



# ISLAND BUSHWHACKER

THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA • VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION

CENTENNIAL 1912-2012

## 2012 ANNUAL







# **ISLAND BUSHWHACKER ANNUAL**

**VOLUME 40, 2012**

VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION  
*of*  
THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA



SECTION EXECUTIVE – 2012

Chair	Rick Hudson
Secretary	Catrin Brown
Treasurer	Phee Hudson
Members-at-Large:	Geoff Bennett Russ Moir Martin Smith
Access and Environment	Barb Baker
BMFF Coordinator	Krista Zala
Bushwhacker Annual	Sandy Stewart
Bushwhacker Newsletter	Cedric Zala
Education	Harry Steiner
Equipment	Mike Hubbard
Evening Events	Brenda O'Sullivan
FMCBC Rep	Andrew Pape-Salmon
Library/Archives/History	Tom Hall Lindsay Elms (History)
Membership	Christine Fordham
National Rep	Rick Hudson
Safety	Selena Swets
Schedule	Russ Moir
Webmaster	Martin Hofmann

ACC VI Section website:  
[www.accvi.ca](http://www.accvi.ca)

ACC National website:  
[www.alpineclubofcanada.ca](http://www.alpineclubofcanada.ca)

ISSN 0822 - 9473

Cover: *Charles Turner descending from Mount Tom Taylor* PHOTO: DAVE CAMPBELL



Printed on forestry-certified paper



---

## Contents

---

<b>Report from the Chair</b>	Rick Hudson .....	1
<b>VANCOUVER ISLAND</b>		
<b>5040 Peak</b>	Roxy Ahmed .....	3
<b>Adder Mountain</b>	Roxy Ahmed .....	3
<b>Mount Muir</b>	Dave Suttill .....	4
<b>Mount Whymper</b>	Dave Suttill .....	5
<b>"MMM" weekend: Marble, McBride, Morrison Spire</b>	Roxy Ahmed .....	6
<b>Buffalo Hump Mountain – 1009m</b>	Lindsay Elms .....	7
<b>Edinburgh Mountain</b>	Dave Suttill .....	8
<b>Waterloo Mountain – 1071m</b>	Lindsay Elms .....	10
<b>Strathcona Skyline Traverse #1:</b>		
<b>Mount Adrian to Augerpoint, Mount Albert Edward and beyond</b>	Dave Campbell .....	11
<b>Rugged from Top to Bottom - Rugged Mountain, East Ridge</b>	Chris Jensen .....	14
<b>Lukwa Mountain</b>	Lindsay Elms .....	15
<b>The South Blade</b>	Lindsay Elms .....	16
<b>Mount Hall and Coronation Mountain</b>	Lindsay Elms .....	18
<b>The Mithorn and Margaret Peak</b>	Peter Rothermel .....	19
<b>McKay Peak</b>	Lindsay Elms .....	20
<b>Strathcona Skyline Traverse # 2: Wolf/Cervus Divide</b>	Dave Campbell .....	21
<b>SPOT to the Rescue</b>	David Campbell and John Young .....	22
<b>Something hidden! Go and find it. Summer Camp 2012</b>	Rick Hudson .....	24
<b>Tahsis to Tahsis: Via Mount Leiner, Mount McKelvie and five other</b>		
<b>1500m summits all on the horseshoe around the McKelvie basin</b>	Lindsay Elms .....	26
<b>Woss Mountain</b>	Walter Moar .....	30
<b>Ten good reasons to go to Summer Camp</b>	Phee Hudson .....	32
<b>Over the Whale: A day from Summer Camp 2012</b>	Rick Hudson .....	34
<b>Elkhorn Adventure –A Centennial Climb</b>	Lenka Visnovska .....	35
<b>Popsicle Peak</b>	Lindsay Elms .....	37
<b>Strathcona Skyline Traverse #3: Mount Tom Taylor to Mariner Mountain</b>	Dave Campbell .....	39
<b>Handsome Mountain</b>	Walter Moar .....	41
<b>Black Peaks: A Whale's Tale!</b>	Lindsay Elms .....	42
<b>Summit solitude on Mount Burman</b>	Janelle Curtis .....	44
<b>Jacklah Mountain: A Little Known Gem with Spectacular Views</b>	Peggy Taylor .....	45
<b>Upana Mountain</b>	Lindsay Elms .....	48
<b>Nahmint Mountain</b>	Dave Suttill .....	49
<b>Strathcona Skyline Traverse # 4: Mount Thelwood and Moyeha Mountain</b>	Dave Campbell .....	50
<b>Muchalat Mountain and Oktwanch Peak</b>	Lindsay Elms .....	51
<b>Another day at the spa on Elkhorn South</b>	Janelle Curtis .....	53
<b>Flat Top Mountain</b>	Dave Campbell .....	57
<b>A Journey on the IQ Trail</b>	John Young .....	58
<b>2012 Mountaineering with kids and youth</b>	Nadja Steiner .....	61
<b>Rees Ridge Ramble</b>	John Young .....	64
<b>Luck at the edge of safety: Mount Colonel Foster, Southeast Summit</b>	Tom Carter .....	65
<b>2012 Climb the Island – Centennial Project</b>	Catrin Brown .....	67
<b>COAST RANGE</b>		
<b>Climbing Among Snow Gargoyles – Mount Waddington, Bravo Route</b>	Chris Jensen .....	72

## **SOUTH OF THE BORDER**

<b>Ode to the Twin Sister</b>	Tony Vaughn .....	77
<b>More Peak-Bagging in the Tetons and Colorado</b>	John Pratt.....	78
<b>Mount Baker: Coleman-Deming Highway</b>	Sandy Stewart .....	79
<b>Desert Peaks and Volcanoes</b>	Martin Smith .....	81
<b>The Southeast Ridge of Cathedral Peak, Yosemite National Park</b>	Rick Hudson .....	85

## **DISTANT PLACES**

<b>New Zealand 2012</b>	Martin Smith .....	86
<b>Some Climbs in the Atacama</b>	John Pratt .....	89
<b>Into Morocco's Middle Atlas</b>	Rick Hudson .....	91
<b>Three Weeks, Three Summits, Three Passes! Solu Khumbu region of Nepal</b>	Phee Hudson.....	92
<b>A Spring Fling in North Wales</b>	Martin Smith .....	96
<b>Pilgrimage to Tiger's Nest Monastery, Bhutan</b>	Albert Hestler.....	99
<b>China, Pakistan and the Karakoram Highway</b>	Don Morton .....	100

## **MOUNTAIN AIR**

<b>Above the Bush - Book Review</b>	John Crouch .....	103
<b>On Summit Dilemmas</b>	John Pratt.....	105
<b>Plant List for the McKelvie, Vancouver Island area explored during</b>		
<b>ACC VI summer camp</b>	Judith Holm, Ken Wong.....	106



### Rick Hudson



PHOTO: STAN MARCUS

Our centennial year has come and gone, and what a year it's been! We should all take pride in the section's achievements over the past one hundred years, culminating in the one just gone. Much has been achieved since 1912, when Arthur Oliver Wheeler and friends formed the fifth section of the then 6 year old Alpine Club of Canada here on Vancouver Island (after Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg and Calgary sections in 1909).

#### 2012 Centennial Events:

- *Climb the Island:* This creative project challenged all members to get out there and climb as many Island peaks as possible for the first time in 2012. The goal was to see if we could reach 100 summits in a year. Leaders were asked to photograph their summit group and post to a special webpage that logged the section's progress on an interactive map. To everyone's delight, 118 peaks were topped during the year, including some rare ones that seldom see an ascent in a decade. Congratulations to all who participated, and to those who dreamed it up and made it happen.
- *Literary Island history:* Over three years in preparation, with section financial, editorial and layout support, Lindsay Elms published *Above the Bush* (Misthorn Press, Comox, BC) in 2012, a 165-page record of the first ascents of many of the Island's classic summits. The book provides a definitive history of the early pioneers, their successes and failures, and is a must-have for anyone interested in the development of mountaineering on the Island.

- *Active Island history:* The ascent of Elkhorn on August 21, 1912 marked a significant milestone, as a first ascent of one of the 2000m summits by the newly formed ACC-VI section. Present were both A.O.Wheeler (founder of the ACC and its 1<sup>st</sup> President) and his son E.O.Wheeler (later of 1921 Everest Expedition fame and Surveyor-General of India). Exactly a century later, on August 21, 2012, a group of eight section stalwarts re-enacted the ascent, although the gentlemen did not carry alpenstocks, nor the ladies wear bustles!
- *Centennial clothing:* Commemorative fleece clothing embroidered with the ACC logo and the dates "1912 – 2012" was made available to members at wholesale, and will likely become treasured keepsakes in the years to come.
- *Membership:* The membership stayed fairly steady at just under 400 (including family members) over the year, making the section one of the larger ones among the 22 sections (Calgary is largest at about 1,100; Yukon smallest at less than 10). Unlike many sections, we are spatially challenged: about 2/3 live south of the Malahat, with the balance spread over 400 km up-Island. Strangely, almost half of the membership does not appear to use any of the services we offer.

#### Social Activities:

- *Section events:* As always, there were social activities that provided a counterpoint to the more traditional physical efforts for which the section is better known. The monthly slideshow evenings continued to be popular with those close to Victoria; the photo competition was hard fought, with eclectic images from around the world, and prestigious trophies left behind (and no one knows one of the winners – neither ACC nor UVic!). The banquet was well attended; and there was a record turnout for the summer BBQ. The annual Island Bushwhacker was of the highest quality, although somewhat thinner than the 2010 edition, and over 70 people attended the AGM weekend in January, held at Mount Washington.
- *Outreach:* We enjoyed one of our best Banff Mountain Film Festival events ever, well organized, with great action movies and 930 tickets sold. We had our ACC booth set up in the foyer, along with 6 retail outlets. Volunteers also set up the ACC booth at MEC's Snow-Fest in November; the Trail Rider program was active in the summer; and section members assisted with the VI Spine Trail Association's trail building in the Tuck

Lake area, en route to connecting to Port Alberni. We took on a new executive member for Access – a difficult portfolio on an island full of private property and Tree Farm Licenses. We were reinstated as full patch members of the Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC again, after pushing hard for a fee reduction for several years, which has now been applied to all the other BC clubs too. The section donated \$1,500 to various charities, notably the VI Avalanche Centre and the VI Spine Trail Association.

- *Upgrades to the website:* Social media have become increasingly important to running the section. It seems hard to imagine the days of Schedules mailed to your home 3 times a year, to post on the fridge! The whole ACC-VI platform has been made “more robust”, and numerous subtle upgrades added to allow the membership to stay connected. After a great deal of work by our previous Librarian (Judith Holm), an Island Bushwhacker index was created and made available online, and IBWs back to 1989 scanned and added too. The interactive map developed for *Climb the Island* is being modified to become a general tool for tracking activities by peak, and for posting current beta, even GPS tracks. As the web work grows, the job of managing has devolved to a sub-committee, rather than a lone over-worked guru.

#### Alpine Activities:

- *Getting out there:* This is really why we are a club. Over the year there have been many section and individual trips, driven notably by the goal of pushing the summit count of the *Climb the Island* challenge. The section invested in new gear, including 3 new climbing ropes, and is looking at improving our communication capabilities. We also made possible the purchase of nearly 60 digital transceivers to members at discount.
- *Climbing Education:* Many members upgraded their backcountry skills this year, from AST1 courses to the ACC/TNF week-long program, and many participants took advantage of the new subsidy program, by subsequently leading section trips. Trips at all levels are the reason we exist, and special thanks to both of the Education Coordinators for their courses and to those dedicated leaders who assisted.
- *Week-long camps:* There were two well-attended Spring Ski weeks – one to Sunrise Hut and one to Kokanee Hut, and four Summer Camp weeks – one to the Elizabeth Parker Hut at Lake O'Hara, and three to an alpine

basin (with helicopter support) north of Tahsis Village (where a number of first ascents were made). That's over 90 participants in a section of about 400! As the tented Summer Camps move into their 4<sup>th</sup> year, a sub-committee has stepped up to plan and manage these important events in our annual calendar.

#### The Future:

- *The Ranger's Hut:* Last year the section was asked by BC Parks to make a proposal to manage the now underused Ranger's Cabin at Hairtrigger Lake, a small hut located about half way between the Mount Washington Ski area and Mount Albert Edward. A number of meetings have taken place. If a land use permit can be worked out, it would put us in the same position as many other ACC sections that own or manage alpine huts in provincial or national parks. While not a big money maker, the ownership of a hut would broaden our appeal and provide a small income after expenses.
- *A New Park:* Those who attended Summer Camp 2012 in the Mount McKelvie basin near Tahsis were struck by the unique beauty of that small (1,400 hectare) hidden valley. Among island areas outside of designated parks, it is unique for its large alpine extent, its lakes and waterfalls, and the fact that it is an intact, un-logged watershed. Plans are ongoing to have the area added to the existing 6,600 hectare Woss Lake Provincial Park just to the north.
- *Online banking:* The days of sending cheques to pay for ACC events are thankfully coming to an end! Our bank (CoastCapital) will in 2013 make eTransfer banking available, at which time we will be able to move with the times.

I offer a big ‘thank you’ to all who participated in section activities at every level. Forgive me for not mentioning your names – there are too many – but it is an impressive list. It may come as a surprise to many, isolated as we are way out here on the left hand edge of this huge country, to learn that at ACC National meetings, when all 22 section reps get together and discuss life, the universe and how things are going, the ACC-VI section kicks ass! We are active, connected, and leading the wave.

Finally, thanks to all who took the initiative to lead one or more trips over this past year. You are the heartbeat of the section! And to those committed volunteers, and the willing executive committee, all of whom worked so hard and achieved so much these past 12 months, thank you.



# Vancouver Island

---

## 5040 Peak

---

**Roxy Ahmed**  
**April 29**

After officially starting our spring ski touring season a couple of weekends prior with a jaunt up Mount Brenton, Chris and I were itching to get into the alpine so we settled on 5040 Peak for the weekend's adventure. The goal was to ascend by the Cobalt Lake route which starts at Km 9.5 on Marion Creek Main. A low snow line meant we parked at Km 3.5; this was going to add an extra 12 kilometres round trip and 300m more elevation gain to an already long day. At least gravity and skis would help on the way out!

Skinning up the road before 7 a.m., the sun peaked out for a few moments, but decided to keep us in a fog for the rest of the day. After a couple of hours, we reached the end of the road and the unwelcome sight of an avalanche run-out coming out of a parallel gulley to the one we were about to head up. Good thing we had avalanche gear?

After locating the flagging we hiked up slash and then steep forest for about an hour, keeping to the south side of the creek draining Cobalt Lake, before we hit open old growth forest and put our skis back on. Up to this point crampons were unnecessary but if it froze the night before they would have been welcome. Once at Cobalt Lake the fog lifted just long enough to let us pick out a route to the summit. Lots of avalanche activity in the basin and suspicious cornices above made our decision not to cross the lake to the bench giving access to the summit ridge. Instead we decided to head north into the trees, staying far climbers' left of the cliff band. This popped us onto 5040's West Face directly below the summit.

From there on it was a straight-forward ski to the top. The weather was only getting worse, so we put on jackets, had a quick snack and quickly turned to descend. In the whiteout, we stuck close together and didn't open up until



*Marion Creek Main - end of the road* PHOTO: ROXY AHMED

we reached the relative safety of the trees and had fantastic turns down!

**Participants:** Chris Jensen and Roxy Ahmed

---

## Adder Mountain

---

**Roxy Ahmed**  
**May 6**

After 5040 Peak, our eyes were now set on Adder Mountain down the valley. The weather looked great so we hoped to get some views of the surrounding peaks that were hidden in cloud the weekend before. After considering our route options, we made up an approximate Google Earth track which accessed Louise Goetting Lake from Spur MC30 off Marion Creek Main, crossed the lake and went up onto



*Adder Mountain east ridge* PHOTO: CHRIS JENSEN

the East Ridge to the summit. The usual Northwest Ridge route from Sutton Pass didn't look particularly appealing, and we knew that gaining the East Ridge via the Nahmint valley would be improbable with road access at this time of year. We couldn't find any other beta so we hoped that Google Earth wouldn't hide too many surprises.

Departing Victoria on Saturday night, we encountered a locked gate on Spur MC30 at about 300m forcing us to park there for the night. It turns out the road we saw on Google Earth actually goes up much higher than the 12 year old satellite imagery - a pleasant surprise. We hiked our skis up to about 600m elevation and skinned to the end of the road (~700m) where the intake for a micro-hydro station is located. Above this facility is a spectacular waterfall. After crossing the creek, flagging for Jack's Peaks starts, leading up to the lake. Once there, the flagging continues on to Jack's Peaks but we crossed the lake aiming for the bluff section on the northeast end. A lower angle drainage just west of the steep slopes allowed us to keep our skis on, and brought us to beautiful open forested slopes ambling up to the East Ridge. Just below the ridge is a slope which looked to be a high avalanche hazard, so we carefully ascended it one at a time. On our way down this slope later we both set off wet slides, nothing major but still a little scary.

Below the summit, we ditched our skis and walked around the south to avoid a steep corniced section on the ridge. Soon we were on top! The ski down was probably less pleasurable than it should have been, given that we released small wet slides on any steeper slope. When I skied out of the drainage and landed on Louise Goetting Lake, rather than ice I was met with several inches of water. Needless to say we would not have been able to cross this gap in short time! As we crossed the lake, an avalanche thundered down Adder's South Face, and I was reminded of something a col-

league once told me while surveying lake ice: "Sometimes avalanches onto frozen lakes are large enough to initiate lake ice break-up". Nevertheless this put some pep in our step and we were soon back at the truck enjoying Cheetos and fermented sugar cane.

**Participants:** Chris Jensen and Roxy Ahmed

---

## Mount Muir

---

Dave Suttill

May 7

Mount Muir is one of those mountains that would have escaped our notice if it hadn't been included on the Climb the Island Challenge list. It forms the headwaters of Muir Creek and is named after John Muir, one of the first European settlers on southern Vancouver Island. It was officially named Muir Mountain in 1924 and in 1953 was changed to Mount Muir. It is a nondescript mountain, with no prominent peak. It is however, the highest point on Vancouver Island south of the Leach River Fault. It was also the first mountain that club member Catrin Brown hiked up after moving to the Victoria area.

After having officially recorded our climbs of the three originally listed Climb the Island peaks in the Sooke Hills, Roxanne, Mike and I turned our attention to nearby Mount Muir. We didn't know anything about it other than what we gleaned from the CRD's web based Regional Community Atlas and the Backroad Mapbook of Vancouver Island. We didn't take the climb too seriously as we could see there was a maze of old and new logging roads leading to the top. However, getting there was a bit problematic as all the roads were gated and their condition unknown. We plotted what looked like the most direct access from the mouth of Muir Creek. The idea was to ride/walk our mountain bikes as close as we could get to the summit, then continue on foot if need be.

We set off at our usual 8:30 a.m. start from Victoria on a showery April 30, hoping for better weather. The weather in town was looking somewhat promising, but the closer we got to Sooke, the worse it got. In fact once in Sooke we decided to stop at Serious Coffee and wait for signs of improvement. After about half an hour of sipping coffee and looking out the window, we convinced ourselves that the rain was letting up. So we got back in the car and headed to the mouth of Muir Creek. I had scouted out the area previously so knew where to park and which road would get us pointed in the right direction. It was 10:00 a.m. when we finally set off. The first 2 hours saw us ride and occasionally push the bikes up



the wet 10 kilometres to about the 500m level following the old Anderson Main. Here the road we wanted, Kennedy Main, branched left and immediately became very steep and severely eroded, making it difficult to even carry our bikes. So we stashed them a little off the road and continued on foot. By the 700m level the road was increasingly snow covered, with drooping alders impeding the way. The light showers we were experiencing had now turned into constant drizzle. A little higher up the going leveled off somewhat as we passed through undulating terrain. By now the snow cover was almost continuous, often 15 to 30 centimetres deep. We were barely able to keep our feet dry crossing the several swollen creeks we encountered. One casualty of these creek crossings was Roxanne's umbrella. It went missing after one of the crossings, and a half hearted attempt to relocate it at the time failed. The weather turned from light drizzle to wet snow flurries with visibility down to less than ¼km. While we knew exactly where we were, we had no idea where the summit was. There were several roads leading up into the fog in the right general direction. By now we were cold and wet and it was really time to turn around. We decided to chalk this up as a reconnaissance and head back before things started getting really uncomfortable. Besides, what good is being on the summit if one can't see out? As we were to find out later, we were still one kilometre short of the actual summit.

We recruited another adventurer, Sylvia, to our group and returned exactly a week later for a rematch. The weather had warmed up and the day promised to be mostly sunny. This time things went much more text book. We got to the bike stash point in good time, had a brief snack, and continued on. The disappearing snow and the not so drooping alder posed much less of a hindrance. The creek crossings were also much friendlier. Armed with some screen shots of the air photos in the vicinity of the summit, we knew exactly which logging road would lead us to the once forested summit. Surprise, there was some sort of communications tower in a huge clearing just short of the summit, probably a weather station. This skinny mast can actually be seen from many points in the Sooke hills. It took a bit of discussion to decide exactly which of the many partially tree clad bumps in the immediate vicinity was the true summit. Note to self: always carry a clinometer. We decided on the one that had a small cairn with an iron rod sticking out. It was 2:25 p.m., time for a late lunch.

We lounged around enjoying the sun and identifying distant peaks. I clamped my mini tripod to a nearby tree branch and set the camera self timer for a group shot. I mention this because when we got back to the vehicle, I was without my little tripod. Examination of other photos from the trip showed the tripod was likely still affixed to a tree branch on the summit. On the way down, the rest of the group humoured me while I took a side trip and make a better search for Roxanne's missing umbrella from the first trip. After go-



*Mike Whitney, Roxanne Stedman, Dave Suttill and Sylvia Moser on Mount Muir* PHOTO: DAVE SUTTILL

ing downstream from where we had originally crossed the particular creek for a considerable distance, I found it on my return only about five metres below the crossing point. The trip, 34 kilometres in total, was a long way for Schooner who had also endured the reconnaissance the previous week.

I convinced Mike to return with me 10 days later to explore an all mountain bike route to the top via Butler Main and look for my tripod. By this time the snow was practically gone. We reached the summit by 12:30 p.m. and posed for some silly pictures with our mountain bikes. It was a spectacular sunny day, with clear views in all directions, including Mount Whymper (but that is another story). On the way back we had time for a brief reconnaissance in the vicinity of the West Leech River Falls. The total round trip distance was 46 kilometres. And yes, the tripod was retrieved from just where I left it.

**Participants:** Roxanne Stedman, Mike Whitney, Sylvia Moser, Dave Suttill and Schooner (the Duck Toller)

---

## Mount Whymper

---

**Dave Suttill**  
**May 14**

We had been bitten by the Climb the Island Challenge bug, and most of the peaks listed for the southern part of the Island were getting their first ascents of the year recorded. Some in the Cowichan Lake area had still not been spoken for, including Mount Whymper, El Capitan and



Sylvia Moser and Roxanne Stedman on Southeast Ridge of Mount Whympers PHOTO: DAVE SUTTILL

Mount Landale. We figured Landale and El Capitan were worth a shot, as they could be approached from the Cowichan Lake Road, with mountain bikes providing the initial low elevation approach. The weekend of May 12/13 saw a flurry of email exchanges along the lines of "Let's do El Cap and Landale on the Monday." Sometime Sunday afternoon Mike noticed that club member Walter Moar had bagged Landale and El Capitan and posted it to the Climb the Island website. We hoped that this being Mother's Day would not see any more activity in the mountains. We immediately switched to Plan B, Mount Whympers, with Mount Sutton as a fall back in case access up the Chemainus River was gated shut. I had briefly entertained the prospect of a long mountain bike ride as a way of getting around this possibility, but the others soon talked some sense into me. At the very last minute Mike decided to "wimp" out.

The next day, Monday morning, May 14, we headed out of Victoria at 6:30 a.m., by far our earliest start. The gate on the Chemainus River road proved not to be a problem. It was open and there was no gate keeper in sight. By 9:00 a.m. we were parked 42 kilometres up the valley at the start of the spur leading up the mountain. Our elevation was 500m. It was a beautiful sunny day and route finding would not be a problem. There was no way to go but up. So we followed the spur road up into some old logging where the snow took over at the 800m level. At the top of the clear-cut (1080m), we had no trouble locating the snow covered climbers trail marked by the occasional ribbon. We did bring ice axes, but could have got by without them. There was one band of bluffs about 200m up that required a bit of easy scrambling. Having good south exposure, and being steep enough to shed snow, they were pretty well snow free. After that it was a quick plod up the ridge on snow to the summit. We arrived on top at 12:00

noon, and spent a good hour enjoying the sun and the view. We were at the highest point in Canada south of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. It was the second or third time for each of us. We could just make out the Olympic Mountains way to the south. Roxanne and Sylvia found that we had cell phone coverage. They announced our arrival to the world and gave Roxanne's husband, Sandy, the go ahead to post our climb to the Climb the Island Challenge website. The trip out went fast. We were at the car by 3:00 and back on the Highway at 4:00.

**Participants:** Roxanne Stedman, Sylvia Moser and Dave Suttill

---

## "MMM" weekend: Marble, McBride, Morrison Spire

---

Roxy Ahmed  
May 17 - 20

For the May long weekend, we had planned on a 3 day peak bagging ski trip to the Marble Meadows area: Day 1 - Wheaton Hut, Day 2 - Mount McBride and Morrison Spire, Day 3 - Marble Peak, and then out to meet friends at Buttle Lake. However, as it sometimes happens in the mountains, circumstances made us a day late, which worried our friends a bit but scored us a weather window on our McBride day.

Starting out across Buttle Lake on a hot and sunny spring day, we got a few sideways glances as Chris paddled us across the lake in his 12 foot tinny full of ski gear. Unfortunately, the snow line had worked its way high up the hillside, which meant we had to carry our ski gear and winter provisions on our backs for nearly 1200m of elevation gain. Needless to say it was by far the heaviest pack I'd ever carried. Having not reached the trailhead until 2:30 p.m. after driving from Victoria that morning, by 8 p.m. hopes of reaching the Wheaton Hut that night were dashed - not to mention we didn't actually know exactly *where* the hut was located. So we dug in and made a cozy snow cave below the treeline for the evening's accommodations.

Since it was now improbable that we would ski Mount McBride and Morrison Spire the next day, Chris decided to tag Marble Peak on our way over to the hut the next morning. Chris had an enjoyable time navigating his way across the snowy gaps in the Southwest Ridge, while I had an enjoyable time watching his progress and melting water at the base. Now to find the hut, which as expected, was buried under a few metres of snow. The morning we left, Chris had looked at trusty Google Earth to see if he could locate the hut since



*Deep in the hole* PHOTO: ROXY AHMED

neither of us had previously visited the area. The hut isn't visible in the satellite imagery, but what Chris did find was an odd triangular shadow that didn't match the surroundings. We marked this location and headed for it. Earlier in the day we had met a couple of skiers also on their way to Mount McBride, and when we later reached the supposed location of the hut we noticed their ski tracks had deviated from their course. I pulled out a picture of the Wheaton Hut I had printed from Summitpost, held it up and voilà! There was the distinctive yellow cedar and two crooked trees. Avalanche probes out, one, two, three hits and *thump* Chris hit something that sounded oddly like a roof. We continued to probe until we had a general outline of the roof and started digging. Sometime later and several metres down we (well, mostly Chris) had excavated a tunnel to the doorway and we now had a cozy, albeit damp, underground hut for the remainder of the weekend. Just in time, as it had started to blow wind and snow.

The next day we set out at 5:15 a.m. to find clear skies and an incredible sunrise over the mountains. Our objectives, Morrison Spire and Mount McBride, were lit up in the morning alpenglow and the slog up was now worth every grunt. Getting to the summit of McBride was an uneventful plod, reaching it by 9:45 a.m. Views from the top were incredible! After signing the register we packed up and headed back to the col. A short detour and we were atop Morrison Spire just in time for lunch. Fun turns were had before tackling the rolling terrain leading back to the hut.

The next morning we emerged out of the hut to find it had started snowing again. We skied some of the way down,

but icy conditions meant we had to strap the skis back to our packs for much of the descent. After rowing back across the lake, we found a couple sitting on the boat launch in camp chairs, with hats covering their faces. Chris was somewhat miffed that they were blocking the boat launch with no apparent intention to move. As it turns out, the couple was none other than our good friends Niki and Mark, who had seen us paddling across the lake and decided to surprise us. We were treated to cold bevies and snacks, a surefire great way to end a fantastic trip!

A day trip up Mount Moriarty the following weekend and a ski up Rodger's Ridge the second week of June nicely rounded out a fun spring ski touring season. These ski trips were a great way kick off the Centenary for us and get our legs moving for the upcoming summer's climbs!

**Participants:** Roxy Ahmed and Chris Jensen

---

## Buffalo Hump Mountain – 1009m

---

Lindsay Elms  
June 3

A few years ago in an *Island Bushwhacker* I wrote how sometimes a name can spur me on to want to climb a peak; it is not because it is the highest or hardest, unclimbed or most remote, it is just that its name intrigues me. While recently climbing some of the lesser peaks (still worthy ascents) off the Island Highway between Courtenay and Duncan, I came across one such mountain (and yes it does have the designation mountain) called Buffalo Hump Mountain.

Now, when I hear the word buffalo I immediately picture the iconic North American buffalo – *Bison bison*, with its shaggy, long, dark brown coat. This large, hoofed ungulate roamed the grassland plains of North America as far north as Canada, but it appears was never inclined (as far as we know) to make the swim across to Vancouver Island. However, on the Mainland numerous legends and myths abound regarding the buffalo.

Eighteen kilometres northwest of Fort Macleod, Alberta, where the foothills of the Rocky Mountains meet the great plains, one of the world's oldest, largest and best preserved buffalo jumps can be found. Head-Smashed-In, a UNESCO World Heritage Site has been used by aboriginal peoples of the plains for more than 5,500 years. Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump is an archaeological site known around the world as a remarkable testimony of prehistoric life. The Jump bears witness to a custom practiced by native people. Due to their excellent understanding of topography and bison behaviour,





Buffalo Hump from McKay Peak PHOTO: VALERIE WOOTTON

native people killed bison by chasing them over a precipice. They then carved up the carcasses in the camp set up below the cliffs. This UNESCO designation places it among other world attractions such as the Egyptian pyramids, Stonehenge and the Galapagos Islands.

However, while I was thinking about buffalos, I found myself humming a familiar tune. It was a tune you all know by the reggae master Bob Marley!

*Buffalo soldier, dreadlock rasta:  
There was a buffalo soldier in the heart of America,  
Stolen from Africa, brought to America,  
Fighting on arrival, fighting for survival.  
Singing, woy yoy yoy, woy yoy-yoy yoy,  
Woy yoy yoy yoy, yoy yoy-yoy yoy!*

So why has a mountain on Vancouver Island been named after the buffalo? It is not known who gave it the nom-de-plume, but its name was adopted on August 4, 1949, to a “high rounded mountain just south of the south fork of the Nanaimo River.” Was this a native legend similar to Queenesh? Queenesh is the native name for the Comox Glacier and legend has it that during a great flood the dormant whale breached just before being covered with the rising flood waters, thus saving the local First Nations people from imminent drowning. Could Buffalo Hump be a sleeping bison? What would it take to wake the beast? Maybe a Buffalo Soldier!

The other less charming, or to put it more succinctly, crude possibility, is that it was the mating (humping) grounds of the buffalo. Long ago in a bygone era its possible a bridge existed between Vancouver Island and the Mainland. It was a time before indigenous people inhabited the island hence the reason there are no petroglyphs or pictograms of buffalos

on rock faces. It also explains why the buffalo has not been honoured on their totem poles or in their longhouses. However, there is just this one unsubstantiated reference from an unknown source.

My curiosity was piqued, so after climbing Mount Hooker on the south side of First Lake in the Nanaimo River watershed, Val and I (the Buffalo Soldiers) decided to make a rare ascent of the Buffalo Hump.

We drove back out to the Island Highway, crossed the Nanaimo River near the Bungy Zone then turned right onto Spruston Road. At the end of the paved section, where it turned into gravel, we veered left and followed the McKay Lake FSR. After about 8 kilometres we passed through a gate just before the hydro lines, however, we had been informed that if the gate was locked there was a quad track just to the north that we could get through to by-pass the gate. A few kilometres ahead of us to the right a rounded, rocky summit appeared which we concluded must be Buffalo Hump.

The lower slopes of the “Hump” had been logged so we looked for the narrowest section to cross in order to get into the older timber. After an early lunch we scrambled across the slash and began the ascent. The timber wasn’t all that big and there was a lot of salal covering the ground, but the drizzle from the night before had dried off and the bush rattled and crunched as we soldiered through it. Higher up, we angled to the west to avoid some bluffs and after an hour came out on the summit ridge. Fifteen minutes later we were on the summit watching the clouds swirl around McKay Peak across the valley to the south – another objective for another day. On the summit was a small rock cairn so it was obvious that others had been up here, but how many we don’t know. I certainly didn’t know anyone, but it was an enjoyable hike and no, we didn’t see any buffalos roaming the plains below.

**Participants:** Lindsay Elms and Val Wootton

---

## Edinburgh Mountain

---

Dave Suttill  
June 4

By the beginning of June there was still one Climb the Island Challenge peak in the very southern part of the Island that hadn’t been climbed, Edinburgh Mountain. At 1135m, it was a respectable height for being so close to the ocean. We decided to rise to the challenge. Located 8 kilometres north of the mouth of the Gordon River, it has a commanding view of the lower San Juan River and Port San

Juan. According to British Columbia Place Names, it was named by a party of Scots who staked a mineral claim in the area. Presumably this is the Edinburgh Claim Group located along the base of Edinburgh Mountain by the Gordon River. While treed right to the top, it has some impressive cliffs on its Southwest Face, perhaps reminiscent of Edinburgh Castle.

Access to the base of Edinburgh Mountain proved not too difficult. There were roads on all sides, with clear-cuts providing some elevation gain in places. However, the topographic maps and air photos seemed to indicate that the clear-cuts might not provide any advantage, as they all ended in steep terrain, possibly even minor cliffs. We weren't too sure how close we would be able to drive. We chose a fairly direct looking route from the Gordon River Main, taking off from a drivable access to the base of the long westerly ridge leading to the main North Ridge at a minor summit ½ kilometre north of the true or south summit. This involved driving across the Gordon River on a narrow bridge over a spectacular gorge perhaps 25m wide and 50m deep. Further along we passed through a recent clear-cut that contained a magnificent "leave tree." I went back later in the summer and measured its circumference at 10.7m and estimated its height to be 63m using a clinometer.

We got parked at the lowly elevation of 150m. As far as we could tell, there was no identifiable climbers' trail up. At 10:15 a.m. we headed up into the old growth forest which extended down to the road at our chosen point of departure. We followed the crest of the ridge leading to the summit, keeping track of our progress on the GPS just to be sure. For the first hour and a half the going wasn't too bad. Then at about the 350m level things got steeper, with a series of bluffs impeding our way. Usually this meant going up a gully that got around the bad parts. We left the occasional bit of flagging at the tops of these gullies, as it would be easy to go off route on the way down and find ourselves at the top of a cliff. We didn't plan on any rappelling. By 11:30 a.m. we found ourselves at the top of one of the few bluffs that actually provided a decent view. Time for a snack! At noon we passed what might be considered the crux of our little endeavour. I have 2 way points identifying this in my GPS track log as "bottle neck" and "scary corner." However, these didn't prove to be too difficult, though Schooner did require the occasional boost. We hit snow at 12:40 p.m. The elevation was 980m and the ridge we were following started to level out. Another ½ kilometre and we joined the North Ridge of Edinburgh Mountain at a minor high point. Here we turned south, following the main North Ridge toward the summit. The first part involved losing about 50m of precious altitude, then up the final 100m to the top. This section of the ridge had a fairly precipitous drop to the northeast. The actual summit was bare of snow, though there were one metre drifts on the lee side. The summit was marked by a strange cylindrical metal structure



*Dave Suttill, Mike Whitney and Roxanne Stedman on Edinburgh Mountain* PHOTO: DAVE SUTTILL

about one metre in diameter and three metres in height with a four metre mast coming out of it housing some communications antennae. The structure somewhat resembled a space capsule out of a 1950s science fiction movie. Or perhaps a shower stall! As with many prominent peaks, there was also a brass survey pin marking a geodetic control point.

Unfortunately the wonderful views were not to be had. It had clouded in just about the time we reached the summit (1:30 p.m.). We did get the occasional glimpse of sunlight off the ocean through gaps in the cloud layers. In recognition of the peak's name sake, we broke out some imported Scottish shortbread and put on our Scottish props for the summit photo. Schooner kept busy looking for crumbs.

The return trip, while a lot less strenuous, took nearly as long as the trip up. We had to exercise great care on the way down as there was a constant risk of trapping our feet in some hidden obstacle or other. The bits of flagging we left on the way up were all located, and the route finding went well. All in all, a good day for a 1000m vertical bushwhack over a 4 kilometre route one way.

**Participants:** Roxanne Stedman, Mike Whitney, Dave Suttill and Schooner (the Duck Toller)

---

## Waterloo Mountain – 1071m

---

Lindsay Elms  
June 13

On Sunday, June 18, 1815, near Waterloo in present-day Belgium, then part of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Battle of Waterloo was fought. An Imperial French army under the command of Emperor Napoleon was defeated by combined armies of the Seventh Coalition, an Anglo-Allied army under the command of the Duke of Wellington combined with a Prussian army under the command of Gebhard von Blücher. It was the culminating battle of the Waterloo Campaign and Napoleon's last. The defeat at Waterloo ended his rule as Emperor of the French, marking the end of his Hundred Days return from exile.

Forward 50 years to 1865 on southern Vancouver Island. On June 1, two early settlers, Sgt. Hector MacPherson and William Alexander Robertson, began an expedition up the Koksilah River. With the province in the grips of gold fever after the Fraser Valley and Cariboo rushes, their goal was to prospect as far as the rivers headwaters to the west of Shawnigan Lake for gold. In the *British Colonist* newspaper dated August 5, MacPherson wrote about a mountain they climbed: "On the 18th June the party ascended a mountain near the headwaters of the river, after four and a half hours hard climbing. It was named by the explorers Mount Waterloo." Florence M. Draper of Duncan wrote in the *Victoria Daily Colonist*, October 13, 1957: "The purpose of their climb I do not know unless it was just to spend a happy day in each other's company, studying the geography of this island of ours. However, when Mr. MacPherson and Mr. Robertson reached the summit and looked around ... they then and there decided to call the mountain Waterloo, in memory of that famous battle, and accordingly marked a tree with their own names. Later a proper marker was placed near the spot. They also made a pact with each other that should they be alive on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo, they would climb the mountain again. Unfortunately, when that time came Mr. MacPherson had passed on and Mr. Robertson, then an old man in his 90's, together with his son and daughter-in-law and friends from Victoria undertook the climb. But they used George Frayne's pack horses [of Mill Bay] for part of the trip."

Forward again to 2012 only now it was 197 years after Napoleon's defeat at the Battle of Waterloo. Five days short of the anniversary, Val and I decided see if we could find the logging roads onto the mountain and climb to its summit. After visiting the old copper Thistle Mine on Mount Hayes west of Ladysmith and running the 5 kilometre Twilight Shuffle race in Chemainus, we drove into Duncan. We were looking for the Shawnigan Main that we thought might be

able to get us to the mountain from the northeast. Unfortunately the gate was locked so we had to resort to Plan B. Back out to the highway and down to Mill Bay where we turned off to Shawnigan Lake. By now it was getting late in the evening and we were hoping to find a pull-out beside the Koksilah River and camp for the night, however, we were thwarted again by locked gates. Around 10:20 p.m. we pulled into the Sunny Daze Campground and found a place to camp for the night, unfortunately it wasn't free liked we had hoped.

Next morning we talked to the proprietor, who was familiar with the roads in the area and he showed us on the map which roads to take, but didn't like our chances due to active logging. There was no harm in giving it a try we thought! Just after Kilometre 16 on the Renfrew/Shawnigan Road we turned right (coming into the mountain from the south) and after 50m passed through an open gate. This was a good sign! About 5 kilometres further on, we passed a logging company vehicle and its occupants didn't try and stop us – another good sign! About 8 kilometres in we turned left as we knew this road would take us around the west side of Waterloo Mountain, but with heavy timber we couldn't see much. After driving too far to the northwest, we turned around and eventually found the X 1 logging road that appeared to be our best bet. A short distance in we parked, fixed our height on the GPS (an old eTrek without maps), took a bearing with my compass and headed into the bush. I guessed we would be on top in about 1.5 hours.

The bush was easy and there was no unexpected bluffs en-route. After an hour the trees thinned out and the terrain levelled off so we turned north towards the summit, arriving 20 minutes later at the small cairn and survey marker. The summit wasn't completely tree-free, but there were bare rock knolls here-and-there that enabled us to get a view and eye up the surrounding countryside – the terrain was nothing like the north end of the island.

We lunched on the summit, but decided not to spend too long lounging as that opened gate was still playing mind games with us. I wanted to be back through it before the logging crews were finished work for the day and knowing that they start early I figured they could be done by mid afternoon.

The return was straightforward, but we found we kept wanting to descend in a southwest direction instead of west, however, as usual we arrived out on the road 100m from the vehicle. We quickly changed our shoes, threw the packs in the back and headed back down the roads. As we came around the corner just before the gate, to our consternation, we found the gate shut. "Dung-in-a-bucket" I exclaimed! This was a mild expletive used by Dinsdale Landen in the 1980 British TV comedy *Pig in the Middle*. We pulled up at the gate and got out to check the padlock. Yep, it was locked! However, to the right of the gate was a narrow gap; a hole that quads had filled with timber and squeezed through. It looked to us as though we too might be able to squeeze through also. Val got on the other side of the





*By-passing the gate on the way out from Waterloo Mountain*

PHOTO: VALERIE WOOTTON

hole to direct me while I put the Toyota into 4 Low. I nosed into the hole, mindful of the big rock in the middle that could scrape the underbelly of the vehicle. Val indicated I had 3-4 inches to spare so I decided to go for it! The Toyota's tires spun a little on the timber and the trailer-hitch, at least I think that is what it was, scraped over the rock as I pulled up the steep bank on the other side. I couldn't U-turn onto the main road so had to reverse back over a small hump of dirt, but luck was on our side and we had made it past the gate and back onto the road. Whew!

We couldn't help but think that the occupants of the vehicle we had passed earlier in the morning had probably locked the gate on their way out. Were they chuckling too themselves over the thought of locking us in, or maybe they knew we would try to squeeze through the hole beside the gate. Again we couldn't help thinking about how situations like this never occur up the north end of the island (excluding the gates around Comox Lake).

We drove away knowing we had faced our Waterloo; however, I found myself humming another tune which I thought appropriate, only this time it was an Abba song:

*My, my, at Waterloo Napoleon did surrender  
Oh yeah, and I have met my destiny in quite a similar way  
The history book on the shelf  
Is always repeating itself*

*Waterloo - I was defeated, you won the war  
Waterloo - promise to love you for ever more  
Waterloo - couldn't escape if I wanted to  
Waterloo - knowing my fate is to be with you  
Waterloo - finally facing my Waterloo*

**Participants:** Lindsay Elms and Val Wootton

## Strathcona Skyline Traverse #1: Mount Adrian to Augerpoint, Mount Albert Edward and beyond

Dave Campbell  
July 5 - 8

I have always been drawn to horizontal mountaineering – traveling ridgelines which keep you in the high country for extended periods. Usually these start and end in different spots, or complete loops along a watershed divide which keep the terrain new the whole trip. While Strathcona Park has a number of classic individual mountains, I think the real gem of the park lies in its numerous ridgelines which connect its remote corners. In 2012, the stars aligned and I was able to sneak in a number of great alpine high-routes.

After a long work season, I finally found myself in early July with 4-days off, and I was itching for some alpine time. I had been wanting to get into the Mount Adrian/Alexandra Peak area off the east side of Buttle Lake, and had some good beta from Martin Smith about access. Looking at the map it looked like it would be possible to link up this group with the Augerpoint area, with the potential to climb a number of peaks.

I took off after work and made the long drive up to Buttle Lake. I parked my car at the Augerpoint boat launch area, and jumped on my bike and rode 10 kilometres back up the Buttle Lake road to the spur road. I was able to hike a few kilometres up the road until night fell, and I set up my tent on a patch of road with a commanding view down Buttle Lake. A clear night and bright moon made the view all the more spectacular, and when I woke up in the middle of the night I spent an hour soaking up the scene and trying to photograph the moon and stars.

The next day, the first full day of the trip, I continued up the logging road, staying on the left branch in the upper Adrian/Alexandra valley. There is a prominent gully on the south side of Mount Adrian visible in GoogleEarth and the topo map, and while I had not heard of people using it before, it looked like it would go without difficulties, particularly with the heavy snow pack we had in 2012. The gully was a charm. I dropped my pack at the base and headed up the gully, and in no time I was up onto the ridge to the false summit. A short drop and traverse brought me over and up to the top of Mount Adrian.

A quick jaunt back to the gully and quick glissade brought me back to my pack. Across the valley was another prominent gully that dropped off the west bowl on Alexandra Peak. This was another direct line, and from the bowl I



Looking down from the summit of Mount Adrian to Buttle Lake PHOTO: DAVE CAMPBELL

worked my way east then south onto the south ridge. I set up camp on the shoulder just below the “Thumb”. I had a nice late-lunch and cooked up some soup, and then headed off for some afternoon climbing on Alexandra. First I traversed around the right side base of the Thumb to the notch between it and the main summit. It was then an easy scramble up to the top of Alexandra. I then dropped back to the col, and then with a little more difficulty (Class 3-4) scrambled up Alexandra’s Thumb.

There was still a fair bit of time in the day, but there is a big gap in the alpine between Alexandra and Augerpoint so I decided to leave that for the next day, and spent the evening soaking in the views and reading the book “Half-Blood Blues”.

The next day started with a bit of back-tracking and monkeying around on the logging road network around the base of Mount Alexandra. Logging roads punch fairly high up from this side of the mountain towards Pearl Lake, where another set of logging roads approach from the Oyster River (east) side. The road networks don’t connect, but I was able to follow the Buttle Lake side roads as far as they would go, and then engaged the bush for a good thrash over towards Pearl Lake. This was surprisingly short-lived, and once I crossed the river draining down from Jack Shark Lake, I came across a well-marked out trail which headed up into that drainage. This must have come up from roads around Pearl Lake, and might have been built and maintained by loggers (or at least someone who can access the usually gated roads up the Oyster River).

Fortunately, the trail kept heading the direction I was hoping to go. A couple of kilometres up from Pearl Lake it followed the east tributary into the drainage below Mount Mitchell and Augerpoint. I had eyed out a gully up the northwest flank of Mount Mitchell that looked like it shouldn’t be too bad. When I arrived at it I dropped my pack and stuck up the gully. Unfortunately, I didn’t make it too far before it became apparent that the gully required some more technical (5<sup>th</sup> class) climbing, and was also a little dodgy as the snow filling the gully was getting thin and hollow in many places.

Back at the pack, I worked up to the un-named lake below Mount Mitchell and Augerpoint and had a long, relaxed lunch-soaking up the sun, doing some more reading and having a nap. While the route is not described in *Island Alpine* the old Dick Culbert guide for south-

west BC details a “4<sup>th</sup> class” route up the South Ridge of Mount Mitchell. I was a little nervous about this, as “Culbert 4<sup>th</sup> class” routes can often be more in the modern upper 5<sup>th</sup> class grade. I made my way up the South Ridge to a prominent ledge, and from there the route ended in a blank rock wall. Straight up was definitely a no-go, so I worked out along the ledge out onto the west flank of the mountain. This side is super-bluffy, and just being on the ledge was quite airy, and gave the feeling up being on a huge rock wall. Unfortunately, all the gullies that led up from the ledge looked far too committing, so I headed back to the South Ridge, and around to the east flanks. I was able to work my way up to another ledge system, and then proceeded on some 4<sup>th</sup> class ledgey terrain before being completely bluffed out once again. Despite a couple of hours of searching, I wasn’t able to find a route up, so admitted defeat, and headed back down to the lake.

The route up from lake is not completely obvious, and luckily the heavy snow pack allowed for passage through gullies on the far left (northwest) side of the bowl. From the top of the gully I dropped the pack again and scooted up “Pearl Mountain”. This was a completely unexpected highlight of the trip. The peak is pretty unassuming on the map, but required some exposed knife-edge scrambling (3 - 4<sup>th</sup> class) to gain the narrow summit. Awesome!

Back at the pack I picked my way up some more steep snow to a marginal gap in a cornice which extended across much of the northern slopes of Augerpoint. I pulled my way to the ridge, and hit the top of Augerpoint just as the sun was setting. I pitched camp more or less on the summit.



Summit tower on Pearl Mountain with Mount Mitchell in back right

PHOTO: DAVE CAMPBELL

Up early the next day, I was starting to dream about where to try to end this trip. I still had 2 days, so my original plan of exiting via Augerpoint seemed a little slack. I had tossed around the idea of trying Mount Regan via the Augerpoint/Albert Edward col, but after viewing this from Mitchell, it looked far too challenging. So I thought, why not head along the divide heading towards Mount George V and Ralph Ridge, tagging Regan by its normal route while I was passing? I started the day by heading up Syd Watts Peak. I had been on a club trip up Augerpoint a couple of years ago, but we didn't have time to climb Syd Watts so I was excited to complete this omission.

Sid Williams is the last peak along the small cluster of peaks around Augerpoint; as someone written in Syd Watts summit register, "Sid Vicious" peak seemed like a more accurate description. Lindsay Elms had written a trip report in the *Island Bushwhacker* newsletter a year or so ago about a route up Sid Williams, describing it as having some 5.6 in it. This seemed a little ambitious for me, so I opted to try the standard "Island Alpine" route. This had me dropping down and traversing around the north and northwest flank of the mountain. I picked up a steep gully on the west side, and took this to a narrow notch on the West Ridge. This led to a false summit, about 20 - 30 feet short of the true summit, and unfortunately with a significant gap that needed to be negotiated. This required a rappel, and I couldn't muster up the gumption to set up a rappel and fixed line for the sake of 20 - 30 feet (and a few hours of time no doubt). So I dropped back the way I came, and headed back over to re-climb Syd Watts Peak.

From here it was more back tracking, and then dropped down into Ruth Masters Lake, along the traditional "Augerpoint Traverse". I had some route-finding challenges reaching the Albert Edward col (curse you Vancouver Island micro-ter-

rain!). Finally at the col, I had a big lunch and soaked up some sun before tackling the long slog up Mount Albert Edward. I was up Mount George V last fall, and had tried to scout out a short-cut past Mount Albert Edward by dropping around Charity Lake, but this was a no go. So I had to go over Albert Edward (baby). This section is only 680m of elevation gain, but was a real grind and felt like it kept going on and on.

I had wanted to tag Mount Regan as I was going by, but the ridge of Mount Albert Edward was still heavily corniced, and required a serious detour out and back towards Mount Jutland. It was getting later on in the day, and by this point I was sort of committing to head out via Ralph Ridge the next day, so wanted to get as far along the ridge as I could. So I abandoned Mount Regan (I managed to head back later in the summer and climb it), and headed over and up Mount Frink, and then did the awkward descent to the Frink/George V col in fading light.

I was up again early on the final day of the trip, with grandiose plans of trying to make it all the way to Mount Celeste and then exiting out Ralph Ridge. A quick jaunt and I was up Mount George V and then struck off along new-to-me terrain to the south. The next few peaks are un-named (but 6000 footers) and are more or less straight-forward. The descent off the last of these (Peak 1909) is not so straight-forward. I knew this was one of the cruxes of the trip so I was being really careful to try to follow the map in *Hiking Trail III* as close as I possibly could. I got onto a snowy ledge which looked like it connected to the main snow slope which heads down into the basin between Peak 1909 and Siokum Peak.

Unfortunately, it wasn't the right ledge and by the time I realized this I was somewhat committed (or too lazy to back track?). So out came the rope and I rappelled over one particularly ill-placed bluff along the ledge. This brought me back on track, and I made it down into the valley. The last 100 feet of the descent is home to the 99 foot cliff - the kind that don't show up on the map - and I spent a ridiculous hour or so looking for the one gap in the cliff that would let me through.

I had spent a lot more time than anticipated dealing with this crux, and it became clear that aspirations of heading down to Mount Celeste were far too ambitious. I did a traverse over Siokum Peak, and then struck off along the Ralph Ridge divide out to the west. This turned into a bit of a grind with quite a bit of terrain and lots of ups and downs to negotiate. It was starting to get later in the day, and I was getting a little worried about making the descent in daylight. The ridge itself was grand, with some great views all around Strathcona Park, particularly up Shepherd Creek.

The final leg of the trip featured a series of serendipitously good events. First, as I descended from the final ridge down to Buttle Lake, I was trying to pay very close attention to route finding, and almost immediately I came across the flagged route to Ralph Ridge. While I am not normally a big





*Sid Williams Peak from Syd Watts Peak* PHOTO: DAVE CAMPBELL

fan of flagging, this particular flagging was a real godsend. It was well marked, verging on overly-flagged, but this made it super-easy to follow. I was tracking my progress with my altimeter, and was making great time towards Buttle Lake, but unfortunately the first 2/3's of the route was pretty steep, and the last 1/3 dragged on for ever as the slope eased off. I seemed to be spending tonnes of time down on the flatter terrain at the bottom of the slope. The flagging also seemed to peter out towards the valley bottom, and my light was rapidly fading. After nearly losing the trail right at the critical crossing of Ralph River (would not have been a good ford, particularly in the dark) I managed to find the log crossing at dusk. I pulled up the other side of the river and hit the interpretive trail and stumbled out onto the Buttle Lake Road just before it became dark enough to need a headlamp.

It was now dark, and I was pretty knackered, and still had another 6 - 7 kilometre hike back to my car parked at Augerpoint. Literally just as I started hiking the road, the park operator truck pulled out of Ralph Ridge campground, and offered me a ride! Yes please! By the time I hit Campbell River, my choice of calorie-rich food was limited, but I managed to refuel with fat and caffeine and pulled the long (and late) haul back to Victoria.

**Solo Participant:** Dave Campbell

---

## Rugged from Top to Bottom - Rugged Mountain, East Ridge

---

Chris Jensen

July 6 - 8

My first attempt to climb Rugged Mountain was about 10 years ago when my friend Ryan Bresser and I went for an exploratory climb up the Southwest Face to the left of the Johnson/Newman Route. It was enjoyable climbing, but the lack of pro, lack of time and increasingly harder grade up high meant that we didn't reach the top. I returned again last summer with Shawn Hedges to try again, but soggy weather had us quickly drenched to the bone. We luckily found an enormous boulder by Nathan Creek that we could dry out under. The heavy rain was quickly filling the dry creek bed with water and seeing this seemed to wash away our hopes of a summit attempt. During the bushwhack down the overgrown N20 spur, I thought about how I was going to return with an axe, machete, chainsaw and napalm.

But in a year's time I must have already forgot about the thick bush, because as we pulled into the trailhead, I assured my partner, Roxy Ahmed, that it wasn't that bad. A couple of hours later we emerged out of the constricting world of green and hiked into the spacious old growth. It was hot out so I neglected to wear long sleeves in the spiky bush. Now my arms looked like they got attacked by a box full of angry kittens.

We hit the snowline as we gained the ridge crest on the north side of the valley. Solid snow made for quick travel ... and no more bush. When we came to an opening we got a great view of the Merlon Mountain's big Southwest Face. I traced out two lines with my finger and took some good pictures that could help with a future trip. The hike up the ridge didn't take long and soon we were mucking about on some bluffs. We got a bit off route in this section, but there were plenty of green belays to help get up the wet rock. After the bluffs we traversed towards Nathan Creek Col for a short distance and made camp on one of the only islands of rock. The views from this position were fantastic. Rugged Mountain towered above and below the granite of the Nomash Slab flickered like silver in the evening sun.

In the morning we strapped on our crampons and tromped up the snowfield to the col. From there we headed along the upper Rugged Glacier to check out the East Ridge Variation. This short cut was very tempting, but we just weren't feeling good about the snow conditions so we continued on to do the full East Ridge. This ended up being a great decision because if we had taken the short cut we would have missed out on some of the best climbing!



Roxy heading up to the start of the East Ridge PHOTO: CHRIS JENSEN

As we gained the start of the ridge we looked east and could see the top of Victoria Peak sticking out above a line of haze which was caused by Siberian forest fires. A week earlier Roxy and I were on the summit of Victoria Peak celebrating Canada Day, but unlike today, on that trip we couldn't see a thing due to thick fog.

The East Ridge is a terrific alpine climb which I particularly enjoyed because of the alternating sections of rock and snow. Also, the spicy exposure in places made sure no one was going to get lazy with their hands or feet. The descent down the Schiena d'asino would certainly test anyone's sense of vertigo. Thankfully, after a few deeps breaths both Roxy and I managed to rap down and then start up the next sec-

tion of snow. One of the highlights of the climb was some fun stemming across a moat that I couldn't see the bottom of. You could rock climb for a bit, put in some pro, stem back to snow and when it got steep and loose, you could stretch back across the moat again for some more rock climbing. Now this was some great island climbing! Well time flies when you're having fun and before long there was no more elevation to gain. We topped out; I kicked off my boots and settled in to soak up some sun.

When we looked in the summit register we were amused to see our good friend Katie Ferland was the last person to summit in 2011 and now we were the first ones of 2012. We added our names next to hers, just like we have done on other summits, but this time it was just on different days. While we ate lunch we enjoyed stellar views of the Haihte Range, the Village of Tahsis and surrounding inlets.

Descending didn't take long because instead of reversing the whole ridge we just rapped down directly to the glacier below. This did involve one exciting rappel off a large snow bollard into the bergshroud. I'm just glad we could make it out of that 'shroud! After that we trotted back to camp where we settled down with a hot drink, a drink that had a bit of extra spice to help relax the muscles.

The next morning was a straight-forward hike out. At the trailhead we met Lindsay Elms and Valerie Wootton. They were heading up the South Blades the next day. The Golden Hinde came up in our chat and this set Roxy and I up for our next trip a couple of weeks later.

**Participants:** Chris Jensen and Roxy Ahmed

---

## Lukwa Mountain

---

Lindsay Elms  
July 7

With the outlook for the weekend looking good on the west coast, Val and I decided to head over to Zeballos and maybe climb a couple of peaks on the south side of the Nomash River and then try something in the Haihte Range. On the south side was Lukwa Mountain (1141m), Grayback Peak (1119m) and an unnamed 1300+m (4400ft) peak further to the east. We looked at the Backroads Mapbook and saw roads going high up Curly Creek below Lukwa Mountain and on Google Earth they showed the roads in reasonable conditions. Grayback Peak looked like it could be accessed by the ridge swinging around from Lukwa or by climbing the Nomash Slabs, and Peak 4400 (see *Island Alpine*) seemed a little more complicated with no real obvious



*Lukwa Mountain from Curly Creek* PHOTO: VALERIE WOOTTON

route. We would wait until we got up there and then assess any possible routes once we could see the mountain.

Late Friday afternoon we left Comox and drove up to Zeballos; windows down to keep us cool because we didn't have air-conditioning. We turned up the Nomash Main and found the turn-off for the road that crosses the Nomash River and then winds up Curly Creek, but first we would drive a little further up the Nomash to get a look back up the valley to see what the roads looked like. We could see that it appeared as though it had been logged within the last few years so we thought the road would be in good shape into the upper Curly Creek. Unfortunately, we found that we could only drive up about 3 kilometres: a huge wash-out that had removed the concrete bridge across Curly Creek was completely impassable even for motor-bikes or quads, but we could cross it on foot. We camped that night on a level spot on the road where we could have a fire (it is a guy thing), set up our camp chairs and have a cold beer!

The next morning we hiked up the road, crossed the creek at the wash-out then continued to wind up the road for another two or three kilometres to the head of the valley. Lukwa Mountain was directly above and appeared relatively straight-forward. Deeking off the road we climbed up through the old-growth until we came across some small bluffs that we skirted around. Once above them the angled eased off and we zig-zagged up the snow slopes to the summit ridge. Fifteen minutes later we were on the cairnless summit: Beano Mountain to the southwest looked interesting, but it was the spectacular views of the Haihte Range which attracted our attention. We spent about an hour and a half lounging on the summit before following the ridge around towards Grayback Peak.

For the first hour the ridge was easy and then it began getting steep as it angled up to a sub-summit about half way

around to Grayback. It was mid afternoon and we decided that for now, one summit was enough. We would return to Grayback Peak some other time and play around on the Nomash Slabs at the same time. Although the road we had walked up was directly below us, there were quite a few bluffs in between. Earlier in the morning while walking up the road I had spied a possible route down off the ridge through the bluffs in the event that we had had to come down this way. Fortunately I found the route without any problem and eventually got into a gully which brought us down onto the road about 200m from where we had initially gone into the bush. By 4:30 we were back down at the vehicle, content with the ascent of the rarely climbed Lukwa Mountain. Another peak to cross off the list!

**Participants:** Lindsay Elms and Val Wootton

---

## The South Blade

---

**Lindsay Elms**  
July 9

The Haihte Range evokes a wide range of emotions amongst climbers, especially any who have read accounts of trips into the range over the years in the Island Bushwhacker Annual or in either of my books. It appears that many climbers have had to make several trips before they have achieved their objective (ask Dave Campbell). This is because the weather has unexpectedly changed without much warning; some might say it just started to rain (downpour – that is what it does on the west coast) out of a clear-blue sky. However, the reality is that this is not always the case. Sometimes the weather is so good that you can't go wrong with which ever mountain you chose to attempt. If Vogons (the third worst poets in the universe) climbed mountains their battle cry would be: "summiting is mandatory!"

After climbing nearby Lukwa Mountain, Val and I decided to have a lazy day exploring the Nomash Valley. In the afternoon we parked at the bottom of the N20 spur, the trailhead for Rugged Mountain, where there was one other vehicle parked. Over the last couple of months I had been watching the steady list of peaks being ticked off on the "Climb the Island." Two names that kept appearing regularly were Roxy Ahmed and Chris Jensen. I got the impression that one, or both of them, were on the quest to complete their IQ's and since Rugged Mountain was on the Qualifiers list, I said to Val that it was probably Roxy and Chris who would be coming down the trail.



I decided on a bit of exercise so I went for a run and arriving back at the trailhead hot, sweaty and thirsty, I sat down in a folding chair and opened a beer (the pleasures of car-camping). It wasn't long before we heard voices coming down the trail and a couple of minutes later Chris and Roxy popped out onto the road. They had just climbed Rugged Mountain the day before in perfect weather and for Chris he was one summit (the Golden Hinde) away from finishing his IQ's. We chatted with them for awhile getting the low-down on the conditions of the N20 road and asking how much snow was in the gully that led up to the Blades Glacier. It sounded like the road was a bush-bash, but they said there was a lot of snow in the gully! It wasn't long before they had to begin the long drive back to Victoria, so while they were putting their packs in their vehicle I set my watch alarm for 4 a.m. I thought it seemed a reasonable time!

Being a morning person and masochistically loving alpine starts, I was out of my sleeping bag in a flash when the alarm went off at 4. Val, on the other hand, was hoping to stay in her *schlafen sac* a bit longer. After some gentle prodding (with my ice axe) she made a move and began to get ready. By 4:30 we were walking up the trail aided in the dark by our headlamps. The young sapling alders that were growing on the trail last time I was here, were now strapping saplings bending over under their weight and for long sections of the old road they were trying to choke off our progress. Persistence is a virtue (but it didn't come without some grumbling!)

After a couple of hours we were at the end of the N20 and looking up at the devastation that we had to cross to get to the bottom of the snow gully. Trees were uprooted all over the place from avalanches and there was only a thin covering of snow. We followed up the creek a short distance then decided to cut across the mess. This was a mistake as it took us twice as long to get across compared to our return trip when we stayed higher in the valley. At the bottom of the snow-filled gully we put our crampons on then started up the long slope, thankful for being in the shade which had kept the snow frozen.

An hour later we crested the top of the gully and broke into the sunshine. On a small tuft of heather we stopped for a snack and a drink and took a few things out of our packs that we didn't need to carry up the peak. The warmth



The South and North Blades (on the left) and Rugged Mountain (right) from the slopes of Mount McKelvie. PHOTO: VALERIE WOOTTON

of the sun slowly began to penetrate the layers of clothing we were wearing. In front of us the Blade Glacier (glacier?? Or snowpatch?) swept across below the West Face of the South Blade (1669m) covering an alpine tarn with several metres of snow. Above the glacier the rock face was free of snow and there appeared to be several lines up to the summit ridge. We put our harnesses on and roped up on a rock knoll just before the steepening snow gave way to the rock. The first pitch led up into a steep gully which eventually constricted into a wet, slippery runnel. Moving out to the right a couple of tricky moves brought us onto some low angled rock for half a pitch. More, steep mid 5<sup>th</sup> class rock continued up towards a notch in the ridge, however, before we reached the notch, the rib we were on became vertical and looked like it would require some serious climbing. I moved around to my left on a narrow ledge and found a nice rock ladder that took me up into an easy gully that led to the notch. I brought Val up into the notch from which we could look down easy snow slopes to the east. Maybe there would be a route down this side that would avoid a number of rappels on the West Face!

Ahead on the ridge were several rock towers that we were able to avoid climbing by staying on the snow. It looked like the summit was close, but when we reached the top we found the summit still a several hundred metres further on. A quick discussion about how long we thought it would take to get to the top, but with the weather the way it was and the fun we were having there was no thought of turning around.



Valerie Wootton on the summit of the South Blade with the remaining liquor miniatures PHOTO: LINDSAY ELMS

Ahead another rock tower loomed in front of us, but we were also able to climb around it on the snow. This led to a steep snow slope which angled up to yet another rock tower. At the top of the snow we climbed across a small 'shrund and onto a narrow rock ridge. Ahead was the final snow slope and rock rib leading to the summit. Val belayed me up the snow and at the top I found a big rock horn to throw a sling around to then belay her up to me. We then took the rope off and scrambled up the last 50 metres to the summit. Just below the summit I found the summit box that Al Turkington had bolted down to the rock on his solo ascent in 1987.

While Val tagged the highest point I was unscrewing the wing-nuts on the box eager to see how many bottles of liquor were left (no it wasn't because of thirst). The lid of the box was no longer water tight and the summit register inside was water logged, however, the bottles inside the first aid kit were intact. Three were empty (they'd been drunk previously), but there were still seven full miniatures to choose from. The three empties indicated that only three parties had been to this summit in the last 25 years. I picked a small bottle of Johnny Walker Red Label and cracked the lid ignoring the

"don't drink and climb" motto. It is too bad that whiskey doesn't continue to age once it has been bottled otherwise it would have been at least 37 year old scotch.

From the top we were able to look across the Tahsis River to the peaks surrounding the valley where this year's summer camp was to be located. There was still a lot of snow about but it looked to be interesting climbing. About 2 kilometres to the north Rugged Mountain stood out obviously significantly higher than the peak we were on. The unanswered question is how Al Turkington could think that the peak (the South Blade) where he left the summit register was Rugged Mountain! The only answer I could come up with is that the actual summit of Rugged Mountain can't be seen from Tahsis, only the summit of the South Blade so he considered this to be Rugged Mountain.

We spent 20 minutes on top then began the descent. From where we left the rope we had one rappel and then we were able to traverse snow slopes on the east side around to a notch between the South Blade and the North Blade. An easy snow slope then led us back to where we had left a few things on the heather tuft. We then had a very late lunch.

The rest of the descent down the snow gully, across the valley to the head of the logging road and then the hike down road was uneventful and we arrived back at the vehicle at 6:20 p.m. It had been a fourteen and a half hour day in perfect conditions. All that was left was the drive back to Comox.

**Participants:** Lindsay Elms and Val Wootton

---

## Mount Hall and Coronation Mountain

---

Lindsay Elms  
July 15

Some people will be familiar with Mount Brenton (there are reports in the Island Bushwhackers), a mountain west of Chemainus and usually accessed by logging roads off the Copper Canyon Main. This is the same mainline which heads up the Chemainus River towards Mount Whympere. However, fewer people will know of the two peaks about 3 kilometres northwest of Mount Brenton and separated by Silver Lake: Mount Hall (1304m) and Coronation Mountain (1323m). Both of them are higher than Mount Brenton, but they are probably climbed less and like Brenton both have trees on the summit. Last year, Val and I climbed Mount Hall (not to be confused with the Mount Hall near Toquart Bay) in the fall from the north, but at the time it was too late to traverse the 3 kilometres across to Coronation Mountain and return and then drive back to Comox in the daylight.



*Valerie Wootton and Lindsay Elms on the summit of Mount Hall*

PHOTO: VALERIE WOOTTON

We had spent too much time in the morning on the logging roads trying to find the best access. It was decided that we would return the next summer so that we could spend the whole day exploring the two mountains.

It was now the middle of July and we felt like climbing some easy peaks on our way down to Victoria. We decided to start off with Mount Hall and Coronation Mountain and then a day or two later climb McKay Peak. I finished my night shift (Sunday morning) at 6:30 a.m. and when I got home the vehicle was all packed and ready to go. Val drove while I snoozed. Just before Ladysmith we turned right onto Grouhel Road and then followed that to the logging roads that head into the two mountains from the north. Along the way we passed numerous quads and several 4x4's as this whole area is a popular place for off-roaders to play. They have also built several cabins in the area and one of them was conveniently located on a bench high on Mount Hall (1150m). By 9:30 we pulled into the small parking area beside the cabin. We took a quick look in the cabin and found it still warm from the overnight party who had left an hour earlier.

Knowing there was nothing difficult on the two peaks we left everything we didn't need in the vehicle, taking lunch, water bottle, GPS and camera. From the end of the road we climbed through some easy slash for seven minutes then accessed the summit plateau via the East Ridge. After a while the angle eased off and we had about 45m to ascend over ½ kilometre (eassssy). Although the summit was surrounded by trees, the highest point is on a rocky knoll and there is a small cairn marking the summit. I don't recall a summit register, but the cabin had a log book which had very few summit ascents recorded. From the top of Mount Hall we had a couple of small knolls to wander over before we descended (west) to the first saddle just over a kilometre

away. As we walked through the trees we could see a clearing ahead and then we came upon a new logging road with some vehicles parked nearby. Further down the road we could hear what sounded like heavy machinery road building so we decided to stay in the forest. So much for having the two mountains to ourselves!

Between Mount Hall and Coronation Mountain was a small hump separating two saddles, but we didn't need to go over the hump and were able to sidle around it to the south. From the second saddle the summit of Coronation Mountain was about 1 kilometre away with about 150m to ascend. The highest point on the rounded summit of Coronation Mountain was hard to define so we used readings from the GPS to determine the exact location and the highest point appeared to have a salal bush growing on it! A few metres away was a small clearing where we could sit and enjoy the view to the southwest.

The return trip was pleasant and we walked the last few hundred metres of the new logging road and then cut up an easy rocky rib which took us back to the summit of Mount Hall. We then descended a steep gully (north) which dropped down directly opposite the cabin. That night we sat out on the deck of the cabin looking north at the twinkling lights of Nanaimo's Airport until our own lights went out.

**Participants:** Lindsay Elms and Val Wootton

---

## The Misthorn and Margaret Peak

---

**Peter Rothermel**

**July 16 - 19**

Originally we had planned to do a traverse of Rees Ridge as we had previously done a recce trip into Mirren Lake and Carey Lakes to suss out our entry and exit points, but due to seasonal access restrictions crossing Timberwest's private lands, we couldn't gain access to that part of Strathcona Park and had to scrub the trip. Our plan B was to make a try on the Misthorn and Margaret Peak.

Day one, we hiked up the Bedwell Trail, clear of snow until Baby Bedwell Lake, then mostly on snow, all the way to Cream Lake. Along the shore of Big Bedwell Lake there were a couple of creek crossings; one we could do on an iffy snow bridge and another where we had to ford. The route between Big Bedwell Lake and Little Jim Lake was all on snow and route finding was interesting when we got off the summer route. From Little Jim Lake to Cream Lake it was pretty smooth sailing all on snow, but somewhere along the way my sunglasses slipped out through a hole in my pants pocket.





*Roger & Peggy on the ridge towards Misthorns with Margaret Peak behind.*  
PHOTO: PETER ROTHERMEL

Once at Cream Lake we set up our camp on snow as no areas had melted out to the gravel yet. We did however, have a nice kitchen free of snow and wind under an overhanging rock. Nearby was running water so we didn't have to melt snow.

The next day, we got a fairly early start and began the long slog up the Septimus Glacier. All of the bare ice and crevasses were covered and filled in, unlike my 2005 trip when the glacier was bare, hard ice in places. We had a long boot-pack up in the cold shade. When we reached the col below Mount Septimus, we were in the sun and had a nice break to dry the sweat off and warm up. Then we began the long traverse below Mount Septimus and Mount Rosseau's Southwest Faces. Below us was Love Lake. It was all on snow and much nicer than the scree that would have been exposed in warmer times.

We reached the base of the Misthorn and noted a heathery ramp that looked to lead right to the summit, but decided to head to our furthest objective, Margaret Peak. We dropped down to the "Pocket Glacier" and angled up to the southeast shoulder of Margaret Peak where we stopped for lunch on the sun-warmed rocks. After our break we hiked up to the easy summit in about 15 minutes and declared it "Peggy's Peak". Here we had a second lunch. Looking towards the Misthorn the route looked quite difficult, with several technical sections between us and the top.

We opted to backtrack and talked about coming back the next day to try the Misthorn. We traversed above the Pocket Glacier so as to not lose too much elevation. Along the way we noticed a couple of snow filled gullies that trended up towards the ridge leading to the Misthorn. We decided to take one of the most promising ramps. When we reached the rock, Tak was ahead with me following as fast as I could. Roger and Peggy were just behind. I was hoping that we had found a good route, but it got steeper and looser and I found

myself pulling up over chockstones that I honestly couldn't trust. I waited for Roger and Peggy, as Tak got further ahead. Once onto the ridge, we came to a gap that we needed to jump; maybe only two feet across, but deep and airy. Peggy said she had had enough and I had to agree as the wind had been taken out of my sails. We were about 30 metres from the summit, but it looked too loose for my liking. Tak was already half way up a loose face which Roger decided to follow. Peggy and I waited for about a half hour while Tak and Roger made the summit. When we were all back together we took a short cut down a snow gully to the traverse below the Southwest Face. The short-cut was on soft mushy snow over an icy base and below us were cliff bands. I felt gripped and went quite a bit slower than the rest. I felt ashamed at the time, about my speed and trepidation, but later felt vindicated when a month later, a friend in the same position and on similar terrain, slipped and almost died. Lesson to self! Listen to self!

Once past the traverse below Mount Rosseau and Mount Septimus, we regrouped and had a break. Heading down the Septimus Glacier I was wishing for skis, as the corn snow would have been perfect for a quick descent. Back at camp, we found our tents resting on platforms about a foot above the surrounding snow due to the melting by the sun.

The next day we hiked back to Baby Bedwell Lake where I fortunately found my lost sunglasses. At Baby Bedwell, we washed, rested and camped another night. We had thoughts of trying Mount Tom Taylor, but figured it was too snow loaded, as no rock was showing and the weather was warm. The last day was a leisurely hike out. Having been up every named summit in that area, I'll be back for the Misthorn another time.

**Participants:** Tak Ogasawara, Peggy Taylor, Roger Taylor and Peter Rothermel

---

## McKay Peak

---

Lindsay Elms  
July 17

After driving under the hydro lines on the McKay Lake FSR and finding the gate open (see the Buffalo Hump story for directions) we continued for another 2 kilometres then took the left branch down towards Haslam Creek. A concrete bridge crossed the creek and then the road then continued east for 1.5 kilometres before we veered right following it up for another 3.5 kilometres to a wash-out on the road. A nice flat pull-out just 50m back was an ideal place to camp: running water nearby, plenty of dry firewood and a

great location to watch the sun set behind Green Mountain. Also, across the valley to the north was the rounded summit of the mountain called Buffalo Hump, our adventure of six weeks ago. The GPS gave our elevation as 740m leaving us with 523m to climb obscure McKay Peak (1263m) the next morning. McKay Peak and Buffalo Hump form the eastern boundary of the Greater Nanaimo Watershed Area with Jump Lake located in the middle. The gate at the hydro lines is what usually restricts entry into the watershed.

Rising early in the morning, after a cloudless night, we had a leisurely breakfast as the first rays of the sun warmed us up. With the outlook for another beautiful day we didn't need to take too much in our packs. After crossing the wash-out we deeked off the road into the slash which wasn't very thick and picked a tree at the top as our goal. The old growth forest was pleasant and we gained height rapidly. Above us at 1040m we knew from the map that there was an old logging road, however, about 40m below the road we came upon a rock bluff that forced us out to the right. The rock was loose but we didn't have to go too far to find a route. Once above the bluff the bush thickened (old logging) just before we climbed out onto the old road. To the west we could see the twin summits of McKay Peak.

We walked along the overgrown road for ½ kilometre (it continued around under the East Face) then deeked off onto a spur that angled up to the north summit. Swinging around to the north we found an easy route through some bluffs and scrambled up some nice warm rock to the north summit. The main summit was only a couple of hundred metres to the west and about 40m higher then where we were. Small pines were growing on the dry rocky knolls and the ground under foot was tinder dry. Eventually we arrived at the highest point to find the rocks crawling with flying ants. The closer we got to them, the more they wanted to land on us. I have observed this phenomenon on numerous summits and have come to call them "summit-seeking ants" as they are only on the very highest point. Obviously they have a built in GPS that is very accurate. We quickly obtained our summit photo then moved off to an ant-free knoll to have an early lunch, a drink and enjoy the view. Again we picked out all the familiar summits, but noted there were not many we hadn't climbed.

The descent was straight-forward and we were down in a couple of hours. The gate under the hydro lines was still open as we passed through on our way out to the highway and then down to Victoria.

**Participants:** Lindsay Elms and Val Wootton

---

## Strathcona Skyline Traverse # 2: Wolf/Cervus Divide

---

Dave Campbell  
August 1 - 2



*Cassandra topping out on Rambler Peak* PHOTO: DAVE CAMPBELL

The Wolf/Cervus Divide is one of the more dramatic looking traverses in Strathcona Park. It follows a high rugged divide starting at El Piveto Mountain and following it northeast to Mount Laing. Across the distance it passes over some of the highest and most difficult to access peaks in the park. The route is not often done, and there are certainly some question marks along the way.

So in the spirit of offering some more traverses onto the trip schedule, I decided to post this one. On the BC Day long weekend, John Young, Cassandra Elphinstone and I headed off up the Elk River Trail. We had dropped one vehicle at the exit near Mount Laing, and the other at the ERT. We made pretty quick

going to the Landslide Lake turn-off, and then the trail became a little fainter. Higher up in the Elk River basin, left-over snow made for difficulties following the route, and in deteriorating weather we pitched camp a few kilometres down from Elk Pass.

John had been up Slocomb Peak before, so after dinner Cassandra and I headed up in cloudy, drizzly conditions up to the top (for no views!). It was fun none-the-less, and we made it back down into camp just before dark.

The next morning, Cassandra and I headed off early to climb Rambler Peak, with plans to meet up with John in the afternoon to continue the traverse. We headed up to the south shoulder of Rambler Peak, and dropped our packs and headed off with day packs for the south gully. The south gully was pretty hard and icy, and in some spots was pretty thin (a bit of crampon mixed climbing required). At the top of the gully we traversed around Rambler Junior, and then up the lovely rock on the summit tower to the summit itself. Great climb! We didn't spend too long on the summit, so worked our way down, roping through the mixed section and ice in the south gully. We saw John waiting for us down below.

We grabbed our packs and then met John and we all started working our way down to the Cervus Col. It was mid-afternoon and the snow was getting soft. John was out in front, and took a slip which he was unable to arrest, and he tumbled down the snow and over a rock-bluff. John suffered some broken ribs and a punctured lung in the fall. We deployed our SPOT device, and within a few hours we had been lifted off the mountain by Comox CFB Squadron 442 and John was being attended to in St. Joseph's Hospital in Comox. It was an abrupt and traumatic way to end a trip in the mountains. Fortunately, John is on the mend and the mountains wait for another day.

**Participants:** Dave Campbell, John Young and Cassandra Elphinstone

---

## SPOT to the Rescue

---

### David Campbell and John Young August 1 - 2

**David:** On a fine BC Day long weekend in August, John Young, Cassandra Elphinstone and I headed up the Elk River to start a 6-day trip along the Wolf-Cervus Divide from El Piveto Mountain to Mount Laing. On Day 1 we slogged our way up to a flat camp spot below Rambler Peak. John had been up Slocomb Peak before, so after dinner Cassandra and I had a lovely jaunt in the rain up to the peak.

John had also climbed Rambler before and had made a previous attempt on El Piveto. He knew a route across the



*John hangs in there waiting for the rescue team* PHOTO: DAVE CAMPBELL

shoulder of Rambler and down into the Rambler-Cervus col. Day 2 was cool and clear, so Cassandra and I went for a crack at Rambler. John passed on a summit attempt but we made a plan to meet up at the Rambler-Cervus col. (I had assumed that the terrain was fairly benign to get there.)

**John:** After half an hour an RCMP helicopter arrived, hovered above us and then flew up the slope. When we heard them land we reasoned that they had called the bigger Cormorant chopper from the Comox Armed Forces Base.

A while later the Cormorant flew into view and hovered over us. The pilot opened the window and yelled down, "Who's hurt?" (Dave yelled back.)

"Where are you hurt?" (Ribs!)

"Your wrist?" (No, RIBS!)

"Oh, your ribs?"

Then they lowered a litter and two paramedics on a cable. They laid me out on the litter and strapped me down. Oh, the pain when they straightened me out!

And then more pain and fear as they raised me into the helicopter, swaying to and fro.

**David:** An RCMP helicopter arrived about 30 - 40 minutes after deploying the SPOT. They communicated by loudspeaker and I with hand signals ("Is it broken bones?") I nodded my head wildly and pointed to my ribs.) They saw our situation at the base of a cliff and realized they couldn't land. So they flew to a suitable landing spot and waited to act as spotters. (I think they enjoyed the view!) About one and a half hours later a Cormorant helicopter arrived from CFB Comox. Two rescue-crew were lined down. They assessed the situation and discussed options. I offered to hike out with Cassandra but one of the rescuers said, in a serious tone, "You're coming with us." OK.

The helicopter dropped a basket down to the rescue crew. We bundled up our packs and moved John onto the stretcher



board. The crew showed us how the rescue harness worked (“Don’t lift your arms!”) They had come directly from another rescue and apparently there was not a lot of fuel to spare in the helicopter. Once we were ready they winched John up, then Cassandra with our gear and finally myself. It was a quick flight across Strathcona Park back to Comox. The crew went into full first-aid mode and seemed to enjoy the challenge of this rescue.

**John:** After they hauled David and Cassandra into the helicopter, the longest journey of my life began. The pain! We finally landed at CFB Comox where I was transferred to an ambulance. Shortly afterwards we arrived at the hospital.

Wow, was I ever lucky! After a 14 metre fall I had two cuts requiring two stitches each, six broken ribs (two fractures each!) and a punctured lung. But I had no skull or spinal injuries and no other fractures. Over the next four days a tube drained nearly a litre of blood from my lung. The shattered ribs resulted in a flail chest which has a fatality rate as high as 35%. But here I am, just a few months later, feeling as fit as ever.

**David:** An ambulance was waiting for John at CFB Comox and took him to St. Joseph’s Hospital. The rescue crew didn’t know what to do with Cassandra and me. (“Normally you are on your own now.”) In the end they were super-helpful. A Military Police convoy drove us from the base out to the hospital.

Details were pretty thin once we arrived at the hospital but it sounded like John was in serious shape. He would have to stay in the hospital for a while. We got in touch with his wife who drove up to be with him. Cassandra’s parent also came up and helped us get back to Strathcona Park to pick up the two vehicles.

In my twenty years of mountaineering, this has been the most serious and traumatic incident I have been involved in. I am so grateful that John came out safely from the other end. There were certainly moments when I fretted that there might be a different conclusion. I am also deeply appreciative of the work of CFB Comox Squadron 442. Although the rescue was difficult and the terrain was challenging, they handled the job safely.

**John:** So what have I learned? Electronic safety devices sure have their place in the backcountry. SPOT might have saved my life. In addition, first aid knowledge is essential. David obviously couldn’t do much for my shattered ribs and punctured lung but he stopped my external bleeding. Most importantly, he kept me warm and reassured me with his



*Help arrives from CFB Comox 442 Squadron* PHOTO: DAVE CAMPBELL

calm manner, maybe preventing shock. As for me, I don’t have a list anymore. If I do climb again, it’ll be because I want to, not just because a mountain is on a list. I’ll focus on the journey and not rush myself into rash decisions.

**David:** I am conflicted with failing to be self-reliant but sometimes sh\*\* happens. In this case self-rescue did not seem like a viable option whatsoever. A few lessons learned:

Our original plan was to meet John at the Rambler-Cervus col after our climb of Rambler Peak. This was beyond where the accident occurred. Had John stuck with our original plan and not waited for us, the accident could have occurred while we were separated. The original plan of having independent travel over semi-technical terrain was really not appropriate

As soon as ice axes are needed, it is worth putting helmets on.

Snow conditions were evidently unfavourable for self-arresting. Although the terrain appeared fairly benign, the group should have discussed the consequences of an uncontrolled slip.

I picked up a SPOT about a month ago. This seemed like an appropriate deployment compared to, say, having to hike eight hours to a phone and then organize a rescue. It allowed John to quickly get the medical care he needed – a little over three hours from accident to hospital. The two-way communication of a satellite phone would have been useful to relay information about the situation.

---

## Something hidden! Go and find it. Summer Camp 2012.

---

Rick Hudson

August 12 - 19

*We are Pilgrims, master: we shall go  
Always a little further; it may be  
Beyond the purple mountains barred with snow.  
– James Elroy Flecker*

Late in 2011 it was time to start looking for a 2012 venue. “Nice if it was on the Island,” someone said at an executive meeting. Cheaper too, because there would be no \$150 ferry premium to get to and from the mainland. So, it was back on the Island again; but where? There was the possibility that, since 2012 was going to be the section’s centennial, we should try to go somewhere special, perhaps a camp at the Golden Hinde. But we’d have to get a waiver to fly to Burman Lake, because Strathcona Park is a no-fly zone. Could we get that? After a brisk committee discussion it was resolved that the ACC should respect the rules in the same way as everyone else, centennial or no centennial, and not apply for a camp there.

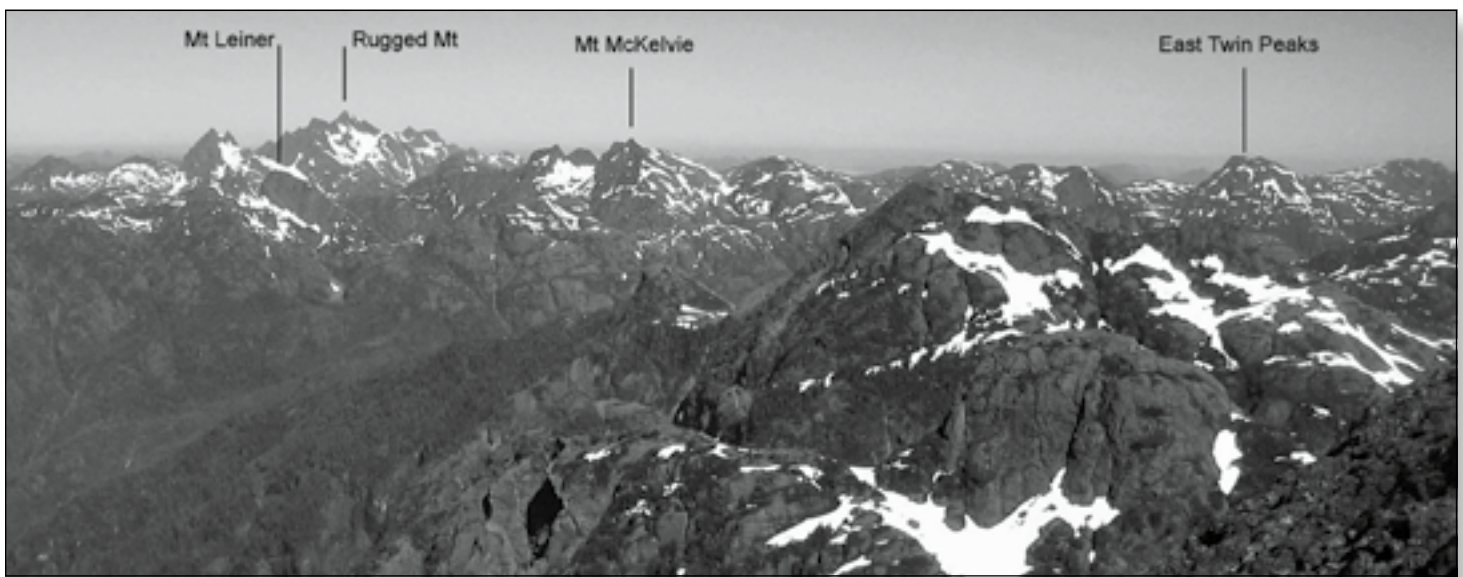
Where else was there both alpine hiking and climbing? The Island doesn’t have a lot of open alpine areas, and those it has, tend to be narrow and confined to a ridge line, like Rees

Ridge (in a park, anyway). The Harmston/Argus/Red Pillar area would be ideal, but it too was in a park. So were Mariner Mountain and Mount Tom Taylor. The Mackenzie Range out on Highway 4 was a possibility, but the valley was thickly bushed, and the peaks only appealing to climbers. Further north, there weren’t a lot of alpine meadows either. Victoria and Warden Peaks were too isolated, the Haihte Range too steep and glaciated, the range around Sutton Peak too strung out, the Prince of Wales Range near Johnstone Strait too low and treed.

The Mount Alava/Bate region in the Tlupana Range had provided a wonderful venue in 2010, and the memory of that camp triggered a thought. Some way off to the north-west we’d seen another group of peaks just east of the Haihte Range (Rugged Mountain) that had looked interesting. I found my photos taken in 2010. Inevitably, they were mostly inconclusive.

A conversation with Lindsay Elms, who had recently been in the Mount Leiner area, offered a possibility. This was followed by tales from Tony Vaughn and Martin Smith of their attempt on Mount McKelvie from McIvor Creek to the east. Checking Phil Stone’s *Island Alpine* (the source of all Island knowledge), almost nothing was written about the area. More intriguing, a quick look on Google Earth showed there was a high valley on the north side of Mount McKelvie, a sort of Shangri La at about 850m elevation, ringed by a circle of summits that went up to 1500m, with only one low point, where a creek drained west into the Tahsis River.

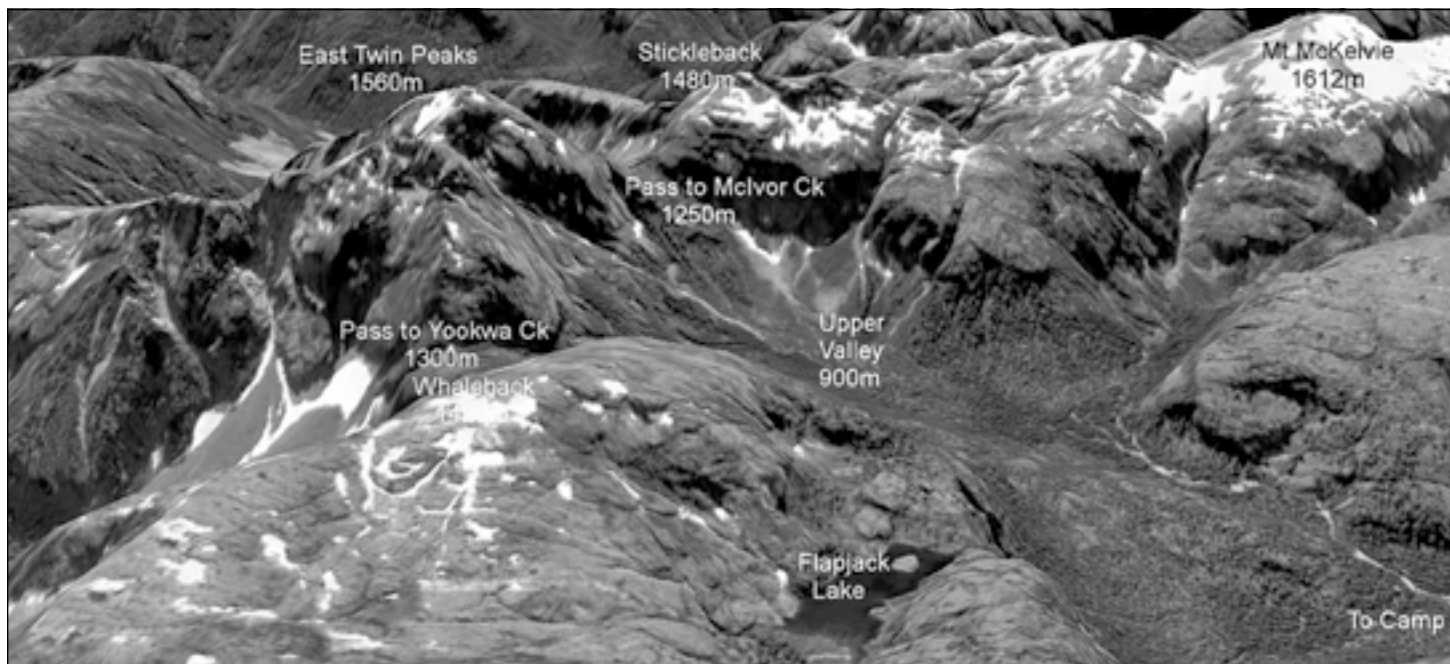
Recalling Eric Shipton and Bill Tillman’s historic 1934 adventure to get up the Rishi Gorge into what later became known as the Sanctuary at the foot of that Himalayan giant



*The photograph that started the search. Taken from Thumb Peak during Summer Camp 2010 at Alava-Bate, the view NW offered possibilities.*

PHOTO: RICK HUDSON





Google Earth image of the east end of McKelvie Basin showed some of the largest alpine areas seen on the Island. The image was taken August 2003. Unfortunately, the west end of the basin was taken March 2010, with significant snow cover. (Most names are unofficial.)

Nanda Devi, here again was the prospect of exploring a hidden valley that seemed to have little known about it. It was an exciting possibility. What was it like? Why had no one gone there? Or, if they had, why had they not written about it? Just like the Sanctuary, there were accounts of early explorers who had reached the lip of the surrounding rim and looked in, but no one had recorded a visit to the valley floor.

*Something hidden. Go and find it.  
Go and look behind the Ranges—  
Something lost behind the Ranges.  
Lost and waiting for you. Go!  
– Rudyard Kipling*

The choice was made. As a bonus, Google Earth showed considerable open terrain on both the north and south sides of the hidden valley. When compared to the Mount Alava/Bate group, this new alpine area was more than double the size, which boded well for the walkers. There were also several waterfalls and lakes which would be attractive destinations. For the climbers in the group, the ring of peaks seemed to offer a number of unclimbed summits by unknown routes, and snow on the north slopes of Mount McKelvie promised some good high tramping too.

There are two parts to organizing a Summer Camp, just like any weekend trip. First, there's the personnel side that involves getting the word out, dealing with questions, reassuring uncertain participants, and building an attendance list. That's the hard part, as my email correspondence from

prior camps showed. Anything from 400 to 600 emails per camp is about the norm.

The second part is the logistics – helicopter rates, equipment, consumables, etc. That's the easy part, because they don't change much, and over the past two years we'd built up a fair cache of equipment. Further, after dealing with helicopter companies, we had a process for estimating the chopper costs (that represent about 90% of the total camp expense). Get the chopper estimate too low, and the Hon Treasurer will hang you out to dry for wasting section funds. Get it too high, and the membership will hang you out to dry for gouging.

Three helicopter companies operated in the north of the Island. All priced their services differently, so it was hard to compare apples with apples. After due consideration it looked like our old friends from 2010, E & B Helicopters, were the most economical. As a bonus, while chatting to their Gold River pilot Kenny Taylor, who had flown us into and out of Mount Alava/Bate, he provided a name for the little lake where we planned to camp. "Oh, we call that Nichol Lake, or Gibson Lake," he said. It was Nichol Lake thereafter.

At an executive meeting in late 2011, Martin Hofmann offered to handle both personnel and logistics, and I happily passed along the spreadsheets and lists that go with the project. I was especially grateful because I would be out of province for the first 5 months of the coming year, when things would be getting busy.

As a corollary to being chief poobah, Martin undertook setting up camp at the start of Week 1. It was only fair that I



offer to manage Week 2 and take it down, but by happy chance there was sufficient demand to justify adding a third week, so Week 2 dodged both bullets, and Peggy and Roger Taylor co-managed the third week and camp closure. Thanks to all of you.

With the stage set, the Week 2 gang gathered on Saturday evening in Tahsis, camped on a green lawn in gentle sunlight, ate fresh fish at the marina restaurant, and waited on the Sunday morning August 12<sup>th</sup> with all the uncertainty and high hopes that always precede a camp. At 8:30 a.m. the sound of rotors was heard coming up the inlet, and minutes later the Jet Ranger settled on the concrete heli-pad next to the sea. Kenny did his safety talk, and then the first group was off into the sky.

Flying up the gorge below Nichol Lake, the waterfalls and cliffs were spectacular, but as we swept in low over the lake there was a feeling of disbelief. The slopes were much steeper than expected, the trees much taller than the dwarf alpine spruce we had anticipated, and where was the camp? A group of people and bags were clustered on a gravel beach, with no sign of the orange dome tents.

Stepping out into a roar of turbine noise, jet fuel fumes and down draft, the crew change was quickly done. Quiet returned as the helicopter pulled away from the beach. Martin was there with a friendly handshake, and a rapid summary followed of where everything was located beyond the trees, in a sheltered clearing next to the river, and what had been done during Week 1. Between greeting old friends and trying to remember key information, the time passed in a daze that was broken by the incoming slap of rotors, signalling another crew change.

In less than an hour the participants and gear had transferred over, and we were left to wonder at our location. It was the start of another Summer Camp!

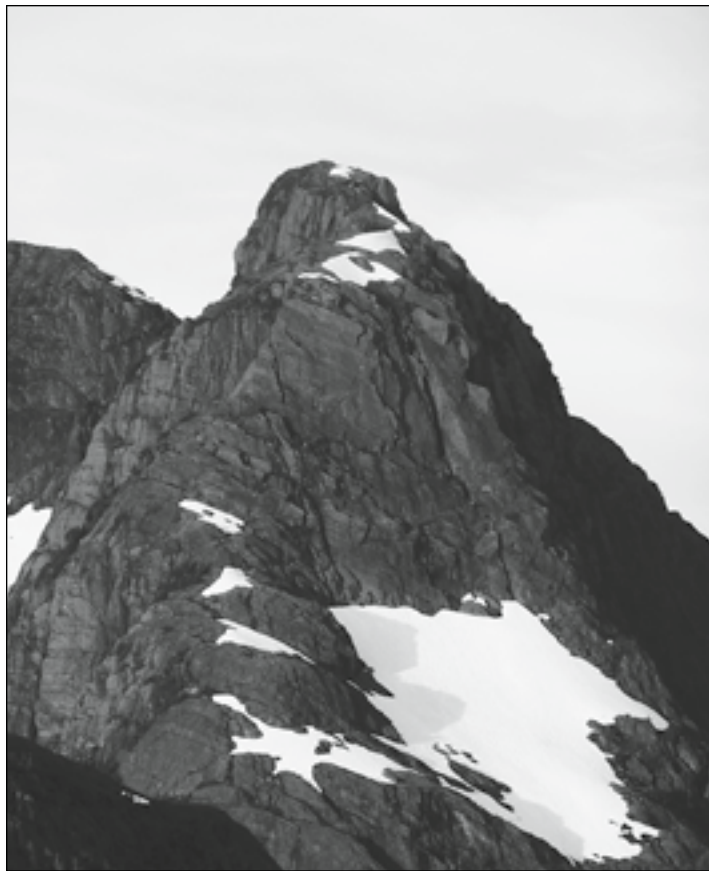
---

## **Tahsis to Tahsis: Via Mount Leiner, Mount McKelvie and five other 1500m summits all on the horseshoe around the McKelvie basin**

---

**Lindsay Elms**  
**August 5 - 11**

This year's summer alpine camp happened that it was again to be in an area that I had only once made a brief foray into peripherally. When Rick Hudson suggested Nichol Lake as the camp location I started scheming how I could climb everything that was on my "to do" list as I knew that I couldn't do them all from the camp location on the lake. I talked with E & B Helicopters and with Rick, and we came to a compromise where after everyone had been flown into the lake (including a few days worth of our food), we would



*Mount Leiner with the obvious sheer wall on the ridge.*

PHOTO: VALERIE WOOTTON

be flown onto the ridge near Mount Leiner. We would then hike for several days, traversing the ridge over Mount Leiner, Mount McKelvie and several other peaks, eventually dropping into camp. We would then spend a day or two based at the camp and then hike back up onto the ridge. After a short ridge traverse we would descend a spur to the Tahsis River and eventually hike out to Tahsis.

Saturday afternoon (August 4) we drove into Tahsis and camped on a logging road above the Leiner River. The next morning we organized our packs and then drove into town and met everyone down on the water-front where the helicopter would be landing. As usual there appeared to be a lot of gear to be flown in! After Morris had dropped everyone off there was still one load to be flown in, but he decided to fly us in first and then take the last few things into the camp. After a seven minute flight he found a flat site on the ridge to touch-down about 200 metres below the twin peaks of Mount Leiner (1471m). I could still say we "climbed" the 1200 metres but not in the traditional sense of the word. This is one way of experiencing a rapid transition from sea-level to the alpine.

With the helicopter gone we took a few minutes to take in our location and then we picked up our packs and climbed up to the saddle between the two peaks. Here we dropped the

packs and hiked up to the easy southeast summit. The higher summit looked feasible, but there was going to be some serious bushwhacking to reach the top. Once back at our packs we put them on and hiked up the easy first 50 metres. From here to the top would require us negotiating some steep, thick bush. I did a quick recce then came back and put my pack on. I suggested to Val to leave her pack as I would come back and get it. For the next 10 minutes I crawled through, around and over the steep bush to reach the summit. Never before have I sweated so profusely for such a short climb. As I scrambled back down to Val's pack I found her thrashing her way through the bush thanking me for carrying her pack. I again sweated my way to the top for a second time! This time on the summit I could at least stop for a few minutes to dry-off and look at the route ahead. For the most part it looked fine, but there are always little features you can't see.

Maps can be very deceiving and as we all know they don't show every feature! The descent down the North Ridge was straight-forward for about 120 metres until we unexpectedly encountered a sheer drop. I looked out to the left and saw nothing so I then scooted out to my right for a look. There wasn't much out that way either at first glance, however, after a closer look I thought there might be a way to squeak down. Below was a steep, narrow little gully that if I could get into it there might be a way back out onto the ridge near the bottom. I climbed down onto a block and looked over the edge. The small rope I had would reach into the gully and there was a nice sturdy tree at the back of the block to rappel off. Because it was a light 7mm rope I didn't want Val to go down with her pack on so I slowly lowered her down into the gully. I then lowered both packs and finally I rappelled down. Once in the gully we could scramble down 20 metres to a narrow ledge that traversed out to our left. I belayed Val out across it, again without her pack. The last 5 metres being the most difficult because of the sheer drop below, but at least we could get back onto the ridge. I brought the packs across while Val belayed me. I had looked towards Mount Leiner and this ridge two years ago when we had climbed onto the ridge between Mount Leiner and Mount McKelvie, but from a distance it looked easier. We continued descending the ridge encountering a couple of small problems that we were able to climb around. Once in the saddle we traversed north for another hour until we found a nice site to set up the tent beside a pond around 7 p.m. That evening we experienced a beautiful alpenglow.

The next morning (August 6) was again beautiful as we made our way up onto the shoulder of a low peak on the ridge which we had climbed two years ago. We were now on familiar territory, a reassuring feeling even if it was only for an hour or two. From the shoulder we had had a good view of the route ahead and knew that there were no serious obstacles on the ridge up and around to Mount McKelvie.



*Mount McKelvie.* PHOTO: VALERIE WOOTTON

The descent down the West Ridge to a saddle was pleasant and then the climb up onto a peak immediately to the northeast of Mount McKelvie was the same. We then had a short descent to another saddle just below Mount McKelvie where we stopped for lunch. After eating we got our ice axes out and put our crampons on as the route to the summit was going to be mostly on snow. With no packs on we could move quickly up the snow slope towards the summit. About 5 minutes from the top, and before it came into view, I swore I could hear voices and after cresting a rise I saw some people on the top of Mount McKelvie (1633m). A small group of six (Frank, Martin, Sonia, Nadja, Walter and Sandy) had just arrived on the summit. As we made our way up to the top some of them had started down so we had a brief alpine chat. They said the camp was in a beautiful location on a gravel-flat beside the river, but more importantly I found out there was a big snow-filled gully down from between two peaks to the north (they were calling the Twins) that we hoped to climb tomorrow. The gully would take us down into the basin where we could then follow the creek into camp. After they all left we had the summit to ourselves, but we could see them traversing the snow-slopes across to the ridge that they had climbed up from camp.

After leaving the summit we dropped down to our packs in the saddle and then traversed a snow-slope towards the ridge in the direction of the three peaks that were our goal for tomorrow. We found a nice campsite on the ridge with water nearby and a view into the basin below towards the camp. After dinner I did a recce across the slopes to check on the route up to the first of the three peaks and found an easy route to the top. We wanted to be on the move early the next morning.

Another beautiful dawn (August 7)! After packing up we traversed across the West Face of Peak 1532 to a rock knoll

in the snow and then climbed up onto the ridge. Again we dropped our packs and scrambled unencumbered up to the summit. My research had found that this peak had most likely never been climbed before as I had not been able to find anyone who had climbed in this area. A friend from Port McNeill had climbed Leiner and McKelvie, but that was all. From the top, the ridge looked like it would be feasible to descend to the north, but we had left our packs lower down and we knew that we could continue with the traverse across the face to reach a saddle between Peak 1532 and Peak 1592 – our next objective.

Once back at our packs we traversed across to just above the saddle only to find a 20 metre bluff stopping us. I looked back and forth finding no easy route down so I found a nice tree to put a sling around where I could then lower Val. Once she was down I lowered the two packs and then rappelled myself. It was then a matter of zig-zagging our way up the South Face of Peak 1592 to the top. From the summit we could look down at the saddle between Peak 1592 and Peak 1599, often referred to during the camp as the East Twins. The descent would be on rock all the way and looked steep in places, but we hoped it would go for us. Nearing the summit of Peak 1599 we could make out several climbers on what appeared to be an airy traverse, but we could see that they weren't roped so it must be fine. Descending to the saddle was steep, but we didn't need to pull the rope out anywhere as there was always good foot and hand holds. Once at the saddle we stopped for lunch and picked the few things we needed to get to the top of Peak 1599 – camera and GPS. It was only about 200m to the summit!

Half way up we met Walter, Sandy, Frank and Chris who were sitting having lunch themselves. We asked them about getting to the top and they also asked us about getting to the top of Peak 1592. They grilled us about how steep it looked and I reassured them it was easy as we had come down with large packs unroped. We started for the summit and told them we would wait for them at the bottom of the big snow gully where they could then lead us back to camp.

The final climb to the top of Peak 1599 was certainly airy, but fun. We also had a great view back along the route we had travelled and could also see the others in the saddle below looking up at the route to the top of Peak 1592. Once back down at the saddle we saw the others nearing their summit. With crampons on and ice axes out we began the long descent down the gully. We were glad that the gully was full of snow as we were wondering what it would look like for the last two weeks of the camp. More than likely a lot of the gully would be snow-free. At the bottom we lounged in the sun while waiting for the others to make their descent. Half an hour later they joined us, bubbly from the nice rock they found going up the peak. The hike through the forest back to camp took almost an hour and it was nice to have them

in front as I probably would have followed the stream down which I found out was not the best route. That night we sat around camp enjoying the company of all the others and listening to their stories of the last couple of days.

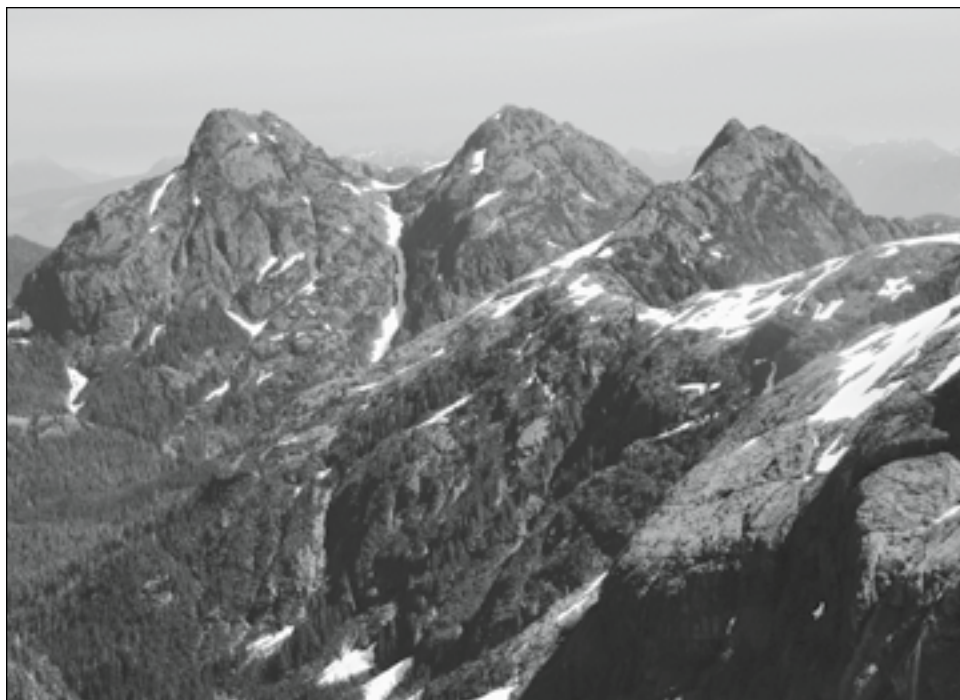
The next morning (August 8) Val and I decided to follow Chris and Karen around towards Peak 1529 which on the topo map was marked as 5005 feet by surveyors. Joining us were Sandy and Frank. Walter, Colin and Alex would follow us a little later. Chris and Karen had been up the peak on the first day so they knew the route, however, they were going to deek off and continue up another peak to the north. We followed them around into a small valley and at the bottom of a steep gully they took off up the valley while we scramble up the gully. Once on the ridge above it was just a nice scramble to the summit. There was a lot more cloud about today, but we were able to see over to the ridge we would have to climb once we were ready to leave camp. Beyond we could also see towards a treed spur off the ridge that looked promising to get down to the Tahsis River. I was able to pinpoint it on the map and this looked to be the only feasible route down. I was feeling confident about this route, but would know for sure in a couple of days.

The next day (August 9) the fog and drizzle set in so we had a rest day around camp. We organized what we would need to take with us, leaving the rest to be flown out with the others on Sunday.

We were fortunate that the next morning (August 10) dawn fine which meant that we had two full days to get back to Tahsis. After saying goodbye to everyone we started up onto the ridge behind camp that would take us in the direction of Mount McKelvie. We had looked across at this ridge on the McKelvie summit day and had watched everyone hiking along the open ridge back to camp. Although the initial climb from the lake was cairned, we failed to find all the cairns, however, once on the ridge crest it was wide and open. At the head of the ridge was Peak 1535 which on the map had a height of 5040 feet. This peak had seen surveyors on the summit in 1986, but I am guessing they flew up there.

I had thought that we might be able to gain the North Ridge of Peak 1535 lower down, but I soon realised we would have to go closer to the peak. Just below the peak we found a steep gully that gained the ridge about 100m below the summit. On a nice heather bench we stopped for lunch and looked at the route down the Southwest Ridge towards the spur we wanted to descend. However, first we wanted to climb Peak 1535, the last 1500m peak on my "to do" list in the area. Without packs we angled up a ramp under the head-wall then scrambled up the last 50m to the summit passing a wooden survey tripod just off the summit. I knew that some of the others from the camp were on the summit a few days ago, but they had left nothing to mark their ascent. We took in the views for 15 minutes before heading back down to our





Left to right: Peak 1599, Peak 1592 and Peak 1532. PHOTO: VALERIE WOOTTON

packs. It was all downhill from here and again untrod!

For the first half an hour the ridge descended gradually, but then it began to narrow and to avoid bluffs we had to go slightly off-ridge on one side and then the other, however, there were no surprises. Eventually the ridge began to level off and we deeked out to our right (west) to the top of the spur that descended to the Tahsis River. The spur was well treed which was promising as I always say big trees will only grow where the terrain is relatively easy. Very few trees grow on rock bluffs and vertical walls. The day was drawing on and we kept our fingers crossed. Out to the left and the right we could see bluffs, but the spur continued down towards the river.

Around 6 p.m. we found ourselves about 200m above the river, but all of a sudden we found we were on top of a bluff that was too long to rappel. There is always something that stops you before you reach the easy ground! Looking to the right the bluffs appeared steeper so we decided to angle across the top of the bluffs to the left (south). For about 100m we couldn't descend any, but then we were able to gradually start descending at an angle. A little further down I found a nice ramp that cut through the bluffs to the forest below. We had done it! The old growth timber gave way to second growth because of logging and at 7 p.m. we came out onto the gravel flats beside the Tahsis River. The descent of the spur was almost 800m and we were now at 150m above sea level. It had been a big day and Val was bagged and hungry! There was no need to go any further because we had a nice gravel flat to camp on and there was fresh running water right beside us. After getting the monkeys

off our back, we then took our boots off and soaked our feet in the river and lightly sponged the sweat off us. Within half an hour we had the tent up, a fire going and a meal simmering on the stove.

All around us there were lots of animal sign and because the river is fairly mellow, I imagined salmon coming up the river this far which meant that there was a good chance of bears being around. We hung what little food we had left and climbed into the tent. The sturdy ripstop nylon would protect us from a bear attack so I had no problem dropping off to sleep safe and sound.

Saturday morning (August 11) was another gorgeous day, but because of our location the sun was slow to reach us. We had about 7 – 8 kilometres to walk out to Tahsis so we knew it would be an easy day. Because we would be

fording the river a few times we didn't want to start until the sun was upon us which would be about 9:30.

The walk down the Tahsis River was enjoyable after all the ups and downs over the last 6 days. The river was never more than knee deep and we saw lots of deer. By 11.30 we came across quad tracks and found an old logging road that came down to the river. We knew that this road would take us into Tahsis now just 3 kilometres away. We had a long lunch beside the river and in the sun enjoying the tranquility, however, we eventually decided to make the final move into town.

After passing the town dump we met our first person who was surprised to see people coming down the road with packs on. A little while later, while walking through town a woman on a bicycle pulled up beside us, peppering us with questions: Where had we come from? Where were we going? Where were we staying? What were we doing for dinner? I picked up on her kiwi accent so we stopped and chatted with her. She had grown up in New Zealand not far from where I grew up, but she had grown up on a farm. She was a typical farm girl – friendly and chatty. She then said that she and her husband had a turkey roasting in the oven and that they had invited their neighbours over for dinner, but there was too much turkey for the four of them. She thought that our legs looked skinny and that we needed fattening up. They had a room for us to stay in and hot water for a shower. How could we say no! We went and got our vehicle and drove back to her place.

We had a wonderful experience in Tahsis and what an incredible way to wrap the trip up. Sunday morning we went

and met the second crew that were flying into camp and those coming out. As usual after any trip everybody was on a mountain high and excited!

**Participants:** Lindsay Elms and Val Wootton

**Mount Leiner** 1471m

**Mount McKelvie** 1633m

**Peak 1532m**

50°00.146' N

126°33.454' W

2.75km northeast of Mount McKelvie. No known record of any previous ascent until ACCVI camp.

**Peak 1592m**

50°00.643' N

126°32.736' W

1.25km north northeast of Peak 1532. No known record of any previous ascent until ACCVI camp.

**Peak 1599m**

50°00.931' N

126°32.968' W

.75km north of Peak 1592. No known record of any previous ascent until ACCVI camp.

**Peak 1529m** (5005ft)

49°01.293' N

126°32.208' W

1.25km northwest of Nichol Lake and marked on 1:50,000 maps as 5005 feet. Previous ascent date unknown, but surveyors left a brass bolt on the summit.

**Peak 1535m** (5040ft)

49°59.357' N

126°35.972' W

1.3km west of Mount McKelvie and marked on the 1:50,000 maps as 5040 feet. Previous ascent in 1986 by surveyors who left a wooden tripod slightly west of the summit.

**Postscript:** During the three camps there were lots of names given for all the peaks surrounding the basin except Mount Leiner and McKelvie. For this story I have not gone with any names adopted during the camp, but the spot heights we read from our GPS. We did get different readings from the two peaks the surveyors had been on so the imperial height doesn't correspond with our metric height.

---

## Woss Mountain

---

Walter Moar

August 11

The surprising thing about summer camp is that time goes by so quickly. Initially I wondered if there were enough objectives for the week, but there was plenty to keep us busy. Mount McKelvie was the first goal for many of us, as it was unclimbed for the centenary challenge. Another centenary peak in the area was Mount Leiner, but it had been done by Val Wootton and Lindsay Elms early in the week. The remainder of the time had been spent on many of the unnamed peaks in the area, none of which were included in the challenge. By day six of the first week of summer camp, the only unclimbed centenary peak in the area was Woss Mountain.

Located northwest of Nichol Lake base camp, Woss Mountain didn't appear to be technically challenging. On August 10, Frank Wille and I hiked east up the McKelvie valley and then went north to gain the ridge north of camp. It was a great day, warm and sunny, and we explored the ridge and the lake that feeds a large waterfall. We finally dropped down into the pass shared with Peak 5005, and then back to camp. As we did the loop I kept looking at Woss Mountain and wondered if it was doable in a reasonable day.

The map showed that Woss Mountain was a convoluted 15 to 20 kilometres for the round trip, and around 1500m of total vertical gain. It looked like the only questionable part was getting down from the ridge to the small plateau at the south end of Woss Mountain. It wouldn't be an easy day but I really wanted to be the one to tag it for the centenary challenge, and after all it was indeed supposed to be a "challenge".

The morning of the 11th came, it was the last day of summer camp and Woss Mountain was my goal. I was up early, and my pack was loaded the previous night and waiting by my tent. All I had to do was retrieve my food from the bear hang to have my customary big breakfast of oatmeal and coffee, grab what was left of my food for the hike, and be on my way. I knew it would be a long day, and I wasn't going to candy-coat the effort in order to sucker someone in, but I was OK with a solo trip.

Other people were doing the high ridge loop around Mount McKelvie, and I was certainly a little jealous as it looked like a nice route. I couldn't eat my cake and have it too, so I was excited for Woss Mountain. The normal route up Woss Mountain is to come in from the north on logging roads and do a short hike, but coming in from the south made things more interesting. I relished the thought of ticking off another centenary peak, although it had been a long week of hiking and my feet felt like hamburger.



*South aspect from the ridges north of the McKelvie Basin* PHOTO: WALTER MOAR

Moving up the valley was routine by the point, although as usual the bugs were making a meal out of me. It seemed like no time before I was leaving the valley bottom and climbing up the drainage used to get to the ridge north of camp. The day was already warming up, and combined with the elevation gain it was really starting to feel like work. There was a temptation to chicken out and head back to camp and be a couch potato all day, but Woss Mountain was a plum peak ripe for the picking and I didn't want to leave it hanging there for another group.

When I reached the ridge I turned west, and I continued the steady hike upward. My plan was to top out on the peak east of the waterfall lake, and from there head down and north toward Woss Mountain. Having completed the first vertical push of 600m it was time for a snack, even though it meant being eaten by bugs while I stopped.

After some rummaging, I realized that my pack was empty.

Not literally empty, it had the usual ingredients: spare warm layer; first aid kit; tarp; water bottle; camera; etc. It was empty of food. No snacks! Zero victuals! Sorely lacking caloric content. My bag of food for the day, which I carefully put together the night before and put into the bear hang, was sitting on the table back in base camp. It also contained my bug juice and sunscreen – I was going to bake in the sun.

Returning to camp for the food was out of the question if I was to complete the hike before dark, and today was the last hiking day. The day had gone pear-shaped, but my hunger for another centenary peak was stronger than my need of snacks.

The descent to the plateau south of Woss Mountain was a mostly straightforward scramble on solid clean rock. Down near the bottom I found myself in a bit of a jam when I ran out of rock to hold onto. However, a small sketchy slab traverse got me to safer ground. From there it was along the beautiful plateau that was peppered with dozens of tarns, and then finally onto Woss Mountain itself. I filled my belly with as much water as it would take and thankfully I found quite a few plump berries that gave me a taste of food.

Once I was up the small steep bit from the plateau, it was beautiful easy going hiking mostly on rock and a little corn snow. I could clearly see the radio repeaters on the summit, and in no time I was there. With a quick summit photo in my fabulous new summer camp t-shirt, my time on the summit was done. After all, there's really no sense in hanging around when there's no lunch to be had. I briefly had a half-baked idea of making the much shorter hike into Woss for dinner and beer at the Lucky Logger, but I figured it wasn't worth having my campmates call in the search and rescue folks when I didn't return. That would be a missed steak.

The route back was the reverse of what I came in on, and I was going full boar to get back to the food in camp. There wasn't time to noodle about and enjoy the day, and there was no margarine for error. It was a long hike back, and although I mustered up the energy I was moving rather slowly. With some tricky bluff negotiation getting back down into McKelvie valley, I was finally down on the flats. I was half-running into camp in order to gorge myself on the day's food, as well as the evening's meal. Special thanks to camp leader Martin Hofmann for the delicious adult beverage that made the whole day worthwhile.

My apologies if this corny trip report is more than you can stomach, but I couldn't resist hamming it up.

**Solo Participant:** Walter Moar



## Ten good reasons to go to Summer Camp

Phee Hudson

1. Summer Camp is a really good place to get to know fellow members of the section. You will learn how amazing people are, in ways that are impossible in an urban or even weekend trip situation.



2. The food is always GREAT. Generally two people cook and clean up for one night of the week. As a result, not only is there great competition to produce fabulous meals, but you get to sit, watch and be waited on for six of the seven nights. And the house wines are always superb.

3. You can be as energetic or as lazy as you like. Every day there will be some folks going on day trips, and some staying in camp to take it easy. And yes, there are comfortable camp chairs in which to relax.



4. You get to learn new skills – from rope skills, ice axe techniques, glacier crossings, rock climbing, rappelling, to digging biffies, cooking for 15 people. Experienced members are generous in passing on skills, and very willing to teach, even if you've never been to camp before.

5. There's nearly always someone in camp who knows a lot about the flowers, history, trees or geology, and is happy to pass their knowledge on to you. There are great evening discussions too.





6. You will have a whole week to figure out how to use your new camera (make sure you bring along the instructions). And if you can't figure it out, there's frequently someone who has the same model.

7. You will be able to sing at the top of your voice with only your fellow camp mates to critique you. If you write poetry, you'll be able to recite your poems to a receptive audience.



8. On the days you stay in camp, you can sleep in for as long as you like and, since you have your own private tent, nobody will disturb you. Unlike huts, there's no foreign snoring factor.

9. You will get a chance to climb and hike to places that you would seldom go on your own, and you will be surprised how good it feels to be on top of a peak in a truly remote area. Sometimes there are even unclimbed summits to bag.



10. Coming to camp may put you a little out of your comfort zone, but doing that is good for you. It's time to push the envelope a little. And you only ever carry a day pack.

---

## Over the Whale: A day from Summer Camp 2012

---

Rick Hudson  
August 18

A moderately early start, but since the camp is at 850m and the surrounding summits are only 1400 – 1600m, the days are seldom long, and those crazy 3 o'clock tumbles out of a warm bag into cold air aren't necessary here. Further, it's the last day of our week at Summer Camp, so we know more about the surrounding territory, and are confident we can minimize bushwhacking.

The trail east from camp lies along a flat valley that has been much blazed and cut over the past week, but Russ and I still manage to loose it several times, and have to scout around under the old growth canopy, searching for signs of recent scuff marks or sparse flagging. But it's a far cry from Monday, when it took us over 2 hours to reach the east end of the valley. Today, Friday, we are there in just over an hour and, with the help of a GPS, turn up the correct creek that drains the pass between the Whaleback on its west, and the Twins (Peaks 1599 and 1592) on its east.

Forewarned is forearmed, they say, and we are aware that Cedric, Judith and Ken had met some fierce bush when trying to stay out of this north – south valley. Scott, on the other hand, had reported the going was fair if you stayed close to the creek. Siding with the lesser of two evils, we chose the latter, but after quarter of an hour ran into a horrendous mishmash of deadfall that completely choked the creek bed.

Now there is no alternative but to duck left into the forest, where the ground cover (barely warranting the designation "bush") is fine, until cliffs squeeze us back into the creek bed, now above the deadfall. It's early morning and long shadows make the place gloomy as we approach a canyon that has every prospect of presenting sheer walls on either side, and giant waterfalls in the middle. Turning a corner we're relieved to see that the river descends towards us in a series of small drops. It'll be an easy scramble.

Climbing out into the upper valley, the steep walls of dark basalt and the narrow river of broken boulders morph into a shallow basin filled with heather, flowers and small trees – a very acceptable change – and we reach the saddle in just over two hours. Leaving the McKelvie Basin behind us, we look north into the real world of roads and clear cuts far below in Yookwa Creek.

The mosquitoes are bad. After searching for botanical specimens for Judith, Russ and I turn our attention to getting up the Whaleback to the west. From our current position,



*Russ nearing the top of Whaleback, with Mt McKelvie and the small McKelvie Glacier across the basin to the south.* PHOTO: RICK HUDSON

a rock ramp leads at an easy angle up the slope, bypassing a dense thicket of dwarf alpine trees, and we are quickly at the eastern cliffs guarding the mountain. The ramp merges into the cliffs, and above are steep walls with few ledges, all choked with trees.

Wait. Off to the left, the cliffs are open. A five minute ascent through bush brings us out onto a snow-covered terrace (even in mid-August) that leads south-east around the mountain to where the cliffs lean back into a gentle ridge. The peak is ours, and without a bushwhack!

Thereafter, it's just necessary to keep heading upwards over mostly open ground of red volcanic rock with sporadic cedar thickets. As we rise towards the summit, the whole basin to the south opens up – Mount McKelvie and its satellite peaks above a large snowfield, to the left the Twins, to the right Nichol Lake with the camp hidden among the trees, and to the far right two other summits that form the circle that creates this hidden basin. Only where the river drains Nichol Lake is the barrier of peaks broken, as the river cuts down through a deep gorge to the Tahsis Valley beyond.

On the summit at noon, Russ and I bask in sunshine and enjoy the breeze that keeps the occasional bug at bay. Flapjack Lake (so named because the island in it looks like one) is hidden below us to the west, but we have plans to descend to it. The radio crackles, and we hear how the others are doing at various points around the basin. Ken is on the peak west of Flapjack Lake, and we agree to meet him at the lake. Once together, we plan to save time by rappelling down the waterfall (Flapjack Falls?) below the lake, hopefully meeting the trail that Russ, Ronan and I had pushed up the true right hand slope next to the falls earlier in the week. On that previous occasion, we had stopped about 70 metres elevation short of the lake. We had been looking for an easy line,



but the route had become too steep for that and we had turned back, although it was clear it would go.

Now, Ken agrees over the radio to descend east from his peak, while we drop west from the Whaleback, hopefully meeting near Flapjack Lake. But looking into the Tahsis Valley, we note fog rolling in, blotting out Tahsis and, as we watch, creeping up over the lip of Nichol Lake to envelope camp.

We head down slope, surprised by how much snow there still is on the west flank of the Whaleback – hidden from view from the McKelvie side. It's the source of all that water cascading down Flapjack Falls.

The snow lets us lose height quickly, but then it's onto rock slabs and little cliffs, threading our way down through old ice-scoured ground until, as the fog rolls over the lake, we reach the shoreline and join Ken, moments before he would have disappeared behind a wall of mist.

The plan is to get to the lake's outlet, but the west side of the lake has steep cliffs. The east side is partly obscured by fog, but looks possible. An hour of scrambling through bush and avoiding huge snow moats finally brings us out to the



Map showing the routes taken: Ken clockwise, Russ & Rick counter-clockwise.



View W from the top of Whaleback to Flapjack Lake and the Haithie Range beyond. Nichol Lake just visible on left. PHOTO: RICK HUDSON

mouth of the lake. The fog is lifting again, which helps our sense of direction. We hop across the outlet just above the falls, hearing the roar of the water as it starts its 200m drop to the valley below.

A scramble down through trees on an ever-increasing slope, and then it's time to pull out the two 7mm ropes, find a handy

tree to wrap them around, and then rappel down through thick brush. The other two pay out the coils from above – no chance we can throw lines down through this forest.

Four short rappels of 20 metres each, combined with some intuitive scrambling along inter-leading slopes, hanging onto blueberry bushes, and then the flagging that marks our highest point on the previous sortie appears, and we know we're safe. The route down from here, although exposed in places, is a done deal. There are no rappels needed, and it's just a matter of time before the angle eases and we are in the lower valley, where a half hour walk brings us into camp early enough in the afternoon for Russ to have no excuse about cooking supper that evening.

**Participants:** Russ Moir, Ken Wong and Rick Hudson

## Elkhorn Adventure –A Centennial Climb

Lenka Visnovska  
August 20 – 22

In the footsteps of the first ascenders who also happened to be ACC members, one hundred years later, we started to walk the Elk River trail towards Elkhorn in the clouds. We were a group of eight and in many aspects very different from the group that first stood on the "Strathcona Matterhorn." We had the gear of now-a-days (although David did have his vintage ice axe with him for a more authentic feel), we did not have our cooks who would be waiting for us with a warm meal after the climb (this one was a bit disappointing), and as noted by Roxy, both genders were equally represented in our group (it seems that one hundred years ago



*Story time! A front row from left Mike Morris, Lindsay Elms, and Valerie Wootton; a back row from left Roxy Ahmed, Lenka Visnovska, Janelle Curtis, and Tak Ogasawara* PHOTO: LENKA VISNOVSKA

mountaineering was more of a manly endeavour). Yet, there was at least one resemblance that even a century could not change. We, I am sure, shared the love for mountains, a longing to spend some time in Elkhorn's shadow, and a desire to stand on its summit. So, here we were leaving the trailhead behind us, feeling the excitement in the air.

The first hour of the hike was relatively easy, but certainly deceiving. Once we reached the Elkhorn sign and crossed the Elk River (successfully, without falling in it!), we traded more or less level Elk River trail for the steep route that approaches Elkhorn. As we were ascending on an otherwise relatively well defined trail, I was expecting some leveling out here and there, but it never really came. It was simply straight up, forget-the-switchbacks kind of a trail. I think we were all grateful for the clouds as the warmth of the sun would have been, at that point, quite uncomfortable. However, the Elkhorn trail was not only about sweating and puffing. It had some fun features as well. One for sure was the so called "low 5<sup>th</sup> class root." The walking poles had to be put aside and the roots of the trees became handles and steps of, what seemed to me, a horizontal climb. Another interesting point was a slippery creek gully that required use of a rope and a few moves to gain the trail above (not always graceful rock climbing style moves, but rather what-ever-gets-you-over-a-slimy-rock).

It took us over 5 hours to arrive at our base camp on a shoulder of the ridge with several ponds formed by melted snow as our water source. As we were up there relatively ear-

ly, we could enjoy a few daylight hours by exploring or resting, but certainly by enjoying the misty surroundings, a silence emphasized by echoed sound of falling water, and the glimpses of Elkhorn Glacier and King's Peak in the opening curtain of the clouds. Moreover, after dinner, we were entertained by Lindsay's stories and by Lindsay and Valerie's thinking-out-of-the-box games. We all stretched and strained our minds (all but Janelle who seemed to figure a mystery of these brainteasers in a heartbeat), so no wonder I heard "Who are the rocks pointing to?" in my dreams that night and, most likely, I was not the only one. We definitely deserved a good night's sleep after a long day of exercising both our muscles and minds!

Next morning, we woke to a drizzle that kept coming and going all day long. We started by going up a small gully close to our base camp that took

us to a higher ridge, which we followed until we reached the base of the northwest face of Elkhorn. From down below the route seemed more of a climb than a scramble, but once on the rock, we got quite high up before we decided to use the rope for protection in steeper sections. When we reached the gendarme, a prominent rock formation that guards Elkhorn, we started to climb rather horizontally to the right. We more or less walked the narrow ledge to get to the back side of the gendarme, yet, a great exposure and some loose rock made me cling to the wall and very grateful for being on the rope! We scrambled up the last section of the mountain and stood on Elkhorn shortly before 2pm, at approximately the same time of day as the first ascenders. After happy handshakes and hugs and a well-deserved lunch, we took a summit photo in the fashion of the very first one that was taken on Elkhorn and headed down, chased away by a returning drizzle. No vistas for us! We followed the same route down except that we rappelled down the steep snow (with Lindsay as our anchor!) around the other side of the gendarme. For me, this was the most unnerving part of the whole climb as the snow seemed way too slippery for my liking. Some scrambling and more rappelling down got us back to the ridge and walking through wet heather back to our camp site.

It was such a treat not to rush down after summiting, but instead to stay for another night and to enjoy more of Lindsay's stories, nice company, and being in the clouds. Perhaps because of the promise of a view from the open-



*Elkhorn summit. Front row from left: Dave Suttill, Valerie Wootton, and Roxy Ahmed; Back row from left: Mike Morris, Tak Ogasawara, Lenka Visnovska, Janelle Curtis, and Lindsay Elms. PHOTO: LENKA VISNOVSKA*

ing skies, I could not make myself get into my tent. Soon a mighty Elkhorn came out of the clouds, at last, as did all the surrounding mountains. Alongside with Mike and Roxy, I found myself in awe by the view – Rambler and Colonel Foster were floating on the clouds illuminated by the last rays of light with the crescent moon at our eye level. A window of opportunity to see the surroundings went as suddenly as it came and we were again in the clouds. It was a magical ending to a great day.

The next day, going down to the Elk River took us as long as going up. The steep trail was covered with slippery leaves and roots, and some of us did slip here and there, yet we all made it to Elk River trailhead without any injury. Well, not counting a few wasp stings that made us run, whether tired or not, with some of us even screaming with excitement. And that's how this trip was – exciting from the very beginning to the end, having an intensity that kept us aware of our surroundings, of our every step. It was also a trip to be shared and it was really nice sharing it with the people in our group. It seemed that without effort we became a team, in which expertise, stories, and laughs were readily shared.

Feeling tired, but happy, my last steps were slowed by the blueberries, a gift of the mountains as Tak called them, but more so by my reluctance to leave this special place (a reliable indicator that I had a good time). And the images of another ACC party celebrating two hundred years of the first ascent of Elkhorn came to my mind. They probably will be amazed by the gear we used, in awe that we did not have any cooks with us, and who knows by then mountaineering might be more of a womanly endeavour.

(Janelle and I returned to the Elk River Valley in the next few weeks for a view of Elkhorn – first from the north,

from King's Peak, and later from the south, from Mt. Colwell aka Elkhorn South. Both times, I could not help thinking "What an impressive mountain!")

**Participants:** Lindsay Elms (leader), Valerie Wootton, Tak Ogasawara, Janelle Curtis, Mike Morris, Roxy Ahmed, Dave Suttill, and Lenka Visnovska

---

## Popsicle Peak

---

Lindsay Elms  
August 25 - 27

In May, 1975, David Coombes, Mary Spokes, Margaret Symon, Al Harrison and Danusha Kanachowski made the 1<sup>st</sup> ascent of MS Mountain from Pamela Creek on the west boundary of Strathcona Park and south of Gold River. The leaders of this trip were Mary and Margaret so when it came time for naming the peak it was given their initials MS. From the summit of MS Mountain they noted another unclimbed peak about 4 kilometres to the southwest and decided to return one day to Pamela Creek and attempt the peak.

Five years later in May, 1980, David Coombes and Margaret Symon returned to the valley this time with Mike Taylor and Beverly McLean. Their objective was the unclimbed peak. In an email from David Coombes he said: "Our first night on the mountain was bitterly cold which meant that in the morning we had to put our feet into cold boots. Until our feet warmed up our toes felt like blocks of ice. We found ourselves singing a song by Michael Franks called Popsicle Toes."

*Popsicle toes.*

*Popsicle toes are always froze.*

*Popsicle toes.*

*You're so brave to expose all those popsicle toes.*

Hence the name Popsicle Peak! However, what is more interesting is how people are able to recall either where they were or what they were doing at the time of a significant event. For example many people are able to recall where they were when they heard the news about the death of Elvis Presley, John Lennon or even Princess Diana. Climbers are no different as David Coombes recalls that at 8:32 a.m. on the morning of their ascent of Popsicle Peak (May 18) they heard Mount St. Helens blow, however, at the time they thought that the logging company was road-building and had let off two huge sets of dynamite blasts. It wasn't until they got home that they realised what they had heard.





*Popsicle Peak from near Peak 1720* PHOTO: VALERIE WOOTTON

Anyway, since their ascent I have only heard of one other ascent of Popsicle Peak and that was by Paul Rydeen, Alana Theoret and Mike Rankin when they made the horseshoe traverse around Pamela Creek from Mount Donner to Mount Kent-Urquhart, MS Mountain, Popsicle Peak and Peak 1720 (which Paul called Heli-pad Peak) in 2006 (or 2007).

I had been into Pamela Creek twice in the early 1990's to climb Mount Kent-Urquhart and MS Mountain, and then in 2009 I climbed Peak 1720 from Hanging Creek, a side stream of Quatchka Creek. However, I still had to cross-off Popsicle Peak.

With the summer drawing on (well the longer days anyway) Val and I decided to climb Popsicle Peak. On the Friday afternoon we drove out to Gold River and then took the Ucona Main in towards Matchlee Mountain. A few kilometres before the end of the road we turned left onto U-29 which then switch-backed up Hanging Creek onto the northwest spur off Peak 1720. The GPS gave us a reading of just over 1000m. That night sitting around the fire we watched the sun set and the stars come out. Once the fire burned out we climbed into the back of the Toyota to sleep, but before doing so I put my running shoes on the back tire just behind the rear door. This was so that in the morning I could open the door, reach for my shoes and then water the huckleberry bushes.

The next morning I did just that: opened the door, reached for my shoes, put them on and stood up. I then looked up and saw what I first thought was a deer, however, I quickly realised that deer don't have long tails. I was looking at an adult cougar about 10 feet away from me. It took me a couple of seconds to fully comprehend what I was looking at then whispered to Val to look out the back window. By the time she cleared the dew off the window the cougar had walked away and over the edge of the bank. In

about 8 seconds it was gone. I hadn't even had time to feel concerned and at no point did I feel threatened by the animal. All I could think of was – wow, what a healthy looking animal! What a great way to start a trip. As a harbinger it's better than a black cat. However, it got me thinking about the brown-coated feline and wondering it was just walking passed the vehicle when I stepped out or had it been laying down behind the vehicle and when I opened the door it decided to move on! I'll never know!

With the excitement over, it was time to pack and start moving up towards Peak 1720. A rough flagged route existed that guided us through the bluffy sections until we reached the sub-alpine heather. The final ascent to the summit I remembered being quite a steep scramble over low 5<sup>th</sup> class rock so we decided to by-pass the summit this time, but bag it on the way out. We traversed left across the snowfield under the north side of the summit and scrambled up a short but steep gully between two rock walls that put us on the ridge to the southeast of the peak. Although in a couple of places we had to ascend slightly, for the next 3 hours we gradually descended towards an obvious saddle halfway between Peak 1720 and Popsicle Peak. The only tricky section being some bluffs we had to find a way down just above a small pond where we set up the tent. Camp was about 120 metres above the saddle and we spent the final hours of the afternoon lounging in the sun.

By the time we got up the next morning there appeared a change in the weather. To the south, behind Splendor Mountain, dark clouds could be seen rolling in but they didn't appear to be moving too fast. I figured that as long as we got to the summit while it was clear, we could at least follow the GPS track back to our camp if the clouds came in. We descended down to the saddle and then a climbed the ridge for about 100 metres. I had seen what looked like a nice route traversing across a treed face into a gully and then climbing out of it onto a mixed slope (rock and snow) up towards an easy looking peak on the ridge. This route ended up being time consuming and on the return we stayed on the ridge and found an easy route down. Once back on the ridge it was easy travelling along the ridge towards Popsicle Peak. The final 80 metres required a bit of rock climbing, but it wasn't difficult. We popped out onto the summit and strolled across to the small summit cairn. The temperature had dropped considerably and we quickly became chilled on the exposed summit. A few quick photos and then we climbed back down onto the ridge to a sheltered spot for a bite to eat and to drink something. We had been moving consistently for the last 4 hours and were ready for a break (which ended up being only 15 minutes).

The return to camp was uneventful and we were back by mid afternoon. The clouds had slowly moved in and were now starting to obscure the summits. We decided not to

move camp as we were quite comfortable, but I did go and scout the bluffs above for an easy route through them for in the morning. By around 7 p.m. it began to drizzle and the moisture remained consistent throughout the night, in fact a small trickle under the tent was enough of a concern for me to get out with my ice axe to clear a trench for it to drain away at about 4:30 a.m. If it had of been a heavy downpour, I am sure that we would have been floating because of the rising level of the pond!

Around 7 a.m. the drizzle appeared to be easing off (but didn't stop) so we quickly packed and climbed up to the route I had scouted through the bluffs the previous afternoon. Although the wet rock made the steep climb interesting, there were good foot and hand holds. We never had to resort to using the rope, but it was in the top of my pack. Once above the bluff we continued to gradually climb the ridge all the way back to Peak 1720.

As we approached the ridge where we had climbed out of the gully just below the summit of Peak 1720, the cloud enveloped us and the wind and the rain picked up. We were determined to bag the summit of Peak 1720 so we dropped our packs and scrambled up the loose rock to the top. There was nothing to be seen so we spent only a couple of minutes on the peak. When I was on the summit three years ago the weather was beautiful and I got to have a snooze before descending the North Ridge. In the 1990's there used to be a heli-pad on the summit, but since then everything has been removed except for a few eye-bolts drilled into the rock.

We returned to our packs then scrambled down the loose rock to the snowfield below which we again traversed across to the northwest spur. While descending the spur Val faltered on the slippery heather and did a couple of 360 forward cartwheels before coming to a stop. Although a little shaken, she did re-bruise her tailbone which she had tweaked earlier in the year. It was time for a break and to eat something as we had been on the go non-stop for 4 hours. The final descend of the spur to the vehicle was uneventful, but we did go a little slower to avoid any further tumbles. The lower we got the warmer it got until finally the sun began poking through and warm us up. We were able to remove our gore-tex jackets for the last 30 minutes. Back at the vehicle there was no sign of the cougar having been around, but as we drove down the U-29 to the Ucon Main we kept our eyes peeled.

For many years I had been eyeing up this route to Popsicle Peak and I was happy to finally have it under my soles. The route from the vehicle to Popsicle Peak has stunning views of Matchlee Mountain and there is a route to Matchlee along a connecting ridge from Peak 1720 that would be an interesting traverse – one day!

**Participants:** Lindsay Elms and Val Wootton

---

## Strathcona Skyline Traverse #3: Mount Tom Taylor to Mariner Mountain

---

Dave Campbell

August 31 – September 4



*Charles Turner descending from Mount Tom Taylor* PHOTO: DAVE CAMPBELL

The Tom Taylor/Mariner traverse had been high on my to-do list for some time. I figured that it would be possible as a 4-day trip, and posted it on the club schedule, with the warning that I was anticipating a fairly physical trip (a few people on the trip had even scheduled an extra day into the trip which was probably a good idea, and perhaps should have been a tip that I was being overly ambitious!). In the end George Butcher, George Urban, Ken Wong, Charles Turner and I headed up on Thursday evening prior to Labour Day to camp out at Buttle Lake.

We started off early on Friday, and quickly made our way up the trail to Bedwell Lake. A bit of route-finding was





Soaking up the ruggedness of Strathcona Park below Mount Tom Taylor (left) with Big Interior Mountain and Nine Peaks in behind PHOTO: DAVE CAMPBELL

required getting up from the lake, but soon we were on our way following the standard route towards Mount Tom Taylor. We had lunch overlook Bedwell Lake, with great views of Big Interior Mountain.

We carried along up granite slabs and then snow up to the main glacier below Mount Tom Taylor. George Urban had been up Tom Taylor before (he had actually been over most of this traverse route, but had missed out on getting up Mariner Mountain, so was out to catch up on unfinished business). The rest of us scrambled up Mount Tom Taylor without too many difficulties.

In the late day we continued on along the North Glacier on Mount Tom Taylor. There was a bit of route-finding required to get down some bluffy terrain on the southwest side of the mountain, but we were able to weave a line through the bluffs and set up camp on the divide out to the west of the peak. We had a great evening soaking in the surroundings.

The next day we were up and off. Low clouds swirled there way upwards as we followed the divide south. The next part of the trip was definitely one of the major cruxes. First we dropped down a slimy gully which headed to the first of a pair of lakes that feed into the pass we were heading. Leaving the lake there was awkward slopes to negotiate, and after some poking around we finally made our way through an interesting rocky canyon.

We had worked our way back down into the clouds, and visibility was limited as we searched around for our ascent gully up the other side. After a bit of a false start we were able to consult a photo we had taken from the other side of the valley, and were able to pick our way into a gully system

that would get us back up to the divide heading towards the Mariner Mountain massif.

This gully was pretty awkward, and we hit a challenging bit half-way up. George Urban was able to pioneer a bushy detour around a rock step, and the rest of the team tackled it head on. We decided to rope up for this, and with the help of a shoulder stand from Charles, I was able to lay-back my way up the step (5<sup>th</sup> class, A0). I set the rope up above, and the rest of the guys were able to wriggle their way up. We hauled packs over this section.

Above the gully it opened into a broader snow slope, and we retained the ridge-line. We had to go up and over a 1480m bump, and then dropped back down the other side to a set of alpine lakes on the east flank of Mariner Mountain. In dying light we set up

camp at the lakes and enjoyed a nice dinner after a long day.

Mariner Mountain was quite imposing looking from camp, with upper glaciers guarded by extensive rocky terrain. We were able to angle our way up rock, and then snow which we used to gain a pass between the east and west sides of the mountain. Once at this pass we dropped down onto the west side, and then traversed our way onto the main summit glacier complex. The south side of the mountain looked pretty challenging, so we decided to head around to the north side of the mountain to attempt it from that angle. Once around on the north side, significant bergshrunds/moats were present and there was no real obvious do-able route. We decided to back-track back to the south side, and tackled the mountain up rocks from there. In the end things weren't so bad - a bit of 3<sup>rd</sup> class ledgy climbing brought us to some more open heathery terrain, and then up to the summit ridge. The final notch up to the summit was awesome ... a narrow and very exposed knife-edge ridge. Most of the team assumed the *au cheval* to surmount the knife-edge, and this was such a treat to have such an amazing scramble as part of the trip. Truly one of the best situations I have been in on Vancouver Island. Classic.

We spent a little bit on the summit, and then reversed our route back down. The descent off Mariner was not as straight-forward as I thought it might be. Coming from above, it was tricky to find the right path down, and it was the type of terrain where there really is only one viable route (and it can be hard to tell what goes and what doesn't). We got caught up for hours trying various routes down which ultimately didn't go (at one point even considering some





*Traversing along the Tom Taylor/Mariner Divide* PHOTO: DAVE CAMPBELL

bold multi-rappel options). Finally, after we had exhausted most options, we finally found the right way down (it veers slightly to the west of the fall line down to the col).

All the messing around with route-finding on the peak itself and on the descent put us quite far behind schedule. I had hoped to make it back down to the Bedwell River and part-way back up this evening, however, it was after sunset by the time we hit the col at the head of Noble Creek.

The next day, we dropped down to the Bedwell River and then picked up the old road on the north side of the river. This was pretty overgrown and we bashed our way up this for a few hours before stopping for some lunch somewhere near Sam Craig Creek. After lunch we forded the Bedwell River and then picked up the new route that the Friends of Strathcona Park had recently put in.

By late-afternoon it became apparent that we certainly weren't going to make it back in light, and probably not even as far as Bedwell Lake and the trail. As a few people had already planned on an extra day, we all decided that that was probably the best. Luckily we had a satellite phone with us, and George Urban was able to call out and re-schedule a birth he was supposed to be inducing the following day. With a little more time in our schedule, we called it a day early at the You Creek camp, and spent the afternoon jumping in the river, drinking tea, and eating whatever food we had left.

The next morning we continued along the last bit of the route back up to Bedwell Lake, with some lovely forest once we broke out of the second growth. Back at Bedwell Lake, we had closed the loop on the traverse, and then made fast time back down to the cars. A requisite stop for a swim in

Buttle Lake was well deserved, and then beer and food in Campbell River. The extra day was nice after all, and it was one of the only trips all summer where I wasn't pulling back into Victoria at 3 in the morning! (My humble apologies to the crew for under-estimating the time required for this trip. Poor form.)

**Participants:** Dave Campbell, George Urban, George Butcher, Ken Wong and Charles Turner

---

## Handsome Mountain

---

Walter Moar  
September 7

In the summer of 2011, I was on Triple Peak and looking south from its summit I could see another peak that looked rough and fun. I later learned that its unofficial name is Sawtooth Peak and its approach is the same as Mount Hall. When Lindsay Elms mentioned that it was on his checklist and that he was intending to do it soon, I jumped at the chance. Our schedules aligned in early September and Lindsay suggested that we do Handsome Mountain (1195m, 92F/3 GR366394) as a warm up.

I had commitments that prevented an early departure from Victoria, but we eventually met up and carpooled the remainder of the drive. From Toquart Bay we went north up Toquart Main and then onto Lucky Main. Thankfully, the Lucky Main had been recently graded and brushed out, so the drive was straight-forward. Lindsay's notes and navigation kept us on the right track and by midnight we were at the trail-head and ready for a night's sleep. Thankfully the long spell of warm, dry weather meant that tents weren't necessary.

Morning came and we were on the go at around 8 a.m., walking a few minutes down the logging road before heading off into the slash. Walking on logs and large rocks that are obscured by salmonberry bush isn't one of my favourite things, but it was thankfully short lived and we were into the trees in no time. There was no shortage of bush to thrash through, but we continued on and slowly made our way up-hill. The goal was to make our way to an area dotted with small ponds, but Lindsay made a serious navigation error – he put me in front! I must have been eager to gain elevation as we bypassed the ponds completely and found ourselves heading directly up the south side. Rather than up the gentle Southeast Ridge, we instead found ourselves facing a steep drainage that looked like it would go. All was great except the steep mossy bit at the top, but traversing out of the drainage found us on mellower slopes.



*Handsome Mountain from Black Peaks* PHOTO: WALTER MOAR

From here the route-finding was straight-forward: going up was good, going down was bad. We eventually reached the top of the ridge and by 10 a.m. we were in an open spot at 800m that offered an opportunity for a short rest and some photos. The day was warm and sunny, and the views of both the Broken Islands and Toquart Bay were great. The summit was also visible and the route was obvious.

Ahead was more of the same, just a constant push upward and some meandering around the occasional bush or bluff. It was ninety more minutes before we were having lunch on the 1195m summit. It's the scenery offered by these more obscure peaks that really makes it all worthwhile: Lucky Mountain, the Mackenzie Range, Canoe Peak, Triple Peak, Mount Hall, Effingham Inlet, and more. I took a bunch of photos and nearly every one has flying ants in it; the large summit cairn was crawling with the things. Also visible from the top was Sawtooth Peak, which of course was our objective for the following day. Looking southwest we could also see the Lucky Main road that we came in on and another small obscure mountain called Black Peaks that was sitting right above Toquart Bay.

After some leisure time at the top we began the descent with the goal of finding the long gentle ridge route down. All went according to plan except the part where it stopped going according to plan and we once again found ourselves too far south and facing the steep side of the ridge. Although most of the way was a scramble down, once in awhile we'd find ourselves with vertical rock below. We bluffed out a couple of times, but with a few backtraces Lindsay's nose for a good route eventually got us down into the trees and onto more gentle ground.

Lindsay led the way through the trees and even though we were going downhill I still had trouble keeping up with him. I thought I was in shape after a very busy summer

of hiking, but it was obvious that I had some room for improvement in my fitness. Lindsay managed to find exactly the same spot where we entered the trees from the slash and it no time we were back on the road and then back to the vehicle. It was good to rest, refresh and then head onward to Sawtooth Peak.

We travelled back out Lucky Main and when we got to Toquart Main we went north. Along the way we stopped at Toquart Lake to wash-off and get out of the heat for a bit. Afterwards we went towards the trailhead used for Mount Hall as it would also work for Sawtooth Peak. Unfortunately, when we got to the pass into the next valley, the gate was locked. It was likely that the lone truck we passed had just locked the gate. The posted open hours of 07:00 to 16:00 meant that Sawtooth wasn't a reasonable objective the next day if getting locked in was a probability. Resigned to not have a chance at it, Lindsay suggested that we go back and look at Black Peaks for our next day's adventure.

**Participants:** Lindsay Elms and Walter Moar

---

## Black Peaks: A Whale's Tale!

---

Lindsay Elms  
September 8

I am often asked how I get to find all these obscure peaks that I climb. My cynical response is easy – I look around! While sitting on the summits of all the mountains I climb I am always looking around for new (not in the literal sense) peaks to climb. I also spend a lot of time looking at topo maps and the Backroad Mapbook. No matter what the height of a peak is, there is always something interesting on the climb and it is always neat to see everything from a slightly different angle. Some of the peaks can be climbed in an hour, others will take a bit longer, but it is not about the time. Sometimes it's the challenge of figuring out the logging road access, but ultimately it's about the fun, the camaraderie, the thrill of exploring somewhere new and just being one with nature.

After failing to get to Sawtooth Peak, Walter and I decided to go back towards Handsome Mountain and go up something obscure called Black Peaks (1082m). We could have driven back out to Highway 4 and climbed something in the Mackenzie Range, but we thought we might as well stay in the area and do something off the beaten path. I had taken a cursory glance at Black Peaks last year while in the area and it seemed to fit-the-bill. After dinner I went for a run up the logging road to check out the best access point to the peak so that in the morning there would be no fart-



*The twin summits of Black Peaks and Toquart Bay from Handsome Mountain* PHOTO: WALTER MOAR

ing about and we could get straight down to business. I also needed to burn off some more energy!

The next morning, Walter and I walked up the logging road as it swung around towards the West Ridge of the peak. There had appeared to be fewer bluffs on this route and the trees looked bigger which meant more spacing between the trees, hence less bushwhacking. From the end of the road we struck across the slash and entered the forest. Although the terrain was steep, there was very little bushwhacking and the couple of small bluffs we encountered were easy to negotiate. Eventually we closed in on a subsidiary summit (still in the bush) and decided to climb around it on the right. In a matter of minutes we found that this wasn't the obvious route so we backtracked and climbed up to the left into a minor saddle. Twenty minutes later we were on the west summit looking across to the main summit. It was only about 200m away but we could see something glistening near the summit. What it was we couldn't make out, but it appeared to be manmade. Obviously someone else had been up there! However, to get across to the summit we were confronted by a descent that we hadn't anticipated. Below us the bush appeared to drop off vertically. We scrambled down 15m by clinging to bushes and saw a narrow ramp angling down to our left which bisected the rock wall. We were fortunate that this ramp existed because there was no way the rope would have been long enough to rappel down this bluff.

We angled down the ramp then scrambled along the ridge and up to the main summit to find a survey bolt on the rock and a helicopter landing platform. Since someone else had been to the summit (by helicopter), we were wondering if our ascent was a 1<sup>st</sup> climbing ascent! We didn't dwell on this for too long as we sat down to an early lunch and to enjoy the view.

There is something special being on a summit that looks out over the ocean! Out to the west was the Broken Islands, a popular kayaking and whale-watching area, while directly below us was Pipestem Inlet which comes in off the bay.

The heli-platform we were on was a perfect place to soak up some rays, but I found myself too excited to lay down for long. I would get up and pace from one side of the platform to the other: first looking down over the ocean and

then over the mountains on the otherside. I was thinking how lucky we are on the island as they don't get this contrast in the Rockies! However, while I was looking down at Pipestem Inlet I noticed a large ripple in the water. I thought it unusual to see such a large ripple as I couldn't imagine a seagull taking off making that much of a ripple. All of a sudden, a little further up the inlet, I saw a large fish breach the surface. "Walter, get over here, there's a whale down below!" We then spent the next 5 minutes watching the whale surface, dive and then surface again a little further up the inlet. What an incredible sight! How often can you be on the summit of a mountain and see a whale? An elk, wolf or a cougar maybe, but not a whale! This was another one of those "neat-o" moments.

On the descent I remembered back to a ski trip I did up Newcastle Ridge north of Sayward in March. I have seen many rimed trees over the years, but never any trees as thickly rimed as they were on this ridge, their frozen silhouettes reminding me of Roman centurions standing guard. In the background was Johnstone Strait. I couldn't help think that these centurions were guarding the strait! Later, the photo I took of this view won me first place in the Vancouver Island Mountain scenery category of this years photo contest. However, it got me realising how these lower, less frequented and more obscure mountains have their own little hidden gems to be seen. Every mountain is special!

**Participants:** Lindsay Elms and Walter Moar



---

## Summit solitude on Mount Burman

---

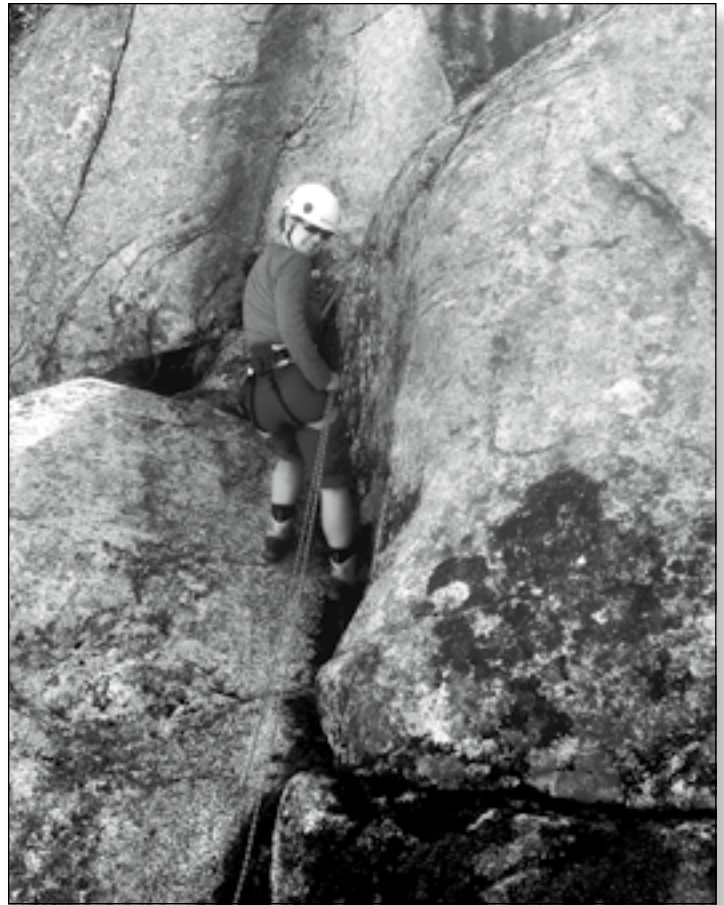
Janelle Curtis  
September 14

Standing on the north spur of Mount Burman where the route from Schjelderup Lake gains the ridge, we had a decision to make. It was just past 8 a.m. on day 3 of our adventure to summit Golden Hinde, the island's tallest peak. But on day 1, as we gazed upon the mountain from Phillip's Ridge, Erin had expressed some reservations. Fair enough; the Southeast Couloir looked intimidating! I hoped that as we neared, Erin, who is a strong hiker and rock climber, would warm up to the idea. But on day 3, she preferred to enjoy the view and read her book. As good friends, we could laugh about our contrasting personalities and the predicament we were in, with one being process-oriented and the other so very goal-oriented.

The options we discussed included: 1) attempting a solo ascent of Golden Hinde, 2) spending the day together enjoying some down time, or 3) exploring some less intimidating terrain close by. We quickly ruled out Option 1; conditions were excellent and I was sufficiently prepared and equipped, but there were few people on the route meaning that I would be heading into exposed terrain on my own, terrain that Erin preferred not to follow me into if I didn't return. Option 2 was less appealing for me; I was feeling strong and longing for the challenge of standing atop a summit! So we settled on Option 3, a solo attempt to summit Mount Burman, which had yet to be ticked off the list of "Climb the Island VI ACC Centenary Challenge" peaks.

Mount Burman's summit adorns a granite dome south of Golden Hinde, and rests above tree line at 1756m. From Phillip's Ridge, I had admired its symmetric shape, bright colour, and delicate network of snowfields. From where we stood, we weren't able to see the summit, but based on my map I guessed it would take 4 - 6 hours to make the return trip. We formulated a plan for responding if I didn't return in that time. I left some gear with Erin, taking only what I needed for a non-technical hike (Philip Stone's *Island Alpine* describes the approach as easy). Then I wished Erin a great day, crossed a small snow field, and started toward the cairns that marked the route up the first bump on the ridge.

Within 10 minutes I found the "tricky spot" Lindsay Elms had mentioned during a route-planning conversation: a short wall, maybe three metres high with a corner and few positive holds. I made the first few moves but felt clumsy on the damp corner with my big boots, and unsettled about the prospect of landing on jagged rocks. I spent the next hour exploring the base of the bump for an alternate route, choos-



Janelle Curtis rappelling down the "tricky spot" on the north ridge of Mt. Burman PHOTO: ERIN MCCLELLAND

ing instead to work my way up on the northwest side. My alternate route was steep and at times slippery on heather, huckleberry, and blueberry bushes, and I traversed some exposed slab and gullies. Discovering two cairns along the way, I was feeling confident about my choices but concerned about finding my way back, so I built several more cairns only to have them quickly disappear into the surroundings. I learned that there is a fine art to building visible cairns!

Once on top of the hump, I moved quickly over open terrain, stopping only to admire crystal clear ponds and sample huckleberries. The approach required crossing several snow fields (which had been crossed recently by wildlife, a bear!?) and scrambling up fine granite. As I neared the summit, I recalled an online trip report describing a ledge to the northwest, so I headed in that direction. Sure enough, I found the ledge and picked my way across to the southern edge of the summit, almost losing balance at the startling sound of a flushing ptarmigan. From there it was a few easy moves to the summit cairn. The register was tucked safely inside a rusty red can and only one other party had signed in during the past year. Wishing I had carried my SLR, I sent myself a SPOT check-in and committed the scene to memory; crisp

blue sky, shimmering green lakes, red-tinged meadows, and layers upon layers of steel grey summits. There, I lay on the warm slab of rock and spent an hour enjoying, for the first time, a little bit of summit solitude.

On the way down, I explored possible routes leading around the southeast side of Mount Burman. It seemed this would have required either crossing a wide snowfield marred by sections of rotten snow concealing melt water, or taking a long detour below the snowfield. Instead, I boot skied alongside my tracks and retraced my steps to the top of the first bump. From there, I followed a trail leading to the tricky spot and wondered if it would seem as tricky from above (it did). Erin, having watched me make my way down to this point called out jovially, “hey, how are you going to get down from there?!” But I had a cunning plan. With a 2.5m piece of webbing I had carried with me, I had just enough length to lower my pack down to her. Erin then attached the rope and harness I had left with her earlier, allowing me to retrieve the gear and set up a solid rappel on a perfect little anchor. In the future, I will think twice about ditching gear (and my camera) to lighten my pack, even for an “easy” approach!

Erin, having enjoyed a restful day was all smiles. And I was all smiles, having enjoyed a lovely hike and set up my first rappel in the backcountry. By then it was nearing 2 p.m. After exchanging stories, we made our way back to Schjeldepur Lake, packed up camp and enjoyed our long, more process-oriented trek back toward civilization. But standing atop Golden Hinde remains one of my goals!

**Participant:** Janelle Curtis

---

## Jacklah Mountain: A Little Known Gem with Spectacular Views

---

Peggy Taylor  
September 15 - 16

What is a gal to do when her hubby disappears to Belize for 10 days of fun in the sun and diving tropical waters with his buddy?? Well of course go hiking! I had been making some minor forays into the “interweb”, via Facebook, and signed onto the Vancouver Island Climbing & Mountaineering group after Peter Rothermel informed me of its existence. Low and behold, Val Wootton posted an interesting looking weekend hiking trip on the group site to a little known peak near Gold River called Jacklah Mountain. It happened to be scheduled for the weekend of September 15 – 16 when Roger was away...perfect!! Of course my first



*Jacklah Mountain from ridge near Matchlee Mountain*

PHOTO: LINDSAY ELMS

thought was...hmm...Lindsay Elms...he is a really fit guy and he loves to crash through bush; can I possibly keep up to him? Well no way to know unless you try. I love the Gold River area and the weather had been holding out nicely. I had always wanted to hike with Val and Lindsay, ever since Roger and I met Lindsay so many years ago on our first ACC outing to the Comox Glacier when he kindly came to our rescue at dinner time with a functional lighter as our lighter and matches were not working! I just had to sign on.

Once all the initial emails flew back and forth for organizing the weekend, we ended up with a great group...Lindsay, Val, Hunter Lee, Rod Szasz, Peter Ravensbergen, Frank Willie Jr. and myself. Hunter and I decided to carpool to Comox on Friday evening as Val and Lindsay had kindly offered to let us bunk in their home overnight. It was lovely to get a good night's sleep and not have to drive up island during the pre-dawn hours on Saturday morning. Early in the morning Rod and Peter met us at the house and sorted out vehicles to travel to Gold River. Lindsay had previously arranged for Maxi's Water Taxi to take us from the Gold River dock at 9 a.m. across Muchalat Inlet to an old logging camp dock at Jacklah Bay. When we arrived at Gold River, Frank was waiting for us at the dock (he had arisen at an ungodly hour to drive up from Victoria); we pooled our cash to pay for the rather high water taxi fee and we were off. The price (\$300.00 return) was much more reasonable when split between the seven of us. The morning was clear and cool but windy so we donned our toques and gloves for the long 7 minute boat ride!

Arriving at Jacklah Bay, our packs were donned in short order and we were hiking up the logging road by 9:10 a.m. A short distance up the logging road, repairs were being done on the bridge over the Jacklah River and we enjoyed looking at the water-sculpted smooth limestone rock below. A few



*Jacklah Bay from the summit of Jacklah Mountain*

PHOTO: VALERIE WOOTTON

minutes further on we stopped to assess pack contents, pool resources somewhat and stash unnecessary gear in the bush. We'd just have to remember to pick it up on the return trip! Off we trundled with lighter packs. As we gained elevation and moved out of the shade, layers were peeled off. Lindsay had written in his email that he and Val would be wearing runners due to the 14 kilometres of logging road. I like ankle support and my runners were not in great shape, so I opted for an older pair of day hikers...a bit of an experiment as the inside material was getting worn through in the heels. More on that decision later. We chatted and got to know one another better as we progressed up the road, proving to me yet again that hikers are the very best folk in the world! A stop was made on the road around noon to have a lunch break and rest.

Snaking up the road led us to a section where Matchlee Mountain was directly ahead of us; 'Twas a lovely sight with snow still gracing its upper reaches and summit! On the side of the road we encountered a tangle of pink, ground-hugging vines...a beautiful and odd sight. None of us knew what this was but it was decided that this was a "Neat-O" moment...one of more yet to come! From this point we could see a subsidiary summit of Jacklah Mountain with an obvious patch of limestone on its upper south slope. We needed to find a campsite with a water source. Upon reaching a small waterfall that came down the hillside and flowed across a rut in the road we rested while Lindsay took a quick jog up the road and determined that this would likely be the last source of water. At 1:30 p.m., it was decided that this would be camp. Originally, the plan was to set up camp and climb Jacklah on the Sunday. However, the group was feeling strong and we still had plenty of daylight, so we stripped our packs to only what was needed and headed off at about 2 p.m. I had felt

some blisters starting on the back of my heels, so before we left I put moleskin on the tender areas and hoped that would keep my feet happy.

We negotiated an old cut-block section, scrambling over and around strewn logs and stumps for about 10 minutes until we reached the old growth forest. Lindsay ably led us through the bush and up a hill. We topped this hill and slashed our way down the other side, utilizing many organic belays, slipping now and again (well some of us were anyhow!), and then side-hilled a bit to the left to make our way over to the Southeast Ridge that would lead up to the summit of Jacklah. I was told this was not serious Island bush-whacking, but it seemed challenging enough with day hikers that had a very worn tread and a slightly out of shape person wearing them! But I was having fun nonetheless and made sure to try to keep the person ahead of me in sight. It was very easy to quickly lose the group in the bush if you got behind, or were not paying attention, but a quick shout would locate someone in short order. It was interesting terrain, in that there seemed to be lots of depressions in the hillside. No doubt some of these might have holes leading to caves as the area around Gold River and Tahsis has many caves and many yet to be discovered and explored. (See article in Canadian Geographic, July-August 2012 entitled *Amazing Caves...* a great read with wonderful photos of caves on Vancouver Island and in Alberta). The terrain gradually turned from old growth forest to rock and smaller shrubs/trees making for a nice easy walk up the Southeast Ridge with only a few spots where hands were required for stabilization. The views just kept getting better as we climbed and the summit at 1405m was reached around 4 p.m. It was a lovely time of day to summit with that amazing late afternoon light. We could see down to the dock at Jacklah Bay; over hazy valleys towards the Pacific Ocean; east to Matchlee Mountain and southeast to Splendour Mountain. Further to the east we could see the Golden Hinde, Mount Colonel Foster and Elkhorn amongst a sea of other peaks and hills. This all-encompassing perspective I have not seen before and it was breathtaking. We enjoyed a leisurely time relaxing in the warmth of the sun, eating our snacks and taking in the expansive views and, of course, taking the necessary group summit photo.

Sadly we had to tear ourselves away from this fantastic spot and started to head down around 5 p.m. We backtracked along the same route for the most part, with a brief stop on the limestone to check out the interesting wave-like features in the rock – another "Neat-O" moment! We were back to our camp spot on the logging road by about 6:30 p.m. with grins on our faces and a few more scratches and dings to show for our efforts. I was feeling my feet at this point and knew for sure that it would indeed be time to buy some new day hikers. But this wee problem was nothing that more moleskin would not help cure...a great invention. Tents were



thrown up in short order, sleeping pads and bags sorted out and even a bivy bag was seen (Rod you hardy fellow). Lindsay built us a nice fire on the side of the logging road. Needless to say there was no lack of fuel lying about! We were treated to a nice sunset as dinners were consumed. Discussions ensued around the campfire and star-gazing took over as night set in. After ensuring that the fire was fully out, most turned in around 10 p.m. I stayed up a bit longer to do a few yoga stretches and soak in the night sky and quiet...sigh...we are so blessed to have these opportunities and rare moments.

Morning comes early for me when I am camping...the back just ain't what it used to be! So at 5 a.m. I arose to spend a penny, do more yoga and revel in a beautiful pink, purple and orange sunrise. No alarms were set and the group all gradually awoke as internal clocks dictated. As breaky was being eaten Rod started wondering about another objective for the day. We did not have to be back to the dock to meet the water taxi for the return trip until 4:30 p.m. and there were places to be explored! So all but Peter and myself decided to tackle an unnamed peak, off a side logging road just down from camp. My feet were feeling quite tired and the sun was lovely. So a rest day felt like a wonderful luxury and just the ticket at that point. The rest of the group pared down their gear and headed off to conquer another high spot at about 10:45 a.m.

Peter and I decided to amble over through a cut block to a small lake to check it out. A half hour's walk took us to the lake and on its swampy shores we saw some nice plants and some obvious game trails to its edge (probably bear as there was bear scat in abundance on the logging road up). Peter educated me on the names of some of the plants of the area and I took a few macro shots. We hung out there for about a half hour and then headed back to where we could lounge in the sun, snack and chat. Ah, life is rough. It was a treat to just hang out and soak in the surroundings. While hanging out, Peter and I wondered whether or not the rest of the group had managed to get to the top in the allotted time. As we were musing on that, Peter's eagle eyes spotted someone moving on the summit! We heard a holler and saw a wave and I gave the standard Canadian "Bob & Doug A-ru-coo-coo-coo-coo-coo-coo" greeting back. Hey...another "Neat-O" moment that Peter happened to spot them up there. We were happy to see that they made it up safely and in good time.

### Unnamed Summit 1223m.

By Valerie Wootton

After leaving Peter and Peggy on the road we headed up the open forest aware of bluffs lurking in the forest above us. As we got higher in the forest the slope became steeper and we ended up on a narrow rib beside a steep gully; by this time we were pulling ourselves up by roots and branches. Once at the top, the angle eased off and we came upon a small lake



*Jacklah Mountain summit group. Standing - Rod Szasz, Hunter Lee and Peter Ravensbergen; Sitting - Frank Wille Jr, Valerie Wootton, Lindsay Elms and Peggy Taylor* PHOTO: VALERIE WOOTTON

to our right; there were a couple of alternatives for going up from this point. We choose to go up a steep creek bed out to our left which unfortunately after 100 metres became dangerously slippery forcing us out to our right onto another steep rib. With a bit of grunting and assistance from shrubbery, we arrived in a saddle between two peaks; to our right was the lower peak and to the left the higher peak. From here it was easy scrambling to a rock wall which was guarding the summit. We managed to zigzag up through the bluffs needing to make low fifth class moves in places. We arrived on the summit (3.5 kilometres southeast of Jacklah Mountain) with plenty of time to descend and reach the dock for our departure time. We saw Peter and Peggy far below reclining on the road. After ten minutes on the summit taking in the views and getting the summit photo; we descended, retracing our steps down to the saddle. From the saddle we found an easier route down to the lake; from here we quickly descended straight down to the logging road where we had entered the forest. We found Peter and Peggy a few hundred metres up the road lounging like a couple of lizards.

### Back to Peggy's narration:

The gang arrived back at our lounging area; flush with their success at around 2 p.m. There was time for a quick break to snack, repack the large packs and head-off down the road. Val and I had a wonderful, gal to gal, chat on the way down the logging road; it was a pleasure to get to know her a wee bit better. By this time my feet were feeling a bit thrashed, but I was still able to walk and was happy that I did not opt to go up the hill...a wise decision in retrospect. Luckily, Lindsay remembered the stashed gear and we collected it and arrived early at the dock at about 4:10 p.m. to see that the

water taxi was also early. We loaded our packs into the boat for the short ride back. On the other side, we packed up the cars, changed into fresh clothes and street shoes and headed for the Gold River Pub (Pipers on the Ridge Neighborhood Pub) for a meal before the long drive back down to Victoria. We were very happy to see that the pub was in operation again after several years of being closed and enjoyed a hearty meal. OK...it was not gourmet, but it sure hit the spot after a weekend of exercise and fresh air!

Thanks to each person in the group for contributing to an extremely enjoyable weekend and especially to Lindsay for organizing the trip and water taxi, route-finding on the fly and slowing down for those of us in a pudgier state of being! So how many peaks over 1400m left to climb on the island now Lindsay?

**Participants:** Lindsay Elms, Val Wootton, Rod Szasz, Peter Ravensbergen, Hunter Lee, Frank Willie Jr. and Peggy Taylor

---

## Upana Mountain

---

Lindsay Elms  
September 17

Jacklah Mountain had been a fun trip starting off with the boat ride across Muchalat Inlet, summiting the mountain in beautiful weather with a great group of people who we got to know over three days, the ride back across the inlet and finally dinner at Pipers on the Ridge pub. However, after everyone began their drive back to their respective homes, Val and I still had one more day before we had to go home. With the weather forecast promising the same as we'd been experiencing, we just had to do something. That something had to be a new adventure! Something we hadn't climbed before! For the new adventure we chose Upana Mountain.

From downtown Gold River, if you look northwest (in the direction of Muchalat Lake) there is a peak standing out alone with a large burn on its South Face. This is Upana Mountain (1340m). Not a big mountain compared to those around it, but we guessed that it would have an interesting view, from the summit, of all the peaks we were becoming familiar with.

We drove out of Gold River in the direction of Tahsis, but after crossing the Gold River we turned right onto the logging road that heads to Woss via Muchalat and Vernon Lake. Not far up the road on the left was a logging road that passed through a clearing under the hydro lines. This was the road we wanted (in the Backroad Mapbook it is labelled M3). Although in places the bush encroached over the road scrap-



*Upana Mountain* PHOTO: VALERIE WOOTTON

ing the paint job on the Toyota, the road was actually in great shape and we slowly zig-zagged our way up onto the eastern slopes of the Upana Mountain. Prior to leaving home we had looked at Google Earth and it showed the road going up high into a relatively fresh cut-block. Just before we reached those cut blocks we came across a wash-out at a creek that only quads, motor-bikes or shank's pony, could get through. Val waited at the vehicle while I walked through. A few minutes up the road I came across the cut-block and finally got to see the mountain. The East Face of the mountain was above me and the traverse through the bush to the Southeast Ridge looked like it would be okay. I could see that it would be a fifteen minute walk from the vehicle to the end of the road.

The next morning dawned fine and with light packs we started up the road; fresh Elk sign all around us. From the end of the road we struck up into the bush following a rib that headed up towards the line of bluffs above. Before reaching the bluffs we began traversing left across the face towards a big gully that angled up to the Southeast Ridge. A few bushy sections, but for the most part it was fairly open. As soon as we topped out on the ridge we stopped for a break, enjoying the view southeast towards Gold River and Matchlee Mountain, and to Big Baldy Mountain, which was looming immediately to our south.

Below us and to our left were the remains of the old burn from the fire that swept across the face in the summer of 1958. At the time it was difficult for firefighters to get to the fire due to the steep terrain and updrafts which were fuelling the flames so the fire continued to burn for several days. Looking above us we noted that the terrain steepened. Following the Southeast Ridge we encountered several rock bluffs, some that we were able to enjoy scrambling up. Eventually the angled eased off and we broke out onto heather slopes. The easy summit ridge snaked up toward a radio repeater perched on the

mountains highest point. Just beyond the tower was a helipad; a nice flat bench to have lunch and kick-back.

Taking in the 360 degree view there weren't too many peaks I hadn't climbed (named ones anyway), however, to the north of us, and immediately northeast of Muchalat Lake, were two unnamed peaks that I hadn't noticed before that I thought would be worthwhile objectives in the coming weeks as the days got shorter. Both peaks were over 1400m and were situated at the southern end of the long ridge containing Maquilla Peak (in the north), Sutton Peak, Mount Alston and Waring Peak. Both of these unnamed peaks had logging roads switch-backing up from the west into recent cut-blocks that would make them both easy day trips. I drew the roads onto my topo map and took photos of the peaks for later reference.

After enjoying "summit time" we were ready to head back down the mountain. We descended the ridge and then got into the gully back under the East Face. Instead of traversing back across to our ascent route, we made a beeline down through the forest following a creek that would eventually bring us back to the washout where the vehicle was parked. Although bushy in a couple places, the route was straight forward and an hour later we were stashing our packs in the Toyota. Our new adventure was over and we were ready for the drive back home, but we had seen that there were more new adventures out there for us in the future.

**Participants:** Lindsay Elms and Val Wootton

---

## Nahmint Mountain

---

Dave Suttill  
September 30

This year's "Climb the Island" challenge spawned a number of great trips! Perhaps the most memorable for me was the Peak 5040 ridge traverse to Nahmint Mountain. Michael Whitney, Roxanne Stedman and I had been on a club trip to 5040 at the end of June so we were familiar with first part of the approach. At that time the trail was covered in snow above the 800m level and the entire trip was in near zero visibility. We resolved to return later in the summer when the weather was better and the snow gone. I found myself back at Peak 5040 in the glorious weather of early September and so had an enticing look at the ridge connecting Nahmint. As September dragged by I started to wonder, could Nahmint be done in a day from the Cobalt Lake trailhead this late in the season? I knew it had been done in mid-summer in 16 hours.



*Roxanne Stedman and the West Face of Nahmint Mountain*

PHOTO: DAVE SUTTILL

Roxanne and I actually had our sights set on Nahmint Mountain earlier in the summer and had extracted a "promise" from Walter Moar to leave Nahmint for us. Walter was intent on bagging a number of peaks in the Kennedy River area at the time. Our first trip to Nahmint on the August long weekend was cut short by helicopter logging which was blocking road access to the upper Nahmint valley. We redirected our efforts that day to nearby Klitsa Mountain where we at least had a good view of Nahmint and the connecting ridge to Peak 5040.

With the prospect of this year's endless summer drawing to a close, Roxanne and I set out for the Cobalt Lake trailhead on the afternoon of September 29. Unfortunately, Mike was not able to come this time. We stopped for fish and chips at the Bare Bones restaurant in Port Alberni. We then headed off, arriving at the trailhead just as it was getting dark. We only scraped the trailer hitch of the Subaru once on the 29 water bars of the decommissioned logging road on the way in. This was the weekend of the full moon, the harvest moon (climber's moon?), so if we were still out when darkness set in, we knew there would be some light.

We started out on Sunday morning at 6:45 a.m., ½ hour before official sunrise. The trail begins by going up old logging slash that soon gives way to steep mature forest. Before long we were half way to Cobalt Lake, getting beautiful views of Triple Peak to the south in the first rays of sunlight. By this time the forest was becoming increasingly open. Cobalt Lake is very scenic, perched in a small hanging valley at tree line on the southwest flank of Peak 5040. By 8:30 a.m. we were way above it at the top the southeast shoulder of Peak 5040 wondering what the condition of the snowfield on the other side would be like. We did bring ice axes but no crampons. Luckily a rocky ridge splitting the snowfield was free of snow



so we didn't need ice axes after all. The snow was rock hard in the slightly below freezing temperatures and would have been impossible to safely negotiate with the equipment we had.

From here on it was simply a matter of following the ups and downs of the ridge leading to Nahmint Mountain. I had it in the back of my mind that 1 p.m. would be the turnaround time if we were to be back before dark. I figured there was some leeway as we both had headlamps and after all, this was the Climber's Moon. The ridge itself was at tree line, with a mix of bedrock and scrub. By 9:15 a.m. we were 1 kilometre along the ridge and not likely to encounter any more snow so we stashed our ice axes and had our first short break. Another hour saw us at one of the high points on the ridge at 1260m. The view was so good it called for another break. Soon we were above beautiful Beverley Lake with views across it to Mount Arrowsmith off in the distance. Just before getting to the West Peak of Nahmint we passed by a 12 metre wooden tower housing what looked to be a wireless weather station. Finding a way past the bluffs on the West Peak proved to be a bit of a challenge. By noon this obstacle was behind us and we were at the base of the final peak of Nahmint with only 200m vertical of moderately challenging scrambling to go. Route finding was fairly easy, but we did take the precaution of flagging the tops of a number of small vegetated gullies to keep us on route for the way down. We spent a good half hour on the summit taking in the view before our turnaround time arrived and we needed to head back. The summit register was in good order.

The return trip went a little faster as the ground was now familiar and we were able to take a few short cuts here and there. Of course we removed any bits of flagging we placed on our way in as we wanted to leave the route in the same state that we had found it. We didn't immediately locate our ice axe stash as what looked to be an obvious place on the way in was not quite so obvious on the way back. Luckily we had placed a way point on our GPS so we found them easy enough. We were back on the Southeast Ridge of Peak 5040 with a little over an hour and a half left before sunset so we elected to take a quick side trip to its summit. We were just entering the logging slash at the bottom of the forest as it was getting dark. The sun sets early in the mountains!

The drive back in the dark seemed long, but was uneventful. We didn't scrape bottom anywhere.

**Participants:** Roxanne Stedman and Dave Suttill

---

## Strathcona Skyline Traverse # 4: Mount Thelwood and Moyeha Mountain

---

Dave Campbell

October 3 - 5

The final installment of summer skyline trips actually started as a club ski trip in the spring. In April, Martin Hoffman, Janelle Curtis, Kate Gigiel, Charles Turner and I, attempted to ski out to Mount Thelwood. We were slowed by some challenging terrain, snow conditions and cornices, and ultimately bailed about half the way out to Mount Thelwood.



*Looking along the divide to Mount Thelwood* PHOTO: DAVE CAMPBELL

I was excited to get back, and I was able to sneak a trip in in our never ending summer in early October. I've been up to Tennant Lake a number of times now, and with the trip earlier in the year I had the route fairly dialed. From the end of the road at Tennant Lake, the route traverses around the north side of the lake, and then up the first major drainage on the other side. This is really the only awkward terrain on the whole trip, and otherwise it is all pretty easy going and not overly tricky (after a summer of getting beaten up by Vancouver Island terrain I was pretty excited about "easy" travel).

To get back to Mount Thelwood requires a lot of ups and downs, and with a bunch of snow still around travel was pretty fast through many sections. Granite heaven! By the end of the day I pulled into the lake just to the east at the foot of Mount Thelwood and set up camp.

My plan for day 2 was to leave camp where it was, and do a loop tour up Mount Thelwood and then over to Moyeha Mountain and back. The route up Thelwood itself was pretty



*Moyeha Mountain from Mount Thelwood, with the ascent route up snow slopes on the left* PHOTO: DAVE CAMPBELL

straight-forward, other than a little bit of extra work to get up the main peak (which is a little ways back and marginally higher than the first high point you climb on the ridge).

From the summit, I worked back towards the sub-peak, and then down the South Ridge of the mountain. This was mostly straight-forward, but did require a bit of bluff and bush management. About 2/3's the way down I veered right into the broader tributary valley, and then into the flat Thelwood/Moyeha col. From the col, the route up Moyeha Mountain was fairly obvious. First I worked my way east to gain a higher bench and then up a gully on the northeast side of the mountain. The gully turned icy and was steep, so I veered out of it on the left to gain the ridge top and this brought me to the upper snowfield. From there it was straight-forward to traverse around the snowfield and gain the summit.

From the top, I retraced my steps back down to the col. On the map it looked like the gully heading straight down from my camp was not too steep, so, with some trepidation, decided to give it a go to get back to camp. I headed down valley towards Upper Thelwood Lake, and then veered left when I hit my drainage. Almost immediately up the gully there was a big headwall. Fortunately, I noticed a piece of flagging off to the left, and I was able to get around the first bit on this route, and then jumped back in the gully above the headwall. The gully itself was a pleasure, with some interesting scrambling bits, but always climbable. Near the top I busted left out of the gully to try to avoid some difficulties near the top. This worked out perfectly, and out of the gully I was able to follow some heathery terrain to gain an elevation about even, or maybe 100 feet higher, than my lake camp. Then I was able to easily traverse into the pass and back to camp (I don't think the gully I was in would have "gone" all the way to the pass). I pulled into camp just at dusk and

enjoyed a nice hot soup and hunkered down for the night.

Day 3 and the weather was still amazing! I slept in a bit, and then had a leisurely hike out along the same route I had taken in (along the Myra/Thelwood divide). The weather was amazing, and I stopped for swims in 2 tarns along the way. Then an easy hike out along the Tennant Lake road.

Of all the traverses I have done in Strathcona, the Thelwood divide really sticks out as being one traverse that has the highest enjoyment vs. suffering ratio. The terrain is really manageable, and while it might be strenuous in terms of all the ups and downs, it is quite hike-able and there are no big cruxes to deal with. And the granite slabby terrain is amazing. I highly recommend it!

**Solo Participant:** Dave Campbell

---

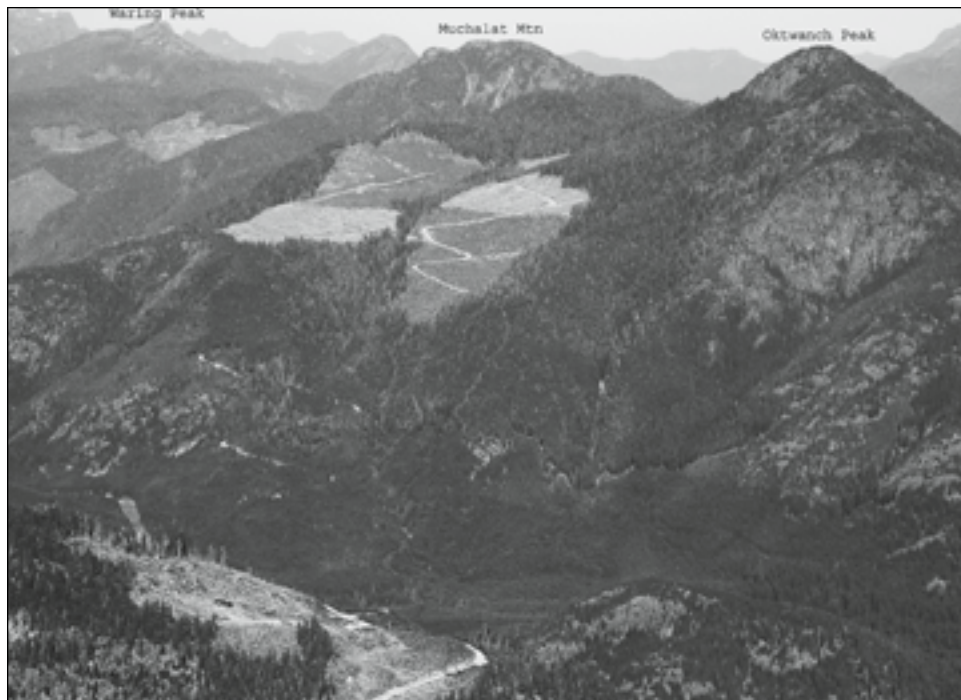
## Muchalat Mountain and Oktwanch Peak

---

**Lindsay Elms**  
**October 4-5**

After looking through the historical survey notes I had accumulated, I found the lower of the two peaks that I looked at from the top of Upana Mountain had been used as a survey station and the notes stated that a brass bolt (#123) was cemented to the summit. The station was occupied by the surveyor Alfred Slocombe in 1947 and was known as O.K.T. Slocombe was also on Waring Peak (and many others) that same year and the station, which was also marked by a brass survey bolt (#120) and a six foot high cairn, was called Wanch. He calculated the height of the peak (O.K.T.) as 4646ft, which converts to 1416m, however, when we took our GPS to the summit it read 1414m. In the scheme of things two metres doesn't make a big difference as this peak is the lowest on the ridge starting north at Maquilla Peak (a corruption of Chief Maquinna's name) and is not one of the contenders for the highest on the island. South of Maquilla on this long ridge is Sutton Peak (named after William John Sutton, a geologist and later Provincial Government assayer), Mount Alston (named for Edward Graham Alston, a lawyer and politician in Victoria during the 1860's), Waring Peak (named after Slocombe's camp cook Harry L. Waring who was injured in the field and died soon thereafter) and then Peak 1456m (4777ft) which on the Bivouac.com website, Robin Tivy calls Oktwanch Peak. Finally at the southern end is Peak 1414m.

Without reading through Slocombe's Field Book for the 1947 season, I have assumed that the two stations, O.K.T. and Wanch, were named after the Oktwanch River which flows into Muchalat Lake. Both of the peaks are to the east of



*Oktwanch Peak, Muchalat Mountain and Waring peak from Upana Mountain*

PHOTO: VALERIE WOOTTON

the Oktwanch River. As the crow flies Peak 1456 is 6.75km southeast of Waring Peak and Peak 1414 is 3.5km south-east of Peak 1456. All these numbers can be confusing so I have decided to simplify things by giving these two peaks unofficial names: Muchalat Mountain and Oktwanch Peak, however, I have given the lower of the two peaks the name Oktwanch, and not the higher as found on Bivouac.com, based on Slocombe's O.K.T. station name. The higher peak I have called Muchalat Mountain. I don't believe someone sitting at a desk in front of their computer in Vancouver, who hasn't set foot on the peak, should be arbitrarily naming our mountains on Vancouver Island. Traditionally, although never officially acknowledged, those who made the first ascent usually had the honour to name the peak. Slocombe more-than-likely made the first ascent of Oktwanch Peak, however, when we reached the summit of Muchalat Mountain there was no sign of any previous ascent and I am not aware of any recorded ascent. Today the naming process is regulated and there are policies and procedures to follow. It is a multifaceted process when a name has been proposed and currently no new names have been adopted as the naming process is largely at a standstill due to layers of land claims negotiations underway at the moment.

We left Comox with a weather forecast that was predicting daytime temperatures in the mid 20's and the forecasters were expecting this pattern to hold for the next week. Was this the beginning of an Indian summer? There would be no complaints from me as summer is never long enough! After

passing through Gold River we took the back road (Gold River - Woss) to Muchalat Lake. Opposite the Muchalat Lake Forestry Campsite, a logging spur turned right and wound up into the cut-blocks west of Oktwanch Peak taking us to almost 1000 metres. This was the road we had noted from the summit of Upana Mountain a couple of weeks ago.

From the end of the logging road the ascent looked a breeze, but I have learned to be leery on the peaks on this part of the island so I packed a light rope. We crossed the cut-block into the trees then angled right up to a saddle to the northwest of the peak. The ridge above steepened and in a couple of places we were using vegetation to pull ourselves up, but it was all well secured by its roots. It turned out to be a short, easy ascent taking only one and a half hours which meant we had plenty of time to enjoy the summit. Apart from looking at all the mountains sur-

rounding us, I also spent some time looking at the access to Muchalat Mountain. Tomorrow's climb!

After a couple of hours on top we began the descent arriving back at the vehicle mid afternoon. We drove down the road a few hundred metres to a nice level spot where we would camp. There had not been a cloud in the sky all day and I was hoping for a beautiful sunset and as we were facing west we would have the sun until late into the evening.

An hour before it got dark I lit a fire (no shortage of dry wood) and we sat in our chairs with a beer and a cider in our hands as we watched the sky gradually go through its changes from blue to yellow, orange, purple, crimson, blood red and finally black. The prominent peak on the horizon being the Nootka Matterhorn - Conuma Peak! About 10:30 p.m., with millions of twinkling stars, the occasional shooting star and the odd spy satellite overhead, we called it a night. ZZZZZZ!

After breakfast the next morning, we drove back down to Muchalat Lake then continued along the road in the direction of Woss. We drove about 9 -10 kilometres and turned right onto the Sheena Road. This road wound up and up and up and eventually took us to 1000 metres northwest of Muchalat Mountain. However, we couldn't quite get to the end of the road because of a washout. It was another beautiful day but the route ahead looked a little more challenging as there appeared to be more bluffs along our chosen route. Also, we couldn't tell from where we were which of the summits was the highest, and if it was the southern most peak there might be a short rappel to get to it.



At the end of the road we found Elk trails through the cut-block into the old growth which is always a good sign. I was surprised though at the gradient of the terrain that they were climbing up (or down). With very little underbrush and the ground being bone-dry, we struggled with footing at times, but it sure beat wallowing through wet bush. Half way up we arrived at a bench which trended left. Here we startled a couple of deer who took off along the bench - if they can go that way then so can we! In a couple of places we got onto the rock to enjoy its feel and then we broke out onto pleasant heather slopes. One hundred metres higher we were on the northernmost summit. No cairn or sign of anyone having been up here!

We continued along the ridge to the south to the middle summit. Again no cairn! To the south was the third summit but it was hard to tell if the one we were on was higher or not. What did the GPS say - 1456 metres. Okay, we would have to go across to the next summit and see what its height was. We were able to avoid rappelling into the notch by down climbing the rock and then we scrambled up to the third summit. The GPS read 1451 metres. Looking back at the middle summit we couldn't tell that we were 5 metres lower it. Sometimes you just have to climb everything to be sure!

We spent another 2 hours on this summit making the most of a beautiful October day, but eventually we had to drag ourselves down. The descent back to the vehicle was uneventful as was the drive to Gold River. In Gold River we had to make a brief stop at the Kings Peak café (for their cinnamon buns) before driving back to Comox! It was hard to leave the area with such beautiful weather predicted for the next few days. We would have had no problem finding something to climb, but sometimes you have to leave something for next year.

**Participants:** Lindsay Elms and Val Wootton

---

## Another day at the spa on Elkhorn South

---

Janelle Curtis  
October 6 - 8

My curiosity about Elkhorn South (a.k.a. Mt. Colwell) stirred when Lindsay Elms mentioned the name in passing as we, a band of eight Centennial Summiteers, scrambled up the Northwest Ridge toward the summit of Elkhorn Mountain amidst thick clouds. Atop the misty summit, I imagined the contours on my map taking formidable shapes all around us. Elkhorn South is a 1989 m peak counterpoised by what Philip Stone described as a

“sweeping ramp” leading to a dizzying 1280m drop into the Cervus Valley, among the longest walls on the island. When I noticed Elkhorn South was still on the list of unclimbed summits in the ACCVI's Climb the Island Centenary Challenge, Lenka, Sarah, and I decided to make it our Thanksgiving weekend adventure.

There are few descriptions of the approach to Elkhorn South, but Peter Rothermel's 2006 ACCVI report and a few online comments had us prepared for a long day trip from camp (10 - 14 hours), some “scrambly bits”, and some challenges negotiating bluffs. We were also duly warned about the possibility of encountering “*Bushwhackerus horribilis!*” Indeed, this would be the first time any of us had led a *bush-whack*, and we wondered if we would have sufficient time in the shortened fall days to find our way to and from the summit. Being well-equipped for the challenge, we set off down the Elk River Trail at noon on October 6 and arrived 4 - 5 hours later at the upper gravel bar camp site. The hike along the ERT was very pleasant: we were treated to sweet huckleberries, a carpet of fall leaves, mushrooms of all shapes, colours, sizes and textures, and a dramatic alpine scene that gradually unfolded as we gained elevation. Our first glimpses of the magnificent slab supporting the summit of Elkhorn South had me grinning in anticipation of the following day's adventure.

The upper gravel bar camp offered sheltered tent sites, a comfortable riverside kitchen, a deep in-river bathtub, and access to the base of Elkhorn South. After making camp, we followed the river upstream to see if we could find signs of a flagged route to save time with route finding the following morning. We found a large log just above camp to cross the river (as described in Peter's report), and followed the river through a series of open meadows until we were forced by a shrubbery to move up into the forest. We kept parallel to the river until we came to a dry creek bed. The route descriptions we had on hand suggested keeping the creek bed to the left, but as we gained elevation, we discovered a whole complex of creek beds weaving in and out of the forest. After scouting the area for the dry creek bed, we eventually spotted a piece of flagging tape, which we took as a sign that we were on the right track. Marking a waypoint, we turned back to camp just as dusk was settling in. Lenka stayed up to admire the stars while Sarah and I crawled into warm sleeping bags and shared stories of alpine adventures.

At 7:30 a.m. the next morning, we made our way back to our waypoint and began gaining elevation along a narrow ridge that eventually led us to alpine meadows. Apart from a brief detour into thick alder growing along the margins of a creek, the bushwhacking was pleasantly straightforward through relatively open forest. After some time, we arrived at the first set of bluffs and avoided Peter's airy moss traverse by climbing a short chimney offering safe passage.

# 2012 PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS



**Vancouver Island Mountains**  
*Sentinels Watching Johnstone Strait*  
Photo: Lindsay Elms

**Summer Mountain Activity**  
*Airy Traverse*  
Photo: Nicole Barrette



**Mountain Scenery**  
*The Mountain is in the Selkirks*  
*The Moon is in Taurus*  
Photo: Hugh Thompson



**Nature**  
*Bald Eagle*  
 Photo: Phee Hudson

**Winter Mountain Activity**  
*Keeping Track*  
 Photo: Catrin Brown



**Humour**  
*Route Finding in the Dolomites*  
 Photo: Simon McVaugh-Smock





Lenka Visnovska (L) and Janelle Curtis (R) on the summit of Elkhorn South, with Elkhorn Mountain in the background. PHOTO: SARAH DAVIES

The second set of bluffs was more challenging to negotiate and we were confused by flagging tape that seemed to lead in two directions. I explored the base of the bluffs while Lenka and Sarah followed one set of flags that veered to the left through the forest. I found what seemed to be an established trail along a narrow ledge below the bluffs. Sarah and Lenka joined me there, and we followed the ledge around to the left of the bluffs and scrambled up some exposed rock to a secure meadow where we stopped for lunch. From there we easily gained open terrain and made our way toward the summit.

Other trip reports commented on the sheer length of the ramp leading to the top, but I think we barely noticed the distance in our summit feverish state! I do recall scrutinizing the Southwest Ridge leading to Elkhorn Mountain, drinking from cool creeks shimmering under sunny blue skies, enjoying the cushioning comfort of heather underfoot, and noticing the complete lack of wind or noise whenever we paused for a breath. After leaving Sarah at about 5500ft to suntan and nap (she had been kept awake most of the night by two elk), I joined Lenka on the summit where we marvelled at the dizzying 1280m drop and views of Elkhorn, King's Peak, Rambler Peak, Mount Colonel Foster, and the befuddling Puzzle Mountain, which we had attempted to approach only weeks before.

On the summit, we found two containers tucked inside the cairn. The first had a record of Lindsay Elms' 2001 trip, and the second contained an ACCVI summit register left

by Peter Rothermel in 2006. Initially we were impressed with our time, having reached the summit within 5 hours. After all, Lindsay had summited in 4 hours ... but then we realized that was his time from the parking lot! We were also surprised to find so few entries in the ACCVI summit register for such a stunning and accessible peak; ours was the 8<sup>th</sup> party to sign in since 2006. We spent more than an hour enjoying the unusually warm weather at the summit, sharing chocolate and peering over the exposed edge. That's when Lenka began showing symptoms of her alpine affliction, the kind that makes it very difficult for her to point her boots downhill and head back to camp. But we eventually met up with Sarah just above treeline. There we decided to avoid the exposed scramble and narrow ledge around the second set of bluffs. Instead, we kept the bluffs to our left and picked

our way down steep slabs of rock and narrow waterfalls to a large gully. We took our time scrambling down our alternate route, and just as we commented that we were looking forward to diving back into the trees, Lenka found an opening into the forest, well below the bluffs. But not before a football-sized rock fell onto my hand, a dynamic reminder of our vulnerability in the backcountry. Our team nurse determined there were no fractures, so we set off down the ridge, lowered ourselves through the chimney, negotiated interlaced creek beds, shuffled over the log bridge, and strode into camp just before 7 p.m. as alpine glow alighted upon surrounding peaks.

Sarah likened our adventure to another day at the spa: the deep muscle massage from alder branches whipping our limbs; the exfoliating evergreen needles scrubbing our skin; the peaceful sound of trickling water; the glow of a new tan; a quiet summit meditation; a delicious meal; a refreshing mineral bath in the river. For our first experience leading ourselves through a *bushwhack*, it was, after all, a very pleasant day!

The following morning, we hiked up to Landslide Lake for breakfast and tea, and to pick out our eventual line up Mount Colonel Foster. There, on the shore, we slept for hours on logs in the sun and dreamed of more alpine adventures before turning our boots downhill and making our way back toward the huckleberries at the trailhead.

**Participants:** Janelle Curtis, Sarah Davies and Lenka Visnovska

---

## Flat Top Mountain

---

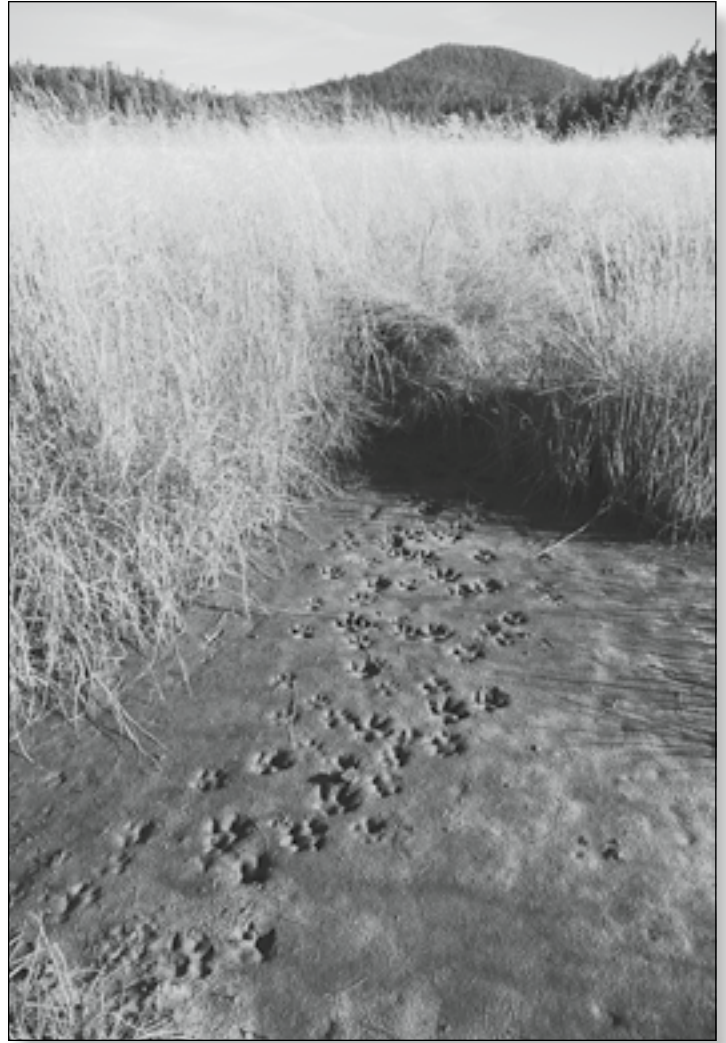
Dave Campbell  
October 6

I was fortunate to be able to squeeze a 10 day holiday in early October, during the end of our “never-ending” summer bout of dry and warm weather. The Centennial Challenge provided some great trip inspiration to planning trips this year. With a nice window of time, I was keen to explore the north end of the Island. I had pencilled a trip in to the Thelwood-Moyeha, and was then heading up to Cape Scott, but I still had a few days extra in my schedule. I was keen on the idea of climbing something that had a water approach so that I could combine a bit of canoeing into the trip. I was also seeking something a little more remote, and something that would provide an all-around “adventure”. I scanned the Centennial map to see what was still unclimbed on the list. Splendour Mountain was high my personal list, as was Snowsaddle Mountain. Both required an ocean paddle, and both would undoubtedly be an adventure. Both peaks, however, required substantial approaches, likely 2 days canoe and bushwhack in each direction just to get to the base of the climb. I could try to cram a 5-day trip into a 3-day one, but it seemed like there would be a high chance of failure, and my 3-day trip would likely end up being mostly time spent suffering in the bush.

Sticking out on the Centennial map was a peak to the far north of the Island. It was the furthest north of the Centennial peaks, as well as the furthest west-jutting out on the north end of Quatsino Sound - Flat Top Mountain. It was also quite likely the lowest peak on the list, rising to an impressive height of 289m above sea level. My initial thoughts were “why is this on the list?” The only rational explanation I could come up with was that it was a case of mistaken identity with the much more famous mountain with the same name-sake in the Mackenzie Range.

It looked quite feasible to approach the centennial Flat Top Mountain by canoe via the more protected waters out of Winter Harbour, and tackle the full 289m directly from the ocean. After doing a little digging, I discovered that there was even an old trail which went from Browning Bay, over to Grant Bay on the exposed west coast (this water-approach has fallen out of favour recently as people now can access Grant Bay via a short trail from logging roads). So I set my sights on a quick trip to Flat Top Mountain. I knew it would be bushy, but at least it would only be a day of suffering in the bush, rather than a multi-day suffer-a-thon.

After finishing a trip to Thelwood-Moyeha, I jumped in the car and headed on back roads to Woss, making a short



*Wolf highway on approach to Grant Bay, with Flat Top Mountain in view behind.* PHOTO: DAVE CAMPBELL

stop at the Upana Caves en-route for some subterranean exploring (recommended if you are in the area). Negotiating roads out to Winter Harbour took a little longer than expected, and it was pretty late in the day by the time I was loading my canoe and pushing off into the ocean. There was a bit of wind as I worked my way past town, and out into Forward Inlet. While not exposed west coast, there were some fantastic views into the broad expanse of Quatsino Sound, and Brooks Peninsula beyond. I pulled north past Matthews Island, and into Browning Inlet, where a dozen or so sea otters were feeding and playing.

At the end of the inlet, I pulled the canoe up at the north end of a shallow bay, where I understood the trail to be. I donned the back, and struck into the woods, but there was not much of a trail to be found. A bit of bushwhacking brought me to a flagged route, which soon brought me out into the salt marsh along the fringe of Browning Inlet. This made for fast travel, and the trail was well worn path. When I



*Enjoying the summit of Flat Top Mountain. The GPS was required to confirm that the author was in fact on the summit.* PHOTO: DAVE CAMPBELL

hit the first patch of a mud crossing, I realized that the “well-worn” path was not a human trail, rather I was following what must be a major wolf highway. There were tonnes of fresh tracks, and not too far along I came across the carcass and remains of a few sea birds (note to self-time to make some noise as I am hiking).

It was getting near twilight when I reached the far end of the inlet, and fortunately as I headed back into the forest, there was a fairly obvious flagged route to follow (I still had about a kilometre to travel to Grant Bay, and was keen to get there before it got pitch dark). The path was good, and I stumbled onto the sandy beach at Grant Bay just as the sky was turning dark reds and purples across Brooks Peninsula. You’ve got to love sandy beach camping en-route to climbing a peak!

The next day I was up early, as I wanted to climb the peak and get out all in one day. I knew I was in for a good bush-thrashing, so I reasoned that if I could stay out of the bush until I was at the closest straight-line spot I would minimize time fighting the forest. So I started the day scrambling along the shoreline, which quickly turned into interesting bluffy terrain. As I made my way around the first headland, it became apparent that the cliffs didn’t “go”. I did get my first view of the peak (hill?) itself-so close yet so far.

With no real coastline options, it was time to engage the bush. I donned a pair of gardening gloves that I had brought along for the task. What transpired over the next 4 - 5 hours was quite primal. Crawling...climbing...tunnelling...pushing...pulling...hanging...falling...squeezing...fighting...relenting. This was west coast, old-growth bushwhacking at its best. Overall, it was slightly under 2 kilometres, but in terms of emotional distance - immeasurable. I fought my way up and down cliffs between rocky inlets, through canyons and

jungle, and past near-record size massive western red cedars and Sitka spruces. Finally, after my “ordeal-by-vegetation”, I emerged victorious on the summit of Flat Top Mountain. I am not embarrassed to say that had I not had my GPS with me to confirm, I might be still wallowing around the bush looking for the “highest point”. Needless to say, the views from the top were much the same as those on the approach.

After a brief moment on the summit, it was time to re-trace my steps. I took a slightly different variation which involved much more wading and wallowing around in wet swamping terrain (which was sadly lacking on the approach). As I forced my way through the final patch of salal, I tripped on a hidden log, and was quite literally spat head first out of the forest onto the sandy beach.

It was getting on in the day, and my schedule up to that point had been a little odd (late arrival to camp and early departure), and it was only in this late-afternoon day that I realized the beach was a fairly popular spot. I got a few odd looks as I dusted myself off, and removed the twigs, needles and branches that I and my pack were covered in.

I was starting to get time pressed for getting out in daylight, so quickly packed up my tent, and hoofed it back across the flagged route to Browning Inlet. Still plenty of signs of wolves, but no sightings along the trail through the salt marsh. Back at the canoe, I enjoyed a calm paddle back to Winter Harbour, arriving just at dusk.

While I wouldn’t recommend Flat Top Mountain high on the list of “must-do” peaks, it truly was a great, unique trip, and certainly an all-around adventure. Thanks to the Centennial challenge for inspiring this one!

**Solo Participant:** Dave Campbell

---

## A Journey on the IQ Trail

---

**John Young**  
August 1998 - July 2012

### The Golden Hinde, August 1998

My journey on the IQ trail began away back in 1998 when I climbed the Golden Hinde, when I was solely a hiker, not a climber. In fact, I didn’t even know there was an ACC section on Vancouver Island, and obviously had never heard of the Island Qualifiers. But I had hiked the West Coast Trail, so the next logical (?) challenge seemed to be to climb the highest mountain on the Island, and two friends and I did just that in August 1998, after paddling across Buttle Lake, hiking across Marble Meadows to the Hinde, and then back via Phillip’s Ridge. A beautiful loop, and with perfect



weather. Maybe even too hot. I discovered on this trip why my boots were only recommended for three-day backpacking trips. By the fourth day the soles of my feet were so sore it was agony to walk. I thought it ironic that 11 years later I would return to Marble Meadows to climb Morrison Spire, Mount McBride and Marble Peak, peaks that I hadn't given a second thought to climbing back in '98.

#### **Mount Septimus, June 2003**

I joined the ACC in 2001, and I think I had heard about the IQ's before I climbed Mount Septimus, but at that time I had no inclination to ever try to climb them all. Mount Colonel Foster, me?! I went on the Septimus trip because it was on the July long weekend and Selena Swets was leading it, with Russ Moir along, too, I had enjoyed climbing and hiking with both of them on previous trips. We camped at the end of Buttle Lake on Friday night and made it up in the vicinity of Cream Lake early Saturday afternoon. After a siesta and some grub, we set out for Septimus and kicked our way up perfect snow in the "X-Gully," returning to camp about 10 p.m.

#### **Mount Harmston, August 2003**

This was an ACC August long-weekend trip led by Tom Carter. I remember Tom asking me how many "IQ's" I had climbed, and it took me a second to realize what he meant by "IQ's." One thing I remember clearly about this trip was how well I ate the last night and the next morning. For some reason I thought the trip was only two days and hadn't brought food for three. When people heard about this they unloaded all their extra food on me and I ate better than I ever have on a climb. I also remember camping on the Comox Glacier and being able to see Port Alberni down one side and Comox, Georgia Strait, and Powell River out the other. Fantastic! The summit day itself was long! 13 - 14 hours. And I had thought it was a two-day trip?!

#### **Elkhorn Mountain, June 2004**

Again, I didn't climb this one because it was an IQ. I was looking for a nice climb with good access. Something I could do as a day trip. So, I decided on Elkhorn's Northwest Ridge. In *Island Alpine* Philip Stone gives it a II with the International Alpine Numeral Grade, meaning it's a climb that takes half a day. How hard can that be? I figured. What I failed to realize, however, was that that was for the climb itself, and it didn't include the approach.

It was my pleasure to have Chris Barner guiding me up this route, and following in his footsteps it seemed almost easy to solo the Northwest Ridge. We climbed in rock shoes, having to change back to our boots a few times, and I remember the last time we did so Chris saying, "You know, if you guys would get out 100 days a year you'd be a lot faster at this." After thinking about that, I facetiously said,

"Yeah, I only teach 195 days a year, that leaves 160 days. I should be able to get out for 100."

"Absolutely!" exclaimed Chris.

And then, as we were hiking back down the trail, I was exhausted, and I remember tripping over my feet and falling in a heap on the trail, and Chris chortling,

"Aha! Gotcha! I knew if we went long enough I'd tire you out!"

Sixteen hours after we started we reached our cars.

Another climb in perfect weather.

#### **Mount Colonel Foster, July 2006**

Now, I admit that when I climbed the Colonel I knew it was an IQ. I was honoured when Tom Carter had phoned me about 6 weeks previous and asked me if I would want to do it. Again, we had perfect weather, but the trip was not without adventure. The first day we hiked up to the North Shoulder and had a wonderful camp, being able to see Warden Peak and Victoria Peak off in the distance. We started off at six the next morning and were on the summit by 2. You'd think we'd be faster descending, right? But no, we ended up having to bivvy, after having down-climbed the couloir in the dark, me with a flickering headlamp, all by myself as Tom barrelled on down. I had brought a Pocket Rocket along and at least we could have a hot drink before we "slept." I had also brought an ultra-lite Thermarest, and did manage to sleep, a little, and as it was getting light about four a.m. I thought I should melt some more snow before we headed off, only to find that Tom had used all the fuel up.

But, another climb in perfect weather.

#### **Victoria Peak, August 2006**

I now had IQ fever, and set out for Victoria with my friend Gus, who has a few years on me. He tired out before we made it to the summit block, so I soloed it, and down-climbed rather than rappelling. A beautiful climb, and a two-day trip from Nanaimo.

#### **Nine Peaks, August 2006**

Yes, I definitely had the fever now. I brought along Donovan Sifton, a 16 year-old who was a member of my school outdoor club. We reached the cirque on Big Interior Mountain about 7 p.m. the first day. Donovan was lagging a bit, which surprised me, as he had always been a strong hiker. The next morning dawned misty, but the sun burnt it off shortly after. We needed crampons to cross the Big Interior Glacier, since it was bare ice in places. I placed a new summit tube on the Big Interior Glacier, and then we headed for Nine Peaks. I nervously noticed that clouds were moving in, but Donovan seemed so fascinated with his surroundings that he didn't notice. I told him our turnaround time would be 1:30. When we reached Bear Pass, he looked nervously at Nine Peaks, saying it looked "foreboding."

"Do you want to do it?" I asked. "Because if you don't you can wait here."

"No way!" he replied, and off we went.

The summit gully was in great shape, and we cramponed



*Clouds rolling in on the Nine Peaks Summit.* PHOTO: J. YOUNG

up to the summit, reaching it about 1 p.m. We had good, but not great, views of some of the surrounding mountains, but clouds were rolling around.

The gully intimidated me on our descent, with it having melted to just one or two meters wide in places, and dropping off about 5 metres into the moat on either side. Didn't seem to faze Donovan, though.

We returned to Bear Pass shortly, and I was glad I had taken a compass bearing on our way out as the clouds rolled in and it started to drizzle, with visibility reduced to about 30 metres. We continued on, and it was nerve-wracking with such poor visibility. I was worried we'd miss the gully leading back up to Big Interior Mountain, and so when we headed up a gully and I realized we'd turned up too early, I thought we should continue along the ridge, which ended up to be the wrong move. The climbing along the ridge was difficult, especially with wet, slippery rock, and on one descent I slipped and landed on my butt, thinking how great that would be if I got hurt with a 16-year-old in my care. I decided that at the first suitable spot we'd better bivvy for the night. Going on like this was dangerous, and I didn't want to cross the glacier in this weather. We found an okay spot under some scrubby pines, and gathered wood for a fire. But when we tried to light it, it wouldn't catch, so we spent a miserable night huddled under garbage bags, spooning together for warmth.

Luckily, the next morning dawned clear, and before long, we were back on route, back to camp about 10:30 a.m., and back to the car about 5:30 p.m. So, we still made it home the third day, just several hours later than expected.

### **Rugged Mountain, September 2007**

This was the only IQ that took me more than one attempt. Dean Williams and I had attempted it the previous

July, as a day trip from the logging road, but turned around when we reached the col at 1:42 p.m. (300 metres in elevation from the top) because we didn't think we had time to make it. So, when Charles Turner e-mailed me in September to say that he and Christine Fordham and Randy Davies were attempting it the coming weekend, I was in.

We hiked up to the col and set up camp and were treated to probably the most fantastic sunset I have ever seen. The next morning we soloed the East Ridge, and rappelled down a cliff before climbing up to the summit. On the descent, we down-climbed the gully to the glacier, and there was a huge bergschrund at the bottom that Charles belayed us down. His protection was a little suspect, but his sling held and all was good. Then, back to camp and the long sometimes bushy hike back to the vehicle, but another great climb.

### **Warden Peak, July 2012**

Finally, five years after my eighth IQ, I finished them off this past July. I climbed this one with Ryan Barlett, and although we carried a 60m. 10.5 mil rope, we soloed it. I just followed in Ryan's big footsteps as he punched his way diagonally up the snow couloir just before the summit block. We had great weather, but cloud blew in and we didn't have much of a view from the summit. I wasn't overly jubilant on top, though, as we still had to get down.



*Ryan looking intense on Warden.* PHOTO: J. YOUNG

Down climbing the rock was nerve-wracking, but down climbing that couloir was terrifying!

But we did it, and good thing, because after my accident three weeks later, I rather doubt if I'd be returning to Warden.

Overall, my IQ journey was full of luck: I had great climbing partners, and, on all but one of the trips, great weather. And in 1998 I hadn't the faintest idea that the Golden Hinde was the start of a 16 year journey.

---

## 2012 Mountaineering with kids and youth

---

Nadja Steiner with contributions from Finn Steiner, Anna-Lena Steiner, Iain Sou and Evelyn Sou

One quiet Saturday morning three dark figures stole themselves through hidden trails into Tod Inlet Park. Over the lost bridge they made their way leaving a trail of paper strips and curious signs. Their going did not go unnoticed. A host of children was tracking them. Frequent stops were asked from them to rescue lost stuffies from trees and caves, however, the white wolf was with them. Her name was Amy and she had a scent to track. It was oddly familiar to her, she knew who they were hunting and they were getting close. In fact they were getting so close, that she started to happily wag her tail and to the dismay of the three figures betray their hiding place to her accompanying host. So ended the “Schnitzeljagd”, the intro into this year’s “mountaineering with kids” series.



Ayla and Zoe playing “Hide and Seek” at Goldstream Park

PHOTO: NADJA STEINER

A climbing and juggling camp in Goldstream Park in June with some rope work, climbing and rappelling practice at the Mount Wells schoolyard has almost become a tradition by now. I was impressed, not only by how comfortable many of the kids (or youth by now) have become with their climbing and rope skills, but also with their ability to include and embrace newcomers. The evening found a happy crowd of old and new kids playing hide and seek in the campground forest and hockey on the street and watching a fiery juggling

performance of some of the parents or even try out some of the fire toys.

The second climbing camp on Saltspring Island was organized by Shanda and Stefan. Base camp was Ruckle Park, which some of the older kids had biked to earlier on Friday morning. I was looking forward to the hike at Mount Maxwell on Saturday. Organized by a “local” this year there were promises for new trails. We came up some back route, parked the cars at some dead end (after shuffling some cars to Burgoyne Bay) and left for our adventure. Or ... not quite yet ... the smallest kids tend to have the strongest (and most screamey voices), especially if a parent might have packed a pair of pants with the wrong colour (*deja vu?*). Meandering through the salal framed paths we reached our first destination, the climbing rocks, close to a beautiful outlook, where the cry of a peregrine falcon already alerted us to his presence. Luckily we were prepared and Finn took plenty of pictures trying to catch one in flight. Meanwhile all the kids made it up one or two routes on the well bolted cliffs and practiced rappelling. After a lunch break we made our way down the face of Mount Maxwell toward Burgoyne Bay, an alpine experience on the island, which I did not expect. In beautiful sunshine, we scrambled over grassy rock outcrops, putting in fixed ropes at two places to help the kids on their way down. We finally reached the forest at the base and Stefan lead the way along trails and a beautiful grassy Gary Oak meadow back to the cars. Some more car shuffling and a stop for a swim in the lake brought us back to Ruckle Park.

Evelyn summarizes as follows:

*Evelyn (8) “Hi, my name is Evelyn, I am part of the Alpine Club and I am eight year’s old and we do a lot of trips and I’m going to talk about a trip when we went to Saltspring Island. We took the ferry and when we got there we set up our tents and sleeping bags, ate dinner and went to sleep. The next morning I was the first one up in my tent, I took my DS and waited. Then my whole family woke up and we had breakfast. Then we went rock climbing and I climbed to the very top. We then went down a trail that led us to a lake and we swam. Then it was time to go to the campsite for dinner. Afterwards we had marshmallows, played a little bit and got ready for bed. The next morning I was the first one up again. We went to a beach and set up a rope from tree to tree. We got a harness and got attached to the rope so we could swing back and forth. Then we had to go, in no time we packed and were back on the ferry.”*

What Evelyn was referring to was in fact a zipline, one nice application of technical rope skills Stefan had set up over a little bay close to the Ruckle Park day use area. Jim had brought a real hand hold for the zipline and so, very excitedly they went over and over again, until it was time to pack up and go home.





Zipline in Ruckle Park DRAWING: EVELYN SOU

For August, we had planned a more relaxed multiday hike, geared toward the younger kids. In the end it turned out to be three mums with three kids aged 11, 12 and 16 going. I must say, apart from the somewhat frustrating very early mornings Amy was asking from me, it was one of the nicest and most relaxing trips I did all summer. The details are best described by Finn:

Finn (13): "When I awoke, it was dark. Groaning loudly, I got out of bed and got dressed. Stumbling down the stairs, I had only one thought: getting to the car and rescuing some sleep. I barely made it before I collapsed, asleep again. About an hour later I awoke in Duncan, where my mom had stopped for coffee. Blearily, I opened my eyes in our packed car, full of whining dog sounds and inhaled the scent of the fresh hot chocolate she had brought me. The rest of the drive passed in a flash, with us seeing the car loaded with the people we would be hiking with. At 11:00 we met everybody at the trailhead, all 6 of us. We would be hiking Mount Jutland, right next to V.I.'s 11th tallest peak, Mount Albert Edward. We got organized and started hiking. I breathed in the fresh mountain air, and decided that this was where I belonged. Another 4 hours hiking to Circler Lake brought me back to reality. Taking in all my aches and pains; I reflected that this was almost, but not quite where I belong. A good night's sleep helped, despite the dog scratching/wanting walk at 5 a.m. We got up 7-ish and filtered water, ate breakfast and packed our bags. This was the ascent day. We had decided the night before to try going up the back route, by Amphitheatre Lake to avoid the crowds going up Albert Edward. Hiking to the end of the lake, we started going up a little travelled path which we assumed led up to Amphitheatre Lake. After an hour's dedicated hiking we realized we had passed it, as we could see it about 300m below us and about one kilometre away. Regardless, we kept climbing

the steep slopes, which did nothing to help my fear of heights, and ended up on the ridge that joins Mount Albert Edward and Mount Jutland. We then continued to hike on the path up to the summit. One hour later, we had reached the summit. Around noon, we ate lunch on the summit and took pictures of us, and beautiful gem lake. At this point in time we realized all 3 mothers were going to be 42 within that year. What a coincidence! While I amused myself and Raven by popping out my wiggly teeth (all three of them!!!), the moms talked and Malachite just stood around impassively (mostly likely enjoying the view, I think). Then we decided that we should go so we would still have time for dinner in daylight. The descent was scrambly and slippery, as we went down the well-travelled Mount Albert Edward trail, or I should rather say highway? We arrived at base camp with plenty of light to spare, so I packed out the fly fishing gear I had lugged all the way from the Nordic Lodge trailhead. I cast to some visibly rising trout with a few different streamers, but no luck (or fresh trout for dinner) was to be had. One did show interest in a black marabou leech, though. The next morning we started our rest day with playing cards and then hiking up to Amphitheatre



Amy, Finn and Raven: Mount Jutland ridge PHOTO: NADJA STEINER

Lake. I had brought my fly fishing rod and over the course of that lazy summer afternoon caught 2 beautiful alpine rainbow trout, one of which we kept and ate for dinner. We all went to bed, safely back at Circler Lake before the mosquitoes kicked in. Once again morning dawned misty and cold. Our breakfast however, wasn't. The trip back passed quickly, with Raven and I calling each other "fiends" and singing "Brown Squirrel" in opera version. We stopped at Lake Helen McKenzie for lunch, hiked back through Paradise Meadows, and still had enough energy to run back and kiss the Terra Firma of civilization, aka a logging road. After we said our goodbyes, it was down the mountain and to friends in Black Creek. Here my tale ends."



Iain rappelling the nose route on Mount Arrowsmith PHOTO: NADJA STEINER

By now it was early September and we still had one trip on the program, the postponed youth trip up the Mount Arrowsmith Nose. Again we were blessed with amazing weather (we actually planned it that way), with 4 adults and 4 kids a reasonably group size for this kind of trip. The plan was to hike to the saddle on Saturday, review rope and rappelling skills and get an early morning start for a long day on Sunday. While practicing repelling another ACC group just returned from their Arrowsmith ascent via Rudi's Route. Occasional encounters like these are one of the nice components of being in the club.

About one hour after they had left a loud rumble alerted us to the Arrowsmith slopes. The always present snowfield was falling apart, reminding us that late summer avalanches after hot days are certainly possible in the alpine. Two more such events within the next hour took care of the whole left part of the snowfield, part of which had been crossed by our fellow ACC climbers earlier that morning.

Sunday brought an early rise with breakfast in comfy down jackets fighting off the morning chill. Finn decided to stay back with Amy, neither one of them were super firm with heights and Finn was looking forward to a nice day of rest on such a beautiful place. First aim was the snowfield where a small stream would allow us to fill our water bottles. From there we went up the first gendarme.

Anna-Lena (16): "A biting chill accompanied the first rays of the sun as it began to shine over a white snowfield, stubby green trees, and a few funnily-shaped domes pitched haphazardly on the saddle between Mount Arrowsmith and Mount Cokely, somewhat out of place among the dark greens and bright pinks of the stubborn vegetation just barely above the treeline. Sleepy figures expanded to twice their normal size by down jackets and fleece layers crawl out of their tents, blinking their eyes at the sight before them. After a mountaineer's

breakfast and a water fetching mission to the snowfield above the lake, the enthusiastic and brightly coloured group of what seemed to be small gnomes began their march; up the rugged looking light brown hump looming over the base camp, waving goodbye to the small white four-legger and slightly larger down-jacketed two-legger as they turn towards the scramble ahead of them. Their 'biners clanging on their harnesses, already puffing on this first challenge of the day (besides getting out of the sleeping bags,) they make it to the top of the first hill... one down, three to go. Much laughing and talking, panting and puffing, and water-chugging ensued as the caravan of determined kids and adults hiked on. Continuing towards the first steep descent, with a pause for pictures and anchor setting, before the first of the group descended down the rocky face - the first of several rope-and-harness-related adventures that day. While the first brave souls scrambled down, the part eager and part slightly less eager remaining adventurers sat and enjoyed the beautiful view and weather. Then on it went, over the next hill, finding little exposed scrambles to get from place to place, thoroughly exploring the limits of the various comfort zones, until the last big push, the adventurous "Nose", loomed over the group. The leaders went ahead, the blue and red ropes were attached, and the fun (round 1) begins. After each climb up the first pitch, the blue haired gnome/kid spidered up to fetch the rope where it dangled halfway down the pitch to bring it to the waiting climbers, to be roped in and sent on their way. After a particularly interesting second half of the climb involving prussiks and some interesting choices of routes, what was dubbed the "dalek" - the metal tower at the summit - was in sight. There, chocolate and lunch awaited the hardworking group, and they were greeted by a clear view and a jet loop. Much fun was had posing for summit pictures and returning to the glory days of preschool via stick figures drawn in the summit log. After that lovely reprieve, in order to return to camp in daylight, the food was packed away, harnesses put back on, and off they went, down the 60 metre repel, some speedily zipping down like pros, others slightly more hesitant... after that, with a sense of accomplishment, the rest was easy, with a shortcut down a crack in the side of the mountain (another 60m rappel), roped into a tree, and careful navigating the loose rock field down to the snowfield. There the group was greeted by the frenzied yelps and barks of the supremely exited white furry creature, to lead them back to base camp."

Or in short summary:

Iain (13): "We met at the Whiskey Creek gas station to car pool to the trail head of Arrowsmith. There were 8 of us in total. When we got there we ate lunch and divided up the gear that the ACC let us borrow. Then started up the mountain and did some belay practice at base camp. In the morning we got up, ate and started up the first hump to the summit. When we got to the top we had to rope in to get down into the valley. On the way up the "Nose" we had to climb and my dad and I





Iain, Anna-Lena and Madelaine descending Mount Arrowsmith  
PHOTO: NADJA STEINER

*were the first ones up. After every one was up we walked the last bit to the summit, the view was great. We ate lunch and started our decent. It was awesome because we had a 60 metre rappel! On the way down we saw the ice-field where we got our water in the morning. We rappelled down there instead of hiking around, which improved our descent time. When we got to the base camp we packed up and went home."*

It was really a great trip, which all the kids (and parents) can be really proud off. The Whiskey Creek ice cream was definitely well deserved.

This year we even found a fitting event for a dreary November weekend, a slumber party on Saltspring Island, including climbing in "The Wall", skiing (on the Wii Balance board – or the couch), Geocaching on a nearby hill, even some kayaking and a slide show. Thanks a lot to grandma Gessinger for letting us invade her beautiful place! It was a perfect end to the summer as well as begin of the winter season event, great to have everybody together in a relaxed atmosphere with lots of laughs and talks. We are looking for-

ward to another year with winter skiing and some exciting summer plans for 2013.

**Participants in one or more trips:** Nadja, Harry, Finn and Anna-Lena Steiner, Florence Daurelle, Olivier, Zoé and Nanook Lardière, Lauren and Krisalla Dake, Derek, Tessa, Iain and Evelyn Sou, Dahlia and Malachite Miller, Sue and Raven Castle, John and Madeleine Thomson, Stefan, Ayla and Sidney Gessinger, Shanda and Olivia Lemcke, Ariana Kelly, Jim, Mathew and Katrina Basnett, Chris, Melissa, Gwaiidon and Soul White, Arno and Cees Dirks.

---

## Rees Ridge Ramble

---

John Young  
July 1 - 7, 2011

Imagine. 7500 metres total elevation gain in one week, and no, we were not climbing in the Andes or the Himalaya, but in Strathcona Park. I had known there was going to be lots of ups and downs, but I never imagined we'd be climbing over seven kilometres.

We started off on July 1<sup>st</sup> at the Henshaw/Shepherd Creek trailhead on the Buttle Lake Roadway, about 2.3 kilometres south of the Ralph River Campsite. The trailhead was unmarked and we poked around for half an hour or so looking for something obvious, before we just decided to head up into the bush. It was bushy for 20 minutes or so, but then only periodically bushy after that. We followed a faint trail up through the forest with some light rain falling, and then when we broke out of the trees at about 1500 metres elevation, the sun broke out and we had great views of Buttle Lake, far below the snow covered slopes of Shepherd Ridge. After about six hours of hiking, we set our tents up on the snow and melted snow for water.

Saturday morning we awoke to cloud, and initially there was a high ceiling, but it fogged in later on and drizzled lightly. Route finding was tricky, what with the fog and the rugged ridge. At times, we were contouring and I used my altimeter to keep us at the right elevation. Getting up and down off Shepherd Peak, our first six thousand footer, was laborious and time-staking, with a little third class scrambling. We set up camp at 6:30 p.m., just shy of Shepherd Horn, on a windswept flat spot, whose only redeeming quality was a pool of water. The thermometer read two degrees and we all went to bed early.

It rained overnight and Sunday morning we awoke in the fog. We made our way up Shepherd Horn, still in the fog, and put a few more waypoints into the GPS, but just then the fog lifted and we could see our route. Wow! The Red Pillar,





*Mathew carefully places his feet on a steep slope* PHOTO: J. YOUNG

Argus Mountain, Mount Harmston, and Tzela Peak all tantalized us and the route looked straightforward. We easily descended the north side of Shepherd Horn before swinging back to the south and then west above Tzela Lake, which was just melting out around the shore. Below Tzela Peak we passed through avalanche debris and then up to the col between Harmston and Tzela. We had lunch, set up camp, and then headed for Mount Harmston. Ryan took a precarious precipitous route down to the Cliffe Glacier with the rest of us taking a much longer, slower route. We gained the moraine leading up to Mount Harmston and travelled on snow all the way to the top gully, which, surprisingly, was bare. We finally reached the summit about 6:30 p.m., revelled in the view and basked in the sun for a while, before trying to spy out a route up Tzela Peak, our objective the next morning. We returned to camp in beautiful evening sunlight and had a late dinner before heading to sleep at sundown.

Monday morning Ryan and Matt and I headed up Tzela Peak with Charles and Janelle catching up on their sleep. We weren't sure of the route as there didn't appear to be a Southeast Ridge, just an east one, and the guide book refers to a Southeast Ridge. We scrambled up and over some precipitous rocks before coming out to a steep snow slope with a very steep looking snow gully up ahead that led up towards the main summit. By then, though, we'd already been gone an hour and a half, and since we had a long ways to go that day, we decided to return to camp.

We packed up our gear, and headed down to Henshaw Creek 500 metres below. We then had 800 metres to climb back up to Iceberg Peak, up steep, soggy snow, in the hot sunshine. The view from Iceberg Peak was worth it! Great views of the west side of the Comox Glacier and Mount Harmston. We then continued on to Mount Celeste and Ryan, Matt, Janelle and I scampered up to the top before returning to set

up camp in a glorious spot with views of Georgia Strait and the mainland mountains.

Tuesday morning we awoke once again to clear skies, and set out for Siocum Peak just a short distance away, with little elevation gain or loss. We did have an interesting traverse around a bump, with a "goat trail" leading around the west side of a bump. Matt and Janelle and I then headed up an unnamed bump, built a cairn, and christened it "Sisyphus Peak" which, according to the GPS was 1937m making it another six thousand footer. We reached Siocum Peak and then camped on the north shoulder at about 1800m with great views of Georgia Strait, Mount Celeste, the Golden Hinde, et al.

Wednesday morning, Matt, and Ryan and I set out early to try to get to Peak 1909, Peak 1920, and Mount George V and back. It all proved to be straightforward, the snow affording a direct route up Peak 1909. On the return, though, we contoured around the west side of Peak 1920 at about the 1800 metre mark and it proved to be "grippy" with some loose rock, steep snow and a sharp, long drop off. It didn't save any time either, but we won't forget it! The rest of the return to camp proved uneventful, except for Matt having to run back a couple of kilometres to retrieve his jacket that had fallen off his pack. Ryan and I became cold in the wind and fog while we waited for him. We descended the steep soggy snow off Peak 1909, and then had the long, steep climb back up to our camp on Siocum Peak. Another fabulous sunset and then to bed!

Thursday morning started out foggy, and our descent down the Ralph River Route would have been difficult without Charles' GPS. We made good time, however, and the route was even flagged from the tree line down. It was bushy in places, but not difficult going downhill. We crossed the logjam at the bottom, and we were done! A magnificent week in the mountains of Strathcona!

**Participants:** Ryan Bartlett, Charles He, Janelle Curtis, Mathew Lettington and John Young

---

## **Luck at the edge of safety: Mount Colonel Foster, Southeast Summit**

---

**Tom Carter**  
July 30 - August 1, 2011

I have had friends fall. Only luck saved them from the terminal plunge. Hidden ice, a hold pulled out, even a touch of wet lichen can precipitate rapid acceleration into the void. Our dependence on luck became uncomfortably clear on our climb to Mount Colonel Foster's Southeast summit.



*Emerging from the south-west gully* PHOTO: TOM CARTER

The first day into Berg Lake was wet and got wetter. Leading the trail around Landslide Lake left me drenched. The heavy snowpack forced us to camp on snow. Three quarters of the Colonel was shrouded in cloud. My fingers slowly thawed around a mug of tea. Waterfalls poured off the mountain all night.

The morning's climb up the snowfield took us to the bottom of the cloud and the first of the long series of bluffs leading to the south col. The choice was slimy rock or slimy bush...at least the bush offered something to clutch. One of the group turned back at the sight of the exposed and muddy grovel. The route leads to a 5.8 corner that when wet is almost impossible. With a hoist and an axe pick I could pull up and dangle the handline. Above...more slime. One more decided to go down on the rope.

I have climbed this route many times, alone and with groups and never considered rope and harness necessary. The handline was just for emergencies. Needing it twice

below the treeline had me pondering the far more serious terrain on the upper mountain. The easy rolling rock bluffs above were drying out, which eased the decision to forge on. This was the first group I have ever had that resolutely stayed behind me, even on easy terrain. I wondered if they were the orderly type or if they were actually relying on my confidence.

Above the col the snow at the entrance to the main gully was partly melted out, calling for a steep snow traverse above an ugly moat. And then the real climbing began! One more of the group decided to descend to await the rope down the slime. The view was dark, brooding and ominous, with threads of cloud drifting through the pillars. I watched head after head emerge from the gully, each one, very much on their own. I appreciated their obvious concentration. Everyone climbed the even steeper pitch above like a ladder. The Colonel's bony shoulder is easy. We were six on the summit. There was the usual elation and photos and the promised clearing was finally happening. All the Colonel's towers rose out of the mist, Rambler Peak and the Golden Hinde materialized out of thin air. The group was thrilled with the climb. As awesome as the spectacle was, I was consumed with the task of getting everyone down safely, and before dark.

I assumed the group could down-climb what they had climbed up, but the consensus was for the handline to come out. One by one I watched hands clutching the rope disappear down the gully...ever so slowly. I was holding my breath. Death is always so close and there was little I could do to fend it off. The last was down, one step closer to safety. I threw the rope down after them and was alone on the mountain. Climbing down, twice rocks came off in my hands, but I held on. We can handle our own risky moves but with a group, I felt I was seriously pushing luck.

We down climbed the next stepped pitch in a tight cluster. Across the snow traverse and I could breathe again. Once again the rope came out for the slime pitch. My solo down after the group into darkness was the nerviest. With headlamps on, the last guy and I found our way to the snowfield. We plodded our way down and into camp at 10:15. I was in every way exhausted.

For me the walkout felt like forever. The group was dancing like butterflies, buzzing after such an exciting climb. For many of them it was a whole new level of mountain experience. I knew in retrospect that harnesses should have been an automatic even though they had never been needed before. Good luck? It will disappear if you push it too hard.

**Participants:** Roxy Ahmed, Tom Austin, Len Wells, Katie Ferland, Peggy Taylor, Graeme Ramsay, Robert Ramsay, Yan Lyesin and Tom Carter.

---

## 2012 Climb the Island – Centennial Project

---

Catrin Brown



*A big high-five for Chris Jensen and Roxy Ahmed on the summit of the Golden Hinde* PHOTO: C. JENSEN

To celebrate our centennial year in 2012, we wanted to come up with something that could be as inclusive as possible for club members, that would last the whole year, and would focus on climbing on the Island. And so the ‘Climb the Island’ project was born.

The goal was simply to give club members the opportunity to record successful ascents of a list of Island peaks via an online summit register, linked to an interactive map on our section website. Once a summit was climbed, its icon on the map changed from green to red and further ascents could not be recorded. With more than 160 peaks on the list, the project was open-ended in scope, but it was thought that 100 successful summits would be a terrific outcome for this centennial venture.

The site went live on 1 January 2012, and section members immediately got to work claiming their glories. The list included a range of peaks from easy day hikes to grueling multi-day expeditions, with access by foot, ski, snowshoe or even canoe. Weekend trips were frequently set around peaks that remained ‘open’, and there was a fair bit of second guessing of who would ‘get to pin’ what as the months rolled by. Summit photos revealed every conceivable type of weather condition, with groups ranging from solo adventurers to large party-sized gatherings. On more than one occasion, different groups converged on the same summit on the same day.

Steadily our accumulated total grew, and by late summer it was clear we would surpass the 100 peak goal.

And so by the end of December, 123 club members had taken part in climbing an impressive 118 Island summits, accumulating a combined altitude of 181 kilometres (well into the ionosphere.) And our online map showed the tide of red covering much of the Island. It was truly a wonderful year-long party!

The project was never conceived as a competition, but along the way there were some notable achievements that were celebrated during a light-hearted prize giving after the AGM in January. These included:

### Most peaks climbed:

Walter Moar.....22 peaks

### Greatest vertical total:

Walter Moar.....32009 m

### Most solo climbs:

Walter Moar.....13 solos

### Highest peak climbed:

Roxy Ahmed, Chris Jensen.....2195 m

### Lowest peak climbed:

Catrin Brown, Colleen Kasting,  
Karen van Dierens, Mike Hubbard,  
Peggy Taylor, Roger Taylor .....228 m

### Most social climber:

Lindsay Elms.....32 fellow summiteers

### Top social index(RMS):

Greg Rowe .....mean 12 fellow  
summiteers

### Most appropriately dressed summiteers:

Roxanne Stedman, Dave Suttill,  
Mike Whitney .....Edinburgh Mountain

### Happiest summit photo:

A tie between:

Dave Campbell .....Flat Top Mountain  
Lindsay Elms.....South Blades

### Female solo:

Janelle Curtis .....Mt. Burman

*Congratulations everyone and thanks for helping to make it a memorable centennial year in our Island peaks.*



# 2012 Climb the Island

Mountain	Elevation (m)	Date	Climber(s)
5040 Peak	1532	5/12/2012	Chris Jensen, Roxy Ahmed
Adder Mountain	1507	5/6/2012	Chris Jensen, Roxy Ahmed
Alexandra Peak	1983	7/5/2012	Dave Campbell
Augerpoint Mountain	1839	7/7/2012	Dave Campbell
Babbington Hill	228	1/1/2012	Catrin Brown, Mike Hubbard, Colleen Kasting, Karen van Dieren, Peggy and Roger Taylor, Oliver
Big Interior Mountain	1857	5/13/2012	Mike Childs, Andreas Hinkkala
Black Cat Mountain	1604	7/15/2012	Andreas Conradi, Robin Suttmoller
Buffalo Hump	1963	6/3/2012	Lindsay Elms, Valerie Wootton
Castlecrag Mountain	1753	2/14/2012	Gene Filanovsky
Comox Glacier	1963	6/21/2012	Lindsay Elms, Valerie Wootton
Crest Mountain	1566	6/30/2012	Ryan Bartlett, Matt Clarkson
Crown Mountain	1849	7/11/2012	Tom Carter, Kurtis Felker, Christine Rivers, Dean Williams, John Young
Eden Mountain	1641	6/9/2012	Sandy Briggs and Gerald Cobbold
Edinburgh Mountain	1135	6/4/2012	Roxanne Stedman, Dave Suttill, Mike Whitney
El Capitan Mountain	1493	5/12/2012	Walter Moar
Elkhorn Mountain	2166	7/21/2012	Charles He, Graeme Ramsay, Robert Ramsay
Elkhorn South	1973	10/7/2012	Janelle Curtis, Lenka Visnovska
Empress Mountain	608	1/30/2012	Roxanne Stedman, Dave Suttill, Mike Whitney
Flat Top Mountain	289	10/7/2012	Dave Campbell
Flower Ridge	1667	5/15/2012	Gene Filanovsky, Bill Phipps
Golden Hinde	2195	7/26/2012	Chris Jensen, Roxy Ahmed
Green Mountain	1463	6/9/2012	Chris Jensen
Heather Mountain	1338	1/8/2012	Brianna Cook-Coates, Walter Moar
Hkusam Mountain	1645	9/3/2012	Mike Childs
Iceberg Peak	1982	6/20/2012	Lindsay Elms, Valerie Wootton
Indianhead Mountain	1282	2/4/2012	Harry Steiner, Jeff Hoy, Gavin Eaton, Robert Ramsey
Jutland Mountain	1821	2/12/2012	Martin Hofmann, Dave Campbell, Colin Goldblatt, Pat M.
Kings Peak	2061	7/14/2012	Matthew Manuel, Stephane Lacroix
Klitsa Mountain	1639	6/3/2012	Russ Moir, Rick Johnson, Sean McIntyre, Kevin Bartlett, Mark Winfield, Ronan O'Sullivan, Shanda Lembike, Stefan Gessinger, Rudy Brugger
Logan Peak	1336	8/18/2012	Brianna Cook-Coates, Walter Moar
Marble Peak	1761	5/18/2012	Chris Jensen

Mountain	Elevation (m)	Date	Climber(s)
Mariner Mountain	1771	9/2/2012	George Butcher, Dave Campbell, Charles Turner, George Urban, Ken Wong
Mcenzie Peak	1390	9/30/2012	Walter Moar, Lindsay Elms, Peter Ravensbergen
Misthorn	1605	7/8/2012	Harry Steiner, Charles Turner, Tomas Torres-Bonet, Brianna Cook-Coates, Dave Suttill, Roxanne Stedman, Sven Hansen, Alois Schonenberger
Morrison Spire	1808	5/19/2012	Chris Jensen, Roxy Ahmed
Mount Adrian	1870	7/5/2012	Dave Campbell
Mount Albert Edward	2093	3/7/2012	Gene Filanovsky
Mount Allan Brooks	1506	1/28/2012	Martin Hofmann, Jas Fredette, Nic Scott, Lindsay Elms, Wanda Hill, Kate Gigiel, Noah Lucas, Ellen, Sylvia Moser, Claudine Veran, Roger
Mount Alston	1759	5/18/2012	Dave Campbell
Mount Apps	1531	6/9/2012	Walter Moar
Mount Arrowsmith	1819	1/1/2012	Tom Carter, John Young, Ronan O'Sullivan, Dave Campbell, Chris Sommer, Krista Zala, Kurtis Felker, Rod Szasz
Mount Beadnell	1750	6/13/2012	John Hughesman, Roxy Ahmed
Mount Becher	1390	1/15/2012	Krista Zala, Cedric Zala, Alan Schlereth, Greg Rowe, Robert Ramsay, Roger Painter, Russ Moir, Ann Mais, Mike Hubbard, Wanda Hill, Catrin Brown
Mount Benson	1023	2/25/2012	Peter Boon
Mount Braden	428	1/23/2012	Dave Suttill, Mike Whitney, Roxanne Stedman
Mount Brenton	1218	4/14/2012	Chris Jensen, Roxy Ahmed
Mount Burman	1754	9/14/2012	Janelle Curtis
Mount Buttle	1379	2/18/2012	Chris Ruttan
Mount Celeste	2045	5/13/2012	Gene Filanovsky, Bill Phipps
Mount Chief Frank	1470	12/14/2012	Walter Moar
Mount Clifton	1440	5/18/2012	Lindsay Elms, Valerie Wootton, Sonja Schum
Mount Cokely	1619	2/19/2012	Colin Goldblatt, Patrick Dunbar, Rebecca Abernethy, Bram van Straaten
Mount Colonel Foster	2129	7/30/2012	Charles He, Andreas Hinkkala
Mount Curran	1476	4/6/2012	Roger and Peggy Taylor
Mount Drabble	1363	5/12/2012	Martin Hofmann, Josh Slatkoff, Peggy Taylor, Catrin Brown
Mount Elma	1414	1/29/2012	Peggy Taylor, Roger Taylor, Mike Hubbard, Greg Rowe, Karen VanDieren, Susan Mulholland, Cedric Zala, Ben Hendricks, Patrick McConnell. Joined on the summit by Lindsay Elms, Sandy Briggs, Charles Turner, and Christine Fordham

# 2012 Climb the Island

Mountain	Elevation (m)	Date	Climber(s)
Mount Frink	1950	5/11/2012	Gene Filanovsky, Bill Phipps
Mount George V	1931	5/12/2012	Gene Filanovsky, Bill Phipps
Mount Gibson	1334	6/23/2012	Brianna Cook-Coates, Walter Moar
Mount Grey	1395	7/7/2012	Walter Moar
Mount Hal	1487	9/16/2012	Chris Jensen, Roxy Ahmed
Mount Harmston	2009	8/5/2012	Mike Childs, Jaime Crucil
Mount Heber	1683	7/8/2012	Pam Olson and DF (both summits)
Mount Hill 60	1016	3/23/2012	Cedric Zala and Krista Zala
Mount Hooker	1263	6/2/2012	Lindsay Elms, Valerie Wootton
Mount Hooper	1486	5/27/2012	Walter Moar
Mount Horne	744	5/7/2012	Valerie Wootton, Lindsay Elms
Mount Irwin	1322	9/16/2012	Chris Jensen
Mount Joan	1556	5/26/2012	Brian Money, Lindsay Elms, Valerie Wootton
Mount Kitchener	1450	7/1/2012	Martin Smith, Tony Vaughn
Mount Landale	1535	5/12/2012	Walter Moar
Mount Leiner	1456	8/5/2012	Lindsay Elms, Valerie Wootton
Mount Mark	968	5/25/2012	Lindsay Elms, Valerie Wootton
Mount McBride	2083	5/19/2012	Chris Jensen, Roxy Ahmed
Mount McKelvie	1621	8/6/2012	Lindsay Elms, Martin Hofmann, Sonia Langer, Walter Moar, Nadja Steiner, Sandy Stewart, Frank Wille, Val Wootton
Mount McQuillan	1575	6/15/2012	Brianna Cook-Coates, Walter Moar
South Blades	1669	7/9/2012	Lindsay Elms, Valerie Wootton
Mount Moriarty	1603	5/26/2012	Chris Jensen, Roxy Ahmed
Mount Muir	861	5/7/2012	Dave Suttill, Mike Whitney, Roxanne Stedman, Sylvia Moser
Mount Myra	1803	2/5/2012	Matthew Manuel, Michelle Bowlen, Rebecca Abernethy, Bram van Straaten
Mount Olsen	1289	8/19/2012	Brianna Cook-Coates, Walter Moar
Mount Parsons	1356	7/7/2012	Walter Moar
Mount Regan	1976	8/18/2012	Lindsay Elms
Mount Rosseau	1958	8/11/2012	Alois Schonenberger, Roxy Ahmed, Tony Andrychuk
Mount Schoen	1862	7/31/2012	Laurence Philippsen
Mount Schofield	1138	5/25/2012	Lindsay Elms, Valerie Wootton
Mount Septimus	1948	8/19/2012	Laurence Philippsen
Mount Service	1486	5/4/2012	Walter Moar



Mountain	Elevation (m)	Date	Climber(s)
Mount Spencer	1454	6/17/2012	Brianna Cook-Coates, Walter Moar
Mount Stubbs	1486	12/16/2012	Walter Moar
Mount Sutton	1172	5/19/2012	Josh Slatkoff, Peter Smith
Mount Thelwood	1742	10/4/2012	Dave Campbell
Mount Tom Taylor	1789	8/31/2012	George Butcher, Dave Campbell, Charles Turner, Ken Wong
Mount Wesley	908	5/7/2012	Lindsay Elms, Valerie Wootton
Mount Whymper	1539	5/14/2012	Dave Suttill, Roxanne Stedman, Sylvia Moser
Moyeha Mountain	1791	10/4/2012	Dave Campbell
Nahmint Mountain	1564	9/30/2012	Dave Suttill, Roxanne Stedman
Nine Peaks	1848	5/13/2012	Mike Childs, Andreas Hinkkala
Patlicant Mountain	1239	5/6/2012	Sandy Briggs, Lindsay Elms, Val Wootton
Pogo Mountain	1486	4/14/2012	Ian Kilpatrick, Rory O'Connell and Richard Butler-Smythe
Ragged Mountain	578	2/4/2012	Mike Whitney, Dave Suttill, Roxanne Stedman
Ragged Mountain South	550	6/28/2012	Mike Hubbard, Martin Smith, Tony Vaughn and Thursday Thrashers: Dave Batstone, Ian Brown, Jack Morrison, Dave Scandrett, John Truran, Mike Wilmut.
Rambler Peak	2092	7/30/2012	Lindsay Elms, Valerie Wootton
Rugged Mountain	1861	7/7/2012	Chris Jensen, Roxy Ahmed
Sooke Mountain	524	7/4/2012	Martin Smith
Steamboat Mountain	1477	10/6/2012	Walter Moar
Strata Mountain	1443	2/11/2012	Martin Hofmann, Dave Campbell, Pat M
Syd Watts Peak	1856	7/7/2012	Dave Campbell
The Cats Ears	1479	8/25/2012	Brianna Cook-Coates, Walter Moar
The Limestone Twins	1385	10/7/2012	Walter Moar
The Red Pillar	2034	6/24/2012	Bob Mueller, James Elwood, Derek Rushton, John Gourlay, Clarke Gourlay
The Squarehead	1507	5/26/2012	Lindsay Elms, Valerie Wootton, Brian Money
Triple Peak	1557	10/6/2012	Anthony Bergson, Chris Jensen, Robin Suttmoller
Tsable Mountain	1500	12/16/2012	Walter Moar
Victoria Peak	2163	7/1/2012	Chris Jensen, Roxy Ahmed
Warden Peak	1970	7/5/2012	Ryan Barlett, John Young
Waterloo Mountain	1061	6/13/2012	Lindsay Elms, Valerie Wootton
Woss Mountain	1593	8/11/2012	Walter Moar

# Coast Range

---

## Climbing Among Snow Gargoyles – Mount Waddington, Bravo Route

---

Chris Jensen  
July 14 - 18

Sometimes climbing puts you in a position that you don't want to be in. Dizzy and gasping for air you may think "I just want off this thing"! That was certainly the case as I held on tightly... on the gym stair climber. The weight limit for the helicopter flight into Mount Waddington meant that everything needed to be as light as possible. Sadly I couldn't just go down to MEC to buy a lighter version of me. So I climbed many fake hills and a few real ones until the scale got down to a number that I hadn't seen since high school. Whew, now I can check one thing off my to-do list.

Preparing to climb Mount Waddington took almost a year of research, planning, sweat etc. Shawn Hedges spearheaded the trip and was our rope gun when it came to climbing the mountain of logistics. Many potential partners, objectives and schedules were considered until it finally came down to 4 people with 1 goal: climb the Main Tower via the Bravo Route.

On July 14, Shawn, Hunter Lee, Henrik Hinkkala and I arrived at Bluff Lake, the home of White Saddle Air and take off point for Mount Waddington. This scenic spot is roughly an 11 hour drive from Vancouver in a Eurovan. Recent thunderstorms meant that Mike King and his Bell 407 were off dealing with wildfires. We were given notice to be ready as he might be able to fly us in at last light and that is just what happened. This is Mike's preferred time to take people into the Coast Range as winds are often calmer. After a quick gear load we were off and about 20 minutes later we were hooting and hollering as we stood on the Tiedemann Glacier. We were set for 10 days of alpine fun.



*Passing Rainy Knob with Teidemann Glacier behind.* PHOTO: CHRIS JENSEN

Within minutes of arriving we heard our first avalanche. Rock, ice and snow rip down the granite faces with unnerving regularity. A look around the valley shows all forms of frozen water perched to release down the 1000m+ walls. It's amazing how some of the massive ice blocks fight gravity for as long as they do. The constant rumble of avalanches ensured that no one became complacent about the seriousness of this place.

It looked like we were going to have good weather as the forecast called for 4 days of solid high pressure for almost all of British Columbia. We went to bed with stars above and expected to wake to clear skies. But the area has a reputation to maintain so early the next morning we were greeted with fog, heavy rain and gale force winds. It may have been the only place in British Columbia that rained that day. It was a fitting welcome to Mount Waddington. We thought the day might be a write-off, but eventually the weather started to clear so we packed up and began the plod up to Rainy Knob.

Once on top of this knoll we could see most of the Bravo Glacier icefall. The combination of a deep winter snow pack

and cool spring meant there were plenty of snow bridges and hidden crevasses. We entered the icefall and weaved our way through the jumble of seracs using an avy probe to feel our way forwards. Henrik had the (mis)fortune of being the guinea pig for a pitch within the teetering blue blocks. My pupils dilated as I watched slushy slides release with each of his movements and carry onto the bottom of the icy chasm just below him.

After safely making it through the icefall, we hoped to continue on to make our next camp at Bravo Col. However, due to the morning weather delay we found ourselves camping in the aptly named Cauldron (base of Bravo Glacier headwall). Falling seracs

have killed experienced climbers here so I wasn't excited to spend more time here than needed. The area showed recent slides which terminated in crevasses. We chose our campsite carefully.

After an uneventful night, we awoke and soon got to the first task of the day: climbing out of the Cauldron. To get started we needed to cross a steep bergschrund and gain the headwall. Luckily we found one spot that allowed easy access. Without that single connection it would have taken some alpine acrobatics to climb out of the bergschrund. On the headwall we could finally swing our axes and enjoy the airy views. The climbing was moderate but as snow turned to loose rock we roped up for a pitch and Hunter belayed us up to the top of the headwall.

Bravo Col is a short distance away from the top of the headwall, but soft unconsolidated snow meant that we had to slowly trench our way there. At the col we refueled our furnaces and fed our alpine appetites world class views of Mount Combatant, Mount Tiedemann and the Serras. I smiled from ear to ear as I saw my best alpine dreams become a reality.

Travel from Bravo Col to Spearman Saddle was relatively straightforward. While this portion of the route was fairly mild, the temperature was not. It was sweltering hot at the Saddle. The 30+ degree heat combined with thinning air meant it was time for a good break. One of the team wisely went straight for the coveted alpine nap. Shawn liked the view from the saddle and decided to make his camp here. A host of factors weren't lining up for him so he opted to drink in the view and let the three of us continue on.

As we neared the summit tower we could see that it was heavily rimed and there was a troop of gargoyles on the upper flanks. Looking at the conditions I thought about the description in Don Serl's guidebook: "*When rimed, all bets*



*Climbing the headwall above Bravo Glacier.* PHOTO: CHRIS JENSEN

*are off!*" It was going to be a very interesting climb. We made steady progress towards our high camp near the base of the Tooth (3750m). However, just a short distance away we encountered some head scratching terrain. Dinner was going to have to wait. We looked left (yikes!) and we looked right (twang!). The only weakness that didn't include 2000m+ of exposure was a narrow snow shelf that was plastered to the far side of the large crevasse which barred our way.

I was belayed down into the crevasse and crossed a 15 metre long snow bridge to the other side. I swung my lightweight mountain axe into the snow hoping for a solid purchase, but my swing just kept going. The snow was mostly sugar. With the snow gone I now stood there looking at my reflection in the blue ice. Bugger! At that moment I really wished I didn't leave my ice tools down on the Tiedemann Glacier. I swung again and my axe just bounced back off the bullet proof ice. I had to resort to using our few ice screws to secure myself as I cleared away crumbly snow and excavated pick placements. I traversed up along the precarious shelf and as soon as I was on top I dropped my pack and looked down more than 3000m towards Knight Inlet. Wu-Hoo! Now we're getting somewhere! Hunter and Henrik quickly followed and a few minutes later we were making camp. Once in my sleeping bag I could feel my heart bu-bumping quickly due to the effects of altitude, but what got my heart really racing was the thought of possibly standing on the summit the next day!

We savoured the morning alpenglow and grinned as we looked at clear skies all around. We've come a long ways for this and today was our chance. The climbing began just as the caffeine was kicking in. We traversed rock and snow slopes below the Tooth and belayed one pitch to the notch that marks the start of the chimney up the summit tower. The ice and snow conditions were great giving solid place-





*Shawn cresting Bravo Col with Mt. Munday behind.* PHOTO: HUNTER LEE

ments. As the sun rose higher the sub zero temperatures eventually gave way and soon after ice started to fall from far above and constantly pelt us. Most chunks were small; some were not (ow!). We built our belays in the most protected alcoves we could find and tucked in tight every time we heard the thunder of another chunk of ice or rock plummet down the tower.

Besides the falling debris, the climbing was enjoyable as it was generally mid 5<sup>th</sup> with lots of opportunities for pro. The crux of the route occurs as you climb past the 2<sup>nd</sup> of two large chockstones. In dry conditions we likely would have stuck to the standard route, but sections of thick rime and the desire to stay on rock directed us onto the Mazama Exit (5.8). Hunter lead up the vertical pitch, unfortunately we couldn't watch the entertainment because we were tucked under the chockstone for protection. All I knew was that lots of ice and rock were coming down and hopefully Hunter was going up. Then we heard the sound of something odd tumbling towards us. Is that metal? Hands tensed on the rope. A second later we watched a free flying ice axe whiz past our backs and disappear out of sight. The carabiner gate on the umbilical cord securing Hunter's axe had failed releasing the axe. I was glad that I didn't have to find out whether my helmet was axe proof.

It wasn't until I started climbing that I realized what an awkward pitch it was. Key holds turned out to be loose rock or covered in a veneer of ice or both. I leaned out on what I

thought was a solid stone but it waited patiently until I was committed before it decided to pop loose. The horizon started to tilt as I began to peel away from the wall. I lunged for a crack only to find it coated with ice. I desperately pawed and pawed into the crack but each time my hands slipped off the frictionless surface. I hoped there was a solid anchor above. Before finding out, in a last ditch effort I wind milled my arms and my right hand found an edge. I pulled back to the wall. The effort left me gassed. At 4000m there is about 2/3rds as much oxygen as there is at sea level and at that moment I was missing every molecule.

Up at the belay we could see that we were getting very close. It was Henrik's lead so off he went up an ice filled gully. I followed and enjoyed the big alpine feel as I swung and kicked my way up the pitch. Missing an axe didn't slow down Hunter much and soon we were together staring at the last steep stretch before the summit. We were now surrounded by the colony of snow gargoyles. Their unusual shapes were beautiful and precarious.

The ice had given way to variable snow so I grabbed our two pickets and started up. As I ascended I managed to excavate spots for pro at the odd rock outcrop. At the last rock before a long stretch of snow there was a perfect spot for a solid piece of pro, perfect except that to get to it I had to move a large stone. Spreading out from my position was a selection of gullies that I could send the stone down. I talked with the guys below to let them know I was planning to send it down

towards the west. They were ready so I picked up the stone and chucked it into a gulley that funneled out to our far left. I watched in amazement as the rock bounced around like it was in a game of Plinko. It took a hard turn and managed to skip out of the intended gulley, hop over the next gulley and then it settled into a direct course for the guys below. Unfortunately, this was the one belay that wasn't sheltered. Henrik reached up and used his hand to fend off the projectile. The customary "are you alright" didn't come back positive. His hand had been torn open, bones and tendons impacted. The laceration was deep and required large bandages to stop the blood flow. After dodging loads of falling ice, rock and even an ice axe that day, what are the odds that the VERY last loose rock on the climb up would injure someone? The snow gargoyles seemed to giggle with amusement. The summit was about 35m away from my position and I thought that was going to be my high point.

Surprisingly, Henrik wanted to keep going. I continued climbing and just short of the summit dug through the snow and built a bomber rock anchor. Henrik placed his crushed hand in a mitten and started climbing with his one good arm. He occasionally tried to brace himself with his damaged hand, but it was clear that he couldn't use it. We wouldn't be able to do much technical climbing like this. Thankfully, that main summit was just a stone's throw away. Henrik pulled into the anchor and a feeling of relief washed over me as we knew that we still had a chance at this. Hunter, with two working hands but just one axe, then cruised up. After a quick check in he continued on and climbed to the top of the pinnacle. OH YEAH!!! That was it. Hunter was sitting on the top of Mount Waddington. Henrik moved up and joined the celebrations. The fang like summit wasn't large enough for three people so Henrik came back down and I headed up to the highest point in the Coast Range.

Some summits can be a bit anticlimactic. This one definitely wasn't. For more than 10 years I have dreamed about climbing this peak. Over that time I got a lot of sweaty palms reading about "the Wadd". From the presentations by Don Morton and Fred Beckey to countless articles, maps and fire-side chats, it was all time well spent and helped build a lot of excitement for this trip.

Like many Bushwhackers, I often scanned the horizon from the Island's summits trying to spot this remote peak. Occasionally on a clear day I could see it and when I did, tingles ran down my spine. The sensation must have been a bit like what Don and Phyllis Munday felt when they spied *Mystery Mountain* from the top of Mount Arrowsmith in 1925. When I saw that distant pinnacle, I could easily relate to Don's words:

*"It was the far-off finger of destiny beckoning. It was a marker along the trail of adventure, a torch to set the imagination on fire."*



Chris and Hunter traversing below the Tooth. PHOTO: HENRIK HINKKALA

As I now sat on the snow tipped torch, I had a hard time believing I was here, though I had a harder time looking down! The clear view thousands of meters down towards Knight Inlet was staggering (which is why I made sure to sit). Mount Waddington is the 4<sup>th</sup> most prominent peak in Canada, 63<sup>rd</sup> in the world. This means great views and dizzying EXPOSURE. The relief is truly Himalayan in scale. From the top I could easily see right across Vancouver Island. Victoria Peak stood out as an obvious beacon that helped position the perspective. I looked down the massive Southwest Face and thought about the two young teenagers that climbed it 70 years earlier with no helicopter, no Gore-Tex, no guidebook or Google Earth. Now that should have been named the Bravo! Route.

After enjoying a moment of satisfaction, we recognized that it was time to get back to it as we were only halfway and our party was down to 5 functioning hands. If you ever try to set up your belay device with just one cold hand then you'll quickly realize how difficult it is. Being a team of three was a great benefit because it allowed one person to rap down, clean snarled ropes and wait while the top person helped rig Henrik's ATC. Once down, the bottom person could undo it



*Hunter on the small and airy summit.* PHOTO: CHRIS JENSEN

and then repeat. Using this system we worked as an effective team to descend off the tower. Henrik made good progress down awkward and overhanging terrain.

The last rappel was a long free hanger over a gaping bergschrund. When I got down to the glacier below I saw a black object not too far away. “Hey Hunter, I see your axe!” We couldn’t believe it came to rest on the east side of the mountain. When I last saw the axe, it looked like it was heading west and was going to be locked away in the Dais Glacier. But instead of spending the next few thousand years in the cryosphere, a few random bounces meant it only had to spend a few hours lying on the snow. The axe was only a little worse for wear, so we grabbed it and then huffed it back to camp.

We considered breaking camp and heading down, but we were running low on energy and daylight. Instead we relaxed and I brewed up some celebratory hot apple cider and

rum. We watched the shadow of Mount Waddington grow over the landscape until its huge silhouette could clearly be seen hundreds of kilometres to the east. We savoured the sunset and satisfaction of the days climb.

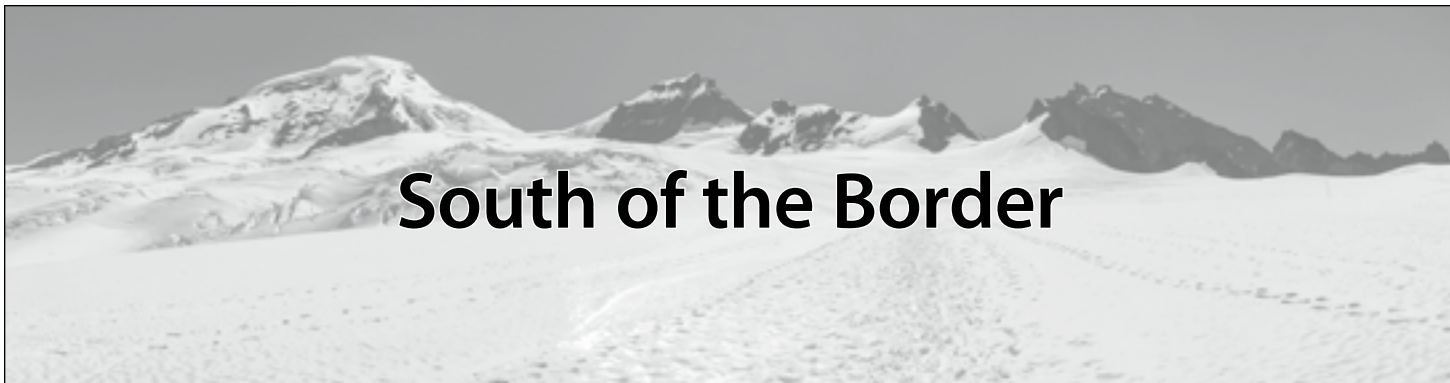
The next morning we descended down to meet Shawn. The good news of having summited was mixed with the news about the injury. Henrik’s hand needed medical attention so we called White Saddle on the sat phone to inquire about an early pickup. It turns out that Mike was already in the vicinity and within a couple of minutes the chopper was landing. We weren’t planning on leaving quite that fast! Without time for debate, we all just hopped in the helicopter and were flying back to Bluff Lake. Once we were back on the ground, Henrik and Hunter continued driving onto Tatla Lake and then Williams Lake where a needle and thread helped put things back together again.

Mount Waddington was everything I expected it to be. The history, the views, the vast terrain, the isolation, the mixed bag of technical climbing and a great group of guys all combined to make a personal high point for alpine adventure.

Back on the Island, instead of having my alpine cravings fulfilled, I found that I just wanted to spend more time above the tree line. The one good thing about having the Waddington trip cut short was that I had a few extra vacation days ... days I could use to climb the Golden Hinde. So a week after sitting on the top of the Coast Range, I managed to plunk myself down on the top of Vancouver Island. The ritual of looking northeast trying to spy Mystery Mountain hadn’t changed. I didn’t see it, but I’m glad my spine still tingled at the thought of climbing in this remote range.

**Participants:** Shawn Hedges, Chris Jensen, Hunter Lee and Henrik Hinkkala





# South of the Border

---

## Ode to the Twin Sister

---

Tony Vaughn

*~ With apologies to any real poet ~*

If you want to climb Twin Sisters,  
Then you had better take your bike  
For if you go by shank's pony,  
Then you're bound to curse and gripe

For there's need to take a big pack  
With tent and stove and gear  
While the bikers just need daypacks,  
With helmet, lunch, and beer.

They may moan as they push upward,  
'Cause the road is kinda steep,  
But coming down at 60  
Makes the journey very sweet

And the mozzies never catch them  
For they're swift as swallow birds  
While the plodders feed those mozzies  
Breakfast, lunch, and just desserts.

So climbers heed this warning  
If Twin Sisters you must climb,  
Take your bike as your companion  
And leave your tent behind.

If North Twin is your objective,  
Then the west ridge is for you,  
For this one is a classic,  
It's the only one to do.

The rock is made of dunnite  
Which is very gritty stone,  
And if you are not careful,  
It can cut you to the bone.

But the hand holds they are plenty,  
As upwards you will climb,  
Till you reach that airy summit  
With the hard moves left behind.

The trip down is like magic  
Though the north face is so steep,  
You can glissade like a rocket,  
'Cause the run-out is so sweet.

The journey to the snowline,  
Can irritate somewhat  
As the snow is soft and mushy  
So you posthole quite a lot.

Too soon the journey's over,  
Though elated you will feel,  
For the North Twin is behind you  
As homeward bound you reel

---

## More Peak-Bagging in the Tetons and Colorado

---

John Pratt

June 30, August 23-25

June 30 & July 1: My third trip to the Tetons began with an ascent of a remote (by local standards) mountain called Thor Peak (3666m). I highly recommend this trip if you ever leave our beloved homeland for the distant flatlands of the Midwest and are homesick for a bit of bush-bashing, a lot of loose rock and a good long canoe-approach (with portages). Plus you get the added challenge of a bit more altitude than we are used to on the Island. One can stay at a pleasant and reasonably cheap place with ready access to trailheads (many only 10 minutes' drive away), laundry and shower facilities and a fine lounge/library for those days when the weather is not cooperating (these are a good deal less common here than in the Coastal Ranges). I am referring to the AAC Climbers' Lodge situated right at the base of the spectacular snow peaks. About its only disadvantage is the risk (but not certainty) of the bad luck of a large party descending on the cabin your bunk is in just as you are about to settle down for a night's sleep in preparation for early rising on the morrow: take earplugs!

June 26 & 27: The nautical part begins the trip. It consists of a pleasant paddle (~20 minutes) up String Lake, followed by a brief portage; and then a 4 kilometre trip across Leigh Lake (this lake is often rough enough to make hugging the shoreline strongly advisable). The canoes are beached (and hidden in the bush) at the mouth of creek pouring out of the impressive Leigh Canyon. Here the bushwhacking begins. There is about two miles of it and it would do full credit to our home ranges. It felt good to get my teeth into it, even if I was out of practice.

After five hours of pretty bad bushwhacking, we came out of the jungle and the way ahead was at least clear (in the sense of being able to see more than a few meters ahead). It was by now evening, so my guide and I settled down at a reasonably agreeable bivouac site, with running water, and got a warm meal inside us. We cached all the sleeping/cooking gear here when we left, by headlamp, at 4:30 next morning. Cramponing up the snowfield in the dark was not much fun, but height was being rapidly gained and that was the main thing. We entered the first big gulley, which was endlessly alternating scree and snow. At one point, there was a rock-step that needed a small belay, then the gulley continued as before. By now it was light and we came out onto some sort of wide, level boulder field. Here we were able to ditch



*Nez Perce Mountain, Tetons, Wyoming. South Teton at right, below cloud.*

PHOTO: JOHN PRATT

crampons and ice axes, as we could now see that the second (upper) gulley was completely talus-filled (not wholly to our delight). This, too, seemed to go on forever, but eventually we reached a notch in the South ridge with just a short, exposed scramble to the summit (8:40 a.m.). There was a splendid view and we relaxed up there for about 30 minutes before commencing our descent. This peak seems to get about one ascent per year, on average. We left the summit at 9:15 and began the long and tiresome process of getting back to our caches and loading up our gear for the final push back through the jungle to the canoe, which we reached at about 3:20 p.m. We were back at the car at about 5 p.m., a most rewarding day behind us.

After a rest day at the Climbers' Ranch I was out again, climbing Nez Perce Mountain. (3628m) by its northwest side (low class 5) and descending to a very nice bivouac site high up - about 3000m - in the south fork of Garnet Canyon. The next day, we were up bright and early and climbed the South Teton (3815m, the fifth highest peak in the range). This is an easy scramble by the voie normale, which we did, but did not return this way, instead making an excellent traverse from west to east (some people do it the other way) over the Ice Cream Cone (3780m), Gilkey Tower (3756m), Spalding Peak (3731m) and Cloudveil Dome (3666m). The traverse ends at the Cloudveil/Nez Perce col, from which we descended to our bivouac site, packed up and exited via the Garnet Canyon trail reaching the car with plenty of daylight to spare.

August 23: Something of a change of scene was afforded by a visit to another favourite stamping-ground of mine: Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado. Here, I did an ascent of Hallett Peak (3875m) via a route to the left of the one in "50 Classic Climbs" (this route, the Northcutt-Carter, is no longer in condition, due to extensive rockfall on it some

years back). The weather was actually a bit rainy and the rock was damp, so we had to choose one of the easier routes on the lower-angled left-hand buttress. The actual summit was another 30 - 40 minutes' easy scrambling away after the technical climbing was finished: the technical routes are described as being on the North Face of Hallett Peak, whereas they are really on the north side of the East Ridge. The real North Face of Hallett - i.e., the fall line down from the actual summit - is a steep, loose and unappetizing slope of scree and snow.



Ypsilon Mtn., RMNP, Colorado. Blitzen Ridge is at right PHOTO: JOHN PRATT

August 25: A rest day followed and for my last trip of the year (I can't go to the mountains every weekend like some lucky dogs!) the weather was perfect. I made an ascent of the remote Ypsilon Mountain (4119m) via the spectacular Blitzen Ridge. The climbing - never severe, but exposed and dramatic - can be seen on YouTube. My guide and I had made a round-trip of it by driving separately up the Trail Ridge Road (the highest paved road in the contiguous U.S.), leaving the guide's car at the visitor centre, then driving back down that road to the Lawn Lake trailhead where we left my car and from which we began the ascent at 5:30 a.m. We were back at my car less than 12 hours later. This climb is a must if you are ever in that area.

**Participant:** John Pratt

---

## Mount Baker: Coleman-Deming Highway

---

Sandy Stewart

July 6 - 8

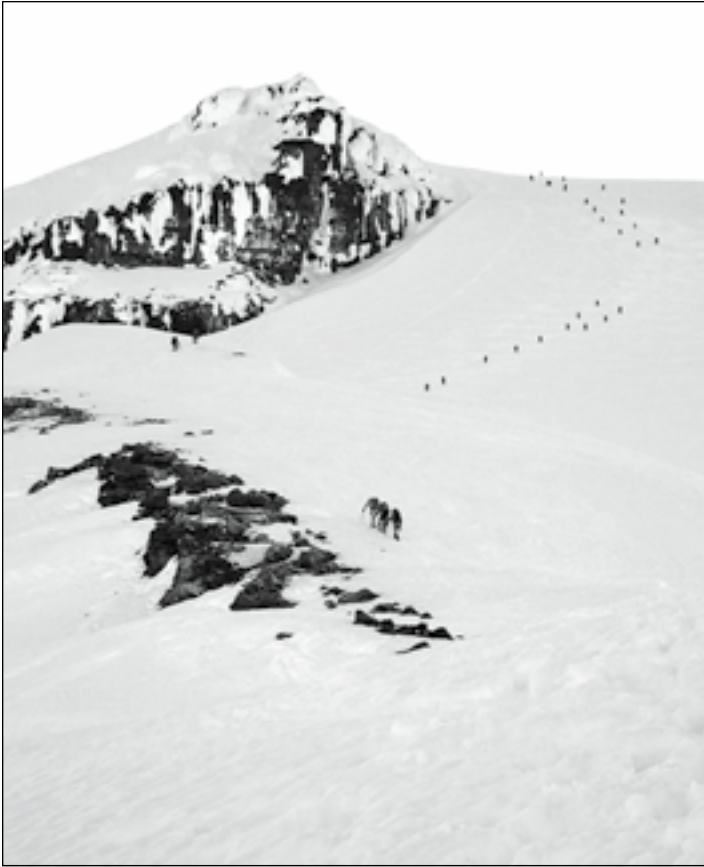
I'd been staring across at Mount Baker for years thinking "One of these days I really should go over there and climb that thing". My friend Ronan had been thinking about it too and he was the one who finally got the ball rolling. Next thing I knew, he had recruited Rick Johnson and Mount Baker was on the club trip schedule for July 6 - 8. Like many club trips, the participant list changed frequently as people sorted out their commitments and schedules. By the Wednesday preceding the trip, our numbers appeared to be firm. Unfortunately, in the 11<sup>th</sup> hour Ronan was stricken with a potentially serious illness and would now be unable to join us. We would be seven.

We left Victoria in two vehicles on a sunny Friday afternoon and managed to catch the 4 p.m. sailing of the *Queen of Stale Sandwiches* to Tsawwassen. I was riding with Rick and Nancy in Brian's van while Josh and David rode with Carlos in his car. We hit the mainland and chugged along in moderate traffic through south Surrey and Abbotsford to the Sumas border crossing. There was some minor congestion at the portal and we inched ahead slowly. One more car to go. "Oh, oh! Is that border guard pulling on rubber gloves?" Happily, we proceeded into the U.S. at about 7:30 p.m. without any additional inspection.

We drove on through bucolic countryside to the Glacier Forest Ranger Station where we completed our registration and stocked up on the mandatory blue poo bags. Another 10 minutes down the Mount Baker Highway, we took a marked right turn on to the steep gravel road leading up to the Heliotrope Trail parking lot. Brian's van began to complain bitterly about the grade and we had to stop briefly while he spoke some soft, soothing words to engine manifold. By 9 p.m. and with the light beginning to fail, we were in the parking lot along with another 60 or so vehicles. It was clear we would not be alone on the mountain.

Brian and Nancy slept in the van while the rest of us set tents and crashed out at the trailhead. All night long I could hear muted voices and footsteps trudging along the trail outside the tent. We were up by 6 a.m. on Saturday for a hearty tailgate breakfast. After some reorganization, the packs were loaded and we were ready to go. The first bridge across Heliotrope Creek had been washed out by violent flooding earlier in the spring. It didn't take long to find a suitable log crossing and regain the trail on the other side. We were in no real rush





*Traffic congestion on the Roman Wall* PHOTO: SANDY STEWART

and as such, had a leisurely and enjoyable hike up through the forest to the firn-line of the Coleman Glacier.

The weather in June had been consistently nasty. As this was the first truly decent weekend of the season, many people had decided to come out for some adventure. There were parties moving in and out all morning and when we got to the firn-line, tents were perched on most of the rocky outcrops within view. We moved off to one side and managed to camp on gravel rather than snow. Running water was also conveniently available nearby. With our camp set up by noon, we had a relaxed lunch in the warm sunshine. In an effort to ensure everyone was on the same page regarding glacier safety, Rick kindly led us through a crevasse rescue refresher in the snow next to camp. The sun was intense all afternoon and there was nowhere to hide for respite. By the time we were finished with our rescue simulations we were all feeling a little “cooked”.

The plan was to make a very early start and so after dinner we laid out the ropes, organized gear and made all the preparations we could before bed. I practised tossing and turning for several hours before 2 a.m. came and it was time to get up. The headlamps of several other parties bobbed along in a steady parade up the glacier while we brewed up and had a quick bite. We tied in as two rope teams and were

underway by 3:30 a.m. Rick led us upward under moonlight at a slow and steady pace. There had been no freezing overnight and although the snow was soft, it still provided enough support for easy travel. The route was an obvious ski/boot-packed trail leading up the edge of the glacier to the saddle between Colfax Peak and the summit. Except for a few enormous crevasses you could park a bus in, the glacier retained its secrets.

The sun began to rise and provided some beautiful, warm light on the Black Buttes. We stopped at the saddle for a brief rest and some water-in, water-out. Looking up at the crumbly ridge leading to the Roman Wall, there were steady lines of people going up and down. I’ve never been on a mountain so busy - it felt like we were part of an enormous alpine conga line...1-2-3 kick...1-2-3 kick. Although we brought our crampons, the Roman Wall turned out to be a steep snow slog due to the warm conditions.

Once we were up on the flat snowfield leading to the true summit, the wind made itself evident and I tightened up my hood another notch against its force. We were on the summit by 9:30 a.m. and surprisingly, the visibility was quite poor as there was a big blanket of smog layering the area in all directions. I later found out that this was smoke that had crossed the Pacific from wild fires burning in Siberia. After the celebratory high-fives, we had some snacks, took a few pictures and tried to ignore all the other people on the summit before heading back down. The snow had continued to soften and although it wasn’t quite post-holing conditions, forward progress was beginning to take more effort.

We cruised back in to camp by 11:30 a.m. and it was time to tear down. The wind was still blowing hard and it got hold of David’s brand new tent. The next thing we knew, the tent was flying away down the valley with David charging after it as best he could. Half an hour later, David’s tired face appeared over the ridge. Somehow we knew that kite-flying jokes wouldn’t be well received. Luckily he had been able to recover the tent with no major damage other than a few small abrasions.

The return trip began with a long, speedy bum-slide down to the tree line followed by a brisk march to the parking lot. The drive back was uneventful, however, we got caught up in the inevitable Sunday afternoon lower mainland traffic. We narrowly missed the 7 p.m. ferry and had to cool our heels at the ferry terminal until the 9 p.m. boat. It had been a long day indeed when we finally arrived back in Victoria, thankful for a successful trip and a safe return. Next time Ronan!

**Participants:** Carlos Francisco Mena Cerén, Nancy Dyer, Rick Johnson, Brian Money, Josh Slatkoff, Sandy Stewart and David Wheeler

---

## Desert Peaks and Volcanoes

---

Martin Smith

September 14 - 30



*Big Indian Canyon (Steens Mountain) from the loop road* PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

The itch that is the Alford Desert in southeast Oregon needed scratching again this year especially since access road conditions in early season had been a problem the last time I was down there in April 2011. Ann and I reasoned that September should be the ideal month for the area – cooler desert temperatures and, obviously, no snow on the rough approach roads that gave access to those peaks I still had left on my tick list. Since Ann had 3 weeks of her vacation allowance left, we thought we'd head back west after the desert and tackle a few volcanoes as part of a slow return north.

With no pressing timescale we made a leisurely trip south and east via Bend and Burns, OR fetching up on the evening of our second day in Frenchglen at the State Parks run old coaching inn there. In fact the Frenchglen Hotel is all there is in Frenchglen. This part of the US is wide open and empty, which is the reason I like it so much. The hotel offers a communal dinner for its guests – mostly birders visiting the nearby Malheur Wildlife Sanctuary. Conversation was mostly about feathered friends – no-one else had any idea that people came here to climb mountains.

At almost 3000 metres, Steens Mountain is easily the highest thing in the Alford Desert. The enormous 60 miles

long by 18 wide basalt fault block is a maze of canyons, rifts and towering eroded faces, particularly on the east side. It also features a tourist road that loops up and around the mountain from Frenchglen and passes close to the summit before returning to Highway 205 in the Catlow Valley. For this reason most hiking routes tend to be from the sum-

mit area rather than to the summit. It would certainly be a multi-day trip to summit the mountain from the west and if one did so, it would likely be via Big Indian Gorge, the west-side canyon than approaches closest to the main summit. We decided, therefore, that Big Indian would our hike of choice on Steens.

September 16<sup>th</sup> saw us up early and ready to leave the South Steens campground, just off the loop road, at about 8.30. The route entered the canyon itself after about an hour, breaking out of pine forest and up steeply into open sagebrush covered terrain which sloped gently up towards the headwall about 10 kilometres away. The trail was well defined but the sage encroached constantly upon it. A few slaps on the legs is nothing but several thousand began to get a bit wearing especially for Ann who wasn't wearing gaiters.

The day was simply a matter of seeing how close we could get to the headwall and this took us nicely to lunchtime when a waterfall offered a cooling dip to go along with our sandwiches. The canyon was quiet, peaceful and altogether a lovely experience. By the time we got back to the truck it was 5.30 and our feet were well aware of the fact that we'd covered almost 28 kilometres and, surprisingly over 600 metres of elevation gain – hardly noticeable over such a long distance.

If Frenchglen could be considered isolated, our home for the night, Fields, was beyond the back of beyond. For some reason, there's a gas station, cafe, store and a sort of motel there and precious little else. The cafe boasts that its milkshakes are "world famous".

The next day's objective was West Pueblo Ridge. I had climbed the main summit in the range in 2010 in freezing conditions and was looking forward to ticking off the area with an ascent of the long ridge of summits across the valley. First though came the crux of the day – the Arizona Creek approach road. The Pueblo Mountains and pretty much everything else in the Alvord Desert is BLM land. This means open range where local cattle ranchers can graze their stock pretty well where they want by arrangement with the



*W. Pueblo Ridge from Pueblo Mountain in May 2010* PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

BLM. This in turn means that the ranchers have built jeep roads into some pretty unlikely places in order to muster their animals. The Arizona Creek road is one such. It ascends along the side of the canyon of the same name and, although it leads to a fairly benign area between Pueblo Mountain and West Pueblo Ridge, the initial climb is steep, rough and horribly exposed. Barely one vehicle width wide it also has the tendency to push your vehicle over such that your passenger, on the way up and you on the way down, just have to glance over your shoulder to get an uninterrupted view straight down the creek. I have no idea what would happen if you met another vehicle along the way – thankfully we didn't.

In any event, we were up at 7 and had passed the point of no return by 8.30. The road was rougher even than I remembered but with Ann spotting me around the areas of fallen rock and with sage raking the side of my truck the whole way we eased up the crux 2 kilometres of travel 20 minutes later and into the high valley below our objective.

There are no marked routes hereabouts. No trailheads or other indication that you are where you're supposed to be other than the map and what your eyes tell you. So we picked what seemed a reasonable compromise between distance from objective and how much abuse we wanted to subject my truck too, took a bearing and headed off across the desert. At one point we came across a line of cairns that later research revealed marked the "Pueblo Mountains Traverse", a multi-day route through the range and we also came across a road that we might have been able to drive to. But, for the most part, we just followed our noses up towards the ridge taking cattle trails through areas of thorny scrub and up dry washes much as we would use elk trails on the Island. The last phase was open sage covered slopes up which we made a beeline for the gully I had marked from below as a likely access to the ridgeline. It was and we were soon on a high point in time

for lunch. The day had now become very hot and, as would become the pattern throughout our trip, views were rather limited by the heat. Nevertheless, the desert shimmered in the haze far below, as deserts are supposed to do, and it was nice to look across to the main summit having done the reverse 2 years previously.

After an hour on the summit we retraced our steps, grateful for the GPS uptrack in some areas of dense scrub, and arrived at my truck at about 4. After inching down the road we were in Fields by 5.30 working hard on a couple of those world famous milkshakes and falling into sugar shock very soon thereafter.

It had been a super day and wonderful to tick off the last of my objectives in the area but, most of all, I was filled with relief at the fact that I'd never have to drive that damned road again!

After two long days the next day was scheduled as a rest day so we took the opportunity to visit some local sites as well as drive the very impressive Steens Mountain loop road and bag the summit as a short 45 minute objective from there.

A notable objective on my 2010 trip south had been Granite Peak, the highest summit in the Santa Rosa Range just over the state line in northern Nevada. In early season the Buckskin Canyon approach road was still closed by snow well below the approach point from Hinkey Summit and instead I had made my own (and maybe a new) route up Buckskin Mountain from the highest point to which I could drive. This trip appeared in the 2010 IBWA. Granite was still business unfinished of course, so the 20<sup>th</sup> saw us at the top of FSR 084 at Hinkey Summit at about 10 a.m. from where we were able to turn left up and drive up a rough spur until the mountain came into sight.

From our selected start point we simply followed cow paths and then open talus slopes west, contouring an intermediate bump to reach the south ridge at a saddle just below the summit block. We then contoured southwest from the saddle, finally turning north and directly up to the fine summit with some easy Class 3 and minor exposure. Interestingly we found the highest cow patty at about 9500 feet, only a couple of hundred feet below the top and on quite tricky ground. My bowels were fine with the situation but perhaps this was past the limits of bovine comfort?

Once again distant views were limited by the heat haze but were still very fine within a limited radius. Far below the tiny white dot that was our truck looked completely out of place in such emptiness. It welcomed us back a couple of hours later, however and we headed back down the road to Winnemucca, NV and a welcome shower.

After almost a week in the high, dry desert, more verdant climes were called for so off we went south and west via the awfulness that is South Lake Tahoe to the Pinnacles National Monument in central California and Steinbeck Country.





*The Gabilan Pinnacles (right) and North Chalone Peak (left)* PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

The Gabilan Pinnacles are believed to have been part of a volcano that once stood near present-day Lancaster, some 300 kilometres to the southeast. Tectonic plate movement on the San Andreas Fault along the boundary of the Pacific Plate and the North American Plate split the original volcano and carried the Pinnacles north over 23 million years ago.

The Pinnacles are only 60 kilometres from the Pacific Ocean. However, the Santa Lucia Mountains to the west strongly moderate any maritime influence on the park's climate and ecosystems. The resulting chaparral, woodland, grassland and rock habitats are unique and simply wonderful. Over the years I hiked every trail that the park has to offer and it was clearly a place to show Ann and to enjoy some low level hiking on well made trails.

North Chalone Peak is the highest point in the park at 1008 metres and we were ready to leave the Bear Gulch east side trail head by 9.15 on Sept 22<sup>nd</sup>. It was already hot. Extremely well made trail took us 7 kilometres and 800 metres of relief up to the summit and the old fire tower in just under 2 hours – except that it wasn't old anymore. What had been a pretty much derelict structure when I was last there in 2008 was now soundly built and gleaming in a new coat of paint. A bear-cache like box was provided for visitors containing such things as garden chairs, blankets, emergency water and medical supplies, books on the abundant local fauna and flora etc. All very impressive.

We enjoyed a leisurely lunch and lounge on the summit admiring the views across the vineyards and the Santa Lucia Range to the west and set off down in the full heat of

the day at about 1 p.m. Our time in the Alford Desert had also been hot but we had enjoyed the benefits of the relative coolness that 2500 - 3000 metres of elevation had to offer. Not so today unfortunately, as we cooked in 35+ deg temperatures all the way down to the valley – where it was even hotter of course. Plans to hike the Pinnacles themselves that afternoon were shelved as we repaired to the shade of the campground and the consolation of cold beer.

The night turned out to be cool and pleasant and we were well rested and well rehydrated when we set out for Scout Peak at about 8 the following morning. From the little saddle below Scout and to the west was Juniper Canyon and the west entrance to the park. Here we turned right and took the steep, narrow High Peaks Trail as it wound in and out amongst the amor-

phous rock pinnacles that we saw from North Chalone Peak the previous day. Staircases were cut into the rock to ease the hiker's passage. These were built during the Great Depression of the 1920's as a make-work project for the hundreds of unemployed men locally who were desperate for the dignity of honest labour in return for nothing but a square meal. Some may question the presence of these stairways in such an environment. Perhaps, instead, we should be grateful that we have been given this facility in return for so little.

After traversing the High Peaks we descended through a mix of chaparral and oak woods to the junction of the High Peaks and Condor Gulch Trails and took Condor Gulch back to the truck. Just two and a half hours but a perfect morning in unique and wonderful surroundings.

Our route now lay on the homeward path but there would be plenty to do along the way.

Mount Lassen is the southernmost of the notable Cascade volcanoes that one can see when travelling up and down I5. It's a very mellow objective and one that I thought that Ann would enjoy as her first of such mountains. Unfortunately, the standard trail was closed as a result of someone falling from it to their death. This was a mystery to me and would be akin to falling to your death off something like Mount Work. Nevertheless, those were the facts and the park website suggested doing Brokeoff Mountain instead. I'm glad they did, since it turned out to be a much more interesting objective. The only problem being that I couldn't stop calling it "Brokeback" Mountain and telling Ann "Ah kayn't quitchew".

Since this wasn't a long trip we made a leisurely start



*Martin Smith and Ann Harwood on the summit of Brokeoff Mountain, Mount Lassen in the background* PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

from the well marked trailhead which is actually just outside the National Park. Once again, outstanding trail took us up through lovely pine forest and out onto the volcanic scree fields below the precipitous South Face. The route then veered west and up to a shoulder before crossing over to gentle slopes on the north side of the mountain and we zigzagged up these to the summit in time for lunch.

The whole Mount Lassen National Volcanic Park lay before us. Well made trails could be seen giving access to all parts of this fascinating landscape and beckoned us for future strips. Above everything towered Mount Lassen, the least imposing of the I5 volcanoes but still pretty impressive from where we stood.

Five hours and 12 kilometres after we set off we were back at the truck and shortly thereafter in the Visitor Centre – sorry Center – sipping lattes. Since the day had been short we elected to get some mileage under our belts and so returned to I5 and north to Weed in preparation for Mount Eddy of the following day, the 26<sup>th</sup>.

Mount Eddy is the highest point in the Trinity Alps, just across the road from Mount Shasta and was my last objective in the area having done everything else (I thought) worthwhile.

The Parks Creek trailhead can be found 22 kilometres from I5 on Forest Service Road 17 which is paved all the way to the trailhead! (This is the US after all). The road winds its way right around the mountain so that you start from the west, the opposite side to what you see from Shasta. We were hiking by about 9.30.

A long forested approach on the Sisson-Callahan Trail took us gently up into the Deadfall Lakes Basin – called, not too imaginatively, Lower, Middle and – wait for it – Upper Deadfall Lakes – the latter being the loveliest of the three

right and under Eddy's precipitous West Face. After a short break at Upper Lake we followed the trail up onto the south shoulder of Eddy and the junction with the summit trail. The long scree slopes of the wide South Ridge might have been tedious but for the lovely contoured trail. Heck a group of horsemen were zigzagging down as we reached the ridge proper. All told it was only 30 - 40 minutes up from lake to the flat summit with its remains of an old fire tower.

Visibility had been deteriorating throughout our trip and today was quite bad. The sun shone, there was hardly a cloud in the sky but the huge bulk of Mount Shasta was barely visible through the haze only 15 kilometres away. To the west the haze didn't obscure the Trinity Alps too badly and they revealed themselves as a whole new playground to explore. So much for Eddy being my last objective in the area.

Back at the truck by 3.30 we packed up and made a leisurely drive back to I5 and just over the state line to Ashland, OR.

Mount McLaughlin is a fairly strenuous day trip involving over 1200 metres of elevation gain and nearly 15 kilometres of travel. We were at the trailhead early the next day, therefore, only to find it buzzing with kids of all ages. Fifty of them and their teachers would be attempting the summit! In fact at least 40 of them made it which is quite something when you consider that none of them stopped talking the whole way. In fact, it was simply wonderful to see so many young people "out there" and was the kind of reminder that I need from time to time, that there might just be hope for the world after all.

The long forest approach was as tedious as I remembered but, at last, the trail broke out into scrub pine and mountain juniper and arrived after about 3 hours at the "sandy saddle" with the summit in plain view for the first time. After a water break we continued up trying to select as painless a passage as possible through the broken scree whilst encouraging the kids, some of who were beginning to tire a bit at this point. On occasion our route took us right to the ridge edge with a spectacular drop-off to the north.

After an hour we were on the summit in nice time for lunch and the welcome discovery that I'd done it faster than I did 5 years ago. Maybe I'm managing to stave off impending decrepitude after all. Once again, views were lost in the haze and there was no chance of seeing Shasta to the south or the Sisters to the north, as I had on my last visit.

Finally it was time to leave and we arrived at the truck under three and a half hours later, foot sore but well satisfied.

Every trip, especially one as enjoyable and successful as this, deserves a fitting finale. Dinner followed by Henry V at the Ashland Shakespeare Festival that evening more than fitted the bill.

**Participants:** Ann Harwood and Martin Smith

---

## The Southeast Ridge of Cathedral Peak, Yosemite National Park

---

Rick Hudson

October 8

Yosemite National Park is a vast area of rolling granite domes and walls located in the Sierra Nevada in eastern California. Justifiably famous for its magnificent terrain, in 2011 over 4 million visitors came to gawk, walk, hike and climb in the 1200 square miles of this middle and high country.

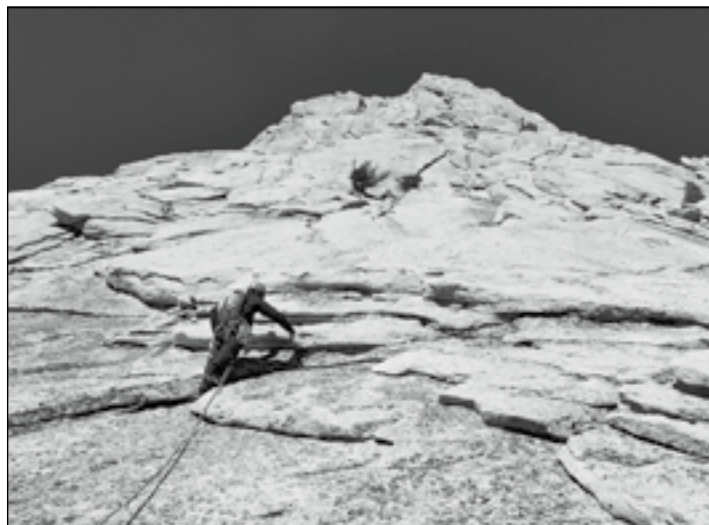
Of course, when you mention the name 'Yosemite', most people think of the famous Valley, with El Cap and Half Dome hemming it in, but the reality is that most of the park is to the north. You can't even get to those northern regions (Tuolumne Meadows) from the Valley. An entirely different road (Hwy 120) takes you there, crossing the divide at Tioga Pass (3031m). Along this narrow, twisting road are dozens of superb rock domes that offer everything from hiking, to exposed scrambling, to high grade climbing, under a California sky.

What's not to like about that? We arrive in early October, when the rock is still warm to the fingers, and the skies as blue as ever. On the bucket list is Cathedral Peak (3335m), one of the higher points off the Pacific Crest, where the summits touch 3900m.

A hike up through western white pine, mountain hemlock, and lodgepole pine for an hour and a half in the early morning banishes the chill, and the great Southeast Ridge comes slowly into view as we approach from the north, circling round the peak. The ridge is a popular route due in large part to its handy length (6 – 8 pitches), superb rock (white granodiorite) and grade (5.7 – 5.8, depending on which line you take).

We are early and have the place to ourselves. One of the nice things about the route is that the face is split by many cracks, so there are multiple options from which to choose. Further, the rock itself has small knobs of feldspar protruding from the weathered face. They aren't visible from a distance, but up close they allow you to climb what seem like blank faces.

Although it's early, the sun has already been on the ridge some time, and the rock is warm to the touch. We are 3, an awkward number, so Rick opts to lead all the pitches. Jacqui and I happily agree, and in short order he leads up a gentle slab that gradually steepens as it picks up the true angle of the ridge. Once on belay Jacqui and I simul-climb a few feet apart. The rock is coarse on the hand with excellent friction, the cracks sharp edged, the blank slabby bits covered in those subtle knobbles ("chicken necks" to the locals) that let us get up steep ground without a lot of grunt.



*Hot sun, white granite. Rick Boden on the first pitch, SE Ridge of Cathedral Peak.* PHOTO: PHEE HUDSON

There are occasional random trees growing in unlikely vertical cracks on the face, and Rick belays from their shade. It's warm, almost hot. Far to the south I can see Half Dome, its classic shape different from this unusual northerly aspect.

Rick is leading again, and the rope slides out steadily, as Jacqui and I admire the view of rock outcrops, a sprinkling of lakes, and widely spaced trees that peter out around the 3000m elevation, leaving high meadows and open slabs. It feels as though the glaciers left recently – much of the bed-rock lays bare under the sky.

We are climbing again, up nearly vertical rock at times, as the slabs steepen into the ridge. There are edgy cracks and delicate faces, all pleasantly warm to the touch, as the ground slowly recedes below, and the view to the horizon improves.

Half way up, we reach the famous chimney pitch. A wide crack, too narrow to get into, but with smooth outer faces, it provides some grunting for a few metres until Rick solves the footing, and disappears above. The rope pays out. An eagle drifts lazily by. Another group are climbing somewhere below and to the right, but will converge with us higher up.

Near the top, the wind has picked up a bit and I'm grateful for my puff jacket. There are now several parties below, fanned out around the true ridge, and we congratulate ourselves on getting up early. At the summit, everything converges on a small tower with a flat top, about 2 metres square. We touch the top where the wind is quite strong then retreat down to the West Ridge where an easy scramble takes us to a ledge to un-rope. Clouds have drifted in from the south, and Half Dome is no longer clear, but to the north the high rocks of Tuolumne Meadows stretch away to the horizon in bright sunshine – dome after dome all offering an infinite number of climbing routes.

**Participants:** Rick Boden, Jacqui Hudson and Rick Hudson



# Distant Places

---

## New Zealand 2012

---

Martin Smith

January 20 - February 20

The “Land of the Long White Cloud” continues to beckon me and after a hiatus of only three years, Ann and I decided that we could resist the siren call no longer and prepared to endure the long trip south in order to enjoy the unique rewards that New Zealand has to offer.

In three previous trips spanning the spring/summer periods of October to March I had not failed to be snowed on at least once in any of those seven months. This trip was to be no exception and made me finally come to terms with the fact that I hadn’t, in fact, had bad luck on the previous trips. NZ weather is crap and you just have to deal with it.

Given this simple fact, you’re always going to have unfinished business in the kiwi mountains and this trip was about dealing with a few of those as well as adding some new ones. Since this was Ann’s first visit we also threw in a couple of treks so that she could experience the NZ hut scene which, frankly, puts BC’s to shame both in terms of quality and plenitude.

After a few days with dear friends in Auckland and the obligatory hike up Mount Rangitoto in the Hauraki Gulf, we set off south in our rental car for a week of volcanic fun in the Taupo and New Plymouth areas. Unhappily I fell victim to the vile Eurobrat who had sneezed all over me in the Vancouver/LA flight and the car succumbed to a ruptured drive belt in the middle of nowhere. By the time that was sorted out and Ann had dragged me into a clinic in Wellington, we’d lost a week and I was feeling hard done by. The weather, of course, had been perfect all the while that I and the car had coughed and spluttered.

It was February 1st before the Wellington antibiotics had done their job, so we wrote off the North Island and headed across Cook Strait for our South Island objectives.



*Ann Harwood descending Mount Arthur in fine NZ clag* PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

Mount Arthur (1795m) in Kahurangi National Park is a lovely destination. I’d done it twice before, once in crap weather on snow and once in crap weather in rain. The last time was with Sandy Briggs in 2009 when Sandy described the flock of keas swirling round the summit as storm clouds raced in as a “real New Zealand moment”. Right on Sandy – but I would like that summit view of Tasman Bay and the Southern Alps just once. So, reasoning that three time’s a charm, we packed up for an overnight and left the Flora Saddle trailhead at about noon on the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The Mount Arthur hut is one of my favourite places to stay. Small but well equipped, right at bush line and with fabulous views. Not even the gloomy Slav couple who arrived late to spoil our splendid isolation could undermine my happy mood. This was Ann’s first NZ hut night and, as with all other huts we stayed in subsequently, she was in awe of the facilities here compared to home.

The good weather pattern had clearly broken even before we left the Flora Saddle and the storm front was well established by the time we left the hut at about 8.30 the next

morning. Five minutes above the bush line we were into the full force of the wind and a driving drizzle with visibility near zero. After half an hour I was drenched and miserable and turned round to tell Ann I'd had enough. What I saw however, was a huge grin and the obvious demeanour of someone loving every second of this. There's no accounting for what drives women, except that it was clearly going to drive this old guy to the summit. So, on we plodded on the typically excellent trail while I got wetter and wetter and Ann's grin got wider and wider.

After a couple of tricky bits on slippery limestone, we finally hit the summit ridge and shortly thereafter the summit itself with its trig point at about 11. Five minutes admiring the 10 metre view was more than sufficient and we off down to find some shelter for lunch.

We took the same route back to the hut – meeting the even gloomier Slav couple on the way – and then a route I hadn't done before direct to the Flora hut, about 2 kilometres west of the Saddle trailhead. This was steep, muddy and slippery with lots of down-sloping tree roots. It felt just like home. We finally reached the car at about 3 p.m. disappointed to have had no view but happy to be back on the trail again.

Tourist stuff occupied the next few days before we headed over to Arthur's Pass. Avalanche Peak (1833m) is the standard objective hereabouts but bad weather is the norm and I had twice previously driven up the pass, taken one look at the driving rain/hail/snow and driven on. This time everything looked very positive and we were up, out and off early on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

As with most of the standard kiwi objectives, there's no losing the trail up Avalanche Peak. It's obvious and easy to follow. Unlike most standard kiwi objectives, however, it goes straight up. No contouring, no benching and steep. Think 3 Finlaysons. One and a half of roots and rock to the always surprisingly abrupt bush line and one and a half on open slopes with ever improving views all the way to the top. The final 5 minutes is on quite a narrow ridge and provides a lovely finish to a very worthwhile mountain. The whole thing took us just over 3 hours – in perfect time for a summit lunch and the usual battle with the keas trying to steal it. Views were perfect in all directions. Not at all what I've come to expect in NZ.

Heading down we took Scott's track, one ridge to the west of our up route. This is less steep and, once in the bush, even contours a bit. By the time we hit the road just after 3 p.m. the day had become positively hot. There was, therefore, not the remotest chance that we were NOT going to enter the pub that someone had had the foresight to site almost right at the trailhead.

For a bit of a change of pace, our next objective was the "Mount Somers Sub Alpine Walkway" near Methven and

right on the edge of the Canterbury Plain. This is right off the usual tourist track and traverses old coal mining territory as well as fascinating rhyolite scenery. I'd done Mt Somers from the south in 2009 and was well acquainted with all the trails, except the Walkway side of the mountain, as well as local logistics. Our landlady from the excellent "Glenview Farmstay" dropped us at the Woolshed Creek trailhead on the 9<sup>th</sup> with the promise to pick us up at Sharplin Falls the following day.

From the trailhead the well signed path took us north up the route of an old tramline. One of the cars has been left in the forest by DoC and presents quite an incongruous sight. Higher up all signs of the tramline disappear but it clearly ran this way since the path led right to the mine entrance itself. After pausing for photos we continued north, up open flax and tussock slopes now and eventually to the ridge crest and the high point known locally as Point 934 with superb views of the Ashburton Gorge and the Arrowsmith Range beyond. The track now descended quite steeply down the valley of the Woolshed Creek and we arrived at the DoC hut there after just over 2 hours tramping and in time for an early lunch. A day which had started fine now turned cloudy and cool.

From the hut the track turned east and began climbing up the Morgan Stream towards "The Saddle" at 1170m, the high point on the hike. From about the mid-point of the climb the first rhyolite pinnacles appeared. A couple of local rock jocks were at work on a new route on one of them and, as kiwis never fail to do, greeted us warmly.

It was about 2 hours from the hut to The Saddle and by this time, the views were beginning to disappear. However, we were still in time to see the main attraction. Stand on The Saddle and look west and you see nothing but mountains: the Winterslow and Arrowsmith Ranges and the Southern Alps beyond. Look east and you see the pancake flat verdant Canterbury Plain, all the way to Christchurch (although not that day). It looks like you could run down to the flat land in half an hour but it is, in fact a good 4 - 5 hours travel away.

Our destination that night was the Pinnacles Hut and shortly after leaving the saddle the namesake features came into view. Just above the hut, these features, as one might expect, are a magnet for rock climbers.

The hut is situated just below bush line but in an attractive location nevertheless. It wasn't as well appointed as the Woolshed Creek Hut but was perfectly adequate. Best of all, we had it to ourselves. Or so we thought. We were just getting ready to turn in after a lovely peaceful evening when two grumpy Germans turned up. Gloomy Slavs and now Grumpy Germans. What a treat! At 10 p.m. these particular chaps now proceeded to prepare what seems like a 9 course dinner while we were trying to sleep. Ann stopped me in time from saying "don't mention the war".



Ann Harwood approaching the Mueller Hut, Mount Cook in the background PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

The next morning we were up at 7 to the NZ standard of cloud and driving rain. Taking care to make as much noise as possible, we packed up, said *aufweidersehen* to our grumpy friends and set off into the murk at about 8. We had approximately 500 metres of elevation to lose to the Sharplin Falls trailhead but actually climbed 400 metres along the way, a lot of it on slippery trail in beech forest and up and over a subsidiary high point called “Duke Knob”. It was only 3 hours but with the trail and weather conditions felt like a lot more. To add insult to injury there was no cell service at the trailhead and we had to walk most of the way to Staveland on SH 72 before we could call for pickup. Since we were heading for a warm shower, however, it really didn’t seem to matter.

Twice before I’ve flogged up to Sealy Tarns above Mount Cook village with the intention of bagging Mount Ollivier (1933m), the first mountain that Ed Hillary climbed that he deemed worthy of the name and for the incredible views of the Hooker Glacier and Mount Cook itself. Twice before I’ve been denied by awful weather, the last time in 2009 when I was literally lifted off my feet by the wind on the open ridge below the Mueller Hut. Neither was the outlook great this time as we set off from a treat night at The Hermitage early on the 11<sup>th</sup>

As usual we hit cloud just below the Tarns after about an hour of climbing but Ann had that “I’m loving it anyway” look on her face again and at least it wasn’t blowing, so on we went. Another hour put us on the ridge and we then followed

the poles through the murk towards the hut. What followed can only be down to the Almighty finally feeling sorry for me. The clouds began to thin, then part and suddenly there it all was, possibly the best view in New Zealand. As splendid as described and finally seen with our own eyes.

Lunch at the hut then a brief scramble and we were on top of Ollivier. Just a bump on the ridge above the village really but if it was good enough for Sir Ed, it was more than good enough for me. Far below our car was plain to see parked behind The Hermitage.

Our satisfied mood was such that even the knee bending 3 hours down to the valley seemed to just flow beneath our feet.

I’m not a huge fan of the “Great Walks” but we felt that Ann’s first visit to NZ wouldn’t have been complete without one, so we’d booked ahead for the Kepler – the Milford having sold out months before.

The forecast was good as we left Te Anau on February 14<sup>th</sup> on the water taxi to Brod Bay on the opposite side of the lake. From our disembarkation point astonishingly good trail – wide, contoured and well benched - took us up almost 1000 metres through beech forest, around bluffs and finally to that unique kiwi transition from forest to tussock moor. One second you’re in tall trees and the next you’re in the open alpine. It’s that abrupt. From bush line it was only a half hour to the Luxmore hut and the end of the first day. If hut standards are high in NZ they’re nothing short of astonish-



ing on the Great Walks. Comfy bunks with individual storage space, ablution blocks, flush toilets and kitchens, though shared, that your mother would be proud of. Prices are reasonable such that a trek like the Kepler with huts, fees, incredibly well maintained tracks and everything thrown in costs less than the West Coast Trail. We all know what we get for our money on the WCT and it ain't much!

We were quite early at the hut and so had our choice of the best bunks as well as time to explore the limestone caves nearby. The evening, as would be the case throughout the trek, was spent in pleasant conversation with like minded people from all over the world. This is one of the most agreeable aspects of a journey such as the Kepler and one that Ann and I enjoyed very much.

The forecast notwithstanding, we got up early the next morning to find the hut cloaked in mist and, as we left an hour or so later wearing 5 layers each against the biting chill, a little snow was mixed in with the steady drizzle - thereby preserving my record of being snowed on on every trip to New Zealand.

The second day on the Kepler is supposed to be the highlight of the trip. Almost entirely on alpine ridges with stupendous views across Lakes Manapouri and Te Anau to the surrounding ranges. We saw not a thing! The side trip to bag the summit of Mount Luxmore (1472m) was the most noteworthy aspect of the day, although one could appreciate the potential of the route as well as the massive effort that the government of New Zealand invests in such enterprises. Would that their counterparts in BC might notice and react appropriately.

Our home for the night was to be the Iris Burn Hut and after several hours in the fog we dropped down the required 600 - 700 metres off the ridges in plenty of time to grab the best beds in the house again just as the sun came back out. The resident possums and a nearby glow worm cliff provided the evening's entertainment.

The next day was a long but simple valley walk down the Iris Burn to the Moturau Hut on the shores of Lake Manapouri. The hut is only a morning's walk from the first take out point off the Kepler at Rainbow Reach and many folk, eager for a shower and real food do head straight out at this point. I urge anyone contemplating such not to do it. Don't miss a night in such a location, right on the shore with views across the lake to the mountains to the west. After a swim in the lake we cooked supper and cleared up just in time to sit back and enjoy a spectacular sunset.

By noon the next day we were back in Te Anau and several hours later in the tourist hustle and bustle of Queenstown for an end of trip celebratory dinner and a night of luxury in one of the town's best hotels. A great way to end another trip to *Aotearoa*, The Land of the Long White Cloud. I wonder what Maori for "never ending" rather than "long" is?

**Participants:** Ann Harwood and Martin Smith

---

## Some Climbs in the Atacama

---

John Pratt

February 13 - 24



*View from summit of Volcan Copiapo (6052m), Atacama region, Chile.*

PHOTO: JOHN PRATT

Last February, fancying another climb in the Andes, I made the long flight down to Santiago where I changed planes and flew back north up to Copiapo (this was where the then recent saga of the 30 or so miners trapped underground - and subsequently rescued - took place). Taking off from Santiago, I got a clear view of the great Aconcagua, which I'd not seen since climbing it half a lifetime ago, back in 1981. Mountaineering in this part of the world necessitates a lot of 4-wheel driving and we went from place to place, refugio to refugio, valley to valley, in a jeep heavily laden with spare tires, fuel, food, water and all the necessities of survival: this is not the best place in the world to have a breakdown. The roads run very high here - altitudes of >4000m are very common and on one occasion I reached, by jeep, the absurd altitude of 5850m. The landscape is bare and sweeping with much brown and gray, and with only flecks of snow here and there. The only green comes from the glacial lakes. The scale of everything is vast - even an open prairie looks cosy by comparison.

Our first stop was the Laguna Santa Rosa (3700m), a lake surrounded by barren, rounded peaks. The wildlife was mildly interesting - pink flamingoes around the margin of the lake and an Andean fox which came foraging around the refugio, a beat-up shack of a place with a couple of leprous mattresses for sleeping on (to the extent one could sleep). The next day we did an eight-hour acclimatization hike up one



*Camp at Laguna Verde (4350m).* PHOTO: JOHN PRATT

of the Siete Hermanos, a cluster of nondescript mountains which rise behind the cabin. The apparent scale is deceptive - things here tend to be much further away than they look. After hours of hiking, the summit seemed no closer. Of course, we were there eventually, but it was quite a grind. It was strange to think this innocuous peak (at 4850m not at all high by local standards) would top anything in the Alps! For variety, we descended by a different ridge, but it was a classic case of “six of one, half a dozen of the other”.

The next refugio, at Laguna Negro Francisco (4200m) was a much more agreeable place. It is actually a ranger station for the Parque Nacional Tres Cruces and had a good kitchen, electric light, a fireplace, a ping-pong table and quite decent bunks and mattresses. The next day we took a reconnaissance drive out with the park rangers to scope out the best approach to Volcan Copiapo (6052m) which was the next goal. The “roads” here are little more than rutted tire-tracks through the sand and stone-flats. Mining roads criss-cross the entire area. The mountains around are huge rock piles, mostly over 5000m. I’ve seen much rubble in my time, but this place takes the biscuit.

The next day was an acclimatization day, and we visited the Mina Maricunga, a large mine. The Atacama is supposed to be one of the driest places on Earth, but today was cold,

gray and rainy - like a bad day in Victoria, but with only half the oxygen.

We left the refugio at 5:00 the next morning, in the dark, and began the long and difficult drive up to the start of the climb, which we began at 7 a.m., just as it was beginning to get light. This climb was one of the more brutal of the many I have done: slopes of fine, loose rubble with occasional helpful patches of snow. We ground on up and up, zig-zagging. My pack felt too heavy, I had a dry cough and the air, of course, was much too thin. At 5900m, we had a break but I was so tired that I was by no means certain I had it in me to do the last bit! Never before had I been only 150m from the summit of a technically easy peak in perfect weather without thinking I had the thing more or less in the bag. I was, in fact, suffering from a cold which I had the misfortune to pick up before leaving

for Chile, so maybe that was part of it. However, I did keep going and anon we passed the Inca stone wall, about 50m beyond which lay the fairly pointed summit with its cairn and we arrived there at about 11:30 a.m. The view was pretty impressive and I could have wished the experience had not been coloured by my sheer tiredness (I’d since lost my voice). Still, at 6052m, it was the third highest peak I’d ever done and I’m glad I went - as one always is after the things are over! With Sir Isaac Newton now assisting me, the descent to the jeep was extremely tedious, but not unbearable.

From a climbing point of view, there is little else to say. We next went on to camp at the beautiful Laguna Verde (4500m). The lake itself is paralytically cold, but oddly, right on the lake shore, are some natural hot-pools one can relax in. Apart from a relative lack of air to breath, it is a most agreeable place. The next few days saw an attempt - such as it was - on Ojos del Salado, but my cold seemed no better, I was suffering from the altitude and felt unequal to the task, so that mountain, sadly, was one of those that got away.

Fair enough, one can’t get them all.

**Participant:** John Pratt

---

## Into Morocco's Middle Atlas

---

Rick Hudson

February 18 – 21

A quick glance to the left confirmed our suspicions. In the valley below, three figures were dropping rapidly down the opposite slope, aiming directly towards us. The surrounding countryside was empty – empty of vegetation to hide behind, of gullies to duck into, or of any other reason to explain why those figures were heading in our direction. Their target was plainly us. I didn't like the look of the sacks they were carrying.

The trip had started innocently enough. In a rented 2WD car (that was not to be taken off paved roads), we left Marrakech and drove over the High Atlas, still cloaked in snow in February, and down into the Jebel Sarhro, where ancient rocks were thrust up by Africa's collision with Europe in Tertiary times. Fruit orchards and argan trees thinned, then vanished, replaced by a barren but strangely beautiful world of rock and gravel and occasional date palms along the valley bottom, where tiny trickles from the mountains fed dry roots.

Ferdi, Phee and I had a plan. Apart from conventional things like hiking in the Sahara, we wanted to visit the Middle Atlas range. South of the High Atlas, at a more benign 2000 – 3500m in altitude, the region had potential for trekking and, here was the clincher, was home to some intriguing minerals and fossils. For years, Moroccan friends had encouraged us to visit and see first-hand what the region could offer. Now we were finally doing it.

At N'Kob we took on a young mountain guide named Hassan, a cheerful, chain-smoking lad who seemed a long way from ACMG certification. A dropped-out law student who had learned his skills from one of the High Atlas' legendary guides, in his doubtful hands we placed ourselves and the rental car. Hours later we extricated ourselves from its cramped confines after driving a truly terrible road, having spent almost as much time walking next to the vehicle as riding in it.

But our destination was astonishing, if not conventionally lush. A broad, empty valley stretched east and west, stone-covered, bone dry, with a variety of scenic rock formations jutting skywards here and there. A mud-walled complex (*tajit*) next to the dusty road would be our home for the next few days, and Hassan gratefully stepped downwind for a fag, after such a lengthy abstinence.

And here's where the story started, because on a low table in the courtyard was laid out a pile of minerals – quartz crystals, epidote, hematite, pyrolusite and more. I examined them closely. An animated chat with our innkeeper revealed they were all to be found in the region while hiking. "But better I ask local people to bring also," he said in broken French.



*Phee views one of the many strange rock pillars (this one is Bab) that thrust out of a barren landscape.* PHOTO: RICK HUDSON

"Good," I replied, and made the universal sign of rubbing thumb and forefinger together to indicate the changing of money. We had a gentleman's agreement.

The following morning saw us hiking around two tall rock spires known as *bab n'Ali*, while Hassan recounted the romantic story of the two towers as lovers, now turned to stone. If we had thought to bring rock shoes and gear, the walls would have offered some good multi-pitch climbing. Interesting minerals were about too, and the beauty of the barren ground meant the bones of the earth were laid bare for anyone who cared to look. Specimens were collected, but the real surprise came when we returned to the *tajit* that evening, tired and dusty, to find a group of locals clamouring for my attention. And cash.

Where they had materialized from was a mystery. There were but a few deserted buildings to the horizon, but the cactus telegraph is a powerful thing, and word had clearly spread there was a crazy foreigner willing to shell out hard *dirhams* for local rocks. Moroccan sellers can be very persistent, and it was late before I managed to escape.

Dawn found us in a canyon with 100m high walls of dark rock. The morning was cool and there were unexpected pools and tall plants. We hopped along the river bed, breaking out after an hour where a few fields and some scattered houses scratched a living from the hard ground. News had preceded us, however, and further negotiations were required to extricate ourselves from anxious sellers, all bent on making a fast buck. We escaped into the high country, among wild strata with fragile plants clinging to sand and gravel. In all directions, slopes of empty rock rose to a blue sky.

The evening's entertainment was a repeat of the previous. I was running low on cash, and new locals (where had they come from?) were loud in their cries. Had they not walked all





*Water magically trickles from far above in a blind canyon in the desiccated Jebel Sarhro. PHOTO: PHEE HUDSON*

day in the heat of the sun to bring me their treasures? I must buy them or face the wrath of Allah.

We slipped away from the tajit early next morning, heading east into another empty region. Hassan had promised a waterfall – could that be possible in a region like this? He was as good as his word, for, turning into a gorge that led a short distance, we came to a cirque where a truly remarkable sight met our eyes. A thin trickle of running water, so unlikely in this desiccated world, slid in a silver column 40m from a ledge high in the headwall, its fine spray feeding green life on the cliff.

It was as we left the canyon that we saw them, crossing the lower valley and heading in our direction. There was no question of their intent, but we had half an hour's lead, so there was still a chance. Heading up slope at a cracking pace, we passed a magnificent calcite outcrop without a pause. But they were younger and gaining, there could be no doubt. An hour later, despite Hassan using all his skill to lose them in the twisting terrain, they had closed the distance.

“Monsieur! Monsieur! Vous achetez des minéraux, n'est pas?”

**Participants:** Phee Hudson, Ferdi Fischer and Rick Hudson

## Three Weeks, Three Summits, Three Passes! Solu Khumbu region of Nepal.

Phee Hudson

April 22 – May 11

This journey actually began back in 2003. In that year Denis Brown invited Rick and me to join him on a trip to Everest Base Camp, as it was the 50th anniversary year of the first ascent. Denis had been on Everest three times, was well known in the area, and was an ideal person to trek with. At the time, he was keen to lead trips to the Khumbu, and wanted us to be his guinea pigs while he figured out how much it was all going to cost. We subsequently had such a good time that we vowed that in ten years we would go back and do the same thing again.

As it turned out we were back in nine. Nine years older and undoubtedly not as good at altitude. However, there was a great group of old friends, mainly ex Rhodesians and South Africans who wanted to go with Denis, so the dice were cast and in April 2013 we returned to the Solu Khumbu. Besides, there was some unfinished business from the first trip that we planned to include.

To those unfamiliar with this region, imagine a fork with four tines, pointing north. These are the rivers that merge at Namche Bazaar to flow south past Lukla (the fork's handle). The four tines all lie within Sagarmatha National Park. The tine/river on the left is the Bhote Khosi, and at its head is the Nangpa La (5806m) which was once a major trade route between Nepal and Tibet for centuries, until a shooting incident involving Chinese soldiers in 2006.

The second valley from the left is Gokyo, and has at its head Cho Oyu, the world's sixth highest peak. The third valley is the Khumbu, leading to Everest (8848m), Pumori (7161m) and Nuptse (7860m). The fourth valley (easternmost) leads up to the great South Face of Lhotse (8516m), the fourth highest peak in the world. It should be obvious that surrounding those four valleys lies some of the world's most spectacular mountain scenery.

Like most Khumbu trips, we will start in Lukla. The flight in a packed Dornier 212 from Kathmandu to that village (now a small town) is extremely nerve-wracking. Lukla's runway is a mere 450m long, starting at the edge of a cliff and finishing in a stone wall. But the day is clear and after 25 minutes of admiring the Himalaya Range out of the left windows, we land smoothly enough. Then, after a quick breakfast, we begin our trek up the valley to Namche, arriving there the following noon.

Denis always stays in the Namche Bazaar Guest House, with Mingma Sherpa. He has known her for many years and



*Slowly we head up the new stone staircase to the Renjo La.* PHOTO STAN MARCUS

through her, many of her relatives up and down the valley. Mingma is related to Tenzing Norgay of Everest fame. And so begins our acclimatization. Denis' mantra is 'hike high, sleep low' whenever possible. He should know. As a doctor and tour guide with many Khumbu seasons under his belt, he has dealt with innumerable Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) issues both in his own group, and others.

The following day (a 'rest day' that is anything but), we climb the hill behind Namche to visit Ang Nima and his wife, who live in Khunde. Denis was on Everest with Ang Nima in the 1990s and has for many years paid for his two children's schooling. The daughter is now a teacher in Kathmandu, while the son has recently completed his guiding school and is on Everest as a personal Sherpa for the first time this year. More about him later.

The next morning, we diverge from the normal Everest trekking route and turn west up the Bhote Khosi valley to Thame. The sun is out, the ground is covered in purple and blue irises, and the forests filled with ladybugs and red, pink and white flowering rhododendrons. At Thame, we stay at the lodge of with Dr. Kami and his wife, another friend of Denis'. Dr. Kami trained as a doctor in the Philippines and then returned to work at the hospital at Khumjung near Namche. He is the first Sherpa doctor to practise in the valley and is a source of considerable pride to many. (In 2003 when we visited the hospital, there were two Canadian doctors volunteering, and Dr. Kami was still training.)

We have another 'rest day' in Thame which involves visiting the monastery above the village, which is now the

oldest *gompa* in the Khumbu. The oldest monastery used to be Tengboche Gumpa on the Everest circuit, but that building burnt down in the nineties. After visiting Thame Gumpa in warm sunshine we hike up the Thame Khola valley southwest, which leads to the Taschi Lakpa pass and the Rowaling Himal to the west. The valley is seldom visited, and apart from a few stone shelters there is nothing but huge mountain slopes and sparse pastures to see in every direction.

The village of Thame is where Tenzing Norgay grew up. He worked as a servant in a stone house near the lodge where we are staying. The story goes that he fell in love with the eldest daughter of the house (Dawa Phuti) and they eloped, ending up in Darjeeling where he was first employed as a porter by Eric Shipton on the 1936 Everest expedition. The rest is history.

The following night is spent at Lungdung (4470m) farther up the Bhote Khosi valley. It's a sign of the times that in just nine years no less than two small lodges have opened here, where in 2003 there were just open meadows and a few shepherd huts. The lodge is extremely basic, very cold, and the yak dung fire throws little heat. In the afternoon it clouds over, which is normal, and snows lightly. Everyone is a little tense because tomorrow will be the first of our big passes, so the day will to be long. One good thing is that nobody is feeling the effects of altitude. Denis, who in the past has treated numerous AMS symptoms in his trekkers, has insisted that we all take Diamox. So far so good; we seem to be acclimatising well.

The day dawns crisp and clear and we set off at 5:30 a.m. The first hour is in the shade and very cold. The party keeps a steady pace, led by our Sherpa Ang Lakpa. The views are spectacular and the trail climbs through little valleys dotted with picturesque lakes. Then the track to the Renjo La (5345m) steepens. We have heard stories about loose talus on the final 300m, but discover huge blocks have been precisely placed to form a magnificent stone staircase to the pass. Keeping your head down and breathing heavily, the magnificent patterns in the rocks keep you occupied. Then suddenly there is sun, the prayer flags flutter above, and the first of the high passes is done. Alas, the clouds are down and the magnificent view east to Everest is hidden (see Martin Smith's photo, IBW 2005, p63). And it's still a very long way down to the tiny community of Gokyo and our lodge far below.

Gokyo is not on the main tourist route, but many trekkers visit it these days, and we are surprised to find so many





*The hamlet of Gokyo with the Renjo La across the Lake.* PHOTO PHEE HUDSON

people in the lodge. On the up side, it is a much more sophisticated lodge, and the food is good. It snows in the late afternoon and overnight, and the following day (another so-called 'rest day') we hike north up the valley toward Cho Oyu base camp and Scoundrel's View. The views of Cho Oyu's great South Face are magnificent in the crisp, clear air.

At Scoundrel's View near Fifth Lake the mountains open to the east and Mount Everest stands bold and clear, the famous North Ridge visible from this angle and even the two rock steps can be made out through binoculars. A tell-tale plume of snow drifts off the summit, but otherwise the world's highest mountain looks very rocky and dry, unlike the last time we were there. As an aside, we later learned that conditions on the mountain were extremely dangerous this year because of the low snow cover, and many expeditions chose not to climb, due to safety concerns. Nevertheless, a month later there would be a complete zoo on the peak, as 300 people tried to summit on a single day.

The following morning we climb our first high point Gokyo Ri (5483m), only slightly higher than the Renjo La two days ago. Although the top looks close, it takes two hours to get to there, but the view is worth every step. From our perch among the prayer flags we can see five of the ten highest mountains in the world including Everest, Nuptse, Lotse, Makalu and Cho Oyu.

After a quick descent and lunch, we cross the rubble-filled Ngozumba Glacier to spend the night at Tagnak (4750m), a cluster of stone buildings on the east side of the valley. Tomorrow we will cross our second high pass, so we turn in early.

Another spectacular morning dawns. Again, it's cold, and the stream in the valley we follow is frozen solid. Lakpa leads with a steady, slow pace; he is easy to follow and not get out of breath. We cross the Cho La (5420m) in brilliant sunshine. In 2003 we were there in thick cloud. As we chew on snacks at the top, we who were here in 2003 note how much the glacier on the east side has receded. Then it's down, down, down, first over glacier and snow, then big granite slabs and boulders, and finally into a grassy valley that leads to the little hamlet of Dzongla (4843m). We have been secretly dreading this night. Last time we were here the accommodation was very primitive, but now there are three lodges and the facilities much improved.

The weather continues to be good, and every day we wake to clear blue skies. The following morning we descend the Cholatse Khola to join the main Everest Base Camp (EBC) trail and all the people who go with it. After a walk around Monument Hill, where too many chortens have been built to remember the fallen on Everest, we spend the night at Lobouche (4930m).

The next morning we say a temporary goodbye to Denis. He takes two of the group over the Kongma La (5535m) to climb Island Peak, while we head up valley to EBC. We hike the well trodden trail on the west side of the lower Khumbu Glacier, passing the last settlement of Gorak Shep where we will later spend the night. Before we reach EBC we bump in to Tim Rippell, who is a Canadian, a friend of Denis, and owner of Peak Freaks (a company that takes people up Everest). He invites us to have tea in his tent at EBC. His 14 clients are not there at the moment, having gone down the valley for some R & R. We are not only treated to tea, but lunch too, and get a chance to see the latest oxygen equipment. Today's unit weighs just 5 lbs, as opposed to the 42 lbs that Mallory and Irvine would have carried in 1924. In the late afternoon we descend to Gorak Shep and spend a crowded evening huddled around a stove that is barely alight. It transpires that the owner has run out of yak dung. However, we are able to hook up to the internet and send messages to the outside world, should we wish.

We reach summit number two, Kalar Patar (5545m), the following morning. This is the point that Bill Tillman and Charles Houston climbed to inspect the icefall that drains the West Cwm (named by George Mallory). In 1949 Tillman wrote of the icefall: "One of the most awful and utterly forbid-





Heading up to Kalar Patar with Pumori in the background.

PHOTO PHEE HUDSON

*ding scenes ever observed by man.”* It still is, yet hundreds of climbers and Sherpas go up and down it each day in the season. That night we return to Lobouche, while noticing as we head down that the weather seems to be deteriorating.

The following day is when we had planned to cross the Kongma La to Chhukung, a section that we’ve been looking forward to for some days as it’s off the beaten path. But it is not to be; we wake to snow on the ground. The pass and all the surrounding hills are socked in too. Instead, we descend the Khumbu valley to Dingboche, turn east, and climb to Chhukung (4730m) in a snowstorm, happily with the wind on our backs. This is the summit day for our Island Peak trio, and we feel sure that they will not have made it. However, late that afternoon three tired climbers arrive at Chhukung, having summited earlier in the day.

There is one more high point to reach, and that is Chhukung Ri (5546m). By this stage we are pretty acclimatized, and the weather has improved again. The following dawn we climb for two hours, and the views from the top are truly magnificent, with Ama Dablam (6812m) to the south and the great South Face of Lhotse to the north. We also have views of the Kongma La, the pass we should have crossed the previous day.

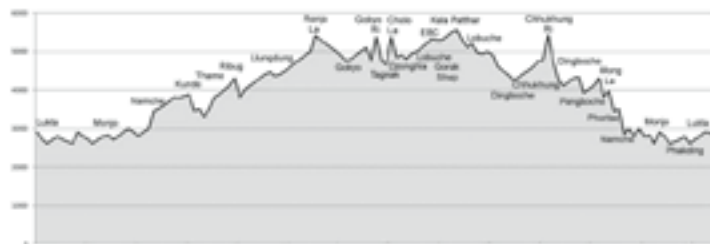
With the whole group together again we celebrate in Dingboche. A carefully conserved bottle of single malt whisky appears that evening, as if by magic, and the party toasts the gallant three, and their guides! This lodge is owned by Nima and his wife, who is the son of Ang Nima. He is the one who is on Everest for the first time this season, with the Peak Freaks team. He is just down in Dingboche for a couple of nights, and the next morning he heads back to EBC. When we later get back to Canada, we learn that he has summited Everest with his client, and taken a picture of

Denis to the summit! Getting to the top of Everest with a client is an important milestone for any Sherpa guide. Apart from the summit bonus from the company, and often a big tip from the client, there’s having the summit added to your resumé, for future clients.

From Dingboche, it’s now downhill most of the way. We visit Pheriche to see the medical clinic and the Everest monument that records all the deaths on that mountain. It’s a sad, long list, and the artist has left ample room for more to be added in the future. A day later, below Pangboche, there are trees, and the ground smells of soil again. The days are warmer and we peel off outer layers. Later still, we are back at Mingma’s lodge in Namche Bazaar, and before we know it we’re on the plane flying out of Lukla to Kathmandu.

It’s been another great trip with fine friends. These are life’s defining moments, yet often seem better the further back they are in your memory. All the coughing and snuffling, bad food and cold uncomfortable beds fade into oblivion, and the exquisite scenery and warm friendships remain as happy memories.

**Participants:** Denis and Gill Brown, David Willis, Oliwia Nastalek, Nick and Carmel van der Westhuizen, Stan Marcus, Ferdi Fischer, Marianne Willis, Stu Johnston, Kathy Wylie, Sharon Clarke, Rick and Phee Hudson.



Elevation profile for the Khumbu Trek. DIAGRAM NICK VAN DER WESTHUIZEN

Total elevation climbed: 10,520m / 34,410ft - more than the height of Everest from sea level!

Total distance walked: 215 kilometres. Not surprisingly, by the end of the trip everyone had lost weight.

### Nepal Trip – 2012

Day 1 - Lukla to Monjo. Distance: 19.4kms. Time: 5.44 hrs  
Elevations: 2886 to a high of 2900 and then down to 2830m

Day 2 - Monjo to Namche . Distance: 7.7 kms. Time: 5.5 hrs  
Elevations: 2830 to 3455m

Day 3 - Namche to Khunde and back to Namche. Distance: 10km. Time: 7hrs  
Elevations: 3455 to 3881 at Khunde Hospital and back to 3455m

Day 4 - Namche to Thame. Distance: 9.69kms. Time: 6hrs  
Elevation: 3455 to 3800m

Day 5 - Thame to Ribug and back to Thame. Distance: 13.9km. Time: 5hrs  
 Elevation: 3800 to 4294 and back to 3800m  
 Day 6 - Thame to Llungdung. Distance: 7kms. Time: 4.5hrs  
 Elevation: 3800 to 4470 and back to 4365m  
 Day 7 - Llungdung to Gokyo via Renjo La. Distance: 13.8kms. Time: 8hrs  
 Elevation: 4365 to 5417(top of Renjo) to 4750m  
 Day 8 - Gokyo to Scoundrels view and back to Gokyo. Distance: 13kms. Time: 6hrs  
 Elevation: 4750 to 5100 and back to 4750m  
 Day 9 - Gokyo to Gokyo Ri and to Tagnak. Distance: 8.74kms. Time: 6.05 hrs  
 Elevation: 4750 to 5362 and back to 4660m  
 Day 10 - Tagnak to Dzonglha via Chola La. Distance: 9.5kms. Time: 7.5hrs  
 Elevation: 4660 to 5371(Chola) to 4843m  
 Day 11 - Dzonglha to Lobuche. Distance: 7.6kms. Time: 4.5hrs  
 Elevation: 4843 to 4930m  
 Day 12 - Lobuche to EBC to Gorak Shep. Distance: 17kms. Time: 6hrs  
 Elevation: 4930 to 5321(EBC) to 5288m  
 Day 13 - Gorak Shep to Lobuche via Kalar Patar. Distance: 7kms. Time: 7hrs  
 Elevation: 5288 to 5545(Kala) to 4930m  
 Day 14 - Lobuche to Chhukhung via Dingboche. Distance: 13.8kms. Time: 3.25hrs to Dingboche and 2hrs to Chhukhung- total 5.25hrs  
 Elevation: 4930 to 4260(Dingboche) to 4730m  
 Day 15 - Chhukhung to Chhukhung Ri to Dingboche. Distance: 5.5kms. Time: 4.1 hrs  
 Elevation: 4730 to 5431(Ri) to 4260m  
 Day 16 - Dingboche to Pangboche via Pheriche. Distance: 8kms. Time: 5hrs  
 Elevation: 4260 to 4400 to 4243(Pheriche) to 3930m  
 Day 17- Pangboche to Phortse to Namche via Mong La. Distance: 17kms. Time: 6hrs  
 Elevation: 3930 to 4300(high pass) to 3820(Phortse) to 3680(Phortse Tenga) to 3975(Mong La) to 3445m  
 Day 18 - Namche to Phakding. Distance: 15kms. Time: 5.5hrs  
 Elevation: 3445 to 2640m  
 Day 19 - Phakding to Lukla. Distance: 12kms. Time: 3.25hrs  
 Elevation: 2640 to 2886m

## A Spring Fling in North Wales

Martin Smith

May 7 – 11 2012

After the rigours of a “friends and family” fortnight in the UK Ann and I were looking forward to a week in Snowdonia hiking over the stomping grounds of my youth from the luxury of the Sigun Fawr Hotel in Beddgelert – a far cry from my old club hut in the Craffnant Valley or from a leaky tent in the Llanberis Pass or at the foot of Tryffan.

We could tell that we’d made a fine choice of accommodation when my GPS took us down a lane about one centimetre wider than our vehicle and which announced itself with a sign warning of “Sat Nav Error”. Once successfully negotiated the road led to the expected converted farmhouse with theoretically sumptuous views of the Snowdon Massif. Instead, however, we peered through veils of swirling clouds and rain at the lower slopes of a streaming hillside. Even the sheep had taken shelter. Not to worry, it’ll be better tomorrow and in the meantime let’s allow ourselves to be pampered in surroundings that were a far cry from stone hut or leaky tent.



*Ann Harwood scrambling up to the summit of Crib Goch*

PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

There were, in fact, patches of blue in the sky the following morning and we caught an early “Sherpa Bus” in eager anticipation of walking the whole Snowdon Horseshoe from Pen y Pass and down the Watkin Path back to the A498 from where we’d walk or hitch back to Beddgelert.

It was windy but sunny as we left Pen y Pass and headed initially up the PYG track before branching right at the base of

Crib Goch towards our first objective of the day. By this time the sun had disappeared and the wind had picked up considerably. There were quite a number of folk on the PYG track but only one other group joined us on the route up Crib Goch.

The scramble to the summit was as enjoyable as ever although the rock is well polished after decades of use and was greasy in the wet conditions. Even before we arrived on the summit visibility had gone to near zero and, once on the ridge, we were exposed to the full force of the wind. The knife edge between Crib Goch and Bwlch Goch – the saddle between Crib Goch and the “3 Pinnacles” – is not for the faint of heart in the best of conditions. Today would be a bit of an ordeal given the wind and Ann’s relative lack of experience with exposure. But it was either that or down climb 300 metres of greasy polished rock – so off we went. At least the thick mist hid the exposure factor.

Usually I make it a point of honour to traverse the knife edge without using my hands. Today I held on with both and moved crab-wise the whole way. Ann followed my lead. Occasionally we would have to crouch and hold on as a particularly strong gust arrived and then scurry across a section where it was feet-only before the next gust. All very exhilarating and a great first experience on a knife edge for Ann.

Next came the Pinnacles which I went over on the left but that Ann was able to by-pass on a lower route, and then the long easy slope up to the foot of Crib y Ddysgl. There had been no let up in the wind conditions and it looked even worse above, so I decided that we’d try and contour Crib y Ddysgl and then head up to the summit of Garnedd Ugain once west of the former.

Sheep tracks led us nicely in the required direction but soon petered out. The ground was all loose down-sloping shale which reminded me why the Everest expeditions of the 1920’s had chosen this area to train in – just the type of travel they would face on the North Col route.

As the ground began to steepen to the west I turned our track to the right and up into the murk above. This put us directly at the summit cairn of Garnedd Ugain with the railway track 5 minutes further west, audible but not visible. Thereafter we joined the cotton and spandex crowd shivering their way up from Llanberis and shortly after that we were in the new summit cafe enjoying the warmth with all the folks who had come up on the train.

There’s usually a line up to stand on the summit itself. Thousands come this way every year. For the first time in my life, however and after at least 20 visits, I did so this time



*The knife edge ridge on Crib Goch in low visibility* PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

alone. For about 10 seconds anyway before the wind and cold drove me back to shelter with Ann.

The fog was too thick to see the route of the Watkin Path, which surprisingly isn’t marked, so we elected to call it a day and return down the Miners Track to Pen y Pass and our start point. The weather was better by the time we got there just before 4:00 but not by much.

The day wasn’t over, however. This was when I was forcefully reminded of my British birthright. Public Services there don’t exist for the public; they exist for the people who render them. The last bus to Beddgelert had left at 2 p.m.! This in an area which draws almost all its income from tourism. God forbid that the paying public should prevent Jones the Bus from getting home in time for Coronation Street or some such. Hitching proved futile so we caught the only bus still running down to Llanberis and looked for what we could do from there. Yes, we could go out to the coast and Caernarvon and back from there – about 3 hours. Yea right! So we ponied up forty quid for a cab and were back in 20 minutes instead.

Our next objective was the Nantlle Ridge starting from Rhyd Ddu just a few km up the A4085 from Beddgelert. Almost everyone goes here for the Snowdon Ranger route up Snowdon. Far fewer head up the opposite side of the valley instead to Y Garn II and the long connecting ridge that finally drops down to Nebo in the Nantlle Valley.

If the weather was bad yesterday it was worse today. Flood warnings were up everywhere and, where the traditional dry stone walls along the roadside abutted a steep slope, water was shooting out of every crevice as if from a firehose. Nevertheless it wasn’t actually raining at the start, so we geared up and set off as planned. The summit of Y Garn II was as flat and featureless as I remembered and its only redeeming feature was a large hollow cairn to shelter in from the wind. Rain began as soon as we started the scram-





*Ann Harwood on the saddle between Y Garn and Glyder Fawr. Pen Yr Ole Wen in the background.* PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

ble up Mynydd Drws y Coed and, once more, we discovered the treacherous nature of frequently travelled, well polished rock. We just couldn't stick to it even on such relatively east ground. So it was discretion-is-the-better-part-of-valour time and 2 hours later we were toasting our feet by the fire of one of Beddgelert's finest hostelries and nursing a couple of its pints.

The weather was even worse on the following day. The weather reports described "pulses" of rain and hail crossing the Irish Sea. A curious description but an interesting new take on weather reporting.

The next day, May 11th, was our last opportunity to get out and possibly the worst weather of the entire week. So we reduced our expectations from a traverse of the Glyderau to a simple walk up Cwm Idwal to show Ann the Slabs (one of the major stomping grounds of my youth) and because we have a picture of it in our living room.

For once the weather improved during the hike and the rain had stopped before we reached the Slabs. So we carried on up the Devils Kitchen and about half way up stopped for lunch overlooking the Slabs. From here I could show Ann all the lines I'd done there as a kid and when I was at University in Bangor. Still the weather continued to improve and we

were tempted on and up to the broad boggy saddle between Y Garn I and Glyder Fawr with the view now open to the west down to Llanberis and Llyn Peris. By this time it was too late to consider the Glyderau traverse but Y Garn looked like a good bet so we hoofed it up there in short order and ducked in behind the summit cairn since, having lured us on, the weather naturally went to pot again.

Now we finally understood what "weather pulses" were. We could see 2 or 3 already rolling towards us across Anglesey having loaded up with moisture from the Irish Sea. Seconds later the first one arrived and we were pelted by hail and snow. It passed in a minute or so and we got glimpses of the Glyders, Tryffan and the Carneddau before the next one arrived. We let that one pass and then scooted rapidly over to the northeast ridge and just as rapidly directly down it to Llyn Idwal and out to the road.

There remained only the traditional "cuppa" at Ogwen Cottage cafe before the quick drive back to Manchester and dinner with the relatives waiting for us.

A short trip but challenging in the conditions and redolent with cherished memories.

**Participants:** Ann Harwood and Martin Smith

---

## Pilgrimage to Tiger's Nest Monastery, Bhutan

---

Albert Hestler

June 1

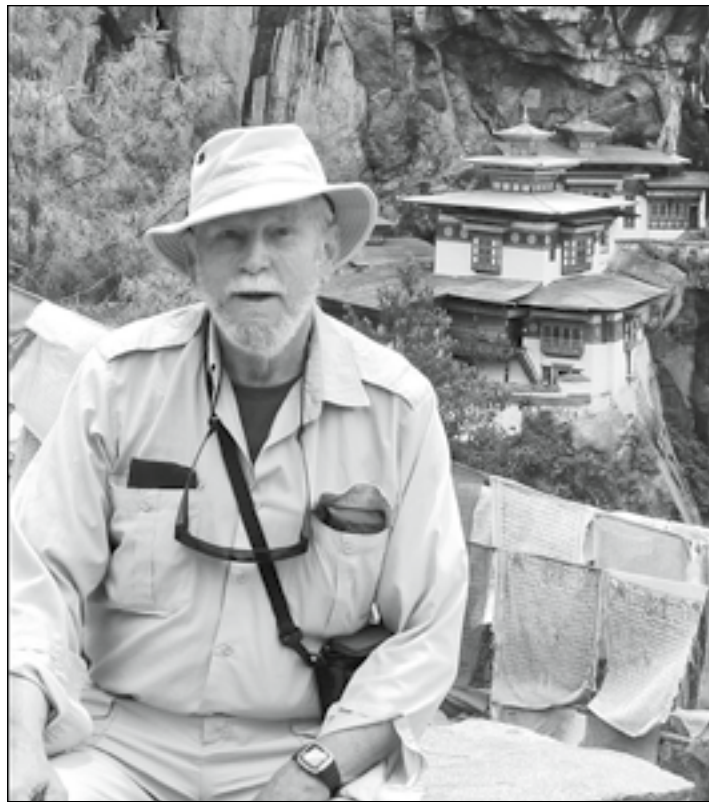
Bhutan has been on my bucket list for some time. It isn't the easiest place to get to, as travel within the country is subject to government regulations which require that foreign visitors travel on a prepaid and pre-planned itinerary organized through, or with, an officially approved Bhutanese tour operator. For starters, everybody has to pay US-\$250 per day upfront; however, this fee covers all transportation, accommodation, food, entrance fees and a guide. Backpacker travel doesn't exist at this time. I was lucky to join a group of Canadians with whom I have travelled previously in other parts of Asia. This trip consisted largely of sightseeing, though I did manage to have one good trek to the most famous and revered site of Bhutan, the monastery of Taktshang Goemba, or Tiger's Nest.

Bhutan is also known for being the country which measures the well-being of its people by the index of "gross national happiness". (This unique concept has a very practical application which is slowly being adopted by other countries as well.) The people certainly are very friendly and seem to be happy with their life. One day, while stopping on the high pass of Dochu La (3140m) to visit a memorial shrine of 108 chortens, our Canadian group encountered a party of government officials, which included the prime minister of Bhutan. He inquired where we came from and cheerfully agreed to have his picture taken with us. He apologized for the fact that poor visibility obscured the otherwise spectacular view of the high mountains. With a mischievous grin he remarked that, alas, his powers did not extend to controlling the weather. So sorry!

When combining the various aspects such as geography, scenery, people, history, culture, religion (Buddhist), government (constitutional monarchy), etc. one may well conclude that Bhutan is the last Shangri La on Earth.

Buddhism was introduced to Bhutan from Tibet in 746AD by Guru Rinpoche. He is said to have meditated in a cave on a cliff face 900m above the floor of Paro valley. He flew to this site on the back of a tigress, in order to subdue a demon. Over the years, the cave has been used as a place of meditation by many holy men. In 1692, a monastery was built over the cave, and appropriately named Tiger's Nest. Even today, the only way to reach this site is to walk, ride a horse or, if sufficiently holy, fly on the back of a magic tiger. That obviously eliminated me.

The trailhead starts at 2600m. Reserving my energy for later on, I took a horse halfway up to a spot where a teahouse



*Albert at the Tiger's Nest Monastery, Bhutan*

PHOTO: A. HESTLER COLLECTION

provides refreshments for the weary hiker. Half of our group stopped there. I then continued on foot through pine forest to a lookout (3140m) which provides a spectacular view of the monastery on the far side of a deep chasm. At that point, only 5 of our group were left. From there one has to climb 400 narrow steps down to a waterfall and then climb 300 steps up to the entrance gate (and back, of course). That's when my knees refused to cooperate.

Instead, I turned back on the trail and followed a footpath which led to the ridge above. As I climbed higher I passed a monastic school where I encountered several monks and a boy, maybe 8 years old, taking a shower under an outdoor cold-water faucet. With the permission of an older brother, I gave the boy a Canadian lapel pin. This elicited a big grin. Continuing higher still on the narrow path along the ridge I reached the small monastery of Zangto Pelri Lhakhang, perched high on a crag, from where I had a great view of the Tiger's Nest from above. There I met two young novices, both 16, who spoke a bit of English so that we could carry on a limited conversation. Basically we just sat on a bench and enjoyed the wonderful view over the valley below. There was absolute peace.

I met up with the rest of the group at the teahouse later in the afternoon for the long hike back down to the trailhead.

**Participant:** Albert Hestler



---

## China, Pakistan and the Karakoram Highway

---

Don Morton  
September

Usually I ignore advertisements for group excursions to far-away places because I prefer setting my own itinerary rather than being led from one stop to the next. However, the words *Kashgar*, *Hunza* and the *Karakoram Highway* caught my attention in a notice by Betchart Expeditions that caters to members of American scientific societies. These were places among the world's highest mountains where I was reluctant to go alone in the present religious and political turmoil. So I registered for a 16-day tour beginning September 3 in Beijing.

I arrived three days earlier with a plan first to climb Tai Shan, a 1594m peak located in Shandong province in eastern China between Beijing and Shanghai. Revered for at least 3000 years, it is the most sacred of the five Taoist peaks and very likely has had more ascents than any other in China if not in the whole world. *Lonely Planet* states that during the week-long May holiday in 2006, 190,000 people were on the mountain and recommends avoiding the May and October holidays.

I took the new Shanghai express train traveling at speeds up to 307 km/hr and reached Taian at the base of the mountain in a few minutes less than 2 hours. After a taxi ride to the start at 200m altitude I began the 7.5 kilometre southern route up 6660 steps! To accommodate the multitudes, there are wide stone steps all the way except for some horizontal sections. As expected for a sacred mountain, there are many gates, temples and pavilions along the route as well as kiosks for food and drink. Many Chinese characters, large and small, are carved in the rocks.

Non-hikers can take a bus to the Midway Gate to Heaven and a cable car to the level of the South Gate to Heaven, where there are a few hotels, but there still are hundreds of steps to the summit. However, it is much more enjoyable to join the crowds climbing all the steps towards the common goal even if one cannot speak the language. Many visitors want to watch the sunrise from the summit so it is possible to rent a warm coat for sitting through the night or a tent and sleeping bag in the hotel area.

Back in Beijing, I joined the tour party of 13 plus a knowledgeable American leader and his local partner. The next morning we took the 3-hour flight to Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang province in the far west of China. Many Muslim ethnic groups live here - Kazaks, Kirgiz, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hui and particularly Uighurs (pronounced Weeghers), each trying to retain its heritages as more and more Han Chinese



6660 Steps on Tai Shan PHOTO: DON MORTON

join them. A high-speed rail line from the east is under construction. Official signs usually appeared with both the Uighur script and Chinese characters. However, the authorities permit ethnic couples to have a second child compared with one for Han parents.

Just 60 kilometres east of Urumqi is Bogda Peak (5445m), a difficult climb with steep slopes up to 80°. Instead we travelled by bus 150 kilometres southeast to the grape growing region of Turpan on the western edge of the Taklimakan Desert. Just 30 kilometres to the south, the marshy lake Adingkul at 150m, is the lowest point in China. For many centuries Turpan was an oasis on one of the Silk Roads. The source of irrigation is an extensive system of karez, underground channels dug with much effort to bring water from the mountains. The area includes the adobe ruins of the Buddhist cities of Jiaohe and Gaochang and the Beziklik monastery with images defaced by Muslims in later centuries.

We returned to Urumqi and took a one-hour flight to Kashgar (Kashi in Chinese) on the northwestern edge of the desert. Now it is a modern city with a population of 200,000, but it has a long history at the intersection of trading routes between Central Asia and China. Marco Polo passed through



here around 1273 arriving from Afghanistan and continuing along the southern border of the Taklimakan. Other roads from Kashgar lead to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Pakistan. During the Great Game of the nineteenth century both Britain and Russia established diplomatic missions in this strategic location. From 1940 to 1942 and again in 1946 the senior British officer was Eric Shipton, the mountaineer who first explored the Khumbu route to Mount Everest. The British Consulate now is a restaurant that retains the interior elegance expected for such a place. Near the old Russian Consulate is the informal John's Cafe with English-speaking staff ready to provide information to travellers and climbers, including treks to the K2 Base Camp via Kargilik (Yecheng) on the Chinese side.

Kashgar, at 1270m, is the northern terminus of the 1300 kilometre Karakoram Highway, constructed between 1959 and 1979 to link China with Pakistan over the Khunjerab Pass. More than 1000 workers died on this dangerous project. The 800 kilometre Pakistan portion ends in the now infamous Abbottabad, where it joined an existing highway to Rawalpindi and the capital Islamabad. When the Highway opened for public transport in 1986, it was 10 metres wide and paved all the way making it popular with cyclists. Brady Fotheringham, in his book *On the Trail of Marco Polo: Along the Silk Road by Bicycle*, recounts his 1997 ride into Pakistan descending 117 kilometres from the Pass in 90 minutes! However, 15 years later cyclists in China must travel by bus for the 120 kilometres from Tashkurgan to the border, while in Pakistan they can ride the whole distance, but must cope with sections reduced to gravel by landslides and heavy use as well as delays for repaving or new construction of tunnels and avalanche diverters.

From Kashgar we traveled west and south by bus and then west again up through the Ghez Canyon to Bulun Kul, a desert lake at about 3300m with snow-covered Charagi (6727m) to the north. As we continued south we passed the giants Kongur (7719m) and Mustagh Ata (7546m) with Karakul Lake between at 3645m. Mustagh Ata is relatively easy for acclimatized climbers, especially on skis, but Kongor is much more challenging. Beyond was Tashkurgan at 3600 m, the last town in China, where we spent the night in the modern Crown Inn with western toilets.

The next day we waited three hours at the Chinese customs and immigration base at Tashkurgan just to leave the country. It seemed that the staff wanted to demonstrate their thoroughness with the hope of being recommended for promotion to a less remote post. Eventually we departed with a soldier on board, presumably to ensure that no one detoured into prohibited territory such as the road to the Wakhjir Pass (4923m) and the Wakhan Corridor of Afghanistan. To the west high mountains rose on each side of a deep notch, the Pamirs on the north and the Hindu Kush on the south. I had



*The Batura Group from the Karakoram Highway* PHOTO: DON MORTON

been in the Corridor from the west in 1969 to climb Noshag (7492m), so it was very satisfying now to see the eastern side.

Following a half hour stop at a Chinese checkpoint 1.5 kilometres from the border, our bus climbed to the broad Khunjerab Pass (4693m), where there is a huge stone arch over the highway. The driver changed to the left side of the road to begin the descent into Pakistan and the precipitous canyons of the Hunza River. The first major town was Sost, where we stopped to obtain visas for \$US 150 and a passport photo. (This convenience applies only to tour groups. An individual traveling this route must obtain a visa from a Pakistani Consulate before leaving home.) Along most of the highway our view was limited by steep rock walls, but occasionally we had glimpses of high peaks topped with ice and snow such as Batura (7795m). We reached the village of Passu for the night. To the east were the spectacular conical peaks of the Tupopdan group, also called the Passu Cathedral, with heights up to 6106m.

The next morning, after a stop to see the Passu Glacier, one of many flowing from the Batura Group, we drove to the end of the Ghulkin Glacier where the road disappeared into Atta Abad Lake. On January 4, 2010, the face of a mountain above the town of Atta Abad slid into the canyon damming the river. During the following five months the water rose flooding the road and the lower parts of four villages before work crews succeeded in piercing the huge dam of rubble. The engineers hoped to reduce the lake to less than the present 14 kilometre length, but the barrier is so thick that they are uncertain whether the river ever can return to its original level. Boats and handlers are needed to ferry all the people and goods between the two ends of the road, putting a major constraint on trade and travel through the valley. Furthermore, the extreme silting at the upper end of the lake requires shallow-draft boats. So we embarked on a skiff



*The Karakoram Highway and the Hunza River* PHOTO: DON MORTON

with two outboard motors on a beautiful green lake passing half-flooded villages, the piers of an unfinished bridge, sheer canyon walls and distant snow-capped mountains.

At the south end of the lake another bus took us farther down the Hunza River, now flowing west, to Karimabad (2300m), where we spent three nights. Overlooking the town on the north side of the river is the centuries-old Baltit Fort, with similarities to the Potala in Lhasa indicating early Tibetan influence in the region. The fort used to be the home of the Mir of Hunza, the hereditary ruler of the Hunza Valley, but in 1974 the Government of Pakistan abolished the position. The last Mir was Muhammad Jamal Khan, who had ruled since 1945. We also visited the even older Altit Fort built on the edge of a sheer rock cliff with a commanding view of the river. The Hunza people belong to the Ismaili branch of Shia Islam, less strict and much less militant than other interpretations. For example, Karimabad has a renowned secondary school for girls specializing in science. The hereditary spiritual leader, or Imam of the Ismailis, is the Aga Khan, currently the wealthy Shah Karim Al-Hussayni, who lives near Paris, France. In honour of his first visit to Hunza in 1960 the people changed the name of the central town from Baltit to Karimabad.

Karimabad is surrounded by high peaks, Bojohagur Duanasir (7329m) and Ultar Sar (7388m) to the north, Diran (7266m), Malubiting (7458m) and Spantik (7027m) to the south, and Rakaposhi (7788m) to the west. I did not want to come to such a place without doing some climbing, so I skipped a morning tour and arranged for the young hotel clerk to show me the path to the Ultar Glacier. We climbed

through watercourses behind the Baltit Fort and along an aqueduct chopped out of the side of a vertical rock face. There was a channel for the water on my left and a narrow walkway on my right with more exposure than I cared to investigate in detail. Higher on our climb, two local men passed us following the same route each bringing up a 50 kg load of rebar 3 metres long balanced on his shoulder! They were porters for construction higher on the mountain to enhance the town's water supply. Climbing expeditions in the Karakoram and Hindu Kush have found Hunza men like these as good as Sherpas from Nepal.

Another day we travelled to the Nagar area on the south side of the Hunza River, an enclave of traditional Shias where there was a sign for a "Shia School of Martyrdom" and another denouncing America. Nevertheless the people were just as happy as the Ismailis to see tourists. Farther up this valley is the terminus of the Hispar Glacier that Shipton surveyed in 1939. However, we went to only the Hoper Hilton lodge that overlooks the Bualtar (or Hoper) Glacier flowing down from Miar (6824m) and Phuparash (6574m). This lodge is a base for treks to Rush Lake at 4694m, Rush Pari (Rush Peak) at 5098m for a view of K2, and other spectacular places in the region.

Farther downstream, beyond where we went, the Hunza River passes Gilgit and then joins the Indus, where a branch road goes east to Skardu and the route to the Pakistan side of K2 and the other three Karakoram peaks over 8000m. The Karakoram Highway continues down the Indus passing below the west side Nanga Parbat (8126m), which actually is classed as an extension of the Himalayan range. I had flown up the Indus valley past Nanga Parbat to Skardu in March 1969 following an unsuccessful stop in Islamabad to obtain permission to climb Noshag from Pakistan. Again in 2012, I was almost connecting with my travels 43 years earlier.

Much of our route of the Karakoram Highway was one of the Silk Road trade routes to China. Below Karimabad on the bank of the Hunza River we visited the ancient village of Ganesh and the restored buildings of a caravanserai. Farther up river we saw a rock cliff with many inscriptions from early travellers. Today the Highway is a strategic route for China to reach the Indian Ocean, once the goal of Russia in the Great game. China is assisting with the rebuilding of the Pakistan part of the Highway and proposes widening it to 15 metres as well as constructing a pipeline and a railway to a new ocean port at Gwadar near the border with Iran.

**Participant:** Don Morton



# Mountain Air

---

## Above the Bush

### A Century of Climbing on Vancouver Island 1912 – 2012

By Lindsay J. Elms  
Misthorn Press 2012

---

Reviewed by John Crouch

There are few in Vancouver Island's climbing fraternity who is as well acquainted with its mountains as Lindsay Elms. He's climbed every significant and not-so-significant peak he has laid his eyes on. And one could say that if Vancouver Island is his playground then Strathcona Provincial Park is his sandbox. He knows every inch of it – intimately. Not surprisingly, it's the Park where he starts his historical journey of climbers and climbing on the Island over the past century. That history is told in his latest book, *Above the Bush, A Century of Climbing on Vancouver Island, 1912 – 2012*.

The book is an anthology of expedition accounts into Vancouver Island's high ground and commemorates the century of the Vancouver Island section of the Alpine Club of Canada. It opens with two chapters by the accomplished father and son team of Arthur and Edward Wheeler. Both were major names in the mountaineering world - Arthur as founder of The Alpine Club of Canada in 1906, his son Edward, as a member of George Mallory's reconnaissance team of Mount Everest in 1921. The elder Wheeler describes the Alpine Club's first foray into Strathcona Park in 1912; the younger recounts, in the same year, the first ascent of Elkhorn Mountain then thought to be the highest point on the Island. Though their writing is unadorned, they convey the beauty of the place and describe the potential it held for climbers and hikers to be well satisfied by its challenging landscape. Though it's the mountains of the Park that are the book's main focus, lesser-known peaks are included to give the history a balanced perspective.







Other original accounts follow, mostly by Island climbers, along with those of more recent climbers. Together with Elms' own accounts (some pieced together using the anecdotal storytelling of early surveyors and climbers), they tell of first ascents - summer and winter, and capture the rugged determination of climbers who tackled some of the most challenging peaks equal to almost anywhere in the world. Here's how Elms characterizes the allure of climbing on the Island:

*Spectacular alpine scenery is not in short supply on Vancouver Island and there are enough mountains to keep climbing enthusiasts busy for a lifetime. However, when compared to the Rockies and Coast Mountains of British Columbia that rise upwards of 4000 metres, Vancouver Island's Alps appear insignificant as they reach a maximum elevation of 2200 metres. Fortunately, local mountaineers have learnt that their lack of height doesn't make them any less challenging.*

As if to prove his point, Elms describe how, in 1985, local climber Rob Wood with Brit mountaineer Doug Scott and Aussie Greg Child – both with new routes up Mount Everest and K2 under their belts, scaled Mount Colonel Foster's precipitous East Face in difficult winter conditions in three days. Scott wrote of the climb, "It's remote here and there aren't facilities. The challenges are comparable with anywhere..."

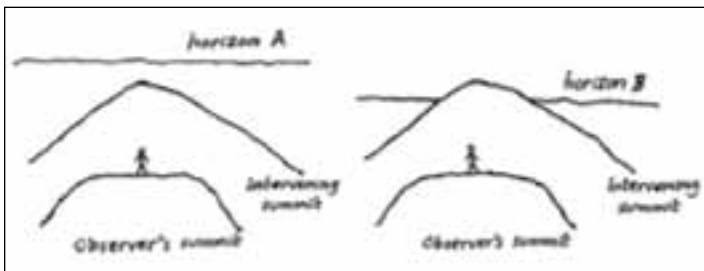
Besides being a compilation of a hundred years' worth of climbing accounts of the Island's mountains, *Above the Bush* is essentially a collection of adventure tales. In the early days, without much road access to the Island's hinterland, climbers and surveyors relied on animal tracks, pony trails and the well-worn tracks of the local indigenous people. The climbers' stories tell of much bushwhacking, creek-bed trudging, daylong paddling on lengthy lakes and endless campsites before the business of a climb could begin. Even in modern times, in some areas of the Island, these conditions still prevail although the Island's ubiquitous logging road system has proved invaluable in penetrating seemingly inaccessible terrain. On the climb, they write of the obstacles they faced and the creativity and stubbornness they needed to succeed. They also wrote of the vastness of the views and the camaraderie that was shared (not always pleasant).

Over the years Lindsay Elms has provided a historian's eye on the exploits of the indomitable men and women who have delved into the Island's spectacular high places (see, for example, his first book *Beyond Nootka*). He has done so not from an academic perspective but from having been there himself and felt the exhilaration and despondency (sometimes) that any climber feels when they rub noses with the walls of rock we call mountains. With interesting stories imaginatively told, *Above the Bush* is a good read not only for the Island's history buffs, climbing enthusiasts and avid hikers but also for anyone who loves tales of mountain escapades.

## On Summit Dilemmas

John Pratt

Anyone who has a long climbing resume – and I’d imagine that would include pretty well all our older members – must on at least a few occasions have gazed across at a neighbouring summit and wondered whether or not it was higher than what they were standing on. If the other peak rises above the horizon, it looks higher; if not, it seems lower, as indicated in the sketches below. The horizon could be a perfectly flat surface, such as the open sea, or something a little more irregular, such a high plateau (I am ignoring the situation in which the skyline is a jumble of towering, nearby peaks: I am assuming the presence of some skyline to which the word “horizon” might normally be applied).



On a rainy afternoon at the Climbers’ Ranch in the Grand Teton National Park, I holed up in the excellent reading room (with a mountaineering library and collection of memorabilia and photographs which rivals that in Sandy Briggs’ living-room) and, my climbing ambitions for the day frustrated, fell to wondering what effects the curvature of the Earth’s surface might have on this matter. To be more exact – if one were standing on the top of a peak of height  $h_1$ , and if between this peak and the flat horizon of the open ocean (always start with a simple case first, before generalizing) there were another peak of height  $h_2$  which rose above this horizon, is  $h_2$  necessarily greater than  $h_1$ , and if not, by how much can it be lower than  $h_1$  and still just touch the horizon?

To do this calculation, one just needs to do a little algebra and geometry and to make a few reasonable approximations regarding the relative sizes of the mountains, their distance

apart and the planet on which they stand. Let me then offer this as a puzzle to our mathematically-minded members: the two peaks referred to above are a distance  $d$  apart on a (contour) map and the radius of the Earth – as we all know – is  $R$ . Show that  $h_2$  will poke above the horizon only if the height difference  $h_1 - h_2$  is less than

$$\sqrt{\frac{2h_1}{R}} d.$$

To give this a little more solidity, suppose  $h_1 = 2000\text{m}$  and  $d = 1\text{ km}$ . With  $R = 6400\text{km}$ , this gives a height differential of 125m. So, if the intervening peak does rise above the horizon, then it is certainly  $> 1875\text{m}$  – but not necessarily higher than the one you are standing on (although it may be). Of course, one can generalize this treatment a bit by assuming the horizon is a plateau, of elevation  $h_3$ , at some other specified distance – but I pondered this for a short while only, as the sun broke through the rapidly disappearing rain-clouds and I decided I now had better things to do. I therefore leave this further problem to the reader.

Actually, there is another interesting “curvature” calculation one can do. If one is standing – say at sea level – and looking toward a mountain of height  $h$  a distance  $d$  away, the curvature of the Earth will hide a fraction

$$\frac{d^2}{2Rh}$$

of the peak from view (this is a rough estimate only, as it will depend to some extent on the slope of the peak: I am assuming the width of the peak to be much less than  $d$ ). Actually, this is the case with Denali, as seen – when weather permits – from the coast near Anchorage. Here, with  $d \sim 200\text{km}$ ,  $h = 6200\text{m}$  and with  $R \sim 6400\text{km}$ , the fraction comes out to be almost exactly 0.5 – so what you are seeing is just the top half of the mountain!

Just in case you were wondering about these things.

# Plant List for the McKelvie, Vancouver Island area explored during ACC VI summer camp

Judith Holm, Ken Wong  
August 12-20

Critical identifications confirmed by Hans Roemer with contributions from Phee and Rick Hudson, Diane Erickson and Claire Ebendinger

Nomenclature follows the 2012 standard for British Columbia which is the Flora of North America.

(One way that previous names can usually be found is by googling the English name)

Plants overlap their ranges and are listed under the heading most typical for the species.

Alpine and Subalpine:	
<i>Abies lasiocarpa</i>	subalpine fir
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	yarrow
<i>Actaea rubra</i>	baneberry
<i>Agoseris aurantiaca</i> var. <i>aurantiaca</i>	orange agoseris
<i>Agrostis humilis</i>	alpine bentgrass
<i>Alnus viridis</i> ssp. <i>sinuata</i>	Sitka alder
<i>Antennaria rosea</i>	rosy pussytoes
<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	kinnikinnick
<i>Arnica lanceolata</i> ssp. <i>prima</i>	streambank arnica
<i>Arnica latifolia</i>	mountain arnica
<i>Caltha leptosepala</i> var. <i>leptosepala</i>	white marsh-marigold
<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>	common harebell
<i>Carex circinata</i>	coiled sedge
<i>Carex lenticularis</i>	lakeshore sedge
<i>Carex nigricans</i>	black alpine sedge
<i>Carex spectabilis</i>	showy sedge
<i>Cassiope mertensiana</i>	white mountain-heather
<i>Castilleja hispida</i>	harsh paintbrush
<i>Castilleja miniata</i>	scarlet paintbrush
<i>Chamaecyparis nootkatensis</i>	yellow cedar
<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i> ssp. <i>angustifolium</i>	fireweed
<i>Cirsium edule</i>	edible thistle
<i>Claytonia multiscapa</i> ssp. <i>pacifica</i>	lanceleaf springbeauty

<i>Cryptogramma acrostichoides</i>	parsley fern
<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>	tufted hairgrass
<i>Douglasia laevigata</i>	smooth douglasia
<i>Elliottia pyrolifolia</i>	copperbush
<i>Elymus hirsutus</i>	hairy wildrye
<i>Epilobium anagallidifolium</i> or <i>E. clavatum</i>	alpine willowherb or club-fruited willowherb
<i>Epilobium lactiflorum</i>	white-flowered willowherb
<i>Erigeron peregrinus</i>	subalpine daisy
<i>Gentiana platypetala</i>	broad-petalled gentian
<i>Geum calthifolium</i>	caltha-leaved avens
<i>Harrimanella stelleriana</i>	Alaskan mountain-heather
<i>Hedysarum occidentale</i> var. <i>occidentale</i>	western hedysarum
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i> ssp. <i>montanum</i>	common cowparsnip
<i>Heuchera glabra</i>	smooth alumroot
<i>Heuchera micrantha</i>	small-flowered alumroot
<i>Hieracium triste</i>	woolly hawkweed
<i>Huperzia haleakalae</i>	alpine fir-moss
<i>Huperzia selago</i>	fir clubmoss
<i>Juncus mertensianus</i>	Mertens' rush
<i>Juniperus communis</i>	common juniper
<i>Kalmia procumbens</i>	alpine-azalea
<i>Leptarrhena pyrolifolia</i>	leatherleaf saxifrage
<i>Lloydia serotina</i>	alp lily
<i>Lomatium martindalei</i>	Martindale's lomatium
<i>Luetkea pectinata</i>	partridge-foot
<i>Luzula piperi</i>	Piper's wood-rush
<i>Lycopodium sitchense</i>	Alaska clubmoss
<i>Micranthes ferruginea</i>	Alaska saxifrage
<i>Micranthes nelsoniana</i> var. <i>cascadensis</i>	dotted saxifrage
<i>Micranthes tolmiei</i>	Tolmie's saxifrage
<i>Mimulus lewisii</i>	pink monkey-flower
<i>Mimulus tilingii</i>	mountain monkey-flower
<i>Mitella pentandra</i>	five-stamened mitrewort



<i>Nephrophyllidium crista-galli</i>	deer-cabbage
<i>Oxyria digyna</i>	mountain sorrel
<i>Parnassia fimbriata</i>	fringed grass-of-Parnassus
<i>Pedicularis ornithoryncha</i>	bird's-beak lousewort
<i>Pedicularis racemosa</i>	sickletop lousewort
<i>Penstemon davidsonii</i> var. <i>menziesii</i>	Davidson's penstemon
<i>Penstemon serrulatus</i>	coast penstemon
<i>Petasites frigidus</i> var. <i>nivalis</i>	sweet coltsfoot
<i>Phacelia leptosepala</i>	narrow-sepaled phacelia
<i>Phlox diffusa</i>	spreading phlox
<i>Phyllodoce empetrififormis</i>	pink mountain-heather
<i>Phyllodoce glanduliflora</i>	yellow mountain-heather
<i>Pinguicula vulgaris</i>	common butterwort
<i>Platanthera stricta</i>	slender rein orchid
<i>Poa stenantha</i>	narrow-flowered bluegrass
<i>Polystichum lonchitis</i>	northern holly fern
<i>Potentilla drummondii</i>	Drummond's cinquefoil
<i>Ranunculus cooleyae</i>	Cooley's buttercup
<i>Ranunculus eschscholtzii</i>	sub-alpine buttercup
<i>Romanzoffia sitchensis</i>	Sitka romanzoffia
<i>Rubus pedatus</i>	five-leaved bramble
<i>Sanguisorba canadensis</i>	Sitka burnet
<i>Saxifraga bronchialis</i>	spotted saxifrage
<i>Saxifraga cespitosa</i>	tufted saxifrage
<i>Saxifraga mertensiana</i>	wood saxifrage
<i>Saxifraga tolmiei</i>	Tolmie's saxifrage
<i>Senecio triangularis</i>	arrow-leaved groundsel
<i>Sibbaldia procumbens</i>	sibbaldia
<i>Solidago multiradiata</i>	northern goldenrod
<i>Sorbus sitchensis</i>	Sitka mountain-ash
<i>Symphyotrichum foliaceum</i>	leafy aster
<i>Tiarella trifoliata</i> var. <i>uni-foliata</i>	one-leaved foamflower
<i>Triantha occidentalis</i>	western false asphodel
<i>Trichophorum cespitosum</i>	tufted clubrush
<i>Tsuga mertensiana</i>	mountain hemlock
<i>Vaccinium deliciosum</i>	blue-leaved huckleberry
<i>Vaccinium membranaceum</i>	black huckleberry
<i>Vaccinium ovalifolium</i>	oval-leaved blueberry
<i>Vahlodea atropurpurea</i>	mountain hairgrass
<i>Valeriana sitchensis</i>	Sitka valerian

<i>Veratrum viride</i>	Indian hellebore
<i>Veronica wormsjkoldii</i>	alpine speedwell
<i>Viola langsдорфii</i>	Alaska violet
<i>Viola orbiculata</i>	round-leaved violet
<b>Montane:</b> (Note that the McKelvie Basin has never been logged.)	
<i>Abies amabilis</i>	amabilis fir
<i>Adiantum aleuticum</i>	northern maiden-hair
<i>Anaphalis margaritacea</i>	pearly everlasting
<i>Angelica</i> sp.	angelica
<i>Antennaria</i> sp.	antennaria species
<i>Aquilegia formosa</i>	Sitka columbine
<i>Aruncus dioicus</i>	goat's-beard
<i>Athyrium filix-femina</i>	lady fern
<i>Blechnum spicant</i>	deer fern
<i>Boykinia occidentalis</i>	coast boykinia
<i>Calamagrostis canadensis</i>	bluejoint reedgrass
<i>Carex laeviculmis</i>	smooth-stemmed sedge
<i>Chimaphila menziesii</i>	Menzies' pipisewia
<i>Coptis asplenifolia</i>	spleenwort-leaved gold-thread
<i>Elymus glaucus</i>	blue wildrye
<i>Epilobium</i> sp.	willowherb species
<i>Galium triflorum</i>	sweet-scented bedstraw
<i>Goodyera oblongifolia</i>	rattlesnake plantain
<i>Gymnocarpium dryopteris</i>	western oakfern
<i>Listera cordata</i>	heart-leaved twayblade
<i>Luina hypoleuca</i>	silverback luina
<i>Luzula</i> sp.	wood-rush
<i>Montia parvifolia</i>	small-leaved montia
<i>Phegoptis connectilis</i>	narrow beech fern
<i>Polystichum munitum</i>	sword fern
<i>Prenanthes alata</i>	western rattlesnake-root
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i> ssp. <i>lanceolata</i>	Self-heal
<i>Rubus spectabilis</i>	salmonberry
<i>Salix sitchensis</i>	Sitka willow
<i>Streptopus amplexifolius</i>	clasping twistedstalk
<i>Tiarella trifoliata</i> var. <i>trifoliata</i>	three-leaved foamflower
<i>Trautvetteria caroliniensis</i>	false bugbane
<i>Trisetum cernuum</i>	tall trisetum









The Alpine Club of Canada  
Vancouver Island Section  
[www.accv.ca](http://www.accv.ca)