

# ***Island Bushwhacker***

## ***2025 Annual***



***The Alpine Club of Canada  
Vancouver Island Section***

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## ISLAND BUSHWHACKER ANNUAL

**VOL 53 — 2025**

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**Our motto:**

1. Come back alive
2. Come back friends
3. Respect the land
4. Have fun
5. Get to the top

**(In that order)**



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*Mount Septimus in Fall colours.*  
PHOTO BY EVA GNECH



# ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA

## VANCOUVER ISLAND

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ACCVI Section Website: [accvi.ca](http://accvi.ca)  
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In keeping the mountains close to our hearts let us acknowledge the many First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people who, since time immemorial, live, work, play in, protect, and honour Canada's mountain spaces.

With this issue of the Island Bushwhacker Annual the torch has been passed from long-time editor Janelle Curtis to Mary Sanseverino (me) and Karly Murphy. It is something of an understatement to say Janelle leaves big mountaineering boots to fill! I hope you'll notice that we now have two people doing the job she handled so ably by herself!

Karly and I have split the job between us with Karly serving as Managing Editor and me as Editorial Director. Fancy words to mean Karly handles the production process and I the layout. But in reality we both pitch in when and where we can.

We are both indebted to Lindsay Elms and Valerie Wootton for helping to edit the text, to Mike Whitney for a detailed copy edit, and to Catrin Brown for a final proofread before going to press.

However, the biggest thanks — and here I take the liberty to speak for all current and future readers — goes to those members of ACCVI who took the time to craft and submit articles. Your words and images gift the rest of us with insight into the many ways that mountains shape meaning for us all.

The 2025 edition has a slightly different structure than past Annuals. For example, we have a Focus on Youth section where two of our authors are under 10 (I think that is a first for the IBA!). Our Mountain Culture section mixes history, citizen science, photography and even poetry. All in all we hope this edition once again highlights the richness and diversity that is the ACCVI.

Mary Sanseverino & Karly Murphy

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Cover: *Tiffany Cunha on Mount Alava.*  
PHOTO BY EYRN TOMBU

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

## REPORTS

2025 Report from the Chair.....	1
<i>David Lemon</i>	
2025 Rick Eppler Award.....	2
<i>Amelia Bieling</i>	
Report on the Glaciers 2025 Project .....	3
<i>Mary Sanseverino</i>	

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## VANCOUVER ISLAND

The Kids of the West Coast Trail .....	4
<i>Eryn Tombu</i>	
Snowbirds' Surprise: Mount Becher Ski Tour.....	8
<i>Janine Buckley</i>	
Mackenzie Summit - The Humbling.....	10
<i>Holly Dibnah</i>	
The Golden Hinde West Ridge .....	15
<i>Eryn Tombu</i>	
May in Marble Meadows .....	18
<i>Anya Reid and Mike Hudson</i>	
Ashwood Solstice.....	22
<i>Eryn Tombu</i>	
A Week in Tranquility.....	24
<i>Lindsay Elms</i>	
Day Trip to Mount Alava.....	29
<i>Eryn Tombu</i>	
Mount Hapush West Ridge.....	32
<i>Lindsay Elms</i>	
Mount Cain in Summer.....	35
<i>Catrin Brown</i>	
An Informative Love Letter to the Beauforts .....	38
<i>Jes Garceau</i>	
Boat – Bush – Climb: Mount Denman, NW Buttress .....	42
<i>Stefan Gessinger</i>	
Discourse Curious.....	47
<i>Mary Sanseverino</i>	

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## WESTERN CANADA

Amiskwi Lodge Hiking Week.....	48
<i>Peggy Taylor</i>	

Rockwall Reflections: Five Days on the Rockwall Trail.....	53
<i>Bryan Lee</i>	
25 Years Climbing on the Columbia Icefields: .....	57
<i>Jim Everard</i>	
Exploring the Fryatt Valley .....	61
<i>Katie McCall</i>	
A Week at the ACC Summer Leadership Camp .....	68
<i>Rachel Treloar</i>	

---

## THE FAR RANGES

Nanga Parbat.....	71
<i>Jim Everard</i>	
Hiking the Cape Verde Islands .....	76
<i>Graham Maddocks</i>	
St. Lucia’s Three Peak Challenge.....	79
<i>Lindsay Elms</i>	

---

## FOCUS ON YOUTH

Mount Queen Bess North Ridge.....	84
<i>Asa Picton</i>	
Bikepacking the Gulf Islands Loop .....	90
<i>Olive Joy</i>	
Through their Eyes: Youth Category - ACCVI Photo Show .....	94
<i>Noah Dale Feau, Sophie Longe, Eamon Miller &amp; Caleb Wullum</i>	

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## MOUNTAIN CULTURE

The Broughton Archipelago.....	102
<i>Lindsay Elms</i>	
BC Parks and Crest Creek a Decade Later: Observations from a Climbing Heathen.....	106
<i>Chris Barner with Introduction by Sandy Briggs</i>	
2025 BioBlitz at 5040 Peak* .....	110
<i>Catrin Brown</i>	
From Paper Maps to Topo Apps, the Age of the GPX is here .....	119
<i>ChatGPT, with commentary by Lindsay Elms</i>	
The 2025 ACCVI International Mountain Day Photo Competition and Show .....	120
<i>Mary Sanseverino</i>	



*Below Snowman Peak looking over to Mount Hatteras and the Hatteras Glacier. 2025 ACC General Mountaineering Camp.*  
PHOTO BY JOHN BALLANTYNE

# REPORTS

## 2025 Report from the Chair

David Lemon

Vancouver Island Section members once again enjoyed a busy, active year in the mountains, with weekend trips on the Island, to longer events further afield such as a ski week at the Campbell Icefields and hiking week at the Amiskwi Lodge.



Amiskwi Lodge hiking week. Full story on pg. 48. PHOTO BY PEGGY & ROGER TAYLOR

The summer fly-in camp was revived in 2025 in a shortened form (so as not to require a land-use permit) at the Alava-Bate area.

Education sessions covering first aid, rock climbing, ski touring and avalanche safety were held.

The monthly slide shows moved to a new location at the Esquimalt Gorge Park Pavilion, where a series of excellent presentations finished up with the annual photo contest ably coordinated by Mary Sanseverino. Winners from the many excellent submissions may be seen on the section website.

Articles about many of these activities can be found in this edition of the Annual along with many great mountain photographs.

The popularity of Hišimýawił again continued to increase, leading to heavy usage of the trail and hut area. Additional signage reminding

users of proper wilderness etiquette have been posted to try to alleviate the effects of the increased traffic.

Amelia Bieling completed the **Island Qualifiers** in 2025 to earn the **Rick Eppler Award** from the Section (see pg. 2). The National Club recognised **Garth Stewart** with the **Don Forest Service Award** for his contribution to the Section in serving as treasurer since 2019.

Congratulations to Mary Sanseverino on the publication of her new native plant guidebook, (co-authored with the late Hans Roemer), *Native Plants of British Columbia's Coastal Dry Belt: A Photographic Guide*.

This has been my final year as Chair of the Section executive. It has been a privilege to work with and share our love of the alpine with such a great group, and I am confident that the next chair will find the same.



Arriving at Alava-Bate. PHOTO BY JOHN ANDRESEN



The ACCVI BioBlitz team enjoying Hišimýawił. Full story on pg. 110. PHOTO BY CATRIN BROWN

# 2025 Rick Eppler Award

Amelia Bieling



*First IQ: Filling in the summit register on Mount Septimus May 21, 2023.*

PHOTO BY CHLOE SWABEY



*Last IQ: Mount Colonel Foster, June 30th, 2025.*

PHOTO BY JONATHAN ARCHAMBAULT

**M**y first experience in the island mountains was hiking Mount Albert Edward with the Outdoor Club in Grade 9, which must have been in 2004. Looking back, I cannot believe that two of my middle school teachers brought a group of us out there over three days. However, I am forever grateful they did, because that experience stuck with me and I have loved being in the mountains ever since!

Fast forward to the late 2010s and I had a partner at the time who wanted to try Elkhorn Mountain and Mount Colonel Foster. On both occasions we significantly underestimated the approaches and our plans were foiled early on in the objectives.

Around 2021 I became significantly more involved in sport and traditional climbing and met an awesome woman named Chloe Swabey. She was keen to get out in the Island alpine and gave me a lot of confidence and stoke to get out

with her! In May 2023, Chloe, myself, and a friend of hers named Emily set out to climb Mount Septimus via the X-Gulley. We hoped to ski tour in, and ended up trekking our skis all the way to Bedwell Lake while also post-holing up to our hips from time to time in the inconsistent snow.

Thankfully, this was the only hiccup from the trip. We camped on the ridge above Cream Lake and made it up the X-Gully before dawn, catching a beautiful sunrise over the back side of Mount Septimus. It was around this time that I actually learned about the "IQs" and thought "I would LOVE to accomplish that!". The following month, I summited 9 peaks and by the fall I had completed all but Mounts Harmston and Colonel Foster.

After reading many trip and accident reports, I had really bigged up Colonel Foster in my mind but I also felt prepared after spending

time in Washing Pass, the Bugaboos, and completing Mount Sir Donald in 2024.

In June 2025, my partner Jonathan and I set out on a 3 day trip to summit Mount Colonel Foster via the Summit Traverse route from the South Col. We reached the main summit around noon and descended the Great Western Couloir as planned. It was definitely the most challenging of the Island Qualifiers, but also my favourite experience due such varied terrain and skills needed as well as an absolutely stunning view.

It was wonderful to get back to our camp at the col before 4 p.m. and have an entire evening to enjoy our accomplishment. Ultimately, it took just over 2 years to complete the IQs and now the next question is, "how long will it take me to complete the Vancouver Island 6000'ers?"

# Report on the *Glaciers 2025* Project

Mary Sanseverino



In an effort to raise the profile and importance of glaciers around the world, the UN declared 2025 to be the **International Year of Glaciers' Preservation**. In celebration, ACCVI decided to launch a **Glaciers I Have Visited This Year** project. The goal was to see how many different glaciers we could include in our mountain explorations in 2025.

We collected amazing images and stories from 12 glaciers, several of which are featured here. Huge thanks to Becky Noble and Catrin Brown for their outstanding contributions!



**PHOTOS: Top** Matier and Anniversary Glaciers - Joffre Lakes Park.

**Upper (L)** Cotopaxi, Ecuador - near the summit crater.

**Upper (R)** Summit of Chimborazo, Ecuador.

**PHOTOS BY BECKY NOBLE**

**Lower (L)** Mummery Glacier.

**Lower (R)** Asulkan Glacier.

**PHOTOS BY CATRIN BROWN**

**Bottom** Devil's Kitchen, Mount Hood. **PHOTO BY BECKY NOBLE**



# VANCOUVER ISLAND

## The Kids of the West Coast Trail

Eryn Tombu

July 10 - 16, 2025

Browsing through the Parks Canada West Coast Trail site, it clearly says “If you have re-occurring knee problems, this trail is not for you. If you are under 12, this trail is not for you.” I’m not good at being told what I can and cannot do. My knees and my child have both experienced much harder back country epics than a 78 kilometre coastal trail.

I had never done the legendary WCT and the summer before my sister Kendra had expressed interest in doing it with the kids. In the fall my friend Matthew Lettington decided to join us with his twelve year old son Hemingway. So on January 20 at 8 a.m. I was trying to navigate the booking site. Worse than kids swimming lessons, the dates I was trying for were already taken. Luckily I was on the phone with Kendra who also was trying to book dates and she managed to get in. After paying almost \$1,900 in trail fees and permits our group of four children and three adults was booked for July 10 -16 with no weather wiggle room. Bouncing around logistics on a group chat we decided to rely on family to drop us off and pick us up as it would be much easier than the bus and parking.

On July 9 Kendra and her two children Amelie (10) and Oliver (12) drove Caleb (7) and I to Port Renfrew, picking up our driver (our mom), en route in Chemainus. We had a lovely evening walking around the tide pools at Botanical Beach before a pub dinner and a cosy cabin at the Wild Coast Wilderness Resort. Morning had us pounding as many calories and as much good coffee as possible into us at the Coastal Kitchen Cafe



*Caleb, Oliver, and Amelie set off*  
PHOTO BY KENDRA BEAUDOIN

before mom, our wonderful chauffeur, wished us good luck at the Parks Canada Renfrew Orientation Centre and left us.

The crux of the trip for me was definitely my pack. Unlike the other kids who were slightly older, Caleb

carried the bare minimum of gear. Which meant I carried all the food for seven days for both of us, and almost all the camp gear. Heavy, and definitely well over the suggested maximum weight for me to carry, but manageable. Matthew and Hemingway showed up shortly

after and we sat through the orientation presentation. Parks Canada allows 25 hikers to start per day from each end, and 20 from the midpoint, so 70 hikers a day on the trail seemed like an insane amount to me. This was clearly going to be a completely different hike than I was used to.

The water taxi dropped our group off and the trail started immediately with a steep long ladder climb. As we were such a large group we let everyone else go ahead giving us the illusion of not being in a pack of people. We trundled along the undulating and forested 7 kilometre section to Thrasher Cove, passing an old steam donkey and surprisingly not a ton of hikers. Once you are on the trail itself it does not seem as busy. Thrasher Cove on the other hand was packed. It was hard to find a patch of sand above the high tide line but we managed to squeeze our three tents in and the kids played tirelessly on the beach. Oliver and Hemingway formed an almost immediate friendship in the way only children can. We sat down and relaxed, had a beach fire and some dinner.

I awoke to find my bag perfectly aerated with about 37 little mouse holes. I searched my bag and found indeed there was not a scrap of food left inside. I wondered why they were so attracted to my bag? I am very diligent about food safety in camp and was disappointed the rodents had singled me out. The next day we left early into the sunshine to make the low tides around Owen Point.

Once packed, we joined the steady steam of hikers heading north. Owen Point is notorious for injuries and we did pass a woman waiting for evacuation due to a broken ankle. The children excelled at navigating the boulderfield. We then found ourselves exploring the sea caves and enjoying lunch at the point. Knowing the tide would soon be rolling in we started off down the tidal shelves. Sunshine turned to mist. Hiking around some surge



*Hemingway and Oliver on the misty beach.*  
PHOTO BY KENDRA BEAUDOIN

channels, muddy paths, ladders and a cable car we completed the 9 kilometre section to Camper Bay. Hemingway was sick and went to bed shortly after we arrived. Caleb, Amelie and Oliver played around a fire in the light drizzle while we speculated the inevitable, which child would feel sick next. An evening walk down the beach, a rowdy game of Phase 10, and we all tucked our exhausted bodies into bed.

The next day we made our way along the trails inland leap frogging with other hikers. The day was

steep, muddy, and slippery as we hiked, snacked and told stories. Highlights of the day included balancing on rotting, sometimes floating board walks, the stunted old growth bog, and a beautiful long suspension bridge. Caleb also lost one of his front teeth. (Lucky for him the tooth fairy was prepared and he found \$2 under his pillow in the morning.) We got into Walbran Creek camp around two and we all bathed in the pool in the sun. Feeling refreshed and clean, we lounged on the beach and played games until the sun set. As the darkness set in, and the children



*Caleb at Owen Point.*  
PHOTO BY ERYN TOMBU



*Kendra and Oliver at sunset at Walbran.*  
PHOTO BY ERYN TOMBU



*Caleb, Oliver, and Hemingway checking out the tidepools.*  
PHOTO BY ERYN TOMBU

one by one turned in, Darren, an older solo hiker stumbled into camp. He started off with us on the first day, and every day after we would see him in camp as he arrived after us. Darren was completely exhausted, so we helped make his dinner, set up his camp and filter water.

As much as I complain about how busy it was, this familiar 'trail family' we got to know was a beautiful attribute to the hike. We looked out for each other, exchanged plans, and spent our evenings getting to know each other. By this time, the group of 25 we started with on day one was down to 22. There was news that two more people had been evacuated.

Day four was a beautiful, hot, beach walk full of beachcombing. Sea stacks, tidal shelves, fossils, shells, waterfalls, this day had it all. We

passed the burger shack, and although it was not open we sought shelter from the sun for our lunch break. Boots off, sharing and comparing snacks, we lounged for an hour of respite. The kids found a tire swing and it was hard to drag them away, especially into our only inland section of the day. But in we went, passed the Carmanah Point Lighthouse to Cribbs Creek. As we neared the campsite and crossed the creek, Caleb bent down and picked up a thrashing and very much alive, 30 centimetre long salmon that had been swimming up the outflow. After a stunned but good laugh he released the salmon on its way and we headed to the camping area.

Once again we were in camp early so we spent the afternoon looking at fossils and exploring the tidal pools on the reef. Darren stumbled into camp late and he told us his plan to call it quits the next day at Nitinat Narrows. The kids adored

him, and although we were sad to see him go, we all congratulated him on making it this far, no small feat. Unfortunately, later that evening a rung on the ladder to the outhouse collapsed under him. With a laceration and a large bump forming he changed his plans to an evacuation at Carmanah Point.

The next morning, now in our rhythm of daily hiking we said goodbye to Darren. Off down the beach into the fog we went. Caleb was feeling under powered and a bit sick so Matthew was kind enough to take some of the weight from his bag, as did I. We navigated the tidal shelves to a large surge channel where we took a ladder to a windswept trail. Back on the beach we tried to locate ship wrecks and wrote messages in the sand before once again heading inland to Nitinat Narrows. At the narrows we splurged on fresh cookies, banana bread and baked potatoes. With

Caleb feeling under-powered the two of us hopped on an earlier boat, hopeful to get a jump on the group and not hold them up too much. With fresh baked goods inside of us, we mustered energy we did not know we had! The sun came out and shortly we were back beachcombing again. Barely making the tides at the sea arch, and with some creative tidal climbing, we turned the corner to see a bear also beachcombing. Caleb and I then bushwhacked back to the trail leaving the beach to the bear.

Arriving at Tsusiat Falls in the scorching afternoon sun, we jumped into the beautiful pool before even setting up camp. We found a waterfront campsite beside the waterfall big enough for our group. Caleb and I staked our claim and relaxed in the sun. Kendra, Matthew and the kids arrived an hour later and we enjoyed another lovely sunset.

Our last full day on the trail was a mix of forest and beach, the trail got easier, flatter and wider, and the

beaches were easier to navigate. There was even time for a swim at Darling River Falls, which was so cold but so refreshing. It was an easy meander to the next campsite at Michigan Creek. As the last day on the trail, the remainder of our day one group sat on beach logs and asked questions like “What is your ideal job and why aren’t you doing it?” and “What are you most thankful for?” All of us were a little sad to be ending the journey.

The next morning we slogged out of camp up the muddy trail. The kids were slowing down from their initial trail energy on day one. Caleb discovered Matthew was an epic story teller, with vivid characters who had incredible voices. He trailed along following Matthew’s every word and kilometres ticked down almost unnoticed. We opted to finish the trail on the beach at Pachena Bay. Walking across the low tide sand flats to the Canada Parks office we all felt a sense of pride. We checked out with the trail staff and I guarded the bags (and

enjoyed the quiet) while the rest of the team went to find cheezies, ice cream and chips. My partner Dayna showed up with a cooler of beers and bubbly waters, bananas and blueberries and we sat in the sunny field eating, cheers-ing and relaxing. When Matthew’s wife showed up we said our goodbyes and loaded ourselves into our respective cars and hit the road. The Kids of the West Coast Trail trip a complete success.

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**PARTICIPANTS:** MATTHEW LETTINGTON, HEMINGWAY LETTINGTON, KENDRA BEAUDOIN, OLIVER BEAUDOIN, AMELIE BEAUDOIN, ERYN TOMBU AND CALEB WULLUM



*Oliver navigating the ladders out of Tsusiat Falls.*  
PHOTO BY KENDRA BEAUDOIN



*Caleb beach walking.*  
PHOTO BY ERYN TOMBU

# Snowbirds' Surprise: Mount Becher Ski Tour

Janine Buckley

May 4, 2025

With sunshine overhead and warm spring temperatures, a small, happy group of four headed up to Mount Becher from the old Forbidden Plateau Ski Hill parking lot.



One of, if not the only, remaining tributes to the old Forbidden Plateau Ski Hill. PHOTO BY JANINE BUCKLEY

After a stop to check out the distinct old orange bull wheel, possibly the last remaining landmark from Vancouver Island's original ski area that once marked the chairlift's offramp, a well-trodden, straightforward trail made for easy travelling to the summit of Mount Becher where lots of remaining snow awaited us.

After lunch surrounding the usual Canadian Geodetic Survey marker, the formal name for the circular, squished-in-the-rock penny/loonie combination that we see on many peaks in this country, Eamon, Jeremy and I enjoyed several soft laps on the upper, open slopes near the top.

"Look at that smoke ring!" exclaimed Eamon! Jeremy and I both stopped to look at the giant loop in the sky way down below. Notably, and memorably, the three of us realized that we were watching the Snowbirds' famous aerial acrobatics from above.

This was a first for me! Living in the Comox Valley for over twenty years, I've become accustomed to their annual spring practice sessions and enjoy seeing them while out on the water, but I had never seen them from higher up in the mountains before: definitely cool, as we all agreed.

In upbeat spirits safely back at the parking lot, another enthusiastic comment from Eamon ended the

day delightfully: “That was the best non-resort day ever!” even if it was his very first tour... 😊. Music to the ears of someone who just finished leading her very first ACCVI trip. Thank you, Eamon.

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**PARTICIPANTS:** JANINE BUCKLEY,  
EAMON MILLER, JEREMY RALPH,  
BECKY NOBLE



*We're spoiled on the Island with so many fantastic mountain and ocean views; thanks for being such a great model with which to show off another one, Jeremy! PHOTO BY JANINE BUCKLEY*



*Happy to be up there at the top of Mount Becher with a great view of the remaining Comox Glacier... PHOTO BY JANINE BUCKLEY*

# Mackenzie Summit - The Humbling

Holly Dibnah

August 23 - 24, 2025

At the crack of 9 a.m., at the bottom of the Canoe Creek Hydro Dam road, an instant friendship formed between Chris Neate, and Holly and Andrew Dibnah. Chris, our fearless leader of the trip (truly), drove from Victoria that very morning, while we had the luxury of staying with family in Port Alberni.

Our objective on Day 1 was the Mackenzie Summit. On Day 2 we would then attempt Shadowblade or another objective before hiking out. We had everything we needed and more: our 60 metre rope, Chris's trad rack, enough food to last for days, and sheer determination... We had everything covered!

It was about 9:30 when I was finished being indecisive about footwear and we were off. We were treated to a leisurely 3 kilometre slog up the switchbacking gravel road towards the Hydro Dam. Here the road ended and became a narrow, winding trail, thus began our real slog up to the Mackenzie Range. There were bat ropes (handlines) to assist us every once in a while through some of the steeper gullies.

The sun exposure was full tilt at this point and I felt grateful we had the privilege of hiking under the forested canopy until we broke out of it around 13:00 into the sun.

I did my best to keep up a strong pace so we would be able to maximize our time on Day 1.

We stopped to assess Canoe Peak and ponder the ascent route I had done during a successful group trip led by Matt Lettington in May of 2023. What a smooth and memorable trip that was.



*Holly and Andrew hiking up the Canoe Creek trail with views of Canoe Peak (left) and Sawtooth (center) behind.*

PHOTO BY CHRIS NEATE

It wasn't long after continuing uphill that the jagged spires of the mighty Mackenzie Range made their dramatic appearance. We stopped for a snack in the shade and marvelled at the beauty and terror that the spires presented. From the north they appeared so tall and ominous and unforgiving. We realized why Shadowblade was so appropriately named and I felt that if we were to climb it, it would feel like we were teetering on the edge of a blade and a shadow.

Redwall Peak looked like an inviting but challenging objective. Chris had previously climbed Redwall Peak

and we were interested in new objectives on this trip. Andrew and I had set out for Mackenzie Summit in June of 2024 via the Mackenzie Climber Trail but had decided to turn around at Perez Lookout. We waved au revoir to Mackenzie Summit due to the time of the day.

We began our ascent again and started moving upwards through rocky, talus-y, bouldery terrain. I swigged water from my water bladder and hoped to be greeted sooner than later by some refreshing tarns. Thankfully we managed to find a tarn ever so slightly beyond where we set up our camp. Our



*The intimidating peaks of the Mackenzie Range as seen from camp.*  
PHOTO BY CHRIS NEATE

other option would have been to drop down a couple hundred metres from camp to a glacier pond at the base of the Mackenzie Range on the north side. As gorgeous as the

glacier pond looked, I was glad we didn't have to make the trek there for our water.

It was around 14:30 that we reached our 5-star camp spot, overlooking

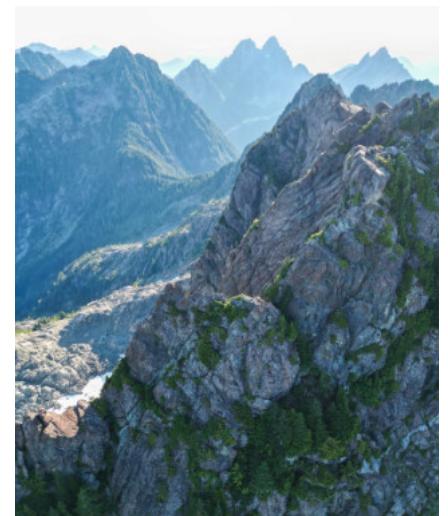


*The west face of Mackenzie Summit, with Flat Top and the rest of the Mackenzie Range visible behind.* PHOTO BY CHRIS NEATE

Kennedy Lake while also being overlooked by the spires of the Mackenzie Range. At this point we had gained ~1100 metres and we were at ~1150 metres. We set up our tents then looked for refuge from the sun for a few minutes where we could find sweet, sweet shade. Andrew and I found a little shaded nook under some spindly trees and had a snack-and-snuggle. It didn't feel like long after finishing some beef jerky that we were on our way to the Mackenzie Summit. Time flew.

At camp we were about 1 kilometre from the Mackenzie "Col" (or notch, as I've heard it described) wherein behind lies Shadowblade, Flat Top and the menagerie of additional summits we were pondering on the feasibility of summiting during this trip. After all, I thought, Mackenzie Summit would be just a warm-up for tomorrow... it was only 1 kilometre from camp, and the guidebook described it as a bushy 4th class scramble... it would likely just be a slightly spicy hop, skip and a jump, right? Well, let me tell you how I was humbled!

The Humbling began by traversing up and across talus-y terrain and then across a long boulder field that felt more like staggering through a desert. I was working towards smaller objectives on the trek though, like "make it to the next pool of shade, rest momentarily,



*Peeking over Mackenzie's shoulder.* PHOTO BY CHRIS NEATE

then repeat”. It felt like 500 degrees but was probably more like 25 Celsius. There was not a cloud in the sky and no bugs, which we were so



*A sinuous ridgeline leading to the open Pacific.*

PHOTO BY CHRIS NEATE

grateful for. When Andrew and I came up to Perez Lookout the previous year in June, we were violently swarmed by black flies like nothing I’d ever experienced and the welts they left behind on our skin stayed for weeks.

There were a couple short, snowy patches to traverse across before we trudged up the final steep talus slope and into some perma-shade at the base of our first pitch around 16:30. I needed a couple extra minutes of rest to fight off the *delirium exhaustorium* along with an Oreo for good luck.

Chris ended up soloing the first 30 metre pitch, which was an incredibly steep gully filled with dirt, loose rocks and small shrubs. It was definitely a testimony to his level of skill, experience and confidence. I found it very challenging when it was my turn to climb and I was eternally grateful that Chris gave me a belay from above. The guidebook claims this route is 4th class, which I found interesting, since I’ve climbed crag routes on Vancouver Island that

were considered 5.6 - 5.7 class yet they felt substantially easier. Then again, this seemed more like a vertical wall of dirt to me, which was something I didn’t have a lot of practice on.

Andrew was the second to climb the first pitch, and at one point – while standing where I shouldn’t have been – a helmet-sized boulder dislodged from above and came whizzing down past me. It would’ve knocked me down into Kennedy Lake had it not missed me since I didn’t have anything solid to hang on to where I was standing. Lesson learned. Exit stage left.

The finale of the first pitch brought us into what felt like a very snug and steep forested nook, where rappel slings were already installed on a thick tree trunk. For the second ~15 metre pitch, Chris led while I belayed him. He placed a couple of cams, from what I can remember, before setting up another solid anchor from a tree at the top of the pitch. Andrew followed, then me. At one point one of my feet slipped while I was trying to stem up a wide, overhanging ledge. It was a good thing I was on belay since I only ended up falling a few feet. I binged up an elbow \*just\* enough

to have a souvenir from the excursion for a couple weeks.

At the top of the second pitch we ended up popping out of the thick forested canopy and onto a tiny flat landing. We traversed across and up a narrow, bushy ledge for a short distance and crossed over a short, airy step to the left of a massive rock face, then into a forested area along the rock face. Chris set up some pro on some thick shrubs as he led the third pitch. We found there was a lot of care and attention required with communication between the lead climber and belayer in this area since the person on lead disappears from sight after the bushy ledge, where it becomes more of a traverse to the left.

Once around the corner of the massive rock face, Chris set up a solid anchor in the crack of a boulder using two cams and a nut. We were all really stoked on the quality of the anchor setup.

We made the final push to the summit rope-less, as the final ~15 metres before the summit itself had us ascending a much gentler slope which ran parallel with the rock face. However, it was home to a sea of remarkably thick cedar shrubs and tree branches that felt as



*Holly and Andrew arriving at the summit.* PHOTO BY CHRIS NEATE

though they were all working in unison to tangle us and grab hold of us while we ducked and weaved and navigated underneath and around and overtop of them.

At last we rounded the final boulder onto the summit around 19:00 and rejoiced in our victory. It was well worth every sun-drenched second-thought, as well as the late-night

delirium back at camp. I thanked Chris for helping us get up there. Or at least, I hope I did, in my exhausted state.

We used our vantage point to scout the other adjoining peaks and Chris captured some great drone photos. I was also happy Andrew got such an incredible view of the Broken Islands Group from above since he had done a week-long group kayaking trip to the area when he was fourteen!

Eventually we all signed the summit register and bid the summit farewell, about a half hour after our arrival.

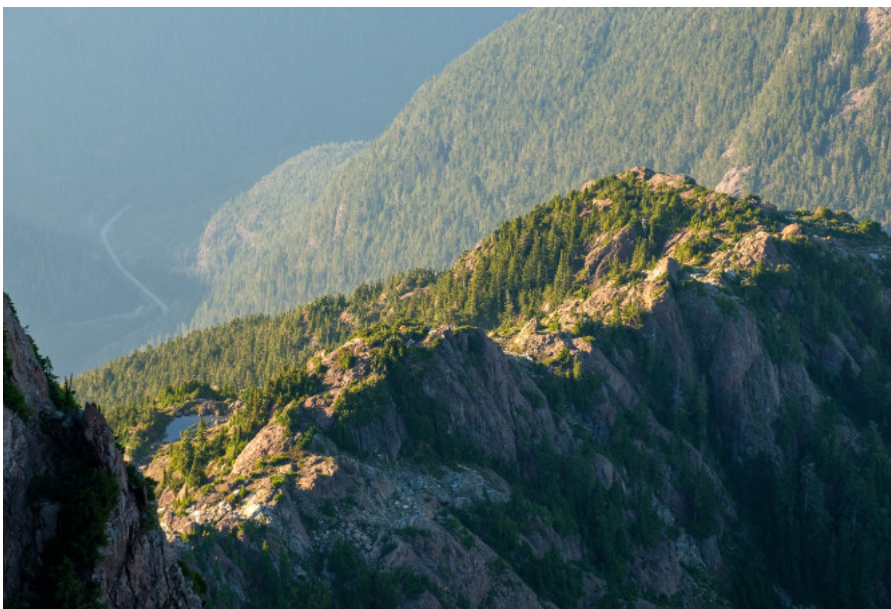
We returned via the same route we had climbed using our rope in the same places as on the ascent. We rappelled down the first two pitches, which brought us to the base of the Mackenzie "Col" before 21:00. The sun had fallen below the horizon and left us with an electrifying orange glow that radiated behind the silhouettes of distant peaks. Although incredibly beautiful, it didn't leave us with much light, so we donned our headlamps to descend the talus slopes and boulder fields around Redwall Peak and back to camp.

By 22:00 we found ourselves at our familiar camp tarn - yay! - and we filled up on water to tote back to camp. Andrew and I enjoyed our gourmet noodle cup meal under the calm, clear, star-filled sky. For years I had dreamed about spending the night in the Mackenzie Range and it did not disappoint.

The three of us regrouped and discussed plans before heading to bed. Andrew and I immediately opted out of an attempt on another summit the following day. Chris said he felt similarly but I wouldn't be surprised if he was just saying it to make me feel better. We all agreed that the day's objective left us feeling incredibly satisfied and was more difficult than we anticipated.



*Beautiful low angle sun highlighting Holly, Andrew, and the surrounding peaks, but the return to camp will likely be by headlamp.* PHOTO BY CHRIS NEATE



*Our two tiny tents perched in the middle of the ridge. Chris nicknamed this the Ramparts Camp.* PHOTO BY CHRIS NEATE



*The last rays of the sun bathe the peaks in pink and purple as we set up our final rappel.*

PHOTO BY CHRIS NEATE

None of us were stoked on the idea of driving back to Victoria on the same day as doing another challenging objective, all the while hiking out too.

The following morning we all played around on some of the short

rock walls near camp and Chris taught Andrew and I some valuable climbing techniques. We were so grateful to have such a solid, experienced leader on this trip sharing his knowledge with us. This was a highlight of the trip for me. Another highlight was the Teriyaki

Sidekick noodles Andrew and I had made for breakfast that morning. So good!

Around noon we decided to get ready to head down. We were on the descent before 13:00 and everything went smoothly. It was much, much nicer on the knees to have broken our trip into two days without having done another big objective.

Once we made it to the Hydro Dam, we dipped our feet in the frigid pool for a small break and had a snack before slip-sliding down the final 3 kilometres of steep gravel switchbacks. We contemplated the experience; the fun, the exhaustion and the lessons learned. It was an absolutely amazing trip and we couldn't have done it without Chris's expertise. We'll be back one day, Shadowblade...



*Andrew and Holly working on some techniques at a small wall next to camp the following day.* PHOTO BY CHRIS NEATE

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**PARTICIPANTS:** HOLLY DIBNAH,  
ANDREW DIBNAH AND  
CHRIS NEATE

# The Golden Hinde West Ridge

Eryn Tombu

July 25 - 30, 2025

Last year my son Caleb stood on the top of Victoria Peak, the third highest peak on Vancouver Island, already talking about the Golden Hinde. His mind clearly fixed on the next target. At that point I was daunted by the challenge of a slog back to the Golden Hinde. Adults struggle with the 60 kilometre return of undulating access clocking in over 4600 metres of elevation. I swear my knees still hurt from my first foray into the area. How was I ever to get a child safely up and down, and how many pounds of sour gummies would I have to carry?!



Family photo. PHOTO BY GARRETT BEISEL

Caleb is stubborn - a common feature of many elementary school children - and his focus on the Golden Hinde was unwavering. I started tossing ideas around with Barry Hansen, one of my climbing partners, about the West Ridge. I was firm in not wanting to do the easiest route, the South Gullies, as on Google Maps the loose choss is accurately

labelled as 'the Bowling Alley'. Our two friends, Quentin and Garrett were excited to join and Caleb's dad Dayna surprised all of us by wanting to come too. He rarely shows interest in mountaineering, but I suppose the appeal of the highest point on the Island was not completely lost on him.

My son also had other plans this summer. He had been working on a

list of 'Life-time Hikes' from a local mountaineering club that he promptly finished in 15 months. This included the West Coast Trail that we only got off a week before leaving on July 25 for the Golden Hinde.

After an easy first day where we camped just beyond Arnica Lake, we started the slog along Phillips Ridge.

It is unrelenting and we met many defeated hikers as we made our way in.

After lunch that day Barry, Quentin and Garrett went ahead with the idea that if the rain did materialize as forecast, they could have a beautiful tarp and camp set up before Dayna, Caleb and I showed up.

The rain came. It came as we dropped off of Carter Col along Phillips Ridge where slippery, steep and loose terrain drops 250 metres before scrambling back up to lake level. It took no time to soak us from the top, the bottom and saturate us from all sides. The bushes embraced us with their moist tendrils as the trail ejected onto the shoreline of Carter Lake. Morale was waning, patience was limited, and some idiot was having a fire on the shoreline. I am normally more diplomatic but after lecturing him on backcountry etiquette, park regulations and how I definitely did not care that he had wet socks I did feel minorly revitalized.

Barry had backtracked by this point and grabbed Caleb's backpack which was stuffed 13 lbs. full. It was just the energy boost we needed. Caleb practically ran up the final bump to the south end of

Schjelderup Lake where a small tarp shelter was waiting. Working together we quickly had Caleb in dry clothes, drinking hot miso soup and having a quick dinner before tossing him into the tent.

Waking up to the sun on the tent, we transformed our beautiful camp into a yard sale of wet gear drying out. Caleb even swam in the refreshing lake before preparing for an easy day. We rewarded ourselves for the wet and long day by taking it easy. We didn't even leave camp until 11 a.m.! Barry, Quentin and Garret headed off to climb Mount Burman, while Caleb, Dayna and I sauntered over to the Burman tarns. Camping here would make for a long summit day but without heavy packs. We weighed options and we all felt lounging and an easy day would be the best plan. We lounged, snacked, and rejuvenated our tired bodies with the adults enjoying nips of Sambuca and Tequila.

On the summit day Barry, Quentin and Garrett left at 6 a.m., and we followed an hour later. Having Rocky Talkies we were warned of a wasp nest in the Burman trench, a soul crushing steep descent followed by an equally lame climb. Even with the warning Caleb got stung once and Dayna twice. After



*Climbing the West Ridge.*  
PHOTO BY GARRETT BEISEL

filling our bottles at the climbers tarn we impressed even ourselves with our fast pace to the ridge. Beating the other three to our meeting spot by over an hour!

The break was very valuable and when Barry and crew showed up having climbed the Behinde, we talked logistics and gear. Barry carried a small rack, and I carried a 30 metre rope that I used to tie Caleb on short rope for the summit block. Caleb was fluent with this method but we still reviewed our climbing safety. I've found having a personal anchor system with a locking carabiner on Caleb a good technique as he can easily clip himself into an anchor or onto someone's harness for support. Donning helmets we headed up the West Ridge. Heather bluffs gave way to a short section of scree on the north side of the mountain before crossing back over to the south side. A remarkable maze of narrow bands of rock make for beautiful and dramatic views.

The West Ridge is certainly one of my favourite alpine routes. The first time I climbed it, Barry and I used



*In front of the West Ridge.* PHOTO BY BARRY HANSEN



Caleb climbing the Golden Hinde. PHOTO BY ERYN TOMBU

no rope or gear, but suddenly, when you are responsible for a 7-year-old, we took all the precautions. There was even a short section Barry built an anchor to belay Caleb up a particularly steep step as he called out with pride “Climbing!” climb on! In the off season Caleb is part of a local “Afterschool Climbing Club” at the gym so it was no wonder he was in his element. We followed a red band of rock as we traversed over towards the summit and Barry and I kept Caleb between us on a tight rope in the tricky sections.



Summit of the Golden Hinde. PHOTO BY ERYN TOMBU

After saying hello to a Ptarmigan and a quick loose scramble we topped out. Caleb was on the highest thing on Vancouver Island!

Beaming with pride, such a huge accomplishment under his belt, or climbing harness at it may be. As far as I can tell Caleb holds the youngest known ascent of the highest point on Vancouver Island. Almost as impressive as his non-mountaineering father making the summit right behind him. His little legs safely took him down the way

we came up, still on short rope and with one small rappel. Thirteen hours from when we left our camp we stumbled back into it, all of us high on a wonderful day in the mountains.

Barry and Quentin were off early and managed to book it out in a day. Garrett joined our family trip and we camped up high on Phillips Ridge. Caleb lost his second front tooth and once again the tooth fairy had thought ahead to bring \$2. The evening was spent enjoying one last sunset behind the Golden Hinde, an absolute epic last night to an amazing trip.



Dayna and Caleb enjoying the last sunset. PHOTO BY ERYN TOMBU

**PARTICIPANTS:** BARRY HANSEN, QUENTIN THOMAS, GARRETT BEISEL, DAYNA WULLUM, ERYN TOMBU AND CALEB WULLUM

# May in Marble Meadows

Anya Reid and Mike Hudson

May 23 - 25, 2025

This adventure started as a trip to Washington State's Mount Olympus; a 60+ kilometre round trip with a lot of vertical gain and early morning starts. However, the night before the trip I realized my passport had expired. Glad I realized this before the Coho customs office! A quick change of plans switched our focus to Vancouver Island, landing on a mission to Marble Meadows and the Mount McBride area.

An early morning drive up Island got us to Buttle Lake around 11 a.m. It was already quite windy, but the waves didn't look too big from the shore. To cross the lake we brought paddle boards, a packraft and kite boarding gear. Deciding on the paddle boards, we started strapping all our gear onto the boards.



*Gear strapped to the paddle board. Tipping over would have meant very wet boots!*  
PHOTO BY ANYA REID



*Mike strapping gear onto the paddle boards to cross the lake. It doesn't look that windy but notice the rocks on the paddle boards to keep them from blowing away. It was windy!* PHOTO BY ANYA REID



*Successfully arrived at the gravel bar. Not too much snow in the mountains.* PHOTO BY MIKE HUDSON

Once we got out on the water, we had to work against the wind to avoid getting blown down the lake. A few minutes out on the lake, Mike yells to me that he forgot something in the car, and I had the car keys, so we both paddled back to shore. After a double check to make sure we had everything, we started back across the lake.

It was a relief to get to the other side of the lake relatively dry and with all our stuff intact. We stashed the boards, paddles and life jackets in



*Decided there was enough snow! Skis on!*  
PHOTO BY ANYA REID

the bush and then headed up the warm dry trail. At this point, it seemed crazy to have skis on our backs, but we were hopeful for some good spring skiing conditions up higher. Not too far below the top of the ridge we put on skis for some bush skinning.



*The roof of the hut sticking out of the snow. Hard to see in the dark, but at least not completely buried.*  
PHOTO BY ANYA REID

Once it flattened out on top of the ridge we were transported back into winter. It got dark while we were skiing across the meadows but using the downloaded maps, we got close to the hut. The roof was sticking a few feet out of the snow and someone before us had dug out some stairs to the door. Had some mice friends in the night trying to get into trouble and steal our food.

The next morning, we woke up to another warm and sunny day as we made our way up to the ridge between Mount McBride and



*Mike on top of the first ridge above the hut looking towards Morrison Spire (far right of the skyline).* PHOTO BY ANYA REID

Morrison Spire. The snow was very wet and slushy which added some excitement skinning up the steeper sections. There were lots of potential routes and some good turns to be had on the way to the ridge. We followed the obvious main bowl to the top of the ridge, which later provided some nice turns on the way down. There were beautiful views from the ridge top in all directions.

We started having some major issues with skins not sticking. It could have been the moisture, but there was also a layer of pollen or algae on the surface of the snow that was potentially contributing to the problem. The route also required quite a few transitions, so I think the pollen on the bottom of the skis ended up on the glue part of the skins.



*Mike doing some slush surfing after side cut skiing sent him for a ride. East flank of Mount McBride in the background.*  
PHOTO BY ANYA REID



*Obvious bowl to gain the ridge between Morrison Spire (left) and Mount McBride (right). Possible ski routes down from the ridge in all directions.*  
PHOTO BY ANYA REID



South/southeast side of Mount McBride's summit. Didn't make it all the way to the summit because of skin issues and time.

PHOTO BY MIKE HUDSON



Getting the most turns in before putting the skis back on our backs. Bush skiing at its finest. Avalanche beacon is just for show at this point.

PHOTO BY MIKE HUDSON



Mike on the ridge with Morrison Spire on the left and Golden Hinde on the skyline to the right. PHOTO BY ANYA REID



Total glue failure!

PHOTO BY ANYA REID

By the afternoon the only thing keeping the skins on the skis were a few ski straps we had. It was a very strange sensation to have your skins completely disconnected from the skis.

In addition to the great views and fun skiing, a highlight of the day was seeing the endangered Vancouver Island marmots. In the early 2000's, only 30 individual marmots were known to exist in the wild[1]. Their population has started to increase but there are still threats to this species[2]. We saw a pair sitting on top of a rocky knoll and then on the way back to the hut there was a burrow through the

snow down into a tree well. The marmots were basking in the sun and looked to be very happy that spring was coming to the mountains.

We made it back to the hut just as it was getting dark and enjoyed ramen and a chocolate bar. The next day we skied back across the meadows and down as far as possible, including some dirt patch skiing, to maximize time on skis.

The paddle across the lake was equally windy and exciting as our first crossing, which added a fun extra adventure to this trip.

Although Mount Olympus would have been cool, we were glad to be able to sleep in past 4 a.m. and not see a single other person the whole trip!

## References

[1] [Vancouver Island Marmot](#)

[2] [Vancouver Island Marmot \(\*Marmota vancouverensis\*\): COSEWIC assessment and status report 2019 - Canada.ca](#)



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**TOP** Vancouver Island Marmot doing a “belly splot” (photo taken in the summer).

**CENTRE** Classic Vancouver Island Marmot pose.

**BOTTOM** Marmot den “emergence hole” – they often have to dig through a few metres of snow to get out in the spring.

PHOTOS BY MIKE HUDSON

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**PARTICIPANTS:** ANYA REID AND  
MIKE HUDSON

**Vancouver Island  
Marmot Recovery  
Foundation:  
[marmots.org](http://marmots.org)**

# Ashwood Solstice

Eryn Tombu

June 21, 2025

Initially, for summer solstice Tiffany Cunha and I were hoping to climb the West Buttress of Rambler Peak. The weather once again did not want to cooperate and it was one of those weird days where the forecast actually looked better up north. Tossing around ideas we settled on the Bonanza Range, specifically Mount Ashwood. Route information was vague for this rarely summited peak. We looked at maps and satellite images to pick what we felt would be the easiest route. June 20 had us driving north with falafel wraps from Baba Ganoush and a few beers in our cooler.



Eryn and her 'cute' chainsaw.  
PHOTO BY TIFFANY CUNHA

Leaving the highway just south of Woss we followed logging roads in excellent condition up the flanks of the south ridge of Mount Ashwood. The excellent condition

was due to active logging... we turned a corner to find trees fallen across the road which had not been cleaned up yet. Armed with beers, a hand saw, my 'cute' 12" electric chainsaw, and wearing flip flops (oh god what could possibly go wrong), we set to work. Within 30 minutes we had a path Tacoma-wide carved into the road and we carried on up to the pre-decided spur road to camp.

The sun rose beautifully over the surrounding peaks as we laced up

our boots and headed up elk paths through the logging slash. Once we hit the old growth forest it was pleasantly open and easy to navigate. The ground was soft without any low bushes and within an hour we were walking along the heather ridge top with views to the summit of Mount Ashwood ahead.

Along the ridge we found some odd rock cairns and very few obstacles. A quick dip in the ridge brought us to the only crux. It was the last 100 metres of elevation gain before the



Tiffany in the bush. PHOTO BY ERYN TOMBU

south basin where we found dense bush, cliffs, drop-offs and slimy slippery ground underfoot. It was completely heinous but short lived.

We suddenly crested the ridge where an open basin dotted with lakes and hard spring snow greeted us.

The sun beamed down as we made our way past the final lake and trended to the west. Easy route finding around the bluffs and heather slopes gave us views to Pinder Peak, Mount Hoy and countless other peaks we could not identify. We ended up in a short loose gully which had us scrambling to the shoulder in no time.



*Tiffany "Summit Lounging" on Mount Ashwood.*  
PHOTO BY ERYN TOMBU

Initially we thought we would tag Bonanza Peak too but steep, deeply moated sheer ice greeted us on the north side and dissuaded us from carrying on. We had carried a rope and our crampons with the intention of going to Bonanza Peak, but now we used them only as a better workout.



*Mount Ashwood.*  
PHOTO BY ERYN TOMBU

With all the extra time we budgeted for we felt no rush to leave the summit. Casually we ate, lounged, napped, and chatted before picking our bags back up and heading down.

Instead of the rock we climbed up on, we took the gullies, glissading down the sun softened snow to the lake. Only occasionally postholing through the snow to the boulders underneath. Back in the basin the sun had warmed us and we assessed our cool down options. Ice still clung to the lake surface but did not discourage us from a quick icy swim... the kind of swim that is short lived and completely takes your breath away.

Refreshed and back on route, the bushy section was slightly easier with gravity on our side and it seemed to take no time. The open heather ridge, the open old growth forest, the elk paths through the cut block, led us easily to the truck.

What a great start to summer!

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**PARTICIPANTS: TIFFANY CUNHA  
AND ERYN TOMBU**

# A Week in Tranquility

Lindsay Elms

Aug 3 - 10, 2025

We've all had places we want to visit and climb but the logistics of getting there have made it difficult. I'm not talking about a day trip, but a place where you want to spend time exploring and to absorb the beauty and charm of the remote location. One such place for me was an area about four kilometres north of Shangri La.



*Looking down onto Tranquility base camp.*  
PHOTO BY VALERIE WOOTTON

In August 2015, Laurence Phillipsen and I did a day trip from Emerald Lake up to the north end of this area and climbed the North and South Emerald Peaks. Dropping into a basin below the peaks we followed the creek around into a beautiful large gravel flat reminiscent of where the ACCVI have had alpine summer camps in Shangri La. There were small tarns dotted everywhere, a rock wall with the potential for numerous single

pitch routes, and no shortage of flat spots for tents. From my research I could find no other parties having visited the area. This meant there were more first ascents to be made - an enticement for me. The only problem was access to the area, a bridge on the Sebalhall Main was taken out in 2016 and the road was washed out in several places. This logging road at the southern end of Vernon Lake gave access to Emerald Lake and beyond. Each year I would

think about trying to get into the area, but because of the logistics I always ended up somewhere else.

Roll around 2025. The ACCVI were organizing two one-week camps in Shangri La again. They had made arrangements for 49 North, the helicopter company based in Campbell River, to fly them and all their gear into the base camp. In previous years the club had used E&B Helicopters out of Gold River.

Flying out of Gold River was much shorter, and cheaper, than from Campbell River, but E&B have since ceased operations. I called Rachel to ask if we could utilize the helicopter after it had taken the first group in. Rachel didn't have a problem so I called our friend Rod Szasz, who we had been doing all of our west coast mountaineering trips with, and told him the trip was on. His daughter Akela had recently returned to B.C. from completing her education in Scotland and she was keen to join us. Usually it was just Rod, Val and myself on all our trips so this was a bonus for Val to have another woman along.

A week before the trip we were watching the long-range weather forecast and it looked like there was some crappy weather on the horizon – not the whole week but just a few days. We considered the possibility of flying in with the group on the second week, but the forecast didn't predict that far ahead. Rod was a little concerned about the possibility of sitting in the tent for a few days, but we decided to go with the first week anyway. Having the helicopter fly us to our base camp meant we could take a few more luxuries than we usually took on many of our trips – a bug tent, a two-burner stove, comfortable chairs, fresh vegetables, and wine. All absolute essentials!

On the afternoon of 2 August, we drove to Gold River and went up to the Ridge Roadhouse pub for an early dinner. Just after getting comfortable Ian and Margaret Brown arrived so we called them over and had an enjoyable dinner on the deck with them. They were staying in Gold River for the night and driving up to the staging area in the Conuma Valley early the next morning. After dinner we drove up to the staging area where we met the rest of the group flying into Shangri La the next day.

Around 10 a.m. the first helicopter arrived and began shuttling everyone up to Shangri La. A second



*Tranquility base camp in the sunshine.* PHOTO BY LINDSAY ELMS

helicopter soon arrived and began lifting all the gear in slings. It wasn't long before it was just the four of us left at the staging area. The helicopter arrived back and picked up Akela and myself for a three minute flight to our base camp. The helicopter returned twenty minutes later with Rod and Val. Once the helicopter departed, we were surrounded by mountains and silence. I was reminded of Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldwin landing in the Sea of Tranquility on

the moon on 11 July 1969. It felt like we were now there ourselves but fifty-six years later. We pulled out the lounge chairs and sat there for a few minutes taking in the ambience before setting up the tents.

Behind the tents a very small creek trickled down from a valley which reminded me more of an arroyo. The water dropped over a 100-centimetre rock step, cascading like a miniature Della Falls, into a small pool at the bottom where we could fill up our water bottles and jugs. The first afternoon we scrambled up to the ridge behind camp to get a better view of the area. The rock was beautiful and tarns filled every little basin and hollow. There was so much to do here. That evening it was so nice having the bug tent where we could cook and get away from the mozzies. The luxuries of a fly-in camp!

On Monday, we decided to head over to Peak 1570 (Peak 5150 in *Island Alpine*). The highest peak in the area and still unclimbed, although Ramsey Dyer had attempted it last year.



Two beautiful alpine tarns. PHOTOS BY VALERIE WOOTTON



Peak 1570. PHOTO BY LINDSAY ELMS

Just outside of Tahsis, he followed logging roads up Leiner Creek. He knew these roads had been there for a few years, but because of “the power of procrastination” by the time he went for it the road had been badly washed out and he had to walk a few extra kilometres.

From camp we walked to the head of the gravel flat then hiked up a dry creek bed to a high ridge which extended from the Emerald Peaks to Peak 1570. It was a beautiful day and we didn’t feel like we needed to rush. A short descent down the ridge led to a small tarn where we

took a 20-minute break. Beyond was the final rock face leading up towards the peak.

Continuing on we found there was no single route that we had to climb so we zig-zagged up the rock, the scree, and snow patches until we reached the ridge between the two summits. We scrambled up to the first slightly lower summit and then traversed across to the highest point. It was around 1 p.m. when we reached the summit.

There was no sign that anyone had been on the summit before. While eating lunch we took in the spectacular views. To the north we could see all the peaks surrounding Shangri La: Thumb Peak, the Thumb, Mount Grattan, Mount



Shangri La peaks. PHOTO BY LINDSAY ELMS



The summit of Peak 1570. PHOTO BY AKELA SZASZ



The water level quickly rose around our tents but once the rain stopped it dried out just as fast. PHOTO BY VALERIE WOOTTON

Bate, and Mount Alava. To the west we could see down into the lower Leiner valley, and to the north Mount McKelvie and the peaks surrounding the 2012 camp. And finally, to the east we could see Sutton Peak, Victoria and Warden Peaks, and dozens more.

Three weeks after our ascent Ramsey was spurred into action and on 25 August, he finally reached the summit via the Leiner River. His trip account can be found on Facebook.

The next two days we were camp bound because of rain. It wasn't driving rain so at least we could sit in the bug tent and stay dry, but on the second day the accumulated rain on the rock walls of the upper basin finally started weeping into the gravel flat. Out came the ice axes and small trowel as we desperately began digging trenches around our tents.

Fortunately, within an hour of the rain stopping in the mid-afternoon the water disappeared. The rock across from camp quickly dried off and we managed to set up a top-rope and climb a few single pitch routes.



*The Emerald Peaks from Peak 1571. PHOTO BY LINDSAY ELMS*



*Akela lowering Val.*  
PHOTO BY LINDSAY ELMS



*Val belaying Akela on one of the climbing routes on the wall adjacent to camp. PHOTO BY LINDSAY ELMS*



Rod, Akela and Lindsay near the summit of one of the Emerald Peaks. PHOTO BY VALERIE WOOTTON



Lindsay and Val on the summit of Peak 1471. PHOTO BY AKELA SZASZ



Peak 1471.  
PHOTO BY  
LINDSAY  
ELMS



The beautiful lake nestled deep between Peak 1471 and Shangri La. PHOTO BY LINDSAY ELMS

Over the next few days we climbed the west, north, and south Emerald Peaks and explored the little hidden valleys and tarns.

On the last day we got over to Peak 1471 and attempted to get down to a hidden lake situated in a deep col between our camp and Shangri La. On the map it looked straightforward but in reality, there is some complex terrain to negotiate. With more time we could have gotten down to it but hell, that leaves something left to climb in the future.

In my opinion the Tranquility area is well suited for an alpine camp. Many of the peaks around Shangri La are somewhat technical where advanced rock skills are necessary. However, around Tranquility all the peaks are non-technical; there are beautiful alpine tarns everywhere for those nymphs who like a little dip in the water on a sunny day; there is a rock wall for climbing, and no botanists have been in there before to do a bio-blitz. I'm not saying I saw any unique species, but who knows what someone with a better eye than me might find.

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**PARTICIPANTS:** VALERIE WOOTTON,  
ROD SZASZ, AKELA SZASZ AND  
LINDSAY ELMS

# Day Trip to Mount Alava

Eryn Tombu

August 7, 2025

You know those mountains you don't quite have time to summit, and you just think 'ah, next time'... and next time will be who knows when, but left with the best intentions. Mount Alava was one such mountain for Tiffany Cunha and I. After our four-and-a-half-day foray in summer 2024 with Barry Hansen into the Alava Bate range we had left Alava for another time. Having climbed Mount Grattan, Mount Bate, The Thumb and Thumb Peak, the obvious last imposing peak was Mount Alava but we just did not have the time.

This year Tiffany and I had a few trips where we chased weather. Plan A changed to Plan B, Plan B changed to Plan C and there we had it. A day trip into Alava? Sure why not.

Our friend Belinda Bianchi was able to join us and we left Courtenay on August 6 into a torrential lightning and thunder storm. Our drive to Campbell River made us question what we were thinking, but luckily by Gold River the rain had stopped and the sun was trying to make an appearance.

Around 7 p.m. we turned up the Canton Main only to be stopped short by a fallen alder. I did not bring my electric chainsaw this time (an oversight for sure) but luckily Tiffany had three hand saws in the truck and we all warmed up with a little tree sawing action.

Parking at the washout we parked at last time, Belinda set up her luxurious car camping tent and mat while Tiff and I unfurled our sleeping bags in the canopy of her truck. We did set up a tailgate tarp which actually was necessary, and we huddled in the dry drinking beers while the rain returned.



*Tiffany on the ridge with Malaspina Peak behind.*  
PHOTO BY ERYN TOMBU

After our trip last year Tiff and I were fluent with what the approach up Canton Creek entails: great views, light on the devil's club, elk paths and beautiful waterfalls. A little foggier in our memories or perhaps the parts we forgot to remember: the uphill bush, the faded elk paths, the gnarly uphill route finding and endless choss.

Alarms went off at first light and we were happy to see the sun gracing the slopes of Malaspina Peak above us. We made quick work of the service road before taking a sharp right uphill through the cut block where we followed our steps from a year before. Although we now had a good route from last summer, it was still easy to get off track. Elk trails went up and down and often petered out: everything, yet nothing, looked familiar.

After some rocky and wet navigation, we were spat out on the meadow and stream bed of upper Canton Creek, a familiar and welcome sight. From there obvious and bold elk paths led us to the



*Tiffany on the final scramble.* PHOTO BY ERYN TOMBU



*Belinda in the open meadow.* PHOTO BY ERYN TOMBU

steep terrain we remembered as being less than friendly. Attempting to find a better route we followed a dry creek bed to the left. It was certainly not a better route. Not wanting to downclimb we wasted well over an hour traversing through dense, steep, wet terrain.

When I say wet, I mean wet. Although it never actively rained on us that day, the abrasive foliage had perfectly stored water on every needle, leaf and branch. Finally, we emerged dripping with moisture into the basin below Mount Alava and into the sunshine. From here we were in terrain new to us. We had a quick snack and water break before crossing the basin. We followed the stream to try and gain the South Ridge.

Climbing the riverbed was sometimes easy, sometimes bushy and sometimes terrifying, but the route was short and easy to

navigate. A beautiful open upper basin and gully had us scrambling up the South Ridge. The lovely undulating ridge that we trended on the east side of was easy enough. Encountering a few exposed scrambles and one very uncomfortable step up from the last saddle had us standing below the summit block.

The final push to the summit was complex. Finding a route that did not require gear was a bit of a challenge but eventually we finally found a weakness that we could scramble up. At the summit the clouds lifted to give us views to all

the surrounding summits, the blue blue Peter Lake and out to Tahsis inlet.

The last summit log entry was from 2021 which surprised us, we knew it was rarely visited but thought it might get a summit a year. Apparently not. We looked down at Moucha Bay Resort that we could clearly see on the water's edge and shouted out to them that we'd see them in a few hours for mojitos!

With Belinda in the lead we re-traced our steps, (although not the part where we got way off track) finishing at the truck in under 12

hours. Quickly packing up our camp we drove down the logging road and within half an hour we were cheers-ing our mojitos and munching down on some amazing fish tacos, ecstatic that we managed to day trip Mount Alava.

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**PARTICIPANTS:** TIFFANY CUNHA,  
BELINDA BIANCHI AND ERYN  
TOMBU



*Tiffany and Belinda enjoying summit views. PHOTO BY ERYN TOMBU*

# Mount Hapush West Ridge

Lindsay Elms

July 21, 2025

South of Highway 19 just after having passed Jagged Mountain is a dome shaped peak called Mount Hapush. Years ago I had climbed Mount Hapush, but since then whenever I drive up the highway I always glance over my shoulder and think there must be logging roads off the highway that would put me close to the mountain. This went on for many years (two decades in fact) until it finally got the better of me. Looking at Google Earth I saw logging roads spidering high on the west side of the mountain and it looked like the West Ridge would be an easy climb.



A reconnaissance trip in early July confirmed that indeed a good road wound up to over 1100 metres. Unfortunately, the weather wasn't conducive for a

climb, but Val and I knew we would be back soon. An ascent of the West Ridge was just too tempting. Jim Raper was always keen for a climb so on the evening of 20 July we

*Subalpine ridge.*

PHOTO BY VALERIE WOOTTON

drove up to the end of the road and camped for the night. One tree had fallen across the road, but Jim's chainsaw made quick work of it. As the sun sank to the west we got to watch a beautiful sunset.

The next morning we were away early finding a place we could leave the road and step straight into the old growth. At this elevation there was very little undergrowth and in thirty minutes we were in the subalpine on the first summit. Although I hadn't anticipated any concerns, I still made sure we all had harnesses, helmets, and a rope. I have to admit that I was surprised when we came upon a notch and a steep little rock step.

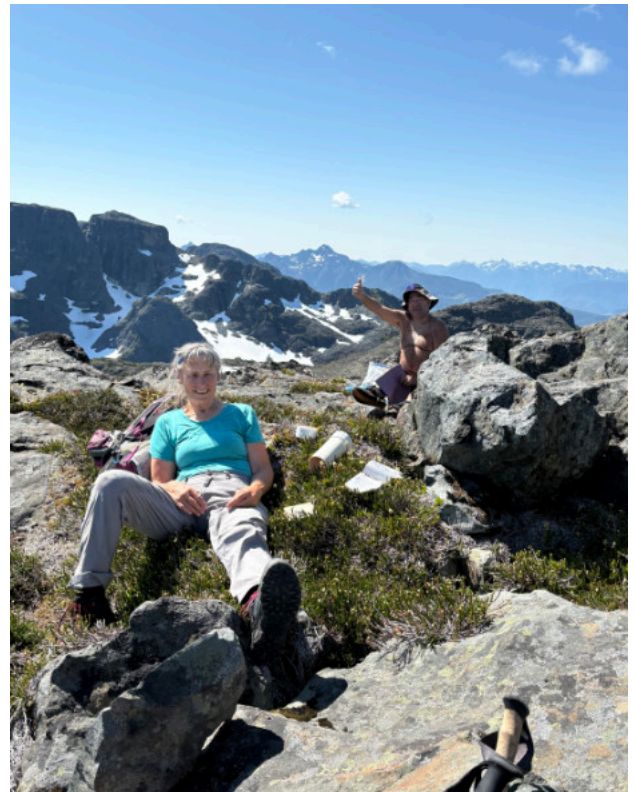
We didn't need to use the rope, but it did call for care. Once back on the ridge above, it continued to gradually climb over beautiful heather slopes. As it was such a stunning day there was no need to hurry. This was something Jim appreciated. Nearing the summit there was another small rock step but not steep like the one lower down.



*Looking at the final ridge to the summit of Mount Hapush.*  
PHOTO BY LINDSAY ELMS



*The rock step on the ridge to the summit.*  
PHOTO BY LINDSAY ELMS



*Mount Hapush summit.*  
PHOTO BY LINDSAY ELMS



*Summit selfie.* PHOTO BY VALERIE WOOTTON

After four easy hours we were on the summit. There were only a few puffy clouds in the sky and we sprawled out on the heather to soak up the sun. Underneath the cairn we found a summit register. The paper inside was slightly damp and we dried it out in the sun. Since the summer of 2020 it had seen six parties reaching the summit and most of them traversed the ridge from Mount Cain Alpine Resort. One party had climbed it from the alpine meadows to the southwest of the peak, accessing the meadows from the ski road well before the village.

Eventually we began the descent. Again, we stopped often to take in the views. At the lower rock step we roped up and I belayed Jim and Val while they down-climbed the pitch. Back over the first small summit and then down into the old growth. By 3 p.m. we were back at the vehicles. We had driven in the previous evening because they were actively logging on the road and we didn't want to meet a fully loaded truck on its way down. Now we couldn't hear any chainsaws so we decided to slowly drive out. Apart

from one crew cab we didn't see any other trucks on the road.

By the time we reached Campbell River we were all hungry and over dinner we re-capped the day's climb. I'm fairly certain that ours was a first ascent of the West Ridge and Jim was duly pleased that he was part of the first ascent.

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**PARTICIPANTS:** VALERIE  
WOOTTON, LINDSAY ELMS AND  
JIM RAPER

# Mount Cain in Summer

Catrin Brown

August 24, 2025

We all know that Cain sucks, and if you haven't already, please tell your friends [1]. So much for its ski season, but I had long wondered if this miserable place could have any redeeming features in the summer. August 2025 proved to be a good time to check that out.

It was a hot Saturday afternoon when we pulled into the empty parking lot at 1180 metres. Empty and quiet - not at all the Cain we thought we knew. No eclectic assortment of car and truck camper conversions, no late night parties and get-togethers round fire pits. Just a beautiful stillness and the familiar shapes of Mounts Cain and Abel, albeit devoid of snow.

We'd hit a spell of very hot weather, so made an early start to climb Mount Cain West the next day. It's an easy hike up the track that services the lifts and through meadows that we better know as ski runs.

We exchanged cherry greetings with a couple of folk busy painting the towers of the ski lifts, and again I am reminded that so much



Part of the Genesis Range forms the backdrop to our quiet campsite. Left to right (north to south) is Mount Cain, Dream Peak, Kunnum Peak and Mount Abel.

PHOTO BY CATRIN BROWN



Volunteers at work painting the ski lift towers on a hot day.

PHOTO BY CATRIN BROWN

volunteer work happens unseen and unheralded. Thank you volunteers for all that you do all year - you truly are the beating heart of the Cain ski hill. In three days up there, these were almost the only people we saw.

From the top of the upper lift (L4), there is a rough trail that leads to the 'golf links' and gains the ridge, traversing the bowl to the east of the ski hill.

It's a scrambly route over a series of rocky blocks, before entering the 'Central Couloir'. This is a class 4 gully, where I was happy to be



The route follows the ridge with some ups and downs. PHOTO BY CATRIN BROWN



Erich climbing the Central Couloir. PHOTO BY CATRIN BROWN

belayed for a few steps when it got particularly slimy.

From the top of the gully, the summit was soon gained – but not so quickly left. The vistas and ambience of our solitude were just too perfect today.

Mount Cain's main summit lay just to our east, and at 1819 metres is only a few metres higher but involves a more difficult technical climb.

We retraced our steps for the return, though our progress was slowed by indulging in the prolific blueberries in the meadows. It wasn't a long climb today, with an elevation gain of just over 600 metres and 10 kilometres return, but a great bang for the buck in terms of a classic day in the Vancouver Island mountains. And to wrap it all up, the night sky from our camp was spectacular:

***no light pollution + new moon = perfect darkness.***

Thank you Cain for showing us your better side in summer!



Views from the summit over Jagged Mountain with Mount Waddington, 4019 metres, in the sun-hazed distance. Not a great photo, but a great sight - please insert the wow factor.

PHOTO BY CATRIN BROWN



Summit view to the Sutton Range in the south east showing Victoria Peak and Warden Peak. PHOTO BY CATRIN BROWN

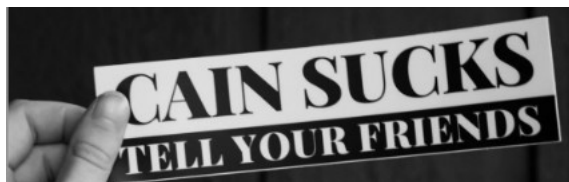


Looking down the Central Couloir to the resort village below.

PHOTO BY CATRIN BROWN



Heading back down the ridge. PHOTO BY CATRIN BROWN



**References**

[1] Mount Cain's mantra is a familiar bumper sticker.

**PARTICIPANTS:** ERICH SCHELLHAMMER AND CATRIN BROWN

# An Informative Love Letter to the Beauforts

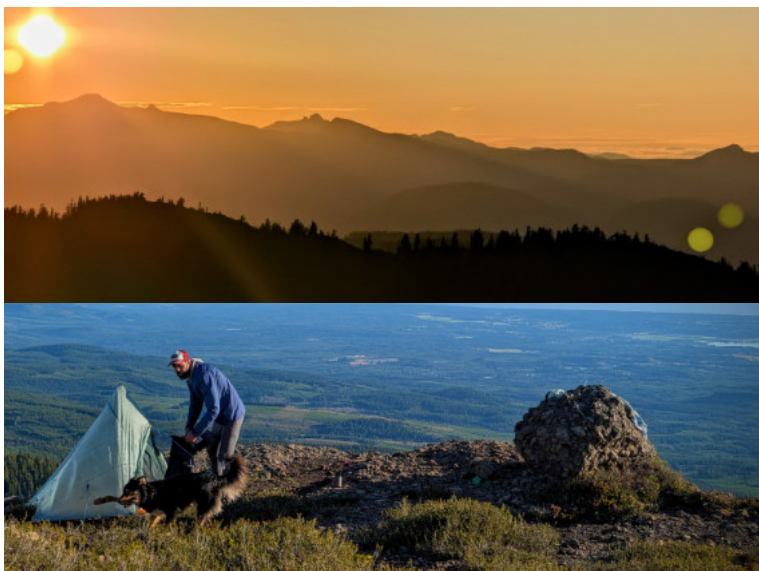
Jes Garceau

July 12 -13, 2025

Let's do a loop! Around noon on the 12th, Leif, myself and Tzela (the dog) jumped in my truck and made our way up Buckley Bay Main. At 800 metres you'll cross the Tsable River, after hanging a left onto Lunchtime Main. Another left onto LT 23, finishing with a right onto a smaller spur; the road terminates at a lovely elevation of 1120 metres, high above the west banks of Kim Lake.

Jumping out of the vehicle on a balmy day, we located the flagging for the boot path and within 2.5 hours of leaving my driveway in Union Bay, we were standing on the summit of Mount Clifton, 1440 metres. A quick backtrack on the path and we located the next flagged route heading south, down through the subalpine forest. This leads to the Clifton col, and Mount Chief Frank, 1150 metres.

The small dip leads immediately to the highway sized, angled ramp, proceeding on slab and rocks. Before you know it, you're back in the lovely subalpine, strewn with meadows and tarns. Small snow patches provide contrast to the shrub like, twisted mountain hemlock dotting the rugged landscape. As we approached the summit of Chief Frank, we are now afforded fantastic views of the Comox Valley municipalities and harbour in its entirety. Just after 5:00 p.m., we were standing at the bushy cairn of the summit.



Seeker of nice tent spots (top). Tzela the thief (bottom).  
PHOTOS BY JES GARCEAU

Subalpine bliss. PHOTO BY JES GARCEAU

The plateau, which reaches a height of 1470 metres, is dominated by large flat bouldery fields, patched together by various rugs of heather and drainage. We dropped a few metres down, perched on small benches overtop the NW face of the mountain. It drops precipitously here, and it was a great spot to set up camp.

First things first, get the couple beers out of the backpack and into the snow. We enjoyed a beautiful sunset while gassing a couple of tall boys and spotting man-made landmarks throughout the valley. Sustained entertainment provided by Tzela stealing Leif's guy line tension stick, the one he used to taunt his angular 1-man abode, mostly while we weren't looking. As if to say "oh, thanks for setting this out for easy grabbing!"

Up at 6:30 a.m. we took our time with a leisurely departure after several coffees on a beautiful morning. We were on the move by 8:00 a.m. This time there was no boot-path, and I didn't try to source any beta beforehand.

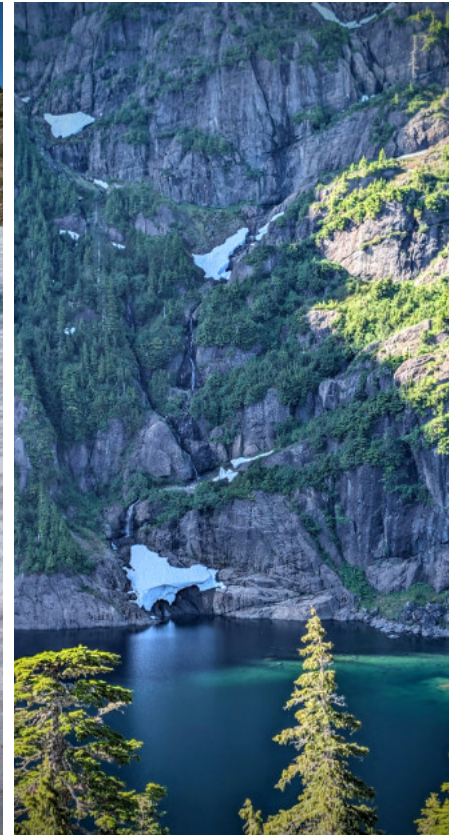
The route is straightforward, as you descend the southwest ridge towards the drainage of Beaufort Lake at 1050 metres. This path is adorned by spectacular views of Baynes Sound, overlooking Denman, Hornby, Texada and Lasqueti Islands to the left and the steep, tall walls protecting the



*Tzela and the tarn.*  
PHOTO BY JES GARCEAU

crater-like Beaufort Lake to the right. The ridge itself is mainly a large slab, occasionally streaked with bands of subalpine trees, or sparse islands of various height greenery. The first 100 metres of elevation loss is uniquely scarred by a (relative to itself) deep ditch, following the direction of the ridge. We travelled along it, as it was a neat feature to admire.

As we approached the low point and headwaters of Beaufort Creek, we



*East wall of Beaufort Lake.*  
PHOTO BY JES GARCEAU

found ourselves looking across the way with small bouts of doubt to regain the ridge on the other side. While we were skeptical that we were the first here, we truly didn't know if the route went. The first 20-30 metres appeared to be a wall; we continued so we could rub our noses on it. This brought us to our only difficulty of the trip, a 5m wall on our side of the ridge.

The nature of the lake is that of a tub; the walls drop directly into the lake almost everywhere we could see from any one spot. We noticed a very worn nylon strap tied to a tree, confirming human trace. While we had no intention of using it, it served as a nice way to lower Tzela down to Leif after he downclimbed the 4th class slab.

By 9:00 a.m. we were gazing at the walls surrounding the lake as we drank and refilled our bottles on the ample log jam water crossing. We quickly located a stiff 3rd class green gully. While the slide alder was as pleasant as ever (that's sarcasm),



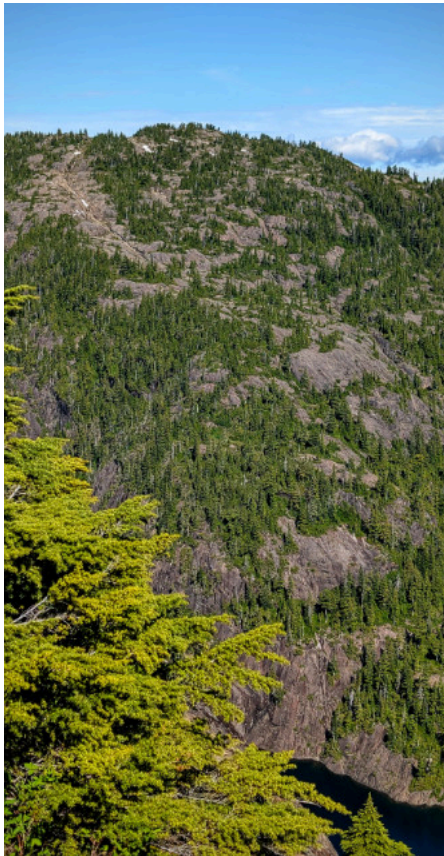
*Denman, Hornby, Texada and Lasqueti Islands.*  
PHOTO BY JES GARCEAU



*Water break at the logjam. PHOTO BY JES GARCEAU*

it served us well for safety up the slippery slope.

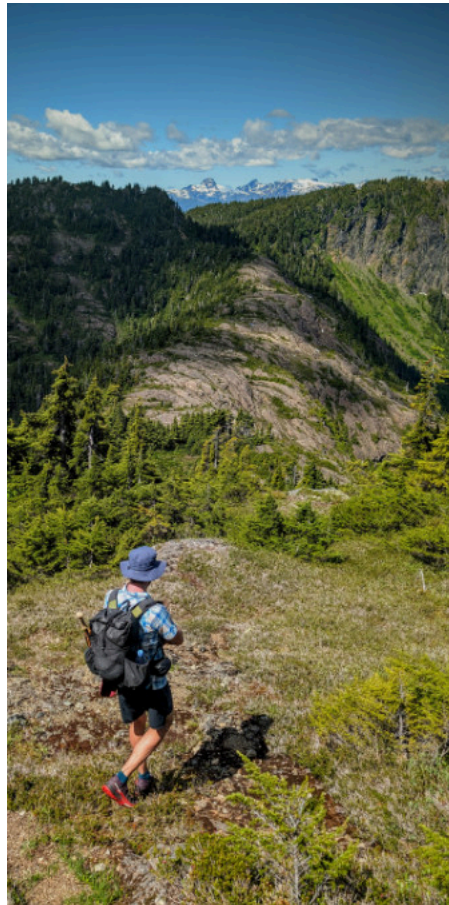
Within that previously mentioned 20-30 metres, we were quickly exposed to beautiful glades on the gentle sweeping rise, circling high around the eastern side of Beaufort Lake. We arrived at the summit of



*The ditch from afar and the route angling down the open slab. PHOTO BY JES GARCEAU*

Mount Stubbs, 1479 metres, at 11:00 a.m.

It was an inspiring few hours in the beauty, quietly forging ahead, head filled with cheerful thoughts, one foot in front of the other, enjoying life. Really sucking it in as they say.



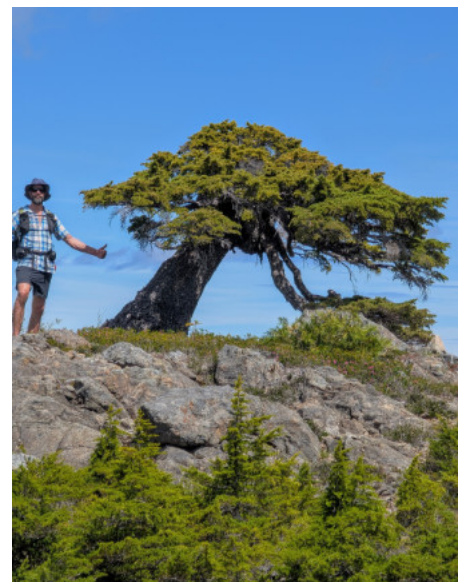
*The connecting ridge. PHOTO BY JES GARCEAU*

We snacked, enjoyed the views, and then got back on the road.

From here we join the established Beaufort Crest Trail in a westerly direction. The boot path stays high here only dropping to about 1380 metres, before rising to a cairned unnamed high point at 1488 metres, then dropping to 1400 and finally once again rising to the summit of Tsable Mountain at 1490 metres. We gained the summit by 1:00 p.m.

These high, short connecting ridges could be my favourite features to approach. Something about fully eyeing these natural bridges hits all the buttons for me. Circling around the lake the entire time, we were now high above the west walls of the lake, with the creek crossing earlier at the almost east side of the bowl.

Dropping off Mount Stubbs, we make our way back over to just below the west flanks of the Chief Frank plateau and rejoin our route from yesterday. While we only lost 150 metres to 1330 metre elevation, it gets moderately thick through this, what seems a seldom used boot path. We got off said path and rubbed some trees on our gear a few times for good measure for the trip. We hustled and retraced the route back down and over the east corner of Mount Clifton and scampered back to the truck, arriving around 3:00 p.m.



*We approve of this tree! PHOTO BY JES GARCEAU*



Beaufort Lake overlooking Baynes Sound. PHOTO BY JES GARCEAU



The track.

**Trip stats:** 19 kilometres and 1500 metres gain/loss; 8 hours moving time.

Living with the Beauforts as my actual backyard for the last several years I have spent a fair amount of time in it. From grabbing the summits, to foraging or hunting grouse, I continue to be drawn back to it. Wandering over the same grounds or weaving around the meadows in search of fungi. The rocky outcroppings, the meadows littering the landscape, the Dr. Suess-inspired trees. Easy hiking broken by light scrambling. Always taken back by its beauty, always eager to return...

**PARTICIPANTS:** JES GARCEAU,  
LEIF MCIVOR AND  
TZELA (THE DOG)

# Boat – Bush – Climb: Mount Denman, NW Buttress

Stefan Gessinger

August 26 - 30, 2025

A sheltered anchorage (which are far and few between along the coastal inlets), approach to the alpine within 12 hours and granite peaks are three ingredients I have dreamed of combining in one outing. At the head of Toba Inlet in Desolation Sound, Mount Denman appeared to fit the criteria. Forbes Bay, a traditional Klahoose Nation summer village site, looked like it could provide decent shelter in moderate conditions. It is the most used access point for Mt. Denman - a combination of flagged trail and compulsory bushwacking to follow the overgrown 90 year old logging road.

Jason Addy from Powell River had sent me the description of the first ascent of the NW Buttress in 1997 by Chris Kettles, Rick Clements and Fred Becky (who would have been 74 at the time). Rick describes climbing 12 pitches on good rock, mostly easy climbing with several pitches at 5.9/5.10. They down climbed and rappelled after bivvying on the summit.

Based on this description it seemed prudent to bring one or two rope guns and for years I would pull up the route description on my phone to entice potential trip partners. A trip of this length, flexibly staged around a good weather window would require a lot of planning in order to free up schedules. A group of interested climbers was formed in May 2025 and in early August Shanda and I spent a lovely week bringing our little catamaran, Alice J, to Cortes, from where I planned to stage the Mount Denman trip later that month.

Finally after months of anticipation and preparation I was dismayed to realize I had mistaken the group's stoke to climb as commitment and all aligning schedules vanished 1-2 days before the planned start. The boat was in position, stocked up and ready to go. The work schedule had been cleared of pressing deadlines and dentist/doctor/mechanic appointments had been postponed and backcountry gear was packed.

Jason Addy's second ascent in August 2025 brought welcome current beta and his description of being able to bypass trickier pitches at more moderate grades



*Desolation sound with Mount Denman in the centre.*  
PHOTO BY STEFAN GESSINGER

gave me the confidence to attempt it without rope guns. Not ready to give up on the trip I cast a wide net looking for trip partners who could get out for a week leaving on very short notice, which included contacting strangers on Facebook.

Andrew had not yet returned my call from two days earlier and intended to tell me that he could not get out for 6 days on such short notice. I had barely blurted out my plan of travelling by electric car from Salt Spring to Cortes, from there by sailboat through Desolation Sound and climbing a Becky route on Mount Denman when he promised to try to get a backcountry pass.

And so we were off a few days later. The three ferries connected well as we island-hopped our way to Cortes. By late morning we were sailing towards Desolation Sound with the spinnaker flying. Nothing says sailing like setting the spinnaker sail – naturally the conditions were short lived and before long we were doing what sailboats do most of the time in the east coast waters of Vancouver Island, slowly motoring towards our destination.

The rising tide flows around the north and south end of Vancouver Island and the flooding flows meet in Desolation Sound. Because the water from here does not flow all the way back to the colder open ocean during the ebbing cycle it is substantially warmer than anywhere else on Vancouver Island. It is a common sight to see fellow boaters jump in the water for a swim in the anchorages. When motoring our catamaran draws about 1.5 feet, allowing us to go most places kayaks can go and we enjoyed a scenic route through island clusters with an extended stop at Prideaux Haven for a late lunch and swim.

Forbes Bay is a river delta with a ground that drops off steep and it was tricky to find a spot to anchor that was not too deep or shallow.



*Andrew Welsh following the green sidewalk through the Forbes Creek valley. PHOTO BY STEFAN GESSINGER*

We eventually settled in securely with the anchor set on a protruding shelf and a stern tie running back to a large rock at the shore. We had set all this up at high tide with the depth sounder telling us that we would have enough water underneath us when the tide would reach its lowest level during the middle of the night. As the tide goes out, the slack in the dual anchor line system increases and the position of the boat changes - I slept on deck in order to check a few times during the night that we would have sufficient clearance of several large boulders which lay on the muddy bottom.

Confident that the boat would be fine during a variety of wind, wave and tide conditions we rowed our inflatable canoe ashore at dawn and hid the boat in the bushes where it would not get too hot in the sun. Soon we'd picked up a flagged trail which follows the Forbes Creek valley, hoping to make as much headway as possible before the day's heat set in. The well travelled flagged trail did not last long and we started slowly picking our way through the path of least resistance of the underbrush. All trip reports we had read spoke of a difficult to find, 90 year old wood logging road which makes travel up the valley a lot easier.

The road is rotten and gone in many places and easy to lose as you are trying to follow it but is also a great line contouring through the valley with long sections of log stringers being walkable. It consists of two parallel logs with it's top flattened surface covered in thick moss - this made for a green sidewalk above the forest bottom.



*Logging truck on a wood "fore and aft" logging road.*  
PHOTO SOURCE UNKNOWN

Following the wood logging road with 90 year old trees growing in the middle of it left us wondering how the harvesting and log transporting was done at a time when they were still cutting down trees with handsaws. Our initial conclusion was the road would have been planked and the planks had been moved to the next road. Later research indicated that it was a so called "fore and aft road" with the stringers being essentially a wooden rail track with little curbs keeping the wheels of the trucks on track. What a slow and terrifying drive it would have been crossing many small ravines in the valley terrain!

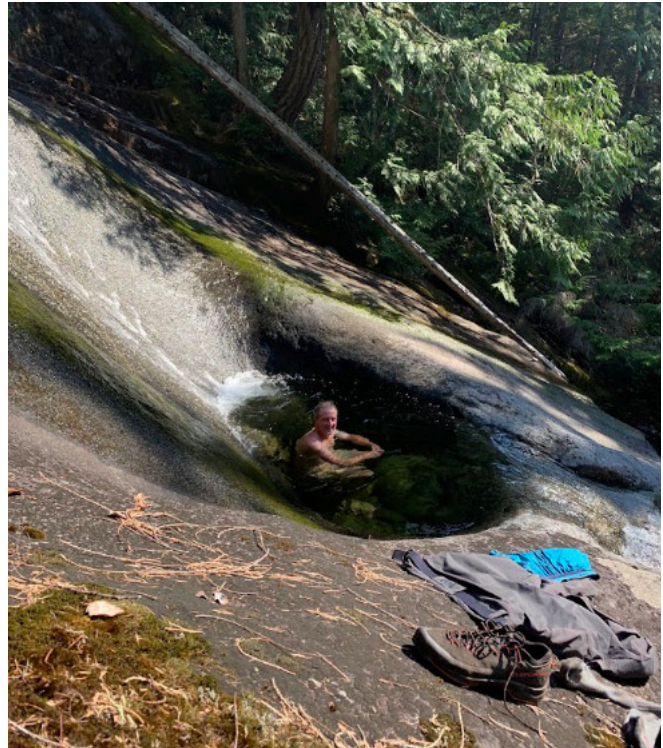
The end of the logging road brought us to the 1000 metre climb out of the valley bottom. The group which had come through a few weeks earlier was at this point followed by a bear which ended up being in their vicinity for 7 hours – this unusual behaviour was our biggest concern of the entire trip.

Fortunately we did not cross paths with this bear during the next few days and we trudged up through the old growth forest enjoying the shaded canopy during the very hot day.

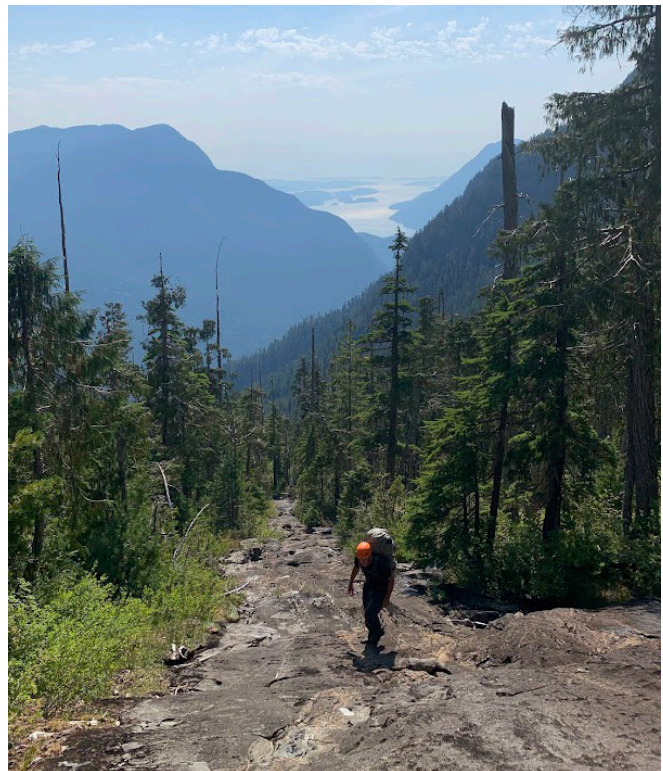
The majority of the forest travelled well by Vancouver Island standards and at tree line we found several dry stream beds where the eroded thin layer of topsoil had exposed granite slabs.

Exiting the abrupt treeline at the top of an old moraine was a dramatic change in landscape as we looked over a huge granite bowl which would have had a permanent snowfield not too long ago. We chose to set up camp here as we wanted to hang our food in the trees. Boat to camp took us 12 hours.

Wanting to complete the technical climbing before the sun hit the NW buttress we opted for another early start. The rock was more compact than anticipated, gear was sufficient but not abundant. Route finding was fun and went well with many ways to go. Most of the climbing was short sections of 5.6 - 5.8 with a lot of opportunity to be pulled into more difficult terrain.



*Hillside cold plunge.*  
PHOTO BY ANDREW WELSH



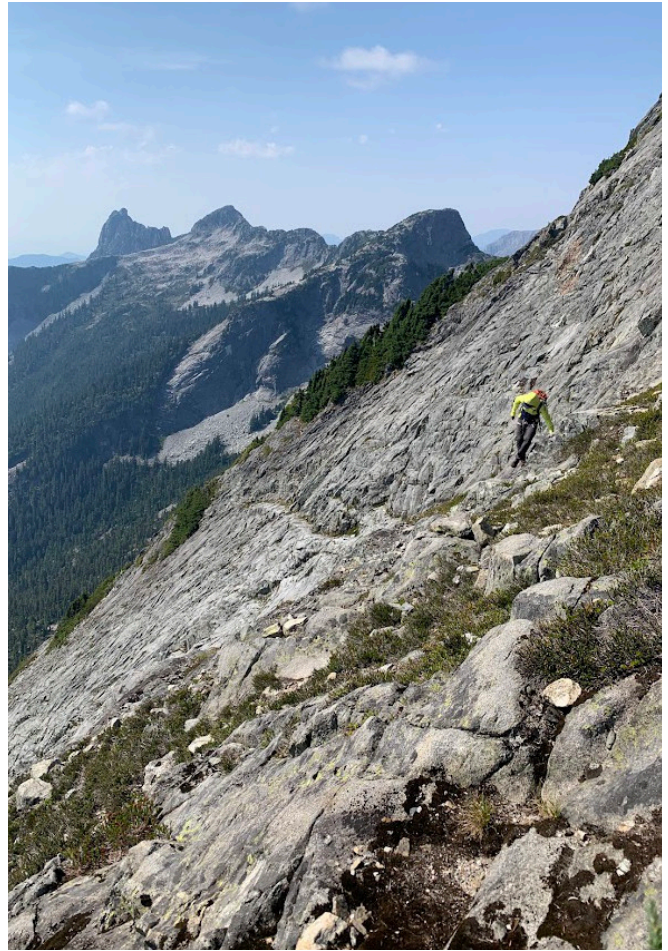
*Andrew taking the obvious route.*  
PHOTO BY STEFAN GESSINGER

Our crux ended up being a short 5.10 corner which protected well - my kind of alpine crux.

Topping out on the ridge crest was another dramatic moment with big exposure down the 800 metre north face, expansive views across the Coast Range mountains



View down the route to camp.  
PHOTO BY STEFAN GESSINGER



Stefan Gessinger with the grey sidewalk in the background. PHOTO BY ANDREW WELSH



Andrew Welsh on the summit ridge. PHOTO BY STEFAN GESSINGER

and down on to the anchorages of Desolation Sound.

Descending the standard route is a quite straightforward scramble with a key section - the "grey sidewalk" which cuts across most of the large slab on the S-face.

Unfortunately we ended up losing quite a bit of elevation before circling back to our approach route from the day before, resulting in a 250 metre ascent back to camp. It took us 12 hours camp to camp to climb and descend back to camp.

Bushwacking and heat is a claustrophobic combination and the 7 hours hike back to the boat required a fair bit of ignoring unpleasant circumstances.

Reaching Forbes Creek close to the coast made for a very refreshing swim. We swam off the boat two more times before boating over to Tenedos Bay where a short hike brought us to the awesome swim spot of Unwin Lake. The anchorages of Desolation Sound are very busy and popular during the summer months. Despite the worst of it being

over by the end of August Tenedos Bay was still very busy and we found ourselves relocating our anchoring spot to find a suitably quiet corner.

The next morning as we motored Alice J through calm seas back to Cortes I felt appreciative for the slower pace of this leg of the trip. Often a weekend trip on Vancouver Island ends with a somewhat hasty return in order to catch one of the late ferries back to Salt Spring island.

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**PARTICIPANTS: ANDREW WELSH  
AND STEFAN GESSINGER**



Looking back at our route on the Denman summit block. Picture from earlier in the season.

PHOTO SOURCE UNKNOWN



Andrew Welsh and the Alice J in Tenedos Bay. PHOTO BY STEFAN GESSINGER

# Discourse Curious

Mary Sanseverino

Want to see more stories from ACCVI members throughout the year? Of course you do! Make sure to visit [ACCVI's Discourse website](https://discourse.accvi.ca) (discourse.accvi.ca) for trip reports, upcoming events, media, access issues, education and more. Here are few examples from 2025 to give you a taste of what our ACCVI Discourse has to offer:

**Big Day Out 2025 - Island Style**  
by Stefan Gessinger. Photo of the approach to Adder Mountain.

CLICK OR SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW TO SEE MORE



**Mount Harmston, Argus and the Red Pillar** by Sarah Duncan. Heading back to camp after a successful day in the alpine.

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**Gully Adventures** by Neil Ernst.

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# WESTERN CANADA

## Amiskwi Lodge Hiking Week

Peggy Taylor

Sept 5 - 12, 2025

On September 4 a group of eight ACCVI members converged on Golden, B.C. to helicopter into beautiful Amiskwi Lodge. Located in British Columbia's Rocky Mountains, just outside the north west corner of Yoho National Park, Amiskwi turned out to be a wonderful place to spend a week!

This was a self-catered, self-guided trip. Amenities at the lodge included a fully appointed kitchen with propane stove and oven, freezers on the front entrance deck, and coolers inside, indoor composting toilets, two wood burning stoves in the dining area and sunroom, and comfortable beds. There was a separate building with a sauna, and hot water to fill large watering cans to use in the showers and a kiddie's pool outside to cool off in. The pool especially was enjoyed by most of us every night!

Folks paired up to cook dinner for the entire group twice during the week. Everyone made their own breakfasts and lunches. Dinners



Arriving at Amiskwi Lodge, BC, just outside the north west edge of Yoho National Park. PHOTO BY ROGER & PEGGY

Views southward over Amiskwi Lake with Amiskwi Peak (centre), Ogre Peak and Ogre Peak NE2 to the right of that. The Great Divide Trail is hidden in the valley below.

PHOTO BY ROGER & PEGGY





*A second lake – Saturday was a two-dip-day!*

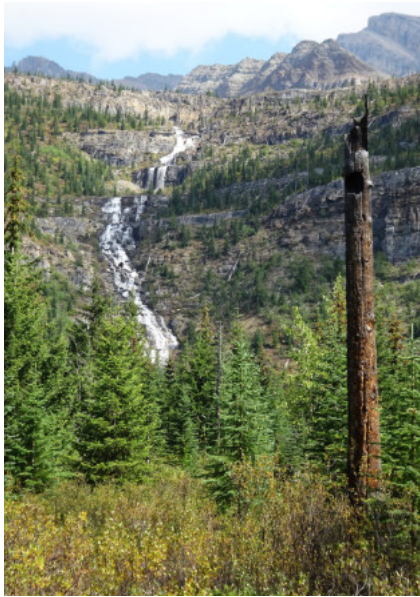
PHOTO BY ROGER & PEGGY

were outstanding and most were enjoyed on the large deck with a stunning view to the Mummery Glacier.

Although the week started with some smoke from a fire nearby in the Blaeberry Valley, a rain-filled thunder and lightning storm on Sunday night cleared out about 85% of the smoke. Our hikes later in the week had much clearer and further views.

On Saturday the entire group hiked south along a rocky plateau to Amiskwi Lake and a second unnamed lake just over a small ridge from Amiskwi Lake. As it was a hot day dips were happily enjoyed in both gorgeous blue and blue green lakes by many of the group.

On Sunday through Wednesday smaller groups formed to hike to multiple locations. Jenny and Ian were especially interested in hiking sections of the Great Divide Trail both below the lodge in the forest and the alternate route above the lodge. They spent several days checking out the condition of the trails; Jenny was one of the original planners/creators of this incredible trail! A highlight on one of those hikes was down the valley to the confluence of the Amiskwi River and a creek draining the west slopes of Arete Peak. We got a great view up to a waterfall that poured out of the area around Amiskwi Lake.



*Waterfall from Amiskwi Lake.*

PHOTO BY ROGER & PEGGY



*Fascinating geology on the ridge above the lodge.*

POTO BY ROGER & PEGGY

Many hiked up to Crystal Ridge, the obvious ridge above the lodge, via different routes, to obtain expansive and stunning 360 views. The routes up proved to be geologically super fascinating and we wished we had a geologist with us to explain the great variety of layered, blockish and fossilized rocks.

Even though it was late in the summer there were still small flowering plants blooming here and there! You could spend hours and days wandering these different plateau levels above the lodge checking out the rock formations. The colours in the crushed rock along Crystal Ridge going north were particularly beautiful as were the views south into Yoho Park showcasing Mont Des Poilus and Arete Peak.

On one trip Roger, George and Rachel ventured further afield: down the steep valley, past the Great Divide Trail, and up to the area north of Hagen Peak NE2. Here they found lovely meadows with pasque flowers in their “hippie” stage and berry bushes showing off their fall colours. Many blueberries, grouse berries, and others were still edible and delicious both in the valleys and on the plateaus! The group found another appealing lake north of Hagen Peak NE2 and then they travelled up to a higher ridge that had amazing views down the Blaeberry Valley and up to the Mummery Glacier.



*Panorama looking northward along Crystal Ridge above the lodge. The Mount Mummery massif and glacier are centre left, and the unnamed lake (known locally as Ayesha Lake) sits below Mount Ayesha on the right. PHOTO BY ROGER & PEGGY*



*Panorama looking southward along Crystal Ridge. Mount Ayesha and Ayesha Lake on the far left, Mount Collie is centre left, followed by the Mount des Poilus massif just right of centre. The remnants of Glacier des Poilus is in the centre. On the far right is Amiskwi Lake. PHOTO BY ROGER & PEGGY*

They were so impressed with this area they convinced the whole group to try a longer variation of the trip on Thursday. We began with a trip to the end of the logging road, then up the other side trending left to a meadowy plateau (referred to as the “golf course” by the lodge owner). After pausing for a snack and a view back to the lodge we ascended a steep meadow-covered hill, and began hiking along an open rocky ridge with trees on the left. Eventually we popped over the ridge and headed down to an open rocky bowl.

We traversed higher on this bowl to head up a loose rocky draw to a col



*L-R: (standing) Nicole, Leona, Ian, Jenny, Rachel; (kneeling) Roger, Peggy, George. PHOTO BY ROGER & PEGGY*



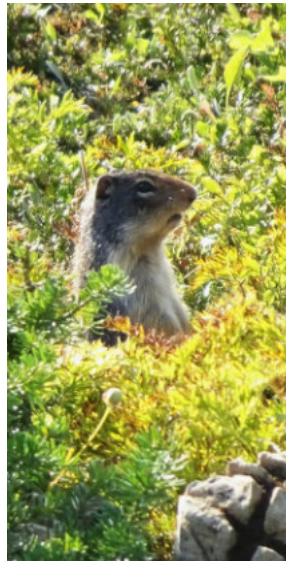
*In the col on the right (east) side of Hagen Peak NE2. Another alpine lake for hardy dippers!*  
PHOTO BY ROGER & PEGGY

on the right (east) side of Hagen Peak NE2. That was a grunt but well worth the view. Our lunch spot in the col gave us a view down to the small lake, ridges above it and the Mummery Glacier behind.

After lunch, we carefully picked our way down the loose rocky slope to the shore of the lake for another very cold dip, enjoyed by all of our hardy crew! We worked our way along the small ridge on the right of the lake to take in the views to the Blaeberry Valley and ever present Mummery Glacier.

Our descent was via the higher col into the greenery on the far right of the lake. We traversed upper meadows, then into trees below and eventually back up the brutally steep trail to the lodge. After a 10-hour day and a full week of hiking most of our reserves were quite depleted, but we all made it back in one piece and agreed that this was the best day of the trip!! What a day to end off on!

We were blessed with great wildlife encounters. Many Columbia ground squirrels live in the meadows close to the lodge, we spied mountain goats on several of the days, a shy porcupine was discovered on our last big day (trying to hide his head behind a rock), a resident raven pair



*Columbia ground squirrel. R&P PHOTO*



*Our shy porcupine. PHOTO BY RACHEL TRELOAR*



*Mountain goat. PHOTO BY ROGER & PEGGY*

accompanied us in the high places and many lovely birds were spotted in the trees surrounding the three decks at the lodge.

This was a fantastic week of mostly off trail exploration in a truly diverse and stunning area. I can say wholeheartedly that a good time was had by all, some boundaries were pushed now and then, but no one came out worse for the wear! Sadly, no weight was lost due to the huge and delicious meals.

Thanks to our host Gary for providing such an amazing place to stay and for some good stories! I would highly recommend Amiskwi

Lodge and this area as a place to hike (and ski in the winter).

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**PARTICIPANTS:** RACHEL TRELOAR,  
GEORGE URBAN, LEONA  
WINSTONE, NICOLE WINSTONE,  
JENNY FEICK AND IAN HATTER,  
PEGGY AND ROGER TAYLOR.

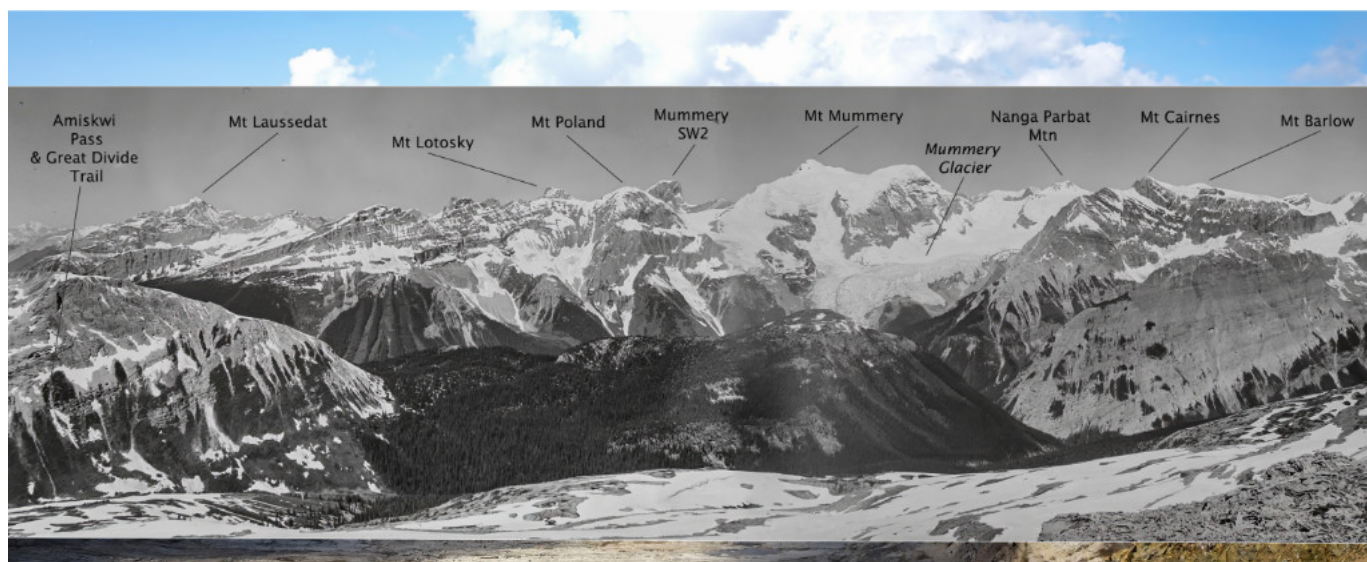
**Postscript by Mary Sanseverino:**

I couldn't join the group at Amiskwi, but have long wanted to repeat a particularly lovely set of images from the area taken in 1917 by Arthur Wheeler. I asked Peggy, Roger, and the rest of the team to try their hand at rephotography.

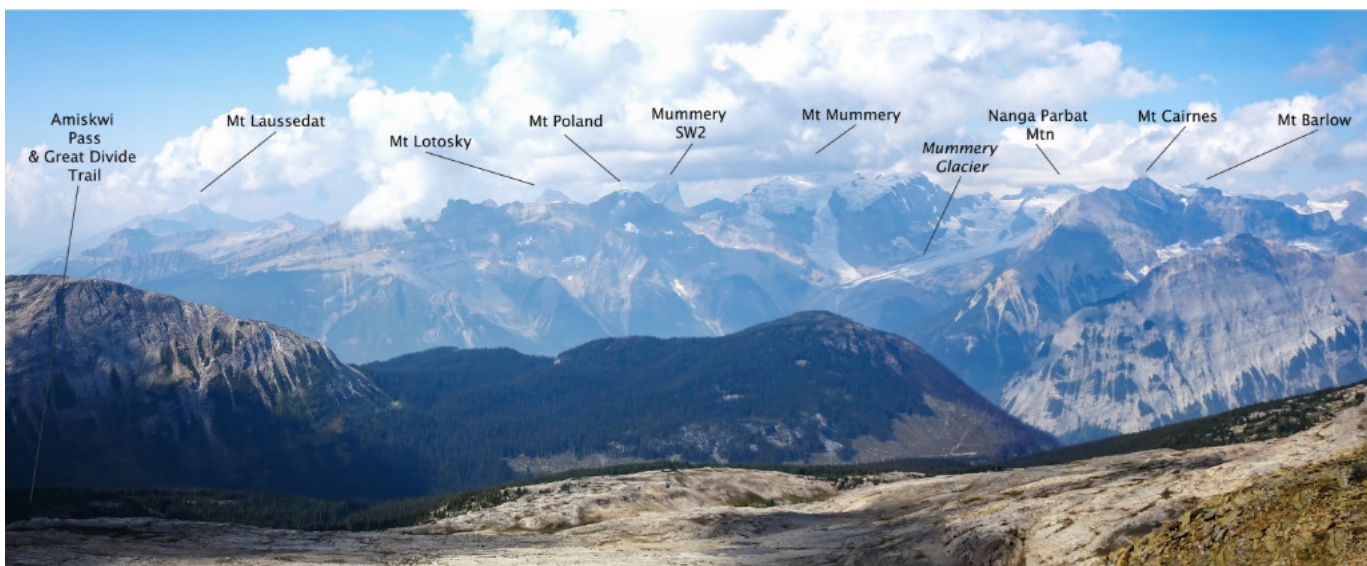
As you can see, they didn't disappoint!

The historic images are part of the Interprovincial Boundary Survey (1913 - 1924) which defined the border between B.C. and Alberta. Wheeler and his team took these images on July 8, 1917. Of his time in the area Wheeler reported "Grand day and good views." It looks like the ACCVI team had the same luck!

Congratulations to Peggy Taylor for lining up and taking the modern repeats with such good accuracy. Much has changed, but I'll let the images speak – they tell a far more eloquent tale than words ever could.



Black & white images: A.O. Wheeler, Interprovincial Boundary Survey, 1917. Colour repeat: On Crystal Ridge looking eastward. B&W IMAGES COURTESY OF LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA/ BIBLIOTHÈQUE ET ARCHIVES CANADA AND THE MOUNTAIN LEGACY PROJECT. COLOUR PHOTO BY PEGGY TAYLOR



# Rockwall Reflections: Five Days on the Rockwall Trail

Bryan Lee

September 18 - 22, 2025

Some backpacking trips ease you in. Others make their expectations clear from the first step. Our five-day, south-to-north traverse of the Rockwall Trail was firmly in the latter category, beginning with a long, unrelenting climb to Floe Lake that wasted no time in demanding both effort and attention.

This trip was part of a tradition my longtime friend Michel and I have tried to maintain for years: at least one backpacking trip annually, no matter how busy life becomes. Michel is a very experienced hiker with strong legs and a well-timed sense of humour, qualities that grow increasingly valuable as days lengthen and packs stubbornly refuse to get lighter. For this year's trip, we chose the Rockwall for its reputation: sustained alpine scenery, honest elevation gain, and immersion in classic Canadian Rocky Mountain terrain.



Michel (left) and Bryan (right).



Floe Lake. PHOTO BY BRYAN LEE

## Day 1: Floe Lake — Earning the View

We began on September 18 at the **Floe Lake Trailhead** under warm, clear skies. The trail immediately committed us to the climb. Switchback followed switchback in steady succession, each offering just enough progress to keep morale intact, but never quite enough to feel merciful.

The ascent to Floe Lake was the hardest physical day of the trip. Late-season conditions meant dry trail and warm temperatures — excellent for views, less ideal for sustained uphill work. Conversation

became sporadic, punctuated by breathing pauses and the occasional joke at our own expense. Michel, as always, found humour in the suffering, reminding me that at least the trail was honest about what it demanded.

When Floe Lake finally revealed itself, the reward felt proportional to the effort. The lake lay calm and reflective beneath surrounding peaks, its stillness amplified by the fatigue of the climb. We made camp at Floe Lake Campground, spent a quiet evening by the water, and let tired legs recover. The suffering of the day had purchased access to a place of remarkable serenity.

## Day 2: Numa Pass and a Sobering Encounter

Morning at Floe Lake was still and warm as we climbed toward Numa Pass. The forest gradually gave way to open alpine terrain, and the sense of exposure increased with elevation. Near the pass, the most intense moment of the trip unfolded.

Rounding a section of trail, we came upon a sow grizzly bear accompanied by two young-of-last-year. The bears were browsing calmly and were within roughly twenty feet of us before we became mutually aware. Time compressed into a few deliberate seconds. We spoke calmly, stood our ground, pulled out our bear spray and allowed the bears the space they needed. After a brief pause, they moved off without incident.

The encounter was quiet, close, and deeply sobering. There was no drama beyond the undeniable reality of sharing space with wildlife that belongs far more to the landscape than we ever could. Once the bears had moved on — and our heart rates followed suit — we continued, more attentive and more appreciative of where we were.

That night we camped at **Numa Creek Campground**, replaying the encounter in thoughtful silence. It lingered not as a story to embellish, but as a reminder of responsibility and respect in prime bear habitat.

## Day 3: Beneath the Rockwall

The third day delivered what the trail is best known for: sustained travel beneath towering limestone cliffs, with long, unfolding views that define the Rockwall experience. Walking beneath the massive ramparts of stone felt humbling. The scale of the terrain reduces concerns to their proper size, and progress becomes measured less in kilometres than in moments of attention.

The trail undulated pleasantly, offering a reprieve for tired muscles



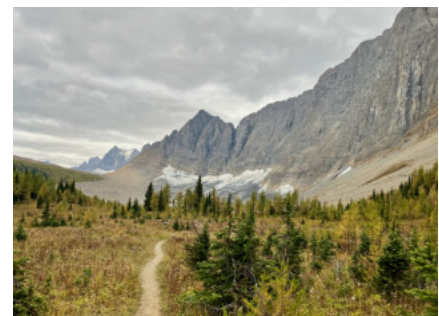
*Numa Pass bears.* PHOTO BY MICHEL AUDY



*Bryan on the Rockwall Trail.* PHOTO BY MICHEL AUDY

while keeping us firmly in alpine country. Warm, stable weather continued — a welcome gift for late September. We stopped often, not from fatigue, but appreciation.

By late afternoon we descended toward **Tumbling Creek Campground**, where the steady sound of water provided an evening soundtrack. It was a day that felt expansive rather than demanding, and it reaffirmed why we return to the mountains year after year.



*The Rockwall looking south.* PHOTO BY BRYAN LEE



*Tumbling Glacier.* PHOTO BY MICHEL AUDY



*Helmet Falls.* PHOTO BY BRYAN LEE



Trails's end Paint Pots. PHOTO BY MICHAEL AUDY

## Day 4: Helmet Falls

Our fourth day carried us north toward one of the route's visual highlights: Helmet Falls. The sound of falling water announced itself well before the falls came into view, eventually revealing a powerful ribbon dropping through steep rock walls.

We camped at **Helmet Falls Campground** and spent the afternoon resting, wandering, and watching the falls. The combination of force and calm was mesmerizing, and the campsite felt like a fitting place to spend our final night on the trail.

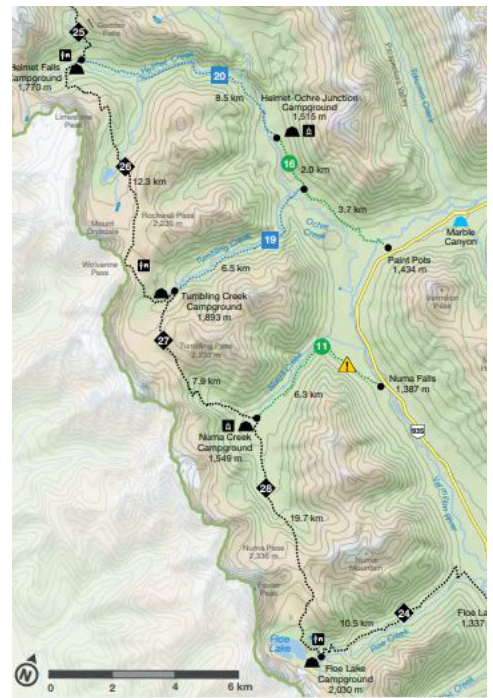
That evening, we reflected on how smoothly the trip had unfolded. Good weather, solid pacing, and mutual trust had allowed us to move comfortably through demanding terrain. The mountains had asked for effort, attention, and

humility — and had offered generosity in return.

## Day 5: The Paint Pots and the End of the Trail

Our final morning led us down toward the **Paint Pots**, a striking and unexpected conclusion. After days of rock, forest, and alpine passes, the mineral-stained pools felt almost otherworldly. The contrast between vivid ochre colours and surrounding forest provided a gentle but memorable finish.

**PARTICIPANTS: BRYAN LEE AND MICHEL AUDY**



Rockwall Trail map.

# 25 Years Climbing on the Columbia Icefields:

## *Excision of the West Twin Monkey*

Jim Everard

May 25 - 29, 2025

Sometimes mountains are climbed for 'simple' reasons, including pure pleasure, the views, scientific study, or the chance to be with friends. The reasons can also be complex and enigmatic to both the participant and the observer.

Our 2025 bid to climb West Twin/Daughter of South Twin was less for lofty motives than it was for a contrived desire to 'knock off' our last-named summit in the Columbia Icefields. In short, there was a monkey on our back and it was biting hard.

For anyone thinking "25 years seems like a long time to complete 16 climbs in one compact geographic area," they'd be right. After all, many climbers have completed the Icefields ascents in as little as two or three trips over the span of two years or less. However, complications arise living out of province, some 3000 kilometres away from the Winston Churchill Range. Ticketing for affordable flights is done months in advance, which is a sure formula for losing the weather roulette game. The result is often having to live for a week inside the equivalent of a ping-pong ball at 10,000 feet between Snowdome and North Twin. After a while, it begins to feel like a strange, almost embarrassing habit.

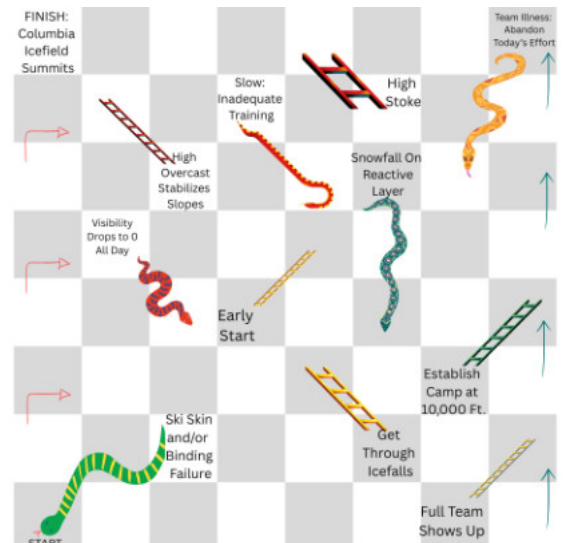
In many ways it's analogous to the game of snakes and ladders, except on Columbia Icefields trips it feels like there are more snakes than ladders. The roll of the dice can grant you shortcuts up the ladder, or a ride down the snake in delay or



*Kabuki signboard poster (detail), Royal Albert Museum, London, UK.*

defeat. Flexibility and patience are paramount, since losing the game is not an option.

This year's trip was, maybe, our twelfth time onto the Icefields: or twenty-fourth trip travelling under Snowdome's seracs or weaving through the lower, middle and upper icefalls to gain the bottom of the hourglass. (Assuming the hourglass ramp exists that season or year.)





*Jim Everard heading up the ramp.* PHOTO BY BLAIR PIGGOT

But unlike previous efforts, the 2025 trip had a new starting point for me, Vancouver Island. With this new location came vastly improved flexibility to work with opaque windows of good weather. The end of May corresponded with a promising period of blue skies. However, elevated temperatures and sun baked south facing slopes would be on the menu too.

On two previous occasions we had faced a similar forecast. On one occasion we backed off due to reactive faceted layers, and on the other we watched a team trigger a cornice failure from the northeast ridge of West Twin. The cornice landed 40 feet below, like a 150mm howitzer shell. The south face of West Twin ripped off. The climbers had to descend to and through the 8 foot crown, down onto the ice, followed by many sketchy rappels.

“Let’s rub our noses in it, and see what happens,” was our best option.



*Not fast enough: Blair Piggot heading across the Columbia Icefields.* PHOTO BY JIM EVERARD

There were no other parties heading up the Athabasca Glacier when we arrived in late May. The traditional ‘busy season’ – usually

corresponding with the Victoria Day long weekend – had come and gone with fewer parties and ascents than normal.



*Jim Everard approaching the summit of West Twin; Mount Alberta in the background.*  
PHOTO BY BLAIR PIGGOT

We leaned hard into not travelling under Snowdome, and this choice was strengthened with the crack and roar of serac fall. Roped up, we threaded our way between icefalls and ramps and eventually gained the toe of the barely intact (skiable) ramp.

A gain of 300 metres brought us to safer terrain and ever-expanding views. But the reality was we were moving slowly. It took a full hour before the top of Mount Columbia came into view. The sun beat down. We stopped often for liquid. The rest stops became more frequent and longer. (We also neglected to follow the GPS track, a costly mistake paid for in time and energy).

By 6 p.m. we ought to have been at the far north end of the Icefields, in the vicinity of North Twin. Instead, we were more than 5 kilometres short. The mind knew we had to keep going, but the body refused. The snake of inadequate conditioning and acclimatization halted progress. Funny things happen when the combined age of two climbers exceeds 135 years.

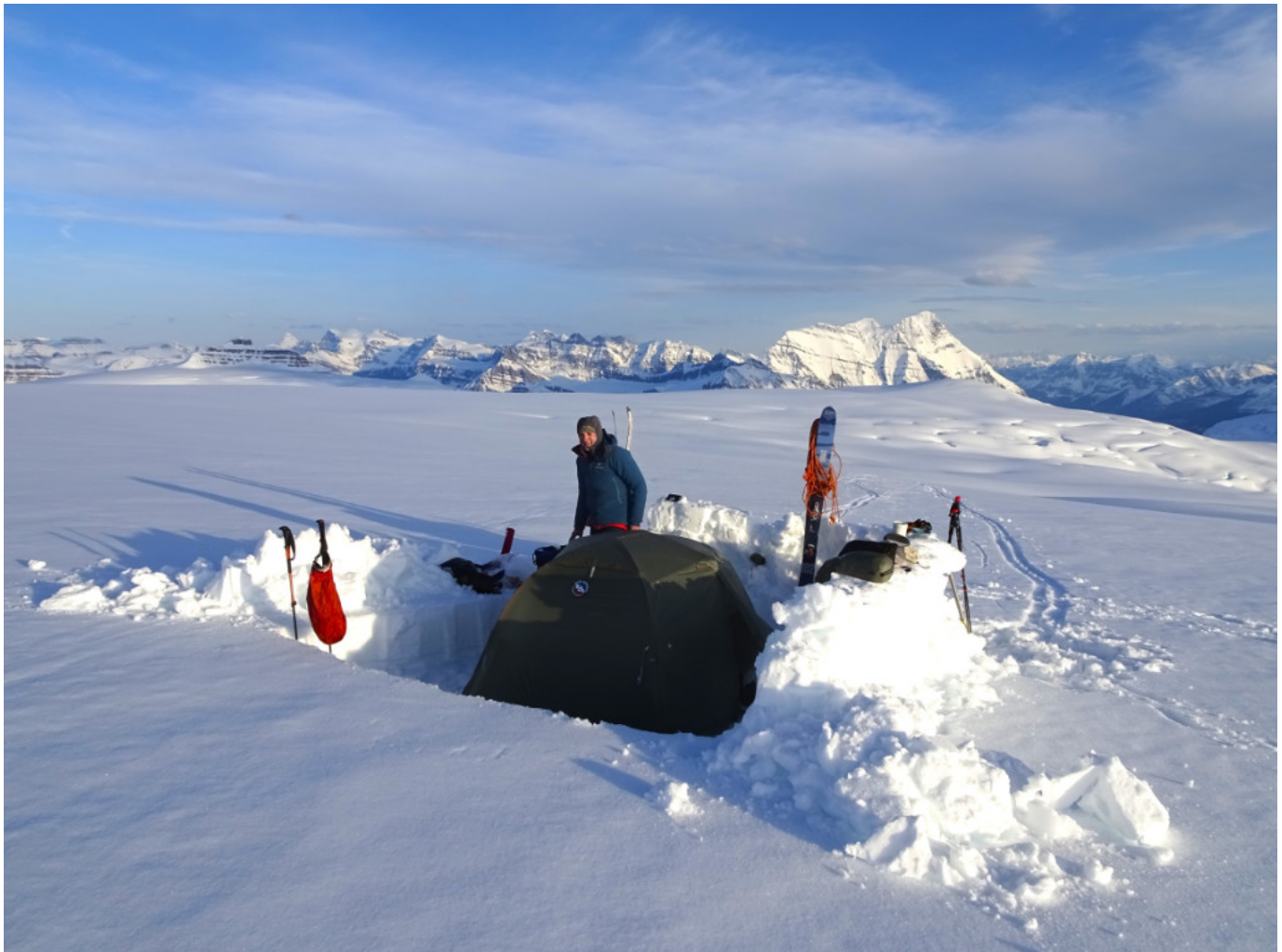
The next day we stayed put, a decision shaped by low clouds and spirits.

The forecast for day three was more promising. We knew we had to be off West Twin's south slopes by about 10 a.m. at the latest. That meant waking up at 3 a.m. and departing in nautical twilight by 4 a.m., which we did.

At 5:30 a.m. the sun shimmered off the summit of Mount Columbia, yet we had still not reached the north end of the Icefields. We picked up the pace as best we could (which, because of me, wasn't much), and cut short our refueling and rehydrating efforts. Ski crampons were attached in 15 seconds, then we scratched our way across the lower face of North Twin and down to the col with South Twin.

The view was not encouraging. It was 8 a.m. and we could see the slopes of West Twin had been baking in the sun for hours. Pinwheels of snow traced wild lines down the surface like tears.

We looked at each other, knowing what the smartest move would be (retreat).



*Packing up camp, Mount Bryce in the distance.* PHOTO BY JIM EVERARD

Still, we rolled the dice, and landed on the square of a ladder.

We ascended to near West Twin's ridge in lung-busting fashion, burrowed our way through a slightly overhanging cornice and dashed to the summit. There we lingered for no more than three minutes, taking in the immensity of our surroundings.

The distinctive southwest fin of Mount Alberta grabbed our attention, as did the volume of snow on Alberta's scrambling slopes, the Japanese Route, and the long traverse across to its summit. We dispensed with hydration and essentially jogged back along West Twin's ridge to our ascent line. There were a few tricky moves back through the burrowed, but still overhanging, cornice.

And then, turning inward, we pretended to gently flutter into each and every step made on our ascent, terrified by the consequence of bucket bashing our way down.

Only well past the bottom of the slope did we return to normal breathing, water and food. We were delighted to be off West Twin. The journey back to the more-distant-than-ideal camp would consume much of the remaining day. The sun beat down. Pained feet felt like mashed potatoes; I slowed to a crawl.

By the time we made it to camp the overwhelming emotion was relief rather than celebration. Type two fun at best.

On the last day we had to deal with a few new spicy snakes: melted out zones of uncertainty, a few collapsed snow bridges and a forced march, boots on, across the Sunwapta. But by then, even the snakes felt like ladders.

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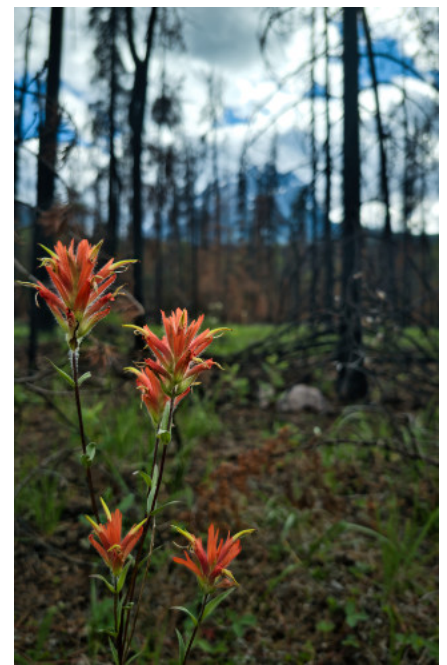
**PARTICIPANTS: JIM EVERARD AND BLAIR PIGGOT**

# Exploring the Fryatt Valley

Katie McCall

July 12 - 15, 2025

The challenging Fryatt Valley Trail in Jasper National Park, approximately 50 kilometres round-trip, is renowned for its stunning alpine scenery, featuring waterfalls, crystal-clear streams, and hanging glaciers. The trail leads up a steep headwall to the cozy Fryatt Creek Sydney Vallance 12 person Alpine Club of Canada Hut.



Walking through the burn scar on the first section of the Fryatt Valley Trail. PHOTOS BY KATIE & RYAN

**T**he Fryatt Valley Trail in Jasper National Park starts a couple kilometres up the Geraldine Fire Road, which is located near Athabasca Falls. The trailhead has a parking area with room for about 10 cars, but no facilities. Campsites have prepared tent pads, bear caches and barrel toilets.

## Day 1: Trailhead to Lower Fryatt Campsite (about 11 kilometres)

The beginning of the trail follows an abandoned road, wide and flat.

The first couple kilometres took us through blackened burn scar from the massive 2024 fire, which was eerie to walk through, but new life already abounds: from grasses and wildflowers to birds and small critters, all could be seen and heard throughout the woods as we walked.

The trail gently winds its way towards the Athabasca River, then runs parallel to it until about KM 7.5, where the trail gets right up to the river's edge, making a potential spot for winter travellers to cross the frozen river and knock 7-8

kilometres off their slog into the hut. After that the trail veers away from the river towards the Fryatt Valley with a gentle climb.

There were a few rocky sections between the river and Lower Fryatt Camp, and some sections that narrowed to a "wide single track" rather than the defined double track of the old road. Overall it was an easy hike and would be very rideable on a mountain bike – which Parks does allow up to the Lower Fryatt campsite. The only parts that would be tricky on a bike

were a handful of awkward-height deadfalls across the trail.

The highlight of this section was a stunning viewpoint overlooking the Athabasca.

We arrived at a mostly full campsite, with only two tent pads remaining. We set up our tent and got started making dinner. We were very surprised to see a Parks Canada-branded firepit at the site, complete with chopped wood for campers to use. We joined another



*A stunning viewpoint above the Athabasca River.*  
PHOTO BY KATIE & RYAN



*Ryan walking across the bridge at Lower Fryatt Camp.*  
PHOTO BY KATIE & RYAN

group around the small fire and chatted for a while until we all headed to bed.

## Day 2: Lower Fryatt to ACC Hut (about 11 kilometres)

We rose just after 6 a.m., and Ryan packed the tent while I prepared breakfast. We ate alongside other campers at the picnic tables and shared travel plans. Most said that they were headed back to the trailhead, but one couple planned to stay the night at Brussels Campground and then continue to the hut the following day. We looked forward to having their company in a couple of days. Once

we'd eaten and packed, we set off for the hut!

From the Lower Fryatt Campsite, the trail winds through the forest with a relatively gentle but steady climb. The underbrush was thick in many places, crowding the trail, and due to the previous night's rain, we got quite damp as we walked. We passed a solo hiker heading out who looked totally soaked. Ryan soon opted to put his rain pants on, but I didn't bother since he was in the lead and brushing most of the water away for me!

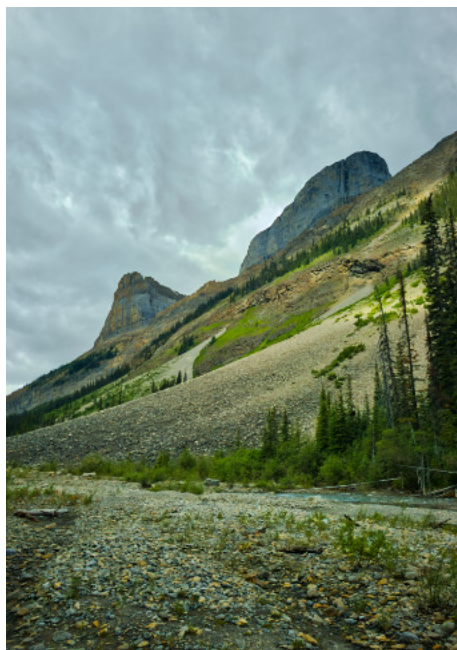
The sound of the rushing creek ebbed and flowed as the trail twisted through the forest. At one point we got very close to the creekside and saw a short trail down to it, so we detoured for a look. Wow! What a stunning valley!

We rejoined the main trail to soon find a log bridge crossing the wide, rushing creek. Once across, the trail followed the rocky creekside where several different routes could be seen picking their way upstream. After about 2 kilometres of rocky walking, we arrived at Brussels, the second and final campground along the trail before the hut. We stopped for a quick bathroom break but were eager to get going again as the bugs were pretty bad.

We carried on along the valley floor, the peaks on either side towering over us. We could see waterfalls on both sides rushing meltwater down into Fryatt Creek as we followed it upstream. Then seemingly out of nowhere a huge cairn stood ahead, and just beyond it, the stunning Fryatt Lake.

We dropped our packs at the cairn and ventured off to explore a nearby waterfall on the north side of the valley. The breeze at this higher point was doing wonders to keep the bugs away, so after checking out the falls we had lunch at the cairn.

Bellies full, we followed smaller cairns to descend to the lakeshore.



*Looking up the Fryatt Valley.*  
PHOTO BY KATIE & RYAN

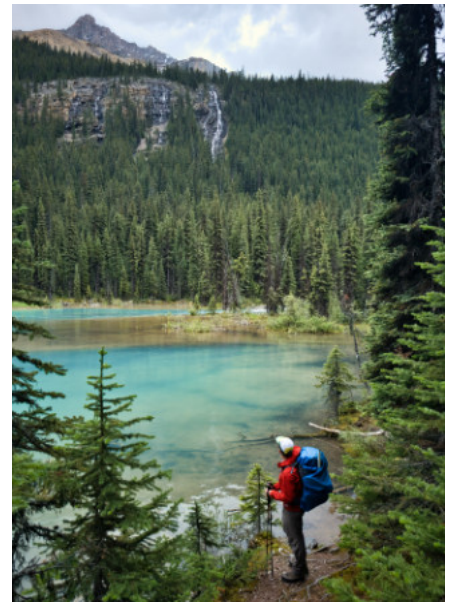


*Katie reaching for the top of the giant cairn in front of Fryatt Lake.*  
PHOTO BY KATIE & RYAN

After only a few steps it started to rain, so we paused to put on our rain gear. Once we were level with the lake we followed the trail along its northwestern side, getting peekaboo views of peaks through gaps in the trees as we went.



*One of many rushing waterfalls along both sides of the Fryatt Valley.* PHOTO BY KATIE & RYAN



*Katie and Ryan walking along the shore of Fryatt Lake.*  
PHOTOS BY KATIE & RYAN



*The old bear hang at the decommissioned Headwall Campground.*  
PHOTO BY KATIE & RYAN

About 3 kilometres past Brussels, just before starting the climb up the dreaded valley headwall, is the old Headwall Campground. This camping area was closed by Parks due to rockfall risk, but a picnic table and the old bear hang remain.

We paused to chat with a couple that was stopped for a snack there. They had stayed at the hut the night

before, and on their way out had attempted to climb over a shoulder of Mt Fryatt to exit the area via the Geraldine Lakes Trail. They had ended up “cliffed out” and unable to find a safe route, so opted to backtrack to the hut and follow the Fryatt Valley Trail back out. We wished them luck with the long, late day they had ahead of them and

steeled ourselves for the final push of our day: the headwall.



*Katie starting the headwall climb. PHOTO BY KATIE & RYAN*

The headwall climb brings hikers up about 200 metres of elevation in the short distance of 500 metres laterally, giving an average slope angle of nearly 45°. In the Parks Canada guide to the Fryatt area, it's



*Arriving at the Fryatt Creek (Sydney Vallance) ACC Hut. PHOTO BY KATIE & RYAN*

clearly stated to ensure that you follow the yellow trail markers for this section because veering off the proper route can lead to very difficult and dangerous terrain. While tough, the climb was over quickly and the sharp elevation gain



*Looking back over Fryatt Lake from the top of the headwall. PHOTO BY KATIE & RYAN*



*"Serenity Pool" just steps from the ACC Hut. PHOTO BY KATIE & RYAN*

gave us stunning views over the lake and valley below.

The final stretch from the top of headwall brought us past a beautiful ice-blue pool of water with a rushing inflow but no visible outflow, and then to an even lovelier sight: the hut!

We took some time after arriving to read through entries in the Hut

Register, many of which mentioned hikers' surprise at how quiet this hut is. A few tales recounted the absolute slog of getting up there in the winter – it sounds like the average ski/hike time is about 16 hours one way. A recurrent character throughout the years was Kevin the Porcupine, though he never made an appearance for us.

There were many detailed drawings, including artistic maps of the area with names for natural features such as Serenity Pool, which we passed by just before reaching the hut.

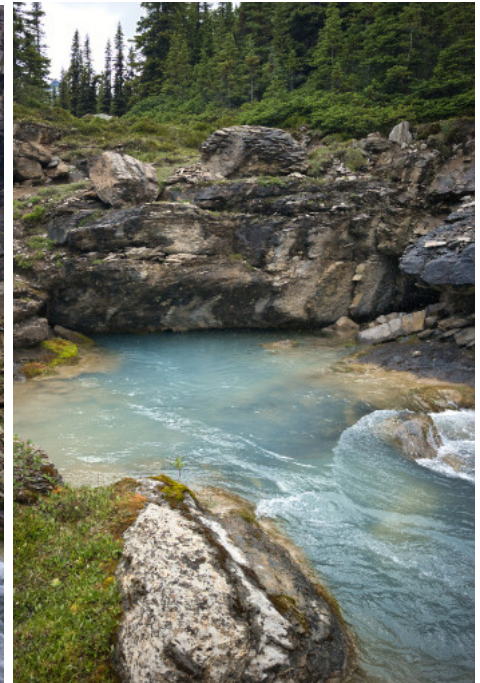
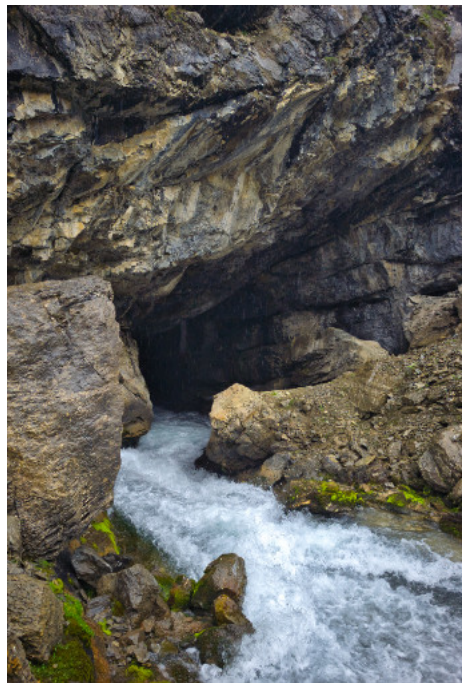
While we were relaxing, the other two hut occupants – a father and son from Grand Prairie – arrived after a day exploring the upper valley area. The four of us chatted over dinner and we learned that the dad's other son (who couldn't join them for this trip) had been the one to first build the massive cairn we saw, years ago on their family's first trip up here!

### Day 3: Exploring The Fryatt Valley (about 8.5 kilometres)

Our first morning in the hut we woke to rain pounding on the roof so we slept in, feeling no sense of urgency to get outside in the deluge. When planning this trip, we intended to attempt a summit of one of the smaller mountains in the valley, but with the rain, low clouds, and intermittent fog we were seeing we decided it would be smarter to explore below the clouds. After a lazy breakfast we donned our rain gear head-to-toe and set off.

From the hut, we followed a boggy trail southwest alongside the creek. About 550 metres on, we came across a large cave that the creek rushes into. We checked it out as much as we safely could, then continued farther upstream where we saw that the creek was flowing out of another cave. From there, the trail ventured through a boulder field until we came upon the shoreline of a beautiful turquoise lake.

We followed the marshy lakeside to our left, finding our own route as the trail disappeared in the softer ground. Once we were about halfway around the lake, we consulted our map to decide our next move. The other hikers at the hut had talked about getting to the



*The first and second caves that we came across upstream from the hut. PHOTOS BY KATIE & RYAN*



*The view from above this beautiful blue lake. PHOTO BY KATIE & RYAN*

bottom of the glacier at the end of the valley, but a large boulder field of slippery rock barred our way.

We decided to avoid the boulders and instead try to get to another glacier that we'd seen from the hut on the south side of the valley, then take advantage of the high ground to plan our next move.

We picked our way up the rocky slope, navigating large and small

rocks covered in slippery lichen. As we climbed, the glacier eventually came into view. Sadly, we also saw that we couldn't safely get right up to it due to the terrain... So, we got as close as we felt comfortable with and then turned around to find ourselves dazzled by the otherworldly blue of the lake below. It was also around this time that we noticed the rain had stopped – yay!



*A viewpoint overlooking the glacier at the end of Fryatt Valley.* PHOTO BY KATIE & RYAN

We did a time check and figured we might as well try to make our way towards the glacier at the end of the valley, so we descended a bit and traversed west across the scree and talus slope above the boulder fields. As we crested the rise south of the lake, a large tarn came into view below us.

Reading the terrain, we decided the easiest route followed a gentle slope from the tarn up to the southwest, so we continued to pick our way along the moraine.

We soon found a rough route marked by cairns, which we followed until we could see the toe of the glacier to our northwest. Unfortunately, we were approaching our turnaround time (5:30 p.m.), so we made the call to head back down to the hut.

But we still hadn't touched a glacier... "Wait!", we thought – there was another smaller glacier not too far to our east that we should be able to access in a reasonable time. We traversed across another boulder field to reach it – and walk on it.

Feeling a sense of accomplishment, we had fun boot-skiing down the lower snowfield before rejoining the cairned route above the lake. As we approached the steeper section, we briefly lost the trail in the loose rock but continued in what we knew was the right direction. When we reached the lakeshore, we took a moment to look around and locate the proper trail, then saved a waypoint in our GPS app for next time.

From the lake, we followed the same trail back to the hut that we'd

taken earlier, except for a small detour to find the outflow of the creek downhill from the first cave. By the time we got back to the hut, the clouds had almost completely cleared, and the evening sun was shining brightly. We ate dinner, played a game of crib, and went to bed, knowing we had a long hike out tomorrow. The couple at Lower Fryatt that said they'd be getting to the hut this night never showed; we're guessing they turned around due to the heavy rain earlier in the day.

#### **Day 4: Fryatt Hut to Trailhead (about 22kilometres)**

We woke up early to a perfectly clear sky, the sounds of the rushing creek and birds chirping nearby. We ate our oatmeal, packed our gear, and cleaned the hut before setting off.



*Fryatt Lake looking northeast from the western shoreline. PHOTO BY KATIE & RYAN*

Going down the headwall was much easier and faster than the climb two days prior. We were thankful the rain had stopped, because the steep descent would have been treacherous in the wet. We felt bad for the father and son who had hiked out in the downpour the day before.

In what felt like no time at all, we reached the old Headwall Campground, then continued to make quick work of retracing our steps past Fryatt Lake towards the wide and rocky valley. The hike all the way to the bridge flew by, and then we were enveloped by the lush green forest once more.

We continued our brisk pace and arrived at the Lower Fryatt Campground around 11:30am. We enjoyed a slow lunch, taking the time to air out our feet as we ate, and got back on the trail just before noon. While the rest of the hike out was very easygoing, cruisy, and mostly flat (except for those pesky deadfalls), the last few kilometres seemed to really drag on. We passed at least four groups on their way in, and wondered how many would make it all the way to the hut.

Finally, a glint through the trees! Just around one more bend, there was the trailhead. While we were a little disappointed not to have attempted any summits, we know we made the safe call based on the bad weather, and we're so happy to have explored such a beautiful, hidden gem. We're already planning our next trip back!

**PARTICIPANTS:** KATIE & RYAN MCCALL



**ALPINE CLUB  
OF CANADA**

**CLUB ALPIN  
DU CANADA**

# A Week at the ACC Summer Leadership Camp

Rachel Treloar

July 26 - August 2, 2025

In late July of 2025, I headed to the Hatteras Range in the Purcell Mountains for what was to be the final Alpine Club of Canada Summer Leadership Course (SLC), held alongside week 4 of the ACC General Mountaineering Camp (GMC). This location was chosen to give quick access to several glaciers and peaks, ridge traverses and rock climbing, as well as hikes to alpine lakes and meadows. We staged from a logging road south of Golden and after a 20 minute helicopter ride arrived to a warm welcome at basecamp.



*Hatteras Range basecamp, elevation 2135 metres.*

PHOTO COURTESY ACC / GOOGLE EARTH, 2025

I was keen to participate in the Summer Leadership Course to gain additional skills and practice existing ones, strengthen my leadership abilities and build confidence to lead more challenging multi-day mountaineering and hiking trips in the mountains. While I have well-developed group management skills in a variety of con-

texts, I have limited experience applying them in the alpine. I was hopeful that the course would provide me with the skills, tools and supported practice time to better plan trips, manage risk, and safely and effectively lead groups in the mountains. Another key goal was to use my participation to support expanding the number and type of

trips our section offers, and support the development of leaders by transferring the skills I learned at the SLC.

While the SLC was held alongside the GMC, the SLC focuses less on summit objectives and technical skills and more on the development of leadership skills, including risk assessment and decision-making,



*On the glacier.* PHOTO BY RACHEL TRELOAR



*Summer Leadership Course members on the ridge above camp.* PHOTO BY FRANCISCO MEDINA

route finding and group management. We learned to lead and practised route-finding on different types of terrain, including glaciers, steep snow and rock. Days were very long as we were generally up before 6:00 a.m., heading out of

camp between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. after a short meeting, returning mid to late afternoon and then meeting until as late as 8:00 p.m., with only short breaks for meals or a quick shower.

While we made it to the top of Squab Peak (2746 metres), we stopped short, often well short, of all the more prominent peaks in the area as much of our time was spent watching, practising and discussing skills.



Time for fun! PHOTO BY RACHEL TRELOAR



Practising on steep snow. PHOTO BY FRANCISCO MEDINA

We did still have a little time for fun. One day we packed the camp mascot, an inflatable pink flamingo and took it along with us, photographing it rappelling, climbing steep snow and other such antics. On the last night the entire camp joined into fun, games, music and a rope coiling competition.

Going forward, the ACC has decided to change the format of national leadership development courses from the week long summer and winter courses in BC/ Alberta to shorter activity based courses rotating through different parts of Canada.

For 2026, this will be Backcountry Skiing (Eastern), Rock Climbing (Sea-to-Sky), and Hiking/ Backpacking (Central). These courses will be section-vetted, with participants selected by ACC National and will host about 10 leaders each.

Future courses may include ice climbing and ski mountaineering. If you are an active section leader and you are interested in being nominated for one of these

courses, please reach out to the leadership committee ([leadership@accvi.ca](mailto:leadership@accvi.ca)) for more details when they are available.

A huge thank you to the Vancouver Island section for subsidising my attendance.

All in all, it was a fabulous experience and I feel very privileged to have been able to attend.

**PARTICIPANTS:** RACHEL TRELOAR FROM ACCVI, ALONG WITH SLC PARTICIPANTS AND LEADERS FROM ACROSS THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA



# THE FAR RANGES

## Nanga Parbat

Jim Everard

April, 2025

The possibility of reaching great summits, conjured from youthful exuberance, was slipping away. The mountains were not growing taller, but irreversible health issues were putting them out of reach. Specifically, my dream of ascending Nanga Parbat was fading. Fast.



*Jim Everard soloing the Southeast Ridge of Nanga Parbat.*  
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE RIALB HERITAGE COLLECTION

Having recently been diagnosed with Stargardt’s disease – a so-called ‘progressive’ disease that eliminates some or all of the eyes central vision and – if you are lucky – trapping you in a liminal space where shapes can still enter your side vision. I had about 3-5 years of eroding sight before that too might be gone.

Having just retired – actually, reorganized ‘to pursue other opportunities’ – I leaned hard into expedition planning and climbing. This team would be composed of long-time trusted friends, Rialb and Lafar. We had climbed together for decades in challenging mountain

ranges and circumstances - earning us the moniker “The B.Sc. Boys” referring to the Bugaboos, Selkirks and Cascades. As for the expedition manager, there was no one better qualified than the multi-talented Sargeant Kowalski. Rick Collier, whose Canadian mountain exploits

are legendary, often partnered with Kowalski. “He’s fit and tough” was Rick’s succinct summary. (See Rick’s [Laughing Bears Creek trip report on Bivouac.com](#)).

Kowalski had a breadth of military and mountain experiences that rivaled that of Sir Harry P. Flashman. Much of Kowalski’s experience was chiselled from the Karakorum and Himalaya, and included first ascents of Mount Kami (with Sophia Eleni) and solo efforts on Mount Paristan (Koh-e-Qaf range) and Deo Mir (‘the ghostly ascent’, as he put it). Kowalski was going to be my ace for this dream climb.

Like most unsponsored expeditions, getting off the ground and into the Himalaya was never assured. Sure, I had a few sponsor connections from previous climbs, but in 2024 companies were still in “Covid mode”; unorganized and scrambling to understand what of their sponsorship monies ought to go to AI-recommended digital initiatives vs. more traditional advertising channels. We floundered for funds for months.

In early 2025 I was dumb-founded, but also delighted to learn that some Canadian spelunkers had designs on a cave system with an opening near 5,000 metres on Nanga Parbat (much like the mountain caves recently explored and charted in the karst Winston Churchill Range/Columbia Icefield of the Canadian Rockies). I contacted the group and learned their destination was close to our planned Kinshofer route on the Diamir Face of Nanga Parbat. We agreed on a price to guide them up, representing about half of our cash requirements (permit fees, airfare, porter costs, and ‘facilitation payments’ to name a few). The other half I left to hope, fate, and Kowalski.

This was to be a pre-monsoon ascent, which meant leaving Canada in March. Kowalski had left a month earlier to renew his

decades-long connections with the Pakistani military and ‘facilitate’ the dozens of required permits. (I could never pin down his connections, though they must have been deep; once in his sleep I believe Kowalski was uttering phrases in Urdu).

Little in life is linear, and in late winter of 2025 I succumbed to



*The local countryside from the truck.* PHOTO BY JIM EVERARD

influenza H1N1, a nasty variant that was making the rounds in Canada. Doctors prescribed low-dose antibiotics. They had little sympathy for a climber whining about a climbing schedule. They were also disappointed that the Nanga Parbat effort would not be delayed. “Fool-hardy”, “dangerous”, and “immature” was their assessment. Just before the planned flight, I secured more potent pharmaceuticals from a Kowalski relative.

I self-medicated and met up with the team at the airport. The coma-like impact of the drugs and my impaired vision transformed the next 48 hours into the “worst trip” ever. (Or the best “tripping” ever, I suppose.)

“Finally. On our way West!” I think I heard Lafar say as we boarded the first flight. Embarrassingly, I have no solid recollection of flying to London, the five-hour layover, and on to Lahore and Islamabad. Apparently Lafar and Rialb assumed

the role of care-givers, managed passport issues, used wheelchairs to shuffle me about, and schlepped me in and out of aircraft.

It was a good thing the drugs were constipating and the air travel dehydrating; my mates were relieved of any delicate handling procedures.

At our planned destination Kowalski apparently put me in a fireman carry down to the tarmac and into a military staff car, and we were secreted out a V.I.P. gate at the far end of the airfield.

Eventually the miasma of drugs began to wear off. I had hoped to hear the echoes of previous expeditions: the whines of motor cycle rickshaws and the growls of diesel trucks. Swerving and weaving Bedford buses, with finely detailed floral cut plastic, and hand pounded tin. “Jewelry boxes on wheels,” as Barry Blanchard described them.

In the front seat, I could finally make out the profile of a now heavily bearded Kowalski, no longer in his traditional army fatigues, but in the shalwar kameez.

“The man is a master of disguises”, I thought. Perfect for getting us safely through the mountain military check-points and past ‘unofficial’ inspections.

“Kowalski, my dear friend. Working miracles, again?” I opined. He smiled through slightly pursed lips.

By now Rialb and Lafar were asleep, shattered from the burden I had placed on them. Kowalski produced a bashed metal plate filled with chapati’s on one side, and lamb curry on the other. “Unlimited chapatis. A sponsor,” he said with characteristic bluntness.

Through the truck’s abused glass windows, I could make out dozens of wooden buildings and farmed plots of land. Still, it was worth a picture.

On previous occasions I remembered the trip from Islamabad to be about 18 hours. For some reason (the dozing?) this journey felt shorter.

Towards dusk, and despite my impaired vision, I could make out behemoths rising from what I assumed to be the road to the village of Trashing and onward to near the Chungphar Glacier. By day’s end and in utter darkness I swore I could sense the immensity of the south flank of Nanga Parbat: the soaring Rupal Face and the Central Spur.

Against the odds, the expedition was about to become real.

“Almost there,” Kowalski said, as he jammed a clip into his machine gun and placed it on his lap. He saw my look of concern. “Bears,” he grunted. “Never know where they’ll be.”

“Some things never change,” I chuckled, remembering both Kowalski’s term for Russians and his combat experience against them in this geography eons ago.

The vehicle ground up a steep grade, without throwing us up against the door or each other. “These roads seem better too”, I noted. I could not quite figure out the constant scratching of branches against both the chassis and the windows. There ought not be any vegetation here.

“Oh yeah, climate change”, then chided myself for missing that obvious point.

We stopped, exited the truck and were swallowed by darkness. A biting wind gave us reason to move quickly into a nearby tent that Kowalski and his Adjutant Hargila had set up.

I collapsed into one of the cots, dreaming of morning light on the cathedral spires above us. Kowalski refused the luxury and headed out, mumbling something about hunting calicorns.

Maybe I wished too hard, but in the morning the tent walls never lit up. I could smell no wood fires, nor hear the buzz of porters or kids playing barf pani or chuppan chupai. I pulled back the tent flap and was greeted by a layer of impenetrable fog, about 300 metres off the deck.

Kowalski bounded around the corner with Lafar and Rialb holding ubiquitous glasses of chai and chapatis prepared by our Yogistani cook, Pong. I sat and listened to a litany of woe.

Kowalski confessed to not having secured much additional sponsorship money, despite my best directives for candidate firms in sponsorship-rich Ontario. He rambled off his misfortune “Camel Towing and Sales, no reply. Mammoth Erection, ditto. Glory Hole Doughnuts, bankrupt.”

Our situation was bleak. We were porterless, without liaison officers and with only a week’s worth of food and fuel. We had made it thus far by selling much of our equipment, donated items, even some of Kowalski’s ammunition.

“*Inshallah*, we will find our way up Nanga Parbat”, Kowalski whispered in sepulchral tones. Rialb and Lafar nodded solemnly.

As I sat in disbelief at the absurdity of tackling “The Shining Mountain” in these circumstances, the fog began to dissipate, revealing an appalling and terrifying sight:

Trees, bushes and mosses.

“KOWALSKI!!!!!! Where are we?”

We are in the Blaeberry valley, 45 kilometres northwest of Golden, BC and 6 kilometres from Nanga Parbat.

“What the hell do you mean?” I demanded. My brain strained to break through what could only be a nightmare. I slammed the butt end of Kowalski’s machine gun hard into my thigh, hoping to wake up.

He pointed north. “Nanga Parbat is a few kilometres up there just beyond the Mummery Glacier, beside Gilgit Mountain.”

I didn’t see. But I did feel like throwing up.

It took the better part of the morning to even lightly grasp our situation. Eventually the ~~rupee~~ penny dropped.

Another 24 hours of near immobility and blank stares brought me to the fifth stage of grief – acceptance. Only then could I talk to the team.

“I don’t know whether to shoot you or forgive you.”

Kowalski’s trigger finger twitched.

“OK, forgiveness it is,” I thought.

Like my vision, I realized the light of my dream was extinguished. There would be no glory, no self-affirming experience.

I plunged into dialectical behaviour therapy and *amor fati*. Eventually I emerged a Stoic. “OK then, let’s give this thing a try.”

We busied ourselves with moving the camp up the valley and improving our physical conditioning. In fine weather we succeeded in making ascents in the Mummery Group and Barnard Dent Group.

Our attention turned to Nanga Parbat.



Nearing the summit of Mount Barnard.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE LAFAR HERITAGE COLLECTION

It was certainly going to be a scaled down version of what the first ascensionist on the Pakistani peak achieved in 1953. “Not much Buhl here,” I sniffed.

Our route would take the SE ridge, pioneered by Dane Waterman in 1980. A predawn start was required before the sun turned bits of the ridge into a Jumanji surface of shifting rock and snow.

“OK, men, less talk, more walk,” Sarge ordered, as he led us from our tents across the hard packed surface. A knife-edged ridge loomed. By the time we got there Kowalski was climbing the ridge,

leaving impressive bucket steps in his wake. I admired how effortless he made it look, even without crampons.

The precariousness of the ridge forced us into a traverse, with elevated rockfall risks.

After some two hours on the go we huddled in a council of war. Ripping into yet another chapati I asked “How much further?”

Kowalski chewed hard on his cheroot, and inhaled deeply. “Depends on how high you want to go.”

“As high as we can” Rialb and Lafar sang out.

“That may be higher than you think,” Kowalski cautioned. We huddled to discuss this cryptic answer, while Sarge continued up. Our deliberations were interrupted by Kowalski’s shouts: “Good news: The ridge ends nearby. Clear sailing into the hereafter.”

We scrambled the 70 metres and sure enough, the razor ridge abutted a snow field that led to the summit.

Thirty minutes later all four of us were high-fiving it on the summit of Nanga Parbat Mountain.

We were thrilled to be on the summit, but we knew it was so much more. It was about a journey of discovery. It was about being with life-long friends, and about chasing new dreams, no matter what the odd circumstances.

Mercifully the descent went without incident. Back in camp we relaxed around the make-shift kitchen when Sarge appeared fully loaded and began marching off. His parting words were exactly the same as when he left Rick Collier in 2000: “I’m off to take care of some dangerous whackos from that place south of the border.”

After the expedition I spent a bit of time re-reading Hermann Buhl’s literature on his legendary solo ascent of Nanga Parbat. I stumbled on one of his quotes, one that spoke directly to me.

*“After the climb, you should feel no trace of tiredness; on the contrary, it is then that you should be really fresh. Then you will have found the correct measure of your abilities.”*

Our ascent of Nanga Parbat left me gutted and shattered; a trashed relic of my former self.

Buhl’s quote was prescient, timeless and accurate beyond words.



Mounts Trutch, Barnard, Prior, Walker, Bulyea and Freshfield fill the horizon. Jim Everard (L) and Rialb (R). PHOTO ATTRIBUTED TO SARGENT KOWALSKI

## NOTES

Sargent Kowalski is a fictitious character created in the fertile imagination of Rick Collier. Rick was a remarkable mountaineer and adventurer, and an English teacher. He remains the only person to have summited all 600-plus officially named peaks in the Southern Canadian Rockies.

Rialb and Lafar are anagrams for Blair (Piggot) and Rafal (Kazmierczak).

Pong appears courtesy of the Rum Doodle expedition team.

The brief pre-summit verbal exchange with Kowalski is a nod to

the great British mountaineer and rock climber Don Whillans. The exchange approximates Whillans' discussion with a Japanese team on their way up the North Face of the Eiger. He had an acerbic wit that often spared none.

Canada's Nanga Parbat was named in 1898 by J Norman Collie. The name was adopted in 1921, specifically to commemorate British climber A.F. Mummery who died on the Himalayan peak.

Hermann Buhl soloed Pakistan's Nanga Parbat in epic circumstances in 1953.

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**PARTICIPANTS:** JIM EVERARD, RAFAL KAZMIERCZAK AND BLAIR PIGGOT

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**Editors Note:** *Out with the author on a recent hill country ramble, he opined to me that this article belonged not in the Western Canada section of the Bushwhacker, but in the Far Ranges. Given how widely the story ranges in time, place, and – let's face it – rich imagination, I felt compelled to agree!*

# Hiking the Cape Verde Islands

Graham Maddocks

February, 2025

Some 500 kilometres off the coast of West Africa lies Cabo Verde, a diverse archipelago of volcanic islands. Independent of Portugal since 1975 these 10 isles form a country where the sun is guaranteed to shine year-round and there are some excellent hiking opportunities. The people speak a type of creole based on Portuguese and West African languages.



*View of Cova Crater from the Paul valley.*

PHOTO BY GRAHAM MADDOCKS

**S**parsely inhabited (except for Santiago), two of the islands Sal and Boa Vista have resorts but are little more than sun drenched large sand islands. Other islands offer some world class hiking.

Rising in the far southeast of the archipelago, Fogo is all about its towering volcano, the very much active Pico do Fogo which protrudes almost 3000 metres out of the Atlantic. The Portuguese named it Fogo (Fire) after several angry

eruptions. Climbing the active volcano peak from the crater is the highlight of any visit, but the caldera itself, a place where locals have built villages and grow grapes in the volcanic soil, is one of the most fascinating experiences in

Cape Verde. Pico do Fogo rises almost 1000 metres out of the volcano's horseshoe-shaped caldera and at 2829 metres is Cape Verde's highest point. Some 20 kilometres long and almost 7 wide, Fogo's volcano is a national park.

Santiago, the most African of all Cabo Verde's islands, has half the population and is the site of the capital Praia. West of Praia is the old capital Cidade Velha; it was here that 500 years of human habitation in Cabo Verde began. The village's church dates back to 1495 and in the main square stands a pillory where enslaved persons were traded, the space still divided into a grid with each section holding 12 people.

Repeated pirate raids led to the site being abandoned and the capital moved to present day Praia.

In the north of the island is the Parque Natural Serra da Malagueta, a jagged mountain range with Mount Malagueta the highest point at 1064 metres, though several other peaks almost reach the 1000 metre mark. With marked trails branching off the main backbone trail these remote peaks are easy to access.

I should also add that Cape Verde is very arid and there is no shade on any of these trails.

Another island Sao Vicente is little more than a giant cinder patch but contains Cape Verde's liveliest town and cultural capital Mindelo. Due to a lack of water, Sao Vicente remained essentially uninhabited until the English established themselves there in the early 19th century. In 1838, Portugal granted Britain the right to build a coal depot in its deep-water port at Mindelo and soon thousands of coal boats a year were calling here en route to South America. But the island offers little in the way of hiking or vegetation, although there are some sun blasted cinder peaks.

Having been to Cape Verde before for some dry sunny hiking, my favourite island is Santo Antao. An hour's ferry ride from Mindelo, the



Steep approach trail to Cova Crater. PHOTO BY GRAHAM MADDOCKS



Fertile fields in the volcanic soil of the caldera of Cova Crater. PHOTO BY GRAHAM MADDOCKS

island of Santo Antao is a dizzyingly vertical isle, ruptured with canyons, gorges and valleys offering Cabo Verde's most dramatic hiking in the verdant northeast. The rest of the island is a barren dry landscape inhabited mainly by goats. The highlight of any visit is a hike along the Paul valley, a rugged tear in the landscape planted with cash crops and dotted with villages. Other treks run to the top of the highest

mountain, Topo de Corao, and along the rocky north coast.

At the island end of the Paul valley as it runs towards the sea a steep path climbs to the Cova Crater where farmers work a circular piece of land made fertile by volcanic ash within the caldera of an extinct volcano.

My favourite hike is a 13 kilometre dramatic clifftop path along the



*Steep climbs on the north coast trail of Santo Antao. PHOTO BY GRAHAM MADDOCKS*

north coast that bucks and weaves its way above the seething Atlantic passing lonely evocative abandoned villages of stone cottages where in the past a living was scratched from the arid steep slopes by terracing.

The trail runs from Cruzinha to Ponta do Sol where there is accommodation in a pleasant fishing village. The trek can be done both ways and involves some very steep climbs.

The only inhabited village is Fontainhas where a few houses cling to the side of the canyon and one can get a drink and a traditional meal of cachupa (a stew of beans, corn, meat and fish scraps).



*Fontainhas village. PHOTO BY GRAHAM MADDOCKS*

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**PARTICIPANTS:** GRAHAM  
MADDOCKS

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*North coast of Santo Antao (L).  
Abandoned cottage (R).*

PHOTOS BY GRAHAM  
MADDOCKS



# St. Lucia's Three Peak Challenge

Lindsay Elms

**November 16 - December 1, 2025**

Thirteen years ago, in the Travel section of the *Time Colonist* there was an article titled "The Pitons say it all in St. Lucia." Accompanying it was a photo of the Pitons which dominate the skyline along the southwest coast of the island nation. The article went on to say that images of the Pitons are everywhere: from the triangles on the nation's flag to the labels of the local beer. It also said that writers have struggled to find the right words to describe them. St. Lucia's Nobel Prize poet Derek Walcott called the twin peaks the "horns" and Oprah Winfrey once declared the Pitons to be among the five must-see sites around the world. The two iconic Pitons – La Gros Piton and La Petit Piton – are the most famous peaks in the Caribbean. I was immediately smitten by the picture so I cut out the article and added the peaks to my bucket list of peaks "to climb."

Years went by but the image of the two volcanic cones always stuck in my mind. I never forgot about them. In October 2025, Val and I were wondering where to go to get away from the November rains when I remembered about the Pitons and St. Lucia. By the end of the day, we had booked tickets to Vieux Fort where the international airport for St. Lucia is located on the southern tip of the island. It takes a lot to get me excited when the departure date is still weeks away, but I was feeling excited about finally coming to grips with the two icons.

When travelling we usually pick up a Lonely Planet guide book for the country we're visiting which has information on places to stay from budget to expensive hotels and guest houses, places to eat from the low end to the five-star, how to get around using local buses (their



*La Gros Piton and La Petit Piton from near the summit of Mt. Gimie.*

PHOTO BY LINDSAY ELMS

frequency between locations and cost), places of interest and how to get there, entrance costs, and many other tidbits a traveller wants to know before arriving, but there was none. So, we started looking around on the web.

To be honest there was not a hell of a lot out there and what there was catered to the resorts. We then started to look at how to go about climbing the peaks, how to get to them, trails, and the cost to climb them, but there were many conflicting accounts. The bottom line though, it appeared we would have to hire guides to take us up the peaks and they were paid in US dollars, and the cost varied considerably. We've had to hire guides in other countries but they are not what we would call a guide, so we have a reluctance to hire someone especially when we know there are well-worn trails up the peaks. But as the idiom goes "when in Rome, do as the Romans do."

It took a bit of searching but we found an interesting site that described a new adventure experience that was launched in 2023. It linked three peaks on the island which became known as the Saint Lucia Three Peaks Challenge. It invited visitors to climb La Gros Piton (798 metres), La Petit Piton (736 metres) and the highest peak on the island Mount Gimie (950 metres). The catch was they were doing all three peaks in a single day. I have to admit that ten years ago we might have considered it, but now – let's just leave it at that. We did decide, however, to climb the three peaks but we would do it at a more leisurely pace over three days.

For those interested, Julian Toussaint (St. Lucian) currently holds the record for the Three Peaks Challenge, climbing the three mountains in succession with a combined total climbing time of 5 hours 12 minutes, while Sabrina Verjee, the record-breaking British ultra-runner from Cumbria, completed the Three Peaks Challenge in just 5 hours 16 minutes. Good for them!

After flying into Hewanorra International airport we got a taxi, which was pre-booked, to take us to the old French capital of Soufrière on the west coast. "Soufrière" comes from the French "soufre" for



*La Petit Piton from the slopes of La Gros Piton.*  
PHOTO BY LINDSAY ELMS

sulphur, which is naturally deposited in volcanic areas. It's a very common name in the Caribbean. On St. Vincent, the island south of St. Lucia, the highest peak is called La Soufrière volcano (1235 metres) which last erupted on 13 April 1979, and on Guadeloupe the highest peak in the Lesser Antilles is also called La Soufrière volcano (1467 metres). However, Soufrière is no longer the capital of St. Lucia and the island is no longer French. The island has changed hands fourteen times between the French and the British. Castries is now the Island's capital and was formerly referred to as *Carenage* before it was renamed Castries in 1785. It was named after Charles Eugene Gabriel de la Croix, Marquis de Castries (1727-1801), the French

Minister of the Navy and Colonies. The Castries Harbour, one of the best deep-water harbours in the Caribbean region, was originally a volcanic crater which flooded when its western wall collapsed. The harbour became famous in 1942 — during World War II — when German submarines torpedoed two ships there, killing several people.

Although November is still considered the wet season, it is the tail end. We could expect some rain most days, but there could be days without precipitation or at least very little. We decided to give ourselves plenty of time to achieve our three objectives so we booked a suite in downtown Soufrière for 11 nights. It was perfect and the owners went out of their way to help us. We gave ourselves a couple



*Val and Lindsay on the summit of La Petit Piton with La Gros Piton behind.*  
PHOTO BY LINDSAY ELMS

of days to acclimate to the heat and humidity, and on the morning of the 19th got a taxi to drop us off at the trailhead for La Gros Piton. We arrived at 7 a.m., signed in, and paid for our guide - US\$50 each. There is not much to say about the ascent except that a lot of people do it and it is a well-worn trail all the way to the summit.

We then spent a few days snorkelling at several locations along the coast and hiking to some of the waterfalls. On the morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, our taxi driver picked us up with our guide for La Petit Piton – US\$80 each. The government has decreed that tourists must take guides on the climbs and although La Petit Piton is the lower of the two, it is more technical with ropes in-situ on the steep sections. We were dropped off at the trailhead at 7 a.m. and paid a US\$10 rope maintenance fee.

This climb was a lot steeper and yes there were heavy hawser ropes on sections where you literally had to haul yourself up the rope. I was constantly looking at the integrity of the ropes as some of them appeared to have been in place for a while and slightly weather worn, but they seemed okay.

The ascent and descent of this peak was more fun than La Gros Piton. There are fewer people on the climb and the views from the top are more beautiful. We were fortunate that there had been no rain during the night and the rocks were completely dry.

Two down, one to go!



*Val on one of the rope sections on La Petit Piton.* PHOTO BY LINDSAY ELMS

The next day we got torrential rain for about three hours.

We hadn't had rain like this up until now and we were wondering if it would be like this the next day. We had booked our taxi and a guide to take us up Mount Gimie on the 25th. Mount Gimie is in the centre of the tropical rainforest and we had no idea how developed the trail was, but we knew it would be wet and slippery. There is very little information available as it is not one of the tourist climbs.

We had heard of independent climbers doing it without guides, but because we wanted to be assured of the summit, we asked our guide from La Petit Piton if he would guide us and he said yes. We had got quotes of up to US\$250 each which was totally unreasonable. On the morning of the climb, he couldn't make it and arranged for one of his friends to guide us for the same price, he was charging us – US\$80 each. The taxi ride to the trailhead and pick up in the afternoon was US\$95. We could accept these prices. Neither of us wanted to leave St. Lucia with the Three Peak Challenge incomplete.



*Banyan-like roots in the rainforest on Mt. Gimie.*  
PHOTO BY LINDSAY ELMS



*Piton Troumasse from the summit of Mt. Gimie.* PHOTO BY LINDSAY ELMS



*Val and Lindsay in the rainforest on Mt. Gimie.*  
PHOTO BY LINDSAY ELMS

Fortunately, the morning of the 25th dawned clear although there were the usual clouds lingering over the tops of the mountains. We had never seen the summit of Mount Gimie in the nine days of being in Soufrière. Our taxi picked us up at 6:30, and in the village of Migny we picked up our guide. Our guide had gumboots on! Was this a statement about the impending condition of the trail? Just how wet was it going to be?

Twenty minutes later we were at the trailhead and ready to start

hiking in our running shoes. Our elevation at the trailhead was just over 600 metres, but straight away we started descending. This didn't make Val happy. One hundred and fifty metres lower we reached the Canaries River.

The trail to this point was obvious, but now we followed the river downstream for 100 metres and then turned up a small side stream. Although there was nothing to mark the trail, I'm sure I would have figured it out if we had attempted the climb on our own.

We slowly began ascending as we traversed around the mountain. Half an hour later we stopped for a bite to eat and a drink to replace the fluid lost from sweat. When we were ready to go the guide pointed up and said: "all up hill now man".

Thirty-five minutes later we were on the summit. Clouds were swirling around and giving us small breaks to see the surrounding ridges and valleys. The two Pitons were just discernible in the distance when the clouds dissipated. Not far away to our south was the island's second highest peak – Piton Troumasse (875 metres). No trail existed up it, but I'm sure a few locals have hacked their way up the dripping bush.

I have to admit we both felt pretty chuffed at completing the Three Peak Challenge. Not that they are difficult, but each of the peaks were quite different. The rainforest around Mount Gimie was special with the Banyan-like roots and the thick moss hanging from the limbs. We could hear the St. Lucian amazon parrot calling from the tops of the trees, but we could not see them. Not a lot of people take on the Three Peak Challenge as either a day trip or over three separate days. Our taxi driver, when he picked us up, said in the fourteen years he had been driving we were his first guests to climb all three peaks.

When we got home, the article that I had cut out all those years ago was sitting on my desk. I looked at the photo of the two Pitons and could see myself standing on their summits with a big smile on my face. It's such a great feeling being able to still cross peaks off my bucket list.

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**PARTICIPANTS: VALERIE WOOTTON AND LINDSAY ELMS.**

# FOCUS ON YOUTH

## Mount Queen Bess North Ridge

Asa Picton

### August 17 - 24, 2025: ACCVI Memorial Fund Youth Grant Recipient

I felt the solid rock beneath me. I closed my eyes, relaxed, and breathed in deeply. I reminded myself that things were going well. I felt good. The fear was present, but I could overcome it. When I was ready, I continued on. This was a practiced task, one that is essential for managing risk. You must experience the fear, analyze it plainly, and then act - it cannot control you. I sat straddling Mount Queen Bess's North Ridge, both legs pointing down towards its sheer faces as I gazed upward. Around a rocky outcropping fifteen metres below me stood my climbing partner Jude Thompson, belaying and silently hoping that I was experiencing easy terrain.

"How is it?" He yelled, hardly audible.

"It's not terrible - I just can't find anywhere to place anything," I yelled back.

Ahead of me lay a significantly steeper section of snow. I knew it would be at least another five metres before I could place another piece of protection, and that was only if the boulders ahead weren't loose, a rarity. We had been moving since before sunrise, it was now just past 4 p.m. Ever since the saddle in the ridge our progress had been slow. I was beginning to have doubts, and I suspected Jude felt the same. For now, I pushed on, and tried to imagine I was above a bolt and not a suspiciously angled gear placement.

Mount Queen Bess lies deep in the heart of British Columbia's Coast Mountains, over 50 kilometres from a paved road in any direction. Its steep faces and striking prominence make the mountain a breathtaking sight. During an expedition that

made the second ascent, it was remarked that "Queen Bess won the unanimous vote as the most beautiful peak we had ever seen."

Because of its remote nature and proximity to the more widely known Mount Waddington, Queen Bess is hardly ever visited. This obscurity is exactly what drew Jude and me to the mountain, and when we were unable to find any record of a purely overland ascent since the 1970s, we knew we had to try for ourselves [1].

A mixture of dread and excitement filled me as I finished packing and felt the full weight of my 60 pound (27 kilogram) pack. Jude and I locked eyes and laughed, were we really getting ourselves into this again?

In the previous year we had made an attempt at the mountain. We

had crossed rivers, untracked valleys, and forests of fallen trees. We had persevered for days through dense bush, and climbed an unexplored couloir of loose rock, only to realize that our ambitions were too grand.

At the time, both of us spoke of never returning to those valleys, it simply was not worth it. We would have to wait until we had the money to charter a helicopter. But here we were, standing in the living room of Jude's childhood home in the Tatlayoko Lake community, trying to be excited about the arduous journey ahead. Even though it was a possibility, neither of us could bear the thought of a second 80 kilometre bushwhack without a summit to show for it.

With zero knowledge of the land, it was almost hard to believe that in



*North Ridge of Mount Queen Bess, August 21, 2025. Jude Thompson stands on the left.*

PHOTO BY ASA PICTON

the previous year we had completed the journey that was to come. Our approach started at the south end of the mighty Tatlayoko Lake, or Telhiqox Biny, in the traditional language of the T̄siilhqot̄'in.

There is no record of any other travellers ever going on foot up the Nostetuko River valley as we have, although it is worth noting that this does not mean it has not been done.

Historically, families from the Xeni Gwet'in community in the T̄siilhqot̄'in Nation have traversed the mountains to reach Bute Inlet, the closest access to the Pacific Ocean. This was done in order to trade with coastal communities who offered goods which they did not have access to, and to escape the harsh winters of the T̄siilhqot̄'in Plateau [2].

While it appears as though the traditional crossing settled on a route just south of Mount Queen Bess's range, it is likely that Indigenous explorers of the time looked for passages through the same valley that Jude and I trekked through. Nevertheless, once we had crossed the river on the first day, we saw zero signs of humans for the entire journey.



*Nostetuko River, site of our crossing.* PHOTO BY ASA PICTON

Our enthusiasm died when we arrived at the previous year's log crossing, it was half underwater. It was looking like our only option was to continue on, and hope to find a suitable spot to attempt to swim instead. With the light fading, we crashed through the trees and arrived at a remarkably straight and wide section of river.

After unpacking and organising our gear into contractor bags, I stripped down and tied our rope to my waist. Once on the other side, Jude would tie each bag one at a time to the middle of the rope, ready for me to pull across to my side of the river.

We didn't have much light left, I had to go. Adrenaline flooded through me as I felt the icy power of the water. Slack from the rope was being pulled down by the force of the river, forming a long arching parabola behind me, serving as an additional force holding me back. I could feel the wet rope digging into my skin under the water. After reaching the safety of the opposite riverbank, twenty excruciating minutes were spent pulling the bags back and forth with the rope. Our first major obstacle had been completed.

Our GPS track from the previous year proved indispensable for our approach, and it was with it that we managed to traverse the thirty kilometres to our alpine camp within only two days. By now, we had knowledge of what obstacles to avoid. We also now knew where to find the numerous animal trails that snaked their way along the river; their benefit to our efficiency cannot be understated.

The night before our ascent I laid in my sleeping bag, forcing myself to think positively. We had to get to the top, this much effort had to be worth it. A defeat would be crushing, juxtaposed with the intense elation of a success - both potential options warring to win in my head.

Under the early morning stars, all was silent save for the hissing of the stove. We packed our bags silently and efficiently. Within 30 minutes, we were gaining ground once again, determined to make our second attempt the last. For hours we hiked up boulder fields towards the mountain, its East Face glowing ever more orange in the early morning light. Our headlamps were inevitably put away, replaced by

crampons to finish the final approach to the ridge up a steep glacier. We had arrived at the couloir, the route we had previously taken to the ridge.

The enormity of the Coast Mountains emerged as we took our final steps onto the ridge. Mount Waddington's grandeur in the distance was instantly noticeable. I couldn't help but think of the importance that this vantage point held to Don and Phyllis Munday along with Henry Hall, the first ascent team of Mount Queen Bess. I realized with more certainty, why they had put so much effort into that peak; it was truly something to behold.

This vantage point was also a milestone for Jude and me, as it was our high point from last year. With our inexperience, we had vastly underestimated the time the summit would take. Realising that continuing would certainly mean a night without shelter or adequate food, we had made the decision to turn around without attempting the ridge itself.

Now was the time to prove we had what it takes. I took the first lead. The snow was firm in the early

morning, allowing me to kick-step my way up an initial steep section towards an outcropping of rock that I hoped was solid enough for a sling. Once there, I realized that we were going to be in for a slow climb. About six inches of loose snow covered every rock. This made for a terrifying guessing game where you couldn't be sure if the rock below the snow was stable. A loose rock not only meant the potential for a fall in any of three directions, but also it falling on top of your belayer's head. At the outcropping I was able to stomp a good platform and kick at a nearby horn, trusting that its immovability meant it could take a fall, slung it, clipped my rope in, and continued on.

By the early afternoon, Jude and I had gotten into a groove. Trading leads, one of us was always able to find a solid enough place to sling an anchor. With almost every crack buried, it became evident early on that this was by far the fastest method - there simply weren't enough options to place enough gear any other way. Nevertheless, we were steadily making progress.

With options as limited as they were, it meant that during a lead, if we were unable to find a good spot to make an anchor, continuing was risky. Downclimbing back to a suitable anchor after running out of rope was not something either of us could handle the thought of. This led to us doing many short pitches, wasting lots of time in the process, time that was rapidly flying by.

Pitch eight, 3:30 in the afternoon. I stood belaying Jude as he was climbing out of sight around a gendarme, his presence reduced to the steady pull of rope through my belay device.

Time was ticking. I began to wonder: in a situation like this, is the accepted practice to trade safety for speed? Maybe a more experienced alpinist would have switched to a simultaneous climbing approach. The thought of giving up the security of an anchor



*3rd pitch of Mount Queen Bess North Ridge, Jude Thompson following, our tracks visible on the left. PHOTO BY ASA PICTON*

sent a wave of anxiety through me. I wasn't ready for that. I checked our location, we were still 600 metres from the summit. However, we were on by far the steepest portion of the North Ridge, and had only 200 more metres until it appeared as though the angle of incline lessened to near flat.

With each pitch of rope, the snow gradually got deeper. We had initially thought this would be favourable, but it was becoming clear that without snow pickets for

protection, it was far too steep and loose for any alternative except digging out cracks and horns.

As we climbed higher I began to realize that our retreat options were narrowing. After the ridge flattened, there was no guarantee things would get easier; in fact, the closer we got, the more it seemed they would do the opposite. I estimated that we had enough gear to build about eight to ten anchors for rappelling. How many pitches had we done? Nine? Continuing was

risky, and highly committing. It meant the necessity to find somewhere to bivouac for the night. I looked around, there was nothing.

How do people do it? Was this route too grand a goal for our experience? We were shaken, silent, and out of optimism. I could see the disappointment growing on Jude's face. It was 4:30 p.m. Above us loomed a massive outcropping—our last shot at a bivouac. If there was room on top, we could stop. If not, we were out of options.

Jude took the lead. I held my breath as he stepped onto the snow beneath a wall of rock, with no protection except the anchor in the ten metres of rope between us. I fed out slack as he climbed onto the protrusion.

"How does it look?" I yelled. "Is there enough space to bivy?"

I waited for his response. "Jude?" I shouted again.

"No," I heard faintly. "There's not."

I could tell that he was trying to convince himself otherwise, but it couldn't be done. My resolve came quickly—we were not going to make it. He knew it too. Jude vainly tried to convince me to come up to share the highpoint with him, but there was no point. Light was already beginning to fade, and at that moment I wanted nothing more than to feel safe again, it was time to retreat.

After downclimbing to meet me at the anchor, we shared a tearful hug, and laughed at the absurdity of our position. It had been harder and more committing than either of us had imagined, but we had tried anyway. We gave it our absolute best, but were once again humbled by our objective. But we were still proud, and it only meant that when we did come back and make it, we would be that much more victorious. For now, there was nothing we could do except safely retreat.



*Highpoint photo. Jude Thompson (left), Asa Picton (right).*  
PHOTO BY ASA PICTON

We had been rappelling for hours, and each was proving to be more nerve racking than the last. I was grateful we had done such short pitches on the way up, it meant that we could link together our existing belay stations to use as anchors. Finally, there was only one more to go, Jude went first.

I was beginning to feel my anxiety about our position ease, we were almost there, and could soon set up a camp on the safety of the col. Suddenly, a startled yell from below

snapped my attention back to the present.

I descended to meet him. He had his foot propped up on his knee, inspecting his steel crampons. One of the points had bent a full forty-five degrees from the impact, but miraculously, his foot was completely unharmed. He held up his hands to show that the falling rock had been roughly head sized, he got lucky.

I was reminded at that moment of how remote our position was, and was thankful we had made the

decision to turn around when we did. We couldn't afford to be stranded up there.

After nine rappels off slings, we finally reached our ridge camp as the sun was setting. I felt shaken, thoroughly spent, but grateful to be standing in such an incredible location. Few get to experience what we have, being so far removed from the normality that life usually presents. It reminded me that the summit was not the point. Many things are done just to be forgotten. This trip was something that neither of us will ever forget - you don't get a lot of moments like that, and that was special enough.

I am immensely grateful to our friends, family, and the ACCVI Memorial Fund Youth Grant, whose support was integral to our ability to pull off an expedition of this magnitude. We are so thankful for the generosity and the unwavering enthusiasm that we have received from our community for this adventure, it truly could not have been done without them.

## References

[1] See [Canadian Alpine Journal 1982 \(Vol 65, pg 35\)](#) for Bruce Fairley's history of climbing in the Mount Queen Bess area.

[2] Lloyd, R. (2022, November 16). *Spiritual journey marks a return to land and tradition for Chilcotin's Xeni Gwet'in*. West Coast Traveller. [west-coasttraveller.com](http://west-coasttraveller.com)

**PARTICIPANTS:** ASA PICTON AND JUDE THOMPSON



MEMORIAL YOUTH GRANT  
[ACCVI.CA](http://ACCVI.CA)



Mount Queen Bess North Ridge with red line showing our route and highpoint. PHOTO BY ASA PICTON

Want to go deeper? Click on [Return to Mount Queen Bess](#) or scan the QR code below to access a film about this adventure.



- TO USE THE QR CODE:**
- OPEN YOUR CAMERA APP.
  - POINT IT AT THE CODE.
  - TAP THE LINK TO WATCH

# Bikepacking the Gulf Islands Loop

Olive Joy

## June 20 - 22, 2025: ACCVI Memorial Fund Youth Grant Recipient

June 20, 2025 - A group of eight alpine enthusiasts set out for a bike ride at sea level around four Gulf Islands in British Columbia. You might be wondering why a trip sponsored by the Alpine Club of Canada bagged no big peaks. It's a tale full of twists, rooted in a love for the outdoors, unwilling to be stymied by the President of the United States, and guided by a goal to build outdoor community, skills, and confidence for youth in Victoria.



*Smiles after the downhill on Mayne Island. PHOTO BY OLIVE JOY*

Seven months earlier, I was sitting in my living room, watching rain barrel down during a major storm hitting Vancouver Island. My group chat was blowing up. Plans for a cabin

retreat in Jordan River with friends were dashed. The power was out, and our Airbnb reservation - meant to be our base camp for surfing, mushroom foraging, and hot tubbing (I mean, forest bathing) -

was cancelled. Disappointed and soggy, I scoured the Internet for alternative adventures to lift my spirits.

A nature lover at heart, I've found my home on Vancouver Island. After escaping the concrete jungle of Toronto six years ago, I've made it my mission to soak up all that this paradise has to offer. From my first unexpectedly snowy backpacking trip to Cirlet Lake, to dipping my toes into ski touring, to joining the Kludhak Club, I've been steadily building my knowledge, gear library, and - most importantly - my confidence in accessing the outdoors safely and joyfully.

One club, however, like the elusive morel mushroom, had remained just out of reach: the Alpine Club of Canada. Its name and pursuits inspire greatness. But it wasn't until that wistful, damp November afternoon, while scrolling through the Vancouver Island Section's upcoming events page, that I finally took the leap.

Two weeks later, I was driving up a logging road with two strangers after having completed an extensive Google Sheets emergency contact, scheduling, and food list (courtesy of Rachel), woken up at 6 a.m., and loaded the car with snowshoes and enthusiasm for a Future Leaders weekend trip to the 5040 Hut. Our leaders, Martin and Rachel, guided us through a whiteout to a beacon of light in the dark - a warm reprieve and base for a weekend of snow touring, avalanche safety, hut lore (have you seen the outhouse view?!), and stories of past and future trips.

One particularly enthusiastic fellow, Scott, and I became fast friends - and occasional enemies during fierce games of Settlers of Catan. Scott is determined and hard-working, demonstrated during our late-night arrival at the cabin. When we found the pellet stove out of order, he and Martin spent over an hour tinkering with it until it finally roared to life. Thanks to them, the weekend was a cozy delight that left Scott and I inspired to lead a trip of our own.

Back in Victoria, iPad and maps in hand, Scott and I headed to CragX for a climb and planning session. We had it all laid out: we'd travel ecopoint-style, using only public transportation, cycling, and walking to reach our objective, summiting Mount Appleton in the Olympic Mountain Range in Washington State, with a short detour on the descent to soak in some local hot springs. We love the idea of reaching a remote summit using an accessible and low-impact method of transportation: bicycles. This approach significantly reduces both environmental impact and barriers to access - core values for us when thinking about how we engage with the outdoors.

We submitted our proposal for the Vancouver Island Section's Youth Memorial Grant and waited. But during that time, tensions escalated between the U.S. and Canada. As the President of the United States threatened tariffs and spouted violent rhetoric, a growing movement discouraged cross-border travel. With the U.S. suddenly off the table, it was time to pivot.

Back to CragX we went, with renewed determination and a time crunch as summer was coming on quick. Staying true to our foundations, we wanted to plan a trip that would be fully accessible by bike. Since biking to Strathcona over a long weekend seemed logistically impossible, we turned our attention to the Gulf Islands. Our chosen mission: biking through four islands in three days - Saturna, Mayne, Pender, and Salt Spring.

Those who have visited these islands will already know that the cumulative elevation gain rivals that of many alpine trips. Although not a summit objective, we would be building community, developing skills, and fostering awareness and appreciation of environmental stewardship, key elements of an Alpine Club of Canada trip. In applying for the Youth Grant, our particular goal was to welcome new

members and inspire confidence in their ability to plan and carry out an outdoor adventure. We're deeply grateful to the Vancouver Island Section for making this grant available, helping ensure that the outdoors remains accessible, inviting, and inspiring for youth.

The date was set, and the crew was formed through classic Victoria connections: friends of friends, choirs, run club, Facebook Marketplace, and a friendly fellow bike-enthusiast colleague. We built a trip-planning spreadsheet (which I now use for every adventure - thank you Rachel for the template!), started a WhatsApp group chat, and gathered for a bike-and-beer session to review details before takeoff.

Then, a week before departure, I received a sombre call from the club: their insurance policy had been revised and no longer covered bike trips. Undeterred, Scott and I reached out to private insurers for quotes. At first, we were quoted thousands of dollars to host a "biking event," but eventually opted for individual health insurance at under \$20 per person. Problem solved.

Panniers packed, food dehydrated, bibs on - we were off. Group One (myself, Ryan, and Mackenzie) left earlier in the day, enjoying a day off from work. Group Two - Scott, Bianca, Becca, and Kylie - set out in the afternoon to meet us that evening at our first camp at Narvaez Bay on Saturna Island. Nicole reunited with us the following morning at the ferry terminal.

The familiar Lochside Trail felt extra special that morning as the sun rose - no longer just a commuter route, but a gateway to adventure.

Stepping off the ferry, we were immediately introduced to the weekend's new terrain. Gone were the flat, rolling paths of Saanich, replaced with sharp turns, steep ascents, adrenaline-pumping descents. The objective of the Gulf Islands had emerged.

We acknowledge with gratitude that our journey through the Gulf Islands took place on the unceded, traditional, and ancestral territories of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the WSÁNEĆ, Hul'qumi'num-speaking Nations, and other Coast Salish communities who have cared for these lands and waters since time immemorial. As we biked across Saturna, Mayne and Salt Spring, we carried an awareness that these islands are not only beautiful recreation spaces, but also the homelands, gathering places, and sources of life for Indigenous peoples past, present, and future.

We made camp at the overflow campsite and set out to explore the area. It was a calm, sunny day. Ryan pulled out his fishing rod while Mackenzie and I read in the trees. The peaceful slowness of bikepacking settled in and 30 minutes later we heard a gleeful cry. He'd caught one! Fish unhooked and satisfied smiles plastered, we explored the park on bike until Group 2 arrived. Reunited, we enjoyed a sunset swim, ate so many tacos, and played games until late. Mostly strangers heading into the trip, we're brought together as fast friends in that special liminal space of a group trip.

Just as our heads hit the pillow, the rain began - and didn't let up. By 5:30 a.m., we dragged ourselves out of our tents for roll call. While this ungodly hour is far from the usual relaxed pace of bikepacking, we had two reasons: serious ground to cover, and the single ferry off Saturna bound for Mayne Island. The troops rallied over coffee, and soon we were grinding up the hill, raindrops quickly turning to sweat.

On board, we soaked in the warmth of the cabin, recharging devices and our spirits. By the time we landed, the rain had lifted. Caffeinated and buzzing, we cranked up the tunes and pedaled up the Mayne ferry hill into town. After fueling at a café and chatting with a couple of friendly



*Bikepacking turned hike-a-bike. PHOTO BY OLIVE JOY*



*Euchre waiting for the Salt Spring ferry (L). Bikes packed and ready for the journey home (R). PHOTOS BY OLIVE JOY*



locals, we set out to explore. Between the rolling climbs, we discovered a lighthouse, tucked-away beaches, and the tranquil Japanese Garden.

By midday, we had reached a crossroads: race back for the ferry to Pender or linger on Mayne with some flex time. The vote was decided - stay. Bonus time meant a leisurely lunch and a beer flight at Mayne Island Brewing Co., the perfect cap to a morning of damp beginnings turned bright.

But we weren't out of the woods yet. Back at the terminal, we boarded the boat for Long Harbour, Salt Spring. From there, we faced our hilliest ride yet, with an honourable mention to the climb leaving Ganges toward Ruckle Park. Though it was the last push of a long day, the group was wonderful.

We shared snacks, encouragement, and stories to take our minds off the never-ending hills.

At last, we rolled into Ruckle Park for sunset, the park alive with tents and clusters of happy campers, like a West Coast Woodstock. We tucked in for the night, proud of the day's accomplishments and lulled by waves crashing against the rocks.

Over breakfast the next morning, we laid out the game plan: biking up Mount Tuam. At over 600 metres of climbing, it would be a serious effort. But as the conversation unfolded, the group consensus became clear - we'd pass on the objective. As leaders, Scott and I felt our responsibility was twofold: first, to ensure the group's safety, and second, to keep the trip aligned with our shared goals. Skipping Mount Tuam didn't take away from

*Every trip needs a group hug!*  
PHOTO BY OLIVE JOY

the spirit of the journey, the memories we'd already made, or the potential joy of ending our adventure on a lighter note.

After a group hug, we pedalled out toward the final ferry. On that last ride together, we cranked up *Pink Pony Club* and sang at the top of our lungs - beautiful, off-key, and completely perfect.

**PARTICIPANTS:** OLIVE JOY, SCOTT BELL, KYLIE SHAUGHNESSY, BIANCA PEDRETTI, RYAN HICKS, MACKENZIE SCHROEDER, BECCA MONTES AND NICOLE CZEGLEDY.



**MEMORIAL  
YOUTH GRANT**  
[ACCVI.CA](http://ACCVI.CA)

# Through their Eyes: Youth Category - ACCVI Photo Show

Noah Dale Feau, Sophie Longe, Eamon Miller & Caleb Wullum

## December 11, 2025: ACCVI Photo Competition and Show

December 11 is designated by the UN as [International Mountain Day](#). This year it coincided with the ACCVI Photo Competition and Show. Coincidentally, for the first time since its introduction, we had more than one or two entries in the Youth (18 and under) category. In celebration of both mountains and youth, we asked Noah, Sophie, Eamon and Caleb to put their work together in a photo essay. We are proud to present it here!

### NOAH DALE FEAU

Noah is 9 years old.



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*Opposite Page:  
Sunset Behind The Cats  
Ears.*

I like the orange, pink, red and purple colours. It's really nice. It really catches my eye. I could see The Cats Ears with its pointy rocks and tall trees. It looks like a big cat. I saw it from 5040 Peak.



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*Top: Coral Fungus on 5040 Peak*

This is one of the greatest photos I've ever taken. It looks like a coral reef. I like the texture and colour of this mushroom. I found it on the side of the 5040 trail. I really like mushrooms, they are yummy. It took time to get a good photo. It was my first time seeing one of these mushrooms.

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*Bottom: Lichen at 5040 Peak*

## SOPHIE LONGE

I have always been super passionate about the outdoors. I've been camping with my family since I turned one and love exploring the world from a backcountry perspective.

I recently completed my AST 1 course as part of my high school Capstone project where I am learning to splitboard in the backcountry safely.

I'm involved in the scouting community with 5th Garry Oak Venturers and am the captain of Oak Bay High School's snowboard team!



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*Elkhorn at Sunset from Kings Peak*

My dad, brother and I climbed Kings peak this past August and camped up on the ridge. We set up our camp, made dinner then climbed our way up to the peak to watch the sunset before hiking down by headlamp. It was absolutely beautiful and a well deserved view after the 2000 metres vertical we ascended earlier. Our camp spot on the ridge was quite exposed and the wind on the tent kept me up all night. Despite the wind, Kings peak is still one of my favourite summits!



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*Southern Chilcotin Mountains*

This past summer in early July, my Venturer group, 5th Garry Oak, went on a 5 day, 100km backpacking trip to the Southern Chilcotin Mountains. We began up the High Trail and climbed over Windy Pass down to Spruce Lake. On day 3 we left a base camp at Spruce Lake and trekked up the Sheba Ridge Trail. This photo was taken on the torturous switchbacks on our way up through the meadows. Spruce Lake can be seen down below.



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*Yukon at White River*

In August, my friend and I (both Venturers in the 5th Garry Oak Scouts group), joined the 1st Lakeview Venturers of Kelowna on their expedition down the Yukon River from Carmacks to Dawson City. This photo was taken just past the confluence of the White River when we stopped to stretch our legs. The sandbars in this section of the river are made of very fine sand that are amazing to run and stretch your legs on. Interestingly, they also create some fun quicksand pockets that we enjoyed playing in.

## EAMON MILLER



*Scramble to the Summit on Triple Peak*

Climbing Triple Peak was my favourite experience and greatest memory I have of mountaineering. I remember how nervous I was to scramble to the summit on the steep and exposed 15 metre face, but standing on the summit there was no more fear. I would say summitting Triple Peak was a turning point in mountaineering for me when I realized just how much climbing mountains means to me.



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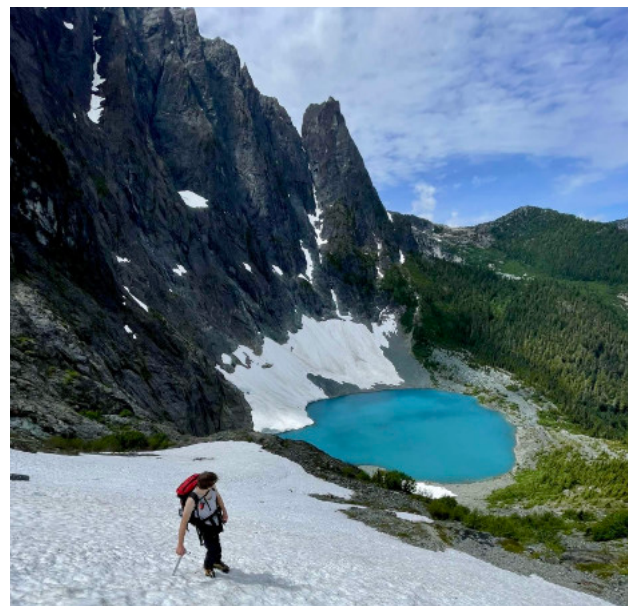
*Rope Throw on Triple Peak*

Coming down through the clouds after a successful summit of Triple Peak. This picture was taken setting up the rope for our 3rd rappel. I love the silhouette of the rope.

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*Mount Colonel Foster Turnaround*

On a hot summer day me and my close friend Miko were making a bid at the southeast summit of Mount Colonel Foster. In the photo we were on one of the lower glaciers on the way up the south couloir. It was around the time the photo was taken when we started to accept that we were almost at our designated turnaround time. While being one of the most difficult decisions I have had to make in the mountains, we decided to turn back and live to summit more peaks.



## CALEB WULLUM

I'm Caleb Wullum, I am 7 years old. I don't know how I got to be a mountaineer, I guess I just like climbing and hiking. I've always been climbing mountains, ever since I was in my Mom's belly. I love the challenge, and I love snacks.



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*The Old Man on Philips Ridge*

The old man was actually medium old, (Garrett Beisel) and the sunset was beautiful. I took the picture after climbing the west ridge of the Golden Hinde. It was neat to look back on the mountain for one more night. Awesome to see what I just did.



*Top: Peek-a-boo Behinde*

At a snack spot near the very top of the Golden Hinde. The gully we just climbed framed the Behinde. It was one of my favourite snack spots.

*Bottom: Mount Mcbride in a Cloak of Clouds*

This was at a camp below Jack's Fell. We thought it would be rainy, so we almost bailed on the trip. I'm glad we went. We had a perfect summit of Auger Point the next day.



# MOUNTAIN CULTURE

## The Broughton Archipelago

Lindsay Elms

### Naming the features of the Broughton Archipelago

Here is the final article in a series (see [IBWA 2024](#)) that covers the islands, and the mountains on those islands, surrounding Vancouver Island: The Southern Gulf Islands, Northern Gulf Island; Discovery Islands; around the North Coast and down the West Coast. The stories only delve into a few of the thousands of islands which range in area from a few square metres to the largest, Nootka Island at 510 square kilometres. Each article looks at the origin of the names for the islands and the peaks on them, and when they were officially adopted.



Captain George Richards, during his survey of the coastline of Vancouver Island in the 1860's named literally hundreds of features after monarchs, British naval officers, and Spanish explorers and naval officers. Some were crew members on his ships. Many were visitors to the Pacific Northwest while others had nothing to do with the area. Very few names were descriptive, and rarely were the Indigenous names acknowledged. Richards has named more features on the map than the Indigenous people who have lived here since time immemorial.

**Broughton Archipelago** is a group of islands located between the eastern end of Queen Charlotte Strait and Johnstone Strait. The archipelago is the traditional territory of the Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw, Namgis, Ma'amtagila, and Tlowitsis nations of the Kwakwaka'wakw peoples.

The archipelago was named in 1792 by Captain George Vancouver in honour of Captain William Robert Broughton (1762 – 1821), the commander of *HMS Chatham*, the second ship under Vancouver's command. It includes hundreds of islands and islets of all sizes scattered throughout the archipelago.

The archipelago is rich in biodiversity and culturally significant sites. Protected areas include Broughton Archipelago Conservancy, Broughton Archipelago Provincial Park, Burwood Group Conservancy (established in 2009), Cormorant Channel Marine Provincial Park (established in 1992), Echo Bay Marine Provincial Park (established in 1971), and Qwiqullaq/Boat Bay Conservancy (established in 2007). The last conservancy is located in the Johnstone Strait, directly across from Robson Bight (Michael Bigg) Ecological Reserve that protects key habitat for killer whales and prevents their harassment.

The largest island of the Broughton Archipelago is **Gilford Island** (384 square kilometres) and there is no information available on the origin of the name. The highest peak on the island is **Mount Read** (1469m) and was adopted on 6 April 1950. It was named by Captain George Richards after Captain William Viner Read (1797- 1860+). The second highest peak is **Mount Hulton** (1220+m) which was adopted on 2 June 1959 and named by Captain Richards. **Mount Dunsterville** (739m) was adopted on 2 July 1959 and named by Captain Daniel Pender after Commander Edward Dunsterville (1796-1873), civil assistant to the

Admiralty's Hydrographic Department, 1842-70. The next highest is **Mount James** (736m), adopted on 4 April 1957 and named by Captain Richards. **Saddle Hill** (382m) was adopted on 4 April 1957. It is located between False Cove and Shoal Harbour south of Echo Bay Marine Park. **Bare Hill** (64+m), on the southwest peninsula was adopted on 3 June 1954. All of the above peaks were labelled on British Admiralty Charts drawn by Captain Richards in the 1860's.

The northernmost island of the archipelago is **Watson Island** in the entrance to Mackenzie Sound. It was named in 1866, after Alexander Watson, a native of Scotland. He was the first treasurer of the Colony of Vancouver Island and later general inspector of the Bank of British Columbia. He married Jessie McKenzie in 1863, the second daughter of Kenneth and Agnes McKenzie of Craigflower farm established in Victoria in 1852. Craigflower farm became a social centre for naval and colonial officials, and the McKenzie girls (Agnes, Dorothea, Jessie and Wilhelmina) were much courted by visiting officers (see [Old Homes and Families - The Daily Colonist, Sunday May 30, 1948. p.6.](#)).

When Lady Jane Franklin (wife of Sir John Franklin) visited Victoria in 1861 the season's most colourful social event was the picnic in her honour at Craigflower farm. **Catherine Hill** (270+m) on the northwest corner of the island was originally labelled Mount Catherine on British Admiralty Chart in the 1860's but changed to Catherine Hill 31 December 1953 because of duplication. The origin/significance of the name is not recorded. However, **Mount Catherine**, up Knight Inlet west of Gilford Island, was named in 1865 by William Blackney, RN, assistant surveying officer aboard *HMS Beaver*, after Catherine Balfour Macdonald, wife of Senator W.J. Macdonald of Victoria, and second daughter of Captain James M. Reid of the

Hudson's Bay Company. The Gwawa'enuxw village of **Hegams**, now known as Hopetown, is on the south side of Watson Island.

South of Watson Island is **North Broughton Island**. The highest peak on the island is **Mount Browne** (464m). It was adopted on 4 September 1958 and is on the southeast side of the island. **Mount Stopford** (250+m) was adopted on 4 September 1958 and named in 1863 by Captain Pender after Lieutenant Robert Edward Stopford, commander of the *HMS Sutlej*. In October 1864, the *Sutlej* participated in a raid of nine Ahousaht villages where there were 15 casualties and 11 prisoners taken, including the wife and child of Chief Cap-chah. It is located on the west side of the island. The twin peaks of the **Wren Hills** (241m and 238m) are on the peninsula on the southwest side of the island and were adopted on 4 September 1958. These peaks were labelled on Captain Richards British Admiralty Charts of the 1860's. Some old maps show **Roberts Hill** (241m) in the middle of the island, but the name is not official.

**Broughton Island** was adopted on 6 April 1950. The highest point on Broughton Island is **Stoney Mountain** (560+m) and was adopted on 4 April 1957. It was labelled "Quoin or Stoney Mountain" on Captain Richards 1867 British Admiralty Chart. There is no information regarding the origins of either name. **Double Hill** (410+m) southwest of Stoney Mountain was adopted on 4 April 1957. **Despard Cone** (192m), south of Double Hill, was named by Captain Pender after Joseph Despard Pemberton, surveyor-general of Vancouver Island from 1851 to 1864. It was adopted on 4 April 1954. **Mount Ick** (352m) is located between Greenway Sound and Broughton Lake. It was adopted on 4 September 1958 and there is no information on the origin of the name. **Melbourne Hill** (230+m) and **Walkem Cone** (220+m) were both adopted on 6 June 1952.

They appear to be one hill, but the two peaks are separated by a ridge. Melbourne Hill is the west summit while Walkem Cone is the east summit. Walkem Cone is named after the Honourable George Anthony Walkem (1834-1908), judge of the Supreme Court of British Columbia. **Lane Hill** (275m) is northeast of Walkem Cone and was adopted on 4 April 1957. There is no information on the origin of Melbourne or Lane Hill. All three peaks are east of Booker Lagoon.

On the south side of Broughton Island and fully protected by the Broughton Archipelago Conservancy is **Eden Island**. It was adopted on 6 April 1950. It was labelled on Captain Richards Admiralty Charts from the 1860's but named by Captain Pender after Admiral Sir Charles Eden (1808-1878), a Royal Navy officer who went on to be Second Naval Lord.

**Baker Island** is on the west side of Gilford Island and north of Bonwick Island. It was named by Captain William Broughton after First Lieutenant Baker of *HMS Discovery*. He was the keeper of the Remark Books commonly called the "ship's log". It was adopted on 6 April 1950. South of Baker is **Bonwick Island**. It was named by Captain Daniel Pender in the 1860's, after Charles Bonwick RN, acting assistant engineer aboard the gunboat *Grappler* in 1860. Between 1963 and 1870 he was acting chief engineer aboard the paddle steamer *Beaver* engaged by Captain Richards to survey the west coast. It was adopted on 6 April 1950.

On the eastern side of the archipelago abutting the Discovery Islands are two islands that comprise the Cracroft Islands: **East and West Cracroft**. They were adopted on 4 September 1947 and named in 1861 by Captain Richards after Sophia Cracroft, niece of Sir John Franklin, the noted Arctic explorer who died during the ill-fated expedition in 1847. Miss Cracroft was on this coast with Lady Franklin in 1861. West Cracroft

Island has two named peaks: **Mount Anthony** (310+m) was adopted on 7 April 1955. It is located east of Port Harvey. There is no information on the origin of the name but Mount Antony was also named by the British Admiralty at the same time on the north shore of lower Knight Inlet. **Mount Thomas** (510+m) was adopted on 3 June 1954 and is west of Port Harvey.

There are no peaks on East Cracroft Island. Off the northwest coast of West Cracroft is **Harbledown Island**. It was adopted on 4 September 1947. It appears it was named by Captain Pender and presumably refers to a small village near Canterbury in Kent, England. This was possibly the home of one of his officers but it is not known which one.

**Swanson Island** is located northwest of Harbledown Island. The only peak is **Harbour Cone** (133m) on the southeast end of the island. It was adopted on 3 June 1954 and labelled on British Admiralty Charts from the 1860's. **Crease Island** is east of Swanson Island and was formerly named Lewis Island on Captain Richards 1860's Admiralty Charts but changed in 1906 by the Geographic Board of Canada to Crease Island. It was named after Sir Henry Pering Pellew Crease (1823-1905). He was a British-Canadian lawyer, judge, and politician, who emigrated to the Crown Colony of Vancouver Island 1858. He was the first Attorney General of the United Colony of B.C., and sat on the Supreme Court for 26 years until he retired in 1895 with the honour of knighthood.

East of East Cracroft Island is **Hull Island**. The island was named c.1860 by Captain Richards for Thomas Arthur Hull, ship's master of *HMS Havannah* under Captain Thomas Harvey, namesake of Port Harvey which is just to the west, forming a bay between the two nearly-joined Cracroft Islands.

**Minstrel Island** is believed to have derived from a visit by a boat,

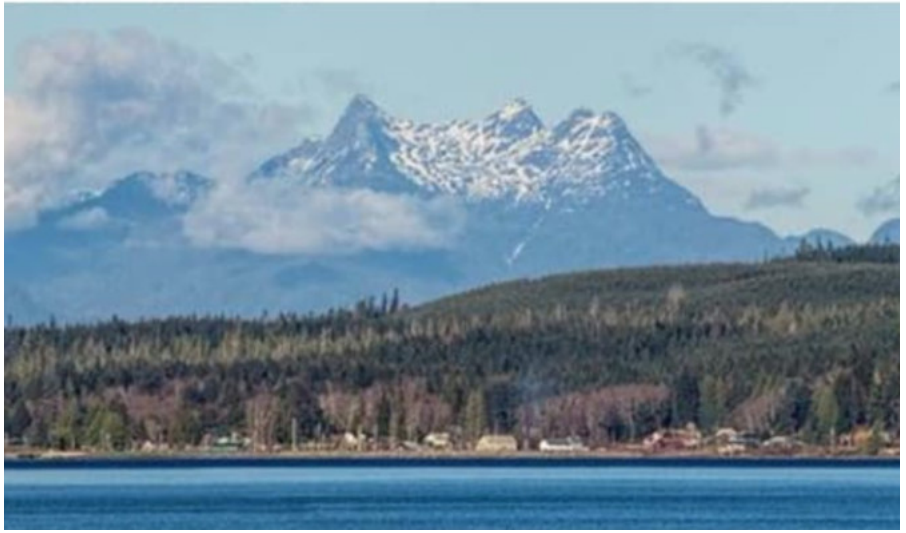
believed to be *HMS Amethyst*, carrying Lord Dufferin, then Governor General of Canada, and his wife which carried the viceregal couple on a voyage up the coast to Metlakatla in 1876. According to one of the crew, Patrick Riley, Amethyst's crew performed regularly as a troupe of "minstrels", white people made up in blackface, who provided entertainment for shipmates and visitors, and the name likely commemorates a performance in these waters. West of Minstrel Island and wedged between West Cracroft, Harbledown and Village Island is **Turnour Island**. There is no information available on the origin of the name. The only named peak on **Village Island** (northeast of Turnour Island) is **Island Cone** (104m) located on the north coast. It was adopted on 3 June 1954.

Village Island is one of the major home territory islands of the Mamalilikulla and Qwe-Qwa'Sot'Em groups of Kwakwaka'wakw and their principal village is called Memkumlis, often known by the name Mamalilikulla. The name means "village with rocks and islands out front" or as translated by famous chief and carver Mungo Martin, "group of little islands" and the German anthropologist Franz Boas as "round things [islands] in front at beach". **Klaoitsis Island**, also perhaps **Adlagamalla** in Kwak'wala, is an island located to the south of Turnour Island in the Clio Channel. The name is an alternate spelling of Ławit'sis or Tlowitsis, the name of the Kwakwala'wakw group whose territory it is in.

Continuing west is **Cormorant Island**. It was adopted on 6 April 1950 and was identified on a 1919 map and is the most populated island in the Broughton Archipelago. It was named in 1846 by Commander George T. Gordon RN, after the *HMS Cormorant*, a side-wheel paddle sloop built in 1842. It has the distinction of being

the first naval steam vessel to ply British Columbia waters, when in 1846 it arrived with several other war vessels to strengthen British naval presence on the North Pacific coast, in light of growing sovereignty-tensions with the United States.

The Kwak'waka'wakw name for Cormorant Island is Yalis and refers to the feminine qualities which make it a safe haven. North of Cormorant is **Malcolm Island**, named after Admiral Sir Pulteney Malcolm (1758-1838).



*Looking across Malcom Island to Mount Stephens / k'we.*



*A wood engraving on paper by Walter J. Phillips from 1932 called Zunuk – a totem figure with outstretched hands and in the background K'we/Mount Stephens.*

In 1816, Sir Malcolm was the Commander-in-Chief of the St. Helena station and had charge of Napoleon during his final captivity. The village of Sointula is reached by ferries from Port McNeill and the island is part of the historic and present territory of the Namgis First Nations. Sointula means “Place of Harmony”.

**Mount Stephens/k'we** (1592m) is the most conspicuous peak looking northeast of Port McNeill. It is northeast of Nimmo Bay (off Mackenzie Sound) and west of Kingcome Inlet on the mainland. K'we, also spelled Quay and Kwe, was the home of the Thunderbird.

*“The Gwawa'enuxw tribe lives in the village of Hegams, now known as Hoptown on the south side of Watson Island. The Gwawa'enuxw have always been taught that one of their First Ancestors was the great Thunderbird who roamed the heavens and made his home on K'we. One day, in another time, he descended from the mountain. When he reached the base of the mountain, he shed his Thunderbird form and became one of the first human ancestors of the tribe that eventually came to occupy the village of Hegams.”* Chief Robert Joseph, Gwawa'enuxw tribe, 1998.

Mount Stephens was named in 1792 by Captain Vancouver after Sir Phillip Stephens (1723-1809). In 1751 he became the first clerk of the Admiralty, its second secretary in 1759 and Secretary in 1763, and later a Lord Commissioner of the British Admiralty between 1795 and 1806. Mount Stephens was later identified on Captain Richards' Admiralty Charts from the 1860's.

# BC Parks and Crest Creek a Decade Later: Observations from a Climbing Heathen

Chris Barner with Introduction by Sandy Briggs

## Introducing Chris Barner and the Heathens

The Heathens (*ex hac origine*: dwellers of the heath) emerged as an important up-Island climbing and mountaineering club in the mid-late 1980s, and a lot of the energy for this came from Chris Barner. Their club focused on, among other things, safety, education and friendship. In those pre-Internet days, the telephone was key. I had met Chris Barner by 1991 but the first joint ACCVI/Heathens mountaineering trip was to Maquilla Peak on the north Island in September of 1993. Chris and I, along with Catrin Brown, Valerio Faraoni and three others had a fun day-trip to that slightly obscure summit. The following January, Claire Ebendinger, Valerio, Don Newman and I were in Campbell River to attend a presentation. We were welcomed to crash on the floor of Chris's apartment, and he loaned us rope and gear for our winter ascent of Warden Peak the following day!

We became good friends. I became a Heathen. (Their club newsletters from the 1990s and early 2000s may now be collector's items.) A huge part of their project was the development of the amazing rock climbing venue at Crest Creek Crags, and many of us from the ACCVI have benefited from their hard work and their hospitality over the decades. An informative, not to say eye-opening, earlier article about north Island climbing activity appeared in the Island Bushwhacker Annual 2013 (Vol 41) "[The Northenders](#)", also by Chris Barner.

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SANDY BRIGGS

## Crest Creek a Decade Later

In December 2014, after two decades of dedicated volunteer work at Crest Creek, and thirty years of volunteering in Strathcona Park more broadly, the Heathens club was issued a “Stop Work Order”. This arose as a result of a dispute over new agreements that volunteers were being required to sign in 2013. During the year preceding the order, a large volume of work had been completed at the crags including a difficult trail project connecting the original crags to the Sunrise area and refurbishing access trails and staging areas at the newer crags. Local climbers and volunteers enjoyed a positive feeling about the crags at that time.

However, the club refused to sign the new agreement in its original form, instead requesting changes to reduce the administrative burden for volunteers. Yet even after two years of negotiations the Ministry remained unmoved. In July of 2016, the club protested the new requirements and Park’s lack of co-operation at their traditional summer camp location. Parks mobilised Conservation Officers and tickets were issued to protesters camped at Crest Creek. A settlement was reached over the charges during a court hearing where the protesters each agreed to a one dollar fine for illegal camping while the Ministry wasted a bucket of tax dollars bringing the case.

At the hearing, Justice Gordon commented on the volunteer agreements;

*I am glad, Mr. Pauwels, that you have said that BC Parks is prepared to let bygones be bygones and try to work at some kind of resolution to this. I hope that you will, because it did strike me that the Heathens have been doing and presumably would continue to do if they could, to the benefits not only of the public, but presumably the purse of BC Parks, because the Heathens are doing some work that is not coming out of the pocket of the government coffers.*



*I guess both as a lawyer previously, and up here, I have always railed against what I call standard form agreements and if there is something unique about some situation..., you know if there is a reason for departing from the standard form, but can still meet the interest of both sides, then just because that is the form that we use for everybody else should not necessarily mean that it should be a form of agreement used for here.*

However, Parks failed to contact the club to re-establish a relationship and no other group came forward to accept responsibility for maintenance at the crags. With no one working there the crags deteriorated; routes re-greened and bolts went uninspected so the climbs became more difficult and dangerous, while windfall littered overgrown trails that had become

hazardous due to weakening structures and footbed erosion. Still, the crags remained busy despite the increasing risk that mishaps might occur, so the Ministry’s regrettable refusal to negotiate in good faith and their failure to re-establish a relationship with volunteers resulted in dangerous conditions at Crest.

During the ensuing eight-year period conditions continued to worsen, so individuals resorted to “guerilla” trailwork tactics to make their climbing outings safer and more enjoyable by cleaning trails, removing obstacles and picking up litter. According to the “Work Stop Order” these efforts were illegal, but local climbers had decided that the risk of getting a ticket for doing unsanctioned work was preferable

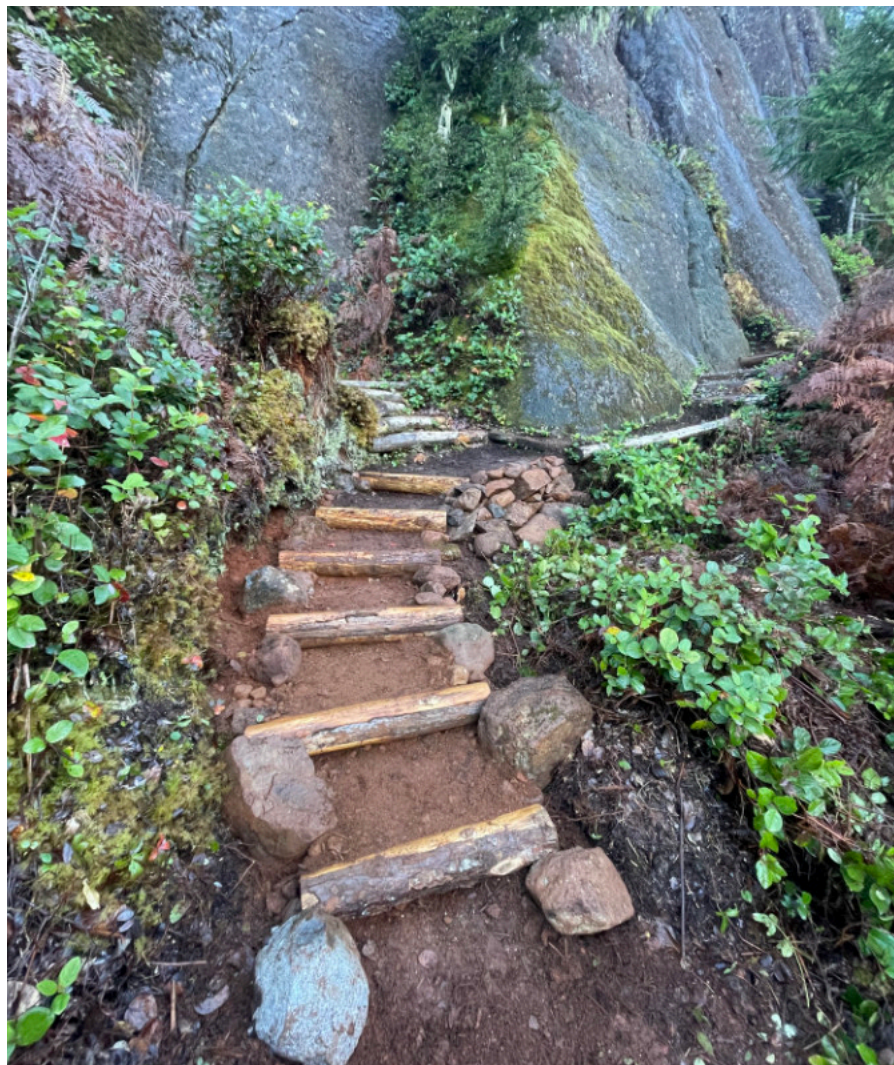
to pulling off a loose bolt hanger! These measures provided a basic level of maintenance, but without an organized group to undertake larger projects, acquire grants, purchase, salvage, and transport materials or maintain relationships with local corporate support, things continued to deteriorate.

One really unfortunate consequence of this entropy was the dissolution of Heathen's youth group projects, which, as Alex Ratson describes below, operated on a work for education basis;

*The cost was sweat equity, you gave back to the climbing community and he (Chris) hoped you could teach the next generation. Being trained in a grounded grasp of both technical and soft skills is something I (Alex) continue to value to this day.*

The club sought other locations where the programs could be run such as in cooperation with the Haig-Brown Institute at the Quinsam River nature trail and other climbing areas like Comox Lake, but none of these options could provide the long-term predictability or convenient teaching venues necessary for the curricula. Sadly, the dispute had created a situation where young climbers would be entering the scene with less savvy and incomplete training. Additionally, there was no longer an example of cooperation between recreationists and land managers to help shape their vision of a future in recreation, conservation, or volunteering.

But things have begun to improve, because as usage and impacts both continue to increase at the crags, officials and climbers all realize that the status quo is unacceptable. I credit my old friend Bill Phipps for reinitiating contact with the Ministry and for harnessing the energy of local climbers, resulting in a realignment of motivations between the groups. A new cadre of volunteers has emerged, eager to renew the necessary enthusiasm to maintain the safety and quality of Crest Creek climbing. Meanwhile,



the arrival of Jessie Moore as Strathcona Zone Manager, along with dedicated workers Eric Krasmen, and Chris Branting has resulted in a simplified volunteer policy that drastically reduces the administrative burden. Thanks to these forward thinking officials volunteering is fun again, but more importantly, faith in land managers has been somewhat restored. The return of common sense to Crest Creek policy is a breath of fresh mountain air and the future seems much more promising, but it is important to recognise that this future has a past.

It is widely believed that the heavy handed volunteer agreements of 2013 originated to facilitate the expansion of LNG development and potential pipeline construction championed by "Liberal in name only" governments prior to 2017. In

any case, it is prudent to assume that the lobbying power of industry will affect Parks policy again in the future so Ministry officials seem doomed to a fate of being yarded in three (or more) directions at once! As industry lobbies for access to resources, conservationists will call for the preservation of precious public lands, while recreationists will continue to remind us that parks are for people too.

We rely on industry to build communities prosperous enough to allow us to set aside protected areas. Concurrently, we rely on conservationists to preserve these lands which provide the potable water, breathable air and the bounty that allows us to flourish here. Recreationists live in our communities and work in our industries, while their time in nature has shaped their intuitive understanding of how these



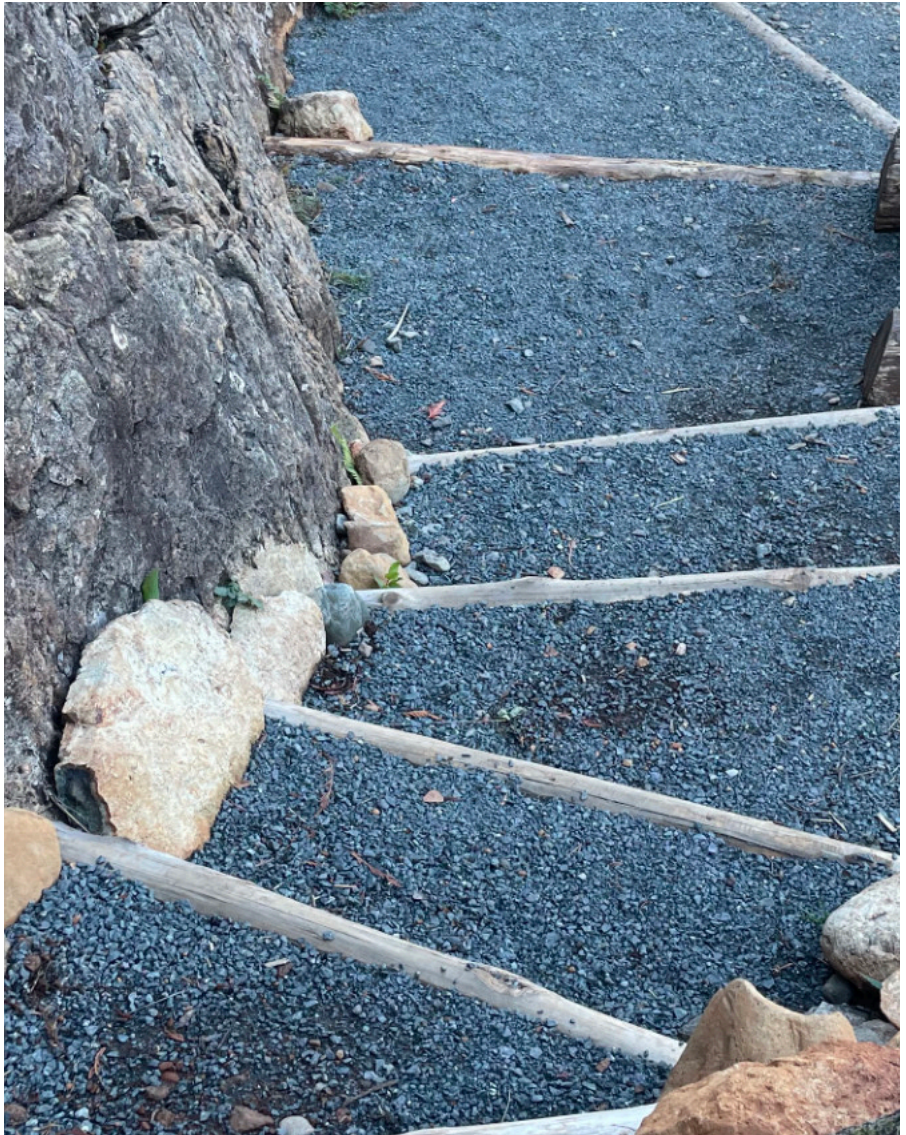
factors are integrated. Simply put, we are all on the same team.

As someone whose concern regarding the impacts of these dynamics on the environment dates back to the 1970's, I have seen the pendulum swing back and forth many times. The resulting perspective is so informative that the role of elders is critical; something our Indigenous friends have long understood. In fact, leadership in any group or organisation requires a certain level of emotional maturity in order to prevent regrettable overreactions. Justice Gordon put it this way;

*When emotion steps in, reason steps out. It is far better to keep an even keel.*

There have been times when I have deplored Parks' policies but I refuse to treat their employees with contempt and even as we lament the impacts of industry, we can do so without demonising folks who are just trying to make a living. Additionally, we can heed the call of conservationists and recreationists without labelling them as extremist or elitist.

There is a middle ground, free of the drastic policy oscillations that began the dispute between the parties at Crest Creek; we just have to move toward it. Thanks to the efforts of Jessie, Bill, Eric, Heathens and many others, work has resumed as Crest Creek. Elders like Paul Rydeen and I



can help, not just with trail building knowledge and route development techniques but also by recounting experiences of evolving relationships between stakeholders. I urge all parties involved to ride the wave as it crests while preparing for possible future disturbances, but we must all seek to "Flatten the wavelength" in order to go forward more efficiently and respectfully.

So far, the new efforts at Crest are insufficient in scope and frequency to return the area to its former glory anytime soon, but the pieces are all in place, the efforts are honest and the motivations are sincere. We are now on a path to take positive steps toward safer and more enjoyable recreation. This is in everybody's best interests; we all agree that recreation

is necessary for the good health and well-being of our environment and all our citizens, workers, land managers, and volunteers alike.

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CHRIS BARNER WITH PHOTOS BY  
PAUL RYDEEN

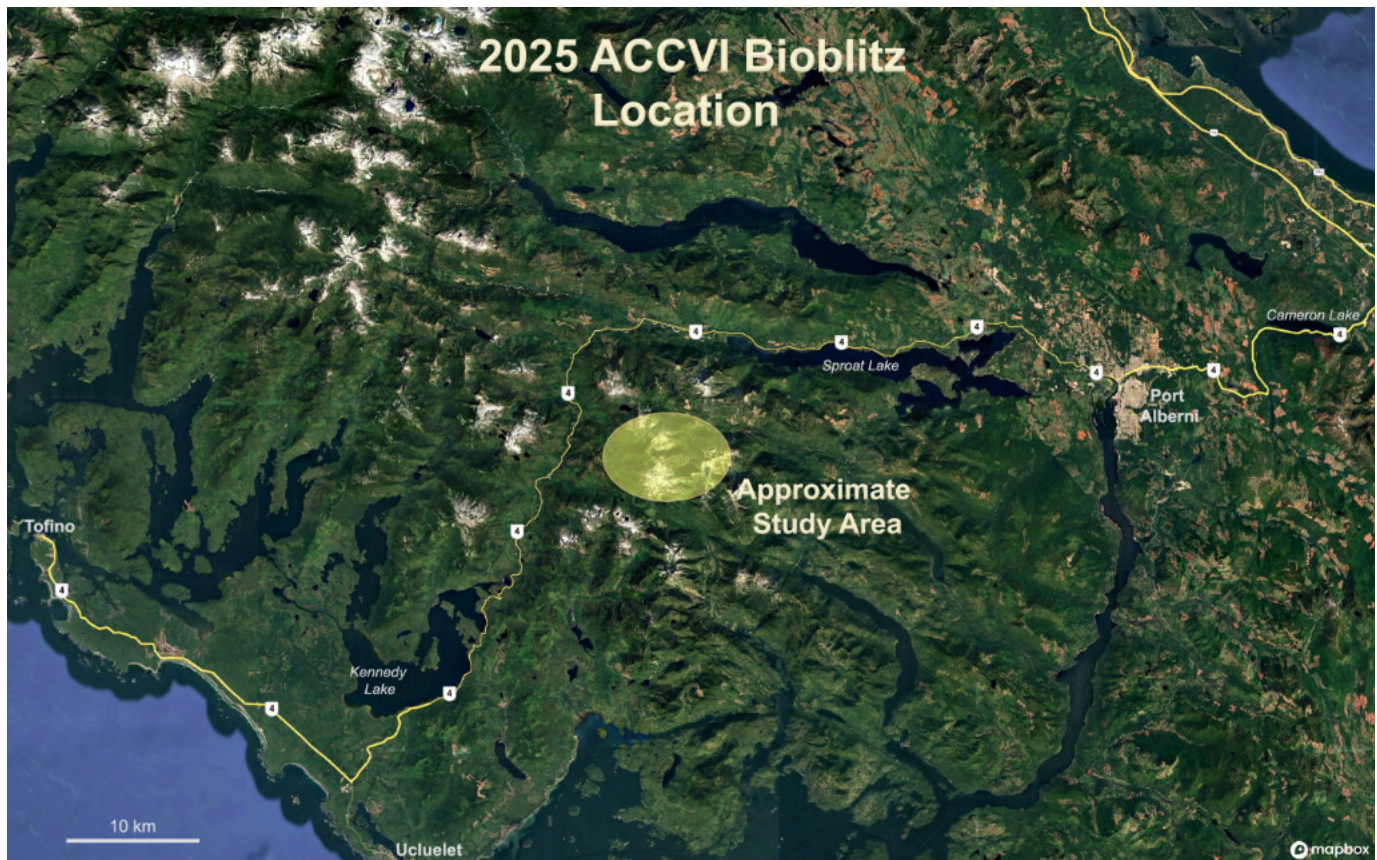
# 2025 BioBlitz at 5040 Peak\*

Catrin Brown

July 29 - 31, 2025

## What we planned

“ I'm in! Happy to block those dates in my calendar”. Chad’s quick reply to our email “Shall we BioBlitz again this summer?” was typical of the enthusiasm for the project generated from a similar event the previous summer. And so, with the support of a grant from the [ACC Environment Fund](#), Mary Sanseverino and I were again able to muster a fine team of experts and enthusiasts, and put our plan into action for a three-day BioBlitz at 5040 Peak in July 2025.



*The yellow circle shows the area of study relative to HW 4 which runs east to west across central Vancouver Island. MAP DATA © GAIA GPS, © MAPBOX, © OPENSTREETMAP CONTRIBUTORS. IMAGERY © MAPBOX: MAPBOX.COM/ABOUT/MAPS . OPENSTREETMAP DATA: OPENSTREETMAP.ORG/COPYRIGHT*

\*This report was submitted to ACC National as part of the terms of acceptance of a grant received from the ACC Environment Fund in 2025.

The BioBlitz concept is expansive but simple. At heart it is a communal effort to record as many species as possible, within a designated location and time period. The data collected provide a snapshot of local biodiversity. This is a baseline that can help track change in species composition over time, identify endemic species, and inform decisions of environmental management and stewardship. The communal part is important too – working together, people with diverse interests and depths of experience spark curiosity and learning within the group. In short, with the right group in the right place, a BioBlitz is a lot of fun.

The environs of 5040 Peak[1] was clearly the ‘right place’ for our planned BioBlitz. Situated on Vancouver Island west of Port Alberni, the area is accessed by steep trails leading to the peak at 1535 metres. With an altitude zonation of 900 metres from trailhead to summit, the region includes old growth forest, a treeline lake, alpine tarns and meadows, and the cliffy peak itself. Just below the peak’s east col is a limestone plateau with some unique geology[2]. This rich diversity of ecosystems represented in a relatively small area makes it a naturalist’s treasure trove.

The west shoulder of the peak is the site of the first (and so far the only) Alpine Club hut on Vancouver Island, Hišim’yawił[3], built by the Vancouver Island section and opened in 2018. Our section therefore has a strong interest in the stewardship of this region, and facilitated our use of the hut as a comfortable base for our three-day project.

The ‘right people’ also fell into place perfectly. We shoulder-tapped a few friends with known expertise in different areas, then advertised the event on the ACCVI schedule for open participation. The result was a diverse and happy team of twelve,



*From Cobalt Lake there is a glorious view south to Triple Peak, 1557 metres. PHOTO BY DAVE SUTTILL*



*The geology on the plateau is beautiful as well as fascinating. PHOTO BY CATRIN BROWN*

with different areas of knowledge and interest, eager to learn together and from each other. By the time we reached the trailhead on a sunny morning in late July, new friendships were forming and plans were set.

### What we did

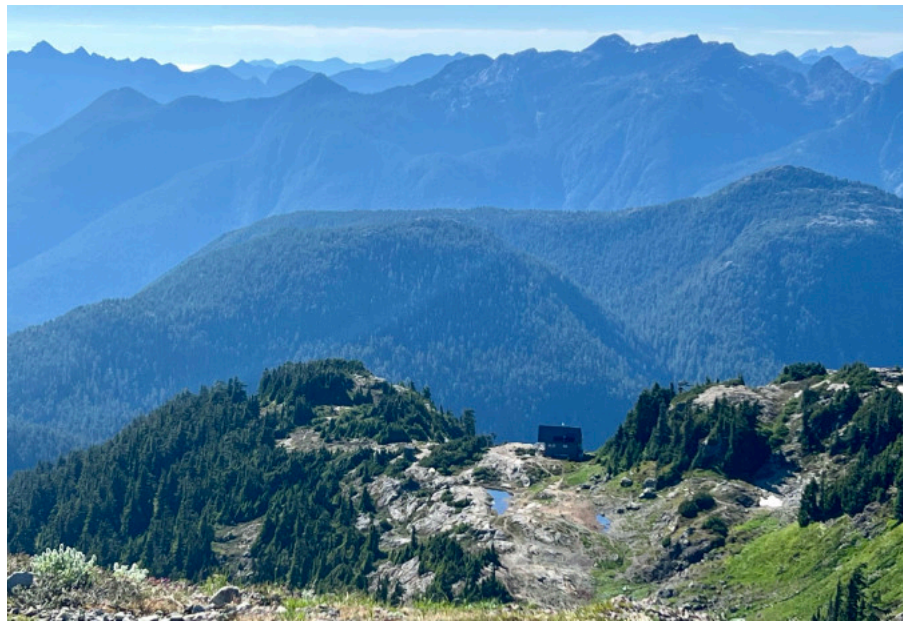
We had barely left the cars when the observations started. Using the app iNaturalist, we got to work observing and recording species as we hiked. The app makes it easy, as photos can be uploaded to the site at

the time or later, where they are identified by AI and a community of experts. All our observations over the three-day BioBlitz are then organised into one project on the iNaturalist site, with geotagging giving the exact location of each observation. And so we hiked, and looked, and took photos, and compared thoughts on identification, and hiked some more, and listened for birds, and took more photos. We may have set a new record for the slowest hike up the mountain — and possibly one of the most enjoyable getting up there too.



**(L):** Maddy and Aeltie checking out plants in the wet area at the base of the small waterfall, slightly north of the trail below Cobalt Lake. PHOTO BY DAVE SUTTILL

**(R):** Cobalt Lake is at 1160 metres on the route up. The summit of 5040 Peak and Hišimyaŋiλ are off to the left of the photo. PHOTO BY SIMONE LITTLEDALE



Hišimyaŋiλ, the ACC hut, sits on the west shoulder of 5040 Peak. Not a bad place to work! PHOTO BY CATRIN BROWN



Dave at work. Slender Bog Orchid, *Platanthera stricta*. PHOTO BY CATRIN BROWN



Joel, Maddy, Catrin, Dave and Simon setting off. It's a steep climb through the forest to the lake and plateau above. PHOTO BY DAVE SUTTILL

Groups spontaneously formed with different focuses. The birders set a faster pace, perhaps trying to listen more clearly away from the group's chatter. For others the interest was closer to the ground, studying invertebrates and swamp plants. Some spent longer on the relatively dry slopes above Cobalt Lake. Everyone was busy.

After a busy day observing, it was good to re-group at Hišimýawił in the evening to enjoy a shared dinner and spectacular sunset.



*Hišimýawił is a perfect place to enjoy a convivial meal after a long day's work.*  
PHOTO BY CATRIN BROWN



*Sunsets from Hišimýawił are often spectacular, showcasing the Island mountains as far as Strathcona Park to the north.* PHOTO BY ALCINA DE OLIVEIRA

Setting out from the hut on the second day, we spread out in small groups, covering a great deal of the chosen terrain.



Rick at the east col looking up at the ridge towards Nahmint Mountain. PHOTO BY PHEE HUDSON



(L): Alpine botanists Paul and Chad making their way across some little explored terrain to the south of the Nahmint Mountain west ridge. PHOTO BY AELTIE NOYES

(R): Looking down from the col at Catrin and Alcina exploring the limestone plateau. PHOTO BY PHEE HUDSON



**Top:** Joel making observations as he and Dave scrambled up from the plateau to the north ridge of 5040 Peak.  
PHOTO BY DAVE SUTTILL

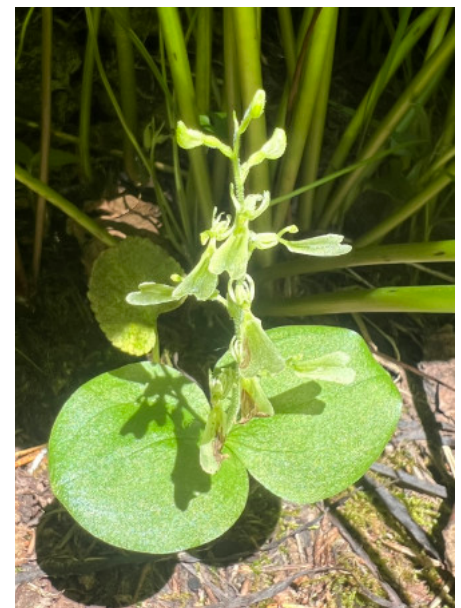
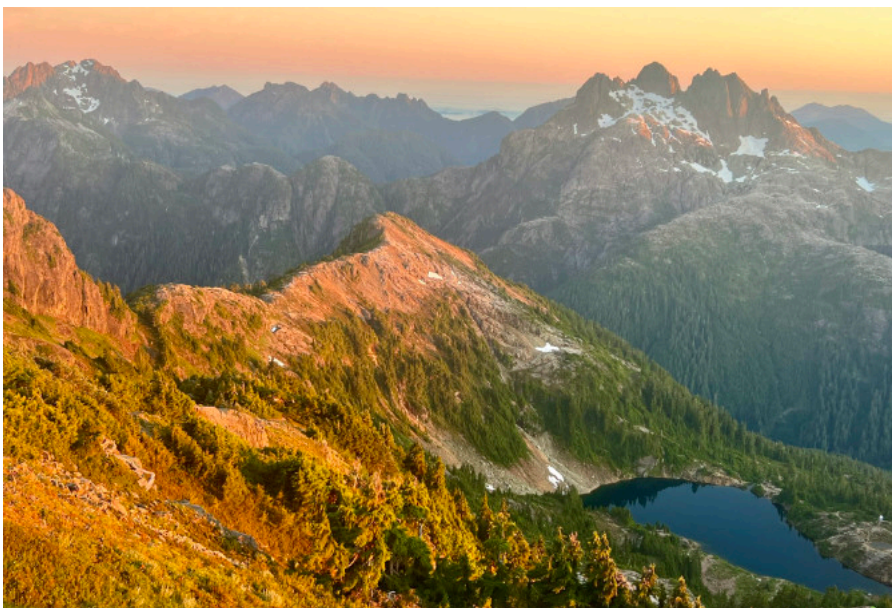
**Centre:** Simone and Simon making sunset observations just below the summit.  
PHOTO BY CATRIN BROWN

**Bottom (L):** Sunset view over Observatory ridge and Cobalt Lake to Triple Peak. **Bottom (R):** Broad-lipped Twayblade, *Neottia convallarioides*, a species of orchid, took some focused searching.  
PHOTOS BY CATRIN BROWN



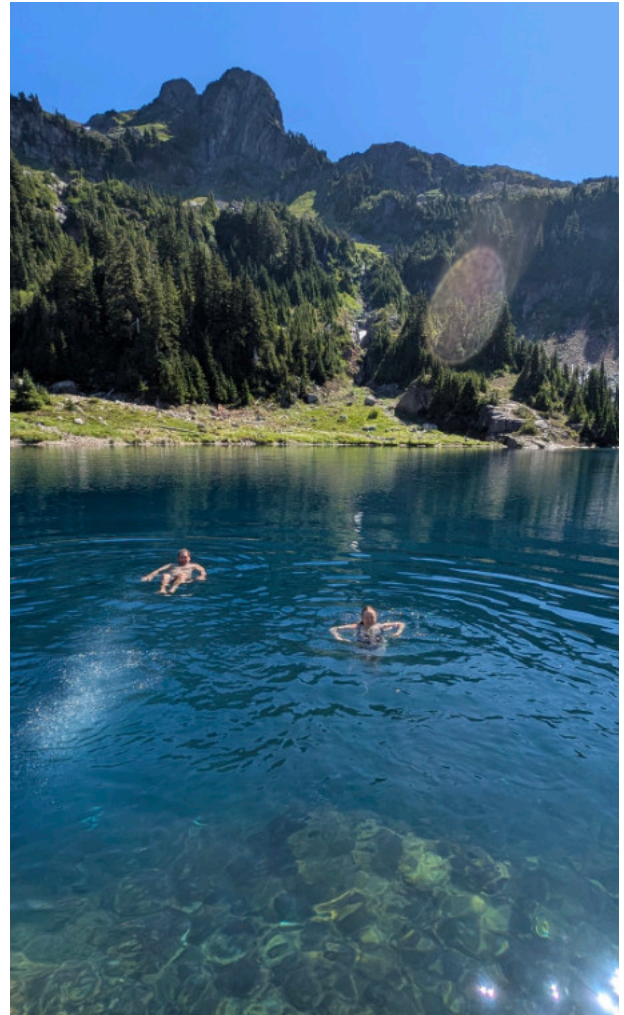
As dusk became night, a small group climbed to the summit and observed roosting bird behaviour and enjoyed more glorious sunset views.

Back at the hut, we used white sheets and UV lights to study moths on Hišimýawił's deck. There was no shortage of fun and lively commentary on the day's findings, and discussion of some of the challenges of changing taxonomy that seem to beset the botanists particularly. Observations continued on the third day as we packed up from the hut and slowly made our way back down the trail, making sure we had time for a cool swim in Cobalt Lake. Very welcome.

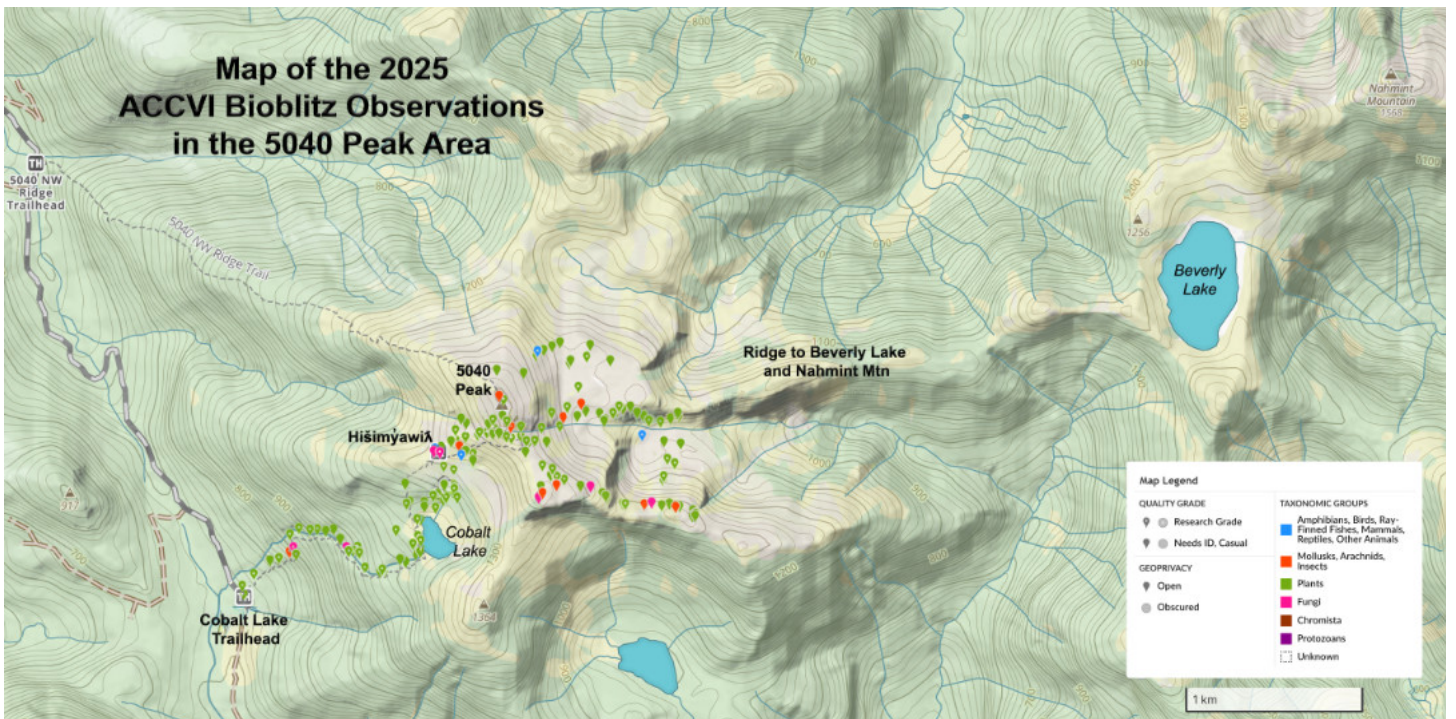




BioBlitzers leaving Hišim'yawił on Day 3. Left from top: Martin (hut manager), Alcina, Catrin, Paul, Chad, Dave. Right from top: Joel, Simone, Maddy, Simon, Aeltie. (Rick and Phee Hudson missing from photo.)  
 PHOTO BY CATRIN BROWN



Final swim in Cobalt Lake on the hike out.  
 PHOTO BY SIMONE LITLEDALE



Map of all our observations, colour coded according to type. MAP DATA © GAIA GPS, OPENSTREETMAP CONTRIBUTORS. OPENSTREETMAP DATA: [OPENSTREETMAP.ORG/COPYRIGHT](https://openstreetmap.org/copyright)

## What we learned

Mary helped to collate our observations into a unified data-set on iNaturalist:

[www.inaturalist.org/projects/2025-acc-vancouver-island-5040-peak-bioblitz](http://www.inaturalist.org/projects/2025-acc-vancouver-island-5040-peak-bioblitz)

The headline results are as follows:

- 1021 observations
- 258 species identified

## Species of note

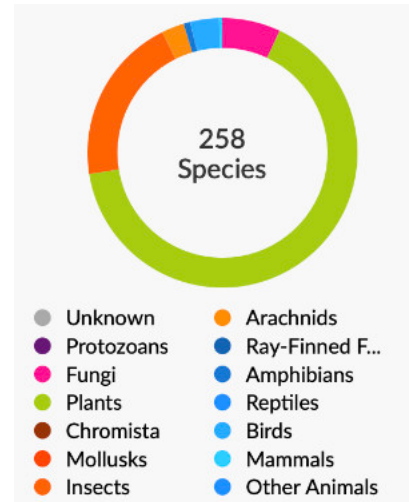
This iNaturalist designation is given to species which are unusual or rare for a location.



*Mountain Deathcamas, Anticlea elegans.*  
The second Vancouver Island record, the only other location on the Island is the Clayoquot Plateau.  
OBSERVATION BY PAUL SPRIGGS



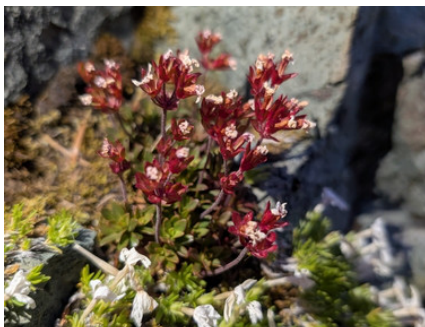
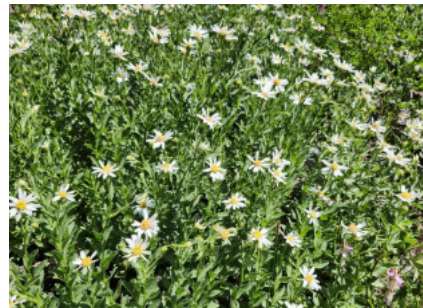
*Bruce's Tiger Moth, Chelis brucei.*  
Only the third one recorded on Vancouver Island.  
OBSERVATION BY PHEE HUDSON



*iNaturalist-generated summary of the numbers of species found by kingdom or class. INATURALIST ACCESSED 28 FEBRUARY, 2026*

## Vulnerable Status (VU on iNaturalist)

This designation is given to species which are officially threatened/at high risk of extinction. The location of these observations are obscured on iNaturalist.



**Top (L):** Vancouver Island subspecies of White-Tailed Ptarmigan, *Lagopus leucura ssp. saxatilis.*  
OBSERVATION BY SIMONE LITTLEDALE

**Top (C):** Olympic aster, *Doellingeria paucicapitata.*  
OBSERVATION BY PAUL SPRIGGS

**Top (R):** Cascade Wallflower, *Erysimum arenicola.*  
OBSERVATION BY CHAD KREUTZENSTEIN

**Bottom:** Cliff Douglasia, *Androsace laevigata.*  
OBSERVATION BY SIMONE LITTLEDALE



The beautiful environs of 5040 Peak. PHOTO BY CATRIN BROWN

## Species of mention

- Cliff paintbrush, *Castilleja rupicola*
- Band-tailed pigeon, *Patagioenas fasciata*

These data are now in the public domain and so are available for reference and research. In addition to these records, anecdotal observations were shared. For example, Paul was noting how the avalanche lilies seem to have aborted seed setting after flowering this year, likely stressed by the prolonged seasonal drought. Observations like this may help to support research projects such as the impacts of changing climate on species health and distribution.

And this is an environment that may be changing for other reasons. In recent years we have witnessed a huge increase in the popularity of this mountain region, and the accompanying steep rise in human traffic. This is raising issues for us at ACCVI about the best responses in terms of stewardship and conservation. It is evident that the acquisition of as much primary data

as possible regarding species representation, will be increasingly important as we assess these concerns and consider mitigation strategies.

Needless to say, a project of this nature is dynamic, as observations from the area will continue to be added to the iNaturalist site. We look forward to following this expanding data base. We are very grateful to the ACC Environment Fund for granting us support with this project. Perhaps ACC members across the country might consider a mountain-based BioBlitz and contribute to citizen science in this way. With the right group in the right place, it's a lot of fun!

## References

[1] '5040 Peak' refers to the height of the peak in feet (1535 metres). The name was submitted by ACCVI members Rick Eppler and Rob Macdonald after their early climbs in the area, and was officially adopted by the BC Geographic Names Office in November 1984.

[2] "[It's not only beautiful, it's interesting! The geology of the 5040 peak area.](#)" Maija Finvers, Island Bushwhacker Annual 2019 Vol. 47.

[3] Hišim'yawił means "Gather Together" in the Barkley Sound dialect of the Ucluelet First Nation. It is pronounced [Hi-SHIM-ya-wit].

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**PARTICIPANTS:** CATRIN BROWN, SIMON DAKIN, ALCINA DE OLIVEIRA, MARTIN HOFMANN (HUT MANAGER), RICK AND PHEE HUDSON, CHAD KREUTZENSTEIN, SIMONE LITLEDALE, AELTIE NOYES, PAUL SPRIGGS, DAVE SUTTILL, JOEL USSERY AND MADDY VALLEE

## Acknowledgements

Our work follows in the footsteps of earlier mountaineers and naturalists who recognised the ecological interest in the 5040 Peak environs. Between 2005 and 2007, ACCVI members Judith and Viggo Holm and Ken Wong, explored the area extensively, cataloguing the vascular plants under the expert eye of botanist Dr. Hans Roemer. We are grateful for their work, which has been summarised in the [5040 list](#) on iNaturalist compiled by Mary Sanseverino, and was available as reference material for our project.

# From Paper Maps to Topo Apps, the Age of the GPX is here

ChatGPT, with commentary by Lindsay Elms

Once, the mountains whispered low,  
To those who dared through ice and snow.  
With compass needle's steady spin,  
And paper maps worn thin from planning.

The guidebooks spoke in cryptic lines,  
Of jagged ridges, weathered signs.  
"Trust your eyes," the old ones taught,  
"Read the land, its lessons wrought."

But now the peaks have gone online,  
Shared in segments, route, and time.  
A GPX, a Strava track,  
No mystery—just download and pack.

Watches buzz, the arrow leads,  
Through forested trails and barren screens.  
No pondering over which way's best,  
The path's been chosen; forget the rest.

For seasoned souls, the blend is clear—  
Old wisdom guides where tech might veer.  
The scars of choices made in stone,  
Enhance the data they now own.

Yet for the fledgling, risk is high,  
To trust the map without the eye.  
The easiest line might weave through strife,  
A path too sharp, a threat to life.

The art of choosing, knowing when,  
To turn around, to try again,  
May falter when a glowing screen,  
Conceals the cliffs the eyes have seen.

Success grows nearer, yes, it's true,  
With satellites to guide us through.  
Yet self-reliance, old and bold,  
Is treasure rare, worth more than gold.

So, mountaineers, both new and old,  
Let this be shared, the wisdom told:  
The tools may change, but peaks remain,  
Respect the mountains, or court disdain.

The irony that this poem was written by ChatGPT was intended. We are living in a new technological era, which is causing some massive shifts in how we approach mountaineering, and where we find information for our next ascent. Instead of carefully decrypting directions from a guidebook with compass bearings and map references, we can more simply download a GPX from Strava, sync to our GPS watch and off we go. This saves much time and effort, and reduces the chances of getting lost. For experienced mountaineers, this navigational backup is yet another tool in the toolbox.

The risk is that for beginning mountaineers, over reliance on the routes of others can lead to trouble, especially given GPS tracks are least accurate in steeper terrain. Traditional navigational skills are invaluable in the mountains, along with the ability to look at terrain and visualise the most efficient route through the scree, scrub and snow.

So, my advice is to embrace the new technological aids but also maintain your analogue navigation skills through the traditional means:

1. **Read the guidebook and study the map.**
2. **Go orienteering and rogaining to practice map and compass skills.**
3. **Use technology as a backup rather than the main strategy.**

# The 2025 ACCVI International Mountain Day Photo Competition and Show

Mary Sanseverino

December 11, 2025

This year our annual [Photo Show & Competition](#) was held on Thursday, Dec 11 - which is also [International Mountain Day](#) - hence the double celebration!

The show was held at our new venue for southern Vancouver Island: The Esquimalt Pavilion at Gorge Park. Between online and in-person we had over 50 participants.

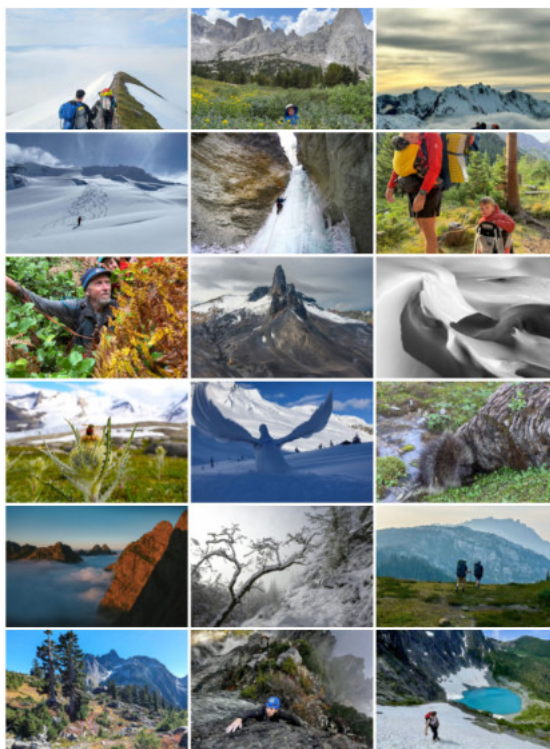
This year we had 115 photos in total from 41 photographers – a fine showing from across the ACCVI section.

After looking at the photographs I think you'll agree the crowd doing the voting (both in-person and online) had their work cut out for them!

And speaking of hard work - let's take a minute to thank not only all the photographers and those who did the voting, but those who helped put the event on:

- **Master of ceremonies** - Gordon Kyle
- **Craft services** - Kate Stewart, Garth Stewart, Peggy Taylor
- **IT** - Neil Ernst
- **Voting tabulation** - Roger Taylor, Peggy Taylor

Scan or click the QR code below to visit all the photos!



2025 Winner **Activity in Summer**: Colin Dams | Honourable Mention: Erin Friderichs | All [Activity in Summer photos](#).

2025 Winner **Humour**: Erin Friderichs | Honourable Mention : Mary Sanseverino | All [Humour photos](#).

2025 Winner **Activity in Winter**: Craig Mount | Honourable Mentions: Jim Everard, Josh Slatkoff | All [Activity in Winter photos](#).

2025 Winner **Vancouver Island**: Luen Harris | Honourable Mentions: Eva Gnech, Craig Mount, Peggy Taylor | All [Vancouver Isle photos](#).

2025 Winner **Mountain Scenery**: Sandy Stewart | Honourable Mention: Keith Battersby | All [Mountain Scenery photos](#).

2025 Winners **Nature**: Jim Everard, Dave Fishwick | Honourable Mention: Rachel Treloar | All [Nature photos](#).

2025 Winner **Youth Category**: Eamon Miller | Honourable Mention: Eamon Miller | All [Youth Category photos](#).



## ACTIVITY IN SUMMER



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*Winner: Colin Dams*  
MOUNT BAKER  
DESCENDING

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*Honourable Mention: Erin  
Friderichs*  
"SONFLOWER"



## HUMOUR



*Winner: Erin Friderichs*  
**ULTRALIGHT!**

*Honourable Mention:*  
*Mary Sanseverino*  
**T'WER ONLY 'OLE IN THE  
SALAL, BUT IT WERE  
TRAIL ENOUGH TO US!**



## ACTIVITY IN WINTER



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*Winner: Craig Mount*  
TRIPLE BACKDROP

## ACTIVITY IN WINTER



*Honourable Mention: Jim Everard*  
BLAIR PIGGOT HEADING UPSTREAM, ROCKY MOUNTAINS



*Honourable Mention: Josh Slatkoff*  
SILKY ASULKAN

## VANCOUVER ISLAND



*Winner: Luen Harris*

MACKENZIE RANGE LOOKING EAST TOWARDS TRIPLE PEAK



*Honourable Mention: Peggy Taylor*  
MOUNT MCDONALD SNOW DAY

## VANCOUVER ISLAND



*Honourable Mention: Eva Gnech*  
MOUNT SEPTIMUS IN FALL COLOUR



*Honourable Mention: Craig Mount*  
HEADING INTO MARBLE MEADOWS

## MOUNTAIN SCENERY



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*Winner: Sandy Stewart*  
BLACK TUSK FULL ON

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*Honourable Mention:*  
*Keith Battersby*  
CAMPBELL ICEFIELD



## NATURE

*Co-Winner:  
Jim Everard*

BEESPOKE SCENE  
NEAR MOUNT  
ROBSON



*Co-winner:  
Dave Fishwick*

ASULKAN  
PTARMIGAN

## NATURE



*Honourable Mention:  
Rachel Treloar*

PEEK-A-BOO PORCUPINE

## YOUTH



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*Winner: Eamon Miller*  
SCRAMBLE TO TRIPLE  
PEAK SUMMIT

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*Honourable Mention:*  
*Eamon Miller*  
DECISION POINT ON  
SOUTH EAST COLONEL  
FOSTER



Awe in the Mountains. Tent Ridge, Kananaskis.  
PHOTO BY SYLVIA MOSER



*The Alpine Club of Canada • Vancouver Island Section • [www.accvi.ca](http://www.accvi.ca)*



Sarah Duncan celebrates: Nine  
Peaks in the background.  
PHOTO BY PEGGY TAYLOR