

The Alpine Club of Canada • Vancouver Island Section

Island Bushwhacker

2021 Annual

**THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA
VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION**

**ISLAND
BUSHWHACKER
ANNUAL**

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**VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION
OF
THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA**



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This 2021 volume of the Island Bushwhacker Annual is here because of the contributions of many people, including all the authors and photographers who shared their inspiring articles and lovely photos of wild alpine places. Special thanks also go to Lindsay Elms for helping to edit the text and to Cedric Zala for writing an essential production guide a few years ago. I am grateful to Robie Macdonald (1947 – 2022), who edited this journal over many years, for sharing his love of the mountains, passing on copies of previous inDesign files to use as examples, and believing in me.

~ Janelle

To Rob this journal was a celebration of explorations, history, geography and people that he valued so highly, and he loved the continuity between the different generations of mountaineers. The photos chosen for the front and back covers and the photo just after the Table of Contents are a tribute to Rob, featuring peaks where he made many pioneering explorations in the 1980s, including Triple Peak, 5040 Peak and Cats Ears.

~ Catrin

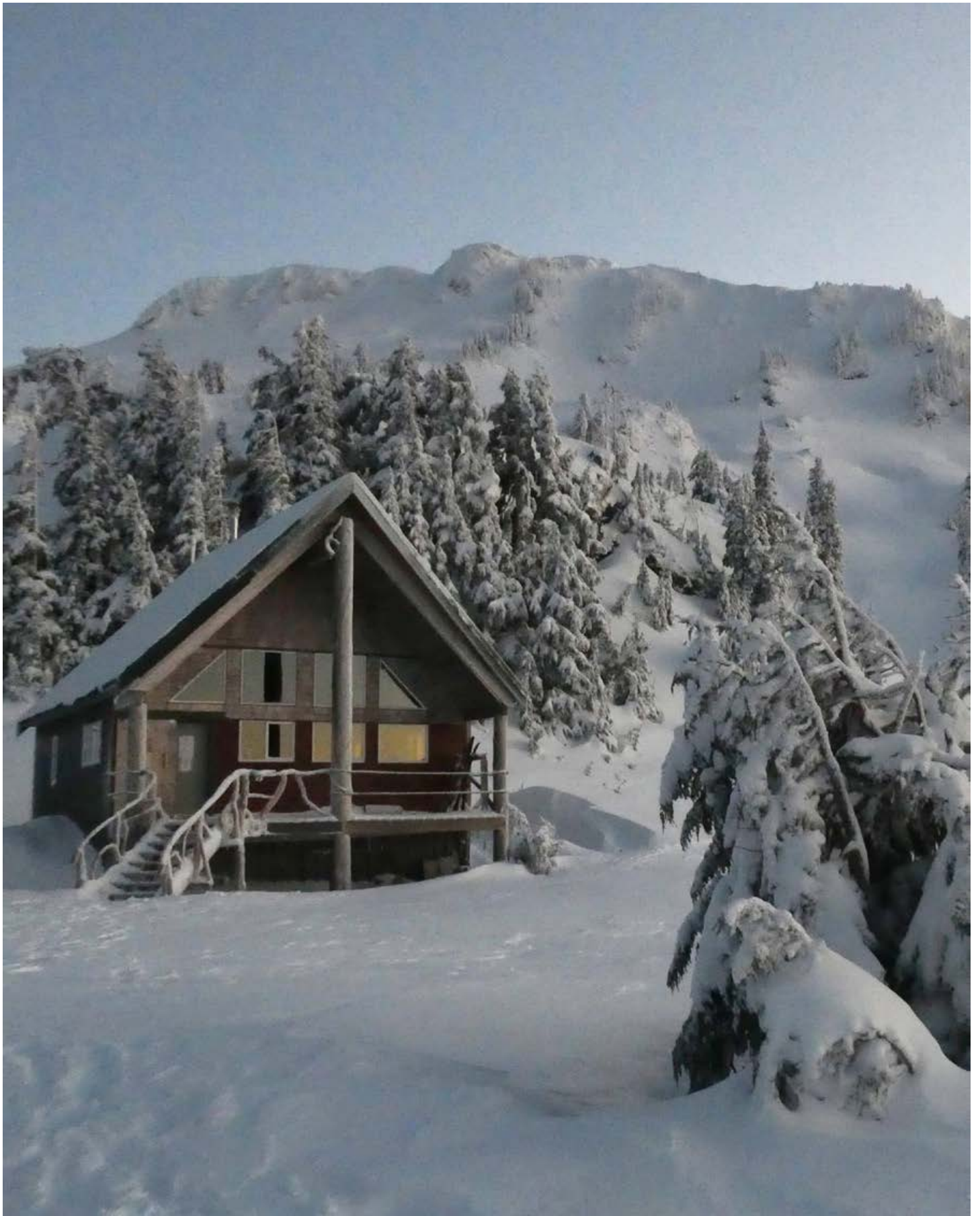
Front Cover Image: Snow cave with Triple Peak in the background during a tour with John Relyea-Voss and Sean Holroyd. (Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](mailto:johnrvoss@gmail.com))

Image just after the Table of Contents: Hišimýawił on 5040 Peak in December at sunset. (Photo by Martin Hofmann)

Back Cover Image: A photo of Cats Ears from Hišimýawił in December. The railings were made by Chris Ruttan. (Photo by Alcina de Oliveira)

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REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Catrin Brown



Catrin Brown at Hišim'yawił, June 2021.
(Photo by Martin Hofmann)

2021: a year of two parts

Looking back, it felt a little bit like this:



2021: a year of two parts.

Continuing Covid restrictions dominated the first six months of the year, with limitations on gatherings, travel and group activity. By the summer, things started to ease and slowly we emerged into a more normal world of activity. So, let's take a quick tour through 2021, the year of two parts.

Part One: a time of cancellations and remote connections

It was a very quiet start. Our trip schedule was inactive, many events such as ski camps and in-person gatherings were cancelled, and Hišim'yawił, our hut on 5040 Peak, stayed closed. But as we were by now a year into the pandemic, we had become pretty adept at staying together whilst staying apart. Happily, we were able to continue to offer online versions of the Banff Centre Mountain Film Festival, and hosted a well attended virtual AGM in early February. Our monthly slide shows hosted on Zoom continued to be very popular, with guests in some cases overcoming time differences to sign in from overseas. On one evening we actually hit the 100 maximum audience capacity.

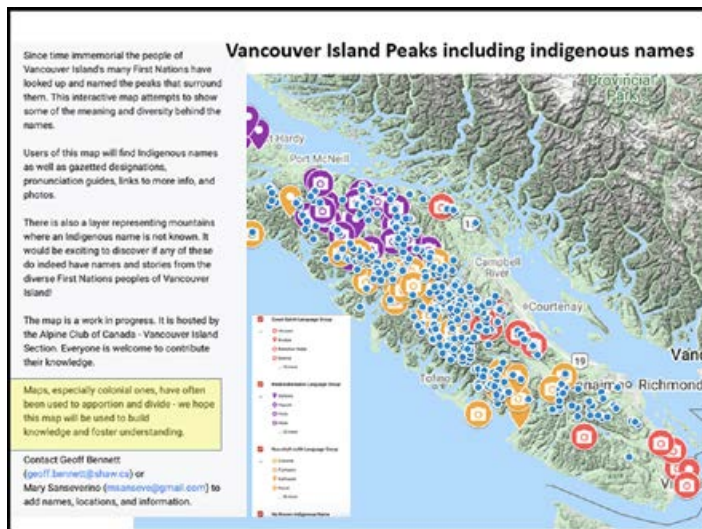


Monthly Zoom slide shows in the spring.

And behind the scenes, members were busy.

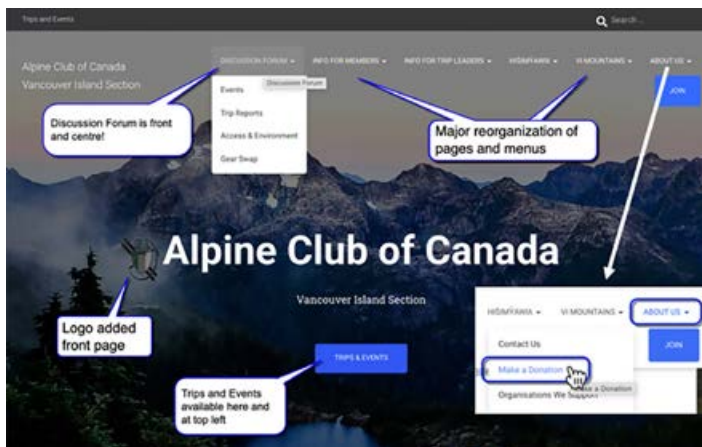
- Robie Macdonald pulled out all the stops to get the *Island Bushwhacker Annual 2020* published online in the spring, with hard copies mailed shortly afterwards. Here it is again - our flagship journal in full colour, and although it's a lot more work to produce, it really is a treat. Janelle Curtis also kept us well connected through the extensive seasonal newsletters.
- Geoff Bennett picked up on an interesting project in a local school regarding indigenous names of Island peaks. Lindsay Elms and Mary Sanseverino jumped in with their knowledge and expertise, and ultimately produced an interactive map of the Island peaks, now hosted on our website. This is work in progress, and we look forward to it

continuing to evolve as we learn more from First Nations.



Interactive map of Vancouver Island peaks.

- Our webmasters made many upgrades and developments on our site, a busy task given the steadily increasing volume of resources hosted. The links with our discussion forum have been enhanced, and a short video on our main schedule page shows you how to sign up for notifications of new postings in the forum. Never miss a trip posting again! It is now possible to donate to our section through a new link in an expanded 'About Us' menu.



Our accvi.ca home page, showing some of the recent upgrades.

- Our leadership committee worked to centralise communication amongst leaders, and to facilitate access for direct posting to the schedule. I'm happy to say that our active leader list is a large and growing group - and we are always happy to welcome new and aspiring leaders.
- The hut committee and custodians were able to work on various maintenance projects while Hišim'awił remained closed to paying guests. The need for active stewardship of the area, including at Cobalt Lake, is becoming more pressing as the trails have seen a massive increase in popularity. An information booth is now

installed at the trailhead, as well as signage in some vulnerable sites.



Maintenance projects at Hišim'awił.

- The executive committee was busy as ever, especially with the ongoing decision-making in the light of evolving provincial health guidelines. It seems that sometimes deciding to do nothing is a lot of work!
- A high note in the spring was when the stars aligned for Stefan Gessinger to fulfil his long-term dream of a ski traverse across the roof of the Island. See page 15 for an account of this glorious journey across landscapes that few people get to see.

Part Two: a time of activities and reconnections

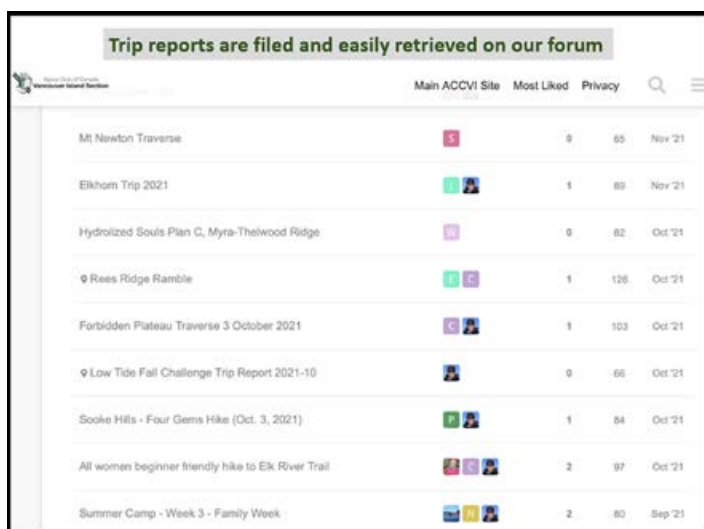
Late June brought a welcome relaxation of restrictions, and our schedule opened for trips. And then, just as plans started to form, we had a new challenge - the infamous heat-dome with associated fire and health risks and backcountry closures. Sigh. Nonetheless, the summer was filled with activities for groups large and small.

- On July 1st Hišim'awił once more opened to paying guests, the culmination of work from the hut committee to develop a plan for operation within the prevailing guidelines. Reports from delighted guests started drifting down from the mountain and across the ether, confirming the happy opportunity that this 'gathering together' provides.
- A barbecue for the executive committee in early July was the first time for several of us to meet each other, despite having worked closely together for months.
- The green light for summer camp led to a few busy weeks before our first batch of happy campers were en route to the South Chilcotins. Somehow dodging extreme heat and forest fires, there followed four successful weeks of hiking, climbing and enjoying the camaraderie that seems unique to these remote locations. Our Family

Week group once more had a very successful experience, challenging themselves with the more technical routes on rock and ice (see pages 71 and 76).



Summer camp at Griswold pass for four weeks in July and August.



Screenshot from the 'Reports' section of our discussion forum.



Our trip schedule includes a large variety of trips - left to right from top: All women's backpacking, ice climbing, Sooke hills hiking, TrailRider.

- Back on the Island, momentum for our trip schedule grew, and more and more reports were shared on our discussion forum, showcasing a terrific variety of offerings. Some leaders took advantage of the opportunity for access through Comox Lake gate, a privilege of membership on club trips. Congratulations to John Relyea-Voss for being our top trip leader of 2021 and winning the coveted jacket.

- In the late summer we enjoyed a very well-attended barbecue in Victoria, a happy time of reconnection with celebrations of marriages, births, many trips and tales and a few awards.



Awards to members were celebrated in the summer barbecue.

- By the fall, we were back to offering in-person slide shows and thanks to some technology purchases, were able to offer a hybrid model to retain some of the advantages of the online offering too. Welcome to the future.



Monthly Zoom slide shows after the summer.

- Our annual photo contest in November was a highlight. I'm not sure which was more impressive - the

quality of the photos, or the insanity of coordinating the in-person and virtual voting. Both were pretty jaw dropping.



Donations to organizations were made at the end of the year.

an important part of this. We are a diverse group - I like to think increasingly so, and in just about all the ways diversity can be imagined. Yet we are held together by a common and constant thread, which for me has three strands: *passion* for the natural world - for its exploration, its wonder and its need for our stewardship and protection; *community* that grows from this - the friendships, the give and take of respect and support; and *family* - which can be defined in many ways, but at heart includes an element of inter-generational sharing. I look forward to the continuing life and work of this community.

Happy trails,
Catrin

- Towards the end of the year the executive allocated some money according to our budget to organizations focused on conservation and advocacy for the Island backcountry. Issues of backcountry access continue to challenge us, as do the concerns of increasing pressure on wild spaces. These are issues affecting many other groups too, and we are well represented on several of the relevant focus groups and committees. By membership of the section, you are adding your voice to what we continually try to do to protect and conserve the outstanding wilderness in our backyard. We hope we help you to find ways in which you can contribute too.

So, whilst it was only half a year of full activity, plenty was still achieved. What this report leaves unsaid though is what makes all of this possible. Here then is the rogues' gallery of the executive committee, the committed team of volunteers who drive these activities.

In addition to the committee, there are several coordinators who help to keep our activities running, as well as our many trip leaders, who we consider our essential workers. Everything I have mentioned in this report, and a whole lot else, happens solely because someone from these groups has donated their time and energy to build and strengthen this community. We are truly fortunate to have this wealth of generous, talented and good-humoured people who give so much. And I should know, as it has been my privilege to work with this team for the last six years.

So, as I pass on the baton of the role of Chair, I want to thank everyone for contributing to the good energy that flows amongst us in this section. By showing up and taking part you are



Members of the ACCVI executive committee in 2021.



NOTES FROM THE SECTION



Mount Joffre Rockslide from a Skier's and Hiker's Perspective

Margaret Brown

Backcountry users experienced a dramatic change in the nearby Coast Mountains in May 2019. With a thundering roar first on May 13 then on May 16 huge chunks of a large buttress fell off the northeast face of Mount Joffre. Hundreds of kilometres away seismographs registered a major disturbance. The whole of the upper Cerise Creek valley below Mount Joffre and all its old growth timber



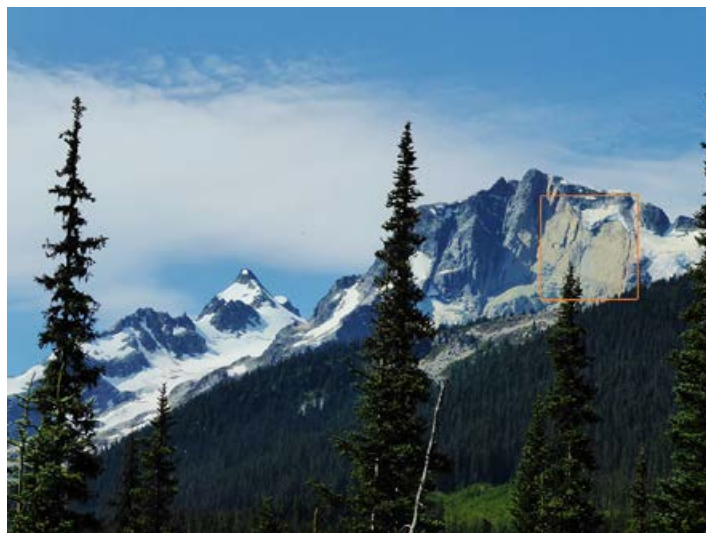
Overview of the slide looking north from the old summer trail near Keith's hut. It looks like a grey lake but is a mass of huge rocks and rubble curving out of the valley between Mount Joffre and Chief Pascal into the Cerise Creek drainage. (Photo by Anna Brown in July 2021).

was obliterated between the slopes of Chief Pascal to the slopes of Vantage Ridge about one kilometre in width and stretching about five kilometres down the valley towards the confluence of Cayoosh and Cerise Creeks. Instead of ancient trees and a meandering stream and trail in the valley there was a pile of huge rocks mixed up with ice, pulverized and broken trees. Near the confluence of the

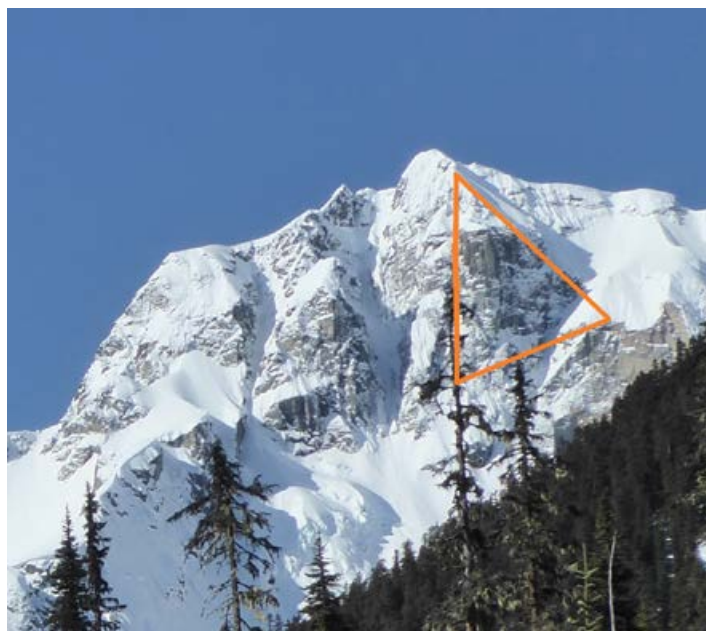
creeks the watercourses were changed repeatedly by a series of debris torrents exploding through dams of piled up debris.

It's hard to know what would cause such a catastrophic collapse on the face of the mountain. It happened in early May, at night fortunately, when skiers were off the slopes. It was very hot during the day with lots of melting and freezing at night. As well, permafrost that is melting in the mountains is also contributing to the instability.

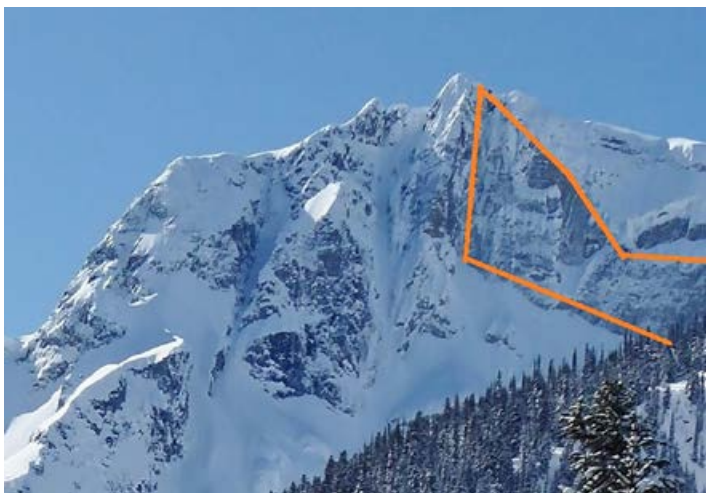
Below are a few photos of the area taken mostly when skiing and a few while hiking. All photos were taken or directed to be taken by the author (Margaret Brown) unless otherwise designated. If you are interested in further reading, there are detailed scientific analyses illustrated with numerous photos available on the internet under the topic Mount Joffre rock slide.



The northeast face two months after the right side of a major buttress crashed down. Light brown remaining rock outlined in orange is the remaining scar. This photo was taken part way up the summer route where it crosses the old logging road and enters the clearcut.



Face and buttress two weeks before falling off.



Face nine months later. (Photo by Margaret Brown)



Ian, Penny Brown and grandsons Logan and Ryan crossing in September 2016 in approximately the same place.



Fresh active rockfall as of December 31, 2021. Photo taken from Cayoosh logging cuts looking south across Highway 99. Daughter Anna and family in foreground.



July 2019. Where is the route? The middle third of the summer route that used to run south along the flanks of Chief Pascal from Ian towards the peaks on the right has been buried and obliterated under tons of debris.



Erich Schellhammer in September 2021 finding a way across the drainage between Joffre and Chief Pascal approximately where the summer route used to be.



Gerta Smythe in Feb 2008 looking towards the clearcut where Ian was sitting in the last photo. All the timber and winter route to the right of the clear cut has been destroyed.



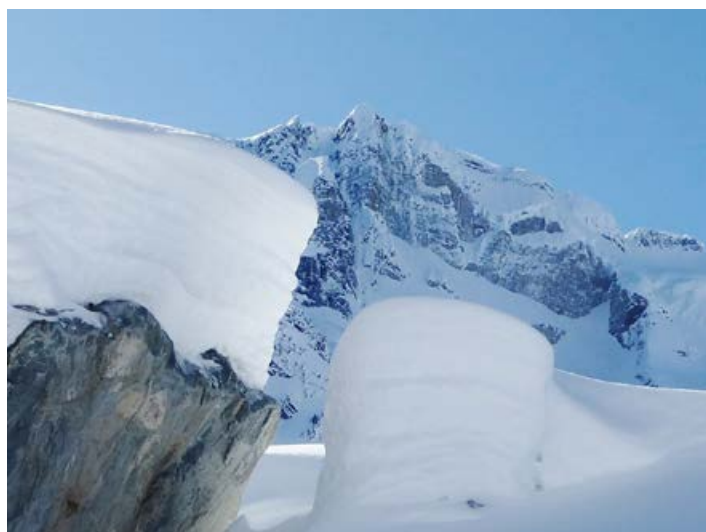
July 2019. Margaret standing in the devastation at the bottom of the valley near the confluence of Cerise and Cayoosh Creeks where the trails began.



Obliterated timber makes for a wide open winter route.



A blanket of snow changes everything although winter route finding in the area of the confluence is still difficult. Claire Ebendinger finding her way in February 2020.



Gap between boulders points towards the area which broke off.



Big improvements further up the valley. February 2020.



Ian and Margaret skiing in the upper valley two weeks before the catastrophic rockslide. We were lucky. The buttress that crashed is outlined in red.



The area still has other dangers. Ian is excavating himself after seeking shelter behind an innocent hump at the side of the valley. He fell through the snow into a maze of downed trees in January 2021.



September 2021. Life is returning. Fireweed and mosses are starting to grow amongst the debris.

Victoria Peak – Two Stories. They Hold The Heights They Won

Lindsay Elms

From the Island Bushwhacker Fall 1988

John S. T. Gibson

“They Hold the Heights They Won” is the inscription on a bronze plate attached to the summit cairn of Victoria Peak. It has doubtless been noticed by all who have climbed that peak, but for me it was an unexpected bonus when I arrived on the summit, for it brought to mind a poem I have liked for many years, and from which it is very nearly, but not quite, a quotation. Though not an exact quotation, the inscription must surely have been inspired by, and adapted from Geoffrey Winthrop Young’s poem “I Hold the Heights”. If anyone reading this knows who put the plate there, and on what occasion, it would be interesting to hear from them. Meanwhile, those who have seen that inscription and do not know the poem it comes from, may like to see its source, so I will quote it here.

I have not lost the magic of long days;

I live them, dream them still.

Still I am master of the starry ways,

And freeman of the hills.

Shattered my glass, ere half the sands had run-

I hold the heights, I hold the heights I won.

Mine still the hope that hailed me from each height,

Mine the unresting flame.

With dreams I charmed each doing to delight;

I charm my rest the same.

Severed my skein, ere half the strands were spun-

I keep the dreams, I keep the dreams I won.

What if I live no more those kindly days?

Their night sleeps with me still.

I dream my feet upon the starry ways;

My heart rests in the hill.

I may not begrudge the little left undone;

I hold the heights, I keep the dreams I won.

The particular appeal that poem has for me is the way it asserts the continuing enjoyment we can extract from the days we have had in the mountains. Rather than being relegated to a hazy limbo of things past, we can continue to

savour and relish the heights we hold, which have become part of us, while still looking forward to more in the future.



The 1965 story of Victoria Peak and the plaque

Lindsay Elms

In August 1965, twelve inmates and one corrections officer left Lakeview Forestry Camp north of Campbell River, an open prison for young hardened offenders, and headed out on an expedition to climb Victoria Peak. The inmates were between nineteen and twenty-one years of age and they had completed a nine-week rehabilitation program at the prison to instill self-reliance and responsibility. An integral part of the program was learning outdoor skills as the officer-in-charge of Lakeview (Donald Clay) was himself a mountaineer who had trained on the mountains in Kenya. On Tuesday August 17, the party reached the summit of Victoria Peak, but not long after beginning the descent the officer, Robert Hagman, slipped on ice and tumbled about 80 feet. The boys managed to get down to him and found him badly lacerated and lapsing in and out of consciousness. They immediately set about making him comfortable as they could see he was going into shock. Several boys rushed down the mountain to collect firewood so they could build a fire. Without proper first aid supplies they cut up clothing to make bandages and cleaned the blood off Hagman. Late that afternoon two of the boys left the mountain and travelled through the night before they came across a logging truck driver the next afternoon. It was a long night for those on the mountain. The next day (Wednesday) two boys stayed with the injured, three left to try and meet up with another party of inmates and officer (Joe Kennedy) on the other side of the mountain while the rest went down to their base camp and brought food and supplies back up the mountain. The logging truck driver was able to dispatch a call through to Lakeview where their officer-in-charge called Comox Air Force Base. With an accurate description of the accident site from the inmates, the helicopter was able to fly directly to the site and rescue

Hagman and fly him to Campbell River Hospital where he survived the ordeal. Friday afternoon the last of the inmates arrived back at Lakeview where the first thing they did was inquire about Hagman, obviously concerned with his outcome. The staff at Lakeview Camp were proud of their boys in the way they handled the accident and themselves and felt re-assured that their program was beneficial. This story adds another piece of the history for Victoria Peak; however, it does answer one niggling question that many have been wondering over the years – who took the brass plaque up the mountain with the inscription “They Hold The Heights They Won.” It was these young offenders and their officer from Lakeview Camp.

The Reality and the Possibility: The Motherlode

Sonia Langer

If I sit a bit too long, or let my mind wander a little too far, the ghost wells up in my belly. The longing, the looking backwards, the memories of some pretty magical open-throttle moments in the wilderness. Hiking southwards to find the Arctic circle cairn, holding the raft oars as the Tatshenshini meets the Alsek, topping out on the Beckey Route on Liberty Bell, sitting in the snowy sunshine atop Young’s Peak. All those ski lines, all those ski lines. The long stretched curves with a knee skimming the snow’s surface with the 6/8 rhythm in my soul as the skis fly and glide. That’s the strongest ghost. Keeping the ghost calm and letting the ghost be a kind of smoke that I can blow away with a deep exhale helps. The ghost of a past, and the ghost of a future, but for the moment, a kind of haunting.

I’m now a solo parent of a four-year-old. The trips have needed to change while I figure out how to re-scale the adventures and keep us both safe. If the bigger adventures come again, they might be so, so sweet because I might have my daughter with me. Imagine that? Wow, what a blessed and divine path to birth a tiny being, and strap her to your body for a couple of years, then follow her around watching the increasing independence. When she was two-and-a-half, the world shuttered with this Coronavirus, and solo motherhood became bold font, all caps. It was like poor weather to hamper the approach to a mountain base camp. We persevered.

In these four short-long years, I’ve felt supported and encouraged by ACC friends to keep the adventures going. In the summer of 2018, Catrin arrived at the



Sofia's first mountain summit at nine months. Carried up by Mama Sonia Langer with the help of Catrin Brown, and other ACCVI friends, she 'helped' with the final stages of the hut construction project. August 2019. (Photo by Catrin Brown)



Celebrating her second birthday at the Hišim'awił hut in October 2019, Sofia participated in a Wild Women's trip organized by Nadja Steiner. Mama Sonia Langer was happy to be hiking again, although our summit experience was hampered by a tiny set of loud and temperamental vocal chords. (Photo by Nadja Steiner)

parking area for Hišim'awił with an empty backpack, ready to help carry my gear so I could carry Sofia on my chest.

A year later, autumn of 2019 Nadja and the whole team of Wild Women shared Sofia's second birthday in the mountains at Hišim'awił.

Another year later, Nadja invented a fun game of counting the 'sit spots' on the hike which encouraged little Sofia age two and three quarters to hike all the way to the Hišim'awił hut herself!

And this summer, we made it up there just ourselves: our little team of two. How is it possible that we've had so many summer adventures in the mountains, and the child is still so young?



Thanks to Nadja Steiner's enthusiasm and encouragement, Sofia walked to the hut all by herself at age two-and-three-quarters! Here she gets to fly atop the Vancouver Island mountains. August 2020. (Photo by Sonia Langer)

In their film, Izzy Lynch and Tessa Treadway, each a badass mountain woman, call it "The Motherlode." <https://vimeo.com/521544102> One of these women is a single mother, the other is a solo mother. Solo.

No tag-team, no breaks, no down time. No going for a bike ride without pulling kid/snacks/dolly in the Thule rig behind you. No hiking without kid/snacks/dolly in the other Thule on your back. And, carrying all the gear: all of it! And then, once out of the Thule rigs, the pace sloooooows down. I'm in that stage now: zenning through the forest, astonished that this is the same body that ran the half marathon, skied Baker, tackled AlbiEddie in a day in both seasons but is now breathless up the stairs.

Despite the 'lode', it's possible, it really is. And it's immeasurably fun! I'm figuring out how to re-scale and to adjust the goals according to the child. Able to carry a very heavy pack, I've never really sought out ultra-light gear. Now that the motherlode includes the child, I have finally invested in some lightweight gear. My Big Agnes Fly Creek UL2 tent, MSR Pocket Rocket, and my fancy new GSI Pinnacle Dualist pot/cook set have really cut down both the volume and weight of my gear. And, packing a newly pared-down minimum helps too: warm clothes for the child, one dolly, and one tiny Robert Munch book. It is doable: when she was two, I carried a forty-litre pack on my chest, Sofia in the Thule child carrier on my back. I've always sped past Lake Helen Mackenzie, on my way to bigger and better things, so I enjoyed spending time at this beautiful lake. This particular night, I was relieved to see a couple with an infant set up on the tent pad beside us with a similar plight of bedtime screaming, nighttime screaming, and breakfast screaming, and diaper chaos and little sleep.

My deep love for Mount Cain is tangled in the ghost of longing. Because we could not gather in groups last year, and because the accommodations are imploding due to popularity, Mount Cain has been seemingly out of reach, so I felt as though I was holding my breath again this winter. Sofia and I did manage to venture in our campervan and do our parking lot penance. Always up for adventure, Nadja and Harry and EJ were there to cheer us on.

While Harry taught Sofia the physics of gravity, I skied my first run in two winters. For a moment, the years of child carrying vanished and I was myself again on that line beside the upper T. And, there was a moment of looking towards the Dream Chute, the Cain Couloir with the east boundary rope holding me inside this new life, that needed a few deep exhales.

Sofia has been working hard to learn to ski, and I'm almost ready to pick up my ski poles again after two full winters of snow plough. My bigass skis sure have felt out of place on the corduroy, but they remind me of my past and my future.



*Covid winter of 2021, Sofia learned to ski at Mount Washington with the edgy wedgy strap holding her skis in place and Mama Sonia Langer holding the reins of the ski harness. Repetitions of Reverse Traverse, with snack/play stops on the way down enabled her to enjoy learning to ski. That final day in March, the harness came off which allowed Sonia to perform three real tele turns- not three days, not three runs, but three blissful turns.
(Photo by Sonia Langer)*

Even a small micro-adventure with a young child can be thrilling. As monumental as the hike to Elk Pass is the 500-metre track at Mouat's Park on Salt Spring, or the one-kilometre flat gravel pathway at Ruckle Park. She has gone from riding her run-bike strong and fast in her red rain boots, with her dolly in her pocket, to the wavering and thrilling pedal bike with its green bell and hand brakes! I can now ride my own bike beside her: it's happening: we're riding together!



At age four, Sofia enjoys skiing at Mount Cain. Physically strong enough to control the skis, she no longer needs the harness, reins, or edgy wedgy aids. (Photo by Sonia Langer)



The rewarding 'Motherlode' journey. (Photo by Sonia Langer)

This motherlode adventure is the hardest multi-day trek I've ever done. The solo adventure further burdened by the pandemic, half of this little girl's lifetime, is unfolding now, and I look forward to finding my way into a new community of active parents. As our lives open up, the virus recedes, and my sweet and powerful Sofia finds her footing, I look forward to the next part of the journey. The weight of the lode is great. With long exhales, the hauntings are at bay. And, the joy is immeasurable.

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VANCOUVER ISLAND

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Flat Top, Mackenzie Range

Stefan Gessinger

January 23, 2021

With freezing temperatures down to the valley bottom we set out for a day trip into the MacKenzie Range at 2.30 a.m. Navigating in the bubbles of our headlamps, we slowly labored up through the steep and foggy forest. We would perceive the same space as drastically shortened at the end of the day with gravity and daylight letting us cover ground so much faster.



Dawn in the Mackenzie Range - this moment made the early start all worth while. (Photo by Evan Devault)

Day break had us positioned above the clouds and the north face of the Mackenzie Range came dramatically into view. With the snow in perfect neve condition at all elevations the



On our way to Flat Top (4th from right) via the col on the right side. (Photo by Evan Devault)

hiking was very enjoyable and the steep scrambly approach to the summit block was transformed into several pitches of AI2 with some good exposure. The final pitch on to the summit traverses out over the steep and tall north wall which could be described as engaging. Thick coastal fog had risen to the base of the summit blocks which made for a beautiful view across the coast range with sunny winter peaks poking out of the sea of fog.



Andrew Welsh topping out on to the Flat Top. (Photo by Evan Devault)



Sunny winter peaks protruding from the sea of fog. View towards Mount Hall. (Photo by Evan Devault)

A fifty metre rappel was a fast way to get off this thing. After installing a new six mm sling around a large, sharp block we agreed that it did not look right and doubled it up with a second sling for peace of mind - the rappel could be described as exciting. We traversed below the Witches Hat and the Centaur on a wide shelf and rappelled/down-climbed the gully between the Centaur and Sunrise Peak.

From here it should have been an easy and quick stroll through a landscape of house-sized, snowy lumps across a large bench back to our descent ridge. However, the fog transformed it into an incredibly white space erasing all sense of where the ground is. For about an hour we fumbled around, often 'down' climbing flat terrain backwards on our hands and knees. Technology eventually got us through this part and after consulting the GPS about 200 times we were relieved to make it back into the forest where we able to much better orient ourselves.

Participants: Stefan Gessinger, Andrew Welsh, and Evan Devault



Rock step to summit block. (Photo by Evan Devault)

Kainum Mountain – 1330m+/-

Lindsay Elms

February 9, 2021

My involvement with the ACCVI project on First Nations names of peaks on Vancouver Island reminded me there were still some peaks I hadn't climbed yet, but there were also a couple of others that although relatively small, would be worthwhile objectives. The first two that stood out for me was Kainum Mountain and Kwois Peak. Kainum is an officially recognized peak while Kwois isn't. The other mountain that intrigued me was Mount Ozzard or Cumaata in the indigenous language. It's a small 701 metres peak on the east side of Ucluelet Inlet that looks over the town of Ucluelet. Val, Rick Ronyecz and I hiked up to its summit on a beautiful day in late June and I highly recommend this hike for anyone with half a day to spare in Ukee. Although there is a road all the way to the summit, the view over the west coast is spectacular.



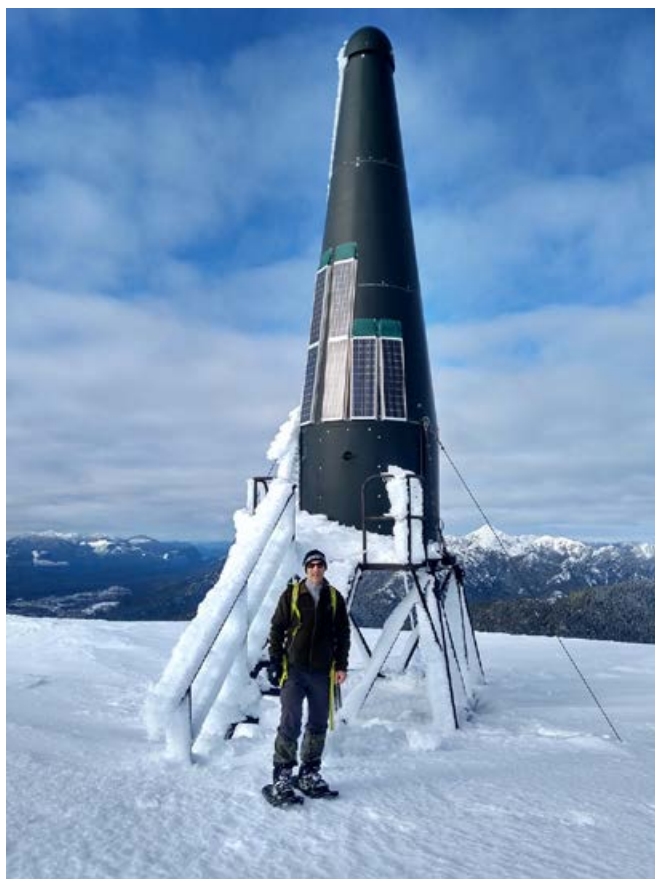
Kainum Mountain. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

Anyway, Rich Ronyecz and I decided to climb Kainum Mountain. A couple of brief texts and a look at the weather forecast inspired us to head up island on the morning of February 9. The north island was experiencing clear blue skies – an opportunity we couldn't ignore. However, we almost didn't make the trip. As Rich was leaving Qualicum and heading out onto the highway, he slid off the road and into a ditch. No amount of rocking to and fro could get him out so he called a tow truck to come and pull him out. Two hours later he was on the road, a little shaken but undamaged.

After turning off at the Zeballos FSR we drove around the

end of Atluck Lake and looked for the logging road that would take us onto the ridge to the south of the peak, but we found we were still too far away from the summit. Back down to Atluck Lake and then on to the Welch Main. We passed the Welch Lakes and turned onto the East Welch Main where we found another road which took us up into some relatively fresh cut blocks. We parked at about 700 metres. It wasn't exactly an alpine start, but we figured we had plenty of daylight hours.

A short hike through the slash saw us in the old growth. The higher we climbed the more snow had accumulated under the trees and we eventually had to strap on our snowshoes. On a small rise we could see the summit in front of us and it still looked a couple of hours away. Fortunately, conditions were ideal for snowshoeing and we reached the summit in an hour and a half. The repeater tower was rimed and frozen.



Rich Ronyecz on the summit. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

Again, looking around I could see so many peaks that I had already climbed, but there were still many to the west that I wanted to climb: Mount Renwick, Kwois Peak, Snowsaddle Mountain. We spent 30 minutes enjoying the views from the top before heading down. The return trip was uneventful and we arrived home without going off the road again.

Participants: Rich Ronyecz and Lindsay Elms

From Coast to Coast: 80 Kilometres of Ski Traversing Across Vancouver Island

Mitchell Baynes

April 17-26, 2021

I have always had an insatiable curiosity to explore. My mom jokes that as a baby I would find ways to escape my crib. Even back then it seemed I wanted to find out what lay beyond. I was the prisoner in one of Poe's stories reaching out into the darkness, grasping for whatever horrors inhabited the corners of my room, rather than sitting in comforting ignorance. The crib is now a ridgeline, but not much else has changed. This ravenous need to know *why*? still drives me for better or worse. It felt natural then to question my motives for going on this ten-day, 80 kilometres ski traverse across Vancouver Island with Jonathan and Stefan.

We are drawn to the outdoors for a myriad of reasons, but despite the grandeur of adventure, it can be hard to come to terms with the inherent absurdity of it all. In the mountains, we are always living in a sort of dichotomy – for something so meaningless, outdoor pursuits have the potential to create some of the most meaningful experiences of our lives. At the same time, we escape the day-to-day grind, we challenge ourselves beyond what we may face in daily life.

Hayden Kennedy nails this sentiment in his article "The day we sent logical progression." He writes passionately about this strange dichotomy we are presented with in our mountainous pursuits, exploring the darker side of progression. Like many who spend their lives committed to outdoor adventure, Kennedy had watched friends lose their lives in the mountains. In the article, he laments that the very thing that brought him close to these people was the same thing that took these people away from him. It is haunting to read now, as just two weeks after the article was published, Kennedy took his own life after being unable to rescue his girlfriend from an avalanche in the backcountry.

When I first got into ski touring and climbing, I heard similar stories from grizzled veterans. It seemed that everyone had lost someone to the mountains over the years. I now know two people that passed away in the outdoors, and I had my own near fatal climbing accident just a few years ago. What then is the point of this if the risk is so

high? For myself, the challenge and the goal are what I find so addicting. It is exceedingly rare to be directly and immediately rewarded in the real world in the same manner.

How rare is it in life to be directly and immediately rewarded for your efforts? It can take years to master a trade, climb the ladder of a career, or to know if what you are doing at this precise moment in your life will even matter to you just a few years from now. In the outdoors, I can see the ridge that I passed days ago growing smaller in the distance. I can see myself higher up from the valley bottom than I was yesterday. The bare simplicity of such an existence can be beautiful.

However, the emptiness of challenging myself for nothing more than personal gratification gnaws at me. At times, it feels like a waste to put my energy towards something so frivolous given the immense and urgent problems of the times we live in. The never-ending calculus of risk vs. reward implicit to the outdoors extends outwards to the risk of creating an unrewarding, meaningless life if these deeply meaningful trips become the only facet driving us forward.

There is a line to straddle between using these experiences in the backcountry as a catalyst for personal growth, and grasping too tightly to them -- becoming consumed by them. I have never been good at balance -- I have always been either a one or a zero. It is no surprise then that I overindulge in the outdoors. I greedily desire every experience to be meaningful, and yet it is this very desire that robs me.

How is it that the very best parts of life come at such a potentially high cost? Where is the balance between challenge and triviality? I sought to find this out on the traverse.

*The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep*

- Robert Frost

"Screw this!" I heard Jonathan wheeze from up ahead. As I stepped up beside him onto the east summit ridge of Mount Tom Taylor, I could understand the sentiment. The vista in front of us was nothing short of breath-taking; a kaleidoscope of colors extended across an endless expanse of mountains. The moon was nearly full and the first stars shone dimly in the dusky light. But, as we looked at the sheer west face dropping down in front of us and the blocky granite scramble up to our right, the views of

immaculate wilderness before us came as cold comfort. Every cell in my body cried out for me to stop, but I knew an insurmountable inertia would set in if I rested for even a moment. Stefan got the rope out and started climbing up the thumb of granite that stood in the way of the lower-angle west ridge that we sought to exit by. His fatherly leadership grounded us in this inhospitable place, but as he belly-flopped his way up the granite blocks and faded from view, Jonathan and I looked at each other with the barest hint of fear and desperation in our eyes. "I really, *really* don't want to be here right now" Jonathan said to me. The cold of the night was setting in, and a howling ridge-top wind made this place feel even more desolate and exposed. "Me neither man," I replied. "Let's just get this over with."

I tied into the rope, then re-tied the knot a couple more times, unsure of myself. In the mental fog of extreme exhaustion, concentrating on even simple tasks took every ounce of energy I could muster. Stefan belayed us up the summit block and we continued roped-up along the knife-like ridge that followed by the light of the moon. I moved like an animated corpse; head down, one ski pole hanging limply from the ski strap, ice axe dragging along in the opposite hand. *And miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep.*

By the time we finally descended onto the Taylor glacier it was nearing midnight. I was trashed -- ready and willing to fall asleep right there on the snow. Jonathan and Stefan started setting up camp under a towering wind lip while I melted some snow for water. Lacking the energy to make a hot meal, I ate a large portion of my lunch snacks, spooned some coconut oil into my mouth for calories, and crawled immediately into my sleeping bag.

It was only day five of our ten-day traverse. We had covered 40 kilometres of ground, and still had another 40 kilometres of discontinuous ridges and glaciers to cross



Ascending from Noble Creek after spending a day stuck in the tent. (Photo by Mitchell Baynes)

before reaching our final destination of Herbert Inlet. Like any marathon effort, half-way never truly feels like half-way. We were all wrestling with our own doubts, challenges and mental demons. Not many words were spoken that night, we didn't have the energy, but the thin-lipped line on Stefan's face portrayed his concern. With a dwindling weather window and exhaustion setting in, success seemed far from certain.



*Dawn on the morning we climbed the Misthorns.
(Photo by Stefan Gessinger)*

A month and a half prior, we were trudging up the Bedwell Lake trail to create a food cache at our halfway point. Jonathan had been a perennial trip partner for years, but this was only my second time meeting Stefan. Jonathan himself barely knew Stefan; they met by chance on a hut building trip. Stefan spilled the beans about the expedition to Jonathan, who later spilled them to me. We were both immediately captivated by Stefan's vision, and when the third member of the team got injured, Jonathan vouched for me to step in.

This excursion was a shakedown that would define how we interacted as a team. We met our first challenge when we were tasked with crossing a section of huge cornices perched precariously on top of slippery slabs. Rather than walk underneath them, we decided to circumvent the section by boot packing upwards. It was around this point that it also started raining. It became a horrible, soggy wallow, but the stoke was high. Months of discussion had finally culminated in this first real action towards our goal.

The mountains have a way of stripping everything down. As your existence is reduced to waking up, walking, and going back to sleep to do it all over again, the character of a person is reduced in a similar fashion to a few core qualities. Jonathan's defining role became the galvanizer of the team. His desire for harmony and straightforward solutions lent itself to finding the least stressful route options and keeping everyone on an even keel. I met Jonathan on a University of Victoria Outdoor Club trip. By

random chance we had both just gotten into ski touring, and we quickly became each other's main trip partner. He had a seemingly unlimited amount of stoke, and the ability to make even the most miserable outing sound appealing on paper. It's funny looking back at the innumerable ways we bungled even the most straightforward tours. At the time those tours felt overwhelming, yet when I have returned to these areas years later, they feel trivial. As we cut our teeth on the low-lying, rugged peaks of Vancouver Island, I came to trust Jonathan implicitly, deferring to his judgment over my own despite him being six years my junior.

Stefan became our stalwart leader, the veteran mountain man that had a way of bringing calm to the most perilous of situations. I couldn't believe he was willing to do a trip with the two of us. Jonathan and I could never have pulled off an expedition of this magnitude without him. Born Swiss, he now hails from Saltspring Island. He is the kind of person that I hope to grow into in a decade's time. With an apparently bottomless supply of wild stories about nights spent under the northern lights and unexpected bivvies in high places, our tent-bound time was never dull.



Camp on the third night. (Photo by Stefan Gessinger)



Ascending the Misthorns. (Photo by Stefan Gessinger)

I am somewhere in between the two, stoked to face the good and the bad, but also stuck in an awkward adolescent phase in my outdoor progression. I know enough to get myself out of some hairy situations, but I lack the certainty and finesse that Stefan carries so effortlessly.

After a rainy, socked-in night, we stashed our food, marked the location on our maps, and became one step closer to pulling off this lofty idea.

Despite a couple dark moments the day before, a long night's rest and a ton of calories on the morning of day six left me in much better shape. We had only been covering eight to twelve kilometers a day, yet we could still see the ridges and mountains from the beginning of our journey disappearing into the distance. It felt surreal to watch the ocean slowly grow larger on the horizon as we edged closer to the unnamed and unexplored peaks on the west side of Vancouver Island. The landscape in this area gave the impression that God Himself had simply put the cursor near the corner of the picture and downsized it here. The mountains around us were shorter, yet they were stark and steep. Knife-edge ridges topped many of the peaks, and steep granite walls lent a primeval air to this place.

Once again, Stefan led the way. We contoured along a closely treed slope until we reached a small creek crossing. The snow bridges masking their respective creeks were whimsical in both form and nature. They towered up to five meters tall in some places -- windblown and melted out into ostentatious, impossible shapes. They dared you to cross them, but offered no promises of safe passage.

As Stefan crossed the creek, one of these structures suddenly gave way, dropping him about a meter to the next flat section below. "Hey, are you okay?" I asked. "Oh ya, I'm fine," he replied. Then after a long pause, "... Ummmm, actually maybe not." "What do you mean?" "I think my ski is broken."

Sure enough, as he held the ski up for us to see, it was clear that there was a very unnatural bend to it. It had snapped directly under his foot when he fell. But while my mind immediately began to whirl, Stefan appeared unfazed.

He set about on repairs. His first idea was to use something to bridge the ski back together: with some metal wire he reinforced the crack, but it was clear that this was not enough. The ski would have to be drastically altered if there was any hope of using it on the rest of the trip. We got out our phones to record the moment for posterity, and Stefan dramatically delivered the coup de grâce, breaking the ski into two pieces. Finally, he remounted the toe binding on the front half of the ski. Walkable, though nominally slope-worthy for the descent.

"If it were easy, it wouldn't be hard," Stefan reminded us for what must have been the tenth time this trip. We rolled our eyes, smiling. His casual stoicism made it hard to complain.



Descending from Abco Mountain. (Photo by Mitchell Baynes)



*A huge avalanche path we ascended at first light.
(Photo by Mitchell Baynes)*

On we went, Stefan hobbling on his asymmetrical ski setup. We crossed the Mariner glacier in a complete whiteout and spent an entire day tent-bound as inclement weather barred our path forward. Now we were getting into the *really* wild places. Even animal tracks had stopped. When we caught glimpses of the ocean between clouds, it was obvious that it was getting closer.

Along the ridge towards Abco Mountain, we were once again halted by rainy weather and the loose-wet avalanches that were subsequently triggered. We knew we needed to reach the steep snowfield on the backside of Abco Mountain while the snow was still firm from cooling overnight, but we still had three kilometers of finagling, bluffy terrain to cover. The alarm was set for midnight.

By 1:00 a.m. we were back on our skis, reaching Abco Mountain by sunrise. As the dawn rays hit the snow, our worst fears were realized. The snow turned to mashed potatoes in an instant. We started post holing up to our waists, and our pace ground to a grovelling crawl through the slush.

As we gained the knife ridge, we were greeted with a dazzling rainbow of fungi, moss, and ferns blanketing every inch of real estate. The foliage covered every rock, even those directly on the summit ridge. The ocean stretched out to infinity before us, and the dizzying geographic relief on either side of the precipitous ridge made it feel as though we were standing on the very edge of the world itself. It was a landscape so bewilderingly vast that it was difficult to imagine anything could even exist beyond what we could see.

We thought that descending would mean the hard part was over, but as we got lower, the terrain became steeper and bushier. Sections of blowdown made for a cruel sort of obstacle course: squishing under or humping over huge fallen logs, all with skis on our backpacks to catch every stray branch along the way. The closer we came to the ocean, the denser the bush became. The forest was using every trick up its sleeve to deter us from completing our task. We had now been on the move for over 18 hours with only about a liter of water to drink. I had only salty nuts left in my pack, which were essentially inedible in my state of dehydration. The beach looked tantalizingly close but felt desperately out of our reach.

When we finally made it, there was much rejoicing. It seemed a little absurd that we had travelled such a great distance, and yet we were still so incredibly far from any trace of civilization. This is one of the great luxuries of Vancouver Island, but it was a sobering reality at this stage in the trip. It was now truly a full moon, and we knew we were in for a big tide that night. We cozied up to the rocks at the tippy-top of the beach and fell asleep beside an inviting fire mere inches from the tide line. The next day,



Our first sighting of the ocean on day six of the traverse. (Photo by Mitchell Baynes)

the water taxi picked us up and we were brought back to civilization.

This traverse will soon fade into a cherished memory, but the lessons of it will linger for years to come.

The sudden transition back to society is always jarring after a long time away from the comfort of routine. The three of us have not seen each other since the trip ended, but it seems like everyone has returned to their own version of normalcy.

I still have not come to terms with the paradox of the mountains. The desire to explore is an itch that can never be scratched. However, the traverse did help me understand the importance of these excursions.

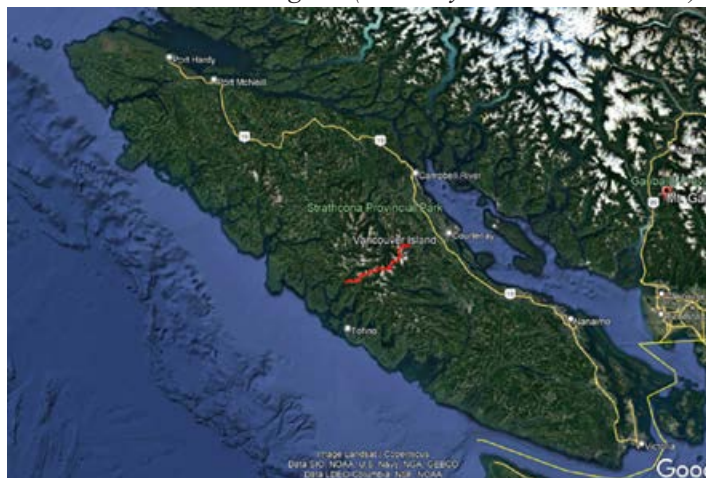
The struggles we face in the outdoors give us a taste of the heroic. As a child, I fantasized about being Batman or Ironman, but as an adult those dreams fade. The prerequisite of being a billionaire tech mogul was admittedly harder to attain than I had thought. Though I don't dream of becoming Batman anymore, there is still a part of me that wants to be Heinrich Harrer high up on the north face of the Eiger, or Henry David Thoreau in his idyllic woodland shack.

I grew up in a Christian household. I memorized verses every Sunday, read the Bible regularly, attended youth group -- the whole nine yards. I drew strength from the stories of Jesus and Paul. I haven't been Christian for a number of years however, and now I find that the stories of Joe Simpson crawling with a broken leg through the crevasses of the Siula Grande, or Ernest Shackleton escaping the Antarctic are the new gospels that inspire me to persist.

There is a lot to be said for learning to struggle, it is a skill that my own generation has been ridiculed for lacking. Yet I see now that there is a danger in defining myself solely in terms of the outdoors. In doing so, an identity can become like a bubble in the stock market. Growing, growing, growing, until it pops and one is left with only the emptiness that awaits inside.



Back at sea level once again. (Photo by Jonathan Skinnider)



The GPS track of the route that we followed.

Participants: Jonathon Skinnider, Stefan Gessinger, and Mitchell Baynes

The Cats Ears: A long Day Up the South Face

Barry Hansen

May 11, 2021

Like many people, my introduction to The Cats Ears was from 5040 Peak. And like many people, I tried to spot its namesake feature from afar, but nothing along its jagged ridge quite fit the bill (it didn't make sense until I saw it up close from the summit—definitely The Cats Ears!). But my dominant thought while admiring The Cats Ears from afar was climbing it. I shelved the idea for a future date due to other priority objectives—but I knew those feline ears would be somewhere in my future.

Fast forward to Halloween 2020 when Rich Priebe and I finally got around to climbing Mackenzie's main summit and had a good view of south exposures on Canoe Peak and The Cats Ears. It began with a conversation about attempting both of them together sometime in 2021. Over that winter we examined topo maps, Google Earth, and tracked down a good photo of The Cats Ears south face taken from the summit of Canoe Peak. I spotted what appeared to be a decent potential line heading directly up from the Canoe/Cats Ears saddle, but there was only one way to find out for sure. We also liked the idea of approaching via the col between Canoe Peak and The Cats Ears, which begins very narrow just above the Canoe Creek micro-dam but gradually opens into a wide bowl before narrowing again at the upper saddle. Our initial plan was to hike up this col to the saddle, climb Canoe Peak, drop back down to the saddle, climb The Cats Ears, and then descend via the same route.



Our approximate route up The Cats Ears south face. (Photo by Phil Jackson from the summit of Canoe Peak)

We couldn't locate any record of previous attempts via this route (neither up this col nor up The Cats Ears south face). But if it appears possible, why not give it a try! We decided the best conditions would be later spring when the gully is still filled with snow but avalanche risks have passed. The right moment arrived on May 11. We arrived at the Canoe Creek micro-dam access road parking area just off Highway 4 at 6:00 a.m. Starting elevation: 50 metres. We knew it was going to be a long day but had no idea that 19 hours would pass before we saw the car again. If we had known this beforehand, would we have still gone for it? It's hard to say.

We made quick time gaining the almost 500 metres elevation up the steep micro-dam access road before entering the forest and following the recently flagged (and somewhat cleared) route along Canoe Creek for about 200 metres, at which point the flagged route turns abruptly to cross the creek to access the Mackenzie Range. We bushwhacked another 300 metres along the creek before turning left towards the terminus of the Canoe/Cats Ears col. We had slightly modified our original plan of going directly up the col, instead deciding to gain the lower Canoe ridge and follow it to Canoe Peak's summit before dropping to the Canoe/Cats Ears saddle, climb The Cats Ears, and descend via the col. We thought this would be a more aesthetically pleasing option, allowing us to enjoy extended vistas of both the Mackenzie Range and The Cats Ears.

Unfortunately, we discovered that gaining the lower ridge of Canoe Peak from the south was no small feat: it was steep, bluffy, and wet. We wasted over an hour trying to navigate the challenging terrain only to reach an impassable section, at which point we pulled out the rope for a couple of rappels back down to the base. We backtracked a short distance to the Canoe/Cats Ears col terminus,



Heading up The Cats Ears south face with Triple Peak in the background (and ptarmigan in top left corner). (Photo by Barry Hansen)

fought our way through a short but annoying section of alder, salmonberry, and devils club before arriving at the waterfall where the col terminates. We crossed the creek, scrambled up the open rock on the waterfall's west side before crossing the creek again at the top. From there it was easy travel up the narrow gully since the water was flowing underground at this point. We soon arrived at the snow, which made for quick travel the rest of the way up to the Canoe/Cats Ears col, except for the final steep section, which was knee deep post-holing. There were also a few spots at the lower end of the col where snow bridges were starting to open up but it was straightforward to navigate around those hazards.

When we arrived at the saddle, we realized that climbing both Canoe Peak and The Cats Ears wasn't possible for us time-wise. However, we immediately agreed that The Cats Ears was the cake we wanted to eat today. Canoe Peak could wait for another day. And so, we started up a short steep snowfield on The Cats Ears lower south flank before entering its steep, treed, bluffy terrain, which we battled our way up over the next couple of hours. There was no shortage of obstacles but we managed to find a way past them. The dense subalpine trees chewed up our arms and packs but provided much needed handholds as we slowly propelled our way upwards. We eventually arrived at the summit ridge, exhausted and elated.

We headed east along the ridge, navigating around or over its rocky obstacles until arriving at the main summit block. We geared up and Rich led the approximately 25 metre low fifth class ascent, placing a few pieces of protection, before belaying me up. We were tired but happy campers and were also well aware that the day was far from over. We searched for a summit register but it didn't exist. After a quick bite to eat and a few summit celebration photos, we began our descent.



*Barry on The Cats Ears summit in front of its namesake.
(Photo by Rich Priebe)*

For the descent, we had planned to rappel down the gully that runs from summit to saddle, immediately adjacent to our ascent route. We brought two ropes for this purpose. The first two rappels went well but the ropes got jammed on our third rappel. Rich climbed partially back up in an attempt to free them but was unable to due to excessive friction. We decided to abandon our gully descent plan because daylight was fading, the weather was turning, and we weren't certain what other obstacles the gully might throw at us. We climbed back up to our tree anchor to retrieve the ropes and then traversed over to our ascent route. Downclimbing and a few rappels brought us back to the steep snow field where we set up a running belay to get us back to the saddle just as dusk was setting in. It was now 9:00 p.m. and we'd been on the go for 15 hours. We sent InReach messages to our spouses to inform them we were fine but would be getting home late.

We then plunged, walked, slid, and stumbled our way down the snowy gully as darkness set in and the headlamps came out. The upper section wasn't too bad but navigating the narrow, lower section of the gully was much more challenging at nighttime in our exhausted state. Occasionally I'd lose sight of Rich's headlamp and call out for him to wait. Getting too far apart didn't seem like a good idea at this point. The surface was slippery and I was starting to bonk out. We were relieved to finally arrive at the waterfall and carefully downclimbed to its base where I changed my headlamp batteries in preparation for the next obstacle: the dreaded alder/salmonberry/devil's club section between us and the forest. We decided to follow a different line through it than the one we ascended, which turned out to be a good choice. Still ugly but less ugly.

Entering the forest was welcome relief but I was completely spent, both mentally and physically. We stumbled along the uneven surface—up, over, and around giant moss-covered deadfall and boulders strewn haphazardly among the giant trees. The hot moisture from our perspiring bodies collided with the cool, damp air, rising to create an ever-present fog illuminated by our headlamps. It was surreal and dreamlike. I focused on following Rich's light, trusting that he was leading where we needed to go. And he did. We soon arrived at the micro-dam. It was over. Well, not quite, but close enough. And it was starting to rain. I had two PB & J sandwiches left and gave one to Rich (he was out of food) and ate the other one. An hour and a half later we were back at the car. It was 1:00 a.m. We both messaged our spouses to tell them we were on our way home safe and sound. I arrived home at 3:00 a.m., exactly 24 hours after I had gotten up to begin our adventure.

Epilogue: Two other parties contacted me after our trip for details and both attempted the same route within the following two weeks. I asked someone in the first group if



Looking west at Canoe Peak and the Mackenzie Range from The Cats Ears. (Photo by Barry Hansen)

they could take a summit register and tube up with them, which I supplied. They made it to the summit ridge but ran out of day to reach the actual summit, so instead left the tube and register on a prominent rock in the middle of the open col and informed the second group of its location. The second group made it to the summit and successfully delivered the new register.

Participants: Barry Hansen and Rich Priebe

Mount Colonel Foster (Great West Couloir)

John Relyea-Voss

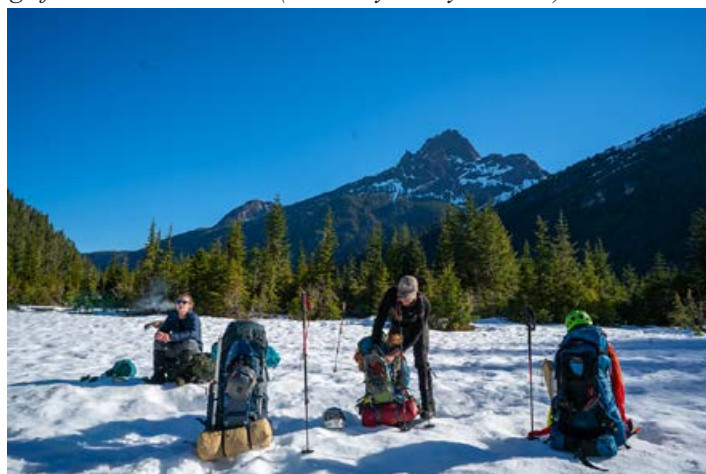
May 20-23, 2021

Day One

After meeting in Campbell River, Casey Matsuda, Kyle Bourquin, Laurel Frost Mitchell and I took off to the Elk River Trailhead to begin our evening hike to camp two. After arriving at the parking lot shortly after 8 p.m., we hiked for about 3.5 hours to camp and quickly set up our tents and went to sleep.

Day Two

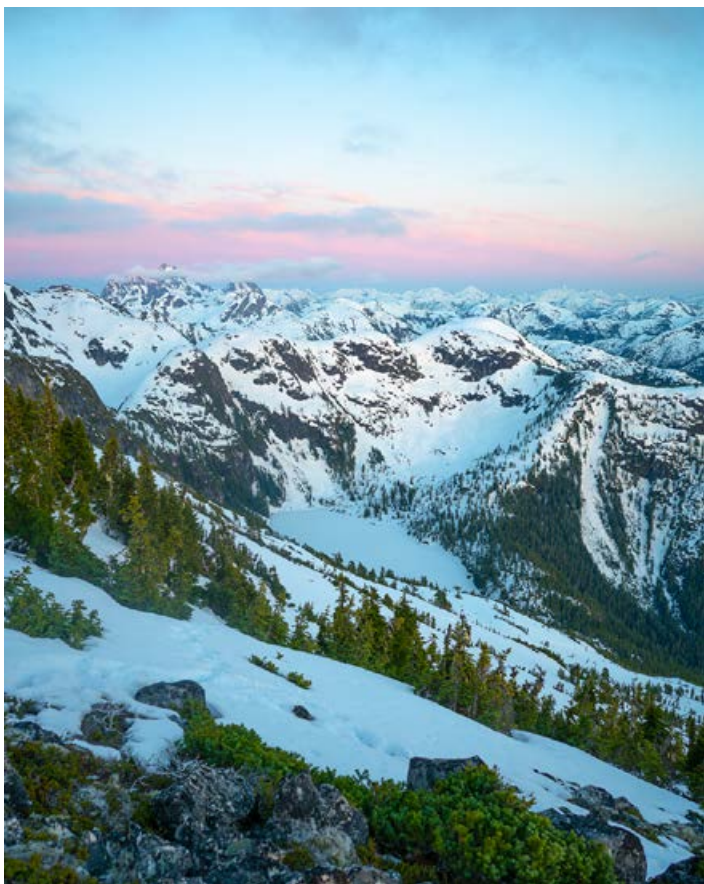
The next morning we woke up early and started hiking shortly after 6:00 a.m. We made quick progress to



Group resting at Foster Lake before heading up the south col. (Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))

Landslide Lake, but snow on the ground slowed down our progress. At around 10:00 a.m., after nice breaks at both Landslide Lake and Foster Lake, we started making our way up to the South Col. The route to the col was snow all the way from the bottom to top and we were lucky enough to follow wonderful boot-tracks left by a previous group that climbed one of the south summits the day before! After a three-hour push, we arrived at the South Col where we took another break and discussed our thoughts on the snow conditions. How far did we want to push on? We also discussed the idea of climbing the tracks to the south summit left by the previous group. In the end we decided to continue on towards the west shoulder in hope of assessing the Great West Couloir for the following day and making for a shorter summit day. Another two hours took us to our camping spot high up on the west shoulder. We set up camp and prepared a long 60 metre rap directly onto the snowfield near the bottom of the Great West Couloir. We spent the rest of the evening eating large amounts of food and staring at the couloir, debating what about what

it would look like once we got a closer view. We set our alarms for 5:00 a.m. and tried our best to get a good night sleep.



Camping spot on shoulder of Foster the evening before our summit day. (Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))



A look at the GWC from camp before our summit day. (Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))

Day Three

After a clear night, we all woke up to what seemed like perfect conditions. We had a quick breakfast, drank a coffee, got our gear ready and rappelled onto the snowfield.

After a fifteen-minute hike and a quick chat at the base, we decided to solo the couloir. The couloir was full of snow, the angle was low the entire way and we felt we could competently self-arrest at any point during the climb. The last 60 metres of the couloir got a bit steeper; however, with the firm snow conditions and great steps, we decided to continue on. At about 9:00 a.m. we all topped out just below the Utopian Fin. Seeing some slings we spotted the line up the fin. Kyle led the fin and made an anchor just below the ridge. The three of us followed. Once arriving at the ridge, we realized we would be dealing with more snow. After a quick chat we decided to press on, but if we reached a point where we felt the snow would compromise our safety we would stop. Casey led along the ridge and built a solid hand line to better protect a very exposed scramble. Next up we had the 5.8 slab which was partially snow covered. It didn't look like there would be much protection on the return journey so we decided to leave a single rope in-situ after rappelling. This way we would have a top rope in place on the return. Down on the ledge below the slab, I geared up and climbed to a small ledge about halfway up the next pinnacle. The rest of the team rappelled down and then climbed to the ledge while I belayed Casey to the top of the pinnacle. Once there he tried to assess the situation, but from where he was it wasn't a great vantage point. He could see a ledge below that we had to get to but he couldn't see a safe way back up to where he was standing. Casey quickly belayed me up and I came to the same conclusion. After debating and burning up some precious time, Kyle came up and his fresh eyes spotted a line around the side of the pinnacle where he got a better view of a way down. After climbing down and clearing snow off the ledge, he shouted back up letting us know the route was good and we could come down. Casey decided to stay up top of the pinnacle and belay Laurel up while I rappelled down to Kyle to take a look at the ledge.

Shortly after we all arrived at the ledge, we felt much better about being able to retrace the route back up and we were happy to carry on. Kyle and Laurel rappelled down to the ledge and made the exposed 5th class move into the gully leading upwards while Casey and I took a quick drink of water and a quick bite to eat. Once the four of us made it around the corner, Kyle scrambled up the next section and we all quickly followed. At the top we found the ridge totally covered in snow. We then followed the ridge to a narrow scree gully up to what we thought was the summit. It wasn't! Another short 5 metre rap followed and some 4th class scrambling up some large boulders. Near the top were



Casey on the ledge before the exposed corner on Mount Colonel Foster (Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))



Group on the final summit scramble.
(Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))

two large boulders with exposed snow slopes on either side and just beyond it looked like a few final 5th class moves to the summit. Once there we took a look around for the summit register but couldn't find it. We decided we must not be there yet. Kyle led one more section along the ridge and for safety decided to leave a handline in place to put our minds at ease. Finally, the three of us made our way to a very snowy summit where we spent an enjoyable 45 minutes eating some snacks and taking in the amazing view. We did not find the register and figured it must have been buried below where we were sitting.



Group on summit of Mount Colonel Foster.
(Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))

On our way down from the summit, we skipped the scree gully and exposed ledge and rappelled directly to the pinnacle. The sun had dried the rock which made for a pleasant climb. Laurel quickly made his way up the 5.8 slab and led back over the ridge. He set an anchor and

belayed us up to the top of Utopian Fin. From here we set one very long 60 metre rap down to the top of the couloir. By mid-afternoon the snow had softened so we decided to rap the top section of the couloir. A 70 metre rap followed by a 10-minute glissade down the couloir made for a fast exit. After further celebration we had a wonderful sleep and went back out the following day making it from the west shoulder to the parking lot in eight hours.

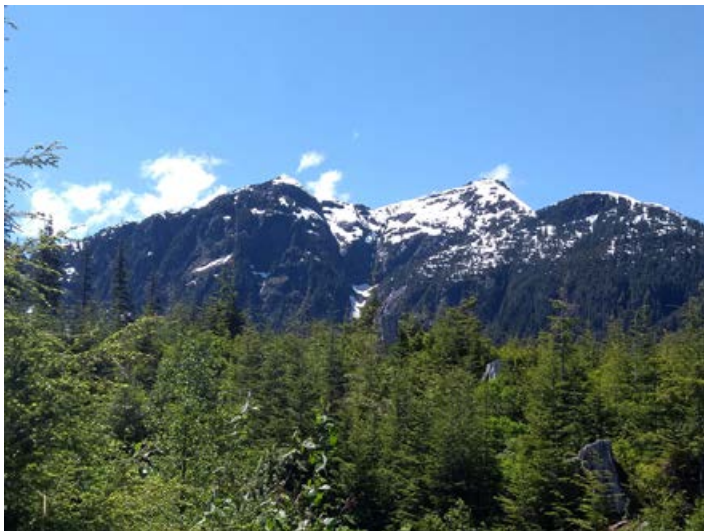
Participants: Casey Matsuda, Kyle Bourquin, Laurel Frost-Mitchell, and John Relyea-Voss

Kwois Peak – 1375m

Lindsay Elms

June 1, 2021

Kwois Peak (unofficial name) was described as “the sentry at the head of the Kwois Creek and the devastated Benson River. The summit is within the Tashish-Kwois Provincial Park and offers commanding views of the West Coast.” The Tashish-Kwois is one of the few valleys completely protected from the ocean to the alpine on Vancouver Island. In the summer of 1934, George Jackson and his survey party were in the area and on a summit they named “Pass” they built a 5 foot cairn and took readings of some of the other mountains they had recently climbed. Although it appears it could be Kwois Peak it is possible that it is one of the smaller peaks immediately to the south as he documented the height as 1274 metres whereas Kwois Peak is closer to 1375 metres according to my gps. Anyway, since then, none of the peaks in the area have received any attention until 2021.



Kwois Peak. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

On May 15, Matt Lettington, Phil Jackson and Dustin Hirschfeld headed up to Cross Lake after navigating the complex logging road system up the Tashish River and camped at the base of the Northeast Ridge. (A couple of weeks earlier they were foiled on their attempt on the North Ridge by a notch which was impassable at the time due to snow conditions.) The next morning, they ascended the ridge to an obvious saddle and then proceeded up the southeast Ridge to the summit where they didn't find any sign of a cairn. To mark their ascent, they built a small cairn before descending.

In the middle of a cold spell in February, Rich Ronyecz and I found ourselves on top of Kainum Mountain above Atluck Lake and looking west towards Kwois Peak and the long south ridge running towards Mount Renwick. We decided that we had to visit these peaks later in the spring. I was regularly in contact with Matt and knew of his failed attempt on Kwois Peak so he invited me on his second attempt, but unfortunately, my timing didn't coincide with his trip. On the afternoon of May 31, Rich and I drove up to the end of the road above Cross Lake and camped. Although some snow had melted since Matt et al.'s climb two weeks earlier, it looked like there was still a lot of snow about and hopefully it would be a little more consolidated. In the morning we climbed into the logging slash and then entered the area of blow-down which Matt described as obnoxious. It was almost an hour of up and over and under and around trees blown down by the predominate north wind that funnels down the valley from the north coast of the island. Not far into the region of blow-down we came across snow on the ground and once in the open forest we found conditions ideal for climbing without snowshoes. We reached the saddle after two hours and in a little under another two hours found ourselves on the summit looking across the Kwois Valley at Snowsaddle Mountain, the peak that Rev. William Bolton and his exploring party climbed in 1894 during his north to south traverse of Vancouver



Looking into the Tahsish-Kwois with Snowsaddle Mountain across the valley. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

Island. This was a much-discussed peak. It has often been wondered if today's official Snowsaddle Mountain was the peak Bolton actually climbed. Back then maps weren't accurate and the weather during their ascent and subsequent descent was abysmal. I had flown over the area a couple of years earlier and was unable to accurately discern the route described in Bolton's diaries, but I have to give Bolton the benefit of the doubt. Anyway, it looked a spectacular area and the ridge looked like it would make a terrific traverse. The descent back to the vehicle was quick and we were able to check out a couple of approaches to Mount Renwick for a future trip. Matt Lettington, Phil Jackson, Jes Garceau and Dustin Hirschfeld had made a rare ascent of the peak on April 4 and stated their ascent of the peak was virtually from sea-level which is unusual considering the vast logging road system in the area. Unfortunately, I never got to this peak in 2021, but I'm happy to say it is still there for next year.

Participants: Rich Ronyecz and Lindsay Elms

Vancouver Island Trail

Nick Noble

June - August, 2021

All photos are by Nick Noble and Rebecca Beitner.

In June 2021, my partner Rebecca and I (Nick) started a 770-kilometre journey along the full length of Vancouver Island, following the Vancouver Island Trail (VIT). The VIT is an in-development through-hike that crosses the ancestral and unceded territory of the Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Kwakwaka'wakw people, from Victoria in the south to Cape Scott at the island's northern end.

Over the course of our six-week trip experience we saw



The White River.

some amazing things: a grey whale breaching repeatedly as we ate on the beach; a herd of elk crossing a river right next to our tent in the middle of the night; old growth trees with souls and stories told through the faces in their gnarled burls. We felt a spiritual connection to the land that we will keep with us forever.

Our mission for completing this hike was to film a documentary about managing my Type 1 Diabetes (T1D) in the backcountry. We submitted a proposal for this project to the Alpine Club of Canada Vancouver Island section, who generously provided funding from the Memorial Fund, a grant provided to youth undertaking mountaineering projects.

T1D is a chronic condition where the body's immune system attacks essential insulin-producing beta cells. Put simply, insulin is what converts the glucose in the food you eat into energy. The life of a type 1 diabetic is one of maintaining a constant balance. Where most people's bodies are able to process glucose, a type 1 diabetic has no natural insulin, so the glucose accumulates in the bloodstream without being metabolized into useable energy. When too much glucose builds up, diabetics experience a high blood sugar, or hyperglycemia, which can have devastating effects in both the long and short term. As such, we must inject artificial insulin into the body using syringes or an insulin pump, to convert excess glucose into energy.

Most bodies can also maintain healthy energy levels when not enough glucose is being consumed. Not so for diabetics. If the balance of glucose being ingested and converted is too low, we experience hypoglycemia, which can be treated by ingesting simple sugars, often fruit juice or sugar tablets. Left untreated, a low blood sugar can lead to seizures and death in a matter of hours or less.

To avoid hyper/hypoglycaemia, diabetics must care for themselves 24/7. Many elements of this become subconscious with experience: monitoring our environment for the nearest place to buy a sugary drink if the need arises; keeping a mental inventory of our diabetes supplies so we can re-stock at the right time; checking in with our bodies for symptoms of a deviating blood sugar level. There are some key self-care concepts to understand that are more tangible. For one, we need to check our blood sugar level several times a day using a glucometer, a device that uses a small sample of blood obtained by a needle-prick to the finger. We treat the blood sugar reading accordingly: if high, we take insulin and maybe exercise to burn off excess glucose; too low, we eat and sit down for a few minutes. Every time we eat, we need to take the amount of insulin necessary to metabolize the carbohydrates in the food. My insulin pump allows me to administer insulin without injections, by way of a reservoir connected by plastic tubing to a patch that delivers the

insulin through a plastic needle (a cannula) fixed in place by sticky adhesive. This cannula and adhesive need to be changed every three days to avoid infection and scar tissue buildup.

I was diagnosed with T1D at age six. I was made to understand that everything about the outdoors was dangerous – too much exercise, unreliable access to medical help, too many supplies to cart around. Starting at age ten I attended a summer camp for kids with T1D, called Camp Kakhemela, in Howe Sound. This was a decision that altered my life, possibly more than any other. We went kayaking, hiking, canoeing, camping and more, all with an eye on three core areas of development – hard skills (paddling, tying knots), soft skills (empathy, resilience, confidence), and diabetes management. I learned that the restrictions placed on me upon diagnosis were artificial, and that with the right planning, caution, and awareness of my body's messaging, I was capable of doing what anyone else could do, and of accessing the lessons that a relationship with the land has to offer.

Being diabetic is a risk multiplier: it adds a layer of a complexity to every pre-existing hazard on the trail, as well as a significant logistical burden on top of the already headache-inducing packing needs of a long-distance thru-hike. The backcountry became a challenging ground where I learned to manage my diabetes in an environment with little margin for error. I have experienced some scary situations: an insulin pump lost in a canoe flip, equipment malfunctions due to rain damage, and having to eat soggy, ruined food because skipping meals is not an option. These difficult situations deepened my understanding of my body's needs and strengthened my ability to care for myself in a crisis. By pushing my limits, the outdoors gave me the opportunity to reclaim my independence and confidence from what was presented as an unbearably restrictive diagnosis.

The Vancouver Island Trail is a 770 kilometre patchwork route made up of government-maintained park trail,

volunteer-maintained footpaths, rural backstreets, logging roads, and bushwhacking routes in uncleared forest that connect the island from end to end. Most of the trail runs through the mountainous centre of the island, with shorter sections of shoreline hiking at the Alberni Inlet and north of Port McNeill. The trail is maintained by a small but industrious group of volunteers called the Vancouver Island Trail Association. When we started our hike in June 2021, the trail was about 90% complete. We would be the sixth and seventh hikers to attempt to hike the entire trail in one trip.

We watched my blood sugar levels carefully as we hiked through the first section of the trail through the Cowichan Valley, which follows old railway grades through rolling hills shot through with meandering rivers. To our pleasant surprise, my blood sugar levels so far were actually *better* than they had been at home in the city - likely the result of consistent exercise and a tightly planned diet. When I experienced a low blood sugar, we found our planned treatment highly effective: six sugar tablets to raise the blood sugar, a protein bar to help stabilize the blood sugar once it was raised, and a generous drink of water to help the body digest it all.



Old farmstead on the Cowichan Valley Connector.

We marched our way to Cowichan Lake, our first stop in town since leaving Victoria. While there, I realized I had forgotten a vial of the testing strips that my glucometer uses to absorb blood samples. I went to the pharmacy and picked one up. One vial of testing strips, which might last about a month, costs just shy of \$100. Luckily, my private health insurance covered 80% of the overall cost. There is a common understanding among non-diabetics that Canada's universal healthcare system takes care of the cost of managing diabetes; this is unfortunately not true. The cost of insulin and testing strips are paid for out of pocket by those without private insurance, and low supplies are not covered at all. Supplies for continuous glucose monitors, a blood-sugar monitoring system that reduces the labour performed by diabetics and drastically improves health outcomes, is similarly only covered by



Navigating on the ridge of Mount Adrian.

private insurance, and the 20% copay still costs hundreds of dollars per year. Government coverage of insulin pumps, which come with a \$6,000-\$9,000 upfront price tag (needing to be replaced every few years) and thousands of dollars a year in ongoing costs for supplies, is inconsistent across provinces, most of which require diabetics to cover at least part of the cost. On top of the financial costs, the administrative burden of navigating this patchwork of insurance providers, government programs, diabetes clinics, supply manufacturers, and pharmacies is equivalent to a part-time job on top of whatever other responsibilities diabetics are carrying. It is a relentless burden, made worse by the too-common patterns of indifference, ignorance, and blame shifting that those who rely on Canadian health care systems experience.

After Lake Cowichan, we took the Runner's Trail to the Alberni Inlet, a highlight of the trip. The Alberni Inlet trail offered majestic views of the ocean, a technical but fun trail winding around decomposing railway trestles and moss-coated rock faces. On our third day of the Alberni Inlet Trail, the heat wave frying the Pacific Northwest reached its apex, baking us in temperatures reaching 43 degrees Celsius. Heat like this can ruin insulin, but we were prepared, and stored my insulin in Frio Packs, which are carrying containers filled with water-activated cooling crystals that keep the insulin at a safe temperature. It was our first time trying this product, however, and our uncertainty about the Frio Pack's effectiveness caused us considerable anxiety.



Salmon Pens in the Alberni Inlet.

In Port Alberni, we were hosted by two VIT volunteers named Joan and Steve. While we were eating dinner on their porch one night we saw smoke on the horizon: a small wildfire had broken out at the town's edge. Joan and Steve judged the fire to be near a friend's home, so they hurried inside to give her a call. The fire and the heat wave were grim reminders of the climate crisis accelerating in British Columbia. The increase in the rate and severity of natural disasters is especially scary for a diabetic: insulin and diabetes supplies make their way to patients through

a long and complex supply chain, a single disruption in which can spell disaster for someone reliant on these products. It's hard not to feel like these logistical threads were all too fragile in the face of our planet's deteriorating temperament.

Due to the heightened risk of wildfires on their property, Mosaic Forestry Management closed the Beaufort Range, the next section of trail. We were forced to skip this section and travel to Cumberland, a village downhill from the Forbidden Plateau in Strathcona Provincial Park - where our next section began. We were joined on the first day of hiking by Terry Lewis, the director of operations for the VIT Association. Terry is a joy to hike with: a former soil scientist, he is deeply knowledgeable about the environment we were travelling through, and we happily absorbed the wisdom he shared about the geology and ecosystems surrounding us.



Crossing the Forbidden Plateau.

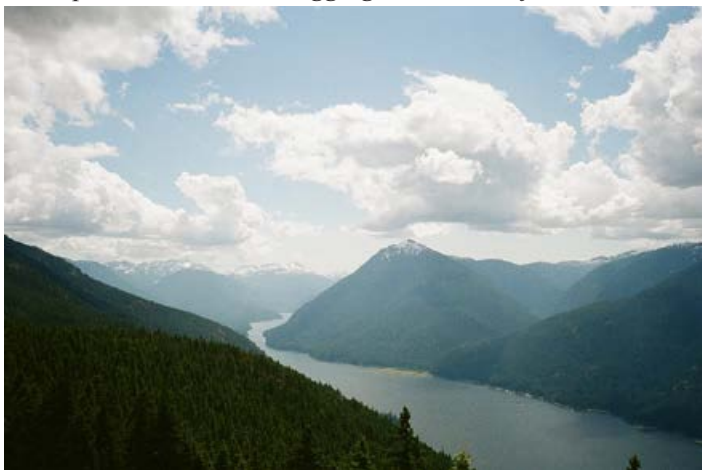
On the Plateau, we started running into issues with my continuous glucose monitor (CGM). The CGM is a patch on my arm that monitors my blood sugar between blood sugar tests, which calibrate a baseline for the CGM's readings, and sends me an alert if it is going too high or too low. I received a notification on my pump saying the CGM had stopped working properly and needed to be replaced. I didn't carry many backups, as they are bulky, and this soon became an issue as the CGMs were repeatedly failing prematurely (one set is supposed to last ten days before needing a replacement). We theorized the CGMs were failing because of the heat. This issue would persist to the end of the trip. This meant that I had to resort to monitoring my blood sugar exclusively through manual tests. The loss of the CGM was the loss of a safety net, and a diabetic in the backcountry never has enough of those.

We were camping out at Stewart Lake, between the Strathcona Dam and Woss, when my insulin pump stopped working overnight. In addition to the doses of insulin I administered manually to account for the food I ate, the insulin pump also automatically administers small

increments of insulin throughout the day, called a “basal,” to keep blood sugar levels steady the rate of which needs to be adjusted based on my levels of physical activity. With my CGM on the fritz, I was not notified as my blood sugar rose steadily in my sleep without basal rate insulin to counteract it. I woke up feeling severely dehydrated and nauseous, symptoms of a high blood sugar. I felt like molasses had been poured into all my body’s organs. My head was throbbing, my body ached, my mouth and throat were as dry as sandpaper, and the thought of food was viscerally repulsive. I removed the pump site and injected a new one. A message appeared on the pump screen telling me the insulin was not being delivered properly. I needed to change the site all over again. When I removed the site I had just inserted, I found the cannula bent 90 degrees, blocking the insulin flow. This happens sometimes and is an unavoidable risk, but a possible problem in the backcountry, where I can only carry so many extras. After changing the site again, I took insulin to correct my blood sugar, chugging water as I waited for it to come down. We waited a few hours at the campsite until I was confident my blood sugar was coming down at a decent rate before setting off.



Camp on a deactivated logging road south of Schoen Lake.



Buttle Lake.

In late July, we were hiking the last leg of the VIT, the

North Coast Trail in Cape Scott Provincial Park. I found I was experiencing far more low blood sugars than earlier in the trip, which I initially attributed to the technical and challenging terrain of the North Coast Trail. My blood sugar level dropped far more regularly than usual, and my treatment didn’t keep it steady as long as it should have. Symptoms of a low blood sugar differ by person. To me, the feeling resembled inebriation without the euphoria: a watery weakness in the limbs, trouble thinking clearly, impaired speech, glazed eyes. A severe blood sugar would induce panic as my body would lose the energy to perform basic functions. If left untreated, this would culminate in seizures and a loss of consciousness, which I have been fortunate to have never experienced but have witnessed many times in other diabetics. This last leg on the trail had me burning through low supplies at an unsustainable rate, and slowing our progress as I needed to constantly stop and lean against a log for a few minutes.

During this trip I switched back and forth between two basal rates: One standard basal rate for our days in town, and a second, much lower basal rate for hiking. The hiking rate is lower because the consistent exercise burns a lot of glucose, meaning I needed less insulin. This system worked pretty well for most of the trip. A review of my basal rate revealed the reason for the increase in low blood sugars: I had forgotten to switch my basal rate to the hiking pattern when we left Port Hardy, and I was still receiving the full dose of basal insulin. Although switching to the hiking basal pattern corrected the issue, this mistake left me with a dwindling collection of low supplies three days into this six-day stretch.



Hiking the North Coast Trail.

We capped off the Vancouver Island Trail with two nights at Nels Bight, a long crescent of white sand beach at the end of the North Coast Trail. As we relaxed on the warm sand, watching the sun cross the sky and dip below the horizon of open ocean, we were filled with a profound sense of accomplishment. A slow-motion tornado of seagulls whirled lazily above us, their cacophony of shrieks piercing the rolling crashes of the tide. The next



Socks and boots drying on the North Coast Trail.

day we complete the Vancouver Island Trail by hiking to San Josef Bay, where my parents awaited with a bottle of wine, hamburgers, and a ride home. It is a strange feeling to watch hundreds of hard-earned kilometres disappear under the tires in a matter of hours as we drove down-island.



The Cape Scott Lighthouse, terminus of the VIT.



Sunset at Nels Bight.

On the way back down from Cape Scott, we made a side-trip to Alert Bay. We took the ferry from Port McNeil and visited the U'mista Cultural Centre. The Centre's website reads: "*The mandate of the U'mista Cultural Society is to*

ensure the survival of all aspects of the cultural heritage of the Kwakwaka'wakw." We found the experience to be extremely informative and enlightening. As so much of the northern half of the VIT passes through Kwakwaka'wakw land, we encourage all VIT hikers to visit the U'mista Cultural Centre on their journey to learn the history and pay homage to its original keepers.

Footage and art from this trip is being edited into a documentary film, detailing my experience as a type 1 diabetic in the backcountry. Watch ACCVI communications for a screening in 2022.

Participants: Nick Noble and Rebecca Beitner

Rambler Peak – 2105m

Catrin Brown

August 17-19, 2021

All photos are by Catrin Brown.

Sitting on top of Rambler Peak in the afternoon sun, leafing through the entries in the summit register was a treat. The current register dates back to 1995 and the names and handwriting of so many of the climbers evoked warm connections. Their tales - of quick ascents, of slow ascents, of elegant climbing routes, of wrong gullies climbed, of glorious conditions, of foul weather, of solo outings and groups - all resonated because of where I sat. I guess that's one of the things about summit registers - they are best read in place, as a record of the unique but ultimately shared experience of each summiteer. This though was an added distraction, as the views alone were enough to draw our attention. It would have been rude, nay impossible, not to spend time drinking in the 360-degree panorama that lay before us. All this to say that we dallied on the summit longer than was wise.

The previous day we had enjoyed the gentle ascent of the Elk River Trail and beyond to Elk Pass. From the junction with Landslide Lake just beyond the gravel flats, there is a real sense of leaving the world behind, and we saw no one for the next two days. We made camp at a beautiful tarn below the pass (good advice is to go on beyond the first tarn you encounter - it gets better). Nestled in the shadow of Rambler Junior on one side, and the Colonel on the other, it was a glorious haven for the night.

We set a relaxed pace for our summit day, taking the so-called spiral staircase route. Starting from our camp on the west side of the peak just north of Elk Pass, the route makes its way over the south shoulder to the lower east



View of Elkhorn Mountain from the trail to Elk Pass.

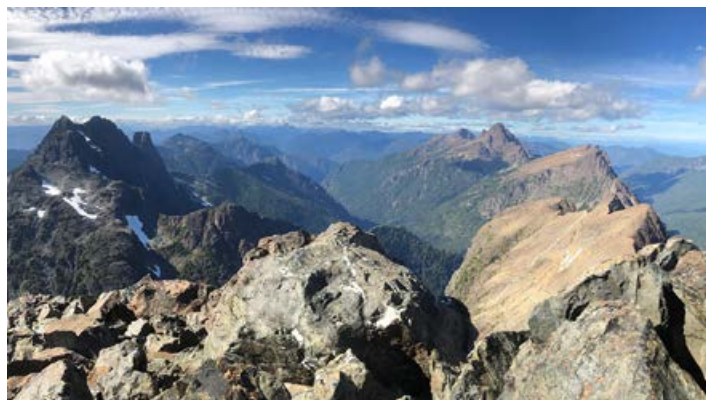
gully, then trends across the glacier and rock to the upper north east gully. Direttissimo it is not, but a fun mix of terrain.



Erich topping out of the lower gully.

The gullies were completely void of snow so more scrubby than many reports suggest, and we roped up for some slimy sections. The walk across the glacier under the Needle was a good interlude between the potential bowling allies in the two gullies. We reached the summit in the mid afternoon and, as noted, enjoyed spectacular views in every direction.

The foreground is dominated by the mountains that flank the Elk River Valley, Mount Colonel Foster to the west and



Summit View looking down the Elk River Valley with (clockwise from 10 o'clock) Mount Colonel Foster, Victoria Peak, Warden Peak, King's Peak, Elkhorn Mountain, and Elkhorn South.

Elkhorn South Mountain, Elkhorn Mountain, and King's Peak to the north. The Golden Hinde and Behinde lie to the south east with Mount McBride off in the east. In the more distant north, we could make out Victoria Peak and Warden Peak. And that's a pretty good "who's who" of the highest peaks on the Island, not to mention five of the Island Qualifier peaks.

Enough dallying, the sun is getting low in the sky and it's a



Rappelling down the upper gully. We were glad we were only two as it made it easier to control the line of fire of rockfall.

long way down. Retracing our steps down the upper gully and across the glacier, daylight rapidly faded.



Erich heading back across Rambler glacier, with Golden Hinde and Behinde.

Fortunately, Erich had recently bought me a search and rescue grade headlamp, and I was infinitely grateful for its strong beam as we set up rappel after rappel in the dark in the east gully. We picked our way across the talus slopes, but when a head light failed and the moon set, we bivvied on the south shoulder for a few hours waiting for dawn. A crazy wind storm denied us meaningful rest as it ravaged our flimsy emergency blankets.



Making our way down from the south shoulder at first light.

At first light we made our way through the rocks back to the pass and down to our tent (which had also taken a beating in the wind storm.) Later that morning it was time to head back down to the Elk River trail, taking the time for a side trip to Landslide Lake.

The position of Rambler Peak at the head of the Elk River Valley in central Strathcona Park gives it obvious status and makes it a great objective. There have been comments in the past that it would be a worthy 10th Island Qualifier peak. Yet, as the summit register confirms, it sees very few

summits each year. And that is perhaps one more reason to go.

Participants: Erich Schellhammer and Catrin Brown

Rugged Mountain East Ridge

John Relyea-Voss

June 19-20, 2021

After an unsuccessful trip to Rugged two weeks earlier, Laurel Frost Mitchell, Casey Matsuda and I decided to return with Vanessa Volkman to try to redeem ourselves. After meeting near the N20 spur the evening of the 18th, we camped at the start of the spur to make for an early start the following morning.

Day 1 - Hike to Nathan Col

In the morning we all piled in Casey's SUV. The road conditions of the N20 were pretty rough and required high clearance 4x4 with some piling of rocks in a couple spots to get through the first 100 metres. The trip before, I received some info from Kris Mutafov of a potential route up the north side of the ridge which we visually confirmed during our last trip. As it was foggy and lightly raining, we opted to try to drive around the other side of the ridge and see if we could find a more efficient way up. We passed the usual trailhead and drove another couple kilometres to the north side of the ridge gaining some much welcome elevation. After moving a few obstacles on the road, we came to a few large downed trees where we parked. Our chosen



Fog at Rugged Mountain.
(Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](https://www.instagram.com/johnrvoss))



East Ridge of Rugged taken at night.
(Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))



Astro shot of Rugged at night.
(Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))

route up was very quick and much less steep than the standard bushwhack up from the south side of the ridge. We highly recommend this way for anyone looking to cut some time off their approach. Despite a couple of navigational challenges, we quickly made the ridge and arrived at Nathan Col around lunch. We levelled out a large snow platform for all our tents and spent the afternoon bouldering and waiting for some nice weather to arrive. By late evening we were lucky enough to get a peek at the summit.

The fog and clouds disappeared early in the morning so around 3 a.m. Casey and I got up from our tents for some photography fun and then went back to bed for another couple hours.

Day 2 – Summit Day and Home

We set our alarms for 5 a.m. and were ready to start the ascent by 5:30 a.m. Conditions were great, and we arrived at the large moat below the east ridge in about 15 minutes. Once there we decided to rope up in two teams and climb the two pitches using snow pickets for protection. The snow was pretty soft, however, we felt it was stable and safe for travel.



Vanessa reaching the belay on the lower section of the east ridge. (Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))



Casey reaching the belay on the lower section of the east ridge. (Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))



Laurel belaying the group on the lower east ridge of Rugged. (Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))

Above the moat we reached the chockstone notch where I belayed the team up. After a tricky and steep 15 feet of mixed snow and rock climbing, we made our way above the notch to the crest of the east ridge. From here, Laurel belayed Casey from the opposite side of the ridge crest and Casey climbed the steeper and more exposed first half of the ridge placing a few snow pickets as he went. At the top he built a solid snow anchor and belayed the rest of us up.

We decided to solo the last remaining 10 metres up to Schiena D'Asino (Donkey's Back). Once reaching the pinnacle we scrambled up some third/fourth class ledges to another comfortable ridge. A slightly steep and exposed 5 metre snowy traverse put us on some lower angle snow which we comfortably followed up to the summit scramble.

At the base of the scramble, Casey and I climbed some mixed fourth and fifth class rock where Casey set up a belay station. Casey then brought up the rest of us. We arrived at the summit at almost exactly three hours from leaving the tent. As this was my final IQ, Casey had decided to bring up a full apple crumble pie which we all enjoyed while taking some much-deserved summit selfies. When reading the summit register, we realized we were the first team to summit in 2021 and the last team up was in September of 2020.



Group at summit of Rugged. (Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))



Group at summit of Rugged.

(Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))

After spending 1.5 hours on the summit, we rappelled back to the upper ridge and made our way back down to the Donkey's Back. From below the Donkey's Back we rappelled down off two snow anchors setting some additional pickets to protect Casey for his down climb. Below the notch we rappelled down to just above the moat where we traversed carefully to a safe position. From here we glissaded back to our tents. The round trip took just shy of six hours. After drying all our gear for a couple hours in the sun, we packed up and headed back down. Laurel impressively descended the entire snow field below Nathan Col in about 15 seconds and Casey attempted a high-speed boot ski which ended in a hilariously epic wipeout. After another 30 minutes of traveling down the ridge Vanessa had an unfortunate slip which resulted in a pretty big fall. Luckily, she was okay to make the rest of the trip out, however, she ended up putting a tensor on her knee. We took it easy on the way out and made it back to the vehicles at around 5:00 p.m. On this climb Casey completed his fourth IQ'er, Laurel completed his fifth IQ'er and Vanessa got her first.

Participants: John Relyea-Voss, Vanessa Volkman, Casey Matsuda, and Laurel Frost-Mitchell

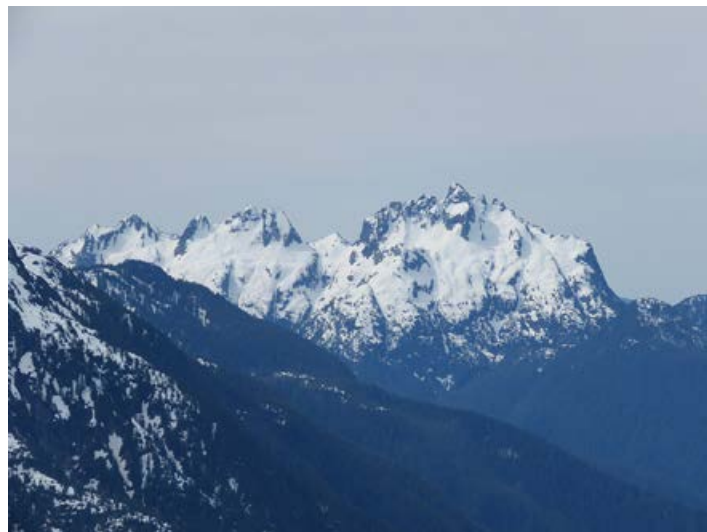
Hidden Peak Traverse

Stefan Gessinger

June 21-22, 2021

Armed with a photograph and a two-sentence description from a Port Alberni local named Quagger, a multi pitch rock climb in the MacKenzie Range, approached from an old growth valley without a trail, seemed like a great setting for a date with a new relationship. What could possibly go

wrong? Inadequate navigation tools, a two-metre snowpack in June (who would have thought), bushwhacking in shorts, creek crossings and thick coastal fog had us emerge back onto the highway completely worked over yet making for a successful and foundation building outing. As memories of the miserable aspects faded, my intrigue for the area grew. Ski and climbing trips to the surrounding peaks started to give me a sense of the terrain and how to ramble through. With the seasonal snow cover making the low elevation coastal mountains look wild and rugged, and breaking through the clouds on a ski tour up Jack's Peak, I was provided a dramatic view of the Hidden Peak skyline and north face. Another tantalizing objective added to the list.



Early season view of Hidden Peak. (Photo by Chris Ruttan)

Traversing a ridge line is an excellent way to extend a climbing route that lacks tall features, and thus Andrew Welsh and I started scrambling up the steep forested S-ridge mere metres from our park spot with a small rock rack, bivy gear and ice axes. The forest section traveled quite well with plenty of open rock sections which reduced the bushwhack factor. Although at some points the forest was so steep, we would probably resort to rappelling if we returned via this route.

After about four hours we reached the snow-covered treeline terrain. An hour more and we arrived at the first sub summit with beautiful views out to the open West Coast and the hanging valley between Hidden Peak and Mount Maitland. We followed the ridge over its highpoints but opted to lazily bypass several rock features on very enticing and convenient snow slopes.

We bivied on an open rock section at a col hoping the exposed position might help blow the bugs away. With a solid weather forecast we opted for sleeping bags and mosquito nets leaving a shelter at home - the problem with that plan was the night temperatures were so mild that the buttoned-up bags ended up being far too warm, creating an uncomfortable sweat bivy.

The following day we summited the main peak again opting out of sportier options and just using the rope for a rappel from the main summit block. A nice return route had become apparent as we made our way along the ridge. Rambling along the snow covered ridge we jumped into a very inviting tarn - because how often do you get to sit in a little pool on a snow-covered ridge on a hot day looking out over the clouds coming in from the Pacific.



Andrew Welsh looking out over the west coast and our return route on the right. (Photo by Stefan Gessinger)

At the end of the snow, we managed to find the entrance to the scree gully we had seen from our starting point. It was like finding an elevator and in quick time we managed to drop 400 metres in elevation avoiding a whole lot of forest although it did eventually get bushy and a very overgrown trail led to an even more overgrown road with the section between trail and road being proper no fun at all.

We returned to the truck from the opposite direction we had set out from - a perfect loop involving less than 500 metres of road.



Google earth map - traveled route counter clockwise.

Participants: Stefan Gessinger and Andrew Welsh

Triple Peak in the Heat Dome

Catrin Brown

June 29 - July 1, 2021

As we consider ways to describe 2021, 'the year of the alphabet' may be a strong contender. The appearance of new Covid variants kept increasing our working knowledge of the Greek alphabet, while ever-changing trip plans often took us further than we might wish through the Latin alphabet.

Case in point was a planned trip during the last week of June. Plan A was a five-day trip via Oshinow Lake to climb Mount Harmston and co. But abrupt closure of the access gates due to extreme heat squashed that idea. Plan B quickly became plan not-to-be when two of our collective vehicles broke down within minutes of leaving home. This was the time of the crazy heat dome, and it seemed our vehicles were coping no better than we were with the 40°C temperatures. So, plan C saw us regrouping the next day with a now abbreviated plan to climb Triple Peak. With reconfigured vehicles and no access gates to worry about, this plan surely might work.



Keith and Martin finding a way up the waterfall route. (Photo by Catrin Brown)

The route up to the lake below Triple Peak is often described as the ‘waterfall route’ as it follows the line of the outflow from the lake in a steep ascent with several crossings. But rarely could the name be quite so apt. The rapidly melting snow above cascaded down beside us in waterfalls of awesome force. Tricky crossings ended in wet boots, for me at least, but given the persistent heat, that was actually no bad thing. ‘Triple Peak lake’ sits in a glorious bench position below the peak, and for many has become a choice destination in its own right. This week though we were alone to camp by the still frozen lake and enjoy the pleasantly cool temperatures as the marine fog rose. ‘Alone’ is actually wishful thinking given the swarms of black flies that were similarly drawn to the location, no doubt delighted to find ready supplies of fresh blood. “Bitten alive” pretty much says it.



*Triple Peak above our camp at the frozen lake.
(Photo by Catrin Brown)*

The summit climb starts with a snowfield above the lake which takes an ascending line to the base of the rock. It had been hard to believe when packing in Victoria that we could need crampons and axe, but in fact we were glad of both on the surprisingly hard snow. We found a good place to cross the bergschrund relatively easily and stashed our gear at the bottom of the rock. Erich and Martin led a couple of steep pitches, climbing past and over the infamous chockstone, and on to steep heathery slopes above.

The marine fog rose again and made for some interesting peek-a-boo views from the summit. It was fun to look across the valley to 5040 Peak, Nahmint Mountain, Mount Klitsa and Adder Peak, and spot peaks and ridges that have become familiar to us from Hišimýawił. As the mist swirled, we could see the hut itself, still surrounded by snow.



*Erich checking our route around the chockstone.
(Photo by Catrin Brown)*



*Summit smiles: Josh, Erich, Keith, Martin.
(Photo by Catrin Brown)*

Except for Keith who was a “Triple neophyte”, we all had different memories of earlier climbs of the peak. Josh’s tale from approximately 2000 was the starkest contrast with today. He described their route as “mostly blind bush bashing, somehow managing to claw our way into the alpine”, and a descent that involved “controlled falling through dense bush, occasionally finding a stable foothold”. It all goes to prove you can’t climb the same mountain twice.

For now, we enjoyed a leisurely descent with several rappels and interesting manoeuvres around the chockstone. Back at the lake, we fed the black flies for another evening before descending via somewhat calmer waterfalls to Marion Main where the temperature had cooled to the balmy mid-thirties.



Josh and Keith descending the snowfield with Adder Peak, 5040 Peak, Nahmint Mountain and Mount Klitsa above the fog. (Photo by Catrin Brown)

Triple Peak, with its dominating presence in the viewscape from Hišimýawił, has become somewhat emblematic for our section. Being now familiar with its moods in different seasons and times of day from the hut, it was fun to rub our noses in its face, and remind ourselves it's a worthy mountain to climb, as well as gaze upon.



Triple Peak from Hišimýawił, December 2021. (Photo by Catrin Brown)

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

Rees Ridge Ramble via Carey Lakes

Gordon Kyle

July 10-17, 2021

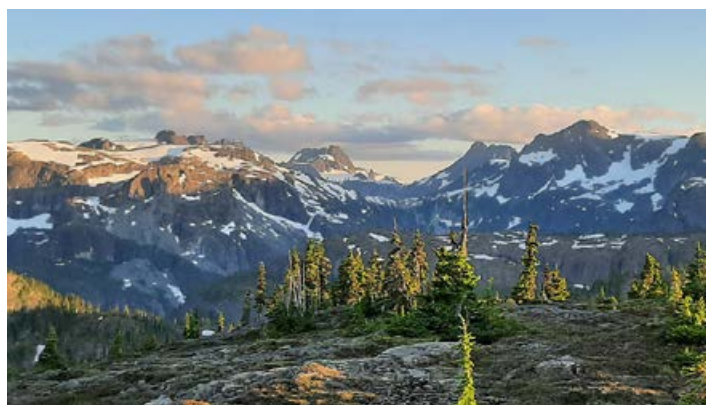
The Carey Lakes area is so distinctive and beautiful that Strathcona Park boundaries were originally expanded to

include it, as I understand.

Thanks to clear and complete ACC directions it was easy to arrange gate access to Comox Lake Main and then Cruikshank River Main. At [49.6290 -125.2730] we branched onto Cruikshank (CRK) 8000 Road which climbs steeply to a small spur at [49.6263 -125.2999]. Cross ditching soon stopped our vehicles at 990 metres elevation so we walked a couple more kilometres to our start southeast of the lowest Carey Lake. Having driven up from Victoria this worked well for the first night's stop.

Aside from some miserable blowdown at the edge of the clearcut this leg to the first lake was pleasant, following remnants of a trail along a small stream. In contrast to the upper lakes, this lower area is marshland and forest. The route from here is bushwhacking west up the broad forested ridge on the south side of the upper Carey Lakes. We found occasional tapes but not enough to avoid some vegetable belay sections on the way up. Conversely on the way down we found a well-flagged section near our up-route that conveniently avoided some of these steep steps.

This next night we couldn't resist camping on a rocky hilltop just above tree line with tarns and 360 degree views from the mainland to Comox Glacier.



Left to Right: Comox Glacier, Argus Mountain, Mount Harmston, and Rees Ridge. (Photo by Gordon Kyle)

It also introduced us to something new: we all know tornado, firenado, even sharknado, but now we have tentnado. Neil & Wei's tent simply lifted off the ground and swirled around tantalizingly (taunting us?) above our heads for a couple circles before Dave managed to grab it on a dip. There was generally no breeze and we weren't in a contained area so we can only surmise it was Fate having amusement at our expense.

The next day dawned beautifully and we had the pleasure of walking open rolling hills and up ridges the last six kilometres to our intended base camp area. Scenery through here is through class 2 walking with idyllic ponds and dramatic cliffs to suit all scenery tastes - beautiful even with heavy packs. That said it's still intermediate level due to the route finding required and consequences of a slip in damp conditions.

This had been a deep snow year which was balanced with a couple summer heat waves to give mostly open ground with snow starting at 1600 metres. Even base camp at 1860 metres was mostly snow free with plenty of tarns. It looks like in future years there would be one or two persistent snow patches for water.

Although this entire area is shown as Karmutzen volcanic rock with Quatsino limestone, certain large areas had geode-like inclusions up to a metre wide. Another unusual feature was patterns of parallel black marks on the surface of the rocks.



*Proto geode embedded in the landscape.
(Photo by Gordon Kyle)*



Curious black lines on the bedrock. (Photo by Gordon Kyle)



Bluebird day. (Photo by Gordon Kyle)

Obviously bring a geologist for maximum enjoyment of your next hike here.

The first of our three full days hiking out of base camp we used as a rest day with just an easy hike to the head of Ralph Ridge via Siokum Mountain, stopping often for rock pictures and flower photos in their protected patches.

In general the landscape here looks like the reddish surface of Mars. The second full day we tried a more strenuous trip to Mount George V but couldn't see a safe way down from our side to the saddle at [49.6174 -125.4124], so we hiked a nearby ridge instead and dropped down closer to Delight Lake which lives up to its name.

For our last full day's hike, we went south to Mount Celeste which is really just the high point of the ridge. Note that this area has some class III gullies, and we benefitted from a few well-placed cairns.



*Wei being lifted on wings of positive vibes.
(Photo by Gordon Kyle)*

There was good snow to boot up in the Aureole Snowfield but at this point of summer there was already bare ice in the centre, and a seasonal lake was open at the toe of the snowfield. Weatherwise, the convective clouds over the mountains had been starting earlier each morning and growing larger during the days. That day, we had good visibility until the summit, and if I hadn't been so complacent about our starting time, we'd have had time to nip over to Iceberg Peak also. Next time.

We took two days to return to the vehicles via the same general route as our ascent. I know I thoroughly enjoyed the company of Neil, Wei, Ray, and Dave Suttill. With the easy hiking terrain and interesting geology this is a must do for people who like hiking barren landscapes.



Pre-sunrise over Courtenay. (Photo by Gordon Kyle)

P.S: Thanks to the ACCVI people who negotiated Comox Lake Road access for us. Note that Mosaic only allows a maximum of two vehicles. Next time I'd approach from the north of Carey Lakes. Just stay on CRK 8000 Road around to the north of the lowest Carey Lake where I understand Comox hikers have flagged a route up between the first and second lakes.

Participants: Gordon Kyle, Dave Suttill, Neil Han, Wei Wu, and Ray Han

Santa Cruz de Nuca Mountain

Lindsay Elms

July 20, 2021

I don't get off Vancouver Island to climb elsewhere in Canada very often, but on Monday evening (July 19) Val and I met Rich Ronyecz and Steve Kowal in Gold River. We were about to go off-shore. Steve had towed his boat from Parksville to the boat launch at the mouth of the Gold River and we were to motor out to Plumper Harbour on the inside coast of Nootka Island. Our objective was Santa Cruz de Nuca Mountain, the highest peak on the island at 915 metres. It was a peak that had been on my radar for many years. Obviously not because of its height, but it was its name that intrigued me – Santa Cruz de Nuca – it just rolls off the tongue. Santa Cruz de Nuca was a Spanish colonial fort and settlement at the southern tip of the island and the first European colony in British Columbia. Before the Spanish it had been the Mowachaht summer village of Yuquot. The settlement was founded in 1789 and its aim was to secure the West Coast of North America from Vancouver Island to California in the south for the Spanish Crown. Ultimately, Spanish possession failed and in 1795 the colony was abandoned due to the Nootka Convention and the British took tenure of the coast. However, as a reminder the highest peak on the island was named after the settlement.

As we pulled into Plumper Harbour, we looked around for somewhere to camp as his boat was too small to sleep all of us comfortably. On the east side of the harbour, we found a dock and set up the tent. Clouds obscured the summit, but the forecast was looking good for the next day. I knew it would be a bushwhack, that there was no trail and no GPS tracks, so I wanted good weather. I didn't want to have to find another boat again if we didn't climb the thing. It was a one-shot climb.



Santa Cruz Du Nuca Mountain (middle) from Plumper Harbour. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

The next morning was clear, but there was a heavy dew. Time to seize the day. We docked at the logging camp jetty, climbed around the gate and started up the logging road. The first half an hour was fine but then the unused road started getting bushy. The bush, that towered over our heads, was also damp. Within minutes we were wet from head to tail. Fortunately, it wasn't cold, but the young alders, firs and cedars were thick. So thick that we couldn't see someone standing ten feet in front of us. But we kept going. It continued like this for four kilometres until the bush eventually thinned. The last ten minutes on the road before we had to head into the logging slash was clear and we were able to shake a few litres of moisture from our clothes. However, it didn't stay off us for long. Although we only had about 100 metres of slash to climb through it probably took us nearly half an hour to reach the 'old growth'. The trees may have been old, but so was the salal underneath them. We had already climbed 650 metres from sea-level so we only had 265 metres of old growth and salal to negotiate. It just meant we remained wet. The climb was steepish in places, but there were lots of trees and bushes to pull ourselves up by. Eventually, we pulled the GPS out and located the highest point of Santa Cruz de Nuca Mountain. The highest piece of ground anyway as the trees still towered above us. Although there was very little in the way of vegetation under the trees, we didn't get any view, but

we were on the summit. We all felt the usual excitement at reaching the top. It was time to dry out a bit so we shed our wet gear and put on some dry layers underneath, but when we began the descent, we didn't stay dry for long.



The route from Plumper Harbour to the summit of Santa Cruz du Nuca.

Lower down on the road the bush had dried out somewhat so by the time we reached the jetty we were pretty much dry. It was an adventure, and I do want to say thank you to Val, Rich and Steve for sticking it out to the summit and not shying away from this damp adventure. The obligatory summit photo showed everyone smiling.

Participants: Rich Ronyecz, Steve Kowal, Val Wootton, and Lindsay Elms.

Elk River Exploration

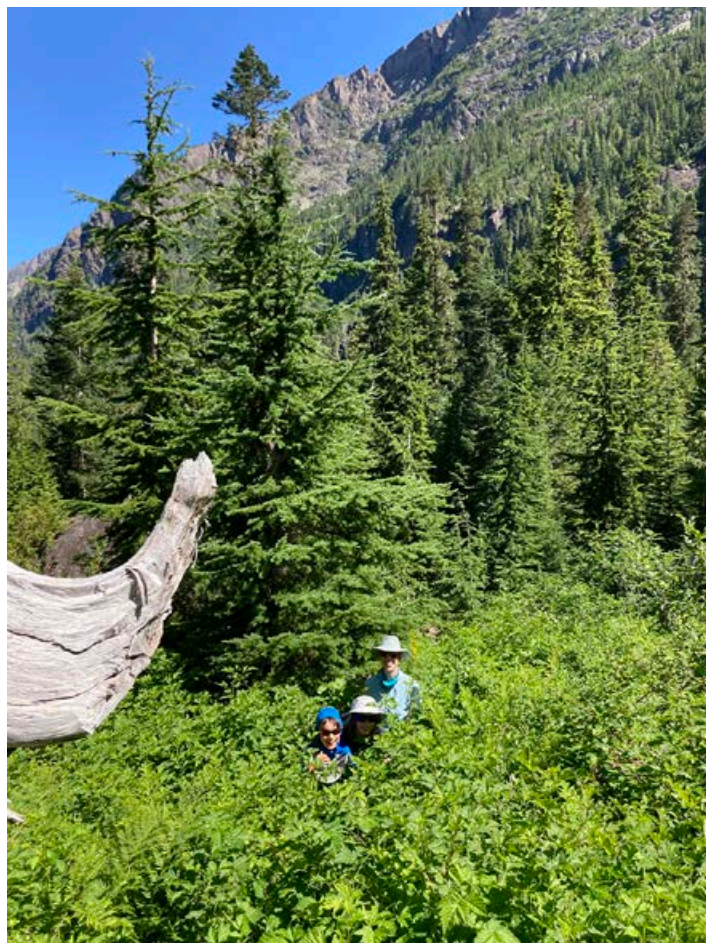
Neil Ernst

July 26-28, 2021

My family and I, two of whom are under 12, hiked up the Elk River Trail to “camp 2” at the gravel bar on July 26. We spent two nights at the campsite, which was nearly full for a Monday/Tuesday. Everything was pretty clean and tidy, and we met the Park staff member on the way up. The second half of the trip in is pretty steep and required some light sherpa duty for the younger ones, but they made it in about four hours. The outhouse at camp was pretty “outhouse-y” but better than nothing! Outhouses can be a little intimidating when you are not much larger than the size of the hole, of course.

We headed to Landslide Lake for dinner and a cleansing swim and enjoyed our boil bags while staring up at the majesty of Mount Colonel Foster. We crept back down the trail and bedded down on the gravel back at Camp 2.

The following day we made our way to the Elk Pass trail, which is well marked on the way to Landslide. Directions in the *Island Alpine Guide* were spot-on the entire way. The main challenge was the lush underbrush that was consuming the trail. The two kids would frequently disappear under giant blueberry bushes. We also had frequent discussions about what other critters might hide under the bushes.



Somehow in 4 months blueberry bushes had grown from seed to take over the whole trail. (Photo by Neil Ernst)

This part of the trail is pretty steady in its climb, with some good breaks at the Hemlock Grove (another potential camp) and avalanche slides. We didn't see any “charismatic megafauna” but did hear a large noise in the bushes at one point, and saw some dried elk scat along the river bed, appropriately enough.

We managed to get to the last climb before the little tarns when the party decided that ACCVI principle #2- “come back friends” was in jeopardy, and principle #4 - “have (type 2) fun” - had been passed about 20 minutes earlier. We therefore marked it as our high point and had a relaxing



Gingerly crossing one of the last remaining snow patches on the shoulders of Rambler. Note slightly dodgy footwear. (Photo by Neil Ernst)

lunch among the avalanche slide remnants and the north buttress of Rambler Peak, before completing the long descent back to camp 2. A refreshing icy dip in the Elk River and the construction of a rock dam rounded out the day.



Rock dam construction on the Upper Elk. (Photo by Neil Ernst)



Heading back the parking lot. (Photo by Neil Ernst)

The next morning, we packed after a leisurely breakfast and made our way back to the trailhead in three hours or so. Much fun was had by all in the end. Highlights included crossing snowbanks, cold and beautiful water for drinking and quick bathing dips, and numerous games of the Monopoly Deal card game.

Participants: Kambria Ernst, Kieran Ernst, Elliott Ernst, and Neil Ernst

Exploring Peaks West of Gold River – Magee Peak, Frisco Peak, Cala Tower

Lindsay Elms

Magee Peak

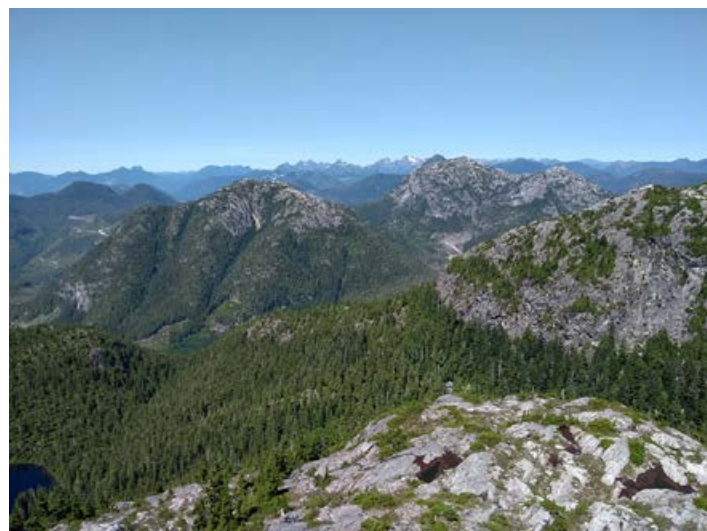
July 27, 2021

In an area west of Gold River and encapsulated by Magee Creek to the east, McCurdy Creek to the south, Neesook River to the west and Upana River to the north, are four peaks rarely visited and without official names although

they can be found on a map in Phil Stone's *Island Alpine Climbing* on p. 350. The four mountains are: Tlupana Peak, Frisco Peak, Cala Tower and Magee Peak. I wrote up a trip report for Tlupana Peak in the *Island Bushwhacker Annual 2007* p. 28-30, however, there were no recorded ascents of the other three. That doesn't mean they haven't been climbed; it's just nothing has been recorded until this year. I gave the name Tlupana to the peak because of its proximity to Tlupana River while Phil Stone named the other three. However, nearby Frisco and Cala Lakes are officially named features as is Magee Creek. These names are linked to William Bolton's exploring expedition and the names can be found in his diary from July 1896. Cala and Frisco are related to the state of California and the city San Francisco or Frisco as it is often called. Bolton lived for a time in that city before the expedition, while Magee (James Magee) was a member of Bolton's 1894 expedition.

Val and I had looked across at Magee Peak on a previous trip when we climbed Big Baldy Mountain. The quickest and easiest access to the peak is via the logging road on the west side of Magee Creek. After driving up to the saddle, and before the road drops into McCurdy Creek, a spur road winds off to the right and around onto the logged south face. Here we camped for the night in the mist. However, around midnight the mist lifted and the stars came out promising a fine day.

In the morning we climbed up through the logging slash and entered the old growth. There was nothing unusual or difficult about the climb and we gained a subsidiary ridge. At the northeast end of the ridge we dropped down to a small lake and then climbed up to another subalpine ridge crest. It was then a short half a kilometre scramble up to the summit where we spent a couple of hours taking in the view and looking across at Cala Tower. Every aspect of the peak that we could see looked steep and difficult, all except the northwest ridge. This ridge swept up from Cala Lake.



Frisco Peak (left) and Tlupana Peak and Cala Tower (right) from the summit of Magee Peak. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

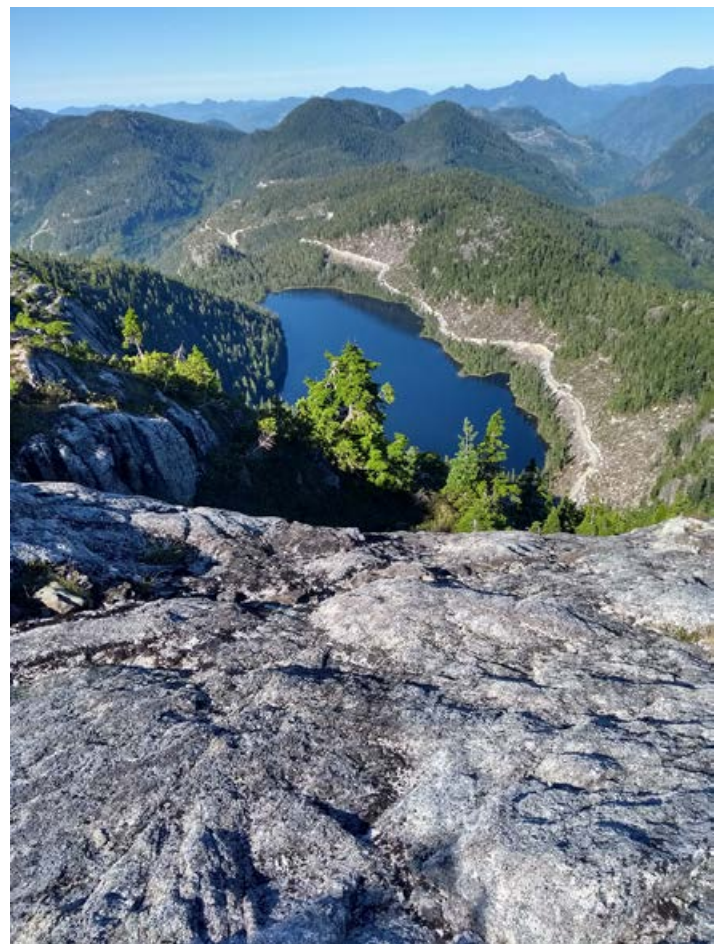
All this valuable information we stored away for a future trip.

Frisco Peak

September 1, 2021

Five weeks later we were back driving up the logging road beside Magee Creek in the late afternoon. From the saddle we dropped down into McCurdy Creek and then linked up with the Neesook Main. About 40 minutes down from the saddle we found the spur road that took us up to Frisco Lake. I wasn't certain how far we could drive but after driving over a distinctive rock wall at the eastern end of the lake we found a good road all the way around the north side of the lake. The area looked like it had been logged earlier in the year. Two thirds of the way around the lake we came across a parked excavator. We weren't sure what it was there for but we would find out.

Half past four in the morning we heard a loud rumble and heard the excavator start up. Lights lit up the whole lake as the driver swung the machine around, then it started slowly grinding along the road in the direction we were camping. Fortunately for us we were camping in the back of the vehicle and not in a tent in the middle of the road. After an hour and a quarter the machine came over a rise and shone its lights on our vehicle. It was still dark out



Frisco Lake. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

but there was a glow on the horizon and it wasn't from his lights. I was already up and waiting to talk with the driver. He was surprised to see our vehicle as he said nobody ever drove up here. We told him why we were here and that after climbing the peak we planned to drive out in the afternoon. He explained that he was here to de-activate the road by taking the culverts out, but he said he would leave the ditches so that we could drive through.

An hour later we drove back along the road and parked next to his vehicle. Across from where we parked there was a convenient short gully that would take us up onto the west ridge. After scrambling up the gully we found a pleasant ridge to hike along gradually gaining elevation. Eventually the ridge swung around and after an hour and a half we were on the summit. Below us to the east we could just see Cala Lake and slightly southeast of the lake was Cala Tower. The route up from the lake looked straightforward but bushy with numerous small granite bluffs to skirt around. We again lounged on the summit for a while before beginning the descent. Once back at the vehicle we drove around the lake and back onto the Neesook Main. We followed that down to the Tlupana Main which took us out to the Head Bay FSR. We then turned back towards Gold River passing Bull Lake and Upana Caves Recreation Site until we found the H-14-D spur road. This we drove up to where we found the small stream that empties out of

Cala Lake. Randy Brochu, a caver from Gold River, told me about a trail that had been slashed from the road into the lake so after parking the vehicle I looked around on the west side of the stream and found the hidden trail. Another pleasant night although we half expected a herd of elk to come tramping by us as there was sign everywhere, but that wasn't to be.

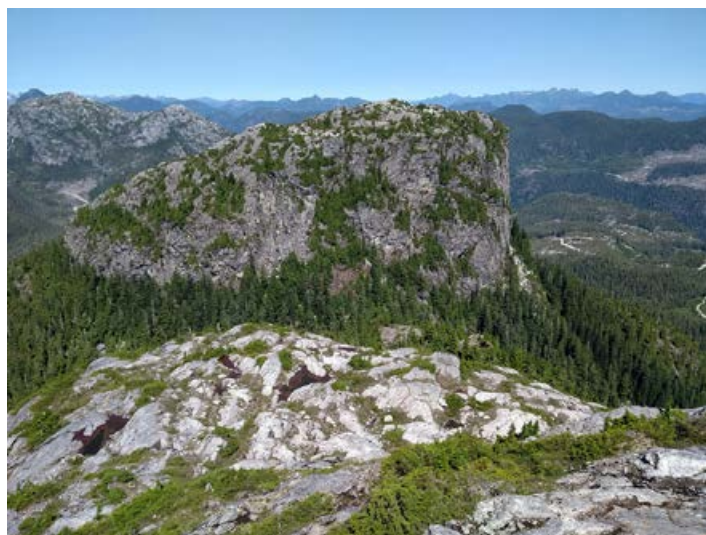
Cala Tower

September 2, 2021

We were up at first light and onto the trail with our headlamps which we didn't need for long. About fifteen minutes in we were at Cala Lake and looking at the bush we would have to climb into. It was obvious that we couldn't scramble around the shore of the lake so we climbed about 50 metres above it and contoured around to a draw at the end of the lake. It was filled with large boulders which had fallen from the bluffs above. The next hour up to a small subsidiary summit at 1000 metres was steep in places but we were able to zig-zag around small bluffs. Small tarns festooned the little saddle and it made pleasant walking. At 1200 metres we came to the final bluffs before the summit. I knew that we could have found a way through these bluffs but to descend them would have required a rope which we didn't have. We angled around to the right and found an easy ascent route although again it necessitated zig-zagging. I don't do it very often but I built a few small cairns at strategic spots to facilitate our descent. These were knocked over on the way down. Once through the bluffs it was a beautiful walk up to the summit but we played on some of the easy granite walls that weren't too technical but nice to feel solid rock under our hands and feet.



Frisco Peak from Cala Tower. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)



Cala Tower – The Half Dome of Nootka. (By Lindsay Elms)

From the summit we looked around at the other peaks: Magee Peak, Tlupana Peak and Frisco Peak, and a little further west were Kleeptee Peak (see *Island Bushwhacker Annual 2017* p.13-14) and Cougar Peak, both accessed off the Neesook Main and the N-30 which go down to the log

sort at Kleeptee Creek. All of them were between 1200 and 1350 metres, no technical climbing involved, beautiful granite bluffs to scramble on and easy short hikes. Why they don't see more attention I don't know, but maybe this will encourage a few to go out and enjoy scrambling around on them. However, if this doesn't maybe the words of the Mary Poppins of the mountains, Sandy Briggs, will temp others when he said of the climb: 'Super! Cala, fragile, is it? Expedite approaches.'



Cala Tower North Face. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

Participants: Val Wootton and Lindsay Elms

Triple Peak North Ridge

John Relyea-Voss

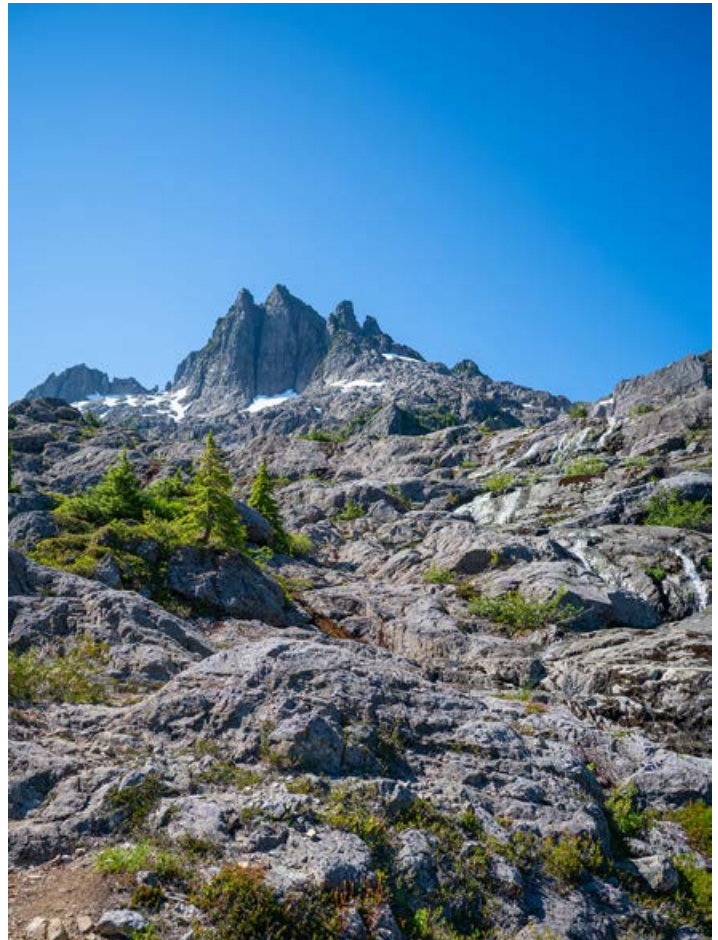
July 28, 2021

Four weeks after Vanessa's knee injury on Rugged Mountain we decided to test the waters with a climb of Triple Peak's awesome North Ridge, but to also enjoy some time at the picturesque lake below the peak and spend the night watching the milky way.

We arrived at the trailhead around 9:00 a.m. and made quick work of the approach to the lake. We decided to

tackle the summit on the first day so we dropped our camp gear and packed our climbing equipment. Leaving the lake, we made our way towards the snowfield below the Northwest Peak. Some wet rock and slabby scrambling made for a few spicy moves. Below the Northwest Peak we had to navigate around some large pieces of snow that had melted and broken-off the main glacier at the base of the peak.

Shortly after, we decided to put on our crampons and



Approach to Triple Peak.

(Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](https://twitter.com/johnrvoss))

continued on to the base of the North Ridge, however, upon arrival we found a deep intimidating moat. We debated whether to rope up and rappel into the moat here or traverse the glacier looking for a safer entry point.

We decided to traverse to the right where we found a spot we could easily climb down. Here we found a nice ledge and made our way along the bottom of the moat back towards the base of the North Ridge.

After enjoying a few minutes in the shade and the cooler temperatures the glacier provided, we started our climb. The first few pitches went very smoothly and we decided to rope up for one of the steeper fourth class sections that was pretty exposed. From here, we reached a large chock-stone

and did some fun moves up to the heather ledges above that led to the summit.

We spent an enjoyable hour on the summit, but then wasted about forty minutes trying to find the descent route. After



*Vanessa at the summit of Triple Peak.
(Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))*

eventually finding the route, we quickly made our way down to the glacier. The rest of the trip back to the lake was great until I had one of my more scary near misses in the mountains. While making our way down some of the slabby rock, I made the bright decision to attempt what seemed like an easy traverse across a wet section of rock. My first step on the rock caused my foot to slip which sent me down and over a ledge that dropped about seven feet. By pure luck I stayed on my feet and landed on the ledge below completely unharmed. Another great lesson on mountain safety.

Once safely out of danger, we both suddenly realized we had forgotten our hiking poles. They were about 100 metres above, so I re climbed the section to bring back our forgotten gear.

After making it back to the lake without further mishap, we enjoyed a swim and a clear and starry night.

Participants: Vanessa Volkman and John Relyea-Voss

Thunderbird – Rugged Mountain

John Relyea-Voss

August 2, 2021

Over the weekend, Keely Sifton, Casey Matsuda and I climbed “Thunderbird” on Rugged Mountain over what turned out to be a true Epic and one of our most memorable mountain experiences to date. Such an amazing route!

Our initial plan was to pack as light as possible and climb the entire route in one day. Around 9:00 p.m. on Friday evening we left Campbell River and drove out to the N20 spur up the Nomash. Parking at the trailhead we managed to get a few hours of sleep.

The Climb

Setting our alarm for 4:00 a.m., we woke up and put our gear together. Immediately, we knew we were going to be up for a real adventure. I had the bright idea of bringing my newly acquired BD Couloir harness and new/aggressive climbing shoes which when gearing up in the morning I immediately regretted bringing. The size of my two extremely small gear loops was laughable and in order to carry any gear I would have to sling everything over my chest. My choice of climbing shoes was going to be a problem as well.

Equipped with nothing but water, snacks, headlamps and our climbing gear - we were determined to climb the route as fast as possible. We took off in the dark and headed up

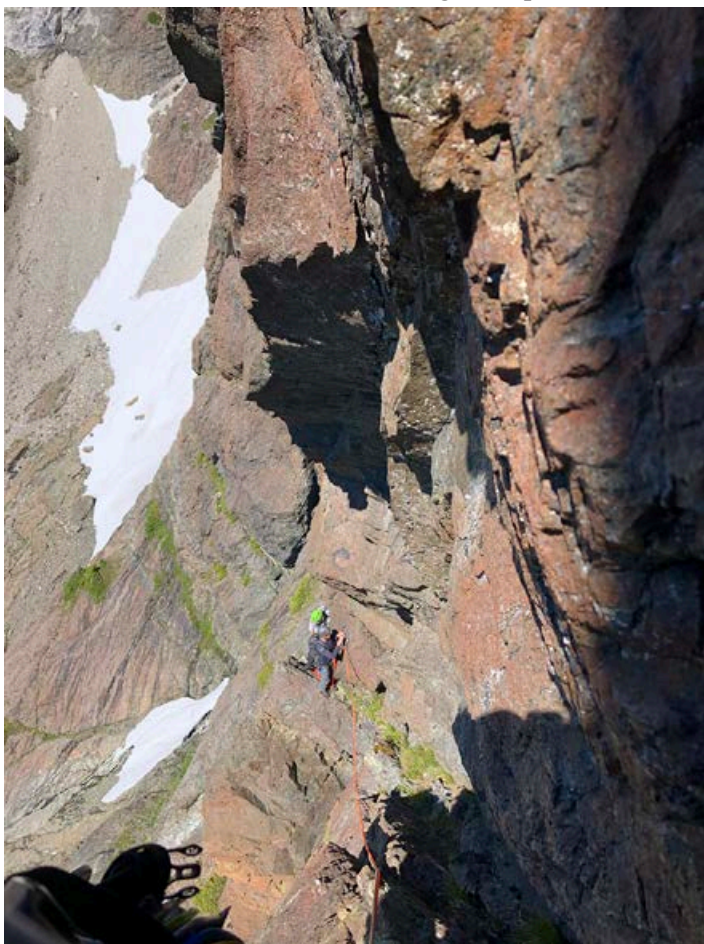


*Starry night at Triple Peak.
(Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))*

the trail towards the base of the climb. After about thirty minutes we ended up getting turned around in the dark and wasted a half hour bushwhacking through the dark forest looking for the trail. After some anxious searching, we found the trail and arrived, excited, at the base of the climb around 8:00 a.m.

Climbing as a group of three we came up with a system that we were all comfortable with while tackling the easier lower pitches.

We managed to quickly find the first anchors before going on the ropes. We climbed through to pitch three, but could not find the following anchors until much higher on the route. From pitch three forward Keely ended up leading a simul climb for what must have been four or five long pitches. As we referenced the guide book and images to try to put us back on back on route, we somehow decided that we were on track once again at pitch seven.



*Upper pitches of Thunderbird.
(Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))*

By this time, it was approaching noon and we had all agreed that if we did not hit pitch thirteen by 3:00 p.m. we would be turning around so we would have time to get off the route before dark. Continuing on, we ended up doing a mix of simul climbing and belaying the lower two climbers up when we hit hard sections of climbing. This continued until around 2:30 p.m. when we thought we were on pitch ten.

We had just finished what seemed like a very steep and short pitch that ended up in a chimney after a very exposed climb. Thinking that it was just under pitch thirteen, I sat down - took off my climbing shoes, chugged what remained of my main water reserve and started mentally preparing for the rappel down. As Keely came up to the belay station, she said I should look at the guide book once more to see if our route lined up with any of the higher pitches. The pitch we had just completed was a lot harder than the 5.8 which we thought we were on.



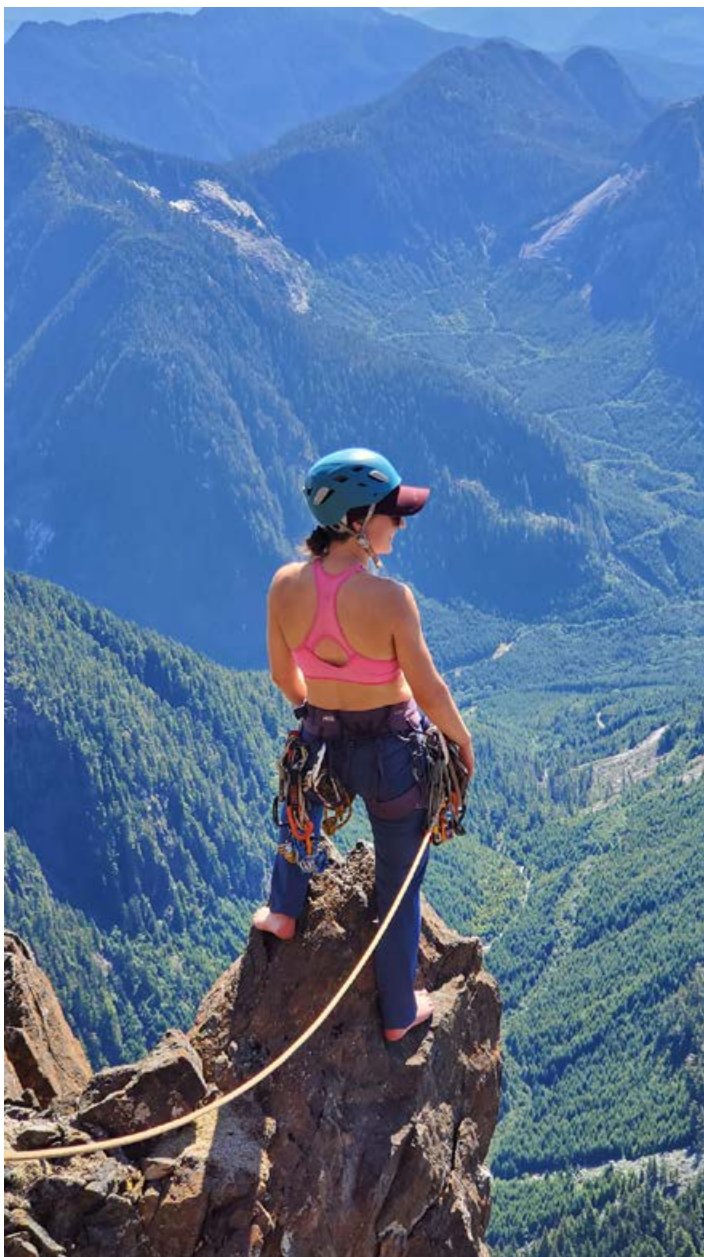
*Keely on a steep upper pitch of Thunderbird.
(Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))*

After reading the guide aloud to the group, we immediately realized that we had overshot pitch thirteen and were actually way further ahead and just completed the first 5.10 pitch of the day, pitch eighteen. We had a good laugh at how much I had prepared for the descent and then all agreed we would press on to the summit.



*Casey on the 5.10 pitch of Thunderbird.
(Photo by Keely Sifton)*

The rest of the climb went extremely well until the last pitch. Climbing down the gully and up the last 5.10 pitch, I had made some placements that resulted in quite a bit of rope drag. We ended up calling the pitch short due to this and I belayed the group off an anchor I set up on a large horn near the top.



Keely topping out Thunderbird. (Photo by john relyea-Voss @johnrvoss)

We quickly climbed the last section and made our way to the summit by 6 p.m. following the standard route. After a short celebration, we climbed down following the same route out.

The Descent

We quickly made our way down rappelling the slabby sketchy sections and scrambling the heather covered ledges towards the glacier. When we arrived at the glacier below the route, we ended up needing to use five metres of webbing on a large boulder to get onto the snow part way down the glacier. Another sling would bring us safety onto the lower glacier where we could walk off the remainder. By the time we made it onto the flat snow it was just getting dark around 9:30 p.m. We turned our headlamps on and started the rest of the journey out.



Casey during the Rugged descent at sunset. (Photo by Relyea-Voss @johnrvoss)



Casey and John on the Rugged descent at sunset. (Photo by Keely Sifton)

As we approached Nathans Col we realized we were not out of the woods yet. Night had really set in and it was difficult to see our descent route. After wasting half hour of searching around the steep drop-offs on the left side of the col, we finally decided to descend a third/fourth class section of very loose rock one at a time and slowly made our way down to a scree field below the col. Fortunately, it went pretty smoothly and we were happy to be done with

what we felt would be the last risky section of the trip.

Following the scree section down, we decided there were two options: head to the lower slabs and try and down climb a route we had used on an earlier trip, or try to make our way to the normal descent ridge. We decided to try the slabs.

The descent in the dark was slow. When we got to a large slabby section, we no longer felt that our progress would remain safe. We also felt that our chances of successfully finding the ridge in the dark would be pretty slim. We decided to find a spot as far away from the bugs as possible and wait until the morning where we could make our way out in the comfort of daylight.

We flaked out our climbing ropes on the ground and slept on them with one puffy and a single emergency blanket between the three of us. We were very fortunate with the forecast calling for warm temperatures and the area we chose had almost no bugs. However, five hours of shivering and short periods of sleep got us through the night. For those of you who have yet to use an emergency blanket, they are truly amazing and I highly recommend having one just for situations like this. It was a true blessing to have.

The next morning, we quickly identified a line to the ridge and made our way in that direction. We decided to make a quick escape down the right side of the ridge setting a few rappels off trees and arrived at the vehicle shortly after 9:00 a.m.

Despite the unplanned emergency bivy, we all felt great about the trip and had smiles all the way back to the car!

Participants: John Relyea-Voss, Casey Matsuda, and Keely Sifton

Comox Glacier - Argus - Harmston - Tzela - Red Pillar

John Relyea-Voss

August 21-26, 2021

After multiple failed plans because of poor weather and dense smoke coverage: Plan A to the Kain Face on Mount Robson and Plan B to climb in the Bugaboos, we decided to stay on the island for a last-minute week-long trip into Strathcona Park.

Day 1

After picking up the ACCVI Comox Lake gate key the evening before, Laurel, Casey, Kyle and I drove the logging

roads to the Comox Glacier trailhead and made our way up the trail towards the main summit of the Comox Glacier with our eighty-pound packs. After close to a ten-hour slog and a vicious attack by wasps, we arrived at the summit and set up camp.



Hiking on the Comox Glacier.
(Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))



John on the Comox Glacier. (Photo by Casey Matsuda)

Day 2

The next morning at 6:00 a.m. we headed towards our first objective Argus Mountain. We made good time to the base of the climb and after a short fifth class scramble, we made the summit.



Looking towards the summit of Harmston.
(Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))

From the back side we went down a steep gully. After exiting the gully we went left along a slabby ledge leading to a fifth class downclimb that put us into a steep scree field. This led us over to the ridge heading towards Mount Harmston.



*Group on the summit of Harmston.
(Photo by Laurel Frost-Mitchell)*



Summit selfie on Harmston. (Photo by Laurel Frost-Mitchell)

We reached the summit of Mount Harmston in about one and a half hours from the start of the ridge. After reaching the summit, Laurel and Kyle decided to head back to camp, while Casey and I decided to attempt an alternative descent route and make our way over to Tzela Mountain. We failed to find a way down the direct 5.8 line from to the summit, but instead found a steep chossy gully with some fifth class moves that led down to the scree field above the Cliffe Glacier. After making it down, we traversed the scree field and made our way to Tzela Mountain.

Without any Beta or information on how to climb this mountain, we eyed up a potential line on the approach and decided to give it a try! We made our way up some steep vegetated ledges and around what we thought was the summit block but ended up getting bluffed out with no



*Looking towards Red Pillar.
(Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))*

way forward. After reviewing our topo map, we decided any further searching for a route would put us past our turnaround time, so we rappelled down and made our way



John looking toward Tzela. (Photo by Casey Matsuda)

back to the Comox Glacier.

Upon arrival in camp we found some of our food bags torn apart by ravens. We ended up losing four bananas, tortillas, squeeze peanut butter, fruit loops, a full bag of granola, as well as our bag of milk powder. All our breakfast food for the next three days had been eaten!

Day 3

We rappelled off the summit block onto the snow below the glacier's East Face. Over the next four to five hours we all climbed six pitches of a great exposed crack from the snow field to the summit. We were amazed with the quality of the rock, the big exposure and wonderful climbing!

Day 4

Starting just after 6:00 a.m. we made our way to the base of Argus Mountain and went around the left side of the mountain following the Argus bypass route. Just before the upper Cliffe Glacier we descended a steep fifth class gully. This required a short rappel to safely get down. Below the gully we navigated some very steep scree slopes which brought us to a short fourth-class scramble to the edge of



Casey Matsuda climbing a new line on the Comox Glacier.
(Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))

the glacier. Shortly after, we roped up and made our way along the upper Cliffe Glacier. We were quite surprised with the amount of route finding required to navigate the glacier safely. Our navigation required jumping a few deep crevasses and crossing some weak snow bridges. After finishing the glacier crossing, we climbed the standard West Ridge making our way to the summit of The Red Pillar in just over an hour.



Red Pillar summit. (Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))



Upper Cliffe Glacier.
(Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))

After a near miss where Casey put his hiking pole through the snow into a very large crevasse, we were happy to be fully equipped with crevasse rescue kits and roped up as a group of four for the rest of the crossing. Once off the glacier we decided to take a right trending line up some second/third class vegetated slopes back to the base of Argus Mountain instead of navigating the loose scree and fifth class gully that we had descended. Back in camp and with time to spare, we racked up and climbed a great exposed variation to our original climb the day before. Another awesome climb!



Night bouldering fun at the Comox Glacier camping spot.
(Photo by Casey Matsuda)

Day 5

After a beautiful bivy under the stars, we realized our remaining food supplies would not last us until the weekend, but first Casey and Kyle decided to climb a third line on the East Face while Laurel and I packed up. We slowly made our way back down the trail taking many breaks looking for interesting rocks and eating our remaining food. This time we took just over five hours (about half the time of our ascent) and our extended breaks resulted in the four of us meeting at the trailhead about fifteen minutes apart. A quick drive back to the gate put us in town at around 5:00 p.m.

Our experience using the ACCVI gate key as part of the agreement with Mosaic was great. The instructions were easy to follow, the key was easily accessible and our communication with ACCVI to gain access to the key was a positive experience. Our group wants to give a huge thanks to ACCVI and Mosaic Forest Management for making this trip possible.

Participants: John Relyea-Voss, Casey Matsuda, Laurel Frost-Mitchell, and Kyle Bourquin.

New Routes on the Comox Glacier

Kyle Bourquin

August 22-26, 2021

After getting skunked by every weather/condition variable, we abandoned our Plan A for Mount Robson and Plan B of the Bugaboos and decided to turn our attention to the Comox and Cliffe Glacier area for five days. Once John had secured the gate key for us from the ACCVI, we got to work on Plan C. The plan was simple, hike up a week's worth of food and gear to the summit of the Comox Glacier, and set up basecamp. From there, we planned to summit all the mountains of the Cliffe Glacier group, and hopefully put up a few first ascents, somewhere.

The East Face

When compared to other mountains on Vancouver Island, the rock quality here can only be described as exceptional! Clean, coarse and solid rock, with deep, clean cracks. There are small sections of hollow chock-blocks but all-in-all, even the ledges are largely free of loose rocks. There is potential for many more lines up to 150 metres on the east face, and potentially 300 metres as you round to the north face. As the glacier inevitably melts, there may be as much as two pitches more uncovered for the east face.



4th class access scramble. (Photo by Kyle Bourquin)

Access

(To Conspiracy/Cracked Theory) Scramble 4th class ledges from the glorious camping platforms on the south aspect of the summit block around to the east face. The ledges eventually narrow to a short section about one metre wide. Immediately after this constriction opens up, "Unkindness" is visible directly above. Continue to follow the widening ledge to a short, 4th class down climb. Rappel off a boulder beside P3 (chimney), Scramble down P2, then rappel again down to the moat, off a chock stone in the top of the P1 off-width (massive 90° corner). As seasonal snow cover permits, descend the glacier towards Mirren Lake to

the large white, corner (P1) above the toe of the melting glacier.

In August the moats in this area are very deep, highly undercut with ice/snowcaves and the large crevasses are thinly bridged, if at all.



Kyle on P4 of Conspiracy. (Photo by John Relyea-Voss)

'Conspiracy' 6 pitches, 5.10a, 115m.

FFA: Laurel Frost-Mitchell, John Relyea-Voss, Casey Matsuda and Kyle Bourquin

August 23, 2021.

Climbed in a single ground up push as a team of four, and (potentially?) the first technical ascent of the Comox Glacier summit!

P1: 20m, 5.9. From a scree covered platform in the moat, climb the corner and face to a short off-width. This is the only pitch of typical alpine rock quality. (We extensively trundled rocks off into the moat to clean this pitch) Good gear.

P2: 10m, 4th Walk/Scramble left up boulders. A couple 4th moves.

P3: 25m, 5.10a. Climb up some wedged chock-blocks to a short chimney. The 2nd half of this pitch is an excellent, clean and solid, fist crack in a corner. Good gear.

P4: 10m, 5.6. Traverse left and undercling the sweet, exposed ledge reminiscent of "Skywalker" on great gear.

P5: 35m, 5.10a. One of the best pitches I've climbed, anywhere! Stem and jam up 25-30 metres of an exceptional, clean, coarse and sustained fist crack! The best gear is #3's and #4's so bring doubles or run it out. Decent but harder to find small pieces on the face. Near the top, head right around an arête to avoid hollow chock blocks, and up to a large/sloped belay ledge.

P6: 15m, 5.7. Up hollow, but solid blocks or easy face climbing Scramble to summit.



*Belay ledge top of P4 Cracked Theory.
(Photo by Kyle Bourquin)*

"Cracked Theory" 5 pitches, 5.10a, 100m.

(2 pitch direct variation, P1-3 described in Conspiracy)

FFA: John, Casey and Kyle (P4-5)

August 24, 2021.

P1: 20m, 5.9. Corner and face to off-width

P2: 10m, couple 4th moves.

P3: 25m, 5.10a. Chimney/ fist crack.

P4: 20m, 5.8. An awesome pitch! High friction. Hand-fist crack with ledges, EXPOSED! Belay on a lovely Heather ledge. Great gear!

P5: 25m, 5.9 (10a move). Do a hard 5.10a move off the belay to gain a boulder. Avoid some obvious loose blocks and climb the solid, coarse rock up easing ground. Awkward final move between large boulders. Belay off boulder. Good gear.

'Unkindness' 30m, 5.10d.

FA: Kyle and Casey

August 25, 2021.

A striking, over-leaning, right trending crack. Visible as



Casey topping out on Unkindness. (Photo by Kyle Bourquin)

you cross the Comox Glacier! One of the first lines you come across on the 4th class scramble around the base of the summit block. Such a good pitch, it's crazy! Clean and solid, unbelievably coarse red basalt. Sustained and varied from finger locks all the way to fist jams. The gear would be good, we were just too spent (and a little scared?) to lead it.

For anyone who is bringing climbing gear for technical lines on Argus Mountain, Mount Harmston or The Red Pillar, I would highly recommend making the summit of the Comox Glacier your basecamp and trying out some of

these climbs, or your own!

Participants: Kyle Bourquin, Casey Matsuda, Laurel Frost-Mitchell, and John Relyea-Voss



Route overview. (Photo by Casey Matsuda)

Rambling up Rambler Junior, Rambler Peak and El Piveto Mountain

Barry Hansen

August 24-26, 2021

Rambler Peak is an impressive looking peak from every aspect, as anyone who has stood atop summits in its vicinity can attest to, which makes it an even more desirable objective for Island alpinists. It was certainly on Rich Priebe's and my list and so we formulated a plan to climb it in the latter half of August when we both had some schedule flexibility. Our plan was to climb Slocomb Peak, Rambler Junior, Rambler, and El Piveto, which are all on the ACCVI 6000'er list (a project we are both attempting to complete). Our initial plan was to hike from the ERT (Elk River Trail) trailhead to Elk Pass on day one, set up base camp, and then climb Slocomb. Day two would be for Rambler Junior and Rambler. Day three for El Piveto. And on day four we'd break camp and hike out. But, as most mountaineers know, things rarely go as planned.

As summer waned, a reasonably favourable weather window opened. It wasn't ideal (two decent days followed by a storm) but since there wasn't a guarantee we'd have a better opportunity, we decided to go for it, but knowing that our itinerary needed to be flexible. We drove separately



Barry on Rambler Peak with sun setting over Mount Colonel Foster. (Photo by Rich Priebe)

to the trailhead because Rich's wife was joining us for the first part of our trip to Landslide Lake, from where she would run back to the parking lot. We made quick work of the ERT and parted ways with Shaleah just past the Gravel Flats. We were feeling pretty good and decided to adjust our plan. Slocomb was scratched out and the two Rambler's replaced it. We arrived at Elk Pass early afternoon, set up camp by a tarn, repacked for climbing, and made our way up to the south shoulder of Rambler.

Our plan was to climb up and over Rambler Junior, drop down to the glacier, climb Rambler via the Briggs route, and then descend via the Spiral Staircase before working our way back down to our camp in the valley. We were unable to find much beta for Rambler Junior but were confident we'd figure it out and so brought what we felt was sufficient gear. The south slopes of Rambler Junior were an easy scramble and we found ourselves on the ridge in no time. I must say, we were pretty excited; like a couple of kids in a candy shop. We traversed along the ridge fairly quickly, setting a couple pieces of pro in the spicier spots. The exposure was as wickedly awesome as the views



Barry standing on the one flat spot on Rambler Junior's ridge. (Photo by Rich Priebe)

were. We arrived at the high point on the north end of the ridge and had hoped to continue along it but the steep gap between there and the stunning Needle feature at Junior's northernmost end looked too sketchy to safely protect a descent from. Instead, we decided to rappel off the east side to a narrow ledge twenty-five metres below. A short traverse along the ledge brought us to the base of the Needle, which we climbed and rappelled from before downclimbing to the glacier.

We crossed the glacier and quickly scrambled up the Briggs route to the summit of Rambler Peak where we took a few minutes to sign the register, have a snack, enjoy the stunning views, and take a few photos. But the sun was setting quickly and we wanted to be down the Spiral Staircase before dark and so off we went, retracing our route back down Rambler and across the glacier to the top of the Staircase. Although there's a lot of decent and well-spaced 'tat' the length of the Staircase, we opted to downclimb its third-class terrain. From the bottom, we scrambled up the talus field back onto Rambler's south shoulder just in time to watch the sun setting over Mount Colonel Foster. It was dark by the time we descended into Elk Pass and we made our way back to camp through the boulder fields by headlamp. We were pretty tired but managed to cook some food before collapsing into our tents. It was a 2000 metre elevation gain, twenty-four kilometres, and a twelve-hour kind of day. And the next day would be another big one to El Piveto and back.

We estimated it would take around ten hours to reach the summit of El Piveto Mountain and return to camp. And so, we decided an early start wasn't necessary, allowing our bodies a little extra recovery time from the previous day. We hit the trail at 8:00 a.m., climbed back up to the south shoulder of Rambler and then picked our way down its bluffy west slope into the wide basin between it and Cervus Mountain. After crossing the talus slopes just above the small lake, we entered the lovely alpine meadows on Cervus's northwest flank and then traversed up a wide sloping ramp onto the ridge. Very pleasant and easy terrain.



Rambler Junior with Rich on glacier (Photo by Barry Hansen)

We dropped our packs near the top of Cervus, quickly grabbed its summit, and returned to our packs for a quick bite before descending Cervus's steeper east face and into the saddle between it and El Piveto.

We had plotted a route up El Piveto on a topo map in advance. And our view from the summit of Cervus confirmed that it looked like a good line. We followed our intended route up El Piveto's western slope to a small basin of snow before turning southward up a shallow gully/ramp that took us close to the top. From there it was easy hiking to the rounded summit. We signed the register, which has very few entries (we were the first entry in 2021), had some food, and took some photos. The temperature was dropping quickly and a storm was rolling in from the west. It was time to leave and neither of us was excited about retracing our steps back to camp, but what can you do? And being thirsty didn't help. We had assumed we'd find water somewhere between the bottom of Rambler and the summit of El Piveto but there was none to be found. And so, back to camp we headed, tired and thirsty but motivated by the darkening sky to keep a steady pace.

After descending El Piveto and scrambling back up and over Cervus (again), we reached its northwest base and drank deeply from a small stream before crossing Rambler's talus filled basin (again) and then scrambling up and over its south shoulder (again) and back to camp. It was an 1800 metre elevation gain, fifteen kilometres, and ten-hour day. It had started raining lightly when coming up Rambler's shoulder but, fortunately, the real storm held off until after we'd cooked our food and settled into our tents. And then it stormed hard all night with heavy rain and gusting winds. We heard debris crashing off the surrounding steep slopes throughout the night. Neither of us slept well.



View of The Golden Hinde, Cervus Mountain, and El Piveto Mountain from Rambler Peak (Photo by Barry Hansen)

Morning arrived and the worst of the storm had passed. But it was still drizzling and the mountains were soaked in. Rain water was cascading off the surrounding cliffs of Slocomb and Rambler. My revised plan to climb Slocomb

in the morning was quickly abandoned. Rich had climbed it previously so I was going to grab it solo but not in the present conditions. Instead, we packed up camp and began the long hike out. Between the light rain and the soggy bushes, we were thoroughly soaked by the time we reached the ERT. But the storm had fully abated, the skies were clearing, and the temperature was rising, allowing us to remove some wet layers and dry out as we continued along the trail towards the parking lot. We passed many groups on their way in, some who were planning the long hike through to Boliden-Westmin Mines. I was glad I wasn't them. I was glad I was heading home. It's a feeling I've gotten used to at the end of every big trip. A feeling of accomplishment, relief, and gratitude.

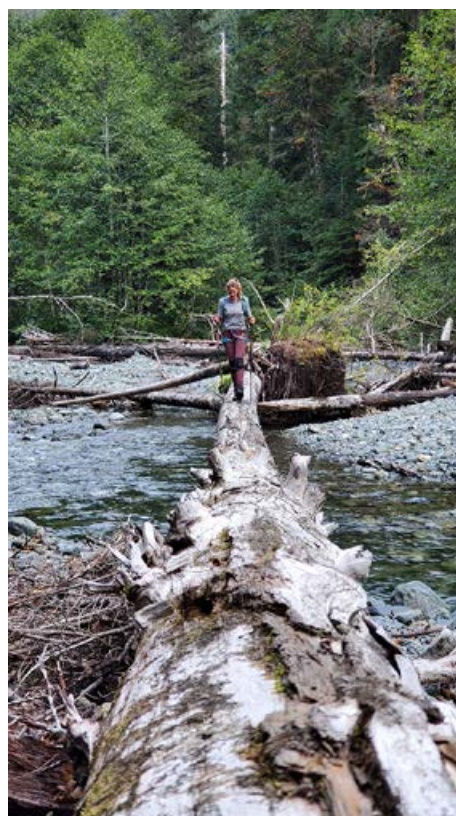
Participants: Barry Hansen and Rich Priebe

Elkhorn Mountain

John Relyea-Voss

September 12-13, 2021

Casey Matsuda, Vanessa Volkman and myself took off early morning on an attempt to summit Elkhorn Mountain via the Southwest Couloir. Planning to hike in and summit on our first day, we started about one hour before sunrise from the trailhead. We crossed over the Elk River at daybreak and made very good time up to the ridge.



*Vanessa crossing the river.
(Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](https://www.instagram.com/johnrvoss))*

The forecast was for sun throughout the day; however, cool temperatures and shade in the forest, as well as rain the day before made the underbrush very cold and wet. We were extremely wet and cold. Taking breaks for snacks and food quickly lowered our body temperatures and we decided to keep moving as this would be the best option for staying warm. Pushing up to the ridge in almost one straight shot brought us to the large boulder field on the ridge where we got some much-needed sunlight and a much-needed lunch break.



Vanessa and Casey on the ridge.
(Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))

After regaining our warmth and energy we pushed on to the climbers camp a little higher. Upon arriving, Vanessa took a seat and said she was not feeling the greatest and decided not to make the summit attempt. After some discussion, Casey and I decided that we would each leave Vanessa with some snacks and an extra puffy which we had packed while we would make a summit attempt.

We agreed on a 3:30 p.m. turnaround time and took off. After making the base of scree fields below the supposed route, we started climbing what we thought was the entrance to the gully. We climbed some third/fourth class rock which led into a very steep left trending gully that finished into a slabby trad route which we did not have the gear to complete. We decided we must have taken a wrong turn somewhere and backed down the gully to the base.

From here we went over one gully to the right and again started climbing. Referring to the guide book we tried looking for the chock stone but we were unable to clearly identify the feature. We climbed up the gully until we reached a point where without climbing gear, the best course of action was to safely back down and re-evaluate our situation.



Casey on some of the slab.
(Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))

At this point we had burned too much time. It was about 2:15 and we had spent hours looking for the start to a route which we had thought would be easy to find. My first previous alpine summit trip in Strathcona Park was to Elkhorn Mountain and the route I climbed was the route we were now attempting. I was very surprised and disappointed I could not remember the beta of this climb. Realizing we would not reach the summit before our turnaround time, we decided to pull the plug and head back to Vanessa. When we arrived in camp she was feeling much better.

The rest of the trip was spent enjoying some beautiful views, as well as bouldering on some large rocks along the ridge! I'm wondering if I should go back to this route next time in order to cement the beta into my mind or try something new and exciting. Only time will tell!

Participants: John Relyea-Voss, Vanessa Volkman, and Casey Matsuda.



5040 Apocalyptic Wetness

Mark Benson

September 17-19, 2021

With original plans to attempt the Nahmint Mountain traverse from 5040 Peak, my eyes were on the ever-changing fall weather forecast and the Windy weather map. With the long-range forecast originally showing a stretch of sunny clear weather, we thought we might win the weather lottery on our long-range gamble of booking the hut. Several days before we were set to leave though, I saw a huge low pressure system appear on the weather map and become firmly entrenched. That is when I looked at my wife and children, who haven't had too much experience with bad weather mountain travel/suffering, and warned them that we may need to dig into a different mindset for this trip; one where you enjoy the beauty of rain and manage gear tightly.

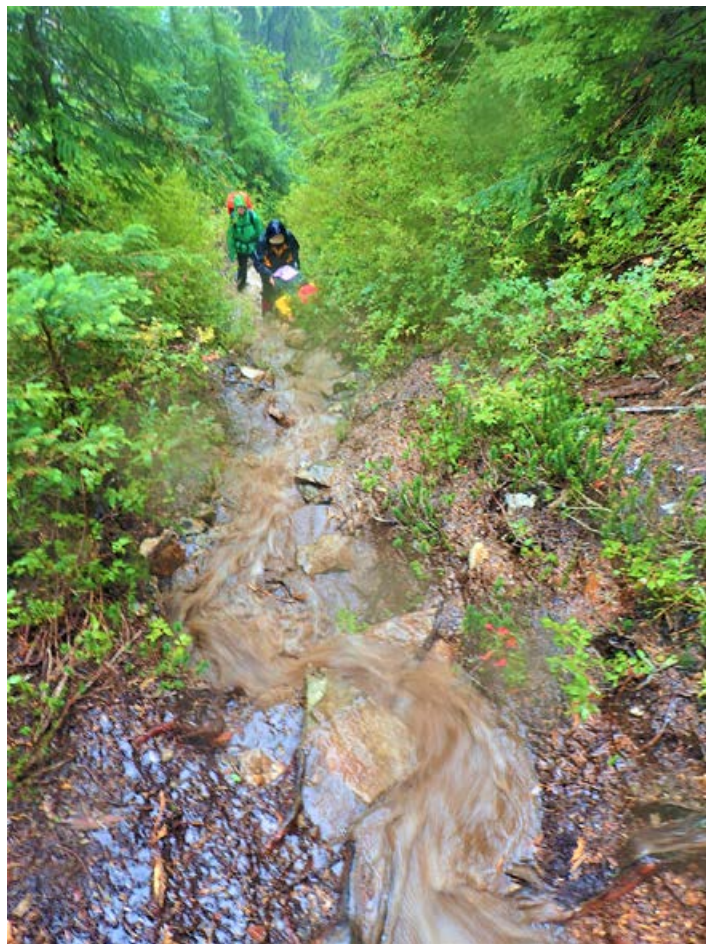
Shortly after a late evening rendezvous with Tina, Gil and Derek, just as we set out in the dark to drive up to the 5040 trailhead, the drops began to fall, and they got bigger and more of them, until it was a complete downpour. As we got to the trailhead, I winced thinking about how to manage getting my children into their tent, which we discovered during the summer camp is no longer completely waterproof, with the least amount of water carnage. I quickly ran a center tarp line between parked vehicles and set up a tarp and stuffed our two tents under it against the vehicles and then stuffed everybody and their sleeping gear in while the wind howled and rain beat down in the complete darkness.



An attempt to keep less than perfectly waterproof tents dry through a crazy downpour night. (Photo by Mark Benson)

The next morning the rain had somehow only gotten heavier. Later we were to find out that the low pressure system oppressing us was of record setting low barometric

pressure and rainfall amounts that were very unusual for that early in the fall. Regardless, we all set out bravely up the 5040 trail with overnight packs. The further we went, the wetter it got. The climbing path had turned into a rushing stream in many places and by the time we reached the sub-alpine the wind lashed our faces with stinging rain.



The trail literally formed rapids in some spots. Here are Derek, Mariko and Aleythia (7) making their way up the last bump before the hut in stream conditions. (Photo by Mark Benson)



What else was there to do but smile at how wet it was. (Photo by Mark Benson)

Through the reduced visibility, I could only be but deeply impressed by my children's perseverance. This was really ugly weather. Of course, they were not really "enjoying" it but they grimly and determinedly pushed on, boots now literally full of water from climbing through the rapids on the hiking path up and rain wear completely saturated.

We finally made it up to the hut (thank you Derek, Tina and Gil for the support with my family in these conditions!). What a welcome sight!! Add to that the warm welcome from Martin and the pellet stove emitting body and clothes drying heat and it was absolute heaven!

In spite of our high hopes that the weather may break or that we may find ourselves above the clouds and weather, this did not happen. We oohed and awed at the odd sucker hole but then groaned as a wall of rain came slamming back in minutes later.



In one of many sucker holes when we would see blue sky and the rain would stop before coming back with a vengeance, we all ran to the front deck to see the scenery below and take a picture. (Photo by Martin Hofmann)

The Nahmint traverse obviously did not happen but lots of Monopoly, reading, knot and rope practice, Derek-led-yoga, laughs, good food and camaraderie did happen,



Kids practicing knots with Derek and Mark. (Photo by Mark Benson)



The youngest member, Aleythia, managing the bank and keeping everyone honest in this high stakes game. (Photo by Mark Benson)



Everyone had a good rope management and basic knot class with Derek. (Photo by Mark Benson)

which made the trip a great experience. Martin, Derek and I also tackled some hut maintenance and repair, installing the winter sliding door and troubleshooting the track system and leaking weather stripping.

As if this was not enough, after descending, we proceeded on in our overloaded minivan to nearby Ucluelet for a few days of wet weather camping, surfing and meeting up with some close kayak guiding friends. Though gaining tons of foul weather experience and "enjoying" the trip with the satisfying camaraderie of shared hardship overcome, this



Rope management. (Photo by Mark Benson)

trip continues to be a point of constant ribbing of me by my wife and children as they make slightly cynical remarks about how the trips dad drags them on always somehow become extreme.



Enjoyed and benefited greatly from a Yoga class led by Derek while the rain poured outside. (Photo by Mark Benson)



During a break in the rain, of course as we started to descend, Cobalt Lake shined with its spectacular beauty. (Photo by Mark Benson)

Participants: Derek Sou (Leader), Tina Lynch, Gill Lynch, Mariko Benson (Sub-leader), Noah Benson, Aman Benson, Aleythia Benson, and Mark Benson

All Women Beginner-Friendly Trip to the Elk River Trail

Janelle Curtis

September 23-25, 2021

I had planned to lead a three-day hike along the Elk River Trail and up to Landslide and Foster (or Berg) Lakes over the Thanksgiving Weekend in 2020 but canceled that trip because of unusually strong winds and rain. Almost a year later, during a well-timed break in September's rainy weather, I met Jane at her home in Parksville and we carpooled from there to the Elk River Trail. Although we had a lovely conversation about our experiences with the Alpine Club of Canada and what had brought us to Vancouver Island, one of ABBA's songs kept surfacing in my mind during our conversation: "...we can go dancing, we can go walking, as long as we're together, listen to some music, maybe just talking, get to know you better..." On our way back home, I realized that those lyrics captured the essence of our adventure along the Elk River!

I described this hike as moderately strenuous with minimal elevation gain and a great way to review the basics of backcountry hiking and camping on benign terrain with a group of like-minded women; this trip would feature some long days of hiking rewarded by some great company, inspiring views, and beautiful wilderness. We would hike up to the Upper Gravel Bar camp on the Thursday and enjoy our dinner by the river. On the Friday, we would spend the day hiking to Landslide Lake, and if everyone was feeling up to it, we would then hike to Foster / Berg Lake at the base of Mount Colonel Foster. On the Saturday, we would hike back to the trailhead and debrief over some food and beverages in Cumberland. I guessed that we would be hiking 20-25 kilometres. I also explained that we would be following provincial health guidelines to reduce the risk of transmitting the coronavirus, including sleeping in our own tents.

Nineteen women expressed interest in joining, but in the end, we were a group of seven.

Through email correspondence, we reviewed how to plan a hike, which footwear, clothes, and gear would be needed for the anticipated conditions, how to prepare food and water, and how best to be ready for the unexpected. There

was a wide range of experience in our group, and we all learned much from each other during our hike about food, gear, backcountry etiquette, napping by scenic lakes, staying warm during the shoulder season, and so much more. We emailed about many questions including some about backpack size, how to treat water, whether or not to pack bear spray, which navigation equipment to bring, and the utility of a hard-shell jacket and pants given the potential for cool, wet, and windy weather. I too learned a bit about what to pack during the shoulder season. Although I am always keen to minimize the weight of my backpack, I wished that I had brought a warmer sleeping bag that weekend!

Jane has a few decades of experience with the Alpine Club of Canada but had recently moved to Vancouver Island and taken up a role on the Vancouver Island Section's Executive as one of the webmasters. We met the rest of our group at the trailhead where we introduced ourselves and signed waivers. I showed everyone where I keep maps, my compass, InReach device, and the group's emergency contact details. I also showed everyone how to use the InReach in case of an emergency. We all agreed to assess conditions and hazards along the way, stay together during our hike, and ensure everyone came back safely. I knew before we left the parking lot that I was going to enjoy hiking with these lovely and active women.



Selfie time! From left to right: Janelle, Alexis, Jane, Jessica, Stephanie, Carly, and Pauline. (Photo by Janelle Curtis)

We started our adventure just before noon by hiking switchbacks through various shades of green in second growth forest that glistened in the afternoon sunlight. Jane took the lead and I made sure that we didn't leave anyone behind. We both encouraged others to take the lead during our hike "as long as we're together." On the way to our camp, we saw chanterelles, walked past the old beaver pond, and enjoyed a short rest at the wooden sign that marks where to cross the Elk River to gain the trail to Elkhorn Mountain. We also caught some glimpses of

Elkhorn South Mountain shining in the late afternoon sun just before we arrived in camp. Having hiked the Elk River Trail many times over the years, I felt like this was a bit of a trip down memory lane.



One of a few switchbacks. (Photo by Janelle Curtis)

We knew there were two relatively big groups of teens at the Upper Gravel Bar camp on the Elk River and we worried that there wouldn't be much room for us. But there were relatively few people in camp when we arrived after five hours of hiking. After setting up our tents, we "listened to some music" as we shared our dinner just a few metres from the flowing river. There too, we enjoyed some yoga and some well-earned treats, including Pauline's green tea pocky. We also spent a fair amount of time "maybe just talking."

The next day we hiked up to Landslide Lake. It was remarkably peaceful with its mirror images of the vivid blue sky, a forest of emerald, olive, and jade, the beckoning silver of Mount Colonel Foster, and steep slabs of exposed rock where the land had slid. It only took me a few minutes



On the way to Landslide Lake. (Photo by Janelle Curtis)

to find the trail to Foster / Berg Lake, although I never did find the stick with a pair of men's underwear that apparently used to mark the trailhead.

Having never been to the glacial lake at the base of Mount Colonel Foster, I was excited to go but also understood that it was a bit of a dance party to get up there from Landslide Lake. The trail has been described as overgrown and technical. After finding the trail, I said "we can go dancing, we can go walking" now! It took us about 1.5 hours to get there on a relatively narrow but well-trodden path up and down through the trees. I have to say that this hike was definitely more challenging than a beginner-friendly hike – it was more of an intermediate-friendly hike! Fortunately, everyone was well-prepared for our ambition with light backpacks, a pair of hiking poles, and a healthy sense of humour.



Just about at the glacial lake! (Photo by Janelle Curtis)

The highlight of our trip was arriving at calm and reflective Foster / Berg Lake. In keeping with one of its names, there were small remnants of glacier and snow on the far side of the lake. It was so calm that there was hardly a ripple, except where the turquoise water flowed down to Landslide Lake. A loon silently cruised the peaceful lake while we

dozed in the sun by the shore for a few hours.



Enjoying a rest by the glacial lake before our dance party back down to Landslide Lake. (Photo by Janelle Curtis)

We started back to camp when it was our agreed turnaround time. By the time we arrived in camp, it was once again time for dinner, laughing, exchanging reviews of our backcountry meals, and sharing many more stories. There was definitely more of ABBA's "get to know you better..."

While we were there, another group of campers built a fire on the Elk River close to their tent. Their wood was so wet that they just created very smoky gray fumes that enveloped our camp on what otherwise would have been a clear evening. Some women in our group let the campers know that campfires are not permitted in Strathcona Park except "...in authorized and provided BC Parks steel fire rings." Please do not build fires in the backcountry within our parks. See <https://bcparks.ca/explore/parkpgs/strath/> for more details.

We woke up to another sunny day and decided to start hiking before it began to drizzle. After we enjoyed some warm drinks and another meal together by the river, we packed up and headed back toward the trailhead. On the



Panorama of Foster Lake (AKA "Berg Lake" – the glacial lake at the base of Mount Colonel Foster). (Photo by Janelle Curtis)

way out we passed another group of seven women hikers who were also smiling and laughing.

We spent the weekend feeling grateful for many things, including the beauty of the Elk River, a few shared treats, and each other's encouraging and pleasant company. We were fortunate that Jane kindly updated us on our progress with her navigation app and it was mostly sunny and dry during our hike, I think because I carried my guide tarp just in case it started to rain on us. Jane, Jessica, and I said our goodbyes to the rest of our group at the trailhead and then we met to enjoy some food, drinks, and more laughter at the Waverley Hotel pub in Cumberland. I'm looking forward to more adventures with all of these dynamic women.

Participants: Carly Austin, Janelle Curtis (leader), Alexis Klaasen, Stephanie Klak, Jane Maduke, Jessica Koski, and Pauline Voon

Forbidden Plateau Traverse

Catrin Brown

October 3, 2021

Rarely was an area so inappropriately named. 'Forbidden' Plateau is well known as one of the most accessible parts of Strathcona Park, both in terms of topography and infrastructure. Sitting at the eastern edge of the park like a stray piece of a jigsaw puzzle, it is a treasure trove of gorgeous sub-alpine terrain and countless hidden lakes. Perhaps less well known is that this innocent-seeming landscape was the epicentre of the 1946 Vancouver Island earthquake, which at 7.3 on the Richter scale remains the strongest land-based earthquake ever recorded in Canada. It was responsible amongst other things for rearranging the upper Elk River valley and giving us Landslide Lake as we now know it. Sometimes it's best not to dwell too much on what might be happening deep below our feet.

Our planned hike in the Plateau was to take us roughly south-east from Paradise Meadows to Forbidden Plateau Road. It's approximately a 28-kilometre trip with a cumulative elevation gain of less than 700 metres, and for many of us would be a chance to join up the more familiar two ends of the route. Only Janine had done the whole route as a continuous trip previously, and that on skis. So something new for everyone today. Probably more by luck than judgement, it turned out to be a perfectly scheduled trip. No earthquakes, no bugs - just a mellow calm

autumnal day. After the endlessly long hot and dry summer, the recent rains had brought welcome relief, stirring the undergrowth back to life, releasing the smells and vibrant colours in the meadows and forests. It was glorious, all of it.

Our happy group of eight set off from the Raven Lodge just after 9.00 a.m. We emerged at Forbidden Plateau Road exactly 9 hours later, still happy.



*It's hard to beat the early morning light.
(Photo by Catrin Brown)*

The dodgiest part of the whole trip was actually 'Paradise planks' right at the start. Sneakily coated in an invisible layer of frost, the board-walks made for a slick and skiddery passage.



Erich and Donna taking the first break at Croteau Lake very seriously. (Photo by Catrin Brown)

From Croteau Lake we had glimpses of early season snow on some of the higher peaks above the Plateau. And the colours just kept getting better and better.



Even colourfully dressed hikers can't compete with the foliage today. (Photo by Catrin Brown)

The trail was pretty easy to follow nearly the whole way, even when it was a river. CDMC (Comox District Mountaineering Club) still do sterling work in the park maintaining the trail and bridges, as they have done since the 1930s.



A river runs through it. (Photo by Catrin Brown)



The hand of CDMC is visible everywhere along the trail. (Photo by Catrin Brown)

Somewhere around Panther Lake we started to hear a loud commotion coming from the meadows, and then were treated to the sight of a sedge of cranes (yes, that's the collective noun I learned) in flight. Apparently they are migrating between nesting grounds in Alaska and wintering grounds in the southern states, and there is concern about their depleted numbers. So, we were pretty excited to have witnessed this.



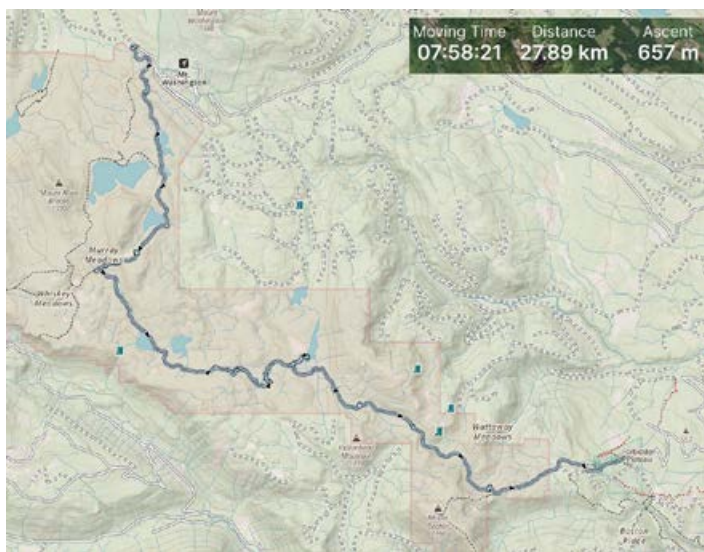
A sedge of cranes giving us a show. (Photo by Catrin Brown)

A diversion off the trail proper at McKenzie Meadows took us to McKenzie Lake for lunch. We were making good time so allowed ourselves a full hour to stretch and soak in the sun's rays. The trail continued through Slingshot Meadows

with increasing glimpses of the familiar peaks, Mount Becher, Mount Drabble and Indianhead Mountain. There is a bit of an uphill grunt as the trail passes the north-east shoulder of Mount Becher, before joining the old ski-hill trails, alder-clogged as they now are, down to the road.



Happy gang at trail's end, left to right: Tom, Davis, Donna, Andrew, Janine, Erich, Tami. (Photo by Catrin Brown)



Track of route and stats recorded on Gaia GPS on iphone. The small diversion about half way was to Mackenzie Lake for lunch.

Next time we might do it in the reverse direction - you should come.

Participants: Janine Buckley, Andrew Cripps, Davis Griggs, Tami Gwilt, Tom Moffat, Donna Dukart, Erich Schellhammer, and Catrin Brown (leader)



Newman/Foweraker Route on Mount Arrowsmith.

John Relyea-Voss

December 4-5, 2021

On Saturday December 4, the three of us met in Port Alberni one hour before the gates opened to give us access to the Climbers trail on Mount Arrowsmith. We all piled in one vehicle, but first stopped at Tim Hortons as usual and then proceeded to drive to the mountain. Good road conditions and light snow made the drive pretty easy. At the trailhead, we put on our winter boots and hoisted our heavy packs and then set off to the base of Newman/Foweraker gully where we hoped to set up our overnight camp. Climbing conditions looked awesome.



Night photo of Newman/Foreraker Route. (Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](https://twitter.com/johnrvoss))

The trip up went very smooth as there was minimal snow

but the temperature was pretty cold. We made it to our camp site near the lake to the left of the gully leading to the Newman/Foweraker route. After our camp was set up, we ran into another three parties. It was a very busy day on Mount Arrowsmith! Two parties were heading to the main snow gully, and the third (Steve Janes and Danny O'Farrel) were also aiming for the Newman/Foweraker route. They quickly geared up and made it to the base of the climb before us. Vanessa was experiencing, literally, cold feet and hands, and had footwear issues as well, so it was decided that it would be best for her to sit out the day's climbing and warm up. Casey and I went up the wide gully [Bruggers] and made our way to the base of the climb. Seeing as the other group were on the climb, we decided it was best to give them plenty of space before following. We wanted to reduce the risk of ice hitting us on pitch one. We ended up climbing the rest of the gully to the narrow col for fun, burning a couple hours before heading back down to the base of the route.

Pitch 1



First pitch of the Newman/Foweraker Route from base of climb. (Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))

The first pitch looked comparable to the conditions we turned back on during a previous trip. The main difference being there was no melting or dripping ice. The crux of the first pitch which was previously thin ice with water running behind, was now completely bare and was more of a mixed climb. Casey was confident on the mixed portion and led the first pitch to the anchor placing two ice screws and a nut on the way up. I followed him up and got ready for my turn on lead!

Pitch 2

The second pitch did not have much ice either, however, the mixed climbing element was very exciting, and I really enjoyed climbing it. I was able to protect this pitch using a few cams. Casey cruised up pretty quickly and at this point, the clock was nearing 3:30 p.m. and we knew we had to hustle.

Pitch 3

Casey quickly led the third pitch and I followed up to the tree belay at the top. As dark was fast approaching, we decided to not go to the summit but instead rap down in order to try and make it back to camp before dark. I sent Vanessa a text message letting her know we made it up safe and we were on our way down.



Kyle Bourquin on Pitch 1 of an attempt on a different day. (Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))

Heading Down

After arriving at the top of Pitch 2, we anchored ourselves and tried pulling the rope free. It was caught up! With daylight pretty much gone Casey ascended the ropes and freed up the pull line before coming back down. With the rope moving freely now, we set up the second rappel and quickly made it down the pitch. The O ring at the top of Pitch 1 made it easy to rap down the last pitch of the route and we ended up getting to the base pretty quickly. A short

down-climb brought up back to camp where Vanessa was waiting.

That night we spent enjoying the stars but suffered through what turned out to be a very cold and windy night. The minimal snow prevented us from digging a trench for our tent and we had spindrift come under our fly during the night. We woke up to find snow inside our tent! Despite down booties and double wool socks, Vanessa ended up getting first degree frostbite on one toe. A trip to the ER drained a hematoma under the nail and confirmed our suspicions. She eventually lost a toenail. Ouch! Looks like heated socks and double lined mountaineering boots are on her gear wish list now. Another very memorable trip!

Participants: John Relyea-Voss, Vanessa Volkman, and Casey Matsuda.

Mount Prevost Hike

Vivian Addison

December 12, 2021

Nine of us took a break from the busy “getting ready for holidays” schedule.

It was a cold and snowy day in the Cowichan Valley, so I was surprised that all could make the trip. I always seem to choose one of the coldest days of the year to put on a local trip! The trailhead at the Bings Creek Recycling depot was even covered in about five centimetres of slushy snow.



Hiking in the snow. (Photo by Peggy Taylor)

We made our way up the trail slowly splitting into two distinct groups, the fast group of four and the methodical

group of four with me in the middle somewhere trying to keep the two groups together and Scott sweeping at the back. If I see Scott, I know that all are ahead. He's good that way.

Partway up the first section Jim Raper showed us a new - to - me - trail across the creek and up the ridge. It was a busy trail considering the inclement weather. Lots of friendly dogs taking their people out for walks. We all enjoyed our time. It takes about one and a half hours to get to the summit with a small group and good tread, it took us a little longer and by the time we reached the second summit it was windy cold and snowy. There was no view due to low cloud cover but the company was sunny. We tucked out of the wind after the required photos and had a short lunch break.



*Calvin sheltering in the war memorial.
(Photo by Vivian Addison)*

Then made our way back down the main trail. The intrepid Mike Hubbard taking the “senior” roll up and down the mountain at the front of the pack.

Participants: Mike Hubbard, Catrin Brown, Joanna Verand, Peggy Taylor, Roger Taylor, Scott Collins, Jim Raper, and Calvin Veensma

Boston Falls

John Relyea-Voss

December 19, 2021

An early start at 4:30 a.m. from Campbell River took me to Nymph Falls where I met Lance to carpool. Isaiah met us at the trailhead and we took off at 6:00 a.m.; myself and Isaiah on touring skis and Lance on snowshoes. The temperature was cold and the sky was clear. The tracks from the previous days gave us an amazing boot/skin track all the way to the falls. Taking our time and enjoying the views, we made it to Boston Lake below Boston Falls just before 10:00 a.m. We took some pictures of the climb ahead, crossed the lake and booted our way to the ice below pitch one of the climb. The ice was looking thick and protectable. We were feeling very excited for a great day of climbing.



Boston Falls from base of climb. (Photo by John Relyea-Voss)

Pitch 1

Upon seeing the climb, Isaiah wanted to go on the sharp end of the first pitch. The longer second pitch looked a bit

more committing from the ground and as we were climbing in ski boots, the lead looked challenging. We geared up, and Isaiah climbed pitch one, topping out into snow. He made his way to the base of the second pitch where he put in some ice screws, made an anchor and belayed Lance and myself up on doubles. Isaiah used plenty of protection ranging from stubbies and screamers, to 16 cm screws. Great quality placements.



*Lance on top of first pitch of Boston Falls.
(Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#))*

Pitch 2

The second pitch had some great featured ice and was not quite vertical. It made for some great climbing and I found it easy to find high-quality screw placements. During the first 40 metres I used seven screws and had a blast making my way to the upper curtain. I assessed my remaining screws: two 16 cm and one 22 cm v thread screw. I radioed down when I found solid ice and decided to make a hanging belay to bring up the other two. I used the two 16 cm screws with a quad anchor and also sunk the 22 cm screw to anchor myself in place just beside the belay station. Lance and Isaiah were at the upper curtain ready for the crux pitch after having cleaned the gear as they went.

Pitch 3

With a full butterfly coil on my lap I recommended Isaiah lead the last 20 feet quickly and make his way to

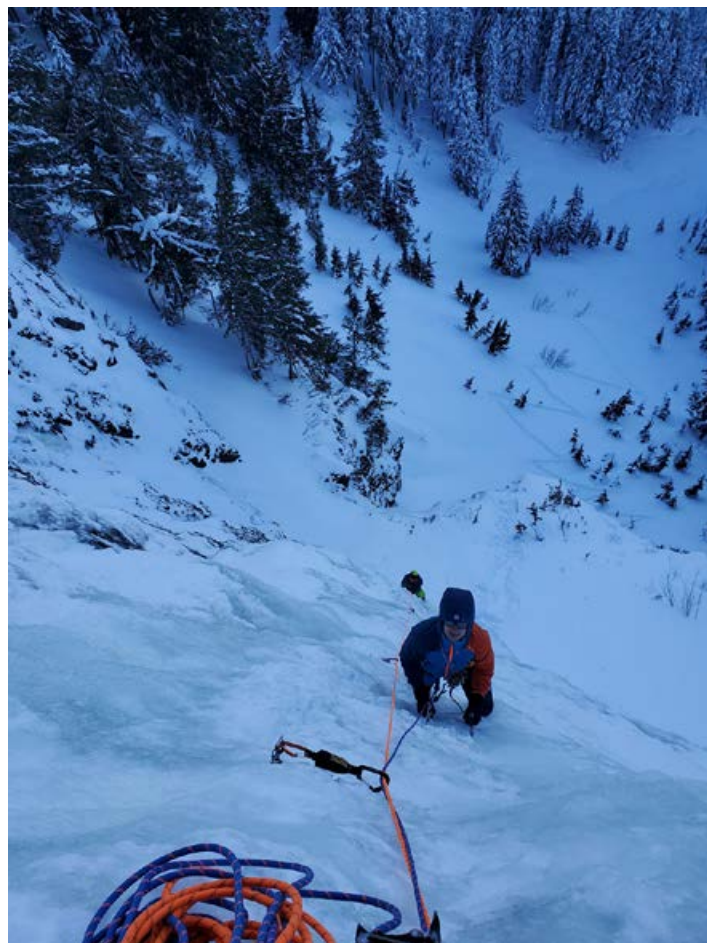


Ice on first pitch of Boston Falls. (Photo by John Relyea-Voss)

the trees up top. Isaiah took off. Reaching the base of the upper curtain, the crux, in a couple minutes, he tried unsuccessfully to place a few screws and after having a tool break off a hold on the vertical section, he decided he was uncomfortable with the lead (in ski boots) and decided to come down to the anchor. We decided to swap ends and I took the rack. Thanks to Isaiah's placements I climbed to the base of the upper curtain on top-rope and quickly made it to the crux section. With three screws of various sizes I searched out a good waist high placement in rock-hard ice and tried to set a screw. After inspecting the screws, I found ice had frozen to the inside from our previous screws and I had no way of clearing them! The next 30 - 40 minutes I kept trying various locations and screw placements unsuccessfully. We saw a second party come up from below and the lead climber recommended a traverse to the right to a sloping bulge. I took a test swing into the ice leading to that section. It was not confidence inspiring. No thanks! I spent another 10 minutes in a last-ditch attempt to get a screw into the base of the upper curtain. Luckily, I got it! I put on a screamer and then decided to take off up the vertical upper curtain. The ice was a bit chandeliered and I had to clear a good amount of ice for each tool placement; however, there were lots of good hooks. I topped out over the upper curtain and made my way along a crusty snow



John climbing the second pitch of Boston Falls. (Photo by Lance Shaver)



Lance and Isaiah climbing to the start of pitch three. (Photo by John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](https://www.instagram.com/johnrvoss))

ledge with a good soft layer of snow/ice which was great for the tools and a good mental break from the climbing below. On more easy ground, I ran out the last 10 metres, swimming through waste deep powder and plunging my tools as deep as I could. I reached the tree and belayed the others up.

The Descent

After reaching the top we saw the second party had bailed from the upper curtain. It was apparent that if they waited to follow us, they would run out of time. We reached the top just as the sun was setting and knew we'd have to rap down in the dark. We found a tree about 10 metres to the right with existing webbing and after inspection we decided not to trust the old webbing but to rap on our own gear. After rappelling 70 metres, Isaiah tried a test pull on one of the ropes but it didn't budge. Communicating with me via radio, he decided to come off the rope and tie onto the next tree that would be the anchor for the last rappel. I then pulled up a bunch of slack, tied it off to Lance and then took two 4 metre quad anchors and a biner to super extend the rappel anchor down the snow slope to reduce the pulling friction. Lance went down next and after a test pull, all was good. I followed quickly and we wasted no time getting down to our skis at the bottom. At this point it was full on night, we enjoyed some candy and our two-hour trip back down to the car.

Participants: Lance Shaver, Isaiah Jacobson, and John Relyea-Voss



Navigating a few puddles. (Photo by Jane Maduke)



From left to right: Janelle, Christine, Judy, Carol, Barb and Ian. (Photo by Jane Maduke)

Up Island Cheer

Jane Maduke

December 19, 2021

The "Up-Island Cheer" holiday hike for the ACCVI mid-island folk was intended to be a counter-point to the "Salubrious Solstice Steppers" down south. It was a great success. We met at Englishman River Falls Provincial Park and went for a wee hike up through Hammerfest where we encountered a bit of snow, a mountain biker and some puddles. We didn't specifically celebrate the solstice, but we're glad the days are getting longer.

We were seven in total. The furthest traveller was Christine Fordham from Black Creek. The nearest traveller was Carol Doering who only had to come from Errington but

managed to be late, just the same. Heroically, she caught up to the group via texts, personal knowledge of the trail system and tremendous personal fitness.



Janelle and Christine enjoy the propane firepit. (Photo by Jane Maduke)

After our hike, Janelle Curtis setup her borrowed propane “fire” and we shared (a great deal of) Christmas baking and great stories of adventures past.

Thank you to all who showed up and made our day special. Have a merry Christmas and a wonderful new year filled with backcountry adventures, summits, and spectacular weather.

Participants: Jane Maduke, Janelle Curtis, Christine Fordham, Judy Delogne, Carol Doering, Barb Baker, and Ian Beales

Griswold Summer Camp 2021 Week 1

Liz Williams

GO! NO GO!

GO! NO GO!

The summer camp committee was on edge, like three dogs being told to SIT and WAIT before getting a treat! With a bit of a scramble, it soon came together. Griswold was ON! Week 1 folk met up at the Gun Lake airstrip for a warm, dry night with few bugs, and were ready to roll by 08:30 a.m. the next day. We had hoped to drive closer to our destination but were told by locals that 2WD cars would not make it.

Blackcomb Helicopters arrived at 11 a.m. due to fire duty (they’d told us not to panic), so it was late in the afternoon by the time camp was pitched. We chose a site one kilometre south of our 2013 site: a fine, flat, grassy area with a creek and snow bank close by. The only glitch was that one person’s duffel bag failed to materialize, so she slept in the social tent with many offerings of extra clothes and padding (and remained cheerful throughout what was undoubtedly somewhat of a challenge!).

The week started off with cool, windy weather and tents were icy some mornings. The big advantage was very few bugs! Midweek we had rain overnight followed by a mixed day – rain, sun, and sleet below, and a wicked snowstorm for Ken and Tak up on Big White. But that was only one day. Thereafter we had mixed sun and cloud, no smoke all week, and enough breeze to keep the bugs away.

Many peaks were bagged, three or four a day by our ardent

MAINLAND

Griswold Summer Camp

**Liz Williams, Rick Hudson, Derek Sou,
and Geoff Bennett**

July 18 – August 15, 2021



Week 1 group. (Photo by Ken Wong)

climbers, but some controversy remains as to their correct names. One peak, 8646' was named after Diane. Apparently Tripod Peak has a tripod on top! The Bump was a favourite start to Spa Valley, named for its many tarns on the north side. The south side had lush, knee-high flowers beyond imagination, and plenty of grizzly tracks.

We often saw canine scat dropped beside a large boulder. Wolverine tracks were seen high on a glacier, and Gentians, a prize for botanists, were seen west of camp. Jeff explored our 2013 site and dug out one of the biffies to find it had become fine composted soil. The rest of the area appeared fully naturalized other than a circle of stones protecting a Moss Campion.

The group was most convivial and we enjoyed the company of two hitherto unknown Vancouverites who clearly had much experience. Top marks for long days and multiple peaks surely go to Ken and Tak who one day did 20 kilometres and an 1100 metre ascent. For sheer endurance in age, the Browns and Rudy aced it with many peaks bagged. As for the cooking, it hardly needs to be said what wonderful meals everyone produced. But we appeared to set a very odd trend for future weeks - that of boots falling apart - resulting in the use of vast quantities of duct tape and shoe-goo plus some ingenuity with hot copper wire!

Overall, Griswold Pass never ceases to enthrall. It provides a vast open landscape with adventures in every direction. *Splendor Sine Occasu* indeed.

Participants: Jeff Beddoes and Cal Veenstra (camp managers), Erna Burda and Wayne Saunders (from Vancouver), Ken Wong, Tak Ogasawara, Diane Bernard, Scott Collins, Graham Maddocks, Rudy Brugger, Jim Raper, Ian and Margaret Brown, and Liz Williams.

Griswold Summer Camp 2021 Week 2

Rick Hudson

This was altogether a very different summer camp from some of the others I've been on. This year we returned to the undulating meadows and gentle glaciers of the Griswold Pass area, located northwest of Bridge River, in the South Chilcotin Mountains. Partly it was the weather – the first day and a half were overcast, but then the clouds cleared and we were treated to blue bird days, one after another, and not a hint of smoke in the air, despite over 200 fires burning in the province, some just to the east.

There was a momentary scare on Thursday when, pre-dawn, there was a sudden smell of smoke in the dark. As the light increased, the surrounding ranges were hazy, and there was the awful fear that it was going to be the 2017 Lone Goat camp all over again (we'd had to evacuate

early that year in dense smoke). But by noon the wind had shifted, the horizons had cleared and we were back to crisp alpine air. Lucky us.

A big difference this year was the happy chance that 11 of the 14 attendees were women. (Our 15th – also a woman – had had to cancel at the last moment due to a medical issue.) The ladies seemed to make friends more quickly, build consensus, and generally cooperate in a way that I've seldom experienced before. It was a pleasure, and manifest itself in many ways. On an uphill grind, a group of men would have been as silent as hunters stalking prey, but this camp week was very different – behind me was a cheerful chatter more typical of Saturday morning at the local coffee shop, than a steep hike!

This lightness came out in many forms – within a day the group had divided into an active group (the Energizers) and the rest. The former were impressive in their ability to climb everything in the valley, leaving early, keeping in touch over the FRS radios, and arriving back in camp (mostly) just before appetizers were served at 5:30 p.m. They covered a lot of ground, and the rest of us basked in their reflected glory. The latter, mind you, were no slouches, but where the Energizers would knock off two or even three summits in a day, the rest were content to tackle one, and then spend time exploring the flora and fauna, or swimming in the many tarns scattered about the valley.

We were blessed with an impressive collection of biologists, many experts in their fields. Subjects included botany (75 flowering species were identified), mammals (apart from the grizzly there were marmots, pikas, chipmunks, plus goat, sheep and moose tracks). We had a herpetologist who waxed eloquent on frogs, toads, salamanders and their ilk, and several bird experts who identified the rare and common with ease.

Another difference was the laughter. I'm not saying we haven't laughed on previous camps, but this year was a riot – there seemed to be side-splitting howls of mirth at any and all times. It really raised the enjoyment for everyone. And there was the evening meal – always a treat to have six evenings of creative cuisine, working around the participants' food fads. Dinners were varied and delicious, and it was clear that everyone really enjoyed both serving and being served. And afterwards, there was music and poetry.

We were not alone in the valley. On the day of our arrival a party of five was seen near camp, but by the time we had pitched tents, they had left. Then on Friday a curious event occurred – first one and then three strangers arrived in camp. They had hiked up from the Bridge River FSR to the south and may (or may not) have been from the BCMC.

Understandably they were disappointed to find our camp, but that can't excuse the aggressive attitude of one of them,



Week 2 group on top of Big White. (Photo by Rick Hudson)

whose first words were that we were ruining the area, and what did we plan to do about repairing the damaged environment? Happily, we had days earlier visited the old 2013 site, where absolutely no trace of any form of environmental damage was visible – the whole area looked pristine. On being told this, the accuser appeared mollified, but it left an unpleasant feeling among those who met them.

Despite that storm in a teacup, it was one of the best summer camps, with the best weather, in one of the best locales. All of Week 2 offers a “big thank you” to the Summer Camp Committee for their hard work. Novices and old hands alike greatly appreciated the amount of preparation that goes into making this annual event happen – thank you!

Participants: June Curtis, Laura Darling, Judy DeLongne, Carol Doering, Purnima Gurvindarajulu, Phee Hudson, Rick Hudson, Fern Kornelsen, Sylvia Moser, Suzanne Morphet, Bob Sedlock, Shevaun Sedlock, K.T.Shum, and

Erica Wheeler.

Griswold Summer Camp 2021 Week 3

Derek Sou

Family Week is a week of the ACCVI summer camp that is reserved for inter-generational family members, parents with kids but also grandchildren with grandparents. This year, I had the pleasure of bringing my nephew Jonah as well as my own kids. Family Week began in earnest for me when I got a call from Rick Hudson, two days before I was due to drive to the Gun Lake airstrip with a convoy out of Pemberton. Rick informed me that there was smoke at camp and that I would have to decide whether to cancel Family Week the following day. I quickly contacted my group to see what they thought and everyone responded that they would like to go for it. I pored over the smoke forecast and had more calls with Rick the following day. We decided to proceed and were immensely happy that we did as there was no sign of smoke for our entire week.

After a delay due to a flat on the Hurley, we all made it to Gun Lake. I was fortunate that my wife's family has a cabin on the lake and my family got to stay with them. The next morning the helicopter arrived right on time and took us up to the camp. I had planned a mellow first day, but the early start gave us lots of time for our first summit in the area. The next day the entire group of 14 made it up Big White after a glacier travel workshop. A highlight was reading the summit register with a log entry from 1913.

We had fabulous weather on August 3rd, the next day. A small group led by Iain and myself went up a multi-pitch route that Rick had climbed when the summer camp was last at Griswold. We found a walk-off route down the back side and spotted an interesting glacial feature that would provide our week with some ice climbing. Meanwhile back at camp Colin and Natasha provided a workshop day on the glacier. The highlight was building a t-slot anchor with an Oh Henry bar that took most of the group pulling on to break.

On another great day some of the group rested at camp, playing football in the caribbean-blue lake while the rest decided to try an aesthetic route on Lepton Peak. Our goal was to go up the glacier and then get on the skyline ridge between Big White and Lepton and summit it on the ridge. As with most goals in the mountains, we had to modify

ours: the transition from the glacier to the ridge wasn't straightforward and the "back" side of Lepton was severely eroded. We decided to circumnavigate the mountain and ascend via the ridge closer to camp. on the summit, I can still clearly recall one of the kids asking me why we went around when we could have easily made the summit from camp. I am sure that my reply trying to explain why aesthetic lines are sought was lost on him.

Our nightly debrief/planning session was highly charged with the anticipation of ice climbing the next day. We packed the few ice tools we had and set out with as many as we could to the glacial feature we had spotted two days before. We passed some excellent rock climbing that we made a mental note of for another day. The feature looked like one glacier undercut another and provided some rappelling practice and ascents before the weather changed to much worse than was forecast. We made it up to the back of Lepton before the storm really started moving across the

glacier toward us.

The next day was a camp day due to rain. We did knot workshops, ate much of the excess food we had, and went on shorter walks close to camp. The following day was not as wet, but not suitable for a bigger day or rock climbing, so we explored the area close to camp more: the streams, rivers, and wildflowers. One ambitious soul even went swimming in a pool in one of the rivers.

Family Week was a roaring success thanks to so many: Iain Sou for being the assistant manager and helping me with so much; Colin and Natasha, for all your help in leading the group; all the participants for all the Stoke and making the camp so fun; the summer camp committee for all the registration, organization, planning, and camp set-up.

Participants: Derek, Iain, and Evelyn Sou, Jonah Morrow, Natasha Salway, Colin and Gabe Mann, Tina Lynch and Gill Parcher, Joe and Karsten Anderssen, Mark, Noah, and Aman Benson.



Griswold Summer Camp Week 4

Geoff Bennett

The weather for the helicopter shuttle was cloudy, cold and windy with a bit of drizzle, but for the rest of the week we enjoyed perfect blue skies and no smoke. Derek's crew from Week 3 left the camp in perfect condition. The long drives and short flights went off without a hitch. Best of all, there were no injuries or incidents.

Almost all of the mountains in the nearby area had been climbed in the previous three weeks, so the logbook contained plenty of information on routes. The 2013 logbook was handy too. Mike climbed every day and led parties up Big White, Green Dome and Lone Goat. Alison and Max also climbed every day and added Lepton and Griswold Peak South to the week's list. I led five climbs including Big White (11 climbers including some who had never set foot on a glacier before) and Griswold Peak North (via the interesting glacier and snowfield on the north and east slopes). We all enjoyed hiking through the flower meadows and swimming in the many tarns.

Friday the 13th was an inauspicious day to set out for a long climb. My right boot had blown out two days earlier and was now held together with glue and duct tape. Nevertheless, Mike, Rommel, Miguel and

The stoke is major for ice climbing. From left to right: Jonah Morrow, Gill Parcher, Iain Sou, Evelyn Sou, Karsten Anderssen, Joseph Anderssen, Gabe Mann, and Colin Mann. (Photo by Derek Sou)



Week 4 group with Geoff in 50th anniversary suit (photo by Miguel Rodriguez)

I set off northwards to climb distant Muon Peak. Within an hour, my boot needed more duct tape. Upon arriving at the edge of the glacier, Mike realized that he had left his crampons behind. So we roped up as a party of four to protect him in case of a slip. After an uneventful hour on the glacier, we climbed onto the west ridge of Muon. The boot needed more duct tape. The airy ridge was spectacular, long but easy. On the way back down, both boots blew out, irretrievably. Mike's extra duct tape got them back to the glacier but the crampons didn't fit well. "Shoeless" Geoff belayed "Spikeless" Mike over a steep bit with a couple of crevasses, then we plodded back down through ice and moraine to the tarns and beautiful meadows. As we hiked past a large group of BCMC backpackers, I bumped into an old friend from our time in Jakarta who I hadn't seen since a GMC 24 years earlier: an amazing coincidence and a fitting end to Friday the 13th.

Another amazing coincidence, at least for Max and me, was that we had both gone to high school in Ottawa, attended Royal Military College as reservists and then obtained degrees in geophysics from UBC. We had never met until camp.

Griswold Pass is an unlikely spot for romance. However, several campers celebrated wedding anniversaries in Week 4: Rommel (12 years), Alison and Max (42 years) and me (50 years). I was given special permission by Wendy to attend camp since I had already missed about half of our anniversaries during the August mountaineering season. I shared a special fruit cake prepared by a friend at the Dutch Bakery in Victoria. Eight years earlier, at the same camp, Phee and Rick Hudson renewed their wedding vows in a 40th anniversary ceremony conducted by "Parson" Albert Hestler. Albert attended camp again this year, still hiking every day at age 88. On the last night, he quoted his favourite bit of scripture, "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help."

Participants: Rommel Agbay, Geoff Bennett, Barb Brooks, Colleen Craig (absent from photo), Alison Hart, Albert Hestler, Mike Hubbard (camp manager), Bryan Kingfield, Brett MacDonald, Max Maxwell, Roger Painter, Shaun Peck (assistant manager), Miguel Rodriguez, Garth Stewart, and Leona Winstone

Epilogue

On behalf of all 57 participants, I would like to thank Liz Williams, Jeff Beddoes and Laura Darling (the organizers), Jeff Beddoes, Cal Veenstra, Rick and Phee Hudson, Derek and Iain Sou, Mike Hubbard and Shawn Peck (the camp managers), Jeff Beddoes and Garth Stewart (trailer hauling) and Tom Hall (equipment storage).

At least a dozen peaks were climbed by various parties during the four weeks. Some nearby summits were climbed almost every day. However, there was considerable confusion in the logbook over names, let alone the usual "east-west" reversal. It would be useful in the future if the Week 1 group could produce a map in paper and digital format with agreed-upon names. We also noticed that BCMC hikers, of which there were many in the area, used a completely different set of names for the local peaks.

A recurring camp theme was "lost soles." This seems to be a problem with most modern boots, especially Asolo. The midsole disintegrates after about seven years of regular use. The cause is hydrolysis but it can be aggravated by high temperatures. At Griswold, a ground temperature of 47C was measured on one occasion. The warning signs are not obvious. Boots should be inspected before camp and discarded if cracks appear or if the outer sole begins to separate from the boot. In an emergency, duct tape and glue can be used to get back to camp but this stopgap measure only works for about an hour or two. Both Ian Brown and Rick Hudson successfully repaired their boots in camp by sewing the soles with hot copper wire. Quite a trick!

The final helicopter load was a mere hundred pounds below the limit – good planning but a bit close. An extra load might have cost an additional hour of helicopter time. It may be worthwhile to re-examine the gear inventory, particularly its total weight. For example, the third bug tent was never used. There may be other superfluous or excessively heavy items.

Griswold Pass ACCVI Summer Camp Family Memories

Mark Benson

August 1-8, 2021

My two sons, Noah (11) and Aman (9), and I were privileged to be able to participate in the ACCVI summer camp in Griswold Pass this last summer. It was a life-long memory-forming experience for us all. This was our first ACCVI summer camp and we certainly hope it is the beginning of many more!

While my sons are no strangers to off the beaten track adventures that they inevitably end up on, being my children, this was the first time for any of us to be on a glacier. I did a fair bit of mountaineering in Hokkaido (Japan) as a university student and grad student, but Japan has no glaciers, so this was not only a fun but very informative and important introduction to glacier travel and the specific rope work it involves to facilitate future adventures. Some of my best and most formative experiences were in the mountains of Hokkaido with my climbing friends and I dearly want my children to be able to taste of similar experiences.



My two sons, though their first time on a glacier, looked pretty at ease and ready to go after a great instructional session lead by Derek, Iain, Colin and Natasha. What a great experience! (Photo by Mark Benson)



The day after arriving our group made our way up to "Big White" via the glacier. Apparently one of the previous camp members had named the un-named peak thus and it was very appropriate from this perspective. (Photo by Mark Benson)

The week spent at camp is so packed with memories; our drive there via Lillooet and finding a great streamside camp spot and savoring swims in the cool creeks as we traveled through the unusually hot interior; the challenge of finding the obscure Gun Lake Airport with Noah navigating for his first time from a back-roads atlas as I chased down dusty roads in our '98 Sienna 2WD van; the exciting chopper ride in, from which we savored our first glimpses of the Griswold Valley and saw a grizzly; the warm welcome at base camp from the previous campers; searching for and discovering the "just right" spot with my boys to put up our tents amongst our curious and adorable VI Marmot neighbors; listening to the beautiful gurgling and delicious

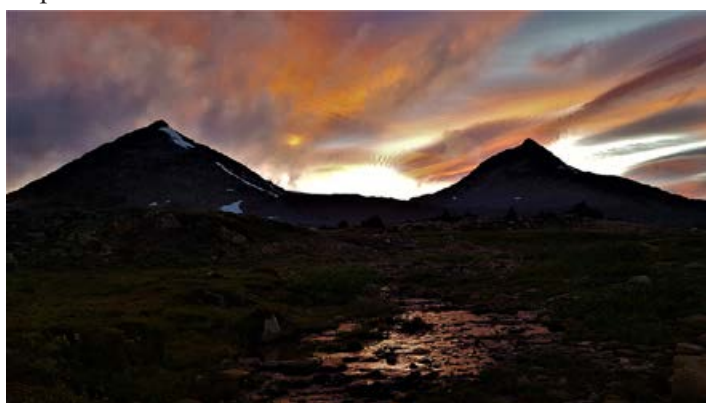
creek that flowed through the meadow not far from our tent site as we went to sleep every night; the incredible front door scenery from our tents every morning of wildflowers in bloom with glacier adorned peaks all around



This is just one glimpse of the many gorgeous mountain meadows with alpine flowers in full bloom and dramatic mountain vista backdrops of our week spent at the Griswold Camp. (Photo by Mark Benson)

us;

stupendous sunrises and sunsets with multi-coloured



While we had many spectacular sunrises and sunsets during our week in Griswold Pass, this was a particularly beautiful sunset after a day of inclement weather. We were all waiting to see if the front would let up enough for a second day of ice-climbing on the glacial face the next day and had our hopes temporarily boosted with this brief clearing at sunset. (Photo by Mark Benson)

clouds, uncountable stars when waking up in the middle of the night; camaraderie with the other members of the camp, the kids gathered together practicing knots, playing football catch while swimming in the glacial lake and card games late into the evening; jumping crystal clear creeks as we explored the expansive meadows and deltas on rain days; the glorious scenery from the many summits and seeing the rush of satisfaction in my sons' tired eyes as they summited; and feeling the accompanying parental pride as well as the deep bonding with them that occurs from having such adventures together... truly formative memories that will last a lifetime!

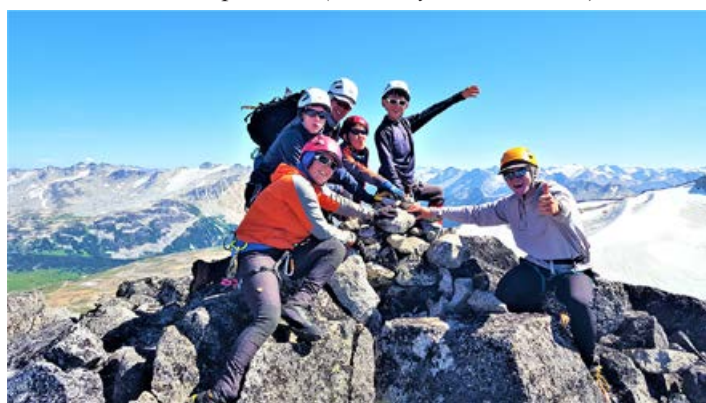
A huge thank you to the ACCVI for the scholarship funding



In a crazy juxtaposition of sceneries, this is one of my favourite memories; seeing all the younger folk enthusiastically playing football 500 in a frigid glacial fed lake, that looks strangely tropical if not for the snow-capped mountains in the background, for close to an hour. Cheers to Gabe for bringing the small-scale football that filled those boring moments for the younger members during their week in the mountains. (Photo by Mark Benson)



On one of several inclement weather days at the end of our week, Joe, my sons and I did an exploration of the valley leading up towards Griswold Peak and enjoyed the chipmunks and exquisite moving water scenes. I love peak bagging but I also dearly love exploring alpine meadows and all their splendor. (Photo by Mark Benson)



Summit of Mount Lepton which we climbed by a very indirect route, circumnavigating the entire mountain after the skyline ridge off the main glacier proved to be too precariously loaded with boulders for safe ascent. The joy you see in everyone's reactions was hard-earned with a scorching day on two different glaciers and lots of boulder-hopping and scrambling. (Photo by Mark Benson)



With hot, tired feet and sore shoulders after a hot day on the glacier and endless moraine moon-scape boulder hopping, the silty, frigid waters of our favourite glacial lake never seemed so inviting! (Photo by Natasha Salway)

that helped make such an awesome adventure accessible to us as a family with a moderate income. This really is a special program that deserves preservation. Once my youngest daughter is old enough, our whole family looks forward to attending this camp! Kudos to all involved in the hard work of organizing this camp so well and to our camp leaders Derek and Iain Sou for the excellent job they did keeping us safe but opening the door to so many opportunities!



Colin Mann giving an instructional on seated belays. (Photo by Mark Benson)



On our last day up in the valley, with inclement weather prohibiting any larger objectives, Tina, Gill, my boys and I did an exploration of the river delta in the valley below our camp. The wild flowers with the rushing, silty stream were so movingly beautiful! (Photo by Mark Benson)



Colin Mann had a buddy who claimed he had rapped off a Mars bar in a pinch using a T-slot anchor. We didn't have a Mars bar, so we used a less consolidated Oh Henry to recreate and test the method. To be noted, we had ideal sticky snow conditions and ample time to construct a perfect anchor slot and it took five people leaning with all their weight to finally break the Oh Henry bar!! While not a recommended practice by any guiding standard on the planet, it does show the power of surface area and resourceful thinking. (Photos by Mark Benson)



This was the easy scramble up the backside of Mount Lepton after a long day of route searching after the obvious skyline ridge above the glacier proved to be too unstable for safe ascent. A long trek to get here but the easy and solid scramble was sublime as we worked towards the blue-skyline summit backside ridge. My two young sons, who part way through this very long day looked pretty exhausted, suddenly found renewed strength when we reached the apex of the ridge and could see the summit and then led the way, dragging the rest of the group with them to the hard-earned summit.

(Photo by Mark Benson)

Participants: Derek Sou, Iain Sou, Evelyn Sou, Natasha Salway, Colin Mann, Gabe Mann, Tina Lynch, Gill Parcher, Joe and Karstan Anderssen, Jonah Morrow, Mark Benson, Noah Benson, and Aman Benson.

The Deserted Trails of Robson Provincial Park:

What do a Backdoor, a Helmet and a Waffl Have in Common?

Jim Everard

July 27 - August 2, 2021

In early July 2021, Mother Nature scoured and rinsed Robson Provincial Park. A deluge of rain, meltwater and boulders reshaped the landscape. Pedestrian bridges were washed out or rendered impassible. The Robson River cut new channels through the forest below Emperor Falls. The Park was closed to the public above Kinney Lake for the rest of the year.

Blair Piggot and I had planned to tackle The Helmet that summer but dismissed the idea given the closure. That was until I chatted with Sigurd, the Park Warden, who indicated that the "backdoor route" into the Robson Cirque remained open. This "backdoor" is the Patterson Spur and is accessed via the southwest amphitheater of Mount Resplendent. A trail scratches its way from the south of Kinney Lake up and across slopes and into the valley south of the



The much-trafficked Berg Lake Trail was closed from July on, for good reason. While most bridges were washed away, this one at the base of Emperor Falls was badly damaged and unsafe (with a few tons of rock filling the walkway).

(Photo by Jim Everard)

Forester Hut (see map at end). The spur proper provides an "engaging" ascent (4th class, feeling 5.0 in places) up to the 9,600 feet / 2,925 metres Resplendent-Robson Col. A left turn at the col leads to a ridge, The Dome and Robson's Kain Face. A right turn leads to Resplendent's 30 feet / 9 metres overhanging summit cornice. Straight ahead and down leads into the Robson cirque and its hungry crevasses and wobbly seracs. The whole area feels like a trip back in time. Quiet forests, thunderous waterfalls, engaging critters and solitude. The price of admission to the col also requires a net uphill of 7,875 feet / 2,400 metres.

Blair and I made quick work of the wide trail for the first 4 kilometres to Kinney Lake. After crossing the Park's only functional bridge, we followed a few switchbacks then, just before the bike lock-up area, plunged into the forest on an unmarked trail. It's a solid grind of about 2-3 hours (depending on pack weight, age and conditioning) before the trail comes to the floor of an upper valley. Far up on our left, we caught inspiring glimpses of Robson's heavily crevassed south face above the Swartz Ledges. Steeper bushwhacking began at the head of this valley.

Sadly, all good things must eventually come to an end (ha!). Eventually, the vegetation thins (much like writer's patience) and the wandering route skirts a buttress streaked with foaming glacial melt. Above that, at 2,100 metres, are unlimited bivi sites on flat bare rock. The next day was "full on". Getting up the Spur was straight forward. There were a few places of consequence where full mountaineering packs transformed the experience into "Type 2" fun. On the other hand, I reminded myself that i) we were not in wet or snowy conditions (which would have made this an ill-advised effort), ii) the forecasted smoke had not yet arrived, and iii) flasks of "liquid incentive" were on the horizon. We were also never truly alone, as a few locals were on hand to observe our ascent; one un-clovened foot after another.

We got to the col by noon. To our left, the Kain Face appeared disfigured from heat dome events. One glance at the contorted mousetrap left us shaking our heads. The



Blair hones his bushwacking skills while sporting a full mountaineering pack. (Photo by Jim Everard)



(Photo by Jim Everard)

cirque below us (our intended route) was concerning. There was no clear way down, yet once deep into the cirque, any re-ascent might not be possible, given our energy levels. With considerable self-doubt we roped up and headed down. For the first twenty minutes the going seemed

straight-forward requiring only occasional probing. But the angles steepened and the challenges mounted. Increased vigilance and a willingness to wander about to suss out alternative tracks became de rigeur.



There was nothing redeeming about wriggling through the seracs, other than inaudible muttered pleading to higher powers. (Photo by Jim Everard)

I began to wish we had another party with us to increase the margin of safety. But on we plunged. Respite was gained from a lunch break and the brainwashing mantra of "this will work out." Eventually our crampons got to better surfaces, and we could see a way out. We began to enjoy our position and surroundings.



With one axe each, concentration levels in this section were elevated. (Photo by Jim Everard)

We dragged ourselves into the Rearguard Meadows before sunset and established camp. The afternoon angst was unpacked and jettisoned. It was the beginning of three days of rest and ascents. A full day was spent just casting about the spectacular surroundings. Our tent was anchored to a 140-million-year-old stromatolite bioherm, in a sea of stromatolites. In the geological Lynx epoch these organic mounds existed in a shallow saltwater ocean. The formations were algal mats formed when the tide ebbed and flowed supplying the cyno-bacteria with nutrients. It was



The magical world of stromatolite mounds. Our tent is inside the yellow circle. (Photo by Jim Everard)

like a continuous supply of Airbnb guests who left behind just enough material for subsequent guests to build upward.

Stromatolites are the world's oldest visible sign of life. They appeared approximately 3.4 billion years ago and they still grow in a few locations on our planet, a testament to notion that "simplicity can be most enduring." (A Ben Gadd comment to me in a subsequent conversation. A more fulsome discussion of stromatolites can be found in the ACC's *Gazette*, Spring 2021, Fossil Forest, on pages 28-31)

Day four started at 4 a.m. The air smelled of ash; forest fire smoke had flooded north overnight. We kept with tradition and delayed any go/no go decision until sunrise. We headed towards the Robson Glacier and, as planned, ascended the slopes of Mount Waffl. The sun never appeared. Our aim was to summit and traverse Mount Waffle and then scope out the 5.5 rock route on the north ridge of The Helmet. It was 8 a.m. when we pulled out the rope on Waffl, and still the sun was nowhere in sight. Breathing became more laboured, but not because of elevation; the air was increasingly a toxic soup. The ascent and traverse continued at a slower pace, with Waffl's summit reached by 10:30 a.m. A quick nosh (now smoked cheddar) preceded our continued traverse and, eventually, an obscured view of The Helmet.

We reviewed our speed of progress (or specifically, its absence), assessed the nature of the darkness (precipitation or smoke?) and listened to our lungs. A mental tug-of-war began and a review of options led us to decide we would



From the summit of Mount Waffl, The Helmet was cloaked in smoke and uncertainty. (Photo by Jim Everard)

have to be satisfied with the gift of a Waffl, but no Helmet. We retraced our steps back to camp and the resident marmots and ptarmigans. By day six our food supplies were looking distinctly skimpy. Worse, my box of Vader

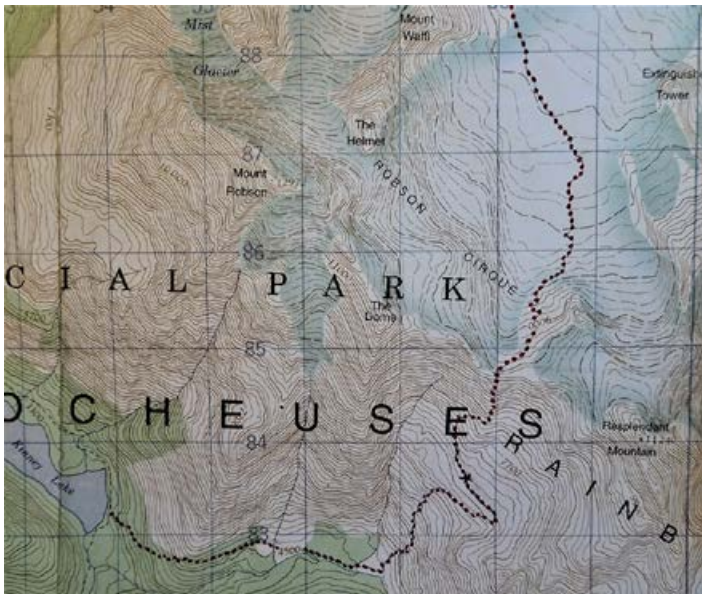


(Photo by Blair Piggot)

Crunch was empty. We began to eye the marmots and ptarmigans with greater interest.

Under indifferent skies we packed up and headed back into the Robson Cirque. It was good to be able to see the route we came in on. The only question was whether a future rematch might follow the "new" Berg Lake trail or the "old" Patterson Spur.

Participants: Jim Everard and Blair Piggot

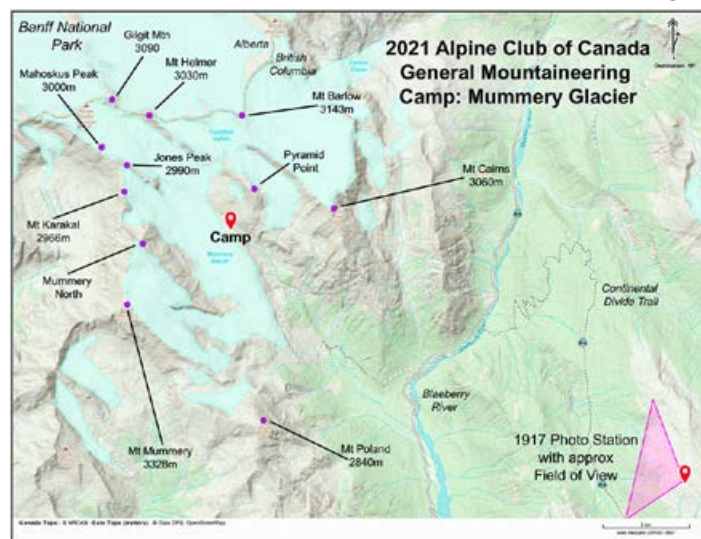


Approximate track. Not for detailed navigation.

A week at the 2021 Mummery Glacier General Mountaineering Camp: Peaks and Plants Galore

Mary Sanseverino
August 7-14, 2021

As I get older I often feel whatever meager mountaineering skills I ever possessed – or thought I possessed – are all too quickly disappearing in the rear view mirror. But, damn it, I still love to be up high in the mountains on a bluebird day. So off I went to the ACC's 2021 General Mountaineering



[Map of Mummery Glacier 2021 GMC](#). Scale 1:50,000.

Data layers: ©NRCAN; Gaia Topo (meters): ©Gaia GPS; OpenstreetMap. Generated by Mary Sanseverino, Jan 31, 2022. Using: Gaia GPS, Trailbehind Inc.; Adobe Photoshop 23.1.1.

Camp above the Mummery Glacier in BC's stunning Rocky Mountains. It wasn't my first GMC – I've been to three others – but always to work with university students. This was my first time as a full-on guest with nothing to do but put a bit of rock, ice, and snow under my boots and please myself.

I will admit to some trepidation. I had a hip replacement in 2019 and found it took me longer than I expected to get back into some semblance of "mountaineering" form. I was worried I might be a liability for any team that had me on it. I'm pleased to report I wasn't looked upon as the weakest link. I guess some of the old tricks of the glacier-travel-trade stood me in good stead! Indeed, the leadership at this camp was so outstanding I don't believe anyone ever felt like a liability.



[Mary at "snow school" on the Mummery Glacier](#).
(Photo by Mary Sanseverino)

That said, I wasn't out every day bagging big peaks because I also wanted to do a little "citizen science" exploring some of the biotic communities in this remote area. We mountaineers often find ourselves moving through landscapes that most people can only dream of. We get to see rare and endangered species in their natural habitats; to observe abundance, diversity, and change in unique places that are little-travelled. I find it personally very satisfying to spend a bit of my mountain time looking closely at the plants and animals that frequent these remote areas.

Today, through the use of applications like iNaturalist (www.inaturalist.org), we can use GPS-enabled smartphones to quickly and easily capture observations and submit them to a scientifically curated global database of the natural world. If you can point a camera you can help extend scientific knowledge of the world at your feet. I took the opportunity to do just that while at the Mummery Glacier GMC.

Before showing some of the more interesting iNaturalist finds let me take a moment to set the scene. Located

about 45 kilometres almost due north of Golden BC, the 2021 GMC base camp (approx. 2200 m) was situated on a small plateau at the top of Mummery Creek. The camp was about 150 metres away from the mighty Mummery Glacier behind a tall lateral moraine. The glacier was very active. Ice fall from far across the valley boomed out most evenings and in the deep still of the night you could hear the ice creak and groan as it moved inexorably downslope.

As many will recall, the summer of 2021 in BC was full of heat, smoke, and fire, so I didn't hold out much hope for good views from any of our GMC climbs. In fact, given the grim conditions on the morning we flew in I was worried that some days might be too smoky to do anything but hang out in camp. Never have I been happier to be wrong. We did get a spot or two of rain, but more importantly the wind changed direction early on and cleared the smoke from our skies. We had bluebird conditions for a good part of the week! The day we moved out was the day the smoke moved back in.

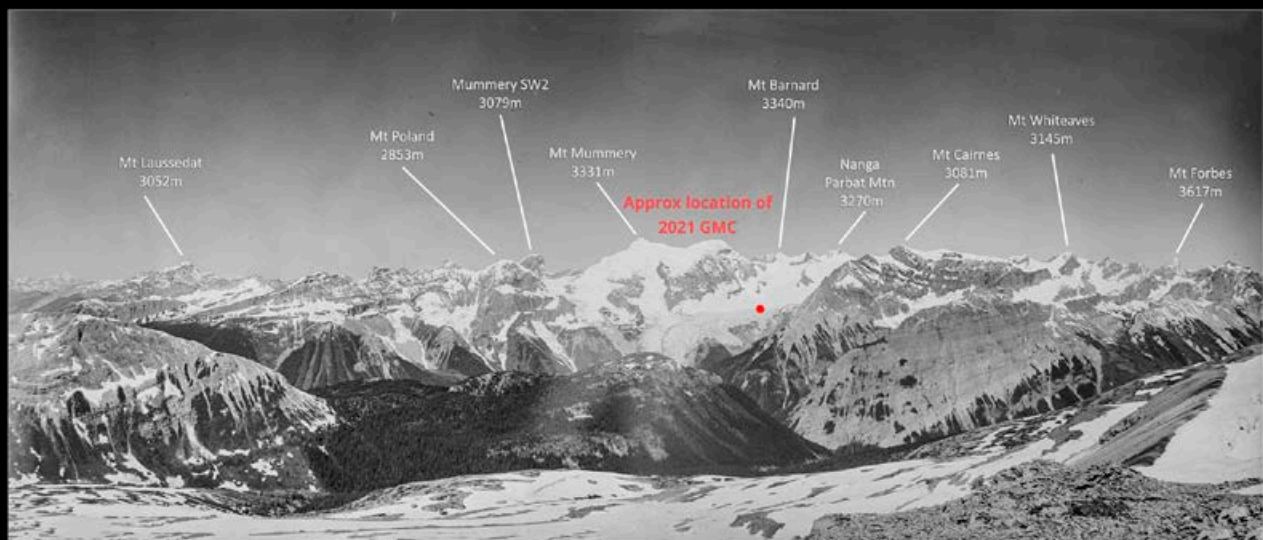
As with most mountains in the Canadian cordillera I'm always interested in seeing historic images of the area before I visit. For some years now this has been part of my repeat photography research with the Mountain Legacy Project (mountainlegacy.ca) at UVic. I love looking at these extraordinary images, thinking about how they were made and what mountain travel must have been like before the advent of good roads, maintained trails, and helicopters.

Arthur Wheeler, co-founder of the Alpine Club of Canada, was a surveyor and topographic map maker. He and his team were in this area in 1917 and 18 taking black and white glass plate photos of these mountains. The images would be used to produce topographic maps of the area. The image featured here was taken in 1917 from above Amiskwi Pass. It looks over the Blaeberry River toward the Mummery group, the Mummery Glacier, and peaks along the BC/Alberta border. The station where the panorama was taken, as well as its approximate field of view, is on the map.

Unfortunately, Mountain Legacy doesn't have a repeat of this photo yet. But, on our flight in to camp we could easily see how much loss of ice and snow this area has undergone. Back in Wheeler's day glaciers and icefields like this made for easier access to remote peaks. Today climate change and glacial recession has made this type of access quite a bit more difficult.

Over the course of a week, what with "snow school" on the first day and a special glacier walk given later in the week by one of our guides, I covered pretty much the entire of the Mummery Glacier from toe to upper accumulation zone. I did Mount Barlow with a big team early in the week, and went out with three other ladies and a guide to climb Mahoskus Peak toward the end of the trip. The views from here were particularly grand.

Above Amiskwi Pass looking NW across the Blaeberry River Valley, 1917



Panorama based on photos from the Inter-Provincial Boundary Survey,

A.O. Wheeler, Dominion Land Surveyor (DLS), British Columbia Land Surveyor (BCLS)

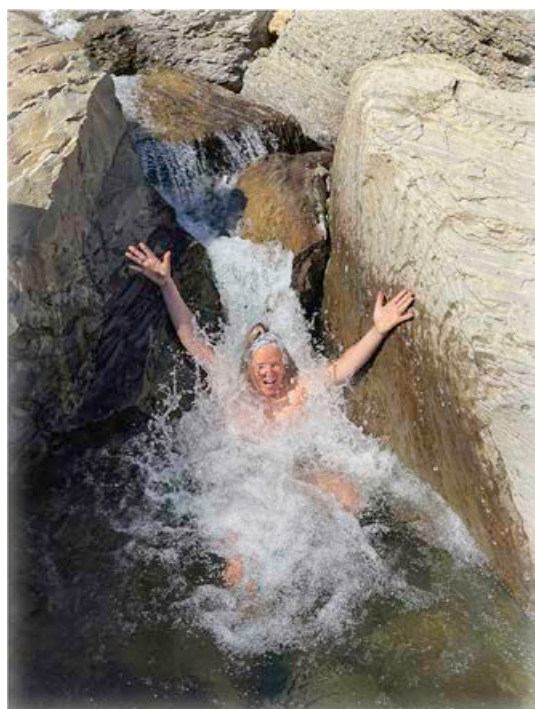


[Looking at the Mummery Group from Amiskwi Pass: A.O. Wheeler, 1917.](#) Our 2021 GMC location would be under a lot of ice if we held it back then! Photo courtesy of Library and Archives Canada / Bibliothèque et Archives Canada, and the Mountain Legacy Project. on the Mummery Glacier.



August 12, 2021: [The views from Mahoskus Peak looking eastward.](#) (Photo by Mary Sanseverino)

As well as making many new friends, another treat was to spend time with ACC-VI friends Peggy and Roger Taylor who were at the GMC during the same week as me. Roger – always one for finding the best water-based adventures on any mountain – discovered “The Spa” (aka Mummery Creek) and several “hydrologic treatments” were taken by the three of us.



[Mary enjoying some well-deserved “hydro-therapy.”](#)
(Photo by Roger Taylor)

It took me more than a day to do a plant census of the area along the eastern side of the Mummery Glacier. There I was, happily traversing the land with radio in one hand, *iNaturalist* in the other, and “real” camera in my backpack. I recorded 100 observations encompassing 42 different species. The Paintbrushes were outstanding, but my favourite flowering plants were the tiny Fourpart Gentians. As always I was impressed with the tenacity of plants to grow in the harshest of conditions. Much of this landscape has only recently been exposed due to glacial recession, yet every little patch of soil seemed ablaze with life.



[Western Paintbrush](#) (*Castilleja occidentalis*) with more red on the bracts than is typical. (Photo by Mary Sanseverino)



Fourpart Dwarf Gentian (*Gentianella propinqua*). This lovely little annual is also known as Spreading Groundsmoke.
(Photo by Mary Sanseverino)



Dwarf Fireweed (*Chamaenerion latifolium*) is often an early colonizer of newly exposed moraines. In the background looking over the Mummery Glacier is Mount Karakal on the left, and the SE spur of Jones Peak to the right.
(Photo by Mary Sanseverino)

One of the benefits of using a tool like *iNaturalist* is the ability to aggregate data into groups and publish it for anyone to see and use. As I was working with my observations I noticed four other climbers had also submitted data from the same area. It turns out they attended earlier GMC weeks. I was able to put my data together with theirs into the [Mummery Glacier GMC 2021 project](#). It is available for anyone with an Internet connection to access.

In all we had 189 observations covering 70 species. Our efforts have provided research-grade information about biotic communities in the Mummery Group to scientists, naturalists, students, etc. And, in undertaking this kind of study we follow in the footsteps of many Alpine Club of Canada members who, especially in the early decades of the Club, took time out of their mountaineering activities to document the natural world around them.

All in all, a grand week spent high in the Canadian Rockies: great friends, great climbing, great exploring, and the great outdoors – sign me up for more!!



The Mummery Glacier with Mount Poland to the far left, the Mummery massif in the centre, Mount Karakal just right of centre (tops in the sun), Jones Peak (in shadow), Nanga Parbat Mountain, Gilgit Mountain, and the top of Mount Helmer just peeking out on the far right. Mahoskus Peak in hidden between Nanga Parbat and Jones.
(Photo by Mary Sanseverino)

- Interested in *iNaturalist*? It's completely free to join – check out www.inaturalist.org
- Mummery Glacier 2021 GMC Observations project:
www.inaturalist.org/projects/mummery-glacier-2021-gmc-observations
- More photos from the GMC (including full size map and historic panorama):
flic.kr/s/aHsmWzb4H7

Staying Warm and Dry in the Sunny Okanagan Range?

Scott Collins

September 26 – October 1, 2021

As with all things, this solo trip started out with a general desire but a modicum of actual planning. September had been a busy month for me and I was not able to get out much except for short hikes around Cobble Hill. I had attended this year's summer camp (Week 1) in the scenic Griswold Pass area. Though the weather was not very summer-like, it was a great camp this year (thanks to all involved) and I got up a few peaks, though by the end I was hobbling around and of little use to anyone.

Anyhow, as someone who grew up in the Rockies and then moved away, to eventually end up on the island (a long, boring story – at least to me), every fall I miss the turning of the leaves, and to be specific the annual display of the alpine larch, *Larix lyalli*, in the Rockies. Those who have

visited northern Ontario (or any part of the boreal forest) will recognize that this tree is kin to the tamarack (*L. laricina*), and also to the Western Larch (*L. occidentalis*) both of which grow at lower elevations, and in the latter case, mainly the B.C. interior.

Anyone who has visited the Rockies in September of late also knows that they are now over-crowded with leaf-peepers like me, and even the once empty Kananaskis charges an entry fee and is over-run with locals during the weekend. So, I wondered, where else does one go if not to the Rockies?

Some friends of mine (Mary Sanseverino and Liz Williams) had the good fortune to visit the Purcells the last full week of September and access the alpine west of Invermere with some friends of theirs who live in the area but I could not break away to join them.

So, the area had to be reasonably accessible to: 1) a 2WD Honda Civic, 2) someone who cannot carry a heavy pack for long distances or over steep terrain, and 3) not over-run with people or at least regulations pertaining to same - e.g. hiking in groups of four as in the Lake Louise area.

In fact, what I really wanted was the “Shadow Lake” treatment where one had a short bike and/or hike to a back-country cabin, sumptuous meals, and day-hiking with a light pack. I had done this a few years ago during larch season (with a great deal of advanced planning) and had thoroughly enjoyed it.

This year, however, I was too late to organize anything, and my research was confined to locating the geographical range of *L. lyalli* in western Canada. I was mildly surprised to discover that this tree has a western limit, in addition to its more familiar northern limit in the Rockies (Lake O’Hara or roughly the Trans Canada Hwy. to the north of that area). One can find larch in Manning Provincial Park though it seems they are confined to mainly one area and predictably there was no space at the resort when I contacted them.

Further afield, I noticed an area that was new to me to the east of Manning Park in the so-called Okanagan Range. Apparently, this area is still considered part of the Cascade Range, or at least the very northeast section of that large chain of mountains.

But I had remembered pictures of larches in Washington State to the south, along with exposed granite batholiths (e.g. the Liberty Bell area) from my misspent youth, and so wondered if the same were true of this area?

Lo and behold, not only are parts of the Okanagan Range granitic (more to follow) but there is also a swank lodge located in Cathedral Provincial Park, hard up against the Canadian-USA border about 40 kilometres southwest of the village of Keremeos, B.C. by paved and then gravel road.

Cathedral Lakes Lodge operates from late spring to the last week in September and has a variety of options including single rooms in the lodge, small or large cabins for groups, and fully catered vs. self-catered stays for hiking folk.

Regrettably, they were booked solid too but they were willing to ferry hikers up from their Ashnola River base camp (ca. 820 metres) to their lodge and the provincial park “core area” at 2050 metres by a steep, *private* road accessible by 4WD, high clearance vehicle. Of which more later...

The cost is significant (ca. \$160 return including tax) but the alternatives are rather steep, and long on foot though not overly so by island standards, requiring the better part of a day or two days by the longest route to get in or out.

Further, the main camping area in the provincial park is a scant 0.5 kilometre from the end of the road, and one is allowed two to three pieces of carry-on luggage. So, to this erstwhile mountaineer, the arrangement seemed quite reasonable, especially since I had no one else to help with the heavy lifting as it were...

So, I booked passage up on Monday September 27 and passage back down on their last day of operations September 30, leaving 2.5 days for hiking and to see the area. I had planned to return to the island by September 30 so as to avoid another overnight stay somewhere on the mainland.

The staging area is roughly 5.5 hours from Tsawwassen in light traffic without stops and there is camping nearby for those who are organized. Basically, you run the risk of *not reaching* the staging area in time for a ride up in one day from the island. The last bus (well no bus is involved) runs uphill usually by 4:00 p.m. with a reservation – but if you are not there, too bad for you!

I, on the other hand, was not organized, and so stayed overnight Sunday in nearby Keremeos at a rather spartan motel, and since there are only three in town, I will recommend the one I stayed at on the way back (Elk Lakes Motel).

I arrived the following morning having scoped out the approach the previous afternoon before dark. The Ashnola FSR is reasonably well graded and maintained though with the usual wash-boarding and fallen rocks etc. typical of this area. The semi-arid, pine scrub forest with steep-sided valleys reminded me a lot of the Sierra Madre Oriental in Mexico – except that the road was in much better condition!

After a brief delay, a vehicle could be heard laboring in the distance and it eventually popped out at the staging area which was at that time packed with vehicles. I was thinking that this could be worse than Lake O’Hara but as it turned out not so much. For one thing, the parking area for Cathedral Lakes is much smaller!

Our ride up consisted of an open air, troop carrier (aka the Mercedes Benz Unimog), and I want to say the models in use dated back to the opening of the lodge itself in 1972 but am unsure. The ride up featured distant views of the terrain through the forest, a non-existent view of the road from my location in the rear while my kidneys etc. barely survived the trip up. The short 15-20 kilometre trip did in fact take

close to an hour (as advertised), and the lurching etc. of the vehicle up the inclines was phenomenal!

On the way up I did spot some very bright yellow trees on the side of Crater Mountain to our north across the Ashnola River but I suspect these were aspen (which are also spectacular this time of year) as the elevation wasn't high enough for larch. Also, I noticed extensive pasture lands at this elevation and it is no wonder this area supports a large sheep and goat population.

Sure enough, as we popped into the sub-alpine near the lodge the magnificent larch were on full display and I would judge pretty well at peak! The lodge consists of numerous buildings and vehicles on the northeast shore of Quiniscoe Lake, while the campground occupies the southeast shore.

I located a tent site and noticed that most of the folks were packing up rather than setting up. Apparently, it had rained the previous night; a veritable deluge for this area (ca. 25 mm) had flooded some tent platforms. Of course, yours truly being a weather geek, already knew about this and had wisely timed his arrival for a "lull" between systems on Monday afternoon.

So, I was able to set-up camp under "dryish" conditions and start off on the right foot. Also, potable water is not available at the campground and so the lake or outlet water must be boiled or filtered before use, and so after setting up the tent the lake water was used to fill up a brand-new gravity bag and filter for later (i.e. dinner, lunch consisting of a day-old sandwich). This is a very useful device – except when one encounters below freezing temperatures. In the end, I mainly boiled water and am still on the planet.

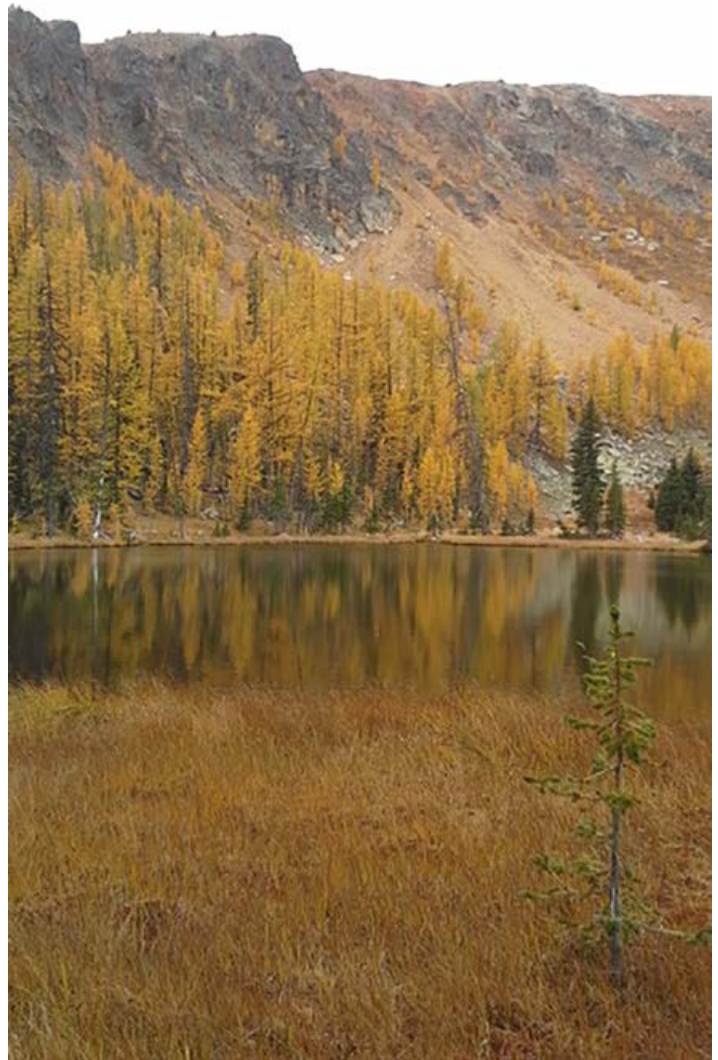
Then a short walk off to Scout Lake and back which featured very nice areas for camping –of course these days camping off the land is no longer allowed in parks or other protected areas.

Now, rumour had it that one could obtain hot (or cold) beverages for sale at the main lodge, though meals were no longer available to hikers, even with a reservation thanks to COVID. Upon my return, I can confirm that hot tea was available for \$2.00 per bag and I advocate retaining the bag for at least one free refill, provided one leaves a generous tip!

Finally, an early dinner consisted of some freeze-dried concoction, followed by soup and then hot chocolate followed by minimal dish-washing. Grey water is to be disposed of in the composting outhouses due to a problem with habituated mountain goats.

I later learned that the goats had moved out of the core area to their wintering grounds elsewhere, though I am not sure where those are. Anyhow, mountain goats are no novelty for yours truly; a resident herd sets up shop every summer at a tenure I visit in the Selkirks. I did see the same herd of deer though, and three times during my stay. Just like Oak Bay!

Now shortly after retiring to the tent the first night, some



Scout Lake showing L. lyalli and above the so-called Rim Wall. (Photo by Scott Collins)

rain moved in and at some point, the wind really picked up while the temperature started to drop. I was dry and reasonably warm in the tent though the wind certainly



View of Glacier Lake and Lakeview Mountain in distance. No glaciers were found – though rock glaciers are known in the area. (Photo by Scott Collins)

didn't let up for most of the night. Anyhow, Tuesday morning dawned clear and cold, while the rain had frozen to the fly overnight.

A chilly breakfast was spent, imploring the sun to melt the ice with little effect, wondering what hike to start off with, the goal being of course to get up to the so-called Rim Trail which features expansive views of the area. A couple next to me who had been before suggested that nearby Glacier Lake was a nice hike and so off I went but, initially intent on exploring some of the other lakes in the next valley to the south.



*View to southwest from the Rim Trail above Glacier Lake. Peak in the distance (aptly named Sheep Mountain) is in Washington State. The best view all day...
(Photo by Scott Collins)*

As it turns out, there are three routes leading from the campground to the next valley. I "lucked" out on the shortest of these to Pyramid Lake which however is now closed to camping. The only other campground in the core area is at Lake of the Woods which I did visit (only one group was staying there) and it is not very far away – except if you go counter-clockwise as I did, ultimately ending back at the main campground.

Finally, I took the steeper, more direct route to Glacier Lake, and then took a trail above the lake that eventually gains the Rim Trail. However, by this time any hope of settled weather had disappeared in favour of the lead-grey skies that would be with me for the remainder of the trip. Moreover, on reaching the rim, I was greeted by squalls of wind-driven sleet and limited views so I saw little point in negotiating the Rim Trail in poor weather and poor visibility.

So, I retreated back the way I had come, headed over to Ladyslipper Lake and ran out of gas about 2/3 of the way up the steep shoulder that must be gained to enter the final valley to the south. In the end it was a full day, though I was back in time for tea at the lodge...

Another evening was spent cooking a freeze-dried or dehydrated meal (not sure – some kind of expensive Beef Stew that required extended cooking/rehydrating of potatoes and still did not taste very good). This time, unlike the first evening, the weather consisted of intermittent

squalls with yet more sleet, the rain a distant memory, while the wind was still blowing at a pretty good clip. Fortunately, a group of young ladies had started a fire (I had no fire ring at my campsite) and I was able to insinuate myself into their little group. It was a bit of an odd discussion, as none of them had been on the planet when I left Calgary in 1983 (i.e. they were all considerably younger than 38), though one had lived and worked there recently. Anyhow, at some point the sleet turned to actual snow, and after dusting off the tent, I settled in for another windy, cold night.

The next day dawned bright again and there was not much snow accumulation overnight but it was clear that Wednesday would be a repeat of Tuesday before the next major system arrived Thursday. The weathermen are rarely wrong when it comes to unsettled weather it seems. Also, though the tent etc. was dry, the interior of the fly was now coated in ice – evidently a bit too much heavy breathing the night before? After breakfast, and packing up, I headed up Red Mountain, again with the idea of completing part of the Rim Trail.

However, a mere 10 metres or so from the summit a fierce squall moved in and to the point where I figured it would be better to drop back down and wait it out, besides the route was distinctly non-intuitive to me heading directly up and over a steep boulder field and ridge vs. around it on more or less level ground?

So, off I went end running this peak, hoping to pick up the Rim Trail on the far side. And the country is indeed quite open though with extensive boulder fields to circumnavigate. Predictably the route was quite a bit longer than the shorter one up through the boulders and over the peak.



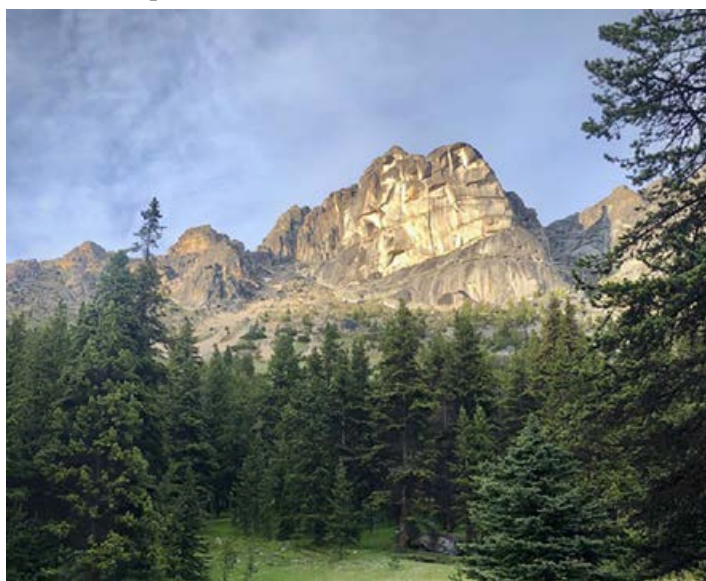
*View from below Red Mountain to the north showing extensive basalt rubble fields, larches with distant views of the (logged) hills southeast of Princeton, B.C.
(Photo by Scott Collins)*

In the end, I ran out of time as I had to return to the lodge by 3:30 p.m. having made the decision not to camp out for

the third night and heading out on Thursday morning. I did complete the Diamond Trail which goes around Scout Mountain but in the end the trip was a bit disappointing, and I will have to return, if only in better weather.

The return to the island was not without incident, as the Spirit of Vancouver Island had been pulled out of service and I had to drive through a deluge on Thursday starting at Eastgate on Highway 3. I eventually made it home but not until Friday on the 10 a.m. ferry and with a reservation so some additional funds were spent on the mainland.

For those interested in the area, and specifically climbing I have some good news for you. The granite batholiths exposed in this area have not seen recent, or at least complete glaciation during the last Ice Age. So, part of the range is characterized by glaciated plateaus and valleys with basalt in the north giving rise to monzonite in the south with isolated granitic “tors” in evidence along the higher ridges. Climbing routes are located mainly in the Wall Creek valley (also accessible from the Ashnola FSR) though the traverse of Grimface is the easiest, rated at 5.7 A0 with six pitches and a bolt ladder.



*South face of Grimface from Wall Creek in better weather.
Photo courtesy of Nick Hendley, Varsity Outdoor Club*

DISTANT PLACES

The Trails of Tenerife, Canary Islands

Liz Williams

December, 2021

Entering a second winter of covid, it seemed wise to think of Europe for travel rather than going too far off the beaten track. What started as a potential tour of Sardinia soon turned into a search for drier, warmer weather. (Cagliari, the capital of Sardinia, is a full 10 degrees of latitude south of Victoria but the rain and temps were much the same).

After a few days in Rome (also rainy), we opted to fly to Tenerife, the largest of the Canary Islands, lying some 300 kilometres off the coast of Morocco. With some trepidation we bought \$150 “Wizz Air” tickets for the nearly five-hour flight to Tenerife. Has anyone ever heard of Wizz Air? I thought not, and my fears were almost realized when I couldn’t find an actual flight number on the ticket. But lo and behold, my estimation of Wizz Air *whizzed up* after a flawless check-in and flight!

My hearsay recollections of the Canaries from the 1970s were much like the denigration given to Benidorm [a once tranquil seaside resort on the east coast of Spain now known for its nightlife-editor] back then: endless tacky fish and chip joints with beer-swilling yahoos. No doubt there may be some of that in the over-built, concrete jungle of Tenerife’s south coast but that’s neither where we stayed nor what we came for.

Tenerife is an island of huge diversity, from heart-stopping, hairpin-bend roads, precipitous mountain trails and ridge-top villages that might slide off at any moment to historic Spanish colonial towns, extraordinary endemic vegetation, and the highest mountain in all of Spain – El Teide, at 3718 metres. Tenerife was formed 20-50 million years ago with eruptions from the African tectonic plate and El Teide’s fumaroles still pump out sulphur gases. Evidence of Tenerife’s geological and volcanic origins are everywhere from the coastal pools sheltering one from the warm Atlantic Ocean rollers to the prehistoric rock trails that blanket the island.

The original settlers, the ‘Guanches’, came from North Africa about 500-200 BC. Being akin to the Berbers, they drove their goats and sheep everywhere in search of grazing, in an attempt to scratch a living out of the harsh landscape. Then came the Spanish conquest, with Tenerife being the last of the Canary Islands to fall to the Spanish in 1496. All over Tenerife the ancient donkey tracks were used for trade in goats, honey, and a limited amount of agricultural produce. These trails, the only means of access and communication for centuries, climb impossible ridges, pass through high remote villages, and descend steep barrancos. Today the routes are well-documented, well-

signed, and offer multi-day hikes if you want to camp.

We hiked in three parks: El Teide, the Anaga Mountains, and the El Teno massif. The hiking is stupendous, with much lava moonscape and exotic vegetation, but you do need a rental car to access these areas freely.

El Teide National Park lies in the centre of the island at almost 19,000 hectares. It's the only sub-tropical alpine area in Europe, and home to many endemic species including the Canary lizard. Much as we're pestered by chipmunks or grey jays here in the alpine of the Pacific Northwest, on Tenerife if you stop for a snack you'll be overrun by dozens of lizards looking for a hand-out! El Teide itself has a cable car to within 150 metres of the summit. Unfortunately, no summit permits were available, but trails from the top of the cable car afforded spectacular views.



Pico Viejo (from the trail). (Photo by Liz Williams)

The Anaga Mountains is about 14,500 hectares, and lies in the far north-east. Designated in 2015 as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, it has the largest number of endemic species in Europe. Many of these, including the Laurel



Anaga Mountains and north coast. (Photo by Liz Williams)



El Teide from Los Roques de Garcia. (Photo by Liz Williams)



*View from El Teide (150m below summit).
(Photo by Liz Williams)*

El Teide has more than forty different hiking routes. Pico Viejo, the older summit at 3134 metres, is a superb long day hike, starting in pine forests and progressing to lava fields.



*Village of Almácigar, Anaga Mountains.
(Photo by Liz Williams)*

pigeon, are associated with the Laurisilva forests - sub-tropical forests with a broadleaf species of laurel with evergreen, glossy leaves. These forests are found only in areas of high humidity and relatively stable and mild temps. The Anaga Mountains have over twenty trails passing along steep ridges and descending dramatically to the north coast, where small villages hang off the rocks.

The Macizo de Teno, designated as a Rural Park of about 8,000 hectares, lies in the far north-west, and is the least travelled and most mysterious of the parks, again with some Laurisilva forest, and high, exposed trails running up from the north and west coasts to the height of land. More than forty routes are described in local pamphlets. The trail down to the coast from the village of Masca, and the trail up from the coast at Buena Vista to Alto Teno are most daunting! Teno is known for its diverse endemic vegetation including cardons, veroles, and tabaibas.



Hair pins! (Photo by Liz Williams)



Village of Masca, El Teno massif. (Photo by Liz Williams)



Anaga Mountains coast from Roques de Las Bodegas. (Photo by Liz Williams)



El Teno massif from Punta Teno. (Photo by Liz Williams)

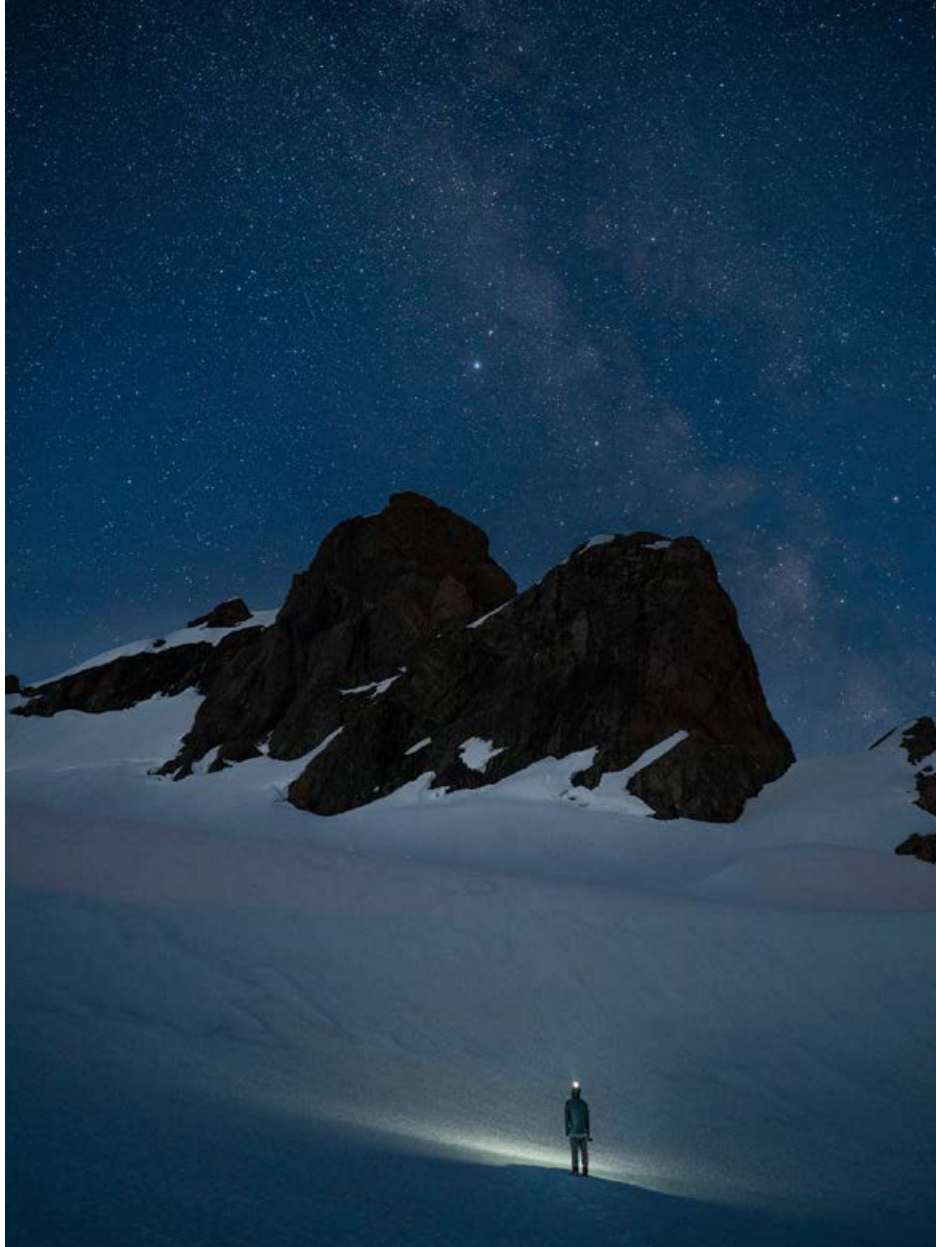


Volcanic rock pool, Buenavista. (Photo by Graham Maddocks)

Oh, and by the way, be prepared for some scary driving when you meet a full-size bus on one of those hair-pin bends!

Participants: Liz Williams and Graham Maddocks

2021 PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS



**Winter Activity
(Winner)**

Rugged approach by night

Photo: John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](https://www.instagram.com/johnrvoss)

**Summer Activity
(Winners - tied)**



Descent from Barlow Photo: Jane Maduke



Blair Piggot descending Robson Glacier Photo: Jim Everard



**Vancouver Island
(Winner)**

5040 Snow cave ski touring

Photo: John Relyea-Voss [@johnrvoss](#)



**Nature
(Winner)**

Alpine owl

Photo: Emily Bennett



Mountain Scenery (Winner)

Tombstone sunset

Photo: Brian Norwick



Humour (Winner)

A tale of lost soles

Photo: Sean Peck



Nature
(Honourable Mention)

Reflection on a message

Photo: Jim Everard

Humour
(Honourable Mention)

Alcoholic skinny dipper with a hiking problem

Photo: Mary Sanseverino



Vancouver Island
(Honourable Mention)

Milky way over Triple Peak

Photo: Chris Neate



**Summer Activity
(Honourable Mention)**

Kluane

Photo: Brian Norwick



**Winter Activity
(Honourable Mention)**

*Reconfiguration of Cerise Creek from the
rock slide on Mt. Joffre*

Photo: Margaret Brown



**Mountain Scenery
(Honourable Mention)**

Tombstone reflections

Photo: Carmen Zitek

