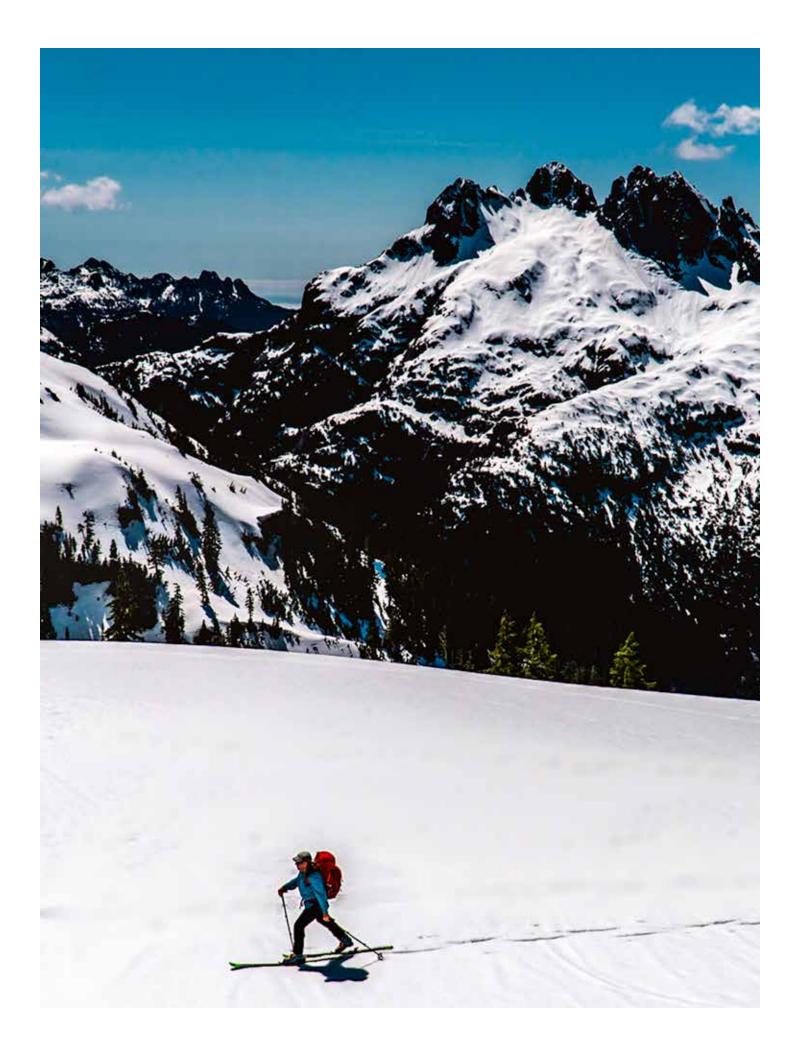
THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION

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VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION OF THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA



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REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Catrin Brown



Catrin Brown at Reflection Peak. (Photo by Mike Hubbard)

The Life of ACC-VI through the 4 seasons of 2019

Winter 2019

Another major landmark for our section passed early in the year: the opening of bookings for our hut on 5040 Peak through the national club. Happily, the first 'official' weekend in January was marked by great skiing conditions and visits from several of the people who helped in the construction project.

Fast forward to the end of the year, and I'm delighted to report that the hut has been a huge success with bookings higher than predicted, hundreds of happy customers and a



First group booked at the 5040 hut, January 2019. (Photo by Chris George)

balanced bottom line. The optimism that drove this project from the start is truly validated!

Ski trips, snowshoe trips and local hikes make our short days pass quickly through the winter months. Right off the top I must give a very big thank you to our trip leaders - too many to mention - you are at the heart of our shared goals. We often refer to the trip schedule as the lifeblood of the section, as we would not be this healthy vibrant community without the opportunities to get together out there. And a reminder that we have an ongoing need for people to step up and lead. Our leadership coordinator Natasha Salway and scheduler Karun Thanjuvar are always on hand to help you develop your ideas.



Skiing from the hut January 2019. (Photo by Chris George)

February was an unusually cold month, and even in Victoria many of us were able to ski around our neighbourhoods. Tame stuff though compared with what was going on up-island. Our own Chris Jensen teamed up with none other than Will Gadd to pull off a first ascent of Della Falls via seven pitches of ice (see page 17). The adventure is beautifully described in "Gripped" magazine and on Will's Instagram page. Chris' mountaineering exploits yet again help to put Vancouver Island on the map of national mountaineering, and we can enjoy a share of this vicariously. Congratulations Chris.

Members also enjoyed lots of opportunities for workshops and courses, organised by our education coordinators, Alois Schonenberger and Colin Mann. They are the folks who answer questions many times over, organise fees and venues, and so help to welcome a lot of people to the club and the mountaineering community. Thank you both. Our very popular leadership subsidy program continues to help make these courses more financially available while promoting trip leadership too. And thanks also to Mike Hubbard and Bernard Friesen who have helped keep us safe with the supply of rental gear.

Spring 2019

The longer days of spring bring flowers to the hills and some more great ski touring in the mountains. Skiing at the hut was amazing, as featured on the front page of the Spring edition of the ACC Gazette. A lodge-based back-country ski week was organised to the Kootenays, and members enjoyed many other trips to destinations such as Mt Cain, the Sooke hills, Mt Arrowsmith and an early start to the rock-climbing season at Quadra Island.

Our Kids and Youth Group was especially active in the snowy months. This program has become a flagship of our section's activities, this year involving an impressive total of 21 different families. One overnight snowshoe trip had 24 participants including 13 kids and youth! The organisation of this could boggle the mind, but it happens calmly through the dedication and unfailing humour of our leaders Derek Sou and Stefan Gessinger with Shanda Lembcke. As I

always say, those lucky kids. It is perhaps one of the best tributes to the program that one of its 'graduates', lain Sou, is now helping in its running and also stepping up to help with our education program. Our sincere thanks and respect to these leaders.



Kids and youth group heading to camp. (Photo by Derek Sou)

A new development this year was a successful partnership with the youth program of the Inter Cultural Association brokered by Karun Thanjuvar. This led to some successful trips, culminating in a lively snow-shoe trip to Mt Washington in March (see pages 7-8). Exposing youth from such diverse backgrounds to our snowy wilderness is a rewarding experience indeed, and we are confident this connection will continue to grow.

As we know all too well, our wilderness environment is constantly under threat from the forces of urban development, logging and the vested interests of private land-owners. Sigh. A recent merger of the forest companies under the new management company "Mosaic" gave us a new challenge, but Barb Baker, our indefatigable champion of all things access, lost no time in making herself and our concerns known to them. It is good to know that Barb will not take her foot off the pedal as she continues to push for public corridors to public spaces.

In the south island, another round of threats to the Sooke hills (a potential highway through the park) set several of us heading to the CRD podium to help stare down such a plan. One positive from the increased number of backcountry users is a stronger voice in these

matters, or so I choose to believe. CRD provided opportunities for us to contribute to workshops on their plans for the Sooke Hills Wilderness Park, while the rock-climbing community harnessed (as it were) their energies to develop a new society, South Island Climbers Association.

In a related way, the executive spent considerable time analysing our membership of the Federation of Mountain Clubs of British Columbia, FMCBC. At issue was the question of the Fed's effectiveness in supporting our concerns on Island-specific issues, and their per-member fee structure, which became increasingly onerous with our burgeoning membership. Beginning at the AGM in January 2019, consultation was widespread including communications with FMCBC. Ultimately, a vote by the full executive determined we would cease membership in the FMCBC, but continue to support its work through annual donation. This change also gave us the opportunity to diversify and expand our financial support for other organisations committed to conservation and advocacy on the Island.

Our executive, now numbering 21, meets about every six weeks, with minutes posted efficiently on the website. This is a good place for me to thank our wonderful team of communicators - Brianna Coates, Martin Hofmann, Kathy Kutzer, David Lemon and Karun Thanjuvar. Jes Scott, who is part of this team, deserves special mention for her ongoing work with maintaining and updating the website - it truly has become a treasure trove of information and active resource.

And despite all this administrative talk, let me reassure you that the executive members are people too - between them celebrating two weddings and a birth in the spring. Congratulations to Kathy and Skafti who married in Canmore in February, Colin and Natasha who married on the summit of King's Peak during a club trip in May (see page 21), and Anya and Hayes who welcomed Teslin into the world in June.

Summer 2019

And so on to the long days of settled summer weather. Hunter Lee and Chris Jensen again

gave us something to look up to, from Nootka Sound that would be, climbing the dramatic Conuma Arch on the west coast of the Island (see page 36). "Respect the Mountains" day, an initiative of the main club and organised by Christine Fordham at Mt Washington in June, brought together families for a focus on human impact. A development from this was the stickers on backcountry toilet etiquette that were distributed later in the year - please place them where you think they will be useful to help our ongoing efforts to share good practice.

Our community and far beyond was rocked by tragedy in late June with the loss of Clarke Gourlay in an accident in Strathcona Park. In his passing we lost an active member and tripleader, our treasurer, a unifying force of up-island mountaineering groups and very much more. Clarke completed his Island Qualifiers in August 2018, and was well on his way to completing the Vancouver Island 6000'ers. Clarke lived life large - as a family man, a successful entrepreneur, a newly-elected politician and of course a very active mountaineer. We were privileged that he gave so much to our community and hold him in our hearts with gratitude. A fuller tribute is given on page 16.



Base camp at Meditation Mountain. (Photo Catrin Brown)

Once more the summer camp committee facilitated four smoothly run weeks of back-to-back heli access for our summer camps during July and August. The vicinity of Meditation Mountain, just outside the Stein Valley park, was a glorious location for hikes and scrambles to the

many accessible peaks in all kinds of weather, with the bonus of a reprieve from the effects of forest fires this year (see page 81). Our Family Week group of 20 again achieved the airiest traverses, most technical summits and longest days of any of the groups. This seems to be becoming a tradition.

New this year was a week's section 'camp', or more accurately "glamp", at our hut. Participants enjoyed exploring the terrain of 5040 Peak, including the delightful and intriguing limestone plateau below the east col, and the long ridge in the direction of Nahmint (see page 57). The wild flowers in August were spectacular. Trail Rider trips, which are always noted for their camaraderie and team spirit, enabled people who cannot otherwise access wilderness to get out there. Thanks to Caroline Tansley for helping to make this possible (see page 6).

Our youth memorial grant, ably steered by Geoff Bennett, was this year awarded to our youth group for an expedition to Mariner Mountain. When Stefan Gessinger reported afterwards that this was their most ambitious trip ever, that really told me something. Please enjoy the separate report of this great adventure starring kids, bikes, and a summit climb of Mt Mariner via rock and glacier (see page 51).

Mike Hubbard and Colleen Kasting again opened their forest garden in Saanichton to the hungry hordes in late August. There we celebrated the national club's *Distinguished Service Awards* to Chris Jensen and Chris Ruttan for their



Chris Jensen and Chris Ruttan, recipients of the Distinguished Service Award August, 2019 (Photo by Catrin Brown)

outstanding leadership and work in all stages of the vision, planning and construction of our hut on 5040 Peak. I'm told that the national club is in awe of the way in which this project unfolded on schedule and in budget. Although Chris and Chris graciously acknowledge the full community effort involved, we all know it wouldn't have happened without the two of them. Hearty congratulations to you both.

Ken Wong and George Butcher each received the Charles Turner Award on completion of the 53 Vancouver Island peaks over 6000'. That brings the total to five of members who have now achieved this 'hall of fame of Vancouver Island mountaineering', as nicely represented on a new page on our website. Meanwhile, the list of recipients of the Rick Eppler Award for completion of the Island Qualifiers grows steadily with the addition of Dan McKean, Laurence Philippsen and Tyler Maclachlan this year. Congratulations all.

The 2018 edition of the Island Bushwhacker Annual was distributed in August to rave reviews. It is an extensive and diverse collection of tales of our members' adventures, also serving as an important store of Island mountaineering history. Our editor Rob Macdonald did a superb job, not only with the print version but also for the first time producing a full colour edition available online. It is a visual treat - indulge yourself if you have not yet done so.

Our section is well represented at the national level with representation on committees and participation in the General Mountaineering Camps. Special congratulations to Natasha Salway who, as the recipient of the Karl Nagy memorial scholarship, worked as an assistant guide during the GMC, and apparently did a wonderful job, as judged (so to speak) by Mike Hubbard.

Fall 2019

Lengthening evenings herald the return of our monthly slide shows at Swan Lake Nature Centre in Victoria. Our thanks to Peggy Taylor, Neil Han and Dave Suttill for ensuring we are always welcomed there with appropriate program, technology and snacks respectively. Our annual

photo contest in October, organised by Brian Parsons, led to the usual high-stakes competition for the coveted trophies (see page 98). Or not. The executive has since decided that we will replace these behemoth trophies-that-no-onereally-wants with gift vouchers for each category next year. The stakes are rising!

In October, we celebrated what was described as "the icing on the cake" of the hut project, the hut-naming ceremony. "Hišimyawih" (pronounced Hi-SHIM-ya-wit), which means "Gather Together" in the Barkley Sound dialect of the Ucluelet First Nation, was the name chosen after consultation by Geoff Bennett with the Ucluelet, Toquaht and Tla-o-qui-aht Nations. The ceremony in October featured members of the Warrior Youth program and our own youth group, using makeshift drums from paint cans (see page 14). Another happy day in the mountains.

A quick glimpse of our financial statements will show how much we depend on the profit from the Banff Mountain Film Festival to drive most of our activities. Happily, thanks to Anna-Lena Steiner and Lise Gagnon, this was again secured by achieving a sell-out crowd at the event. Following our decision regarding FMCBC membership, we were able to increase our donations to organisations with a specific focus on Island environmental and advocacy issues. These included the Vancouver Island Trail Association, the Vancouver Island avalanche bulletin, the Marmot Recovery Foundation, Ancient Forest Alliance. Strathcona Wilderness Institute and SICA.

There is one thank you that deserves its own place in this report, and that is to our new treasurer, Garth Stewart. In the midst of the difficult days following Clarke's death in June, Garth stepped up out of the blue with a generous offer to help. Since then he has invested countless hours in learning and untangling the web of our finances without, of course, the benefit of a normal process of succession. Garth's thoroughness, patience and expertise have been greatly appreciated, and it has been a pleasure to welcome him to the executive. Additionally, Colleen Kasting, our former treasurer, quietly

and supportively picked up all kinds of additional tasks to help with this transition. I am very grateful to you both.

Mary Sanseverino, our ebullient newsletter editor, is stepping down from her role after many years. So December, 2019 saw the last in the current series of these editions, always beautifully constructed and packed with interest. As Mary herself noted, it has become more of a magazine than a newsletter. Our sincere thanks to Mary as she takes a well-earned break from this task.

We were touched and grateful that the Gourlay family once more offered their home to the broader mountaineering community for a gettogether in November. In Victoria a Christmas party was once more hosted at the home of Tom and Pam Hall, with catering ably provided by Lynne Moorhouse and friends.

Looking ahead to 2020

And so the cycle of seasons continues as we look forward to a new year. Last year I pictured the life of our section as a healthy tree, this year I am thinking of us as a forest with this circle of life. And an old-growth forest for sure - beautiful, diverse and inter-connected. We are shaped by every contribution as we learn from each other and share what matters to us. Thanks to everyone for your part in nourishing and sustaining this community.



NOTES FROM THE SECTION



Expanding our reach - trips for specific groups

In recent years some of our leaders have taken initiatives to reach out to specific groups who may not otherwise initially feel confident or compelled

to take part in our activities. By offering trips which provide space for these groups, these leaders have helped encourage many people to come out, enjoy our beautiful environment and be part of our community. Below is a compilation of stories from some of these diverse activities.

Trail Rider Program

Caroline Tansley

Our section owns a Trail Rider, a rugged vehicle designed to take individuals with mobility challenges into the backcountry. Trip participants work as a team of porters to take our guest off paved trails to enjoy the wilderness. The ACC-VI Trail Rider Program had three trips and accomplished two firsts in 2019.

We completed a first and second trailrider ascent of Lone Tree Hill with Marnie Essery in May and with Cynthia Tansley in August. Being short but steep, Lone Tree posed a particular challenge for the team; we paced ourselves wisely and were rewarded with 360° views on the summit.

In July we returned to East Sooke Park with Pippa Blake and reached the petroglyphs via the Coast Trail, which was another first for the program. Although fairly flat the terrain was technical and required careful route planning and manoeuvring.



Summit of Lone Tree Hill: L to R Karun Thanjavur, Caroline Tansley, Karin Olafson, Nicole Harris, Marnie Essery, Andrew Cripps. (Photo by Peter Lushpay)



Enroute to Petroglyphs via Coast Trail. Foreground left to right Karun Thanjavur, Madeleine Tremblay, Nicole Harris, Pippa Blake, Andrew Cripps. (Photo by Caroline Tansley)



View overlooking the Salish Sea's Strait of Juan de Fuca. Large team of porters with Pippa Blake. (Photo by Peter Lushpay)



East Sooke Park, Pippa Blake with Karun Thanjavur. (Photo by Catrin Brown)

Wild Women

Nadja Steiner

The three big M's were the target for the six motivated, marvelous, multifaceted mountain women in September. Canoeing over Buttle lake, meandering the seamlessly endless switchbacks



Members of the Wild Women group (Nadja Steiner & Kara Aschenbrenner (trip leads), Tara Cadeau, Laura Darling, Ashley Burton, Lena Schmidt) climb Marble Peak. (Photo by Nadja Steiner)

to Marble Meadows across some fabulously fossilized limestone (especially cool since we had a knowledgeable geologist with us!), to our basecamp in the beautiful smaller meadow just below the ridge linking up Mt. McBride and Morrison Spire. Those were in fact the first two of the Ms, which everyone scaled the next day. The trip was completed with a detour up the 3rd M, Marble Peak, on the last day of the adventure. An absolutely smooth and fun trip.

In October the Wild Women ventured into the first WW-hut weekend, which turned out to be a wonderful combination of seasoned mountain women, newbies and even little ones, as everyone joined little Sofia in celebrating her 2nd birthday. Not only was it a great opportunity to get to know each other, exchange stories and feast with some good food, but also a chance to explore the backside of 5040 peak as well as the hidden gem of the Hisimyawit marble meadows. That these women are tough cookies became clearly obvious when the first one jumped into the beautiful clear pond while I was trying to take a picture of the smaller frozen pond right next to it. All good fun, all in good sunshine (how else should it be?) and definitely worth repeating!

LGBTQ2+ group

Jes Scott



Hanging out at our 5040 hut on the Wild Women's weekend: Christie Simon, Nancy Wilson, EJ Hurst, Nadja Steiner, Sonia and Sofia Langer, Jo Laenger, Kara Aschenbrenner, Tahlia Ludow, Ellie McLeod, Stephanie Brown." (Photo by a friendly stranger)

This year there were three trips for queer and trans folks. In May, we took a large group of folks climbing outside at Glen Lake Crag. It was the first time climbing outside for many! During Pride, we went for a hike and a swim in the Sooke Hills. And in December, we went for a snowshoe on the Kludahk. Over 20 people gave ACCVI trips a spin for the first time through this group -- and many have gone on to become members.

Exploring the back country in partnership with the ICA Youth and Family Services program

Karun Thanjavur

In 2019, our section began a new community engagement and support initiative in partnership with the Youth and Family Services team of the Inter-Cultural Association (ICA) of Victoria. The ICA team is lead by Gita John-Lyam, and supported by the Settlement Youth workers, Nabeela Ramji and Robin McGeogh. The goal of this ACC-VI and ICA partnership is to promote outdoor and back country activities to the youth in the ICA program, many of whom have emigrated from war ravaged and poverty stricken home countries. The ICA already offers a very active and vibrant youth program, and organizes various cultural and social activities regularly. This ACC-VI partnership aims to build the outdoors program on this existing strength.

In order to promote the program to the youth, and to also gauge their experience and interest, we had our first meet and greet in December 2018.



ICA youth group on summit of Pkols January 2019. (Photo by Quinton Gordon)



ICA youth group snow shoe trip, Mt Washington, March 2019. (Photo by Quinton Gordon)

Catrin and Charles gave short presentations with pictures and stories from their own recent backcountry trips, highlighting their motivations and passion for exploring the outdoors. We also spent some time talking about our trip plans with them, which we envisioned to be a local introductory hike, followed by a snowshoe trip at Mt. Washington. There was a good turnout of youth at this meeting, all of whom were excited to hear of these plans. We also discussed gear needs and other logistics for both trips.

Our first outing with the youth, a local hike up Pkols (aka Mt Doug) in Victoria, was on Sunday January 27, 2019. The location was chosen to

> make it easy for the youth to access via public transit. Pkols also offers a variety of terrain, and most trails are well away from busy thoroughfares to give the youth a real feeling of being in the back country and in nature. There was a good turnout, about 18 youth, three ICA staff and two volunteers, and two of us, Charles and I. from ACC-VI. The skies were overcast but at least the rains held off, making it a pleasant hike in cool conditions. We took the slow, long approach so as to give the youth time to warm up and test out their footwear, since several of them were using borrowed gear in preparation for the snowshoe hike later. To many of the participants, even this



ICA youth learning to snowshoe, Mt Washington, March 2019. (Photo by Quinton Gordon)

hike well within Victoria, was all new, and many, including some who had already been in Victoria for several years, did not even know that such 'wilderness' trails existed so close to their homes. The hike was a new experience for most of the youth, challenging and tiring in parts. But it was good to see how well they worked together as a team, encouraging and helping each other, along with bantering and teasing too. Their euphoria on getting to the summit finally, after hiking for close to two hours, was wonderful to behold!

Buoyed by the success of the Pkols trip, the plans for the snowshoe trip in Paradise Meadows, Mt Washington moved ahead smoothly. The date, March 17, was chosen to coincide with the Spring Break for the Victoria high schools. For this trip, we had 23 youth, three ICA staff and two volunteers. There was excellent response from the ACC-VI when I had put out a call for volunteers to help with this trip,



Karun Thanjavur, Mt Washington ICA trip, March 2019. (Photo by Quinton Gordon)

so we had eight experienced volunteers along with Catrin and myself. This gave a very good participants to volunteers ratio. Thanks also to the ACC-VI for helping with all the snowshoe rentals, despite this expenditure not being in the budget! ICA had arranged a coach for transport, and also took care of warm gear, boots, food and all other logistics. This split in responsibilities made the trip preps much easier to coordinate and manage.

The weather on that mid-March day was superb, making it a pleasure to be outdoors and in the snow, even for the youth who were playing in snow for the first time ever! We split the group into smaller subgroups led by a couple of the experienced ACC-VI volunteers, which made it easier for everyone to mingle and get to know each other. Once kitted up and ready, we did a slow meander through the meadows, choosing the green trails, with a few ups and downs, to give the youth time to get used to plodding in heavy, deep snow with their snowshoes. Once they were comfortable with this new, fun mode of

travel, there was no reigning them back!

They were rolling in snow, laughing as they lobbed snowballs at each other, and trying to race each other without tripping over their wide-gaited footwear. After lunch, the group split into two, one headed for a more challenging snowshoe hike up to the ridge near Raven Lodge, while the others had a fun afternoon tobogganing on the snow slopes nearby.

The feedback from the youth after this trip was very positive across the board, and the ICA was equally pleased with how smoothly and efficiently the trip planning and preps had progressed. Therefore, it is no surprise that we are already well into plans for a follow up Snowshoe 2020 trip, and have already done our first Pkols hike with the 2020 group. Looking forward to growing this partnership in the seasons to come!

Thanks to all the ACC-VI volunteers who made these trips possible, including Charles He, Catrin Brown, Chloe Swabey, Sasha Gronsdahl, Anne Webster, Nikki Stuart, Sean Finucane, Russ Moir, Tom Carter, amongst others.

Happy Anniversary: Hišimyawiλ Celebrates Its First Year

Chris Jensen

Members of the ACCVI have long dreamed of having a safe gathering place in the alpine for our community of friends. The desire for our own hut has percolated through the section for more than a century. With the completion of HišimyawiX, the wait for our own alpine hut is finally over. We now have a cozy place where we can come in from a wild storm, greet familiar or new faces, and thaw our cold hands by a fire. The hut opened in January 2019 and with that, the ACCVI started to count what will hopefully be many years of having our own mountain hut. As I write this article it's currently 2020 so happy 1st anniversary to our new hut!

What did the first year of the hut's life look like? Was it anything like we thought it would be? What mishaps occurred? Did any life changing events



Carving by Chris Ruttan. (Photo by Laura Greenfield)



Happy times at the Hut. (Photo by Brett Classen)

take place up there? What did we learn? A lot of things happened with the hut so get comfortable because this is a lengthy read.

Build It and They Will Come

On an overcast day in October, 2018, after dozens of sweaty hikes up the challenging Ruttan Route; through brutally hot days and brutally cold days; after lots of smiles and lots of pain, Chris Ruttan finally put his toolbelt down and looked up at our beautiful new alpine hut. It was done. We did it.

At least 150 people made the steep hike up to help build the hut, and some people made

Carving of a different sort by Chris Ruttan. (Photo by Martin Hofmann)

the hike many times in all types of inclement weather. When including donors and other non-construction help, approximately 400 people contributed to the project, donating over 8,000 hours of volunteer time.

On January 11, 2019 the first guests came out of the icy cold and poured into the warm hut. I greeted them with excitement. It was finally time for people to enjoy the fruits of our labour. This would be the first of many weekends where skiers and snowboarders would play in the deep snowpack that is typically found on 5040 Peak and then return to a welcoming hut.

Since opening Chris Ruttan added some beautiful woodwork to Hišimyawix. These includes the hut's new name carved in cherry wood, the funky wood handrails and the stunning pair of live edge maple tables. These custom additions really take the place to a whole new level. Peter Gilbert and crew also worked through winter conditions to install the new high-grip decking. The composite deck will be much safer for guests walking in ski boots.

During the early design phase, we needed to make a wild guess for how many people would visit the hut. By analysing guest data

from several ACC huts, it was estimated that this facility would have approximately 900 guest nights per year. The 2019 stats are in: the hut had a total of 1543 guest nights. This doesn't include beds that were used by volunteers or hut stewards. This is 71% higher than originally estimated. We built it and they sure came. Nonmembers represented approximately two thirds of the guests and members one third. The youngest guest was just six weeks old and the oldest was Albert Hestler at 86 years.

The hut's 2019 occupancy rate was 35%. This represents more than four guests staying in the hut every night of the year. This occupancy

level puts our hut on par with some of the ACC's flagship huts such as the Bow Hut and Stanley-Mitchell Hut (37% and 38% respectively). This is amazing considering the comparatively small population of Vancouver Island and the difficult winter access.

The popularity of Hišimyawiλ shows that there has been a strong desire for an alpine hut on Vancouver Island. Maybe after the novelty wears off then usage will decrease, or maybe it will increase as more people find out about it. What's your guess?

Building Performance

The hut's burly design was certainly tested in its first year. Given the extreme weather at this

Chris Jensen on 5040's south ridge. (Photo by Chris George)

exposed location, the building is performing exceptionally well. There were no issues that required us to close the hut. The building has already experienced many intense storms with winds well above 100 km/hr. During one storm the Effingham Weather Station, located less than 2 km away from the hut, recorded more than 300 mm of rain in a 24-hour period. That is almost half the rainfall that Victoria receives in a year. Even in such an intense storm the hut remained dry – well, except for one small leak that can happen under the front door. This is excellent considering that on 5040 Peak, heavy rain often defies gravity and can 'fall' up, and as much as down.

The combination of fine powder snow and very high-pressure winds did manage to find a few

chinks in the hut's armour, but once found these drafts were fixed. There were also some items like the electronic lock on the front door that couldn't stand up to the thick ice that often occurs on 5040 Peak.

The finished hut has now stood strong for one year against hurricane force winds and some of the highest precipitation rates in North America. It is truly an extreme site to design a building for. Let's hope the investment in heavy duty materials and modern engineering continue to perform well in these elements.

Finance

Revenue from the hut fee has been balancing with expenses and the Hut Fund remains in the black. The hut fee is \$20 for members and \$25 for non-members. This is a deal compared to many other huts such as the new Kees and Claire Huts which charge \$30 and \$45 respectively.

For another financial comparison, our neighbouring section's new hut in the Spearhead Range cost \$2.3 million for 38 beds. This represents a construction cost of approximately

\$60,500 per bed. With some final finishing touches, our hut cost \$315,000 for 12 guest beds. This represents \$26,250 per bed which is less than half of what our neighbour's paid (we also provide foam mattresses for that construction cost and hut fee). Besides foam mattress, both huts feature a similar level of amenities and features.

We are fortunate to be in a situation that has allowed us to build a modern hut at a comparatively low cost and low hut fee. A key part of the financial success of this project is Colleen Kasting. As Treasurer, she has kept tight reign on the purse strings. Beyond finance, Colleen also does heavy lifting behind the scenes on a range of complex administrative matters (e.g. insurance). Anyone who enjoys the hut should recognize and appreciate the significant contributions that Colleen has made to this venture.

Heating the Hut

Hišimyawi\(\chi\) contains one feature that you may not find in any other alpine hut: a wood pellet stove. The main risk of going with this heat source is that is needs a constant source of electricity. A big question before opening was how well would the solar panels and batteries support the stove's electrical demand?

We learned the solar system meets electrical demand in most conditions but given the amount of snowy grey days up there, the solar system alone wasn't always enough. During some stretches of poor weather, the Honda generator had to be started. In 2019 two wind turbines were added to the charging system. Many thanks to Hayes Zirnhelt for all the work behind this important addition and for the donors that made it possible. The wind turbines are now operating, and we'll monitor them to see how much they contribute to the charging system. Our ongoing goal is to minimize generator use.

There has been lots of positive feedback on the stove, for example: it's easy to start, burns clean, has low maintenance and the orange glow provides a nice ambiance. The odd guest doesn't read the instructions and thinks the flames should start faster, but it's not as instant as they would like. Other than that user issue, the stove has been reliable and is using less fuel than expected to keep the hut warm (all the insultation is paying off).

Waste Management

The 'pee only toilet' in the hut was finished last year. Thanks to Gary Croome for his work on this, including backpacking up the toilet. People especially value this pee toilet when a storm is howling outside.

The urine-separating toilet in the outhouse is another modern feature of the hut. If it's not already, then this outhouse may soon become the most photographed crapper on the Island. Who knew an outhouse could be so photogenic? Anyhow, going with the new conveyor belt system increases complexity over a traditional pit toilet, and with more complexity comes more things that can go wrong. A couple of things did go wrong: 1) the conveyor belt stopped spinning - uh oh and 2) the pee pipe became disconnected - ew. I would classify both problems as the worst issues that we faced over the last year. Nadja Steiner fixed the conveyor belt and Gary Croome took a deep breath and addressed the far more intense pipe issue. Gary, hats off to you. Thanks for fixing that in those conditions. People should buy you a beer.

Guests have been very good at packing down their garbage and not leaving food behind. One thing that guests sometimes leave behind is their recycling. The recycling truck doesn't stop at 5040 Peak so guests need to pack down their recycling as well.

Hut Stewards

When the hut opened, we didn't know how many people would volunteer to help take care of it. I'm happy to report the roster of hut stewards is at a near optimum level. Many thanks to Martin Hofmann for managing the Hut Steward Program and to everyone that helped take care of the place. Currently hut stewards are there almost every weekend and some weekdays. Hut stewards have played an important role in helping guests, fixing possible issues early and ensuring that people follow hut rules and etiquette.

Speaking of rules, there's always going to be the odd guest that will knowingly disregard them. One example of this is the "no dogs" rule. I have been the hut steward when a group of guests arrived along with five large dogs. Knowing the rules beforehand, they still had full intention of keeping their pooches in the hut. They were disappointed to find out a hut steward was there to prevent this. I have also arrived to find the hut with plenty of dog fur inside and dog poop sitting in the snow exactly where we collect snow for drinking water. I managed to track down the responsible party, and again they admitted they knew the no dogs rule beforehand but chose to ignore it (yes, I was tempted to publicly shame them for polluting the drinking water).

Dogs have turned out to be a management issue. There are several reasons why dogs are a concern, but the main reason is that dog poop presents the biggest risk to maintaining safe drinking water. We are planning to create new signage that will educate people on why dogs are not permitted in the hut (or tied up outside overnight). As word spreads that stewards are regularly at the hut, people will hopefully be less inclined to ignore the rules.

On safety, there were no reports from hut stewards or guests about injuries and Search and Rescue have not had to be called out to look for anyone.

One odd event occurred when there was no hut steward there to help. Long story short, the bunk rooms now have door handles that don't lock.

Access

The Provincial Government approved the application to construct and maintain Cobalt Lake Trail. Planning for trail improvements is in the early stages. Donations and volunteers will be needed to make improvements happen.

The bumpy Marion Creek FSR is doing well considering how much traffic it has seen. In 2019 we asked provincial staff to grade this road, but the request was denied. We would like to improve the road condition; however, the hut fee can't cover it. Volunteers have been out there with shovels and mattocks in attempts to maintain waterbars and fill the worst of the potholes. If you have time, please do whatever you can to help maintain this road. If you see a branch that needs to be trimmed, then go ahead. Every bit helps. If you'd like to help improve access with either money or time, on the trail or road, then please contact htts@accvi.ca. Gary Croome, Access Manager, would like to build a team that can start to plan and implement improvements.

First Nations Hut Name

Geoff Bennett worked in cooperation with Ricardo Manmohan, the Director of the First Nation Warrior Youth Program, and Ucluelet, Toquaht and Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations to create an agreed name for our hut. The new name Hišimyawix (pronounced Hi-SHIM-ya-wit) means "Gather Together" in the Barkley Sound dialect of the Ucluelet First Nation. On October 5th, five Warrior Youth from the three local First Nations joined us to officially name the hut. In



Hut naming ceremony. (Photo by Mark McKeough)

the morning, the youth summitted 5040 Peak, which is the highest peak that any of them had summitted.

After lunch we gathered on the rocks in front of the hut where the Warriors, who were there on behalf of their Elders, sang a Welcome Song and a Victory Song as part of the naming ceremony. This is the first ACC hut to receive a name from First Nations. It was an honour to have the Warrior Youth there, to laugh, to share stories and to learn about the rich cultural history that surrounds Hišimyawix. It was a memorable day. I look forward to having the Warrior Youth at the hut again soon. Thank you to Geoff Bennett, Derek and Ian Sou, and Vanessa Barr for their contributions to this important event (this section was edited based on material previously written by Mike Hubbard).

Guest Gratitude

A quick look through the Hut's log book clearly shows how much people love the new hut and



Moonshine run. (Photo by Chris George)

how genuinely thankful they are to all the people that made it happen. The log book is filled with page after page of positive comments. In a world that can overflow with negative news, the ACCVI's hut provides a good news story. In a small way, this place is contributing to the well-being and quality of life for hundreds of people.

Hišimyawih has been a catalyst for a spectrum of new relationships. People have connected as new climbing partners, new friends and some have even met their significant other at the hut. Grooms to-be have proposed to their girlfriends, marking one of the most significant moments in anyone's life. People picked this place to make the ultimate commitment to their partner. Clearly, Hišimyawih holds a special place in the hearts of many people. This must be one of the reasons why guests have been taking such excellent care of the hut.

The Team

Since the start of this project two positions have changed on the core team. A massive thank you to Rick Hudson and Lindsay Elms for their important roles on the Hut Committee. Rick successfully raised the lion's share of funding for this project. No money, no hut. Lindsay Elms provided valuable input, history and other work that helped bring this project to fruition.

Gary Croome and Peter Gilbert are welcome additions to the team. Moving forward members of the Hut Committee are: Martin Hofmann (Hut Steward Program and Technical); Gary Croome (Access Manager); Peter Gilbert (Facilities Manager); Colleen Kasting (Treasurer); Chris Ruttan (Guru); and Chris Jensen (General Manager).

The hut had a fantastic first year. By all criteria it feels like we nailed this project out of the park. It shows what a generous and motivated community can achieve. Looking back over the five years since it first started makes me very proud of our section. I hope you share a similar feeling. ACC National is certainly proud of us as well. We have received many accolades from Canmore.

After more than 100 years without our own alpine

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hut, we finally have a place where we can 'Gather Together'. On behalf of the Hut Committee, I extend a deep thank you to everyone that contributed to this undertaking. If you haven't been up to visit Hišimyawi\(\lambda\) yet, then what are you waiting for? Go enjoy it!

Clarke Gourlay 1964 - 2019

Catrin Brown

Back in 2016 when I put out feelers to Clarke asking him about taking on the role of club treasurer, I had no idea of the depth and breadth of his community involvements. And perhaps that's a good thing, because then I may not have dared ask. As it was, Clarke's cheerful acceptance of the role was a gift to all of us, generously adding to his already significant contributions to our section. In short, we are a better community because he was one of us.

Before moving to Vancouver Island in 2001, Clarke and his wife Nancy spent more than a decade living and working overseas with humanitarian aid organisations. Motivated by their strong Christian faith, they raised their young family in Turkey, Switzerland and Afghanistan during the time of the Gulf War. Their return to Canada coincided with their plans to start a cheese-making business, a seemingly bold move given the fact that they had no background, training or experience in the industry. Fast forward to 2019, and today Little Qualicum Cheeseworks is a Vancouver Island success story, employing more than 30 people and marketing its products to high-end stores and restaurants across the province (the farm, shop and café are well worth a visit if you have not been). Clarke's commitment to social justice and environmental advocacy led him to serve on the Agricultural Land Commission, and in October 2018 to take office as a Director on the Regional District of Nanaimo. In typical Clarke high-energy style, somehow on the day of this election he found time to be up at the opening of the 5040 Peak hut!



Clarke with his two sons on the summit of Denali. (Photo provided by Nancy Gourlay)

As club treasurer, Clarke's patience and wry humour added levity to communications and executive meetings. He shared his business expertise generously and made light of mundane tasks. He had a real knack of finding creative solutions to tricky situations, often just by focusing on the positive and applying basic common sense.

Clarke's heart, though, was not in spreadsheets, but in the mountains. His passion for exploring and sharing the natural world was a theme that ran through his life, raising his three sons on a diet of back-packing, diving and skiing. His own 'summit bug' seemed to originate from his climb of Mt Kilimanjaro in 2010, and he went on to climb more of the 'Seven Summits' including Aconcagua, Denali, Kosciusko and also Mt Blanc. On Vancouver Island, Clarke made short work of the nine 'Island Qualifier' peaks, for which he received the Rick Eppler Award in August 2018. He was apparently well on his way to earning the Charles Turner Award with only a few of the 53 'Island 6000'ers' still to climb. In recent years, Clarke spent all the time he could

back-country skiing, joining a section weeklong camp in the Kootenays, a back-country ski mountaineering course and a ski ascent of Mt McBride this year. He took the acquisition of mountaineering skills seriously, enthusiastically attending workshops and courses. As both trip participant and leader, Clarke's competence and big-hearted spirit were mainstays for each group he joined.

While Clarke enjoyed countless friends to share his adventures, there is no doubt who his favourite companions were – his sons Raymond, John, and Kevin. We first became aware of the joint father-son trips when he posted happy summit family photos during our 'Vancouver Island 150' celebration of Canada's 150th anniversary in 2017. And in spring 2018, the news of his successful climb of Denali with John and Kevin gave us all something to celebrate.

Anyone who spent time with Clarke knows that his relationship with his family was at the heart of his being. He was a big supporter of the 'Family Week' added to our section's summer camp, and helped set up the bursaries which off-set the costs for accompanied youth. Sharing their family home, Clarke and Nancy graciously hosted Christmas parties for up-island mountaineers the last several years, and welcomed friends new and old alike. Their kind hospitality brought together the different mountain clubs and truly helped to grow the community.

Clarke died tragically on 29 June 2019 while hiking on Mt Donner in Strathcona Park, his death sending shock waves through this community and beyond. Caring, principled, multi-talented and hard-working, Clarke leaves a legacy of what it means to be a community builder. When he entered the political arena, there is no doubt that he was poised to be an advocate for many of the environment and conservation values we share. As we grieve his early departure and come to terms with this loss, let us hope his memory inspires us to find ways of honouring the work he still had to do.



VANCOUVER ISLAND



Finding Ice on Della Falls

Chris Jensen February 23-24, 2019

Waterfall ice on Vancouver Island can be as elusive as a snow leopard. Ice tools can sit for several seasons waiting for conditions to line up. Island climbers often need both vigilance and luck to be rewarded with some beautiful blue ice. The winter of 2019 started off mild on the West Coast, but then in February we hit the ice jackpot. It was the coldest February on record in Metro Vancouver since records began in 1937. The average temperature for February is 4.9 degrees, but in 2019 the average was 0.4 degrees. We didn't just score one Arctic outflow, we had four in a row. This was the year to try any ice climb a person could dream of.

For decades climbers wondered if Della Falls could possibly freeze. Maybe it did, maybe it didn't. No one seemed to know for sure. At 440m Della Falls is recognized by Natural Resources Canada as the highest waterfall in the country. Under other criteria it could be argued that other waterfalls are higher. For example, during heavy rain storms many mountain sides have waterfalls that are higher than Della Falls. But Della Falls isn't a periodic waterfall; it flows year-round.

The mystery of whether these tall falls could be climbed was alluded to in a section written by Joe Bajan in the go-to guidebook Island Alpine Select (2015 Phillip Stone). Speaking about one of two key winter challenges that remained for the Island, Joe riddled the following clue: "Has national stature with the warm smile of really

ticking off those Rockies climbers and their 'best of everything'." While some people pulled at their chin whiskers wondering what he was referring to, many others had figured out that Joe's challenge was Della Falls.

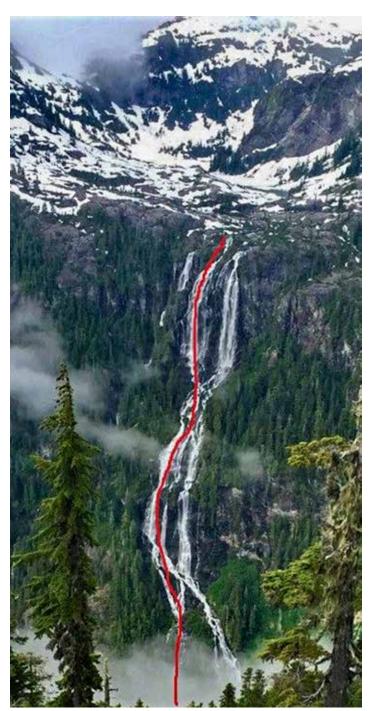
I had only ever heard of one climbing party that trudged into the falls to inspect it during a cold winter. They were disappointed when they arrived at the base. It hadn't frozen. Their finding wasn't a surprise because at 600 m elevation, the base of the falls is generally too low for ice.

Over all the years and all the beers that people had pondered about climbing Della Falls, why had only one party inspected the falls for ice? If its low elevation wasn't enough, then the addition of a 35 km lake crossing combined with a 15 km approach made for a formidable trip. It's a long way to go to take a look. The falls are also located in Strathcona Park so people can't take a short cut with a helicopter or snowmobile.

Several years ago during a cold snap I had tried to organize an attempt to find out if the falls were frozen but by the time we could get going, the window had already closed. At about the same time Peter Rothermel had contacted the ice ninja, Will Gadd, to see if he would be interested in giving it a go. Nothing happened that year, but the seed had been planted. It would remain dormant for several years while people patiently waited for another Arctic winter on the West Coast.

The record-setting cold conditions of February, 2019 quickly sprung that seed to life. Sometimes trips take months of planning, but our attempt on Della Falls came together in the blink of an eye. Fortunately, a cancellation in Will's schedule opened a brief four-day window for him to fly to the Island, boat down the lake, snowshoe up the valley, climb the falls and reverse all of it. Peter Rothermel put Will and me in touch. The chance of getting everything organized and finding ice felt like a long shot, but it was time to try. I didn't want to miss the opportunity again.

I immediately asked for time off work and thankfully the boss nodded yes. I then quickly got onto sorting out logistics like finding a float plane or boat to take us down Great Central Lake.

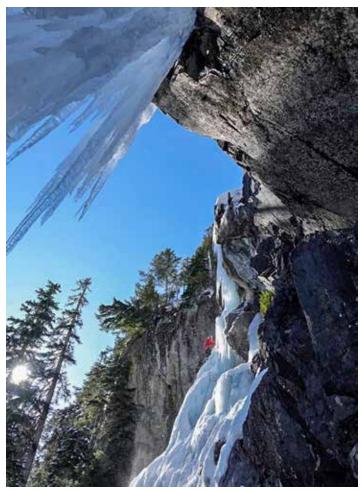


The route taken on the first trip to Della Falls. (Photo by Chris Jensen)

Finding a ride with such short notice seemed bleak, but by a near fluke I managed to find someone to run us down the lake exactly when we needed to go. Will managed to convince photographer Peter Hoang to join us and with that, the trip was a go.

Round One

During the drive to Port Alberni the skies opened up to heavy rain. Will, Peter and I exchanged concerned glances and tried to laugh off that,



Will Gadd leading a mid section during first ascent of the Falls. (Photo by Chris Jensen)

yes, we were trying to go ice climbing in the rain. I turned the windshield 'whippers' to high and we continued.

Once on the boat named "Heavy Metal" we huddled inside its small cabin to stay dry. We were concerned the end of the lake would be frozen preventing us from reaching the dock. As the last stretch of the lake came into view we were pleased to see that it was open water to the end.

It continued to drizzle as we broke trail up the Drinkwater Creek Valley. Conditions were too warm and we were soggy. As Will said "never have my boots and head been so wet at the same time." I smiled and welcomed the Rockies guys to ice climbing on Vancouver Island. I was happy with what we managed to pull off to this point, but with these conditions I wasn't feeling optimistic that we'd find decent ice.

After about 14 km of swimming and sweating

up the trail, we rounded a bluff and saw the first real ice in the whole valley: Della Falls. It was on! My face lit up. After all the years of wondering whether these coastal falls could freeze...there it was. Ice ran from the top right down to valley bottom. Our excitement continued to build as the weather cleared and temps dropped to -10°C overnight. Perfect.

We climbed the falls in seven pitches with some hiking and WI2 ice steps between a couple of pitches. There would be more ice to climb if it wasn't covered by the deep snowpack. By taking the most direct line up the centre of the falls the route went at: Pitch 1: WI4, P2: WI3, P3: WI4, P4: WI4, P5: WI6, P6: WI5 and P7: WI3. Climbing a seven-pitch waterfall ice route on the Island was surreal. It was hard to believe that the rolling waves of the Pacific Ocean were just 20 km away.

The WI6 pitch had big overhanging mushroom funkiness and sparse good gear. Will dispatched



Will Gadd leading upper section during first ascent of the Falls. (Photo by Chris Jensen)

it easily. It was nothing short of impressive to watch Will, with his 35 years of ice climbing experience, lead smoothly and calmly up through daggers and roofs. The WI5 pitch was some of the nicest Island ice I've swung into. Vertical blue bliss.

We were euphoric and tired when we topped out in the sun. Pillowy views of Della Lake, Nine Peaks and Big Interior greeted us. I grinned so hard I think the corners of my mouth may have touch my ears. It all seemed so unlikely, but we went for it and everything came together. An adventure like this is exactly why I love to climb.



Chris Jensen leading pitch on second ascent of Della Falls. (Photo by Hunter Lee)

This area has by far the highest concentration of waterfall ice on the Island and of anywhere I've been to. There were plenty of other attractive lines to head up. Taking other options could likely keep the grade to WI4. Looking up at all the other blue ice around made me wish we had more time to climb. But we had a boat to catch so off we went back down the trail.

Round Two

After the trip cold conditions continued. Hmmmm; I wondered if there would be time to fit in another round at Della Falls? Who knows when – or if – it will ever freeze up like that again. A rare opportunity was sitting there.

So less than two weeks later I was again boating back down Great Central Lake. I was joined by two climbing buddies from the Island: Ryan Van Horne and Hunter Lee. On the upside instead of starting out in rain, this time we began under blue skies. However, on the downside, I couldn't get extra time off work. We had a small window of time to get in and get back home.

With the broken trail, we arrived at the base of the falls in six hours instead of the original nine hours. The next morning, we decided to try the waterfall on the left (south) side. This flow is contained in a distinct separate gulley that you



Hunter Lee leading, Chris Jensen belaying a pitch on the 2nd ascent of Della Falls. (Photo by Ryan Van Horne)

can't see much of from its base. What difficulties were hidden up there?

Temperatures were warmer than my first visit and ice was thin in places. We climbed unnervingly close to ice that was only an inch or two thick. Through the looking glass of ice we could see the cascading water running on the other side. At the start of a couple of pitches we had to skirt around open pools of water at the base. Being largely confined to the narrow gulley with some marginal ice conditions gave this climb a far different character compared to wide open ice of the centre falls.



Ryan Van Horne leading pitch on second ascent of Della Falls. (Photo by Chris Jensen)

The gulley was tiered which meant we could often only see one pitch at a time. Moderate pitch after moderate pitch went by. We kept expecting some spicy WI5 or WI6 pitches to eventually appear, especially near the top, but it never happened. After nine enjoyable pitches we reached the top under sunny skies. Almost every pitch was near WI3 grade. A pitch lower down felt WI2+ and pitch 8 was at the upper end of WI3+. For me, the spice for this route came from punching through the thin ice a total of five times, thankfully only once while on lead.

Descent back to camp was straight forward as we rapped the middle flow that I was familiar with from the previous climb. Afterward we relaxed at camp and gazed up at all the ice that clung to the cliffs around us. I felt a deep sense of appreciation for Vancouver Island. I love my home.

The record-setting cold temperatures of 2019 created a very special ice season on the Island. I feel fortunate to have enjoyed it like I did, with an ice master and also with familiar friends. I hope winter conditions line up again for other people to make the journey into the heart of Vancouver Island. With any luck, there will be dozens of pitches of gorgeous blue ice for people to climb. The window of opportunity will be brief. Act quickly and get after it.

Summary

Della Falls Center (WI6 440m) Vancouver Island, British Columbia. FA: Will Gadd & Chris Jensen, February 23-24, 2019.

Della Falls Left (WI3+ 440m) FA: Chris Jensen, Ryan Van Horne & Hunter Lee, March 9, 2019.

Our Surprise Wedding at the Summit of Kings Peak

Natasha Salway May 25, 2019

Colin and I first met at an Alpine Club of Canada General Mountaineering Camp in 2014, and we got engaged at another ACC GMC in 2016, so it seemed only fitting that our wedding day should somehow include a mountain summit and the ACC.

Back in February of this year, we came up with a plan to lead an ACC trip to King's Peak via the North Spur route and not let anyone on the trip know that there would be a wedding at the top. With a little help from our friend Barry Hansen,



Climbing the winter gully up to the glacier. (Photo by Natasha Salway)

who kindly offered in November to marry us at the top of a mountain, we set our plan in motion.

On Friday, May 24th, the whole group spent the night at the Buttle Lake campgroup. We got up early so we could start our journey to King's Peak. Saturday, May 25th, began a little bit cloudy as our group of eight set off up the trail at 6:00 a.m.. We made really good time to the upper meadows and then worked our way up to the North Glacier under the Queen's face. The winter gully was in great condition and it did not take us long to reach the top of it.

Half way up the gully, we caught up with two more climbers who turned out to be Chris George and Chris Vanderford. As luck would have it, they were very happy to join our group since they were interested in the route we were going to take. At this point I could see that the weather was looking a bit unsettled and foggy around the summit ridge. We pressed onwards as a group of ten now. Colin spied a possible weakness in the rocks leading up off the glacier towards the ridge and we decided as a group to give it a try. The route had some easy snow ramps that we took advantage of until the rocky ramps led us all the way up to the ridge of the North Spur.

It went super well and was quite an enjoyable variation to gain the ridge. It even put us up on the summit side of the infamous notch, which saved us a lot of time. The ridge itself had a bit of snow still lingering on it but it was in good enough condition that we were able to make our way up to the summit without much trouble. Much to my joy the clouds that threatened to dampen our day were melting away to reveal Elkhorn and Colonel Foster in all their glory under blue sky!



Colin finding his way up the North Spur of Kings Peak. (Photo by Natasha Salway)

We let the group have a decent break and some food before Colin and I made the announcement. We thanked everyone for coming up with us that day and casually informed the group that they were about to witness our surprise wedding. After many exclamations of surprise and disbelief, it dawned on everyone that we were totally serious. Barry prepared to begin the ceremony and our very talented photographer, Chris George, found the best possible position to capture our surprise wedding (with only 14% battery life left!) I still cannot believe our luck that Chris decided to climb King's that day!

The ceremony was short and perfect,



The ceremony begins with Elkhorn bearing witness. (Photo by Chris George)

complete with our own climbing vows. We promised to be each other's wedded climbing partner, to be each other's belay and piton, on summits, through cruxes, on alpine starts and rainy days. Under a beautiful sky, with no other groups around, surrounded by amazing friends and fellow climbers, with Elkhorn and Foster

providing the most stunning backdrop we could have wished for, Colin and I became man and wife! After many photos and congratulations, we began our journey down to the King's-Queen's col, then down the North Glacier to the winter gully and then we all descended back to the cars.

Everything on this day came together in ways that we could not have ever planned. We are uncertain if Colin's shortcut route has been climbed before or recorded, but if it hasn't, we decided that a very appropriate name for it would be The Royal Wedding route, since it was



The wedding proceeds. (Photo by Chris George)

part of our potentially record-breaking wedding processional, overlooked by King's and Queen's Peaks. It was the most perfect day, made all the more special by the people who were there with us. We want to thank Jes Scott, Paul Janssen, Robert Ramsay, Doug Scatcherd, Ghislain De Laplante and Chris Vanderford, for being possibly the most unsuspecting wedding party in history! A very special thank you must go to Chris George for being in the right place at the right time and giving us such beautiful photo memories to look back on. Last but definitely not the least, a huge thank you to our friend Barry for giving us the wedding day we had always hoped for and will never forget. As two very active and dedicated ACC trip leaders, our day out in the mountains will be a hard one to top for both Colin and myself.



The Wedding Party on King's Peak. (Photo by Chris George)

You can find the blog post on our wedding day and a great wedding video that Jes put together for us at this address!

https://webelongoutside.com/2019/06/videokings-peak-north-spur/?fbclid=lwAR0gqJwLved5 2xlcsQ8Da2pc2SSStsRfEnHsFSge7le5o3eloBo Glie6LOE

King's Peak Wedding Party: Natasha Salway & Colin Chris George and Chris Vanderford Jes Scott, Paul Janssen, Robert Ramsay, Doug Scatcherd, Ghislain De Laplante and Chris Vanderford

Mount Sebalhal and Kla-anch Peaks

Lindsay Elms May 31, June 8, August 17, 2019

May 31, June 8, August 17

Over the last few years I have been exploring the obscure peaks off the forestry service road between Gold River and Woss. Many of them to the west of the road are unnamed (either official or local names although we have given them names when we climb them), but the forests surrounding them have been extensively logged.

Laurence Philippsen, my climbing partner for many of the trips this year and last year, was familiar with the area having worked out of Vernon Camp for the last thirty plus years. As we drove towards some of the climbs. I would hear stories of close encounters while he was driving his log-loader super-snorkel up, and down, many of these narrow roads and hear about the size of some of the old-growth timber that once existed. Laurence also had a pretty good idea of whether the peaks had been climbed. As a mountaineer he kept his ears and eyes open to possible ascents, and some evenings

after work he would wonder off and explore the lakes and waterfalls near where he had been recently working and climb onto some of the nearby ridges with the view of climbing some of the peaks in the future. There weren't many co-workers interested in joining him; however, sometimes he would return with his young kids during the summer when they were on holidays and his work was often shut-down due to heat. I realize that if it wasn't for these logging roads, access to all these remote and beautiful peaks would be a lot more challenging and, possibly, less likely to attract my attention—well maybe they still would attract me. Anyway, Laurence was always up for the adventure and I would see a sparkle in his eyes as he stepped onto the summits, scanning the terrain that had been his 'turf'.

There was one clutch of peaks that were on my radar to the northwest of Muchalat Lake. In the fall of 2016, Val and I explored access to these peaks from logging roads to the west of the lake, but it didn't appear all that promising and I thought that there must be better access on the other side of the mountains. Then in 2018, we flew around the area and saw fresh logging roads and new activity up the South Kla-anch Road. After my report, Laurence then drove into the area on a reconnaissance trip and talked with the logging crew. In the spring of 2019, we decided we would visit this area armed with our new knowledge.



The horseshoe ridge of Mount Sebalhal (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

May 31

Our first trip into the area was to climb a peak we dubbed Mount Sebalhal which has a beautiful horseshoe ridge surrounding a lake that Laurence had visited with his kids many years ago. From the end of the road we followed elk trails up to a saddle between the South Kla-anch Road and Sebalhal River to the west. A kilometre and a half to the northwest was Swah Peak (1415m) and 2 ½ km northeast was Centennial Peak (1453m), which Val and I climbed in 2016 from the north side of these two peaks (see IBWA 2016). We skirted around the main peak to the west and gained the ridge to its south. After two hours from the vehicle we were standing on the summit of Mount Sebalhal (1368+/-m) on a glorious day. From the summit we hiked the alpine ridge for 2 ½ km to the southwest summit eventually returning the way we had come.

June 8

Laurence and I were back again to attempt the cluster of three summits we called Kla-anch Peak southeast of Mount Sebalhal. Access wasn't going to be as easy, but we had seen a possible route up a side stream off South Kla-anch Road not far from where we had accessed Mount Sebalhal. On each of these trips we would drive up the afternoon before, scope out the best place to deek-off the road into the bush and then camp. At first light the next morning we found elk trails and scrambled along them about 100 m above the stream. One km in we dropped

m above the stream. One km in we dropped

Kla-anch Peaks. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

into the stream but a short distance up we came across a waterfall we couldn't climb so we again scrambled up into the bush to the west. Another ½ km saw us in a bushy saddle below an east-trending spur which would put us onto a ridge to the northwest of the main summit. We found ourselves zig-zagging through bluffs and after an hour popped out into the alpine.

A few hundred metres along the open ridge a spur to the north ran up to the northwest summit of Kla-anch Peak (1368+/-m). We um'ed and ah'ed about whether to climb it now or on the return, but chose to do it first. The main summit looked a long way off and we weren't sure if we could get to it and back in a reasonable time. From the summit of the Kla-anch Peak Northwest we looked at the options of getting to the main summit but decided to hike across to the north peak first, just over a km away, and then scope it out again. By noon we were on Kla-anch Peak North (1368+/-m) where we looked at the options. There was quite a considerable drop before ascending the main peak so we looked at the map and our GPSs. There looked like there might be a feasible route to the main summit from the east of the peak. We would have to return on another trip. It was no big deal as the mountain wasn't going anywhere and we are always looking for an excuse to return to the hills. Our descent through the bluffs was tedious and longer then we remembered on the ascent. By 4 p.m. we were back at the vehicle, enjoying a cold beer and cider before driving home.

August 17

Again, we were driving up the South Kla-anch Road only this time, a km or two in, we turned south onto Oktawanch Road hoping that the roads we had looked at on Google Earth were still driveable. We had seen a heli-logging landing that looked like a good place to start the climb. Unfortunately, we found a bridge out 1 ½ km from the landing. It would probably add an extra 30 minutes to the hike

At first light we crossed the stream and began swatting away at the alder saplings growing on the road.

After 30 minutes, as predicted, we popped out into the heli-landing site. Mist filled the valley and kept the temperature down. Following our pre-drawn track on Laurence's GPS we picked our way down into a creek which we then followed until we had to climb out of it and into the edge of the logging slash. A half hour thrash and we were in beautiful unlogged old growth timber. An obvious spur took us up into the continuing mist to the top of a steep gut. The forest to the right angled up to a saddle and then to the North Peak so we traversed left across the top of the gut to another spur which appeared

to head all the way to the summit. The mist was slowly thinning and twenty minutes from the top we broke out into the sunshine. All around us the higher summits were poking out of the cloud. Finally, we stepped onto the summit of Kla-anch Peak (1480+/-m) to be greeted by a Brocken Spectre. Hopefully, it wasn't a harbinger of things to come like that experienced by Edward Whymper in 1865 on the summit of the Matterhorn. We hung around for an hour hoping the mist below would completely burn off, but it never did until we were almost back at the vehicle. The climb down was fun and guick. It was exciting to pick off more unclimbed summits. It meant that we could now move onto another part of the island and chip away at more obscure summits.

Participants: Laurence Philippsen and Lindsay Elms.

Mt Colonel Foster - Great West Couloir

Philip Stone May 28 - June 1, 2019

It's hard to believe that mountaineers are still learning and figuring out the mysteries of a mountain located a scant 10 km, as the crow



The east face of Mt Colonel Foster above Landslide Lake. (Photo by Philip Stone)

flies, from a major highway but Mt Colonel Foster, on Vancouver Island, even in 2019, still holds a few secrets.

Mt Colonel Foster is undoubtedly the most challenging peak on Vancouver Island and its complex buttresses and couloirs have attracted climbers of all ilks for decades. By any route the main summit, located mid-way along a jagged and hellaciously exposed ridge, is tricky to reach. Since the first ascent in 1968 by Mike Walsh, who followed the ridge crest from the north end, most climbers seeking a direct route to the highest point have followed the craggy line over five main rock spires from end to end.

The 2 km summit traverse can be completed either from south to north or north to south. Alternatively if the mountain's apex is the prime objective the ridge crest can be followed 'out and back' from either the south or north col. When Mike Walsh climbed the peak for the first time he traversed from the north col, over the Northwest Peak, down into a deep col with the Northeast Peak, up over the Northeast Peak and on to the Main Summit. On the return leg he backtracked as far as the deep col between the NE and NW peaks and descended off the mountain down a gully on the mountain's west side, which has been used multiple times since and local mountaineers have now attributed his name -Walsh's Return.

An interesting historical twist, from about the 1950s to today, has played a key role in climbing activity on Mt Colonel Foster: the evolution of the

^{*}Reprinted from Phillip Stone's web site (http://wildisle.ca/blog/?page_id=593)

approach routes. This, as you will see, is at the heart of this particular story.

When mountaineering interest really began in earnest on Mt Colonel Foster through the 1950s, 60s and 70s the approach routes used were split fairly evenly between: following the Elk River to Landslide Lake to reach the east and south flanks of the mountain, and Butterwort Creek, a tributary of the Elk River that curves around the north and west side of the massif. Perhaps most emblematic of the utility of the latter route was Ferris Neave, Hugh Neave and Karl Ricker's first ascent of the Southwest Summit, via the gully that splits the west face between the SE and SW peaks, on July 31, 1957.

At that time the highest summit had not been conclusively identified, as the Southwest and Central peaks are only a few dozen metres apart in elevation, and from many viewpoints the Southwest Summit appears, mistakenly, to be the highest. As successful a climb as it was, the Neave brothers and Ricker's spirited adventure placed them on the wrong spire to make the first ascent of the massif's high point. They had climbed it in a thick shroud of cloud and so weren't afforded a view of the higher, central peak from their own high point. In the following few years local, Island climbers realized this error and set their sights on the true summit.

The Neave-Ricker approach route up Butterwort Creek did not go unnoticed and many of the following trips to Mt Colonel Foster then used Butterwort Creek to reach the North Col which alternated with the Snow Band Route from the south as the favoured route to gain the summit ridge. Eventually it was via Butterwort Creek and the North Col that Mike Walsh made his successful 'foolhardy foray' to the highest, Main Summit on July 20, 1968.

Through the following decades the Elk River Trail was steadily improved, culminating with the construction of a sturdy bridge over Butterwort Creek in the mid-1980s. What had up to this point been a fairly serious creek-crossing through large boulders and cold, fast moving water now became literally pedestrian. As the trail toward Landslide Lake then became better and better the choice between bushwhacking up the

Butterwort valley or sauntering up the elegant Elk River Trail quickly put the former into disuse. The final nail was added in the early 1990s when the last, much needed bridge over Landslide Creek was installed completing a hikers' highway to Landslide Lake. Now there really was no reason to take a second glance at Butterwort Creek ever again, or was there?

With climbers' attention on Mt Colonel Foster now firmly centred around Landslide Lake, and the south and north cols, very few people had caught a glimpse of the mountain's west face. In fact unless you climbed to the top of Matchlee Mountain or Mt Donner, which even today are fairly rarely visited peaks, or took an airplane flight over Donner Lake, there are very few vantage points from where good views of Mt Colonel Foster's west face can be seen. But here and there by drips and drabs a few photographs from exactly those locations began to circulate. What they revealed amongst a slightly shorter, but equally impressive, maze of steep buttresses and clefts, was a wide, curving snow-gully splitting the west face to the south of the Main Summit. As more images and beta accumulated, it seemed that the snow in this gully was consistent and persisted late in the summer season, even remaining year round. Potentially this great couloir could offer an abbreviated option to climb the Main Summit of Mt Colonel Foster.

Curiously, amongst those to spy an impressive couloir on the west face, was Ferris Neave who



Looking up the Great West Couloir (left of centre) on the west face of Mt Colonel Foster in winter. (Photo by Philip Stone)

made a reconnaissance flight with Jack Beban, in advance of their 1957 trip. It was unfortunate for his party that he didn't also notice the relative heights of the summits to steer them on the right course because the gully that attracted his attention led them astray on their quest to make the first ascent of the mountain's high point. You can read Ferris Neave's account as well as some great additional stories and links on Lindsay Elms Beyond Nootka: Mt Colonel Foster page. Amazingly the first recorded use of the Great West Couloir wasn't until 2014, by Hunter Lee and Mike Shives, as their descent route off the mountain after completing a winter ascent of the magnificent Direttissima on the East Face (Bajan, Nichol 1978).

Finally, later that same year, December 30, 2014, Hunter Lee, Josh Overdijk and myself climbed it as a winter route, making the first recorded ascent. Personally I had two motives for this climb: firstly, to spend some time exploring on the west side of Mt Colonel Foster in winter and secondly to find out if indeed the Great West Couloir might be used as a route to the summit. The thinking being that in winter a snow gully would be in its best condition of the year, packed full of snow and frozen solid.

That climb went well. In sublime winter conditions, clear cold outflow and a stable snowpack we took four short, late-December days to complete it. Approaching to Foster Lake the first day, ascending the snow chute to the south col and traversing around to the west shoulder camp on the second day, climbing the couloir and returning via the south col back to our base camp at Foster Lake on the third day and exiting the Elk River Trail on the fourth and final day, New Year's Eve 2014.

We learned that the Great West Couloir is a fairly deep cleft, shaded by the two enclosing, parallel rock-features. Despite being oriented generally south-westward it receives very little sun. About 75% of the length of the gully is a pretty modest 45-50° only steepening for one ~60 m section near the top.

With a successful winter ascent of the Great West Couloir complete there was a sense of 'proof of concept' but I couldn't help feeling that until it had been climbed in more typical seasonal conditions it would remain a bit of an outlier: winter climbs on the Colonel are few and far between. The question still remained if the Great West Couloir offered the potential for a technically easier, 'standard' route on Mt Colonel Foster during the months that see the majority of attempts. So the seed continued to germinate for a high-season ascent.

At last, at the end of May, 2019 a trip departed up the Elk River Trail: Natasha Rafo, Andrew Schissler, Renée Stone and myself. By this point the idea of 'proving' the Great West Couloir had expanded a bit. Now not only did we intend to climb the couloir but we had widened the scope of the adventure to include a novel approach via Elk Pass, and to reinvigorate an historical access route for our exit. You've guessed it, Butterwort Creek!

We left the trailhead at about 1 p.m. our first day (May 28) and began the familiar trek up the Elk River Trail. With long, spring days ahead we had hoped to make it to the Hemlock Camp in the upper Elk River valley that night but the Gravel Flats Camp at 10 km had to suffice. We were still open to approach options and from the Gravel Flats the south col was still on the table. But as we chatted around a water break alongside Landslide Creek it seemed we were all of an adventurous mindset, curious of the possible advantages of avoiding the south chute which has become increasingly problematic with the disappearance of the snowfields it used to hold. So we took the left fork, leaving the Elk River Trail and headed off into the upper valley toward Elk Pass.

The tread through the forest into the upper Elk valley is a well worn route. Hikers en route through the Golden Hinde Traverse to Myra Falls and mountaineers heading for Rambler Peak have beaten a well-trodden path.

As the route exits the treeline into the alpine at the Rambler Canyon, the cool of the old-growth forest gave way to a searing heat as the midspring sun was reflected and re-reflected by the extensive remaining seasonal snow cover. But what the heat from the snow exacts it returns in ease of travel. The cascading upper Elk River lay



Natasha Rafo and Andrew Schissler in the upper Elk Valley with Elkhorn Mountain behind. (Photo by Philip Stone)

buried safely beneath a thick blanket of snow. Huge avalanche debris piles and furrows at the bottom of the canyon showed that the spring thaw was finishing and that the high risk slopes had already disintegrated and fallen off the mountains making conditions safer for venturing onto the steeper upper slopes.

We continued following the river course, keeping to the west side of the creek, well away from any remaining hazard from falling snow off Rambler Peak to our east. The snow conditions were reasonably firm but still soft enough to steadily tire us out.

From Elk Pass we had two main route options to continue our approach toward Mt Colonel Foster: either up over Slocomb's Rise, a high point overlooking the Colonel's south col, or to descend to an unnamed lake south of the mountain and from there up forested slopes to the base of the west face. I was pretty confident about the viability of the route over Slocomb having gone that way some years ago en route to the Southeast Summit. At that time with just day packs we had scrambled down off Slocomb using an exposed gully, traversing and down climbing easily into the South Col. Hazy as the memory was, I couldn't help having a nagging feeling that it could turn out to be more involved



Making our way around the unnamed lake, Mt Colonel Foster in the upper left, Slocomb's Rise in the centre.

(Photo by Philip Stone)

with overnight packs. Not to mention the effort required late in an already long day to make the extra ascent up onto Slocomb in the first place.

The other option via the unnamed lake seemed technically easier but would involve a loss of a few 100 m and it was unknown. In the end we reached a consensus that it would be better to take on the unknown, albeit slightly longer, but less technical route and descend to the lake.

The route from Elk Pass down to the lake was 'all there' but was fairly steep with a little exposure in places. We made it down safely but it was time-consuming, taking about two hours to make the decision and the descent. On the sunny, west facing slope with ever lower elevation the snow cover became softer and thinner. Being a gully-chute, some of the rotten snow covered a small creek. It required care but it all worked out. A week earlier and it would have been a twenty minute boot ski! Once down this gully the next question was: would we be able to find a route around the lakeshore to the open meadows we had spied from above? Again luckily the answer was yes.

From the base of our gully-chute we decided to take the longer but much more open and gentler terrain around the west side of the lake, travelling in a clockwise direction following a series of wide benches above the shore.

In what was still a very snowy world we found a beautiful patch of warm heather at the south end of the lake to have a nice long snack break and assess the route ahead. From where we were the terrain around the west side of the lake looked very straightforward, magical really. I had looked down off Mt Colonel Foster numerous times at this alluring lake imagining what it might be like to wander through those meadows. Now 31 years since my first glimpse of it from the Southeast Summit, here we were!

What didn't look so inviting was the 12% slope to regain the 500 m of elevation we had lost, to get back up into the alpine below Mt Colonel Foster's west face. The forested hillside was riddled with avalanche chutes and we could tell from the texture of the vegetation that what little old-growth trees were there were poking through a dense thicket of shrubbery. We pressed on around the lake like willing victims to a trial of our own doing.

The walk through the sub-alpine, lakeside meadows was just gorgeous. By now the light was warming into evening and the scent of elk hung heavy in the air. We made our way all the way to the north end of the lake and scurried down through a few bushes to the outlet. Some small but adequate logs formed a jam at the outlet and we crossed the creek without incident to the small meadow at the base of the steep forested slope that now loomed above us.

We had made mental notes of a general line to trend as we ascended the slope. For a few metres we weaved up a narrow, boggy creek but it soon disappeared above us in the dense, stocky trees. It seemed like eternity but checking the time stamp on my photos I now know it was about two hours of heavy lifting up a slope of solid B4 bush. Eventually, though, the vegetation



Crossing the snow slopes on the west flanks of Mt Colonel Foster, with Elk Pass and Golden Hinde in the background. (Photo by Philip Stone)

gave way to open snow between the trees and granite outcrops and we all felt a sense of relief to leave the bush behind. As 7:30 p.m. came and went there were a few calls inquiring about camping. But I knew that we were now within striking distance of the west shoulder, and that once there, on a stunning, flat perch with Mt Colonel Foster rising above us and the west coast off in the distance, all ideas of carving out a manky bivvy on the snow slope would evaporate.

We dug in deep and pushed on. As we made the last stretch toward the west shoulder the golden light of the setting sun lit everything around us in a beautiful warm glow. If you need one reason to choose a visit to the west side of Mt Colonel Foster the evenings would have to be it. At 8 p.m. after what can only be described as a pretty full 12 hour day we landed on the west shoulder of Mt Colonel Foster just in time to watch the last rays of the sun set behind the silhouette of Rugged Mountain and the Haihte Range off to the northwest. It took some time to find a suitable camp spot. The ridge was still mostly covered in snow but as hard core as we like to think of ourselves, sleeping on snow at the beginning of June just wasn't in the plan. Eventually we settled on a pair of the least lumpy craters, in the little open heather there was, and pitched our tents. The sunset and afterglow was just incredible. Above us the dark spires of the Colonel jutted into an ever deepening indigo.

The next morning we stirred half-heartedly. I knew pretty quickly that the aches and pains from the previous day's exertions were too much to leap up and start our climb and no one else was up and packing their climbing kit. A rest day was unfolding. No worries, we had packed and planned for five days and a rest day would put us in great shape for a climb the following day.

What a treat to lounge around camp and just watch a day go by from one of my most favourite places on Earth! It was pretty warm though and we were glad to have the small amount of shade from the stunted hemlocks that were dotted around our camp. Andrew wandered up the ridge above us to check on the line into the couloir. When Josh, Hunter and I had climbed it in the winter we had started from this same camp by descending off the ridge in to the northwest

cirque and then up the cirque as it funnels into the Great West Couloir. But on our way back down we discovered a narrow ledge that led from the base of the couloir straight across to the ridge crest making for a very elegant line and eliminating the unnecessary elevation loss and gain down the cirque and back up to camp on the ridge shoulder. Andrew returned with news that the ledge looked good and the couloir was full of snow as far up as he could see. We filed that away for the next morning.

That night we were treated to another spectacular sunset, although my photographer's eye kicked me as the colours didn't quite match the previous night's, which I had ignored due to the fatigue of that day.

We set our alarms for five something and headed for sleep. Next morning brought more clear skies and we were up and on with breakfast as the sun started to light up Matchlee, Mt Donner and the endless ridges to our west. By 6:15 a.m. we were fed, packed and underway from camp. Not exactly an alpine start but a reasonably early departure.



Climbing the Great West Couloir on Mt Colonel Foster. (Photo by Philip Stone)

Above the flat shoulder where we had camped, on the lower west ridge, the ridge tapers as it rises to meet the craggy west buttress of the Southwest Peak (see photo above). The Great West Couloir is to climbers' left of this ridge. We left camp and made our way up through the steepening krummholz to the point where our appointed ledge ran off to the left toward the base of the Couloir. Because of the way



Climbing the Great West Couloir on Mt Colonel Foster. (Photo by Philip Stone)

the buttresses jut out there's no real view of the couloir until you're almost right below it. Now, from the traverse ledge we could all look up and see the wide chute of snow curve up the couloirs; it looked just perfect for climbing.

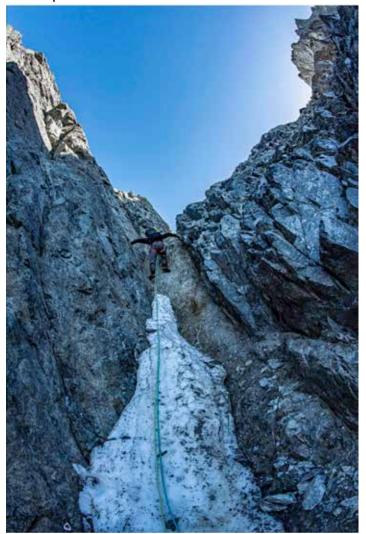
The ledge we traversed in on is a little exposed, with some loose, wet sand and gravel so we quickly roped up to get across to the snow. Once on the snow at the base of the couloir we began simul-climbing up the snow. It's a long 300 m ascent up the couloirs; the angle is pretty low almost all the way up but with an icy surface and given the hazard of falling rock, it's a place to play it safe. There's fantastic alpine atmosphere as the steep rock walls close in above the gully. We were given some concern from the hundreds of rocks dotting the snow around us that had fallen from the surrounding cliffs. But we never saw much rock moving while we were there. Most likely this shrapnel has accumulated from several years and is probably most active during cycles of freeze-thaw and snow-sloughing.

A long steady climb on beautifully firm snow led us ever upward. It took us an hour and a half to climb the main length of the couloir and reach the base of a steepening in the gully. This was the obvious obstacle that I was curious about and one of the reasons that Hunter, Josh and I had first came to climb the feature in winter conditions in 2014, when it was choked full of ice and snow. Now, as we looked up from the last ledge of the continuous snow, the gully above us was mostly clear and dry with a few sections of snow, and

had more of the form of a chimney.

We regrouped and assessed the terrain ahead. There was enough exposed rock that we decided to pack crampons and put our second tools away, keeping one behind our packs for easy access on the snow patches. Andrew took the lead and scrabbled his way up the first few moves in the chimney. A bit of crumbly ice gave way and some soggy gravel squished down the back of the chimney but luckily the rock on the sidewalls of the chimney was mostly solid and dry. Past a first steep step (5.5) and a small, dodgy chockstone the chimney angle eased and there was a ribbon of snow for about 20 m. He climbed as far as the rope allowed and set an anchor and belayed the three of us up a full 60 m pitch.

Once we were all gathered at the belay, Andrew set off again up the remaining tongue of snow until it petered out at a second constriction and



Andrew Schissler leading up the second step in the upper chimney (5.5/6). (Photo by Philip Stone)

steep step. Here there was some damp, dusty sand on the rock and it took some delicate work on the rock but the chimney was narrow enough to stem which helped take some of the edge off the ~5.6 moves. Above this step the angle eased again and the snow returned in a nice long runnel to meet the upper glacier.

By 10:15 all four of us had regrouped at the top of the Great West Couloir at the base of the gendarme on the upper glacier. The views to the east opened up with King's Peak, Elkhorn, Elkhorn South and El Piveto all framed by the surrounding rock towers. Far below lay Landslide Lake and the deep green forest in the Elk River valley. Four hours from camp and we were on the summit ridge and half-way from the south col to the Main Summit into the bargain, not bad! We took a snack break and downed some water.

Above us to the north, climber's left from the exit of the couloir, was the next obstacle, the wall on to the top of the 'Utopian Fin' a feature that had been climbed by Sandy Briggs and Ignazi Fluri July 4-5, 1991: Shunt's Utopia. When we were all re-snacked and ready to go I took the lead and scrambled up the wall, making a rising, leftward traverse that followed the line of weakness but also ensured that any dislodged rock fell harmlessly away from the other three below. We were climbing using two light ropes (Edelrid 6.9 mm Flycatchers) with Andrew on one and Renée and Natasha wishboned on the other. A little unorthodox perhaps but for the level of difficulty and the savings in weight they seemed a good choice for the task at hand.

The climbing up this wall is pretty straightforward. Mostly 4th class with a few low-5th class
moves depending which way you go, maybe
a 5.6 move here and there. The line works up
ledges and short steps. There's exposure of
course and what protection there is, is of small
comfort serving only to determine which of the
ledges you'd hit on the way down in the unlikely
event of a fall. At the top the wall is very flat and
open. An important snippet of beta is that there
is a perfect bivouac spot at the west end of the
crest of the wall, something it turned out we
wished we had known beforehand.

Once on the crest of this wall the rest of the



Renée and Natasha climbing up the wall above the upper glacier onto the Utopian Fin. (Photo by Philip Stone)

route to the Main Summit is in plain sight. It turns right and follows the sharp arête along its crest as it bisects the main summit ridge. The line weaves from the south to north side as needed. It's all pretty obvious, and very exposed! At the far right (east) end of the fin it stops at a little pinnacle of shattered, clean, grey rock. In front, the precipitous east face of Mt Colonel Foster drops away almost in one complete drop over 1000 m to Foster Lake. The climbing route along the summit ridge returns to an orientation with the summits and makes a right angle turn to the north dropping down a clean, open slab. The Main Summit is still in sight but for us it quickly became a case of so near but so far.

Somewhere in the last 200 m we had used up two hours. Thinking back I can't explain how, but as all four of us gathered up above the next obstacle, a rappel down the slab into a col north of the Utopian Fin, the time was homing in on 1 p.m. and we still needed to eat a proper lunch. I started to get a nagging feeling that our time for a day ascent from camp was running out. I blurted that out-loud as we pulled lunch out of our packs and we chewed our food as ravenously as we chewed through the options. It wasn't helping things that the climbing ahead looked intimidating. At that point it's a case of, you know the beta is good but what's staring you in the face just isn't inspiring.



Andrew, Natasha and Renée at the east end of the Utopian Fin, Main Summit to the left. (Photo by Philip Stone)

Despite the evaporating time we decided to press on. Andrew and I rappelled down off the end of the Fin down the slab into the next col. Above to the north of this col is a two-tiered pinnacle. Andrew climbed up the pinnacle but by now our hearts weren't into it and as the clock hands metaphorically moved past 2:30 p.m. we reluctantly turned around. We had cunningly left one of ropes set on the rappel anchor so I toproped Andrew back up the slab onto the Fin and then quickly followed on the second rope. This is a strategy I had thought of sometime ago – it's risky leaving a rope but in certain conditions it could take the edge off that slab and save some time versus leading it on a return leg.

We retraced our steps back along the Utopian Fin, discovering the bivvy spots near the rappel anchors at its west end. One long 50 m rappel each and we were back down on the upper glacier. We had a little trouble pulling the ropes,



Andrew and Natasha exiting the base of the Great West Couloir. (Photo by Philip Stone)

but eventually were setting up the first of two rappels down the upper steep part of the Great West Couloir.

The first, a half-rope rappel, followed by a second almost full-rope rappel onto the top of the main snow chute. I went down the rappels first, and with ropes safely coiled out of the way took the opportunity to clean out some of the more precarious loose rock in the chimney.

As 6 p.m. arrived we were all down the rappels and back on the snow in the couloir. The upper half of the snow is a tad steeper than the lower half and it was feeling a bit crusty as the evening temperatures dropped so we stayed cautious and belayed Natasha and Renée down the first 150 m with Andrew and me alternating setting anchors and plunge stepping down. By 7:30 p.m. we were exiting the couloir at the traverse ledge linking with the lower west ridge.

Now out of the shade of the enclosed couloir the snow was soft and gloriously slushy in the evening light. We weighed up the options of returning down through the krummholz-festooned ridge or boot-skiing down the cirque. Looking down the cirque it looked like we could get a beautiful run down and then sneak a traverse line across the sidehill and pop back onto the ridge right at our camp. Bootski or krummholz? An easy decision!

The line traversing out of the cirque worked like a charm with just a few metres of ascent and a well-flattened remnant-cornice to contend with. We were back in camp just before 8 p.m. Another pretty full day! And another stunning Strathcona sunset.

As we prepared and ate supper discussion was not surprisingly of our exit strategy. There were a few options. Returning down to the unnamed lake and Elk Pass, the way we had come, was obviously off the table! But we could traverse south under the west face to the south col and descend to Landslide Lake. A similar option would be to traverse north and descend from the North Col to Foster Lake and on to Landslide Lake. But as we looked out from our perch on the west shoulder the most obvious, most direct route was down into Butterwort Creek and, as unknown

to us as that was, it just seemed like the pioneers would approve and our own curiosity sealed the deal and we settled on that for the morning.

For all the time I've spent on and around Mt Colonel Foster over the years I couldn't help feeling like my relationship with the mountain... Okay, relationship is a bit strong, I don't think that lump of rock actually cares one bit about any of us. But anyway the point is, without having fully experienced Butterwort Creek I felt as if there was a crucial part of the mountain that was unknown. So I really was very excited to be heading down into that valley and the others seemed blissfully enthusiastic too.

The story of Ferris Neave, Hugh Neave and Karl Ricker's adventure was about to come alive for us as one of the memorable pictures of their climb is of them at the tarn at the base of the northwest cirque. The tarn can be seen from many points along the summit ridge and it is as intriguing as it is inaccessible.

The route down the lower west ridge went incredibly smoothly. The ridge itself is such an elegant feature. It curves off the Southwest Summit in a beautiful arc, cradling the tarn and at the same time presenting a formidable barrier from Donner Lake and the Ucona valley to the west. The snow cover made for perfect travelling. In a few spots there were some short, steep rock steps but they presented little difficulty as the centuries of bear travel had worn the right lines nicely and we worked our way down the ridge with no trouble.

At a key point we knew we had to leave the ridge crest and descend to the east to locate the tarn. This would be crucial as we needed to cross the creek flowing out of the tarn to then make our way into Butterwort Creek valley proper.

This turned out to be truer than we realized so our route choice paid off. As we neared the tarn we could hear the out-flowing creek roaring as it cascaded into a narrow canyon almost immediately downstream of the tarn. Keep that in mind if you're heading that way – plot a route that crosses that creek at the outlet at the tarn.

We took a break at the tarn admiring the view

of Mt Colonel Foster towering above. Crossing the creek outlet was a bit entertaining with some pretty thick conifers barring the way, but we pushed through and made our way into the open old-growth on the other side and here began a magical experience in Butterwort Creek, as if it hadn't been pretty cool so far.

We descended the slope east of the creek flowing out of the tarn, heading north-westerly to cross to the far side of the valley. We knew from collective intel that there are a series of avalanche paths that run down from Mt Colonel Foster's north side all the way to the valley floor in Butterwort Creek and that the travelling would be best at this point on the north side of the creek to avoid them. We kept a watchful eye out for openings in the forest ahead that would warn us of the bush and keep us on track to cross Butterwort Creek at the best location. This we duly did and although we had a glimpse here and there of the bushy avalanche paths running right across the creek, we never did get into them. Phew!

The travel down this upper part of the valley was simply stunning. So much of the vegetation was open heather meadows between the trees. The creek itself was also sublimely beautiful, in many places flowing lazily at a low angle, the banks lined with heather, early spring flowers and then alternately running over clean open rock slabs. Just magical.

Mid-way down Butterwort Creek the slopes on the east side of the valley ease and form a wide bowl below the North Col of Mt Colonel Foster. From alongside the creek the North Tower can be seen above the trees striking a dramatic scene. This is the line to use to approach the North Col. Back in 2006 Ryan Stuart, Tobin Leopkey and I had skied down this bowl after a few days skiing above Landslide Lake, we had continued out Butterwort Creek to the Elk River Trail so from this point I was back in hazily familiar territory.

The travelling was smooth until about two and half kilometres from the Elk River. Here the valley walls close in, forming a bit of a canyon. I remembered from that ski trip to keep high on the hillside away from the creek where there is a narrow bench providing the best line. There are several deep side-creek gullies coming down

off Volcano Peak that require negotiation and keeping at the correct elevation is key to finding the best way across these obstacles. On the steep side-hill with pretty thick bush there was some tough going as we neared the exit of the valley.

The keys to Butterwort Creek are: in the two or three kilometres closest to the main Elk River valley keep to a side-hill traverse a 150 m or so above the elevation of the creek on the north side of the creek; there is a faint but important elk trail at the right elevation – find it and keep to it until well into the middle of the valley. Farther up the valley, passing the north end of the Northwest Peak of Mt Colonel Foster, again stay on the north side of the creek to avoid long avalanche paths that run across the valley floor.

It was a tired group that finally hit the Elk River Trail and swung north on what looked now like a veritable highway. A great way to end an amazing adventure on Mt Colonel Foster. I'm sure we each have a variety of feelings about missing the actual summit but as great as that



Route Map of the circumnavigation of Mt Col Foster.

would have been it could only ever be a line item on what was all-together an amazing trip. We travelled through some very rarely visited parts of Vancouver Island, proved I think now beyond any doubt that the Great West Couloir is the most obviously straight-forward route to reach the Main Summit of Mt Colonel Foster and that Butterwort Creek still has a role to play in exploration of Vancouver Island's most majestic mountain. Now go get at that!

For anyone planning to climb the Great West Couloir it's worth noting that either of the more common approaches via Landslide Lake to either the south or north cols would work as well as they do for any other route. The route traversing around the massif from the North Col requires a little extra attention route-finding and some exposure crossing an open talus slope below the NW Peak. Other than that both lines work fine to reach the west shoulder camp. The other option would be as described in the article above: approach to Elk Pass and go up and over Slocomb's Rise to the south col. (See Philip Stone's website for more pictures - http://wildisle.ca/blog/?page_id=593)

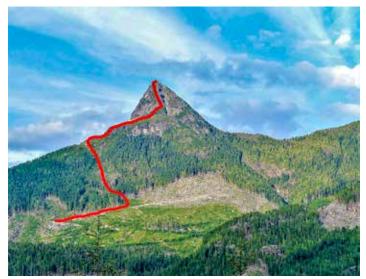
Participants: Philip Stone, Natasha Rafo, Andrew Schissler, Renée Stone

Climbing the Island's Arch

Chris Jensen May 29, 2019

Conuma Peak, the Matterhorn of Nootka Sound, has one feature that makes it unique for the Island: a large arch right near the summit. If you've ever driven to Tahsis on a clear day then this pyramidal peak with the cyclops eye may have caught your eye.

Hunter Lee and I headed up to see what the arch offered for climbing potential. For access, we drove to 600 m elevation on the west flank and camped below an old looking avy path that we'd try to use to gain the north ridge. The next



Western approach route up Conuma Peak. (Photo by Chris Jensen)



First glimpse through the Needle's Eye. The arch was far larger than expected. (Photo by Chris Jensen)

day we oozed our way through dense bush and then onto open slabs that dotted this way up. We were sure happy to pop out onto the north ridge with minimal bushwhacking. At about 1250 m



On the first day we spent time analyzing potential routes up the arch. (Photo by Chris Jensen)

elevation we wrapped around to the west to get a close look at Conuma's arch. Once in the gully I peered up and my pupils dilated as they saw the huge arch looming above me. It was way bigger than I expected!!

After spending time studying potential lines up it, we exited the gully and headed up its north side for a summit bivy. The next morning we traversed down the south edge of the gully and rapped onto the arch. This mountain is quite loose and unstable in some parts. My feet tingled as I wondered if the arch would even hold us. We didn't know if anyone had ever stood on it before.

It was clear that there was a lot of loose rock and not many good gear placements...or even crappy placements. We hoped to climb the arch on all gear, but then reality sunk in. Trying that could end with one of us hitting the SOS button. We picked a promising looking line, but it needed

work. We did some route prep while rapping down like rock scaling and some bolting.

Once at the bottom I looked up and was again filled with awe at the magnificence of this place. The arch spanned across the sky directly above



The red line marks the new three-pitch route up the Conuma Arch. (Photo by Chris Jensen)

us. After taking in the significance of our position, I then tied in and headed up. What a fantastic pitch! Steep and airy. Hunter took the gear for Pitch 2 and headed out left from underneath the arch. That pitch went quickly and then it was my turn to head out onto the face of the arch. I've never climbed an arch before....here we go! Shortly after starting off there was an unexpected hand slip on a dusty hold then that was followed by a foot slip on a glazed spot. These surprises got me ramped up and focused real fast. I shook off the close call and then moved out further right onto the lip of the arch and looked down. Now this is some wild alpine climbing! With a last deep breath I pulled on top of the arch at its apex. The things we get to experience on this Island:)

Summary

May 29, 2019, Conuma Arch

P1: 30 m 5.9

P2: 25 m 5.7

P3: 35 m 5.10a exposed AF



Chris starting up the first pitch beneath the arch. (Photo by Chris Jensen)

To top out on the summit, climb a low 5th exit pitch (south side of the arch recommended, north side harder), scramble ridge then a low 5th pitch to summit.

Gear: Mixed pro, trad/bolts. A single set of cams to #4 and 9 draws. If you don't mind a run out on some easy ground on pitch 2, then you could ditch #3 and #4 cams.

Rope: we rapped down into the gulley with single 60m rope when there was still some snow in it. If snow is gone, then a 60m still works if you approach from bottom of route, climb and descend directly back to the north or south ridges, not going back via the gully. If you want to rap the route when snow is gone, then a 60m might still also work if you angled right and upslope as you rapped. You should intercept the slope in the gully. Otherwise just bring a 70m rope to rap the route when snow is gone.

Rappels/Anchors: Rap #1 to land on top of arch: 15m off tree. Rap #2 to get off the top of the arch: 27m bolts. Rap #3 to get under the arch: 25m off a juniper bush and/or horn. Rap #4 to land in bottom of gully: 30m off bolts, but it will be more than 30m as the snow melts out. Snow was ~3m deep so rap straight down will be ~33m without snow.

Water up high will be an issue once snow melts off. Bring lots up from whichever ridge you're approaching from. You could drive up the spur across the Conuma valley to look into the gully to see if there's still snow in there that could be melted for water.

If you fall off the arch make sure you know how to get yourself back up from free hanging space. You can't lower, you have to go up.

We liked our approach route (~3hrs to bottom of arch), but to get to the summit there are several pitches of low 5th climbing and then slow bushy raps on the return. The south side approach has less time consuming climbing, but more bush. Fastest route might be from the south ridge?

This is a top notch wild route. It's in great shape now for other parties. Good pro. If you go up then please take a new summit log book with you (smaller rite-in-rain book).

2020 update: local First Nations have requested that people first ask for their permission before climbing Conuma Peak.

Participants: Chris Jensen and Hunter Lee

Reflection Peaks At Last

Chris Ruttan June 17-20, 2019

On June 17th I drove up to Port Alberni and picked up my hiking partner, Jane Morden, and then continued on to Taylor Main where we drove up 14 km to the end of a spur where a trail has been established that takes you on a strenuous climb up about 770 m in 2 km to the ridge. We left the car at 6:30 p.m. and got to the ridge crest two hours and fifteen minutes later and spent the night there. Our goal was to continue on this ridge heading west till we reached a point near the terminus where we could possibly find our way down to a meadow bench that we could then use to hike over to a col that we hoped we could use to connect us to an open meadow at the base of three lovely, remote peaks that are not named but are decidedly attractive and reach way into the area just south of Nine Peaks.

We were up and gone by 7:30 a.m. hiking the ridge, which we knew well from previous trips in the area: we also knew that it was no easy task finding a way down the south face due to a cliff band about 12- 15 m high that seemed to have no easy spot to descend. We tried a new route from our previous attempts but it just pushed us back up every time we dropped and we ended up at a spot we had skied down earlier in the spring. There was a steep, nasty creek gulley there so we crossed it where it was easy and hand-railed down the other side till we hit a sort of bench choked with brush, like all the rest of this hillside, and we then popped out onto the top of the damned cliff. We could look down and see a lovely flat bench leading down to the col

we were trying to get to but we were 10 m above it. We back tracked along the small bench till we came to the stream and found a way to cross it, very nasty and a bit risky but we got through and found a way down through the brush and a downsloping slab till we got to the meadow at last.

This meadow area is quite large and worthy of some further exploration but another time perhaps; we were now able to head west again towards the col. I had done a fair amount of Google Earthing on this route and I knew this col had several ponds on it and one fairly large lake but what I couldn't see on that platform was how difficult and brushy the terrain was in the col. Instead of the usual sort of open, sub-alpine spine with lovely meadows and easy walking this place is a maze of rock ridges with very steep sides, choked with dense brush between them, and they run along the length of the col making it hard to explore or move about.

We set up camp there because the route ahead looked like it needed some serious exploration without packs: it certainly wasn't going to be easy and though we had hoped to camp higher where there was a pretty lake in a nice meadow we decided to stop. We set up on a smooth rock above a small tarn that was pretty warm and I had a nice swim to cool off and take some of the bigger bits of grime off. After a brief rest and lunch we began to look around and to see if we could get to the bigger lake we had seen on the computer. We crashed around in the brush, climbed up on the rock spines, scrambled

down one and up the next, thrashed through more brush and finally stood looking down on a really pretty lake of a fair size but still likely 30 m below us and no way down there.

We hiked along the ridge and managed to find our way down a bit but it was getting late and I still needed to scout a route up the cliffs that formed the spine of the ridge as it rose again towards our goal. We found a slightly easier way to get back to the top of the col and then I went off snooping around for the way up. Here and there I could see a game trail and it seemed to trend to

the ascender's right, so I figured who would know better than the guys who live here and I used it wherever I could see it. It's a pity bears don't carry machetes with them because the brush on the steps between outcrops of rock were awesome thick. I finally called it and went back to the tent site for dinner. The right side was the right side, so to speak, and tomorrow would be soon enough to climb it.

At dinner that evening we decided that we would call this Thousand Pond Col because everywhere you go there is a pond. They are tucked away all over the place, some small, some big, but all over. We had a quiet night till 4:45 a.m. when a large male grouse decided that a spot about eight feet from our tent would make a delightful spot to thrum up a girlfriend, I got a photo of him but not in full display.

We were on the route by 7 a.m., June 19 and thankfully with just day packs because the way up was a pretty good thrash through heavy brush and steep little rock steps till we reached the top of that section, and then it turned into a forest of wonderful giant trees growing on a very steep hillside. We went left there and followed a sort of bench that almost looked like a road contouring around the shoulder of the hill. A short distance in and the bench petered out forcing us to begin to climb and it's pretty steep up before you can really begin to traverse. You have to start the traverse where the cliffs above stop you from going up any higher; from there you try to keep rising till you can see above the trees opening up



Reflection Lake. (Photo by Chris Rattan)

and there is a wet meadow area coming down the hillside. Beware here! We have been back to this spot a couple of times and every time we have run into one or more bears; this time there was a very large black ass sticking out of a cluster of slide alder and the brush was so thick I almost walked right into it. I started to back the hell up, but when Jane saw it she hollered at it and I would have liked to have been somewhat farther away when he pulled his head out of the shrubbery. To my relief he just ran up onto a rock outcrop where he stopped to check us out then he walked away down slope, so we charged up the hill as fast as the incredibly thick bush would let us. From there we came up under yet another cliff band which we hand-railed underneath till we came to the meadow where the lake is and what a beautiful spot!

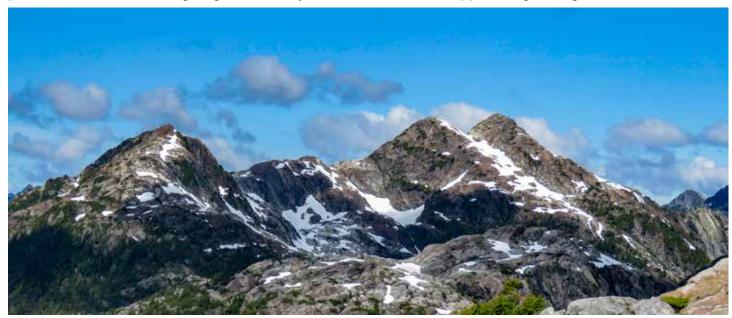
Our goal was to try to get all three peaks in today so we didn't linger long. We headed up past the lake into the high point of the col then followed a ridge up towards the first of the three peaks until we ran into a cliff band that does a pretty good job of blocking the way up.

Here we found a breach in the wall where a creek comes down and we were able to scramble up that to some easier ground above and from there a straight forward hike up a steep but manageable slope. By about 10 a.m. we were on top of the first peak. I could see we had an excellent chance to reach the other two higher points and the connecting ridge was really

straight forward but Jane was doubtful and so we negotiated a turn-around time and then set off along the ridge.

It's a delight to hike along a ridge where, on the west side, you can look down into the valley formed by Ursus Creek - a beautiful, untouched verdant green running across the terrain to the Bedwell River – and on the other side we could look down into the massive cirque to the east formed by these three peaks, and out across the drainage into the bigger drainage of the west end of Great Central Lake. In no time at all we were starting up the second peak, which was a bit steeper and had lots of loose rock so we stayed close together as we scrambled up to the top. From there it was just too close not to take in the third, and highest, peak so we scrambled down and across the gap then up to the top where we found no evidence of climbers or surveyors, no cairn, no garbage.

I built a small cairn and we hunkered down out of the wind for a quick snack but it was very cold so we were soon on our way back along the ridge to the first peak then down the way we came up till we reached the lake, where it was considerably warmer, and there we stopped for a nice long break. We were ahead of schedule so we hung out there till black clouds began to blow in from the south and rain was threatening so we headed back to the tent and almost made it before the rain. It was 5 p.m. and so a 10-hour round trip. The rain stopped long enough for us to have



Reflection Peaks from Dragon Ridge. (Photo by Chris Rattan)

dinner and then it began again at about 7 p.m. After a bit it stopped and we just had gusty wind all night.

June 20th we packed up and left but we didn't use our down route to return: I found a better way back but that is another story and likely as many words as this one (sorry).

Participants: Jane Morden, Chris Ruttan

Climbs in the Lower Tsitika Area: Catherine Peak, Mount Kokish, Tsitika Mountain and Tsitika Mountain Southeast

June 25 Lindsay Elms June 26, July 11, October 5, 2019



Catherine – Tsitika – Kokish area roads and routes.

In between the climbs of the Klaanch Peaks, Laurence Philippsen and I started making forays into the lower Tsitika River area, specifically between Catherine Creek and Kokish River. The Catherine Main was gradually punched farther and farther up Catherine Creek until it finally connected to Kokish Creek. Accessing Kokish Creek was usually from Telegraph Cove and I knew the logging roads were in relatively good shape from talking with the local cavers in Port McNeil. Laurence and I first noticed these roads when we climbed one of the peaks in the Bonanza Range from near Claud Elliot Lake and Peak 1450 to the west of the Tsitika River in 2018. A few years ago, I had looked at these peaks on my topo map and penciled



Catherine Peak – Bonanza Range. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

them in as future climbs. The future was now.

June 25

I can't remember why Laurence and I didn't drive in the afternoon before, but I met Laurence at his place in Black Creek at 2 a.m. It was pitch black outside, but we knew the sun would be rising early as it was, or almost was, the longest day of the year, and the forecast was for a beautiful day. By the time we were driving up the upper Catherine Main it was getting light out and we could see the road winding up towards the saddle between the Catherine and Kokish Rivers. Not far beyond the saddle we parked at a deactivated road and got ready to hike up through the slash, but before we did a pick-up came by. We chatted with the logger and he told us that they were road-building and logging up a side valley a little farther down the Kokish. We stored that info away for later. It was a short fifteen minutes through the slash before we entered the old growth. We constantly trended northeast as we were aiming for a saddle between Peak 1497 to the south and the summit we were calling Catherine Peak—a peak three kilometres to the south of Tsitika Mountain.

We arrived at the saddle in just over an hour, a time when many people are still asleep in their beds. It was then less than thirty minutes from the saddle to the summit of Catherine Peak (1554m). The time was 7:40 a.m. Both of us had cell reception so we fired a couple of quick texts home and then scrambled south down and across to Peak 1497. Across the Kokish River to the southeast we were looking at smaller Mount Kokish and knew we would be back in the area soon. Behind Mount Kokish was the whole spectacular Bonanza Range. Recent logging roads appeared to give easy access to some of these beautiful peaks. Although I had previously climbed all of the peaks, I knew we would be back to climb them again, only from this side. With such easy access, today's climb and descent was short and we were back in Black Creek by 2 p.m.

Participants: Laurence Philippsen and Lindsay Elms.

July 11

The weather forecast was a little iffy but Laurence and I decided to head back up to the Catherine/ Kokish saddle and climb a summit we were calling Mount Kokish. The mountain is at the head of the Kokish River. We just wanted to daytrip it so I texted a couple of friends to see if they wanted to join us. Although most of them are retired, they are busy sailing, cycling or pursuing some physical outdoor pursuit; however, the only one free was Rob Heron, so he decided come along for the adventure. Again, we left in the early hours of the morning and pulled into our parking spot not long after it got light. The sky was gray, the clouds swirling and there was a little moisture in the air. Getting a little damp wasn't going to kill us. From the vehicle we headed up into the forest and got onto a ridge which then curved all the way around to the northwest to the summit of Mount Kokish (1365m). One and a guarter hour up and forty-five down. Another short, easy climb and we were back home not long after lunch and, no, we didn't get wet.

Participants: Laurence Philippsen, Rob Heron and Lindsay Elms.

October 5

Since climbing Kokish Peak, Laurence, Val and myself had returned up the Catherine Creek to the east side of the Bonanza Range and had a beautiful day climbing from the huge scree basins to the top of a couple of the peaks. However, with the logging strike on we decided we had to get back into the upper Kokish Creek area and climb the one last peak I hadn't been up yet—Tsitika Mountain Southeast. Because of the strike we knew the loggers weren't working and the road builders were also off. Since Tsitika Mountain Southeast is so close to Tsitika Mountain we decided to climb both peaks. Tsitika was also one of the few bigger peaks up island that Val hadn't climbed and now that she was feeling more comfortable moving in the mountains after her accident, she wanted to climb. Again, we left home in the early hours of the morning. Laurence and I knew the roads went high in the side valley south of Tsitika Mountain but once we drove in there, we were surprised at how high they went to almost 1200 m. As soon as we stepped out of the vehicle, we walked into the old growth, which



Tsitika Peak. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

was open with very little underbrush. It was a real treat climbing up towards the ridge. An easy hour saw us on the ridge and twenty minutes later we were standing on the summit of Tsitika Mountain Southeast (1534 m). As with many of the other mountains we had climbed this year, there were no cairns or sign of anyone having climbing the peaks. There were a few clouds swirling around the summit of Tsitika Mountain (1657 m), but there was no rain forecast until later in the afternoon. The main summit was beckoning.



Val and Laurence on the summit of Tsitika Mountain.
(Photo by Lindsay Elms)

We spent fifteen minutes on the summit of the southeast peak and then dropped down into a beautiful draw which angled over towards the south ridge of Tsitika Mountain. A short steep little climb up from the draw and we were on the ridge where in places we followed game trails. We had one small bump to go over and then the final climb to the summit. However, before gaining the summit plateau we stopped for lunch in a sheltered spot where we were protected from



Descending Tsitika Mountain (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

the cool breeze. After eating and feeling a little more energized we had to contend with a short section of thick Krumholtz, but once through them the summit flattened out and we encountered a few inches of snow. Ahead of us we could see two summits, but we weren't sure which was the higher. Of course, we went up to the lower of the two and had to traverse across to the surveyor's large summit cairn which we couldn't see from lower down. It had been almost twenty years since I was last on the summit and there was more logging surrounding the mountain. The return to the vehicle was uneventful, as one hopes it will be, and I was happy that I had finally climbed everything in the area that I had wanted to. Val was also happy to get Tsitika Mountain under her belt and as usual Laurence was just happy to be in the mountains. This wasn't our last climb for the season as Val and I headed back up to Port McNeil and climbed Maynard Peak across the valley from Merry Widow Mountain, I noted a lot more mountains up in that area of the island and knew that next year this is an area that all three of us will be focusing on. There are always more mountains to climb and the weird things is they seem to be continuously popping up where

there were none before. Ah well, I guess I am going to be busy for awhile yet.

Participants: Laurence Philippsen, Val Wootton and Lindsay Elms.

A Return to Triple Peak

Rob Macdonald June 30, 2019

In 2017, my friends decided a spring training assault on Triple Peak might be a good idea. They coerced me to join them and, led by Karun Thanjavur, we drove up Island, turned off Hwy 4 onto Marion Main and drove to the end of the road, where a small sign indicated the way to Triple Peak – apparently downward to start. As they say, any trail is better than no trail; this one offers a few interesting bits (classical Island), but after a couple of hours we duly arrived at the small lake where we set up camp in the snow. The next day we woke to a truly Scottish rain. No vis, no peak, no dry spot, no nuttin. A retreat.

Another year slips by faster than one of Jackson Browne's summer fields, and I find myself in late October gazing once again at Triple Peak from the 'about to be opened' hut on 5040. The north flanks looked dry and bare, but ... maybe next year... I thought to myself. And so, in the spring of 2019, here I am again traveling up Island with Karun Thanjavur and Rick Johnson aiming ourselves at a spring assault on Triple.



The way to Triple Pk. (Photo by Rob Macdonald)

Who said nostalgia isn't what it used to be? As we drive over Sutton Pass it is as if I've gone through a time warp and suddenly pops into my head the sound of Crissie Hynde of the Pretenders belting out *Brass in Pocket*, which she almost always did back in the '80s as Rick Eppler and I drove the Alberni-Tofino road in search of adventure. The two of us spent many of the spring-times during 1980-1984 exploring both sides of Hwy 4 (see Rick's Bushwhacker article (1988, 16:4)). As we picked off peaks on our list, the summit views always seemed to be dominated by that attractive set of three



The snowy traverse high above the tarn in 1984. (Photo by Rick Eppler)



Looking down on the tarn in 1984. (Photo by Rick Eppler)

mysterious tusks thrusting out of snowy flanks. "Needs to be climbed" said Rick, repeating what he'd said a week or two before. And so, on a sunny day in mid-July, 1984, there we were crossing those snowy flanks, with our long-held objective in view.

Fast forward. Thirty-five years later almost to the day, here I am again at the end of Marion Main setting up tents with Karun and Rick Johnson. I dropped down to inspect the trailhead, next to which three young lads were lounging by their van. One of them called over to me, asking "have you been here before?" I answered tersely "yes, but that was many years ago," keeping to myself the logical finish "long before you were born, sonny." He seemed to lose interest, but plunged on anyway to tell me that they were planning to go up the next day, not to climb the peak, as he called it, but, rather, they were going to explore the upper lake. I remembered my first view of that pond as a frozen flattening ringed with a necklace of turquoise overflow ponds nestled in rock a few hundred feet below me. On that distant day in 1984 we had climbed up the ridge on the right flank of the depression that corrals the stream you follow on the present-day trail, popped out high in the alpine, and traversed well above the now-traditional tarn to set up camp.

The next day dawned clear and, after a quick munch on something, Karun, Rick and I were off up the trail. It was far easier without a heavy pack, but enough below US Park standards to make it interesting. As we passed the tarn, I noted the demise of snow; we were a couple of weeks earlier than the trip in 1984, but the place was bone dry and bare. As we proceeded from this point, it seemed clear that the snowy flanks of Triple Peak – the feature that gave it such an alluring appearance from afar – were disappearing.



Starting up the main tower in 1984. (Photo by Rob ______ Macdonald)

Soon we stood beneath the north wall of the main summit. It was hard to remember exactly where Rick and I had surmounted the tower in 1984: we had cast around, back and forth, and eventually attacked the likely-looking shallow depression on the right hand side. It looked like it had sufficient holds to get one up the necessary half-rope length. I don't remember much about it, but I did snap a quick shot of Rick before setting off up the wall.

Today, having plenty of time and some interest in what was now apparently the *via-normale*, we



The less snowy traverse to Triple Pk in 2019. (Photo by Rob Macdonald)



Rob on the summit of Triple Peak in 1984. (Photo by Rick Eppler)

traversed over snow to the left-hand side of the tower and mounted a short, steep pitch of hard snow to gain a shaded notch. From there, a bit of a tunnel to pass through and then a bush gorilla traverse above a short chimney put us at the bottom of the 'ascent gully.' Rick had wrenched himself on the krummholz traverse and decided to give it a rest while Karun and I continued up this gully, me with the first lead, Karun to finish it off. From the top of the gully, it was but a short horseshoe traverse through krummholtz traverse and there I was, after 35 years, standing at the broken summit, gazing out over the Hwy 4 terrain. It is hard to describe the rush of emotion that invades your mind at a time like this; all those heady days, as Rick used to call them, and here I was, after a long, long, time left for a period of silence to ponder the good friends I had and the good friends I'd lost along the way. I'm shortly joined by my climbing partner, Karun, and it seems a fine day to share with this gentle soul the success of our climb and the rewarding view.



The view to the SW from the summit in late June, 1984. (Photo by Rob Macdonald)



Rob and Karun on the summit of Triple Peak in 2019). (Photo by Karun Tanjavur)

I now regret that we did not get a summit picture of the two us in 1984 that would have matched the one of Karun and me, but I guess we were not planning for such a distant future.

I have no doubt in my mind that my life without mountaineering would have been very different and definitely the poorer for it. It is significant, I think, that I can remember so many features of that day in 1984, and yet have forgotten the pabulum of most other days that have passed. So many things have changed in those three and a half decades – my old Rolei Camera now replaced by a Sony Nex 7, but out here sitting atop Triple Pk, the loss of snow and ice seems most poignant.

This mountain remains one of my favorites on the Island, and is certainly my favorite Hwy 4 collectable. I'm tickled that this peak's northern face sits right in the picture window of the Island's new hut on 5040. A deserved place.



The view to the SW from the summit in late June, 2019. (Photo by Rob Macdonald)



Rick Johnson keeping a watchful eye on Rob's last rappel off Triple Peak. (Photo by Karun Thanjavur)

Back over to the top of the gully, and Karun and I find three others in the midst of climbing up; this is no longer a lonely, isolated peak in Vancouver Island's bush. My, my – two groups in one day. Karun and I put in two quick rappels past the threesome and leave them to the peak. Two more short rappels get all three of us down to walking territory.

As we drive over Sutton Pass on the way home, suddenly I can hear Doug and Slugs – *Too Bad* – and again I drift back to the '80s. Perhaps I appreciate more than I did then the opportunity to blow away a day climbing with good partners and spending a day together thrashing Vancouver Island's bush. Rick tells me a chocolate malted milkshake awaits at Whisky Creek; life is better than good – it's superb.

Participants: Karun Thanjavur, Rick Johnson and Rob Macdonald

Rockfall on Victoria Peak

Aldous Sperl July 8, 2019

Slowly but surely I've been ticking off the Island Qualifier list. Each summer I have the goal of completing as many of them as possible but it usually ends up just being less than planned. After summitting Nine Peaks with John Ballantyne in June, next on the list was a Victoria and Warden combo. Peter Gilbert had inspired me with a facebook post showing that you could do both of them in a day. So that was our goal as well.

On a weekend in July, Chris Sandl and I saw a Sunday evening – Monday morning clear weather opportunity to try for it. The down side was that it was raining up to that weather window and right after. So on a rather rainy Sunday in July, we drove out to Victoria peak, stopping for dinner in Campbell River. We took the WR381 road up as high as we could and then started the bushwhack upwards around 7 p.m. Within 15 minutes of being in the bush we were thoroughly soaked. The brush was soaking and as we bashed our way upwards we got drenched. Luckily it was only an hour's hike to the alpine.

Once in the alpine we made quick time in the fading light. We wanted to make it up close to the col between Warden and Victoria Peak, and had heard of some flat ledges to camp on above the treeline. With a little bit of searching we did end up finding enough of a flat spot to throw a small tarp up and sleep under it (luckily the bugs weren't a factor up that high). We were doing this trip as light as possible - no tent, no stove, no luxuries. Just a really basic sleeping set up and our climbing gear.

Luckily I did bring a few extra items of clothing for which I was very grateful as we set up camp. There was no way some of my soaking-wet clothes were going to dry without direct sunlight

on them but they'd served their purpose to get us to where we were. A granola bar for desert and then it was time for bed.

We woke up around 4:30 a.m. Scarfed down a few granola bars, packed up what we needed for the day (now down to a very basic backpack - food, water, inReach, headlamp, raingear, camera, and climbing gear) threw on the crampons and started for the col. We reached the col around 6 a.m. and made quick work of Warden Peak - going up the standard route. After reaching the summit and coming back to the col without incident, we decided to try for the Northeast Ridge of Victoria Peak, and started climbing around 8 a.m. A route description in Island Alpine Select showed it as a 5.8 climb for 8 pitches. This was within our level so... we figured why not go for it.

Unfortunately few people seem to climb this route so we didn't have a lot to guide us on what the actual route was. Not letting that deter us,



Climbing the NE Ridge route on Victoria Pk. (Photo by Chris Sandl)

we aimed for the easiest line we could find and started climbing. We did pass one sling along the way which made me think that we were likely on the right route – but that was it. The rest of it was guesswork. Slowly but surely we climbed up one pitch at a time. The weather was glorious - the sun was out, and we had clear skies with a sea of cloud below us. Up we went, sometimes up some questionable lines but for the most part it was good rock and fun climbing.



Aldous Sperl atop Victoria Pk. (Photo by Chris Sandl)

After reaching the summit we had a quick break and then started our decent. We knew bad weather was coming in that evening so we wanted to be off the mountain well before then. Plus Chris had to work the next day back in Victoria.

We were descending without incident until the 4th rappel – where things went awry. All I remember from this part of the trip was being on rappel



Chris Sandl starting the first rappel off Victoria Peak prior to the accident. (Photo by Aldous Sperl)

enjoying myself, and then suddenly waking up with Chris above me asking me questions. I'd been knocked out by a falling rock!

Apparently, the rope had dislodged a rock above me which then came crashing down on my helmet (cracking the helmet) and knocking me unconsciousness. Thankfully I had my prusik on which caught my fall. My climbing partner Chris, meanwhile, had no idea what was going on below. He'd seen a rock get dislodged by the rope but hadn't seen it hit me. He kept calling my name wondering what was going on but getting no response. After a few minutes he heard some groaning below and after a lot of yanking on the rope was able to get himself on rappel and came down to investigate.

He found me groaning, semi-conscious lying on small ledge. Now, Chris had to determine what to do. We did have the inReach with us but... we weren't in a good place to be rescued (still several pitches up the face), the weather was likely to change this evening and we didn't have any way of setting up a shelter on this ledge. Plus my condition seemed to be improving. So he held off pressing SOS and waited to see if I would come around. After 15 minutes or so I was able to have a dazed conversation. I couldn't remember my address but I could remember my girlfriend's name. Could I stand - yes. Was I able to continue going down - I think so. In my dazed state I completely relied on Chris to get me off the mountain. He set up the next few rappels and would put me on fully (including a prussik) and then go down himself and wait for me at the bottom (ready to yank on the ropes to control my descent if need be).

I was pretty proud of myself at that point in time. At this point in my life rappelling has become so second nature that I had zero problem going down despite feeling very woozy (similar to being drunk and having a splitting headache at the same time). I actually remember enjoying the experience. My thought pattern went something like this - wow - I am so out of it - yet I'm rappelling down this mountain... cool. Woah - look how cool this is. Where am I again? Woah cool cloud - oh yeah don't forget to step. This is

Victoria Peak... right? Who am I with? Oh yeah Chris he's right there. Cool. Where am I again? You get the idea.

After three rappels we then had to down climb a pretty steep snow section with a few big crevasses to navigate around. Normally this would be no big deal but in my current state I was not comfortable at all doing this so Chris belayed me from above while I slowly made my way down - step by step. Thankfully, by the time we got back to the col I was feeling pretty good.

From there it was a short hike to our camp, a quick pack-up (with Chris taking the majority of the weight) and a scramble back down out of the alpine. We ended up following the wrong trail on the way down though so the bushwhack was a lot longer and more intense than anticipated. It felt like it took forever and I fell and slipped several times – in reality it probably only took an hour or two.

Back to the car and then back to Campbell River. I called the Nurse's hotline when we were in range of service and they were insistent that I needed to go to the hospital right away. Good advice given what had happened I suppose. So after a quick bite (we hadn't eaten anything since noon) I spent several hours in the hospital. The hospital folks were great and I even got a cat scan that night. Thankfully no issues.

I took it easy the rest of the week and it took a while for the headaches and neck pains to go away but two months later I can now safely say that it was a full recovery.

I've replayed the scenario in my head so many times. How did this happen? Were we prepared enough? Did I take enough time looking for potential rocks that could be dislodged? Should we have done anything differently? My only real conclusion was that from now on I'm always going to carry an emergency bivy sack + down jacket so that if a situation ever arises where movement is impossible - at least there's a waterproof sack the victim can stay in and wait for help with some warmth.

Sometimes accidents happen, particularly in the mountains. I'm just very grateful it wasn't worse than it was. Lessons to take to the bank: always wear a helmet, always use a prusik, always go with someone who you trust. Stay safe out there!

Participants: Aldous Sperl and Chris Sandl

Mt Mariner: A Journey From Sea to Sky

Shanda Lembcke July 17-20 2019

When a person approaches you and says "I have a great idea for a trip" you tend to stop to hear what it is. When the proposal is to take a water taxi loaded with bikes from Tofino and packs full of climbing gear to then ride 7 km to the trailhead and then walk many kilometres up to cross a glacier to climb Mt Mariner (1771 m) you might think the proposal intriguing. When you find out it's a plan for Youth Section of the Alpine Club you may exclaim "no way -too ambitious!". When this proposal is made by a person you trust, it may also feel okay to say yes. So I decide to go with this ambitious plan and soon there are a few families on board. We are lucky to receive a Youth Grant from the ACCVI Memorial Fund which will help offset our transportation expenses.

It almost didn't happen. The weather on the West



Tuning up the bikes. (Photo by Shanda Lembke)

Coast. Non-flexible Summer schedules. Kids not having enough stoke. As our final chance in the calendar approaches the decision is made to go for it. See how far we get and hope for decent weather.

So off we go to meet the boat at the dock at the time we've arranged. Three dads, one son, three daughters and me. Our water taxi driver, Annie, is immediately curious as to what our group is getting up to. The kids, bikes, climbing ropes and ice axes give us away and we tell her of our plan. She is excited for us, which is perfect because our motto for the Youth Section has become "Stoke is major!"

After an invigorating 45 minute ride up Clayoquot Sound we disembark and get on our bikes. The forecasted heavy rain arrives as we are set in motion but spirits are high as some of the Wilderness Resort Staff who have gathered wish us happy trails

Arriving at the trailhead, we swap into dry footwear and keep the wet clothes on under ponchos. The forest will surely be dripping. It is easy going for the first part of the Bedwell River Trail. So straightforward that we all walk past the overgrown turnoff. We've arrived at a river that is flowing in the wrong direction to what we expect. After some scratching of heads we turn back towards where we came from and the fork in the road is revealed. We've lost some time but gain insight into how direction can become complicated. As a group we were easily trudging forward and following along one behind the other on a well-marked trail. A lesson not lost on any of us. A creek up ahead is impassable from the day's rain so the decision is made to set up camp and hope we wake to blue sky and a mellow creek. As I relax in the warmth of my sleeping bag. I think of the challenges that we'll encounter the next day. Stefan and Aila, my tent companions, are clearly not as concerned. Both are sound asleep.

Day Two. No blue sky but we're well rested. The creek has been assessed and has reportedly receded to only a trickle. We will be able to cross it easily. Again, insight is gained. A few hours can

really change a situation! With packs on we warm up fast as we move our way up. The anticipated Living Bridge is next. To say that I am not looking forward to this is an understatement. My stoke is not major at this moment. We've come prepared for this part and also know there is a possibility that this could be the turnaround point if it proves that the bridge is too decomposed to safely cross. Andrew goes first and declares it stable and, judging by the grin on his face, it must be exhilarating. With rope and harnesses we all go across one at a time. It is a relief to be on the other side. We are now on the century-old Noble Creek Miners Trail and at a rest stop we discover remnants of a wood stove, bedsprings, sinks, pots and pans. We believe this to be the cabin site of the well known miner, Walter Guppy. Soon we reach the long scree slope that will get us to the Col. The rain starts to pelt down on us and the ponchos go back on. I do wonder if the summit is the cards for our group. We can't take the kids higher up the mountain if the weather doesn't clear! Regardless of the rain, the group is content. Nathan, the oldest youth at 17, much to my fascination, has carried a bag of chips up and they are still whole, He offers this salty crunchy treat around as we take shelter under some massive boulders. The two youngest in our group, Nina (14) and Donna (10), have never been into the mountains on Vancouver Island but they show no sign of discomfort or fatigue. In fact,



Donna's first rock climb. (Photo by Shanda Lembke)

Donna flows so easily up the steep scree that she stays ahead of most of us occasionally turning back with a smile to yell to her dad, Huib, to hurry up. He is clearly enjoying this challenge. It has



Taking shelter on the scree slope. (Photo by Shanda Lembke)

been about an hour slogging up in the torrential rain and upon reaching the top she turns to exclaim "that was fun!". With the downpour and gusts of colder alpine air we all work fast to get the tents up. Shelter out of the incessant wind and rain is the desired objective now. Into our tents we all retreat with hope that the morning will bring a clear sky.

Day Three and no rain. Another long day is anticipated and we manage to get the group in motion by 7 a.m. Some nice scrambly terrain takes us to a slabby section where the ropes come out. The short rock climb excites us. Are we mountaineering now?

From there we encounter another quick pitch and steep forest until getting to the south glacier. We rope up and make our way up the long slope that leads us to a fun step through to the north glacier. By now the views are getting good but the overcast sky is threatening to shut those down. Nearing the summit block we are forced to show our respect towards a small but intimidatingly



Nathan enjoying a summit refreshment. (Photo by Shanda Lembke)

situated bergschrund. We all agree that this now is definitely mountaineering! There are a few pitched-out sections but mostly we move carefully up towards the summit. This is the fun part-holding on to nice grippy rock, stepping and pulling our way towards the top. Even though hopes of ocean views are mostly gone due to thick cloud we are exhilarated to arrive at the top. High fives all around, a can of *yerba mate*, chocolate and messages written in the summit register -we did it!

The weather starts to close in and we know that this is only half way...camp is still many hours away. Careful steps off the summit lead us to a steep snow field where we decide to assist in fun belays down. It is always entertaining to watch the different flow styles that are achieved. We descend down the block and back onto the glacier. Again, this part feels long but one foot after another and another we are back on the south glacier and then down to the tree line. We left camp about 10 hours ago and all are clearly happy to be back to take boots off and cook up a warm dinner. We've all basically fared pretty well except Nathan's feet. His plastic boots from the day before were a bad fit and after today his feet are shredded. We all enjoy our dinner and even some baths in the tarns near camp. Off to bed with that sweet sense of accomplishment.

Day four. We are on our way by 8 a.m., flowing down the scree slope and boulder field in much dryer conditions. The boat is scheduled to pick us up around 3:30 so we know we need to keep a good pace. Good time is made, breaks are taken and conversation is flowing. Donna, Nina and Aila have become a giggly silly gang and a few times they are reminded to watch their steps. They fall behind and we wait to hear their laughter approach. We are down in the dense forest and close to the trail but, as the girls approach us this time, Nina is limping and can hardly stand on one foot. She has twisted her ankle. The tensor bandage gets wrapped on and contents of her backpack are distributed out. This is another great insight. One injured person unable to walk well affects us all. We are all in this together and it becomes clear that our pace has slowed dramatically. She is stoic although



Back at the wharf. (Photo by Shanda Lembke)

clearly in discomfort. For her it will be especially good to get back on the bike and take weight off her feet. The living bridge gets crossed again with harnesses and ropes on, even though now we are all mostly unfazed and feeling confident. A bit more trudging and we're at the suspension bridge and then our stashed bikes. Riding out the last 7 km is a new experience. I wish I could always have my bike stashed awaiting my tired feet. I've also never experienced a cheering section as I finish a climb. Some of the Wilderness Resort Staff hoot and holler, congratulating our success as we pedal by.

Annie arrives in the boat. She is glad to see us and even offers us local fresh fruit. We are happy to be back on her boat where we sit and enjoy the view of Mariner Mountain behind us. We went there! By boat, bikes and our bodies we got ourselves to the top and back down AND we even had fun. I contemplate how ambitious I thought this trip plan was. I really believed it was too big. Perhaps the final insight is for me alone. My doubts and fears were only worries of failure. When the plan is put in place and the momentum has a chance to get started the big objective is quite possible. Again I have learned that step by step, one obstacle at a time I can get myself to places that seem from a dream. For this trip though, I get to share the journey with three wonderful, energetic and open-hearted families.

Trip Participants: Trip Leader- Stefan Gessinger, Aila Gessinger, Andrew Welsh, Nathan Welsh, Huib De Roo, Donna De Roo, Nina De Roo and Shanda Lembcke.

Beginner friendly all women Traverse of the Forbidden Plateau

Janelle Curtis August 23-25, 2019

The Forbidden Plateau derives its name from folklore about a group of women and children who vanished during a raid of the K'omoks First Nation. The tribe's women and children used to hide on the plateau when other tribes raided them. Legend has it that when a member of the K'omoks First Nation went looking for them there, he found red lichen on the snow and rocks and assumed it was the blood of the missing women and children. And so, the plateau became taboo because it was assumed to be haunted by evil spirits. Fortunately, we didn't encounter any evil spirits during our traverse of the Forbidden Plateau, and we all made it back home safely afterwards.

Lenka Visnovska and I have been co-leading all women beginner friendly hikes most summers since 2013. In August 2019, we had the great pleasure of co-leading another one with Christine Rivers of the Island Mountain Ramblers. The Forbidden Plateau Traverse was an excellent option for us because it gave us the opportunity to camp at scenic Kwai Lake in one of Strathcona Park's developed campgrounds the first night and in the backcountry at Drabble Lakes on the second night. Although that traverse can be hiked easily in one or two days, we wanted to take our time so we could enjoy the beauty of that less travelled route and share our knowledge of hiking in the backcountry with others. I appreciated that the trail was very well maintained (thank you CDMC!) and didn't involve any technical challenges, although, I am much slower when hiking downhill since my accident in 2016, especially when there are delicious berries to sample!

Lenka, Christine, and I worked with members of our group to prepare for this adventure by reviewing clothing, food, cooking, water purification, weather forecasts, and carpooling. We encouraged everyone to pack lightly. We also reviewed our gear list, trip plan, navigation, first aid, food storage, and the importance of having



Shannon, Janelle, Wiebke, Lenka and Alcina hiking past Battleship Lake. (Photo by Christine Rivers)

(and knowing how to use) an emergency satellite communication device on such an adventure. We expected a bit of rain during our hike and brought a few lightweight tarps just in case. More than twenty women expressed interest in joining us, but in the end, we were eight intrepid hikers - five from the ACCVI and three from the Island Mountain Ramblers.

We began our hike at Raven Lodge and passed Battleship, Lady, and Croteau Lakes on the way to Kwai Lake. Hiking past those lakes is a picturesque way to start the traverse. We took some time at Croteau Lake to bandage developing blisters. We also evaluated the weight of our backpacks and decided to pour out our extra water because we knew that we could easily find and treat water on our route when we needed some. Before we arrived at Kwai Lake, passing hikers asked us where our male leader was. That was a somewhat awkward question for our group! One of them said he thought his friend was volunteering to join us. We joked about their comments afterwards and concluded that they probably knew they shouldn't say something like that but were trying to be amusing.



Lenka and Janelle being "Wild Women" in one of the Drabble Lakes. (Photo by Alcina de Oliveira)



Alcina sampling some of the blueberries along the way. (Photo by Janelle Curtis)

After we set up camp at Kwai Lake, Lenka and I went to Mariwood Lake while the rest of the group enjoyed the view at Cruickshank Canyon. That evening, we all shared much laughter and lessons learned during the first day of our hike.

The next morning, we continued along our traverse through the subalpine forest to Drabble Lakes. On the way, we hiked through Mackenzie Meadows and hid amidst the tall grasses and flowers. After we set up camp, Lenka and I went for a swim in the mist just as a few raindrops fell. Those were the only raindrops we felt during our three days of hiking. Fortunately, we were already wet! Others also enjoyed the lake that evening and the next morning before we gathered for another hearty breakfast.

During our last day of hiking, most of us made a short side trip part to the summit of Indianhead Mountain. Then some picked berries and relaxed at the junction with the trail to Mount Becher while Christine, Shannon, and Wiebke climbed Mount Becher and enjoyed views of the surrounding mountains. After they returned, we hiked down to the parking area of the former and overgrown Forbidden Plateau ski hill, where we were picked



Group photo at the end of our traverse. From left to right: Janelle, Wiebke, Christine, Shannon, Alcina, Lenka, Brenda, and Debora. (Photo by an anonymous hiker at Raven Lodge)

up by Ambassador Transportation who brought us back to Raven Lodge.

The subalpine forest of mountain hemlock was dominated by huckleberries, blueberries, and salmonberries. Fortunately, we took three days to complete our traverse - we were all very slow because we stopped often to savour berries along the way!

We enjoyed getting to know each other and learning how to camp overnight in the backcountry. A few of us had not been camping overnight in the backcountry before and some of us with more experience relearned skills related to hanging food from trees and navigation (e.g. use of map and compass, as well as applications such as ViewRanger and Gaia GPS). We all learned about packing lightly, preventing blisters, and the importance of clear communication and staying together as a group.

Participants: Janelle Curtis, Christine Rivers, Lenka Visnovska (co-leaders), Alcina de Oliveira, Shannon Flaherty, Wiebke Imsel; Debora Krueger, and Brenda Olin.

It's not only beautiful, its interesting! The geology of the 5040 Peak area

Maija Finvers August 23, 2019

The rocks in the vicinity of Hišimyawi λ (5040 Hut) are quite varied and interesting, especially those near the col below 5040 Peak and on the 'plateau' north-east of the col. I hope the information and images in this short article about the geology of the area will enhance visitors' appreciation of this area, just as the scenery and beautiful alpine flowers do.

The images accompanying this article were taken during the first annual ACCVI Section 'Camp' at Hišimyawi\(\lambda\) on August 18-23, 2019 (See trip report in the Fall 2019 ACCVI Newsletter https://accvi.ca/wp-content/uploads/ACCVI-NewsletterFall2019.pdf). To quote that article:



1. Geology Map showing the location of the road, trail, hut, Peak 5040 and the 'plateau' area (Modified from a map created using MapPlace 2 at <a href="https://www.mapplace.com/www.com/ww

'Many varied explorations took place: hiking, scrambling, rock-climbing, botanizing, birding, and geologizing in the very interesting and complex terrain of the "limestone" plateau, and on adjacent peaks and ridges. There was lots to do – things to suit varied interests and abilities.'

According to a geology map (Figure 1) 5040 Peak consists of Bonanza Group basaltic to rhyolitic volcanic flows, tuffs and minor limestones (in light green), surrounded by a donut of Vancouver Group thick-bedded grey limestone and other sedimentary rocks (in blue), with Karmutsen basaltic volcanic rocks beyond (in darker green). The rocks in the vicinity of the hut, on the peak and on the 'plateau' and adjacent ridges best match the descriptions of the Bonanza Group. These rocks are 150-250 million years old and show several stages of deposition, intrusion, deformation, fracturing and faulting.

Interestingly, the 'plateau' area was un-vegetated except for some alpine flowers growing in the gravelly and sandy alluvial fan deposits adjacent to small lakes (Picture 2). It is possible that the 'plateau' area had previously been under a snow-field or small glacier (due to its north-facing position) and therefore soil has not had time to



2. View of the 'plateau' from the col below Peak 5040. (Photo by Maija Finvers)

develop. This area contrasts with nearby ridges which have trees and shrubs growing in pockets of soil except on their most barren ridge tops and rock outcrops.

In Picture 3 and Picture 4 note the strips and blotches of light coloured and brownish coloured rocks and the dark grey limestone lenses.

The brownish rocks are basaltic – containing iron-rich minerals while the light coloured rocks are rhyolites or dacites consisting primarily of fine grained quartz and feldspar minerals (aluminum and silica rich, with low iron content). In places, (see Pictures 4 and 5) bands of light or almost white rocks cross-cut the other rocks. These

are dikes created by molten rock squeezed into vertical cracks in the pre-existing rocks at some point in geological history. In the 'plateau' area, these dikes have subsequently been fractured or faulted. The dark grey lenses of rock are limestone which may contain a few fossilized coral fragments and gastropods (snail shells). The surfaces of some of the limestone lenses show dissolution by water creating the ridges and furrows seen in Picture 5.

4. Image below: note the crosscutting intrusive (almost white) dikes (highlighted by the white arrows) and abundance of fractures and faulting. (Photo by Maija Finvers)



3. Basaltic (brownish colour) and rhyolitic (light colour) volcanic flows with lenses of dark grey limestone. (Photo by Maija Finvers)





possibly each other. The narrow dike was subsequently fractured and offset. Note that the surface of the limestone has been dissolved producing the peaks and valleys on its surface. (Photo by Maija Finvers)

5. These dikes cross-cut the limestone and adjacent rock and

Other interesting rocks and minerals are shown in Picture 6 and Picture 7.

Participants: Catrin Brown (organizer), Barb Baker, Jenny Berg, Laura Darling, Adrian Dolling, Maija Finvers, Purnima Govindarajulu, Mike Hubbard, Colleen Kasting, Suzanne Morphet, Anja Pa, and Erich Schellhammer.



6. A breccia (fragments of one rock encased in another and solifified. (Photo by Maija Fiinvers)



7. A geode containing quartz crystals and olive green crystals, possibly epidote. (Photo by Maija Finvers)

Myra Creek Watershed Traverse

Mike Knippel 30 August – 3 September, 2019

The goal was a Myra Creek watershed traverse with a Thelwood, and maybe Bancroft, climb in the middle. We didn't end up summiting, although we achieved the traverse via the backup route, but needed to change our plan three times.

We met at Ralph River campsite for a quick sleep after work Thursday of the Labour Day weekend so we could hit the trail first thing Friday without a three a.m. drive up. Traipsing up the familiar cat track to the dam, two of us scrambled around the north side of the lake through the grotty downfall, and I took the rest of us back down the track a bit and whacked up the side of the hill to gain the ridge, meeting the others on a rock overlooking Tennant Lake. Gary and I made a mental note to try to gain the ridge from the creek at the cat track halfway point someday — it seems doable



The only time clean and dry. L to R: Dan Riis, Gary Lahnsteiner, Mike Knippel, Laura King, Warren King, Pat Morris, Wendy Langelo. (Photo by Dan Riis)

and easier, from the map. After a snack we made for the bushy gully up into the sub alpine, had a fight with some wasps, and made the sub alpine. (The gully goes best if you stay about 20 m above the creek on its north side.)

Now in the granite wonderland above Tennant, it is fairly simple hiking but you do have to find the right ways through the various water and rock obstacles, but there is little need for any

exposure – there's always a decent way. Phillip Stone's book gives good advice; stay left when confronted with obstacles. The going is slow, but this is because of picture taking, blueberries. And stopping to savour the little scenes. The views, obstructed by smoke during my last trip here in 2017, and by rain this time, are amazing, not that we saw many of the surrounding mountains. But I could feel them. We found a nice little tarn just



Rock slide at the start of the bushy gully. (Photo by Laura King)



A granite and tarn wonderland. (Photo by Mike Knippel)

above McNish Lake and settled in for the night. In this area you don't have to worry too much about camp sites, you can pretty much stop anywhere and you are near water.

We woke up to more light rain and headed off for Crystal Pass. We achieved the first big unnamed tarn and noted that the gully snow, which was 3-4 m deep two years previous, was now gone. We got to the next big tarn, which was as far as we got in 2017, went down to its outflow into the Thelwood valley, and charted our way up the monster granite blob between us and Crystal Pass. Pat went up and scoped out a route, and said it was easy, but that's Pat. We took the route, and it is doable for hikers, but exposed in one spot. Going straight up clutching heather, we stepped sideways to the left through some trees to find a gully, and then pulled ourselves up the gully, which had some good holds. The only dicey part was an exposed little walk leading to the bushes, which had a couple spots where there was little to hold on to. Being hikers, and not climbers, these things concern us. Plus we're old, and falling hurts.

We got up onto the blob, and the imbibers broke out some Fireball. We hiked up over the impressive blob, about 400 m up and down a few times. It takes a while, and that is mostly due to all the cool things to look at – granite, intrusions, snow caves, etc. Plus you have to weave your way safely through obstacles but it all works with patience. Arriving at Crystal Pass around 5 p.m., we scouted the small tarn at the top of the pass and although we could make it work, it wasn't the best for our six tents, so we headed north for 20 minutes into the delightful meadow where the pass water tumbles over waterfalls and makes its way out of the valley. The scenery here is stunning, even in the rain, and there is lots of flat granite to set up tents and avoid camping on the heather and grassy bits.

We made our first plan change at this point. The rock was slippery after two days of rain, and although a fairly steep but simple scramble, it didn't make sense to tempt fate and climb wet rock with lightning forecasted. So we dropped that idea and made plans to return someday to finally knock it off. We had also considered

climbing Bancroft on the way out to Phillips Ridge, but abandoned that idea too.

Intent the next day was to gain Bancroft Pass and then follow the 1300 m contour around to Bancroft's north flank, followed by some bushwhacking and route-finding past the Harvey Lakes and then up to Phillips Ridge, with text descriptions from Phillip Stone's book and Hiking Trails III to guide us, although I did have GPS tracks from two sources to get from Crystal Pass to Bancroft Pass. These tracks, rather than dropping down to the valley and then climbing the outflow creek up to the meadows under Bancroft Pass, both showed a way that involved climbing Thelwood's flank a bit, and then side sloping it through some trees to a granite outcropping, from which we would then weave our way down to the meadows and up to the pass. After crossing the creek, where Warren had a spill and made my sailor's ears blush with some choice words, we headed uphill. The trees were much thicker than expected, and very grotty, and there were spots where a fall could result in some steep tumbling. We got turned around a number of times, seduced into routes that looked good but didn't go. Not everybody enjoyed this, but they did enjoy it when we were done. It took us 2.5 hours to make the 500 m to the outcropping, and we stopped for a rest and a discussion.

We had to reassess the trip plan here, and ended up making our second adjustment. We were half way through the trip, time and distance-wise, but we knew the going would likely be slower for the next 24 hours and some in our party needed to stick to the five-day trip plan. We considered our route information, which described the Harvey Lakes area bushwhacks in unfavourable terms. but didn't say a word about the whack we had just completed. Although we assessed it likely that we probably went the wrong way, that we could have dropped farther down the valley and then gone up what probably would have been a creek and gully system into the meadows under Bancroft Pass, we didn't know this to be the case. So we had to assume the Harvey Lake area whacking was tougher than what we had just done, and this would mean it would likely take us six days to complete our original plan. So we made the call at this point to exit via the ridge

between the two Myra Creek forks to the Upper Myra Falls, which we knew based on books and first-hand information went relatively well, with some whacking required, although water was a concern. This had the added bonus of giving us some breathing room, and we descended into the great meadows under Bancroft Pass and set up camp midafternoon for some deserved rest. the first two days having been ninehour days on our feet, and there having been some minor discomfort and concern and stress during this day's whack (in fact, Pat had a fall during the whack, and although we didn't know it at the time, had fractured five ribs. He's one tough 69-year old!)

This meadow has great little ribbony creeks running through it and there is tons of room for tents. We had seen deer from the outcropping down here, but they had skedaddled by the time



Looking back at Crystal Pass. (Photo by Mike Knippel)



Glorious when the sun came up. (Photo by Mike Knippel)

we got down there. Bear scat was plentiful. Knowing we were changing the exit plan, we notified our friend Sean, who had our trip plan at home, and contacted friend Jeremy to get a bit more first-hand info on the ridge. (All hail the Garmin InReach email feature!) Jeremy told us not to do it, that he hated it, and to go the other way, which he hadn't travelled before. So we ignored that advice and stuck with the backup plan, which turned out to be the right call.

I think Jeremy's trip down the ridge had gotten unnecessarily tough because he had dropped to the creek too early, and had gotten caught up in devil's club and downfall whacking along the creek for a long time. Although we didn't have tracks, we were pretty confident that if we just stuck to the ridge, or favoured its north side on the way down, we would be fine.

The next morning we got up and did some light whacking up to the Pass, and turned east to head out the ridge. Advice had been that it would take about eight hours to exit the ridge from this spot, but I knew Jeremy was faster than us, and given that water was scarce, and that we had two days to get out, and that bushwhacking out via headlamp with suspect water availability was a silly idea, we decided to find a little pond that the map showed further down the ridge, about

100 m below the ridge crest, and park there for the night. After some heavy bushwhacking down (we found an easier way out), we found the pond, a great little spot with bear prints and duckies floating around, and set up. Plus, the sun burst out for the first time in the trip, and we had one of those glorious alpine 20 degree sunny days.

It was the right call, as it took us 10 hours the next day to whack out the ridge, and other than a few super muddy holes, there was no water until we got to the creek. This ridge goes well, you just stay to the crest and find your way around challenges, with very occasional bootprints and old flags to help. The ridge splits for a bit about halfway down, and taking the gully between them is a great way down, although we had to veer to the right to make sure we didn't get sucked into going all the way down to the creek too early. From here you stay on the crest or its north side, and there's even occasionally some boot tracks and flags (thanks CDMC!), but not too often. We got down to the creek, remarked it was flowing in the wrong direction (wrong fork), and did some super grotty whacking to make our way to the upper fork and crossing. We can't seem to cross creeks without someone falling in, and this time it was Dan, but as a retired sailor, he knew all the right words to use. From here we whacked up, with some trail, to the Upper Falls trail, and then out to the road and parking lot. It also rained a bunch this day, so everything that had gotten dry the day before, got wet again.



Heading down the Myra Creek Ridge. (Photo by Mike Knippel)

So three trip changes – all the right calls – meant we didn't climb Thelwood (again) but had accomplished the traverse, and had seen some pretty darn fine countryside. We didn't see a soul from parking lot to parking lot, which is pretty awesome, especially considering it was a long weekend. Of course, this is why we save back country trips for long weekends – the hordes are going elsewhere and fighting over tent pads and caches. The painful memories of the whack would soon wane, and Gary and I started planning our next trip up here (still have to climb that mountain!), which we will probably do in the other direction, in via Phillips Ridge and out via Tennant Lake.

The area is wonderful, especially the granite and tarn paradise between Tennant Lake and the giant granite blob. But it does take some work and navigational skill to get up here – it's not a place for the unprepared. The third time will be the charm for us, I am sure!

Participants: Mike Knippel (leader), Wendy Langelo, Pat Morris, Warren King, Laura King, Dan Riis, Gary Lahnsteiner.

Mt. Septimus: An Unexpected Sixth Island Qualifier

Barry Hansen September 1-3, 2019

After summiting Mt. Harmston in 2018 while doing the Comox Range traverse, I decided to try completing as many Island Qualifiers as I could in 2019. It went better than expected as weather windows opened at just the right moments, allowing me to complete another five IQs between June and September (Nine Peaks, Victoria Peak, Golden Hinde, Mt. Septimus, and Warden Peak – in that order).

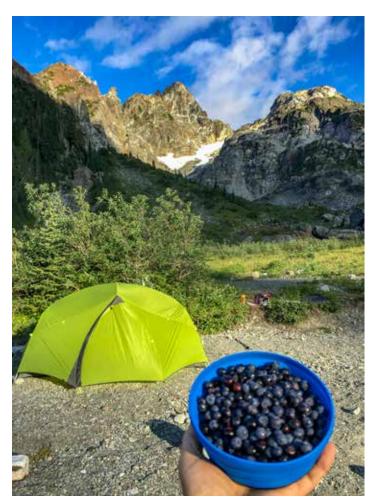
But summiting Septimus was unexpected after a failed attempt during a June trip with two friends to summit Big Interior, Nine Peaks, and Septimus consecutively: poor weather combined with a

gear mishap after successfully summiting the first two caused us to abandon Septimus. Since we had planned to climb via the X-Gully but weren't able to get back on it while the snow conditions were still good, I postponed it for a spring 2020 attempt.

But sometimes the unexpected and unplanned happens — sometimes for the better and sometimes the worse. In this instance, it was for the better. Fast forward a couple of months to a few days before the August long weekend. The weather forecast was looking good and I was hankering for a summit adventure but wasn't expecting to find anyone available, and I'm not prone to solo trips. So, I messaged one of my regular summit buddies, Quentin, on the off chance he was available. It turns out he was. My specific request was for Tom Taylor, which I hadn't climbed yet, but he replied, "How about Septimus?" I was like, "Uh... why didn't I think about that?!?" After all, the X-Gully isn't the only route up Septimus. I did some research and we decided to attempt route 2/2V on the west face, leaving late Sunday afternoon since we both work on Sundays.

But then something else unplanned and unexpected happened. This time the bad kind. I got a call early Saturday morning that my dad had passed away in Penticton. I had just been there the week before visiting my parents and other family. My dad's health had been very poor for many years and so we knew this day was coming — but the actual moment is still a shock. Lots of calls were made and correspondence sent to inform various relatives and friends of the news. But then there was nothing left to do for the time being, and I didn't feel like just sitting around. I wanted to go climb a mountain. I consulted with my siblings and wife and they all encouraged me to continue with my plans for Septimus.

Quentin and I left Nanaimo late Sunday afternoon, arriving at the Bedwell Lake trailhead with an hour of light remaining in the day. We hit the trail and fast-paced it, intending to camp at Baby Bedwell that night. We met some hikers on their way out, who informed us that Bedwell was closed due to a problem bear and that Baby Bedwell was overflowing. We found a rock bluff



Blueberries and Septimus: a perfect pre-summit alpine day. (Photo by Barry Hansen)

a little before Baby Bedwell that had been used as a staging area for trail work and so decided to pitch the tent there in the rapidly fading light. We awoke Monday to a gorgeous morning and after an uneventful bear incident close to our camp, we enjoyed a leisurely hike to Cream Lake, arriving late morning to set up camp and enjoy a beautiful late summer day swimming, picking blueberries, napping, eating, drinking tea, wandering around, soaking in the sun, and absorbing all the surrounding awesomeness. The day concluded with a beautiful display of alpenglow on Septimus and brilliant Milky Way nighttime sky.

We hit the trail at 6:00 a.m. Tuesday morning to good skies and were quickly on the Septimus glacier. We had decided not to bring axes or crampons based on beta from someone who had been on it the week before us. However, we regretted not having crampons because the upper half of the glacier was bare ice and frozen snow, which forced us to work our way up the rock bands on the right instead. After crossing

over the west shoulder and navigating the steep talus slope beyond it, we arrived at the base of route 2/2V. We noticed a lot of rope debris hanging off the infamous 'Standard Route' to the left. I'm glad I'd heard enough about its infamy not to attempt it. We quickly climbed 2/2V exactly as described in Island Alpine Select—pretty much sustained low 5th class in stages. We were both comfortable enough not to set up any pro on the ascent.

We arrived at the summit around 10:30 a.m. and hung out for a while taking photos, eating lunch, and signing the register. The sky changed quickly during this brief time from a mix of sun and cloud to rapidly building cloud.



Customary summit selfie with Mt. Rosseau in background. (Photo by Barry Hansen)

We quickly packed up and started heading down. In the few minutes it took us to get to the notch between Septimus and Rosseau, the west face was already shrouded in thick cloud. We had already planned to descend the same route but the weather solidified that plan. We were grateful for rap stations left by others (although the lower couple were a bit sketchy), but we wished we had a 70 m rope, instead of the 50 m we'd brought along. We rapped the first two sections with a little easy down-climbing in between. While setting up our third rap station. Quentin suddenly pushed me against the gully wall as a 30 cm diameter rock flew past, narrowly missing us and ricocheting off the wall 4 feet past us. I didn't hear it coming but he did and saw it. That got the adrenaline flowing! We waited a moment looking and listening for more rockfall. Nothing. Then



Rappelling off Septimus in the rain and thunder. (Photo by Barry Hansen)

came the thunderous boom, which I first thought was a massive rockfall but we quickly realized was, indeed, thunder. And then, of course, heavy rain. We donned our rain jackets and continued descending as quickly and safely as possible while the thunder and rain continued. By the time our feet landed back on the talus slope, the rain stopped. But the thunder continued until we were back down the glacier. And by the time we got to Cream Lake, Septimus was looking all happy and pretty again. We packed up and hiked out with intermittent cloud and sunshine, arriving at the Bedwell trailhead at dusk.

It was another great adventure in Strathcona Park. But the mountains reminded me once again that although we do our best to mitigate the risks, ultimately, we're not in control. However, for me, the rewards far outweigh the risks. Living, really living, is risky business.

Participants: Barry Hansen and Quentin Thomas

Call of the wild: Remote summits in the Pierce Range – Megin Peak and Talbot Peak

Lindsay Elms September 1 – 5, 2019

For three years in a row — always in September - Rod, Val and myself would visit remote locations on the southwest edge of Strathcona Park. We would go in for up to a week and climb all the immediate peaks in the area. It started with the Splendor/Hygro/Scissors area (2013), then the Scimitar/ Mitla/Sabretooth area (see IBWA 2014 p. 36-37) and then the Lone Wolf area (see IBWA 2015 p. 29-31). Bad weather in 2016 and then an unforeseen situation, which meant all three of us were unable to get into the area in 2017 or 2018. This year we hoped to get back to the area as there was still one cluster of peaks that were beckoning us along the Pierce Range south of Jacklah Mountain (see IBWA 2012 p. 45-48). The weather looked iffy for the end of August but gradually showed improvement into September. We made plans for the first week of September.

September 2

From our camp in a basin just off the saddle at the head of Jacklah Creek we headed south up the scree bowls towards our first objective - Megin Peak. There were no records of anyone climbing this peak or visiting the area; however, cavers had visited the karst formations around the saddle at the head of Jacklah Creek for many summers and scrambled over a karst summit three kilometres north of Megin Peak. Trevor (Mad Mapper) Moelaert, President of the BC Speleological Federation, was able to send me photos of the area we intended to climb, but other than that we were on our own. The lack of information on a remote climbing area is not an unusual situation



Megin Peak. (Photo by LIndsay Elms)

for me to be in. The less information the more intriguing the place becomes. Once around the base of the spur leading up to the north summit of Megin Peak we angled to the saddle between the two summits. To the west of the ridge lies the 27,390-hectare Megin-Talbot addition to Strathcona Provincial Park which contains the largest undisturbed watershed on Vancouver Island. Located in the northeast portion of Clayoquot Sound, the Megin-Talbot addition was identified for protection in the 1995 Clayoquot Sound Land-Use Decision. The addition is rarely exploited by people except when floatplanes drop-off fisherpersons and canoeists on Megin Lake. The canoeists often paddle down the Megin River into Clayoquot Sound and back to Tofino.



Summit Megan Peak. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)



Talbot Ridge. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

From the ridge, the route to the summit of Megin Peak (1460 m) looked a little complicated in places but overall relatively straight-forward; however, there were a few low fifth-class moves in a couple of places.

We spent an hour on the summit then began the traverse across to the slightly lower north peak (1420 m). We continued north along the ridge over more bumps and knobs to the big gully which would take us down to the saddle above camp. To the north we could see tomorrow's objective - Talbot Peak and the ridge leading to it. Although the final summit was still shrouded in cloud the ridge looked easier than today's ridge.

September 3

From camp we re-ascended to the saddle we had dropped down from to camp yesterday afternoon. There appeared to be four to five minor summits we had to traverse to reach our destination so it looked like it would be a longer day than yesterday. On the second bump we belayed one pitch and then not far down the other side we had to rappel a short section. The rest of the route was easy but slow as we zig-zagged between the low-lying stands of krumholtz. The whole time the final summit of Talbot Peak never revealed itself but we could tell that the final climb was going to be tricky. The rock looked broken and there didn't appear to be any obvious line. I am always the optimist. I kept saying let's just continue getting closer as something will present itself. This is what we did and low and behold a route miraculously appeared. From the end of the ridge a narrow line of trees only a few feet wide angled up. I've always said that mature



Talbot Peak summit. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

trees will only grow where the route is safe, safe from rockfall and avalanches. These trees weren't juveniles but had many years of sap flowing up and down their xylem and phloem. The undergrowth beneath these trees was open and really pleasant after some of the bush we had been negotiating along the ridge. Once through the trees we veered right up a short rock wall and then we scrambled under another wall to a small saddle between the two summits. We had squeaked through! The higher summit of Talbot Peak (1380 m) was now just ten minutes further north. After spending a few minutes on top, we decided we couldn't spend too much time lingering so we traversed back across to the slightly lower south peak (1360 m).

We used the GPS to ensure we found the exact route down (no flagging tape for us) and we all commented that we had found the perfect line for climbing the peak. It really was a fun little climb and a nice surprise. It just proves never to judge a climb from the distance. You have to literally



Talbot Peak. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)
ISLAND BUSHWHACKER ANNUAL - 2019



Karst Jacklah Mtn. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

rub your nose on it. The route back to camp was tedious but the nice thing was we finally got to see the summit of Talbot Peak from the ridge. Back in camp that evening we opened the wine we had carried in and toasted the two summits we had climbed over the last two days. Bliss!

September 4

We tried to climb the limestone peak three kilometres to the north of Megin Peak but we found the karst formations time consuming as there were unexpected sinkholes everywhere and we had to find routes around them. We ultimately turned around and went back to camp but we knew we would be back as there were several peaks to the east that piqued our interest. As I have always said there is no shortage of peaks to climb on Vancouver Island.

Participants: Rod Szasz, Val Wootton and Lindsay Elms.

Project VI 6000'ers

Ken Wong 1992 to August 4, 2019

Stop! Stop! A monstrous bulldozer appeared in the early morning mist. It sat at an angle across the narrow logging road, blocking the way to Sutton Peak, my last 'over 6000-foot' Vancouver Island mountain (VI 6000'ers). We were tired from the previous day's 12.5 hours climb up Mount Schoen. This unwelcome surprise zapped

our spirits. Go or no go? I checked the GPS and told the guys that we were just four km as the crow flies from the intended parking spot, which would only be one extra hour of walking on an easy logging road. I did not mention the zigzags and the 500 m elevation gain that was also needed to get there. By this point in the journey, I would say anything to reach my goal. Life is running out.

This story began one glorious early winter morning in 1992. Six of us slogged through deep snow to reach the elbow ramp of Mount Albert Edward, my first VI 6000'er. I was at the back following the right line of footprints. In front of me, a dark zigzag line silently appeared in the snow next to the footprints and snaked towards me, stopping about 20 m ahead. Then suddenly several loads of snow the size of a bus sank and disappeared. It was accompanied by a supersonic BOOM and a shimmering cloud of snow. A cornice had just broken off. I leaped to the left and after realizing what had happened, I laughed nervously. I would have been in that spot in another 30 seconds! I learned from this close call and added it to my list of do's and don'ts. We reached the top and the view from Albert Edward's summit was spectacular. Here we chatted about how we would get to the other distant peaks. I set my sight on the Golden Hinde, the highest mountain on Vancouver Island. My first attempt in 1993 during the Thanksgiving weekend was interrupted by a snow storm. My second attempt the following August was defeated by torrential downpours. My third try in 1996 with Jamie Duncan was successful! However, after six days on the snow with the intense June sun blazing, my face felt like it was on fire. I had not used sun-block as I believed that being oriental, I was naturally protected.

The next peak was Elkhorn, the second VI highest mountain. Jamie and I climbed it as a day trip in 1997 on our third try. The way down wasn't the best as I missed a turn. As well, my headlamp ran out of juice while I was crashing through devil's club so I had my first unplanned solo bivy. It was still the dark age, a time before GPS and LED headlamps. Later Gerhardt Lepp introduced me to the ACCVI after inviting me to complete



On Golden Hinde summit in 1996. (Photo by Jamie Duncan)

his last two Island Qualifiers (IQ), Septimus and Victoria Peak. Now Jamie and I were on the IQ quest. On Friday the 13th, 2007, we stood on top of Mount Colonel Foster, which was the last IQ for George Butcher and myself. It was an epic trip. We spent four nights on the summit block. After being away for five days, we were back at the Elk River trail head and found a Gold River RCMP note on the windshield saying they were looking for us. Our loved ones in Victoria were worried as we were two days overdue so they called the police! Jamie would finish his last IQ, Warden Peak, in 2008.

Now I needed a new project. Philip Stone's Island Alpine guide had a list of 42 VI peaks over 6000 feet. Forty-two was way too many, so I opted for completing the remaining 13 peaks that are above 2000 m. From the summit of Colonel Foster, we could see across the Elk River Valley to Rambler Peak. It became the first summit of our new project. A while later, I came across Lindsay Elms' website that had an expanded 6000'er list of 53 VI peaks. It contained a few more peaks that were over 2000 m. In 2014, George and I along with David Suttill, slogged up the Elk River Trail yet again to climb Rambler Junior. We crossed the Elk River Pass to bag the Behinde and the Comb peaks which finished our 2000 m project. As one project was completed, another one arose. I said to George "let's bag the remaining VI 6000'ers!" This meant that I had 24 more peaks left to do. We started with

Crown Mountain in 2015. The pace quickened after my retirement in 2016 as I could venture into the hills any day of the week! Thirteen peaks were summited in 2017 including Golden Hinde NW with Tak Ogasawara to finish his last VI 6000'er. Five more were bagged in 2018. I felt the toll on my spirit that was inflicted by the multiple high traverses off the east side of Buttle Lake: the 1000 m ascents just to get to the alpine, the horrendous bushwhacks, the smoky air from forest fires and the relentless assaults by blood sucking insects. It was a hard, tough chore. What lured me back for more torture was

the stunning alpine flora, the ice worms on the ever diminishing glaciers, the reflection of snowy peaks on pristine tarns, the pinks and purples of sunrises and sunsets, the immense milky way, the trails of shooting stars, the full moon rising from behind peaks and even the eerie but beautiful smoky yellow sky. The true wildness of the place touched me.

Year 2019. It's the year to finish up the project VI 6000'ers before I passed 60. David Suttill, Roxanne Stedman and I climbed Elkhorn South in June. In July, after an ACCVI club trip to Mount Thelwood and Mount Myra, David kindly guided me up the impossible vertical bushes to the summit of Matchlee. It was his second ascent of the peak so he knew the way. On our return trip, we had just got off the tricky rock face at the base before it started to rain. We had escaped another dangerously close call!

Tak Ogasawara, Graham Smith and Garrett White joined me for my last two peaks. On August 3rd, we climbed Schoen Peak via its 800 m high nearly vertical scree slope. On the return we chose to go down a different gully to avoid the nastiest top half of the scree before we contoured to the scree slope. The next morning, we drove south to Sutton Peak and encountered that aforementioned bulldozer blocking the road. That hiccup added an extra 13 km to the climb! In all, it took us 14 hrs to climb Sutton, followed by a hike back to the trucks in the dark.



On Sutton Peak summit in 2019, the end of the quest. (Photo by Graham Smith)

The Project was over. I became the fourth person to receive the Charles Turner Vancouver Island 6000'ers Award. A tremendous burden is off my shoulders. I've told my friends that I don't ever need to go north of the Sooke Hills again! But then I remember those gorgeous peaks with such fantastic names that I saw from the shoulder of Mount Burman: Splendour, Scimitar, and the Scissors. Hmmmm, I may be back for more!

George Butcher would complete his VI 6000'ers after climbing Golden Hinde NW at the end of August.

VI 6000'ers climbed in chronological order

Year: peak, (the order of peaks and *repeated peaks climbed in one trip).

1992: Mount Albert Edward. 1996: The Golden Hinde. 1997: Elkhorn Mountain. 1998: Mount Septimus, Victoria Peak. 1999: King's Peak. 2001: (Comox Glacier, Mount Harmston) (Big Interior Mountain, Nine Peaks), Mount Frink. 2003: (Rugged Mountain, Warden Peak). 2005: The Red Pillar. 2006: (*The Red Pillar, Argus Mountain). 2007: Mount Colonel Foster (my last Island Qualifier).

2008: Rambler Peak. 2009: (Mount McBride, Morrison Spire). 2010: Mount Filberg. 2011: (Mount Cobb, Mount Haig Brown). 2013: (Iceberg Peak, Mount Celeste). 2014: (Slocomb Peak, El Piveto Mountain, Rambler Junior), (*Rambler Junior, The Behinde, The Comb (my last over 2000 m peak).



Oh my precious!

2015: Crown Mountain. 2016: (*Mount Albert Edward, Mount Regan). 2017: Jutland Mountain, (Mount Adrian, Alexandra Peak), (Shepherds Ridge, Shepherds Horn), Golden Hinde NW, (*Mount Frink, Mount George V, Peak 1931, Peak 1909, Siokum Mountain), (Syd Watts Peak, Sid Williams Peak, Augerpoint Mountain). 2018: (*Jutland Mountain, Mount Mitchell, *Mount Adrian), (The Misthorns, Mount Rosseau, Margaret Peak, *Shepherds Horn, Tzela Mountain). 2019; (Elkhorn South, *Slocomb

Peak), Matchlee Mountain, (Mount Schoen, Sutton Peak (my last VI 6000'er).

Participants: Ken Wong and friends

A Journey to the Island Qualifiers

Laurence Philippsen 1982-2019

My love of the mountains began as a fourteenyear old in 1969. My uncle facilitated two hikes in the summer of that year. The first one involved a long trek through the forest to reach Mt Arrowsmith and the second was a hike up the Cruikshank Canyon to Mt Albert Edward. It was the long sweeping ridge to the peak of Albert Edward that got me completely hooked on this new activity. I just loved being above the trees with a view in every direction! Over the next dozen years. I climbed about ten different peaks in Strathcona Park and repeated some of them a few times. At this point I hadn't heard of the Island Qualifiers, which are a list of nine island peaks chosen by the ACC Vancouver Island section as Major Island Peaks.

1. Victoria Peak. It was in 1982 with two of my cousins, Ernie and Walter Klassen, that I set off to climb Victoria Peak. The only beta we had for route-finding was to drive up the White River logging road and perhaps one other spur off the White River mainline and then start hiking along the west side of a creek that flowed into the White River from the south. We were to follow the creek upstream until we crossed the fourth creek running into the stream we were following. This was where we were to go up until we got into the alpine. From this point we had no other information. The only gear we had were work boots, jeans, flannel shirts, a hat and a backpack. No rope or ice axe either. In those days the glacier on the south of the peak went a long way down so when we got out of the gully it was a matter of going up the glacier until we hit the two 5th class steps from the snow to the upper part of the mountain. After that it was a scramble to the peak. Our altimeter told us we had gained 6100 ft elevation from our vehicle, which we could see parked far below us. It was a full 11 hours to

complete the journey up and back.

- 2. Elkhorn Mountain. A year later Ernie Klassen and I set off to climb Elkhorn Mtn. We left late in the afternoon intending to find a flagged route across the Elk River that would take us between King's Peak and Elkhorn. We somehow missed the crossing and continued up the Elk River trail. By the time we realized that we had missed our crossing it was getting time to set up camp. We were about 6 km up the trail at this point. In the morning we decided the ERT wouldn't get us any further toward the Elkhorn so the decision was made to go straight up through the forest until we were out of the trees and could see something. We reached snow shortly after getting into the open and, not liking the look of the terrain above us, we circled the peak from the west until we reached the north ridge. After a bit of a scramble we reached the peak, enjoyed the amazing view of Landslide lake and Colonel Foster and then returned to our vehicle by the same route we took up.
- 3. Warden Peak. It wasn't until 1990 that Ernie Klassen, Randy Brouwer and I climbed Warden Peak. We drove up the White River main and crossed the river on a spur that took us to about 350 m of elevation, hiked a bit of logging slash and then straight up through the forest following a ridge on the north side of the mountain. We were able to follow the ridge right to the summit tower. By this time our families had insisted that we take a course in lead climbing and buy some gear to help decrease the risk factor in our hiking. I remember we were a little disappointed that we hadn't needed our rope on the ascent, so we set up an anchor and rappelled off the summit. My journal noted that the hike took 11 hours and was a grueling day.
- 4. Golden Hinde. Quite a few years went by before I climbed another Island Qualifier. During this time, I summited another two dozen peaks on the island, but none happened to be an IQ. My son, Aaron, and I set out in the summer of 2009 for the Golden Hinde.

Day one took us to the long ridge beside Burman lake. The next morning, we packed our gear to the climber's tarn below the Golden Hinde, set up camp, and waited out some showers with a



View to the Golden Hinde. (Photo by Laurence Philippsen)

nap. Around noon the weather started to clear so we made a quick side-trip to the Behinde and returned to camp. The third morning rewarded us with absolutely clear skies, so we headed for the peak and summited at 10 o'clock. The views were spectacular with morning fog slowly burning off in the valleys far below. We reluctantly left the peak and made our way to a camping spot on the ridge below Mt Burman where the trail makes its way down to Schjelderup Lake. The next day was a matter of a long slog with many stops to enjoy the view of the Golden Hinde from increasingly farther distances away.

5. Nine Peaks. The next year, in late July, my son Aaron, his friend Aaron Haazen and myself set out up the Bedwell trail. Once at Bedwell Lake we turned left and headed toward Little Jim Lake. Then we followed flagging toward Big Interior mountain. We hit snow as we descended into the cirque below Big Interior and then it was just a matter of a long trek up the snowfield to the summit. We set up camp just below the west side of the summit where there were some level spots in the snow. We left early the next morning. Angling across slopes of snow we went until we were below the summit and made a long trek up to the peak. Other than a handful of clouds to the north we had clear views in every direction.

Nine Peaks is one of those special places on the Island where you feel completely surrounded by peaks! After a quick side-trip to climb Marjores Load we packed up camp and spent the night at the Bedwell Lake camping area and returned home the next morning.



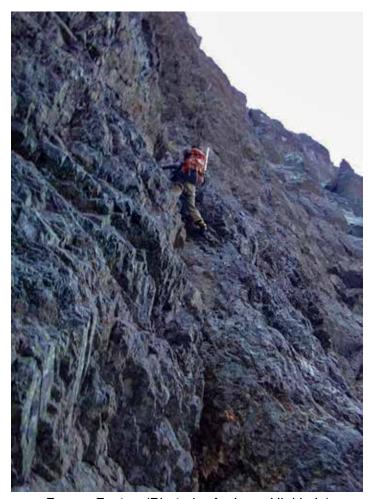
Going home from Nine Peaks. (Photo by Aaron Haazen)

6. Mt Septimus. In the middle of August, 2012, I returned to the Bedwell Trail and hiked close to Cream Lake with friends and set up camp. The next morning, I said goodbye to my companions and set off on my own to climb Mt Rosseau. I went up a gully that took me up to a col where I had the choice of climbing Mt Septimus or Mt Rosseau, I chose Mt Rosseau and arrived at the peak around noon. I intended to climb Mt Septimus on my way back, but it started to rain lightly, and the rocks became a bit slippery, so I returned to camp. The next morning, I could see the mountains again, so I returned to Cream Lake and headed for the X-gully. The climb soon turned into a race against fog rolling in from the valley below Cream Lake. Since I was alone, and nobody was below me I wasn't too concerned about dislodging rocks and made quick work of the gully. Crossing the glacier was a beautiful walk and then the ridge to the top was icing on the cake. Soon I was surrounded by peaks protruding from the fog-filled valleys in all directions. It was time to retrace footprints on the snow through thickening fog and return to camp and then the trailhead.

7. Rugged Mountain. In early June of 2015, my companion and I headed up N-20, a spur off the Nomash Main near Zeballos. It was nice to have the old road clear of brush thanks to a group of

volunteers organized by Lindsay Elms the year before. We got to the Nathan col, roped up to cross the glacier, and headed to the end of the E ridge to climb what Island Alpine calls the E alt route. At this point my partner said he was too tired to go on and stayed to rest for the return to our vehicle later in the afternoon. I carried on alone and after some exhilarating travel and a lot of extra care to avoid any missteps I got to the peak. The views in each direction were amazing, especially looking along the other peaks of the Haihte Range. By the time we got back down to our truck we were glad to take our boots off and head home.

8. Colonel Foster. This mountain was not ever a real priority for me as I had been up the southeast peak in 1988 and had thought the rest of the way to the main peak was maybe too hard to do. Then one day many years later in June of 2015, Andreas Hinkkala made a post on Facebook looking for a partner to do a traverse of all the peaks on Colonel Foster. We went out for a day together and climbed Mt Arrowsmith to

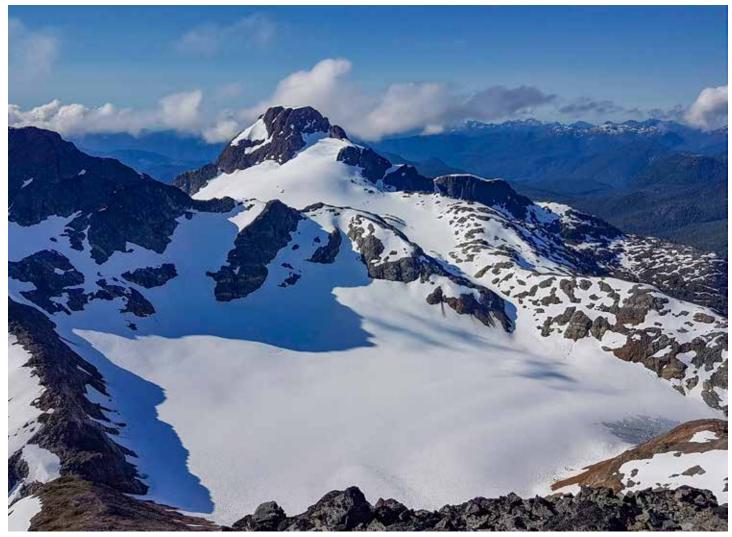


Fun on Foster. (Photo by Andreas Hinkkala)

make sure we would be compatible for Colonel Foster. Then a week or so later we headed up the Elk River trail and spent the night on the south col of Foster.

In a twelve-hour stretch we scrambled the SE peak and the SW peak with rappels down each one, crossed the upper glacier and made our way to the main summit. After enjoying the view, we carried on down to the next col and headed up to the NE peak. Since there was melting snow here, we spent the night on a very small flat spot enjoying a relaxed evening meal with lots of water! The next day we rappelled to the next col, climbed the NW peak and headed to the evacuation gully. Many rappels later we were at the bottom and were very surprised to find most of the snow that quite often causes difficulties had melted and we just walked off to the north shoulder of the mountain. Now it was just a matter of a bushwhack down to Foster Lake. walking around Landslide Lake and the tedious walk on the Elk River Trail. The last three hours by headlamp was something I don't want to ever do again. Getting to the vehicle around 1 a.m. was a huge relief to say the least.

9. Mount Harmston. If I remember correctly, I found out about the Island Qualifiers around 2015 so I never really prioritized my objectives around that list. Suddenly I found myself very close to achieving this goal without really having felt any pressure to accomplish it. I would have finished the list the next year except for a mishap that sidelined my mountaineering aspirations for about a year. I ended up with screws and rods along my spine holding things together until a spinal fusion healed up. For the next couple of years, I worked through small objectives that could be done in a day. I did one easy overnight trip and decided I could manage Mt. Harmston too. As many of you know, the hardest part about access to Mt. Harmston is logging road gates. Hot, dry summers and gate closures kept me out of the area until the summer of 2019. Just before the July long weekend, there was enough rain to reduce fire hazards in the area. I saw a post online about the gate opening and, without time to plan for a partner or to get a canoe, I drove to Oshinow Lake early Saturday morning. I walked around the lake, followed the trail over Peak 1712 and camped on the northwest shoulder of the



View back from the last IQ. (Photo by Laurence Philippsen)

Red Pillar. The next day was a gloriously sunny one and what a great walk over the Cliffe Glacier to the col below the peak! Once on top of the mountain it was fun to relax and think about all the previous climbs that had brought me to this point. I have met a lot of great people to go into the mountains with and look forward to climbing many more mountains in the future.

Participants: Laurence Philippsen and friends.



MAINLAND



Bonnington Range Ski Traverse

Catrin Brown 24 - 27 March 2019

It was winter 2019 and the section was on a bit of a learning curve with our new hut, dealing for the first time with bookings and maintenance. So it was a good time to deal with the Kootenay Mountaineering Club (KMC), who are years' ahead of us with experience in this game. KMC built three huts in the Bonnington Range, and developed a fourth, the Huckleberry hut from a former miner's cabin, back in the 1990s. They now jointly manage these facilities with the BC Forest Service, providing the volunteer help on an annual basis, while the Forest Service supplies the materials. Bookings and payments

are done online through the KMC website. We found it to be a great system and the huts well maintained – perhaps our new awareness of all that is involved made us extra appreciative of the ongoing volunteer effort. Kudos and thanks to you KMC.

The huts make up one of only a few hut-to-hut ski traverses in the interior of B.C. The 'Bonnington traverse' is a 45 km route traversing the Bonnington Range in a horseshoe between Highways 3 and 6, and can be done in 3 – 4 days comfortably. The Range is part of the Selkirk Mountains and runs roughly north-south, bounded by the Salmo, Kootenay and Columbia Rivers. We knew to expect lots of treed terrain, but also long stretches of open ridges and big bowls. And of course we hoped for the fabled Kootenay powder.

Well there's hope, and there's reality. A recent warming trend had brought an early end to much of the skiing around Nelson, and as we set off from the Bombi summit near Castelgar on the west of the traverse, we were relieved there was snow there at all. Powder it was not. The first day's route into Grassy Cabin was an easy 9 km steady climb up, mostly on an old logging road, before a short ski down to the cabin at 1900 m.

Setting off on Day 2 from the Grassy hut. Erich, Keith, Josh and Martin. (Photo by Catrin Brown)

As accurately described on the KMC website, the cabins are rustic and very small, which of course also means that they heat up quickly once the woodstove gets going. They claim to have space for six people – all I can say is it's a good thing our group included a couple, and that we were only five. We enjoyed a long evening working through the heaviest of our food supplies and once more failing to beat Martin at Bananagrams.

A small dusting of new snow greeted us the next morning as we headed down the north ridge of Grassy Mountain to the pass at the head of Granite Creek. Whoever said "If I had more time, I would have taken a short-cut" must have been watching us that day, as we added complexity to the trip. Eventually, we made our way over the top of Twin Peaks and steeply down to a logging road. With more ascents, treed descents and contours we came to the col on the south ridge of Siwash Mountain - the highest summit in the Bonnington Range at 2320 m. From the col it was a short but ugly ski down to the Steed Cabin. There are plenty of reports of people failing to find the small cabins in the trees, even when very close in high snow conditions. But with our diminished snow pack we had little difficulty in finding our next base just before night fall. Amazing how a dry roof and roaring fire can

quickly transform an atmosphere from damp and dreary to cosy and convivial.

On Day 3 we set out in a northerly trending ascent on the eastern flank of Siwash Mountain, descending to cross the headwaters of Erie Creek in soggy white-out. This was a shorter day's touring to Copper Hut, another traditional log cabin seemingly built for hobbits and well stocked with firewood. Overnight the weather at last decided to deliver a heavy snowfall - heavy in both senses of the word.

The final day of the traverse is apparently the crux or the highlight (are those two always the same?), as it crosses a high ridge for five kilometres over a series of peaks with imperial sounding names like

Empire, Colony and Territory. It includes a knife edge traverse and two sections of bootpacking. Now as we all know, conditions are everything. And our new snow pack and the novelty of blue skies presented us with a dilemma - at last we had good route-finding and skiing conditions but now heightened avalanche danger. Do we go on or take the escape route to the north? A strong wind blew up while we were on the first bump of the ridge, which did little to bolster confidence, well mine anyway. It was hard to turn around, but I am grateful to the team for the careful and respectful decision making. And at least we were rewarded on our retreat with some fine skiing under Copper Mountain towards Snow Water Creek. Keith had cleverly noted the coordinates of a sledder's cabin and even more cleverly navigated us directly there. Our Plan B to spend the night and ski out to the Kootenay River the next day unravelled when we learned from a passing sledder that the road was plowed and un-skiable; yikes that would be a very long walk. So plan C emerged by which Erich and I left with said sledder, and later (helped by a lovely example of 'the kindness of strangers') retrieved our vehicles in Nelson. The following day Erich was able to drive Josh's car to meet the others at the end of the road. And so ends another fine trip with these fun and competent friends.

The Bonnington traverse is a well-recommended

ski touring adventure. Completing the ridges on the last day would have taken us down to Barrett Lake and the Huckleberry Hut before exiting to the east. In good conditions the trip would lend itself to extended stays in any of the huts for further exploration. There is no marked route; navigation skills and GPS coordinates of the huts are strongly recommended. There is a lot more information on the KMC website.

Participants: Keith Battersby, Catrin Brown, Martin Hofmann, Erich Schellhammer, Josh Slatkoff

Introduction to Ski Based Mountaineering

Natasha Salway April 17-22, 2019

Back in April, a group from the ACC-Vancouver Island section participated in a Chilko Basecamp ski mountaineering course in the mountains near Pemberton. In our group, we had four members of the ACC-VI executive, two more members from our section, one person from Vancouver and one

from Mackenzie, plus our two guides. We flew in on the Wednesday from Blackcomb Helicopters and set up basecamp close to Mount Currie.

Once we had established our home for the next five days, we headed out for a short tour to start practicing winter navigation and route finding. We also took some time to make some observations on the snow pack stability in that particular area. That night we got to enjoy preparing our evening meal and making plans for the next day in the comfort of two dome Hilleberg tents.

The next two days, we unfortunately had poor weather and visibility so we stayed at camp and worked on technical skills that could be



The path not taken. Series of ridges on the east side of the traverse. (Photo by Catrin Brown)



Our basecamp: note the multiple loose wet point release avalanches On Saturday, April 20th, the day in the background. (Photo by Natasha Salway)

practiced in the tents. We went over more winter navigation and traveling in a whiteout, using map

Looking back up at the run down the North Glacier before we started our ascent back up. (Photo by Natasha Salway)

and compass, rescue systems, knots and the various pieces of gear that our guides use on a day to day basis in the backcountry. We did manage to get out of camp for a short half day on Friday. We practiced skiing roped for glacier travel and dealing with switchbacks in that situation. We did a little boot packing in a whiteout and then skiing down while roped up again. It was definitely as challenging and, somewhat hilarious as it sounds, especially for the splitboarders who were forced to descend in "ski mode".

dawned beautiful and clear. We were able to head out in the morning

for a full day of touring the slopes around Mount Currie. We had a bit of time to discuss cornices and finding safe ways of approaching the edge with the safety of a belay. After that, we had an amazing run all the way down the North Glacier of Mount Currie, and a very technical and challenging ascent back up in complex avalanche terrain. We then did a short boot pack along a ridge to give ourselves a longer descent back to basecamp.



The view of Mount Currie, showing the overhead hazards we needed to be aware of while we were touring back up. (Photo by Natasha Salway)

Sunday, we left camp in the morning, heading for the summit of Mount Currie. The snow was quite a bit harder this day, so we were able to practice more technical touring with our ski crampons. Pretty soon, though, boot packing was needed as the steepness of the slope got more demanding.



The view from the col. We took a good rest here before we boot packed up the ridge to our left. (Photo by Natasha Salway)

We gained the summit ridge and then it was just a short tour all the way up to the summit itself.



Mt Currie summit group: L to R Clarke Gourlay, Martin Hofmann, Colin Mann, Natasha Salway, Josh Slatkoff, and Chris Platt in front. (Photo by Sam McKoy of Chilko Basecamps)

We decided to split the group at this point and half of us went back to camp, while the other group took one more run down the North West face of Currie, before heading back to camp. After we returned, we broke down camp and prepared to fly out that evening. The weather was changing again and there was concern that we might not be able to fly on Monday or Tuesday if we stayed longer. We did a bit of practice with snow anchors and padding the edge of a crevasse before the Helicopter arrived.

The following day we all met up near Squamish to go through setting up full rescue systems, and techniques for ascending a rope. Overall this was a very informative course that Chilko Basecamps put together in an absolutely stunning location. I would highly recommend it to anyone who is looking to further advance their technical skills in winter mountaineering.

To learn more about trips that Chilko Basecamps have to offer or get in touch for custom trip ideas, visit their website https://chilko.ca/

Participants: Chris Platt, Clarke Gourlay, Martin Hofmann, Colin Mann, Natasha Salway, Josh Slatkoff.

Mount Athabaska

Andrew Pape-Salmon June 24, 2019

Mountaineering on glaciers is one of my favourite activities due to the duality of their tranquility and power. In fact, I am obsessed with glaciers. They are an integral symbol of nature yet are hostile environments with little life due to permanent (but melting) ice and natural hazards such as crevasses, seracs and rock falls, blizzards and avalanches. Paradoxically, they are the origin of much terrestrial and watershed life, as they fuel our great rivers and nourish lands, flora and fauna.

For example, the Columbia Icefield near Jasper is the source of four major river systems of western Canada: (1) the Fraser (to the Pacific Ocean); (2) Columbia (ditto); (3) the Athabasca (to Great Slave Lake, the Mackenzie River and Arctic Ocean), and (4) the North Saskatchewan (to Lake Winnipeg, the Nelson River and Hudson's Bay). The Icefield is the starting water source for many large cities, our "breadbasket" of the Canadian prairies, most of our hydro power plants, and in historic times our transportation

corridors. Glaciers and their rivers and lakes provide for water recreation, aesthetic beauty, spiritual nourishment, and a "cool" escape when the climate is hot.

My 2019 adventures included glaciers leading up Mount Athabasca in late June, and then the Easton and Deming Glaciers leading up Mount Baker in late July (see next story).

Mount Athabasca (3,491 m) and its various glaciers are the most visible in the Columbia Icefields from the Jasper-Lake Louise Highway, likely the most viewed glacier in Canada.

Given the complexity of the terrain, we decided to hire a professional guide from Yamnuska Mountain Adventures, the company that hosted the three-month Mountain Skills Semester that I attended in 2009. Reading the slopes for avalanche and rock-fall hazards in the Rockies requires intimate and local knowledge that these guides attain. My mountaineering partner Shawn Hedges and I decided to tackle the most complex route – the North Face. The first ascent of this route in August 1970 was by Yvon Chouinard, P. Carman and F. Pelenier.

Weather is everything for success on glaciers and summiting tall peaks and it was definitely working against us with fresh snow and large avalanches the week before our trip in late June, visible from the webcam on the Banff-Jasper Highway the Thursday beforehand. Our quide, Takeshi Tani, was a genius in devising a safe route within our available timeframe and suggested the "North Face Bypass" route that avoided a pile-up of snow along the summit ridge on the top of the normal north face route that could have catastrophically failed during our climb, bring rocks and debris with it, along with sketchy footing on reaching the ridge. The conditions the evening before were clear and confidence-inspiring, but on the morning of the climb we had visibility challenges, hence no mountain landscape photo in my article (but you



On the Little Athabasca Glacier. (Photo by Andrew Pape-Salmon)

can google for thousands of images from the Columbia Icefields Discovery Centre).

We decided to proceed and assess the conditions below the Silverhorn secondary summit before crossing the glacier underneath the main summit. We began walking at 3 a.m. and up the moraine to the south of the road where Brewster's "Ice Explorer" vehicles move hundreds of people to experience the main glacier every day. On arrival at the decision point, we had enough visibility to confirm the plan and we proceeded to cross the Little Athabasca Glacier to the Bergschrund.

We made rapid progress climbing some steep 45 degree snow and along the ridge to reach a narrow ledge visible in the previous photo with a little snow dusting about one-third of the way up the summit block. Takeshi laid out protection along the ledge with a variety of equipment, but risk levels were low (despite very high consequences) and I didn't suffer any vertigo



On the rock band of summit block. (Photo by Takeshi Tani)

The highlight for me was being back on ice, in this case a "Scottish Ice Gulley" visible in the first photo as a notch, leading all the way to the summit ridge. This mixed climbing was tantalizing and superb!

Seven hours after our start we reached the summit ridge and walked along a 1-2 m wide ridge to the summit, fortunately without much wind. Our guide commented on our fitness and



On the 'Scottish Ice Gulley' with no fear. (Photo by Takeshi Tani)



On the 11,453' summit of Mount Athabasca. (Photo by Andrew Pape-Salmon)

technical skills that enabled us to summit within the limited weather window.

We walked to the Silverhorn and down the AA col route in the snow and down the AA glacier witnessing recent evidence of massive slab avalanches (likely from the fresh snow the previous week).

The trip truly pushed my comfort limits, something I am able to do with a guide.

Trip Participants; Andrew Pape-Salmon, Sean Hedges and Takeshi Tani (Yamnuska Mountain Adventures guide)

Meditation Mountain – Summer Camp 2019 Week 1 – A Week without a Peek from the Peaks?

Scott Collins July 14-21, 2019

Summer camp 2019 was a new experience for me. It was the first time I had asked to be in the Week 1 camp, and I learned a lot about

the importance of organization and experience when it comes to the many tasks that have to be accomplished in a short period of time. Fortunately, things went off more or less without a hitch – except for what I will refer to as the biffy door incident – to wit we had spectacular views from the top of Biffy Hill but so did everyone else who approached!

The one major regret I have is that I did not better document my stay there. I left my cell phone (aka camera) in Jim's truck and failed to keep a daily record of events, limiting myself to just two entries into the log book and a total of 14 lines of prose covering one ascent (Lindisfarne) and the other (the last day) a rest day for the old knees. Fortunately, others were more expansive, and so I am largely relying on their more detailed accounts in what follows.

Day 1 saw the first ascent, and after dinner at that. Ken Wong, Graham Smith, Garrett White and Martin Hoffman sauntered up nearby Contemplation Pk. in two hours return. Unfortunately, and this was to be the pattern for much of the week, they were engulfed in cloud at the top and with no views! Now, I am not 100% sure I went up this peak (see below) – but in any event, if I did, I cannot recall any views either!

The next day (Monday) we all headed over towards Priory Peak in two groups. The first



Camp 1 group photo. (Photo by Ken Wong)

group, consisting of Ken, Garrett, Graham and Josh went up the steepest slope they could find above camp to access the ridge west of camp and made their way - eventually - to the pass between Bella Vista Ridge and Priory Peak via a boulder-filled bench below the ridge. The other, larger, group took a somewhat less steep slope and tried to end run the ridge in question to the saddle between Contemplation and Bella Vista; in the end there was no end-running to be had, though this author preferred the shorter, to the longer steep slope – especially coming down! We gained the Bella Vista ridge directly from the col – most opting for a steep, direct heather pitch, while always the contrarian, your's truly found a nice, lower angle, rock strewn ramp and gully system at climber's right. It was even better on descent!

Bella Vista ridge featured expansive views of the whole area, and in hindsight was the highlight of the week for this author – in that one had a view from the top! Though our group did consider climbing down off the ridge towards Priory in the end we topped out on Bella Vista SW summit having by-passed entirely the slightly higher NE one! However, in climbing the SW summit, we did discover a lower angle (and snow) slope off the ridge to the col between Bella Vista and Priory, which was used by Josh and Graham (and everyone else) on their return to camp.

Meanwhile Ken and Garrett climbed Priory Pk. E (3rd-4th class) and approached the slightly higher W peak but lacking a rope they backed off the 5th class, exposed and loose climbing required to gain the summit. To my knowledge this summit repelled all attempts that summer. They then retraced their steps and set off for distant Meadow Dome (it was still Monday by the way) returning to camp by 6:30 p.m. via Bella Vista Ridge.

The next day saw two groups summit Lindisfarne via the bench and long S ridge immediately E of camp. The only technical move came just below the summit proper where a short, class 3 jamb crack had to be climbed. The summit itself (as opposed to the ridge) was not exactly roomy and your author only "touched" it before retreating. One group (the A group) continued on down the SE ridge towards Aurora but were



Snow, fog, whatever, during the week. (Photo by Martin Hofmann)

turned back by steep ice off the glacier above the col between the two peaks. The B group having summited quite a bit later, turned tail, and with some difficulty, returned via our ascent route; fortunately since visibility was rather limited (again) our fearless leader (Erich) had a GPS track of the entire route.



Descent down gully. (Photo by Martin Hofmann)



Five guys after climbing Reflection and Introspection (Photo by Ken Wong)

Now comes the big gap. The author's memory is silent and so is the logbook as to what exactly happened between Tuesday and Friday of Week 1. The next entries are dated Friday and Saturday (i.e. the last day). I do recall that we had all sorts of summery weather including snow at one point at camp.

I suspect Wednesday (or at least one day) was so relentlessly wet that everyone stayed home. We managed to summit Reflection as well as a smaller bump to the NW (dubbed Introspection) at some point. Much bouldering and boulder hopping involved; yours truly (with the wobbly knees) did not participate.

Anyhow, Meditation was climbed on Friday by most, starting from the col between Reflection and Meditation. A very pleasant romp with what must be an exposed, airy finish involving an eroded N face cornice to reach the summit (Jim – please stay away from the edge!). Friday was also a big day for Ken and Garrett who end ran the S ridge on Lindisfarne via the bench, dropped into the next valley and made their way up to Cherry Pit Pass – where they encountered welltrodden trail exiting the Stein valley traverse. They quickly knocked off both Tabletop Mtn. and Anemone

Peak before returning via the same route. Another long day!

The final day with dramatically improving weather featured a return to Priory, this time armed with kit but, alas, the final passage proved just too airy and elusive. Ken and Garrett managed to bag Meditation on their way back – having climbed every single peak in the area with the exception of Tundra and Aurora. Colleen and Erich put up three routes on the cliff below camp (below the refrigerator) while yours truly did both a lower and upper valley circuit making note of the sheer number and variety of wildflowers. Alas, I cannot



Tabletop Peak, Anemone and Garrett. (Photo by Ken Wong)



Flower meadow south of camp. (Photo by Ken Wong)

tell the difference between cinquefoil and a buttercup so of little help to those who followed.

In summary, during our wet and wild week, we managed to summit every peak that surrounded our camp, with some farther afield, by their easiest routes. The camp itself was very roomy and in contrast to later weeks we had not too much trouble with bugs nor varmints and a nearby snow patch lasted most of the week for refrigeration. The selection of the site (a big S facing bowl that Russ Moir described as blazingly hot) was not without controversy, it being the last amongst those surveyed by helicopter to be selected – at least the pilot liked it.

Trip Participants: Erich Schellhammer (Manager) Catrin Brown, Jim Raper, Colleen Kasting, Mike Hubbard, Albert van Citters, Ian and Margaret Brown, Ken Wong, Josh Slatkoff, Martin Hoffmann, Alcina de Oliveira, Graham Smith, and Garrett White. Scott Collins, camp chair voyeur and author.

Mount Baker Easton Glacier

Andrew Pape-Salmon July 28, 2019

I co-organized a Mount Baker ascent as an ACC-VI trip with Brett Carter from my running club and three rope teams of four people. This was my fifth time to the summit of Mount Baker (elevation 3,286 m), the giant beauty that we look at every clear day in Victoria. As many readers know, it has massive prominence next to the Strait of Georgia and Puget Sound, a common feature of volcanoes.

This was my first trip up the Easton Glacier from the south with a rewarding glacier experience, yet this was a longer and potentially more technical route than the typical route for Canadians up the Coleman and Deming glaciers. The route from the north was closed due to an unstable serac at the top of the Coleman glacier with associated avalanches.

The Easton route includes a long hike along the "Railgrade Trail", the name of which is a misnomer, as the railroad ran to the town of Glacier on the other side of the mountain.

We camped at the highest point just below the open glacier, but ended up waiting out a day of rain and cloudy weather to do "Snow and Glacier School" such as "walk like John Wayne" on crampons, ice axe "self-arrest" on steep snow slopes (head-first and foot-first, on back and on chest), walking in rope teams, and "crevasse rescue".

On Sunday, July 28, we made the summit by 7:30 a.m. after a 2:20 a.m. departure from our camp. Why



Mountain scenery on a clearer day. (Photo by Martin Hoffmann)

Railgrade Trail" along Easton Glacier. (Photo by Andrew Pape-Salmon)

go so early? Many reasons - (1) frozen snow bridges over crevasses that would fail if thawed; (2) less rock fall; (3) smaller avalanche risk due to melt; (4) less chance of overheating on a major climb; and (5) the beauty of watching the sunrise from the top of a mountain. It was fortuitous we left so early and camped so high, as that day



Sherman Crater. (Photo by Andrew Pape-Salmon)

there were easily over 100 people summiting and we were near the front.

Near the top of the glacier we crossed two sketchy snow bridges over large crevasses that frankly were likely to fail in the coming days. As the morning progressed teams moved off one of those bridges to cross farther west, the route we took on our descent.

One cool thing about Baker is that it is an active volcano - the Sherman Crater is steaming away and leaves a sulfur smell and lots of pumice build up around it. We summited five hours after our start in brilliant sun and clear blue sky.

Although gravity is on your side heading down, the temperature is rising and any "hot spots" on



Mount Baker Summit: 10,781ft. (Photo by Andrew Pape-Salmon)



Denning Glacier. (Photo by Andrew Pape-Salmon)

your feet turn to real blisters. Also, the fatigue sets in with such a long day, including time at elevation. I suffer from a mild cerebral edema (altitude sickness), a lightheaded feeling, while others feel it in their lungs. This last photo is taken in the general direction toward Victoria, BC.

I feel so privileged to have experienced several glaciers in 2019 and two brilliant peaks above 10,000 ft elevation, the views from which are sublime, the journeys offering unparalleled physical experiences, and the environment that provide tranquility and spiritual uplifting.

Participants: Andrew Pape-Salmon and Brett Carter (trip leaders), Magdalena Bazalova-Carter, Ryan Bartlett, Walter Cantwell, Jacob Brunning, Tara Cadeau, Chris Demetrioff, David Eirikson, Brett MacDonald, Zoe Minnaard, Jim Swan, Scott Sheldrake, Tim Watson.



We didn't hike any higher as we had not secured a permit to camp in the National Park. Lake Ann is in the National Forest, so no permits for camping are required there.

In retrospect, I wish we had secured a backcountry camping permit and spent the night farther up the mountain. (You will see why by the

Mt Shuksan via Fisher Chimneys

Jes Scott August 2-5, 2019

The traditional name of Mount Shuksan in the Nooksack language is Shégsan ("high foot") or Ch'ésgen ("golden eagle"). Climbing this mountain can be a significant challenge, especially taking the route that we did. We got up early, picked up our parking permits at the ranger station in Glacier and hiked for two hours to Lake Ann.

The trail to Lake Ann was so thoughtfully made. It slowly wound its way up the mountain, making sure we had every chance to take in stunning views of Mt. Baker. Naturally the lake was full of folks camping for the weekend. The rangers had warned us "all the spots would be taken." But we had no problem finding a spot on a durable surface despite the fantastic weather.



Kara climbing Fisher Chimneys. (Photo by Erica Ellefsen)

end of this trip report.) We had heard the glacier cracking, groaning and spitting rocks down all afternoon the day before. So we felt quite inspired for an alpine start. Up at 3:00 a.m. and moving by 4:00. We got the first hour or so hiking done in the dark.

We started climbing just as the sun started to peak over the horizon. We all paused to

soak in the stunning sunrise, not knowing that later that day we'd unfortunately be taking in the sunset at the very same spot. Fisher Chimneys is a mix of fourth class climbing and exposed ridge walking. We all climbed without ropes. I think it would be hard to protect with gear, but someone could have scrambled up and belayed from the top if they had wanted to. After an hour of hiking and two hours of scrambling, we arrived on the glacier.

The first challenge was Winnie's slide, which is usually a very steep wall of snow. Or this year, mostly

ice. Luckily, previous climbers had found a path along the rock that was soft enough to kick steps. And up we went. Some folks consider Winnie's slide to be the crux. I was much more worried about the part around the corner. When I was here seven years ago, it was steep ice.



Jes Above Winnie's Slide. (Photo by Erica Ellefsen)

This was the part of the route that was keeping me up at night. I don't have that much experience on ice, but, luckily, it was covered in crunchy snow.

The next part was a long march across the glacier to Hell's Highway. From a distance, Hell's Highway looks like an insurmountably steep wall. Having been here before, I knew it would



Sulfide Glacier. (Photo by Erica Ellefsen)

appear gentler as we approached. Now for the rather tedious slog up the Sulphide Glacier. It was so hot, so long and rather boring. My mind wandered. My vision was getting blurry. I started wondering if I was dehydrated. Then I realized it was just sunscreen melting into my eyes.

As we got closer to the summit pyramid, I counted more than 20 people waiting to pass through a bottleneck on the standard route. I felt a bit of longing for the empty mountains on Vancouver Island.

To try to save time, I convinced folks to check out the more difficult climbing route instead. After poking around, we decided this route was not in the cards for us that day. We headed back to the standard route. The climbing up the standard route was easier than Fisher Chimneys but scarier. There was quite a lot of loose rock. I was worried about hurting someone below me or having

a hold break off. And then we arrived at the summit. We were officially halfway through with our adventure.

It was time to get down that slushy afternoon snow as quickly and safely as possible. First, we had to do a million rappels. My biggest mistake



Shuksan summit (Photo by Erica Ellefsen)

on this trip was bringing only one rope for a party of five. On the glacier, it made sense for us to travel on one rope. But rappelling with one rope was about to eat up the rest of our day. After arriving at the snow, we zipped down the glacier as fast as we could. But it was a quite a long way to go. At this point, we'd been on the



Rappelling off the summit of Shuksan (Photo by Erica Ellefsen)

go for over 12 hours. I was getting tired. Not really my legs, but my brain. I had been at the front of the rope team, coaching people through tricky climbing and just making all sorts of high consequence decisions since 4:00 a.m. Dead end. I made a wrong turn coming down the glacier. Tired.

Getting down Winnie's Slide is the first time I felt concerned about the conditions. As I approached the down climb, I felt my stomach drop into my knees. The snowy edge we had come up was crumbling in the heat of the day. It was a long way down to the rock below if the snow broke off below our feet. Most of us decided to rappel. Most of us were belayed from the rappel station. This was rather good decision making. We felt relieved to get back to familiar rock climbing and rappelling in Fisher Chimneys.

The relief was short lived as the sun started to set. Lake Ann and our tents now visible, but so far away. It eventually became too dark for us to down climb, so we continued with hours of rappels. With one rope. In the dark.

Now we should have never put ourselves in this situation. It was entirely avoidable by making different decisions earlier in the trip. But considering we now had to get through this, I was so happy with how we handled it. Everyone kept a positive attitude. No complaining. Every rappel

was quickly checked by a buddy to keep us safe.

We rolled into camp 20 hours after we started. The next day, Ryan, Chris and Kara headed out early to beat the heat. Erica and I left a little bit later. And we marveled at what we climbed the day before.

Participants: Kara Aschenbrenner and Jes Scott (leaders), Erica Ellefsen, Chris Vanderfourd and Ryan Bartlett.



A view of Shuksan and Baker at sunset. (Photo by Erica Ellefsen)



The Glass House Mountains

Lindsay Elms February 25, 2019

Seventy km north of Brisbane on the southeast coast of Queensland are the iconic Glass House Mountains: a group of eleven trachyte plugs that rise dramatically from the surrounding landscape. They are remnants of volcanic activity that occurred 26 - 27 million years ago. The 11 Glass House Mountains are: Mount Beerwah (556 m), Mount Coonowrin or Crookneck (377 m), Mount Tibrogargan (364 m), Mount Tunbubudla or the Twins (312m and 293 m), Mount Beerburrum (278 m), Mount Ngungun (253 m), Mount Coochin (235 m), Mount Tibberoowuccum (220 m), Mount Miketeebumulgrai (199 m), Mount Elimbah or The Saddleback (129 m) and Wild Horse Mountain (123 m).

The Glass House Mountains and surrounding plains are the ancestral home of the Jinibara people and Kabi Kabi people. According to Jinibara peoples' lore and custom, Beerwah is the ancestral pregnant mother and Tibrogargan is the father with his faithful dingo, Ngungun. Around the parents are their children – Coonowrin the eldest, Beerburrum, Coochin, Elimbah, Tibberoowuccum, Miketeebumulgrai, Tunbubudla the twins and the youngest know today as Wild Horse.

With a violent storm approaching Tibrogargan, the father, commanded his eldest son Coonowrin to help his pregnant mother Beerwah and siblings move to safety. Being scared of the storm Coonowrin instead fled. Infuriated by his son's cowardliness, Tibrogargan pursued him and struck him with his nulla nulla (a hardwood club) on the back of his head resulting in Coonowrin's



Mount Beerwah (background) and Mount Coonowrin from the summit of Mount Ngungun. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

crooked neck. Once the danger passed Coonowrin felt tremendous guilt for his actions and asked his father, brothers and sisters for forgiveness but they all wept with shame. This is said to explain the many small streams that flow through the area. Tibrogargan turned his back on Coonowrin and gazed out to sea refusing to look at his son who continues to hang his head in shame.

To the Jinibara people there is nothing more important than a mother giving birth and the people are taught to respect and protect Mount Beerwah, a deeply spiritual place. Their lore and custom teach them not to climb this mountain out of respect for its great sacredness.



Mount Tibrogargan and the obvious trail to the summit. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

The first European to see these mountains was Captain James Cook in 1770 when he was sailing down the coast of Australia. He gave them the name Glass House Mountains as the peaks reminded him of the glass furnaces in his home county of Yorkshire in England. All the mountains were first climbed in the 1800's but the most challenging peak is Mount Coonowrin. Climbing has been banned on Mount Coonowrin since 1999 as the terrain was deemed too dangerous: however, one interesting early ascent of Mount Coonowrin happened on Empire Day, 1912, when a party of three sisters (Jenny, Sara and Etty Clark) made the first female ascent with their male companions. They began their attempt at dawn by cycling from Brisbane, climbed a new route today know as Clark's Gully, and then cycled back the 70 km to Brisbane arriving at 10 p.m.—what might be called a 'green' ascent.

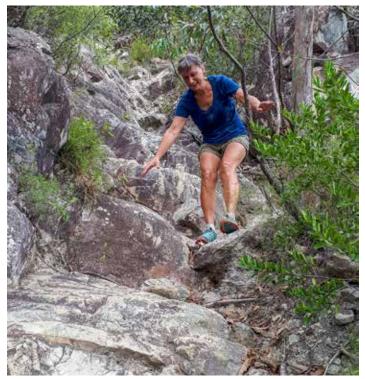
Today most of the mountains have trails to their summits with the most popular being Mount Ngungun. Mount Ngungun is the sixth tallest of the Glass House Mountains and has a well-maintained hiking trail to the summit that affords great views. The trail from the carpark is not as steep as the higher mountains and is recommended for beginners so we undertook the hike to get our first glimpse around the countryside. The third highest mountain, Mount Tibrogargan, has a trail that circumnavigates the mountain but there is a steep climber's route to the summit. Early afternoon we decided to climb the peak (we'd just challenged ourselves on Mount Ngungun) and for Val to take the next step on her path back into the mountains after her accident. Having recently hiked a few trails



Mount Beerwah (left) and Mount Coonowrin (right) from the summit of Mount Tibrogargan. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

in some of Queensland's National Parks, and before heading off to the Great Barrier Reef for some snorkeling, I thought she was ready to attempt a rock route albeit a 4th/low 5th class route. After hiking in 800 m from the carpark we found the sign pointing towards the climbing route. It said the route was for experienced climbers only and was subject to rockfall and was slippery after rain. Although we had experienced a few scuds (local slang for sun-showers) in the morning, we had not received any moisture in the last four hours. The rock looked warm and dry.

We scrambled up the trail to the bottom of the first pitch – a 20 m section of 5.4 rock with lots of good hand and foot holds. The route then followed what looked like a water course, which in places is, but in many places the topsoil has just been eroded off by climbers. In several places on either side of the route were signs indicating to stay away from the steep drop-offs. We continued scrambling up the 4th class rock with a few low 5th moves. Occasionally Val felt like her leg was giving out but she made sure she had good points of contact and after about forty-five minutes we scrambled onto the summit. It was too bad that it was a little hazy as the view was stunning.



Val descending the trail on Mount Tibrogargan. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

As with any climb, it is the descent where one needs to be especially cautious. Again, making sure she had good points of contact Val slowly scrambled down the route taking joy in being back in touch with the rock and on another mountain, albeit not a very tall one.

On the final 20 m section I found an alternate descent route (still 5th class) but on nice warm rock. Two and a half hours after starting we were back at the car ready to drive into Brisbane. Although there are no big mountains like what we are used too on Vancouver Island, it was fun scrambling around on the picturesque Glass House Mountains.

Participants: Val Wootton, Lindsay Elms

Spring in Japan

Tak Ogasawara April-May, 2019

During the spring of 2019, I was in Japan for three months and subsequently made four memorable trips to the mountains.

Kumano Kodou (April 15-18). A spiritual pilgrimage trail to Kumano Hongu Shrine on the Kii Peninsula. In 2016, this ancient trail was designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. There are three trails toward the Kumano Hongu Shrine, the first one being mountainous, the second runs along the seaside and last is between these two trails. Written history says that the trails were established almost 1000 years ago and since then have been walked by nobility and commoners. We chose the mountainous trail, called Kohechi, which is the longest of the three trails. This trail starts from the Mt.Kouya Temple in Nara Prefecture, then goes through Wakayama Prefecture, and finishes at Kumano Hongu in Mie Prefecture after a distance of 70 km. This mountainous trail consists of several 1000 m high passes and winds through numerous old villages. I have wanted to walk this trail every

time I returned to Japan, but never had a chance to do so and this time I was lucky to walk with an old friend.

After spending a night at the friend's house, we left for Mt. Kouya early in the morning and arrived there at 10:00 a.m. Before heading up the trail we visited the Kongoubuji Temple and prayed for a safe journey. We went through Kouya Town and soon after we were at the trail head. The trail went up gently and at the pass we were high enough to see mountains all around. From there we walked a wide, level trail for a short distance, then we continued downward to a small village, then up again through several abandoned houses to arrive at the Ryujin Highway. We walked on the highway for a bit, then back to the trail toward the first 1000 m pass, the Mizugamine Pass, then down to the Oumata village for the night. We crossed Oumata Bridge and the trail went up quite steeply to the Mt.Obako summit. We arrived at a very wide open summit around noon, had a short rest on the summit, and then went down on the stone-laid trail to the night's stay in Miuraguchi Village. It had been a long, steep downward trudge and my toe had started hurt. I was lucky to have a pair of runners in my pack, so I changed to them. After that I had no problems going down. It was around 3:00 when we arrived at Miuraguchi where we stayed at a farmer's house for the night. We walked on the paved road for a bit, crossed a bridge, continued up to the Miura Pass, then down to the next village, Nishinaka.

On the trail we met several local people and chatted about their lives around this trail. The trail from Nishinaka to the next night's stay, Totsugawa Hot Springs, was a quite long walk on the paved road, so we opted to take a bus instead of walking. On the last day of the trip, we passed through Tatenashi Village, and then over the last 1000 m pass (Tatenashi Pass) to arrive at the Kumano Hongu Shrine.

From the inn we crossed a red bridge over Lake Totsugawa, and walked a short distance to the trail head. From there we walked on the steep stone-laid trail toward Tatenashi Village. At the entrance of this pastoral village we were greeted by a lone, fully-blossomed cherry tree. We went through a couple of houses and at the end of the



The Kumano Trail. (Photo by Tak Ogasawara) village we said goodbye to a stone statue. Soon after, we passed through a small temple and then came up to Tatenashi Pass. From the pass, the trail went down gently and soon after we saw the Kumano River far down below and before long we arrived at Yagio Village. From Yagio, it was a long walk on the paved highway to Hongu. We wanted to take a bus but there wasn't one for two hours, so we decided to walk the last stretch of the trail to Hongu. We walked the paved road for a while to the junction where the trail met a second trail. From there we walked on a wide. stone-laid trail, had a little detour to look down on Hongu's torii gate, and then went back to the main trail. It was not long before we reached Hongu Town, where we passed several small shrines and continued to the Kumano Hongu Shrine. At this shrine we thanked to the gods for our four-day safe journey.

On the day of spring Reflect old day Kumano kodou

Three mountains around Oze Marshland (April 27-29). Surrounded by 2000 m high mountains, the Oze Marshland is very famous for its skunk cabbage habitat. Unlike the yellow Canadian

skunk cabbage, Japanese skunk cabbage has white petals.

Our plan was to go up from Hatomachi Pass to Mt.Shibutsu crossing the Oze Marshland, then up to Mt.Hiuchi, then down to Hinoemata Village and up again to the last mountain, Mt.Aizukoma, for three days.

Early in the morning I left Tokyo to travel to Numata where I met rest of group members, four ladies and four men. From there we took a bus to Hatomachi Pass where we put on our jackets and over-pants. We went up a gentle slope and, for the moment, the weather was reasonable, but as we went higher, snow started to fall and a strong wind picked up. A number of people who were descending told us that there were very strong winds and no visibility above. After a short while, we reached the ridge line and the wind was getting stronger and stronger every minute and the visibility was almost nil: however, nobody said anything about going back, so we continued toward Mt. Shibutsu.

When we arrived at the summit of Mt.Shibutsu, I was thinking about going back down the way we came up because of the weather. I talked to our leader, Mr. Satou, and he said he knew a route down to other side that was much quicker than going back, so with this advice we started down. Occasionally we saw markers on the slope, but finding a route to go down was mostly by instinct. As we descended, the wind lessened and the visibility improved. Soon we saw foot prints in the snow and we followed them to the tree line, walked a little in the forest, and arrived at the night's hut.

I went outside early in the morning and found fresh snow on the ground, and the air was crisp and refreshing. Our plan for this day was to cross Oze Marshland and go up Mt. Houchi, then down on other side to Hinoemata Village. Instead of eating breakfast at the hut, we received lunch boxes and left the hut early in the morning. There was about 10 cm of fresh snow on the ground when we started crossing Oze Marshland. In the Marshland there was still quite a bit of snow but small streams began show up, which was a sign that spring was coming soon.



Oze. (Photo by Tak Ogasawara)
When summer comes we remember

Far away Oze
Floating in the fog
Gentle shadow
At the mountain trail
Skunk cabbage bloom
Just like dream beside waterside

This is a very famous children's song we all sang when we were young. The weather was cloudy but once in a while sun showed up and it was magical to see the shadows of people on the snow. After crossing the Marshland we went up the gentle slope of beech forest, then down into a shallow gully.

We followed this gully a little bit to the pass where we could see summit of Mt. Houchi to the left and small peak at front. On the left side of the pass there was a ridge that came down from the summit. We followed this ridge and, soon after, we reached the summit without any problems. On the summit, we could see Oze Marshland down below and a 360 degree view of the mountains. We stayed on the summit quite a while, and enjoyed view in the sun. Then we went down to north side of the summit, carefully descending about 100 m of steep slope, and then we ascended the small peak, which we had seen from the pass earlier, where there appeared to be quite a number of people. When I saw all these people from the pass, I wondered why so there were so many there instead of on the main summit. When we reached the small peak and looked down other side, we saw a fantastic ski

slope. They were all skiers. After we looked back at Mt. Houchi one last time, we headed down on the fresh snow. Gravity helped us go down very quickly to Ozeouuike where the paved road came up from village. Soon after we arrived there, a bus came up, and it did not take long for us to get to Hinoemata village's Masuya Inn for our night's stay.

On our last day of the trip there was one more mountain to go up; Mt.Aizukoma. Unlike the previous day, we were not in a hurry and, therefore, we ate a nice breakfast at the inn and decided turnaround time would be at 11:30, which we were hoping would be enough time to reach the summit.

We left the Inn at 8 a.m. and the weather was again perfect, and there were people already on the road. We walked for about 30 minutes and arrived at the trail head where the wooden steps showed that it was the start of the trail. At the beginning there was no snow but soon after we were on a snow slope. We took a couple of short rests and three hours later we were above the tree line and, for the first time, we saw our destination Mt. Aizukoma. From there, three of us went ahead of the rest of the group towards the summit above the tree line.

There was a wide snow field and several small bumps to overcome before reaching the hut on the shoulder above. Two ladies with me stopped at the hut, but as the summit was not far away, I decided to climb it. I dumped my pack beside the hut and headed out. It did not take long for me to reach the summit, where there was nothing but wide open space.

I stayed there a little bit and then jogged back down to the hut where the two ladies were waiting for me. On the way down from the hut we met Mr. Satou at the tree line and from there we went down together. Shortly after that, we met the rest of our group, and descended exactly the same way we had come up.

It did not take long for us to get back to the trail head and we arrived at the bus station at the Hinoemata village at 2:00 p.m. We went to the railway station, Ozekougen, by bus to complete our three-day Oze trip.

Embraced by Mt.Shibutsu and Mt.Hiuchi Waiting for spring come to Oze

Marshland Skiing at Mt. Tate (May 6-8). I left Tokyo Shinjuku bus terminal by overnight bus to Ougisaw and arrived at 5:30 a.m., at the place where the Mt. Tate Alpine Motor Way starts. The bus departed at the station exactly at 7:30; first I travelled by electric bus, then cable car, then ropeway, and then bus again to the Murodou station at the highest point of the Alpine Way and the starting point of all mountain climbing routes. After a short walk from the Murodou station through the snow, I arrived at Raichiyou Hut where I would be staying for the next three days. After I checked in, I put all my belongings in my room and decided to do some skiing.

I skied from the hut down to the flat below where the Raichoyo Campsite was, then skied up to Ichinokoshi Pass where I was planning to ski out to Lake Kurobe. There are two routes to ski out to Lake Kurobe; via Miyama Canyon or via Tanbo Flat through East Ichinokoshi Pass. From the pass I could see both routes quite well but hut keeper at Ichinokoshi Pass said the Canyon route was a no go, because there was no snow at the bottom. The Tanbo Flat route did not have any problems until one reached the Kurobedaira Cable Station but, again, from the station to the lake there was no snow at the bottom.

I checked next day's weather forecast, which said there would be 10 to 15 cm of snow overnight. I woke up early the morning and looked outside: sure enough, 20 cm of snow had fallen overnight. By that time the snow had already stopped and the weather looked reasonable, so I decided to ski up the ridge which leads to Turugigozen Pass where the Turugigozen hut is stationed. It took me about two hours to the hut and I had a fantastic ski down the other side to the Turugi Canyon. I could not see Mt. Turugi but I saw the Eight Peaks Ridge behind the clouds; I had climbed this many times over 50 years ago.

I skied back up to the pass, then skied down the shallow Raichiyou Gully and got back Raichiyou Hut at 4:00 p.m. After I got back to the hut I went behind it to see the volcanic activity far down

below .There was a lot of smoke, steam and I smelled sulfur. I went back to the hut where I dipped into the hot spring there. I saw Mt. Dainichi from the hot spring, it was so beautiful.

On the last day of my trip, I was not sure if I should use the Murodou Motor Way or ski out because of the new snow the day before. I decided to go up to Ichinokoshi Pass and, if the snow and visibility were good, I would ski out using Tanbo Flat Route. If not, I would come back to the Murodu and take the Motor Way out. At Ichinokoship Pass I looked toward the Tanbo Flat Route and decided to ski out. From the pass I skied down a little bit, then put the skis on my shoulder and walked toward East Ichinokoshi Pass. It took me about one hour to reach East Ichinokoshi Pass from Ichinokoshi Pass. From there I could see the Kurobedaira Cable Station far below. The slope was a little bit steep at the beginning, so I did a couple of kick turns; after that I skied down comfortably to the cable station to end my ski trip.



Mount Tate. (Photo by Tak Ogasawara)

Mt. Tanigawa Ichinokura Canyon South Arête (May 24-25) Mt. Tanigawa Ichinokura Canyon was one of the most famous and dangerous alpine rock climbing areas in Japan. I was kind of sick, coughing, and I did not have much energy for the past two weeks.

My condition was not great, but I thought this would be my last chance to climb the famous the lichinokura Canyon. When I started to climb in



The South Arête route in lichinokura Canyon. (Photo by Tak Ogasawara)

the late 1960s, I wanted to go there, but it was no place for beginners like me. Almost 50 years later I finally had the chance to go there and climb. Even though I was not feeling well, but I decided to go.

In the Canyon there are many routes but not many of them are free. The two main free

routes are the South Arête and the Central Arête. I chose the former route because this line has a great view of the entire canyon and is less bushy than the Central Arête. I set up my tent at the junction of the canyon the night before and waited for my partner, Mr. Satou, to arrive the following morning. Early in the morning he showed up. After I cleaned up my tent site, we walked in snow along the canyon and then ascended onto Tail Ridge. We crossed the bottom of Central Arête. then over the Eboshi Slab to gain our route, the South Arête, and the wide ledge indicating the beginning of the climb. The weather was great and

the rock was dry. The route was seven pitches long, the 1st, 3rd and last pitches having a few awkward moves, but without much trouble we finished the climb. We did four abseils to get back the ledge where we started the climb. There we changed back into boots, and went down the way we had come up without any problems. After the climb Mr.Satou said it had been impossible to climb a week earlier because of the snow falling from the ridge above. With great weather and no

one else there we were so lucky to have enjoyed climbing on perfect day

Walk up on the snow I look above Sunrise brighten up Canyon wall

Participant: Tak Ogasawara

The Manbush Trail

Liz Williams December 2019

Malekula is the second largest island of Vanuatu, a sparsely populated island of dense mountainous jungle, cannibal sites, and home to the Big Namba and Smol Namba tribes. My prime objective was to hike the Manbush Trail, four days bushwalk across the island from Unua in the east to Lawa in the west plus a further day of boating up the coast and riding a truck to get back to Lakatoro, the 'capital' of Malekula. (There are all of two grocery stores in Lakatoro selling Chinese peanut butter and little else but there is a huge outdoor market full of real food – yams, taro, breadfruit, bananas, green onions...).

From Lakatoro, I bumped around in the back of a pick-up truck for two hours, heading south. In places the Chinese are fixing the appalling road to access their copra plantations. Foreign ownership of land is not allowed in Vanuatu but leases up to 75 years are signed with very little oversight on how the land is managed. Amongst the locals there seemed to be some awareness of the risks of handing over land and resources to the Chinese.

I set out on the Manbush trail with two barefoot man-bush (Edu and Non) who skillfully whacked the trail ahead with their bush knives. They showed me which part of the prickly wild yam vine to use; broke open cacao pods to suck the pith; collected black-coated ngali nuts to eat later; and deftly chopped open coconuts, inserting an elegant bamboo straw to drink the cool juice. At one point a falling coconut narrowly missed us. It struck me that being bonked on the head by a coconut might not be a bad way to go, especially if one were on a palm beach with a cold beer in hand.

Late in the day after a dozen crossings of the



Melkem village stay. (Photo by Liz Williams)

Nayem Fale River we arrived at a beach where the Lads built a fire and roasted huge plantain while I dunked in the river for a wash. We stayed that night in the village of Melkem (all the villages of Malekula are simple leaf hut communities), feasting on rice and river prawns and sleeping on pandanus mats in a shared hut. That night Edu left the hut for a while, closing the latch on the outside and trapping me inside. Apart from wanting to pee it made me aware of how



A 'comfy' bed. (Photo by Liz Williams)



Central Malekula Jungle. (Photo by Liz Williams) impregnable these woven bamboo and palm frond huts are – I certainly could not break out.

The second day, after many more river crossings we climbed high in the jungle to a bush camp shelter. Non built a fire by rubbing two types of wood together and re-heated bamboo shafts filled with the roasted prawns that he'd been carrying. Plates were banana leaves, mugs were a portion of a bamboo pole. The only implements used over four days were the Lads' trusty bush knives and an iron pot. We slept on banana leaves, the spines of which were less than comfortable.

Heavy rain and thunder in the night meant travelling up and down a very slippery, muddy trail the next day. We learned how to use laplap leaves; where the cannibals from the highlands fought (and ate) the tribes from the coast; what parts of the wild pumpkin to harvest; and how the Big Hole in the middle of the island fills with seawater. I was taken down a steep path



Elixir of life. (Photo by Liz Williams

where I drank from a crystal clear pool in a cave, guaranteed to render me ageless. We drank freely from the rivers along the route because there is no habitation or apparent animal life. Apart from a dime-size tick in my armpit I suffered no ills.

On the third night we arrived at the village of Lewinlivat. Down a steep path we found a delightful pool and waterfall to clean up in, all surrounded by wild impatiens flowers. That night



River prawns for dinner." (Photo by Liz Williams)

we were regaled with a feast of wild yam, water taro, roasted water cress, fresh cucumber, and pumpkin dressed in coconut sauce. Later, Non came into the village dragging what looked like half a tree, which he pounded and soaked to make kava for me, the local anaesthetizing drink.

The fourth day we descended more precipitous muddy slopes to a charming river confluence and waterfall. Here, the Lads had planned a special ceremony. My travel companion and I stripped down. He was adorned with a pandanus namba (penis sheath) while I was rubbed all over with red plant juice and dressed in a pandanus skirt. The trek ended on the southwest coast where we had a lovely ocean view leaf bungalow for the night. The next day we took an open boat for two hours north quite far off shore to avoid the reefs and sandbars. We had no oars, life-jackets or electronics. Out there under the blazing sun in the Coral Sea it felt quite "Life of Pi" although there was no tiger on board.

Participants: Liz Williams, Graham Maddocks

2019 PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS



Vancouver Island

Clouds Disperse over Landslide Lake

Photo: Elizabeth Robertson



Vancouver Island (honourable mention)

A View from 5040

Photo: Erica Ellefsen

Mountain Scenery (honorable mention)

Mirren Lake

Photo: Jarrett Levesque





Summer Activity (honorable mention)

Max Fisher Climbing the Conuma Arch

Photo: Hunter Lee

Winter Activity (honorable mention)

Climbing North Seaman

Photo: Catrin Brown





Summer Activity (honorable mention)

Climbing the Kain Gendarme

Photo: Tom Roozendaal



Winter Activity

Dan McKean and Even Devault Climbing Newman-Foweraker on Mt Arrowsmith

Photo: Hunter Lee



Mountain Scenery

Þórsmörk (Thorsmork) Iceland

Photo: Rob Macdonald

Mountain Scenery (honourable mention)

Limestone Formation in the Italian Dolomites

Photo: Rick Hudson





Nature

Fungal Snake

Photo: Liz Williams

Nature (honourable mention)

Hermit's Ermine

Photo: Rob Macdonald





Summer Activity

Baffin Island

Photo: Nadja Steiner



Humour

Lyle on Baffin Island

Photo: Nadja Steiner

Humour (honourable mention)

Liiquid Sunshine at Mt Myra

Photo: Ken Wong

