unploughed (Skoki not being open yet for the season) and a fair amount of fresh snow now covered all the early season

obstacles down low (i.e. still not skiable without incident).

In the end, I settled for driving up to Mosquito Ck. with its higher base elevation. There were some hardy folks staying at the hostel and one group of AT skiers but they were headed for the avalanche tracks (aka Nature's ski runs ;-) below Bow Peak across the river valley. Yours truly had the entire Mosquito Ck. valley all to himself – on a weekend! Of course I had to break trail all the way on my skinny skis/skins, and by the time I reached the backcountry campground at km 6 it was time to return (Boy does it start to get dark early this time of year). I did not see a soul all day, though it was obvious a few people had been up the valley before me this season. Unbelievable!



Figure 5: Family on snowshoes in Mosquito Ck. If you find yourself at this location, you are definitely off route, the water through this canyon is very deep, and you should return to the trailhead! The normal route is high above you on the left bank-see photo at left for correct start. Photos courtesy of <http://www.rockiesfamilyadventures.com/>.

Sunday morning was spent shopping in the village (for a map of Hector Lake – having had to subsist on my GPS only the previous day as the Lake Louise 1:50000 sheet ends well to the south of Mosquito Ck. Oops!). I then spent some time chatting with the helpful ladies at the Parks Canada Visitor's Centre about the Pipestone area, it having been recently

opened for the season. There was now sufficient snow down low that I was not going to miss out on this – but never having toured in this area, I really didn't know where the trails ran. In any event, no one had been in there to track set – except for one set of skiers who had headed up the Pipestone Loop (13 km total, set counter-clockwise but not having yet completed the return portion).

Unfortunately, I did not have time to complete that loop, and so opted for a shorter version that turns around at Pipestone Pond. This involved going around literally in a circle once at the start, then following a flagged route back to the Pipestone loop having given up on locating the start of the Hector trail (FYI... it does not start where shown on the map but I located the proper start upon my return). I then broke trail via the Drummond route to eventually reach the pond and fortunately encountered the other party's down track via the return (Hector/Pipestone) route. It was a reasonably quick ski down to the car as a result – and it was indeed fortunate as it was starting to get dark again when I arrived. The other remaining party were in fact waiting in their car as I was the only other vehicle left in the parking lot and they knew I was skiing alone (and evidently had no clue where I was going) – Thanks!

Monday was spent skiing off the lifts at Lake Louise under sunny skies and fine conditions – all the fresh snow was a bit tracked up (had one really nice powder run down the back side and can still crank those turns) and many of the runs were un-groomed (i.e. they had yet to be groomed this early in the season) but I managed to make it down Ptarmigan in one piece and skied off Larch a couple of times before returning to base. Predictably, as most of the lifts were now running, early season prices were no longer in effect (ouch!).

Tuesday, what do I say about Tuesday – with the benefit of hindsight* it was my last day in the Rockies this fall on skis :- (Armed with a map, GPS and the prospect of beautiful snow, I headed up to Bow Summit to discover I was the first vehicle located at the parking lot across from the Crowfoot glades. Of course, I was not headed there but instead was headed via the high route to Helen Lake (with the trailhead directly across the road) below Dolomite Pass. Now, at least one party had the same idea at one point this season but their skin track was deeply buried by all the new snow (including ca. 10-15 cm that came down overnight).

It started out with (Scarpa) boot top ski penetration at the trailhead and progressed to at least knee deep penetration at my high point some 300 m and 3-4 km distance away, breaking trail continuously and with very slow progress. It took me two hours to cover that distance and elevation gain. Never saw a soul the whole time but I regretfully had to turn around after “turning the corner” with a distant view into Helen Lake ca. 2 km away but largely on contour (did I mention a warm front was moving in with a lowering cloud ceiling etc.).

Figure 6: Sketch of ski slopes through an old burn above the summer trail (green line) on Helen Shoulder. The author saw no tracks on his solo trip but visibility was not very good. Higher on the left are numerous start zones for avalanches that routinely run down through the summer trail in this area.



Sketch based on images from [Life in the Mountains](#)

On the ski down (believe it or not this was done with heels loose and skins on as there were some uphill or rolling portions involved), I suddenly noticed that my up track was well packed down – by other skiers about a km or so from the trailhead. I think they must have been wondering what I was up to. Instead of heading straight up the fall line for some turns off Crystal Ridge (aka Helen Shoulder) above Bow summit, what was this “idiot” up to - dragging his AT gear along the summer trail into the Helen Lake valley – for at most a couple of turns on the way back down?

Here, I end this story with a confession. Most of my ski touring dates back to 1970-1983 when I left Calgary for the wider world. I returned periodically to the Rockies to ski tour over the years but only once in a blue moon and so lost touch with the touring community and what they were up to. The years passed and while other folks innovated I did not. I don't fit in with the current backcountry ski touring crowd where the emphasis is on skinning up the nearest accessible slope only to ski back down by the most direct route (in my opinion this is really only what modern AT gear is suited for – it is not well-suited for long distance ski touring). Also, I don't really fit in with the X-C group either - with the emphasis on track set and groomed trails and rapid progress on skinny skis. The fact that I generally did not encounter anyone during my trips into the backcountry during this all too brief visit must be a testimony to all this. I guess you now know where to find me though?

Happy Trails...Scott Collins (solo trip participant).

* Those who are interested in weather forecasting will note that an atmospheric river (aka Pineapple Express) was established off our west coast with high freezing levels and precipitation forecast starting Wed. evening or overnight Thursday in the Rockies and Interior ranges. Sure enough, the Trans Canada Hwy was shut during Thursday at Rogers Pass for avalanche control (which I avoided by leaving Wednesday mid-morning for Kamloops) but I could not avoid the mud slide which shut down the entire Trans Canada west of Hope, finally returning home Thursday evening via Hope, Agassiz, Mission and then Tsawwassen/Duke Point.

e-Trails: Mountain News and Stories

Celebrate International Mountain Day (a United Nations Designated Day) on Monday, Dec 11th. <https://www.internationalmountainday.ca/> (Don't feel you have to restrict yourself to just one day!)

The ski season is upon us. Club Avi gear is available for rent at 2 locations:
In Greater Victoria 8 sets from Mike Hubbard. Contact him at jmhubbard@telus.net
In Parksville 2 sets from Clarke Gourlay. Contact him at clarke@cheeseworks.ca
For more info on rentals check out the [ACC-VI gear rental page](#).

Thank you to Brian Parsons for donating his Spot Gen 3 to the club gear. If you have service-able mountain gear you'd like to donate to the section, contact Mike Hubbard: jmhubbard@telus.net

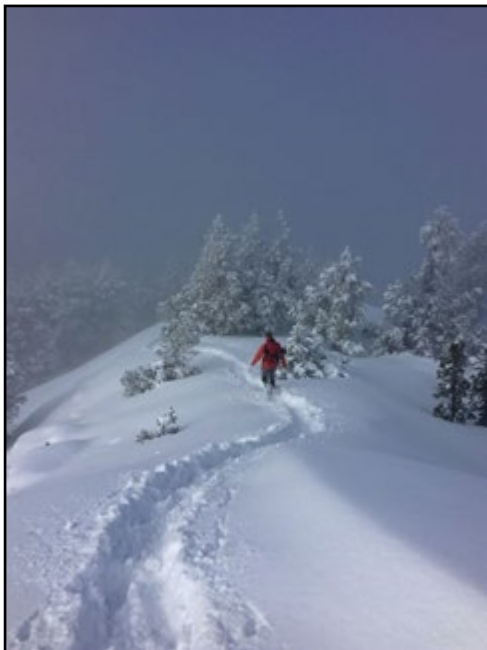
It's time to start keeping an eye on the Island Avalanche Bulletin again! Set your browser to <http://islandavalanchebulletin.com/> and keep informed.

Travelling further afield for winter activities? The Avalanche Canada interactive map is a handy resource: <http://www.avalanche.ca/map>

More courses to get yourself ready for the season: Island Alpine Guides: <https://www.islandalpineguides.com/> (Make sure to mention you are an ACC-VI member for a discount)

Not ready to let go of summer yet -- Mike Blake has a very good [Augerpoint Traverse trip report](#) online. Another story to check out: Jes Scott's question "[What inspired your last big adventure?](#)"

Comox environmentalist and Second World War veteran Ruth Masters dies. The Comox Valley Record has an extensive obituary on this amazing woman - well worth a read: <http://www.comoxvalleyrecord.com/news/ruth-masters-the-passing-of-a-vancouver-island-icon/>



*Ulrike Schmidt
Mount Benson
winter-wonderland*

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Repeat photography in Assiniboine Provincial Park with the Mountain Legacy Project. Read about it on the [ACC's national website](#). B&W 1916 images courtesy of Library and Archives Canada.



From the cover:

A Snowy Big Jim

Photo by Natasha Salway.

Winner of the 2017 ACC-VI Photo Completion Winter Activity Category

Natasha says "Short cuts lead to long delays and great photos! On our way to Mount Septimus, we decided to try a more "direct" route to Cream Lake from Baby Bedwell. Passing beside a very snowy Big Jim Lake after many ups and downs, we determined that our scenic route did not save us much distance after all. This did not dampen our spirits though since we were still able to make camp before sunset!

**Thank you to this month's contributors: Geoff Bennett, Sandy Briggs, Catrin Brown, Scott Collins, Mike Hubbard, Chris Jensen, Matthew Lettington, Colin Mann, Walter Moar, Natasha Salway, and Ulrike Schmidt.
Well done everyone!**

