

The Alpine Club of Canada • Vancouver Island Section

Island Bushwhacker



2020 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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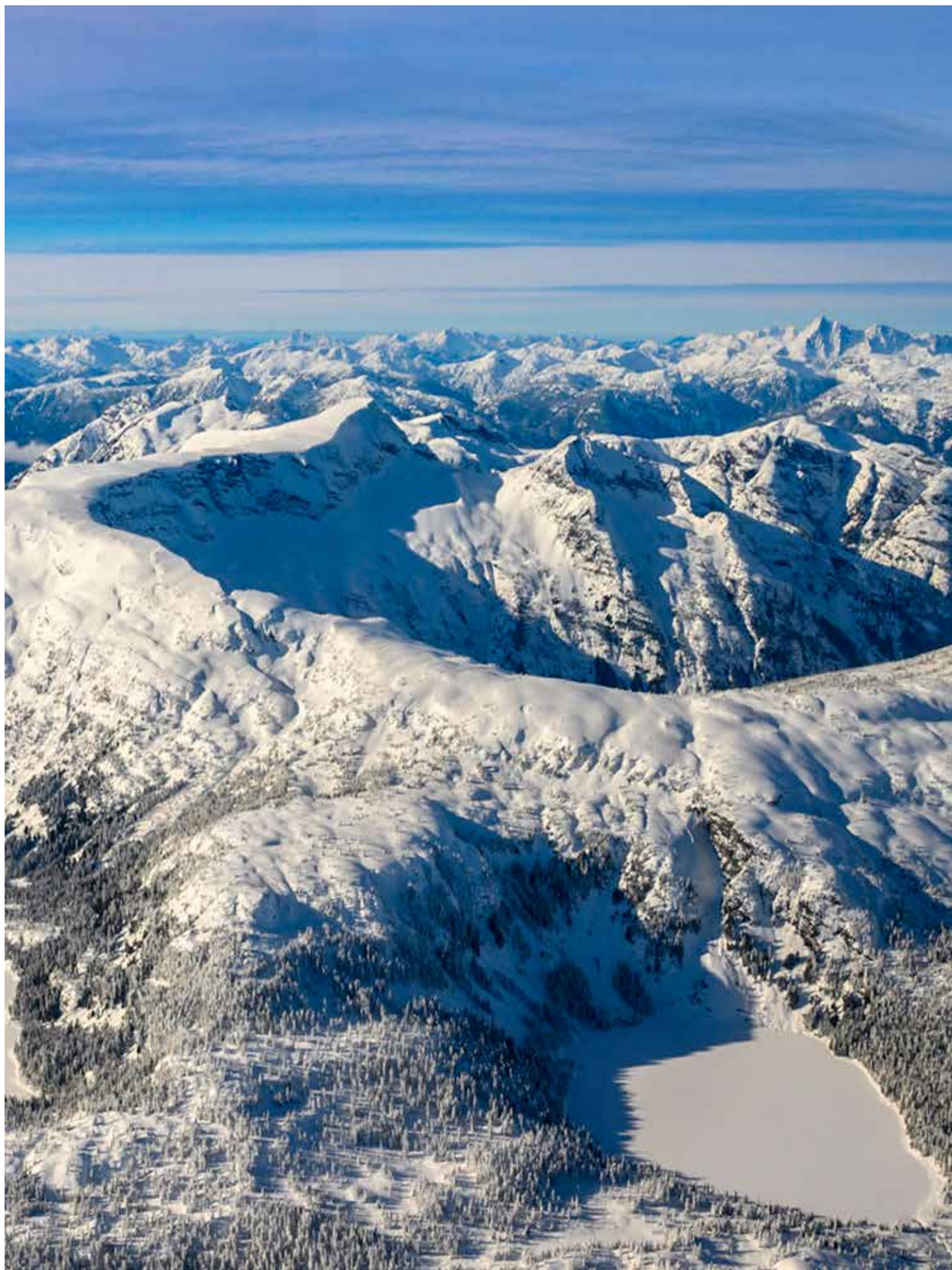
Image Opposite Page 1: Mount Albert Edward in winter from the air (Photo by Richard Oosthuizen)

Front Cover Image: Peggy Taylor looking south from Victoria Peak into the smoke-wraithed valleys of Strathcona Park (Photo by Linnea Hansen)

Back Cover Image: Mount Colonel Foster in winter (Photo by Richard Oosthuizen)

Contents

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR	1
NOTES FROM THE SECTION	5
Hišimyawīł, the Terrible Twos	5
Exploring the Back Country in Partnership with the Inter-Cultural Association	6
A Thumb Sketch History of the ACCVI Photo Competition	7
James (Jamie) Ernest Duncan (1963-2020)	13
Laurence Philippsen (1954 – 2020)	14
VANCOUVER ISLAND	18
Mounts Myra, Thelwood and Moyeha Explorations	18
Call of the Mountains	20
Fault Peak	24
Maynard Peak	26
Mount Rosseau – First Winter Ascent	27
Mount Thelwood	30
Peaks South of McIver Creek	32
A New Route on Colonel Foster	35
Tom Taylor to Mariner and Down into the Moyeha Valley	37
Thelwood and Moyeha, August 2020	42
All Women Beginner Friendly Trip to Crest Mountain	44
Colonel Foster Summit Traverse: The Grand Finale IQ	47
Bushwhacking Overdose: a Linkup of 5040, Nahmint, & Adder	50
A Return to Mount Bate: Remembering the Wild Mountain Time	52
All Women Beginner Friendly Trip to Kwai Lake and Cruikshank Canyon	56
House Arrest: the Tale of a Mishap	58
All Women Beginner-Friendly Trip to Drabble Lakes	61
Mount Ginger Goodwin	63
MAINLAND	65
Aren't You Afraid? A Solo Woman's Journey on the Great Divide Trail	65
DISTANT PLACES	68
Travels in the Pyrenées	68
Climbing Mt Balbi, Bougainville	72
2020 PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS	74



REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Catrin Brown



Catrin Brown and Erich Schellhammer. (Photo by Thomas Radetzki)

It seems inevitable that any report on the year 2020 has to focus on COVID 19. So, taking this to mean Counting Our Vancouver Island Delights 19 times, I'll take us on a quick tour of the year through 19 things that we enjoyed and that kept our community going strongly. And I hope you'll see that, despite some obvious disappointments and restrictions in this unusual year, we found much to celebrate together.

1. Winter trips and AGM weekend February 2020

It began well. Stefan Gessinger and Evan Devault launched the year with an epic winter ascent of Mt Rousseau in early January (see page 28). A large crowd shared our AGM weekend at the Vancouver Island Mountain Centre in Mt Washington, and enjoyed snow and social activities and

workshops. The first thanks in this report must go to our many trip leaders who - in the language of 2020 - are our "essential workers". Our community is strengthened by every event you offer on the schedule, and your willingness to get us out there truly makes a difference.

2. Hišim'awił celebrates one year of happy guests

In mid-January 2020, we marked the first anniversary of the opening of our hut on 5040 Peak to paying guests. By any measure, Hišim'awił has been a run-away success, beating all expectations in terms of bookings and feedback. Chris Jensen, who has been the driving force behind this project from vision to completed construction, is now stepping down as Hut Manager. Difficult as it is to pay tribute to Chris' work and leadership over the last six years, I've turned to some comments from the guest book up at the hut to give some indication of the joy and opportunity created (and see page 5). Congratulations Chris on this extraordinary legacy, not just for our section but for the broader mountaineering community.

3. Island Bushwhacker Newsletter and High Points

Communication is central to our community, maybe more so than ever this year. Thank you to Anya Reid who kept us up to date with events through the monthly *High Points Bulletins*, and to Janelle Curtis for her labour of love in producing the beautiful, extensive seasonal *Newsletters*.

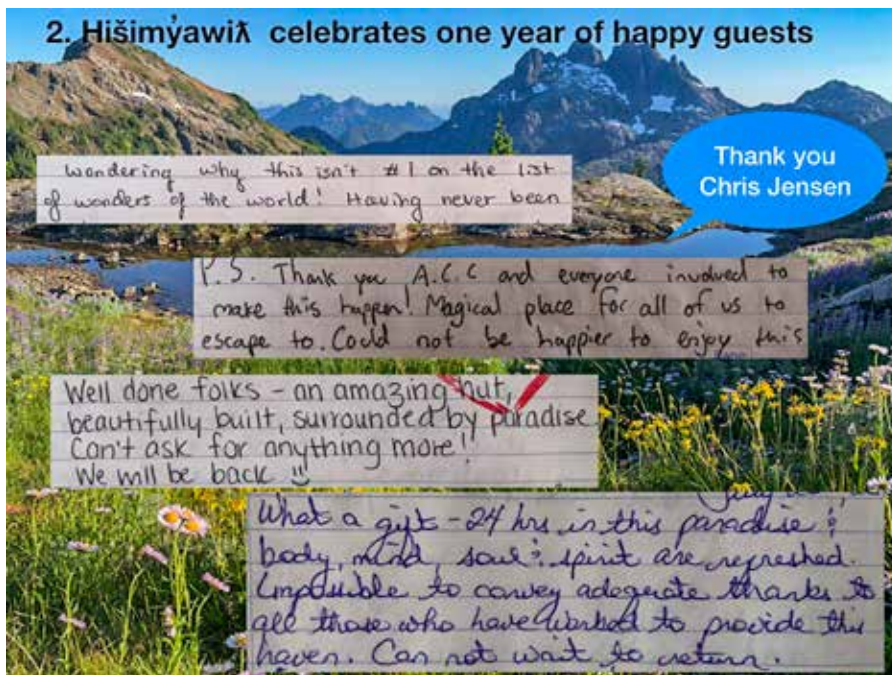
4. Executive committee meetings

On a more prosaic note, the executive committee met regularly through the year, seamlessly switching to Zoom early in the pandemic. And it was a busy year with lots of decisions to make as circumstances evolved. Many thanks to David Lemon and Garth Stewart our secretary and treasurer respectively, for their gracious and industrious work. Josh Slatkoff and Kathy Kutzer reliably take care of membership queries, while Karun Thanjavur coordinates the schedule with the trip leaders. Martin Hofmann picks up all sorts of pieces related to technology and our website. It is a terrific team.

5. Zoom slide shows

The popularity of our online slide shows is perhaps one of the bigger surprises of the year. Without a doubt, these have helped us to stay connected and inspired while apart. Credit for this goes to our presenters Jenny Feick, Karun Thanjavur, Robie Macdonald, Sandy Briggs, Mary Sanseverino, Nadja Steiner and Finn Steiner who did a wonderful job of sharing their passions and experiences.

Thanks also to Neil Han for help with the technology, and to Peggy Taylor who is waiting in the wings to pick up the in-person slide show organization again. Hasten the day!



Comments on the Hut.

6. Island Bushwhacker Annual 2019

A significant leap into the 21st Century happened with the printing of our cherished Bushwhacker Annual in full colour for the first time. And as the editor Robie Macdonald says, “once you’ve seen that, there’s no going back”. Robie again produced a journal which looks so effortlessly professional it belies the enormity of the task of editing and assembly. A full colour PDF version is also available online, which has the advantage of being searchable. It is a matter of pride that our section continues to contribute to the record of Island mountaineering and mountaineers in this way.



A compilation of Zoom slide shows for 2020.

7. Discourse, our new discussion forum

One of my favourite things is when someone identifies a weakness, and then immediately suggests a solution. This was the case when Neil Ernst contacted me with his observation that we didn’t have an inclusive or long-term way of sharing information online. He has since set up our own platform ‘Discourse’ linked from our website, which is growing fast and has terrific potential for future use, be it for trip reports or discussion. Thank you Neil.

8. Access agreement to Comox Lake Main

There was good news in the late summer when, after years of communications and advocacy, we signed a pilot access agreement with Mosaic forest management company giving us 24/7 access to Comox Lake Main. The terms and procedures for the agreement are detailed on our website, and we are grateful to Val Wootton for stepping up as the custodian of the key in Courtenay. We are excited that this opens up possibilities for multi-day trips into the east side of Strathcona Park and other destinations from the west of Comox Lake. Without doubt, this agreement is a reflection of Barb Baker’s long-term efforts championing our cause with the forestry companies.

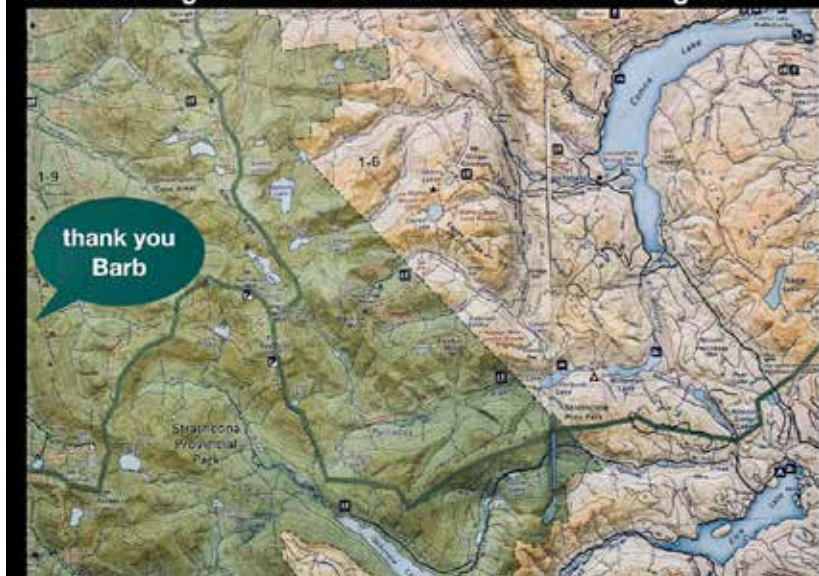
9. National Awards

Speaking of Barb, we were delighted that she was honoured with the national Don Forest Service Award for her dedication to promoting the interests of backcountry recreation on the Island. Barb’s efforts continue to keep municipalities and industry on their toes, and her network also helps in the ongoing maintenance of access to the 5040 Peak area. Jes Scott was also honoured with the Don Forest Service Award for their wonderful work in building us a shiny new website when our old one crashed beyond recovery. And the truth is without a website we are pretty rudderless. Jes also deserves thanks for their work helping to increase the diversity and inclusivity of our section. Congratulations Barb and Jes.

10. Section Awards

Our two latest recipients of the Rick Eppler Island Qualifiers’ Award received their plaques rather more quietly than is usual. Nonetheless, the achievements of Dave Fishwick and Barry Hansen in making successful climbs of the nine IQ peaks is something for us to celebrate. Congratulations to you both on reaching your final summit this summer.

8. Access agreement with Mosaic: Comox Lake gate



Map showing access from the Comox Lake Main.

11. National ACC

As we are one of now 25 local ACC sections across the country, there is a lot of common ground to share and discuss amongst members. Christine Fordham continues to do a wonderful job, both in representing our interests and in bringing back news and ideas from the main club. We can also take pride in the fact that Mary Sanseverino serves on the national nominations committee, and is a corresponding member from the ACC to the UIAA's mountain protection commission.

12. Education

The courses and workshops organised by our education coordinators Alois Schonenberger and Iain Sou are always popular. With the rise in the number of people heading to the backcountry, the demand has clearly increased, and Alois and Iain faced the added challenge of juggling the changing health guidelines this year. Thank you both for finding opportunities to make things happen safely whenever you could. In a related way, we are aware of the need for more education of backcountry etiquette, especially with respect to human waste and the problem of campfires in the alpine. This is something for all of us to take on board as we seek to encourage best practice in our fellow adventurers. The backcountry needs our vigilance.

13. Trips for specific groups

Our push for inclusivity gets a boost from initiatives by trip leaders who reach out to specific groups. Janelle Curtis organised several popular introductory backpacking trips for so-called 'wild women' (see pages 44 & 56). Karun Thanjavur and I worked with the *Inter Cultural Association* in Victoria to organise trips for new immigrant youth, sharing their thrill in exposure to entirely new environments, especially on snow-shoes (see page 6).

Derek and Iain Sou kept the bar high in the Kids and Youth program, with challenging snow camping and rock climbing trips. This program is truly remarkable in the experiences it offers to kids and their parents, often learning new skills together.

14. Supporting our trip leaders

We have well-established ways of offering incentives to our trip leaders, including our course subsidy program and leader recognition contest. If you are not aware of these, please check out the details on our website - they are too good to miss! Thanks to Natasha Salway, Christine Fordham and Tom Hall for helping to administer these programs. In October we also held a Q & A discussion for trip leaders with some useful sharing of ideas. This will be something worth doing again at some point.

I'd like to give a special shout out to the extra work this year for trip leaders when trips had to be changed or cancelled as health guidelines evolved. All variants of plan A involve extra work of decision making, communication and reimbursement. A big example of this is the significant work for the summer camp committee, Liz Williams, Jeff Beddoes and Laura Darling, when the camps had to be cancelled in June. Sigh. Fingers crossed that at least some of the spade work can be used in 2021.

15. Annual photo contest

The pandemic did not stop play when it came to our annual lighthearted contest to share and judge each others' photographs. If anything, the online format increased the participation and camaraderie of the evening. Mary Sanseverino's competence and kind humour coping with the potential bedlam of the online voting was perhaps as memorable as the photos themselves. All the images are posted on our website (and see pages 74 - 82).

16. Geographical inclusivity

Shifting events to online was of course a recurring theme of the year, and we did discover some advantages. Members from across the Island and beyond were able to join equally, even from different time zones. We also had the opportunity to share presentations from other ACC sections, and with like-minded clubs on the Island. We will have to give thought to trying to preserve some of these elements post-pandemic.

17. Banff Centre Mountain Film Festival (BCMFF)

The tour of the '*Best of Banff*' films went virtual this year, and we are very grateful to Laura Darling for navigating the logistics of making these films available to us. Not only do they provide the usual good entertainment of the BCMFF evening, but purchasing the tickets through our affiliate link

is also generating some income for our section. It all helps. And the good news is that these films are available to purchase through till October 2021.

18. Donations to organisations aligned with our mission

In choosing organisations to support financially, the executive gave priority to Island-focused groups especially those where there is a time-sensitive element. The *Vancouver Island Trail*, the *VI Avalanche Bulletin*, *FMBCB*, the *VI Marmot Recovery Foundation*, *Ancient Forest Alliance*, *South Island Climbing Association* and *Canadian Alpine Journal* were recipients for this year.

Our finances are sound, thanks to good planning over many years and treasurers. It has to be said, however, that we are in new territory with the loss of our major fund-raiser, the in-person *BCMFF*. Happily, our membership has remained strong at



Organizations we supported financially.

about 700 through the year - keeping your memberships up to date is the best way, dear reader, you can help ensure our ability to continue to offer expansive programs and events. Thank you.

19. A few more thank yous.

Geoff Bennnett has ably steered our memorial fund through many years of supporting youth projects. Perhaps inevitably, the recipients of the 2020 award were not able to follow through on their plans, though we are holding the opportunity open for them, and thank Geoff for the work involved. Mike Hubbard continues to be our gear manager in the south-Island, and so is often the friendly face of the club to new members. Mike is also my go-to guy with any quasi-legal queries or need of reliable advice. Colleen



Thank you Mike and Colleen and all those who showed up during the year.

Kasting deserves special mention for working tirelessly on the complex issues concerning the opening and closures of Hišim'yawił. And we are grateful that Martin Hofmann has stepped into Chris Jensen's very big shoes as Hut Manager, heading a strong Hut Committee (and see Martin's Hut report, page 5). Last but not least, all the volunteer effort would be for nothing, if it was not for you the members who show up and take part in whatever way you can. This is a large and diverse community and everyone's contributions are valued and important.

Two hard losses

Sadly, 2020 did not leave us unscathed. Jamie Duncan died while skiing in Japan in January, and is dearly missed by his young family and his many friends in the section. Laurence Philippsen failed to return from a solo trip in Strathcona Park in July and, after extensive searches by the Island mountaineering community, was later confirmed to have died in the mountains. His passing leaves a large hole in his community of family and close friends. Both Jamie and Laurence were accomplished mountaineers who had completed their Island Qualifier summits. More extensive tributes to them are to be found on pages 13 & 14 and on the memorial page on our website.

Looking ahead

The outpouring of support in the search for Laurence was a tribute to him, and it was also a tribute to this community. Friends supporting friends supporting friends - that is what we do. This year, perhaps more than ever, we have felt the importance of that connection and these enduring friendships. And so as we look ahead to 2021, I'll picture

the life of our section as a bulb in the earth. I'm not sure if we're going to be a summer-flowering or a fall-flowering bulb, but I am sure that we are nurtured and healthy, just waiting for the conditions to be right for us to flower again in the outdoors. And I for one am much looking forward to that.



NOTES FROM THE SECTION



Hišimȳawił, the Terrible Twos

Martin Hofmann

Hišimȳawił celebrated one year of operation in January 2020. The hut had proved more popular than we had ever imagined. People were going up with their family and friends in all kinds of weather. Even though many people said it was the hardest hike that they had ever done, all the comments were extremely positive. Unfortunately, in mid-March COVID-19 hit British Columbia and we closed the hut down. During the spring and summer we developed a COVID mitigation plan in consultation with Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC) and this allowed us to open again in mid-October. Shortly after we closed the hut again as new restrictions were imposed by the Provincial Health Officer. The hut is still closed and will remain that way until the orders are lifted; at that time we will open under



The hut in winter sunset. (Photo by Martin Hofmann)

the COVID guidelines developed last year, booking the entire hut with a maximum of six people.

The up side of having the hut closed to the public meant that small groups of volunteers, mainly the hut committee, were able to do work on the hut. Many of the details that didn't quite get done have been finished off. Another section of the basement was dug out and floored and a storage rack was added. The basement in general was also tidied up and organized. The basement of the outhouse was also extended to make space for four fish totes, which should allow us to handle the load for a couple of years without problems. Early this winter after noticing water coming in through the front door on stormy days we added a sliding "barn". This seems to keep the rain/snow out of the hut although it adds its own problem of icing up and being tricky to open sometimes.

The volunteers who did get up to the hut noticed a huge increase in the number of day trippers to 5040, a result of "stay local" COVID guidelines no doubt. While that had little effect on the hut it did have a significant effect on the environment in the area. The most obvious problems being human waste and fires in the alpine. We do have the authority to prohibit fires around the hut and we have



The backside view from the top of 5040. (Photo by Martin Hofmann)

got signs from RSTBC and installed them in the hut area. People camping near the hut normally use the outhouse there, but there are no facilities at the trailhead or around Cobalt Lake and apparently a lot of people are not familiar with basic backcountry etiquette. We again worked with RSTBC to get some signs to help educate people and to try and reduce the environmental damage. We hope to be able to install more signs and information kiosks at the trailhead and at Cobalt Lake. To make this happen we will be applying for grants and hopefully we will be able to get some of that work done later this year.

Anyone who drove up Marion Main last year would have noticed how the increased traffic has damaged the road. It was getting to the point where I didn't think my Subaru would be able to make it anymore. Fortunately that problem has been solved for now. *Roc-Star Contractors* improved the road and replaced many culverts at the end of 2020. They went above and beyond their mandate and also improved the parking spots at many locations. Let us hope that people will respect the work and not damage the road once it opens again after the winter.

The hut is generally in good shape and things are working well. The main issue facing us now is the ongoing power problem in the winter months. The solar panels that we have work great for about 8-9 months of the year but from November to January there is too much power needed, especially for the pellet stove, and not enough hours of sunlight and too many ice storms. December has especially frequent storms that cover everything with snow and rime. Last year we added two wind turbines to help with the power but they don't provide enough consistent power to cover all our needs. We are currently working on a plan to upgrade/increase our capacity and looking for grants to fund this work.

The other major event in 2020 was the completion of the weather station, camera and data transmission back to Victoria. The weather station and camera have been running and collecting data/images since 2019. The missing link was the cell router to transmit the data. I worked on that this summer and it is now working fairly reliably, there are times when the connection drops but the system

is designed to handle those. The most recent data and some weather summaries can be found on the Hut Conditions page on the accvi.ca web site (<https://accvi.ca/5040-peak-hut/hut-conditions/>). The camera image is updated hourly and gives a view of the weather and snow conditions in front of the hut (and a view of Triple Peak and the outhouse as a bonus).

In the fall, before the second COVID wave took hold, we started discussions with the *Vancouver Island Avalanche Centre* to collaborate on collecting data on snow conditions and using the weather station to improve avalanche forecasting on the Island. We have had to put this on hold but we hope to work on that over the summer and have something in place for next winter.

We look forward to reopening the hut soon and welcoming the public back to enjoy the hut and the environment on and around 5040 Peak. In the meantime we are working to improve the facilities in order to keep our hut the best ACC hut!

Many thanks to the hut committee members who do all the hard work; Colleen Kasting, Gary Croome, Peter Gilbert and Keith Battersby.

Exploring the Back Country in Partnership with the Inter-Cultural Association

Karun Thanjavur

For the last two years, the ACC-VI in partnership with the *Inter-Cultural Association* (ICA, Victoria) has been offering a 'nature outing' program for youth in new immigrant families to Victoria. The goal of this program is to introduce these youth to local short hikes and nature activities, especially to winter outings. The ICA already has a very active youth group who meet regularly (prior to the onset of the COVID restrictions) for various activities and social events. We leveraged our program off this existing infrastructure, and worked closely with the leaders of their youth program in the planning and offering of all aspects of our program. Each year, we have split the program into three separate activities. In the first activity, a few of the ACC-VI volunteers joined the youth during one of their weekly meetings and talked about the beauty of the great Canadian outdoors, what it offers by way of summer and winter activities, and also some stories from our own trips (all these accompanied by a slideshow of photos). We also talked about our proposed two trips with them – a weekend local hike lasting about a half day, and a day-long snowshoe trip about a month later at Mt. Washington. We also talked about logistical details of the trips, and



The weather station at the Hut. (Photo by Martin Hofmann)

any gear needed. The youth were encouraged to sign up for any personal gear they might need (boots, warm gear, mitts, etc.), so that the ICA could borrow the required gear from *Power To Be*, with whom they have an understanding regarding such gear.

The second activity was intended as a ‘meet and greet’ outing. This year the first hike was up Pkols (a.k.a. Mt. Doug) in Saanich on February 22. We had 10 youths and two ICA staff along with two ACC-VI volunteers doing a gentle four-hour hike to the 345 m summit, which itself was a good personal accomplishment for many of the youth participants. Most of them were in senior high school and there was a good balance of gender. A fair fraction of these youth were from recently arrived Syrian families.

Based on the success of this outing, the second trip (on March 15) was a snowshoe hike to Paradise Meadows. On a beautifully sunny day, a fairly large group of about 30 youths and 10 ICA staff, and a number of volunteers from the ACC-VI hiked out to Lake Helen Mackenzie, a round distance of well over 10 km. Travelling on soft snow in snowshoes was a first-time experience for almost all the youth participants, and the overall distance of the hike was a fair challenge, and thus accomplishment, even though all of them were in fairly good physical condition.



Fun in the snow at Forbidden Plateau. (Photo by Karun Thanjavur)

Though quite tired at the end of the hike, all of them were excited and in great spirits as we debriefed in the warmth of the Raven Lodge over a sumptuous lunch provided by the ICA. The ICA and ACC-VI partnered well in arranging all the logistics for the trip. It should also be mentioned that our timing of this trip could not have been better – due to the sudden restrictions imposed due to the COVID pandemic, all operations at Mt. Washington were shut down a few days after our trip. As an overall summary of our program, it has been a very positive experience for everyone, and we look forward to continuing similar outings in partnership with the ICA in future.

A Thumb Sketch History of the ACCVI Photo Competition

Peggy Taylor

As many members of the ACCVI know, we have an annual Photo Competition every year in October to view images of members’ adventures and celebrate all things mountain. But do you know how it all started? I sure did not.



The ICA youth group snowshoeing at Forbidden Plateau. (Photo by Karun Thanjavur)

From the start trophies with engraved shields noting the winner in each category have been the reward for winners, but trophies have gone out of vogue, the trophies have grown larger and space in most homes has grown smaller to display them in. Roger and I had the pleasure to organize and co-ordinate the annual photo competition for about five years from 2013 - 2018 and, as the person who collected the trophies from past winners, I arranged for the shields to be engraved and then delivered or arranged for pick-up of the trophies. I was noticing a growing trend of reluctance to accept the trophies! I suggested to the executive that perhaps it was time to retire them. As a result the club executive discussed the issue and agreed that it was time to dispense with the awarding of trophies in favour of gift cards from outdoor stores, starting in October, 2020. Whether you loved them or hated them, the trophies do indeed represent a wonderful piece of the club's history. This seemed an opportune time to try to find out how it all started and progressed.

I emailed a few of the long time members to gather some information of how it all began and a handful of members responded. As this article is based mostly on recollections, please forgive any errors and omissions! Indeed if there is more information on the history of the photo competition in response to this article, I would welcome hearing the stories. Prior to the competition starting there were open projector nights (called Mountain Mosaic), held at the Faculty Club at UVIC, at which members could show a few slides of what they had been up to.

The competition began in 1987 when Don Berryman was chair of the section, but the idea sprung up a few years prior in 1985 and it seems likely that it was the brainchild of Rick Eppler who suggested it at an executive meeting. I was quite amazed to find out that both Sandy Briggs and Robie Macdonald had kept issues of the quarterly paper *Island Bushwhacker* that was mailed out to members in Autumn, Winter, Spring and Summer. In the Autumn, 1985, issue the following announcement was made:

PHOTO CONTEST:

We are planning a section photo-contest with trophies and a plaque as tentative prizes for the following 4 categories:

Mountain Pictorial – should be a mountain scene with or without people or man-made objects, but these should be the highlight of the picture (1st, 2nd prize)

Mountain Activity – can be either climbing or skiing. The scene should depict people (as the highlight) in active or passive situations with no doubt being cast that it is in the mountains (1st, 2nd prize)

Nature – can include any form of alpine nature such as flowers, animals, birds, or natural terrain phenomena. There should be no man made objects in the picture (1st, 2nd prize)

Black & White – Anything associated with the mountains or mountain environment (1st prize)

The contest rules are simple: Any contestant may submit four entries, each clearly marked as to category, with maximum of two per category. Submissions should be slides or prints (5 x 7 or later) mail to J. Poulin (address noted), or drop off at room 251 (address noted) c/o Jim Weston, no later than Sept. 28, 1987. Winning slides will be shown at AGM wine and cheese, with best overall featured on the cover of the annual *Bushwhacker*. Please duplicate your material; we will try to return it, but we do not accept responsibility for loss or damage.

Trophy donations would be most gratefully accepted; call R. Eppler.

You will note what a long lead time there was to collect slides or prints!

In the Autumn (Sept.) 1987 paper *Island Bushwhacker Update* the same announcement was repeated, with the note that “Last date for Submission is Sept. 28, 1987” and this time the slides or prints were to be “sent to Julie Henderson (address noted) or Jim Weston (address noted) or to be brought to the Faculty Club at U. of Victoria on September 28th. This is the SLIDE SHOW AND SWAP MEET evening. The winning slides and prints will be shown at the A.G.M. /Wine and Cheese (see dates below) with the best overall featured on the cover of the *Bushwhacker Annual*. Judges for the contest are Bo Martin, Mark Yunker and Kathy Beveridge.”

A 1988 announcement in the paper *Island Bushwhacker Update* (Jan. 1988) appeared:

PHOTO CONTEST:

This is running again this year so take pictures and enter them. The rules have been altered slightly; people who entered last year can only submit slides taken since Sept. '87. First time entries can choose any of their slides. Best Black and White has been replaced with a Best Overall Category. There will also be a trophy donated by Don Berryman for “Most Humorous” picture; he thinks he has the inside track on this one!

Sandy guessed that the giant machine nut gracing the Humour trophy might have come from his father who worked at the Dockyard, likely from a ship or crane.



The Humour Trophy backgrounded against an early winning entry featuring Sandy Briggs.

1988 saw the addition of two new categories: Humour and Winter (Alpine) Activity.

A fun bit of trivia....the burl on the Vancouver Island trophy, the last trophy introduced in 1999, came from a Vancouver Island tree and was made by Richard Keltie. Rick Eppler took great pride in the trophies, polishing the figurines before each contest and adding extra layers to the plinths as the lower levels filled.

A big shout out to Reinhard Illner who made sweep of all of the categories in 1997 except for one. Marilyn Hewgill was the spoiler, taking the prize in the Winter Activity category.

Rick Hudson recalled that Sandy Briggs organized the photo competition in the late 1980's and the event was held at UVIC's Faculty club, where there was a bar in an adjacent room. So things were pretty jolly and we were young and could hold a pint or two! Entries were colour slides and black and white prints, with most of the trophies awarded for slides and one or two for prints. When the Faculty Club became too expensive, the competition was held in odd places for a few years, but then Rick Hudson was able to get a deal at the *Swan Lake Nature Centre* for regular meetings and we rolled the photo competition into that venue. No booze, but a nice location. The annual photo competition (along with the monthly slideshow nights) have been held there ever since....that is until this year when Covid reared its ugly head! In the last couple of

years, Jes Scott and Mary Sanseverino have also been MC's for the competition. Mary was brave enough to tackle the competition online during Covid and despite a few initial hiccups did an incredible job!

Rick Hudson went on to say that it was around 2001 that we started transitioning to digital images and he bought the club's first digital projector. It cost a lot and was not very good, but for a few years we had both slides and digital entries in each category. That made comparison complicated as we had to fire up the two projectors sequentially and initially digitals were pretty small in comparison to slides. Sandy was the MC for the



The Vancouver Island Photo Trophy with a burl donated by Richard Keltie, backgrounded against a silhouetted mountain panorama of Strathcona Park from the northwest.

Year	Humour	Summer Activity	Winter Activity
1987		Don Berryman	
1988	Peter McAllister	Sandy Briggs	Murrough O'Brien
1989	Sandy Briggs/John Pratt	Rick Hudson	Phee Hudson
1990	Sandy Briggs	Denis Manke	
1991	Barb Brooks/Trevor Nelson	Sandy Briggs	
1992	Dennis Manke	Sandy Briggs	
1993	Claire Ebendinger	Rob Wilson	Margaret Brown
1994	Kayla Stevenson	Ian Brown	Reg Stratton
1995	Claire Ebendinger	Don Berryman	Margaret Brown
1996	Catrin Brown	Kris Holm	Jeremy Dolan
1997	Reinhard Illner	Reinhard Illner	Marilyn Hewgill
1998	Claire Ebendinger	Graham Bennett	Greg Gordon
1999	Gerta Smythe	Catrin Brown	Gerta Smythe
2000	Claire Ebendinger	Rick Eppler	Chris Shepard
2001	Sandy Briggs	Hinrich Schaefer	Don Morton
2002	Marcelo Laca	Marcelo Laca	Christine Fordham
2003	Chris Davis	Rick Hudson	Christine Fordham
2004	Russ Moir	Stan Marcus	Albert Hestler
2005	Andrew Bennett	Christine Fordham	Phillipa Hudson
2006	Russ Moir	Selena Swets	Murrough O'Brien
2007	Stan Marcus	Torge Scheumann	Sandy Briggs
2008	Phillipa Hudson	Selena Swets	Mary Sanseverino
2009	Cedric Zala	Rory O'Connell	John Young
2010	Colleen Kasting	Christine Fordham	Ken Wong
2011	Charles Turner	Nicole Barrette	Rory O'Connell
2012	Simon McVaugh-Smock	Nicole Barrette	Catrin Brown
2013	Roxanne Stedman	Chris Jensen	Martin Hofmann
2014	Albert Hestler	Chris Jensen	Phee Hudson
2015	Chris George	Chris Istace	Chris Jensen
2016	Mary Sanseverino	Chris Istace	Roxanne Stedman
2017	Rick Hudson	Natasha Salway	Natasha Salway
2018	Catrin Brown		Hunter Lee
2019	Nadja Steiner	Nadja Steiner	Hunter Lee

And the Trophy has gone to.....

Year	Vancouver Island	Mountain Pictorial	Nature
1987		Rob Macdonald	Rob Macdonald/Wendy Richardson
1988		Rick Eppler	Wendy Richardson
1989			Phee Hudson
1990		John Pratt	Gerta Smythe
1991		Margaret Brown	John Pratt
1992		Albert Hestler	John Pratt
1993		Carol Stewart	Gary Greenspoon
1994		Catrin Brown	Rob Wilson
1995		Valerio Faraoii	Doug Goodwin
1996		Randy Aitken	Gil Parker
1997		Reinhard Illner	Reinhard Illner
1998		Graham Bennett	Gerta Smythe
1999	Richard Keltie	Kayla Stevenson	Martin Davis
2000	no winner	Sandy Briggs	Greg Gordon
2001	Hinrich Schaefer	Hinrich Schaefer	Catrin Brown
2002	Hinrich Schaefer	Charles Turner	Chris Schreiber
2003	Jules Thomson	Hinrich Schaefer	Chris Shepard
2004	Hinrich Schaefer	Doug Murrell/Russ Moir	Chris Shepard
2005	John Pratt	Phillipa Hudson	Graham Maddocks
2006	Sandy Stewart	Phee Hudson	Phee Hudson
2007	Doug Hurrell	Doug Hurrell	Leslie Gordon
2008	Tawny Lem	Dave Campbell	Sandy Stewart
2009	Ken Wong	Tom Roozendaal	Catrin Brown
2010	Tom Roozendaal	Nicole Barrette	Catrin Brown
2011	Robin Sutmoller	Charles He	Christine Fordham
2012	Lindsay Elms	Hugh Thompson	Phee Hudson
2013	Valerie Wootton	Martin Hofmann	Christine Fordham
2014	Andrew Pape-Salmon	Roxanne Stedman	Lise Gagnon/Chris Jensen
2015	Patrick Horsfield	Chris Jensen	Elena Sales
2016	Mary Sanseverino	Chris George	Denise Hook
2017	Natasha Salway	Chris George	Mary Sanseverino
2018	Jes Scott	Alcina DeOliviera	Dave Sutil
2019	Elizabeth Robertson	Robie Macdonald	Liz Williams



The Winter Activities Trophy, backgrounded with a photo taken at Campbell Icefields by Roger Taylor.

competition every year and we relied on him to keep the masses quiet with poor puns and backcountry tales while the tech crew struggled to get the projectors operational, often using a single power plug. This writer recalls that Sandy was a most humorous and knowledgeable host who could almost always tell you where a photo was taken.... he had (and indeed probably still has) so much mountain recognition capability. He anchored those events with great skill right up until he moved to New Brunswick a mere three years ago, I believe. Sandy recalls that, prior to Rick purchasing a slide projector, many members loaned their personal slide projectors for these evenings.

Then came the switch to digital photography. Sandy notes that the change over from slides to digital did not remove all the traditional problems of the physical format. There would be stuck slides, upside-down slides, backwards slides, the inability to move backwards, bulbs burning out, the changing of focus as a slide warmed up, upset slide trays....oops!! But a new set of problems was encountered. Having the right cables, connectors, dongles, compatibility between laptop and projector, software issues, resolution in early digital photos, colour profiles of laptop and projector with some of the old issues of upside-down, burned out bulbs, etc. Roger and I and other organizers can attest to the fact that some folks do not read the rules or forget them at the time of submission and label digital photos incorrectly, send the incorrect format, or enter them in the wrong category or, indeed, the photo may not have even been taken in the mountains or fit the category! In our pressure cooker, last-minute society, the submissions will mostly come in on the last day or two prior to the deadline and indeed in the last few hours of the last evening. So the volunteers would spend a lot of time sorting out these sorts of issues.

notes, is that people do not have to submit physical slides or prints ahead of time, then recover them afterwards. All of which leaves room for the possibility of images being lost or damaged, especially in the process of being taken off to be scanned (in three colours) for inclusion in the *Island Bushwhacker Annual* back in the day. Also digital entries allowed more participation by up-Island members.

By around 2005, Rick recalled that pretty-well everyone was shooting digital photos and the file sizes were increasing. Around that time Rick introduced a 'Mountain Portraits' category meant for images of mountain people/cultures from around the world. However folks did not quite catch on and instead sent submissions that were usually of club members, some of which were photographed from a distance, so there was not much portrait in the portrait! So the intention of this category became diluted to more of a catch-all for photos that did not fit in any other category. In response, that category was dropped and Mountain Activity was split into two categories – Summer and Winter – to keep the same number of categories as there were trophies. A good



The Summer Activities Trophy. The background photo was taken by Ken Wong on Mt Alava's summit in 2010. Featured are (L-R) Rick Eppler, Tony Vaughn, Frank Wille, Ken Wong, Martin Smith, Cory Milne, Paul and Nicole Barrette.

But the upside of digital photos, as Rick

decision in the end! With the growing popularity of the contest, and photography in general, rules had to be developed to put a cap on the number of entries per person as the evening would become way too long and logistically more difficult for the volunteer collecting the photos as Sandy notes.

I do not know how long there was an actual set of appointed judges. As long as I have been a member and prior, members attending the actual competition were the judges and voted for their favorite photo in each category and the counting was still pretty old school with small paper ballots showing the number of the photo chosen in each category. Those were manually tallied during a break and winners and runners up were announced that evening. But try to get a photo of any of the winners! Most of these photographers seem pretty shy to be photographed themselves or maybe they just did not want to be seen holding the trophy??! When Roger took over the collection of photo entries and saw how old school the counting was, being the IT guy that he is, he immediately created a spreadsheet to tally the votes. That turned out to be a much faster, easier and maybe more accurate way to tally the votes.

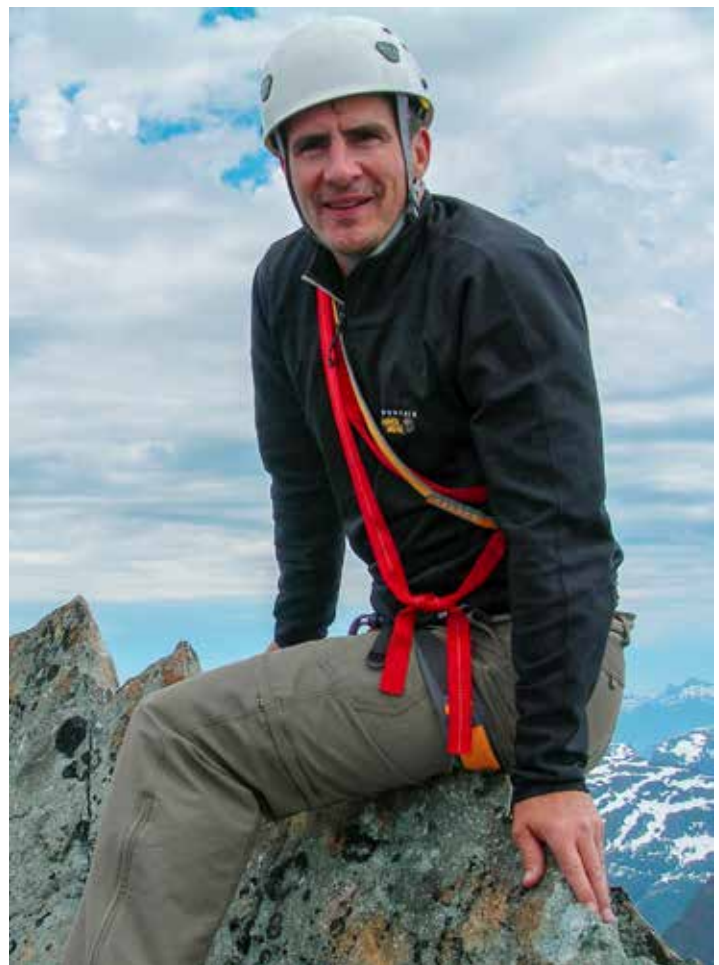
Rick mentioned that over the years there was a tightening up of the rules describing each category after a beach fire photo won the “Vancouver Island Mountain” category one year and a prairie dog won the “Nature” category!! People would get quite fierce about it at the event – if so much as a trail was visible in Mountain Scenery there would be cries of “man-made object” from the back of the room and “disqualified”! I do also recall that there was a small movement to ban any ptarmigan photos in the nature category as those photos seem to pop up with great regularity! And our latest challenge is to ensure that submitted photos are not taken by drone. But I agree with Rick that members have always taken it all in stride with the event always being well attended and enjoyed. I also agree that when you had a film camera, photography was something that you did and many did extremely well. You chose your shots judiciously, only if they were noteworthy, as film and processing was expensive. Now everyone has a camera in their phone, or at least a digital camera, and we are awash in photos! Because of this, many images have lost some of their impact and value.

No matter how you view the technology and changes in technology, the mountains will be there for us to enjoy and recreate in. We are blessed enough to be able to capture the scene and memories in images. Those images we will treasure now and as we get older and the desire to share our special experiences in nature with others we love and those with similar outdoor passions will likely not change – whether that is in person or by Zoom!

Thanks to Robie Macdonald, Sandy Briggs, Rick Hudson and Catrin Brown for their valuable input in helping me to compile this wee history!

James (Jamie) Ernest Duncan (1963-2020)

George Butcher and Ken Wong



Jamie Duncan in 2007 atop Col Foster. (Photo by Ken Wong)

Long-time ACC-VI member Jamie Duncan, aged 56, died of heart attack January 14, 2020, skinning the up-track of his favourite backcountry ski area on the island of Hokkaido, Japan.

Born in Nanaimo to Bernard (Bill) Duncan and his wife Karen (nee Kiviniemi), Jamie attended schools in Nanaimo and as a youngster discovered skiing at Green Mountain and honed his outdoor skills with the Boy Scouts. Smitten with skiing, upon finishing high school he moved to Whistler working as a ski instructor. He came back to the Island to attend University of Victoria, finding a life-long interest in mapping, and graduating in 1994 with a BA in

Geography.

Jamie had a 27 year career with the BC provincial government maintaining all the while that he wasn't staying long. He started with the *Ministry of Environment* in 1994, with stints in *Ministry of Transportation and Highways* and *Translink*. He was fond of recounting an early project for Highways which involved driving the provincial highways filming as he went – long before Google Street view became a reality.

Jamie spent most of his career with *GeoBC* where he became a team leader immersed in the world of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) contributing his geospatial expertise to products and decisions across the BC government. He managed a portfolio of projects for *BC Parks* (trails and recreation sites), *Environment*, *Emergency Response*, *Compliance & Enforcement* and *Forestry*. Jamie is remembered by his fellow workers as an inspiring colleague and mentor who kept pushing everything forward and motivating his staff to be the best they could be.

Jamie brought his passion for the backcountry into his work, often reminding project teams that their products should be widely available to the public on their mobile devices even where no data connection was available. As a result of his input many of the products *GeoBC* creates are more accessible. Jamie ensured that the 1:20,000 TRIM raster topographic maps of BC were georeferenced and useable on a mobile device. (See <https://apps.gov.bc.ca/ext/mtec/public/products/mapsheet>.) Jamie was always generous in helping his ACC community with their mapping needs and questions.

One particular project that brought out Jamie's personal passion and expertise was his work as the *GeoBC* lead on Avalanche Terrain Mapping and the development of brochures and signage to make backcountry travel safer. You may come across the trailhead signs warning of avalanche terrain that Jamie helped design.

Jamie was a dedicated husband and father. He married Michelle Giske in 1996 and daughter Rakel was born in 1998. Tragically Michelle died of cancer in 2000 leaving Jamie a single parent with less time for the mountains. Jamie remarried with Lindsay Karen Atkinson in 2009 and they had a daughter, Abbey, born 2007. Tragedy struck again with Lindsay's death to cancer in 2010. Jamie was devoted to his daughters and his extended family. When he was able to join us in the mountains, we valued his company all the more.

Jamie started his Island Qualifiers in 1996 summiting the Golden Hinde on a trip described as a six-day slogfest through unforeseen heavy snow and ice. He finished the nine qualifiers with Mt. Warden in 2008 (see K. Wong's write-up in the Island Bushwhacker 2008). He greatly valued the ACC recognition for this accomplishment.

Jamie's mountaineering extended to the mainland and down to South America with an attempt on Mt. Aconcagua and hiking Torres de Paine.

Jamie was an enthusiastic participant in ACC trips, from rafting the Tatsenshini/Alesek Rivers to winter hut trips in the Rockies, Selkirks, Monashees and the Valhalla range. With Jamie along, laughter and good times were guaranteed. He had a mischievous (in a good way) nature. Up high or on the slopes Jamie was alert to others' safety and never pressured anyone to go beyond their risk tolerance. But when it was needed he had a gentle way of encouraging his companions to attain their goals – "you can do it" was his standard.

Jamie was generous with his friendship and had other outdoors communities - hiking friends, soccer friends and cycling friends. He was an avid cyclist, both road and mountain with regular local and mainland tours, over to Hurricane Ridge, and off to ride the Tour de France route.

Those of us who skied with Jamie thought he was the best in the Section, light on his feet, always in control with excellent form and turns. He did enjoy giving us pointers to improve our skiing – "you're leaning back too much", "keep those arms in front", "ski as soft as the snow is". So on the rare occasion when he took a fall, he was in for some ribbing.

Jamie could light up the room and any group with his big smile and his ability to find humour and bring positivity to any situation. He would bring us up if we were down or going negative. Jamie always insisted on fairness to others.

Jamie's operative word was "sweet" for the things and people he admired and appreciated (and even for situations where the outcome was unknown). He used it a lot, reflecting his positive and fun outlook. Life to Jamie was generally sweet and he took full advantage of every moment – a lesson for us all.

Laurence Philippsen (1954 – 2020)

Valerie Wootton and Lindsay Elms

Sunday July 5, 2020. I (Lindsay) received an unexpected call from a friend, Andrew Schissler, in Campbell River. Andrew is quiet-spoken and has a calm tone to his voice, but this morning he wasn't calling for a chit-chat. He quickly got to the point. He was calling on behalf of the *Campbell River Ground Search and Rescue* of which he is an integral member. He said that he knew that I not only climbed regularly with Laurence Philippsen, but that I was very familiar with the terrain on Elk Mountain, Mounts Laing, Filberg and Cobb. He was sorry to inform me that



Laurence Philippsen (1954-2020). (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

Laurence was overdue from a solo trip in the area and that they had been searching for him the last two days and were continuing with the search today. He was asking if I had time to go over the route with him and maybe suggest spots where I thought might be possible sites to look for Laurence. Laurence had started out on Tuesday morning on a three-day trip hoping to ascend Mounts Filberg, Cobb and Haig Brown. It was an ambitious trip but it wouldn't be too much of a stretch for Laurence. Unfortunately, no one had heard from Laurence and on Friday morning, July 3, the RCMP had been notified that he was overdue. I was stunned to think that Laurence was missing. I quickly went over the traverse in my head. I pointed out that Laurence had day-tripped Mount Laing last year and he had a clear view of his proposed route. I had also discussed the route with him during one of our climbs. I told Andrew that Laurence would have texted home once he was on the ridge where there was good cell coverage. I had a gut feeling that something had happened to him on the first day before reaching the ridge. I finished by asking Andrew to keep me informed and said that I was available to fly in and help with the search. I felt dazed and wondered if the conversation I just had was real. I quickly texted Val to apprise her of the situation. She would want to know: "I just got a call from Andrew in CR and Laurence is missing

somewhere along Laing, Filberg, Cobb. Overdue and hasn't called out. No sign of him anywhere. Not good!" For the rest of the afternoon I kept going over the different scenarios in my head, but kept coming up blank. Later in the evening Andrew called and asked me to be in Campbell River in the morning to assist in the search. They still hadn't found Laurence by the end of that day.

Monday July 6. I drove to the Search and Rescue office in Campbell River where I met many familiar faces. I was glad that so many people were offering their services to look for Laurence even though most of them didn't know him. I discussed with Andrew my thoughts regarding where to search for Laurence based on my knowledge of the area and of Laurence. I then met with Paul Berry, the Comox Valley Ground Search and Rescue leader. Paul went over the information he had and told me that Laurence's vehicle was found on the logging roads on Elk Mountain and that Laurence had the tracks from George Butcher's GPS. George is a friend of many of us from the Alpine Club and had done a trip to Matchlee Mountain with Laurence last year. Just two weeks ago George had attempted Mount Filberg and had sent his tracks to Laurence. He suggested to Laurence to take this lower route through the forest as it would avoid going over the summits of Elk Mountain and Mount Laing again and would probably put him closer to the ridge north of Filberg in a shorter time. Paul said he had crews on the ground covering the route through the forest, but he wanted to send me up onto Mount Laing with Rod Szasz, Marc Lyster, Laurence Foucault and one other. We met the helicopter at the Campbell River Spit and soon we were in the air flying towards the clouds that hopefully weren't too thick to allow us to land at a site I had in mind on the east shoulder of Mount Laing just a few minutes from the summit. Unfortunately, we couldn't land at the intended site, but we found another landing zone not too far away where the pilot was able to drop us off. A couple of minutes after the helicopter left, all was quiet as we sat in the middle of the beautiful mountains of Strathcona Park. We spent the day searching the areas I considered the most likely places an accident might occur, but by late afternoon when we were plucked off the ridge near Mount Filberg there was still no sign of Laurence's whereabouts.

Tuesday July 7. After four days of intense searching in the alpine and in the forest, the search was called off. On Facebook, some members of the climbing community were asking why it was called off after only four days of searching. A search in the Paradise Meadows area a few years ago went on for a much longer period, but the difference was items from the missing person kept being found. In the search for Laurence, not a single clue as to where he was or what had happened was found. A huge amount of ground had been covered on foot by searchers and search dogs, and the helicopter had flown over much of the search area. Where was he? That evening my climbing

friend Rod Szasz, who was on the search from the Nanaimo Search and Rescue team, phoned Val and me and we went over the map trying to determine what other possible routes Laurence might have considered taking.

Wednesday July 8. Rod, Val and I continued pondering over the whereabouts of Laurence and talked again in the morning. Rod had all the S&R tracks from the previous four days and there appeared to be one area that hadn't been covered. All three of us felt that it was worth a shot to try and re-activate the search for one or two more days. Rod explained what we would have to do to have the search reopened, which was to talk to SAR explaining why we think this area should be looked at based on our collective knowledge of Laurence and the terrain. We also needed permission to speak on behalf of the Philippsen family, which they readily agreed to. If SAR agreed with our ideas, they would then go to the RCMP and pass on the information and ask for a reopening of the search. SAR did agree to our supposition and were taking it to the RCMP. While we were awaiting their decision, we decided to go ahead with a ground search of our own on the weekend. People were using Facebook Messenger to contact me saying they wanted to help search for Laurence. They had seen the newspaper article that was posted on the Facebook pages of both the Alpine Club of Canada VI and the Vancouver Island Climbing & Mountaineering. Without officially asking for help with a search we were getting lots of interest. We contacted Catrin Brown, the ACCVI chair, to explain about the search we were organizing. She immediately jumped on board offering support. Catrin offered to send a notice out to club members and then coordinate the volunteers from Victoria therefore giving us more time to organize what we had to do. It was fantastic the number of people from the climbing community who felt the loss of a fellow climber and knew the value of having closure not just for themselves but Laurence's family.

Thursday July 9. The whole day was a blur. People were constantly messaging me offering their help. Many of them were trying to get a picture in their head of the location of the search and what had transpired to date. I did my best to give them all as much information as I could. In the meantime, Val was arranging forms that we could email out to those wanting to help. It wasn't a waiver, but we needed all their contact information. We also sent them a detailed list of what they needed to bring and asked them to tick the boxes on the sheet and bring it with them on the weekend. We wanted to ensure that they had what they needed to be safe in the bush while out searching. We didn't need another mishap. Also included was a map showing the logging roads up Elk Mountain for those who might be driving up Friday evening to camp. It was midday when Paul Berry notified us that the RCMP had agreed to reopen the search for two more days. We spent time with SAR

doing an online zoom meeting looking at the maps with the tracks from the previous four days search. We decided on the areas where they would concentrate their search and they asked us to keep our searchers out of the area as they were bringing in a number of SAR and RCMP K9 teams. We also marked out areas on the map that SAR felt needed to be searched by our teams. Unfortunately, the weather reports were not looking good for the weekend.

Friday July 10. By mid-morning we had 45 people on the search list. Val and I kept the family updated with how things were going and they felt overwhelmed by the response. At 3 p.m. I went down to the CVGSAR office and picked up a radio from Paul Berry so that we could stay in touch with him. He was impressed by the number of people volunteering and Val's detailed organizing skills. By 4 p.m. Val and I felt we had everything under control: everyone had the email with attachments, and we had a list of all those who offered help. We wanted a little down time so we drove up to the end of the logging road on Elk Mountain and camped. About a dozen friends showed up that evening and we all sat around the fire swapping climbing stories and laughing.

Saturday July 11. Unfortunately, we heard from SAR that due to the weather they could not fly in the K9 teams but would try again on Sunday. First thing that morning Rich Ronyecz and I drove down to the Big Den Recreation Area beside Upper Campbell Lake to rendezvous with the searchers from all over the island. It was heart-warming to see so many people especially when the weather wasn't the best. Car-pooling was arranged and then a convoy of vehicles headed up the logging road. When we all arrived at the "op centre", set up under a tarp between two vehicles, Val, assisted by Janelle and Catrin, took all the forms and got everyone into groups of five or six people. Each team needed someone with a radio, a GPS and an emergency beacon. We didn't want people standing around for too long in the rain so Val quickly got them organized and passed them group by group to myself and Rod to be assigned their search area. Before the first team set off, Val read out a brief note from Laurence's family that they emailed to us Friday morning: "We continue to be astonished by the energy and determination shown by the hiking and climbing community in the search for Laurence. We are deeply touched and profoundly grateful for the efforts of each and every one of you. Please stay safe. The Philippsen family." It was an emotional moment reading it out and everyone paused to reflect for a minute. Eight teams headed out on pre-determined paths and, although the weather wasn't very nice for the search, everyone completed their task and returned safely, and given the circumstances, with a smile on their face, but with no fresh clues as to Laurence's whereabouts. The climbing community coming together at such a short notice and for such an unfortunate situation is very humbling. Thank you everyone.

Sunday July 12. Forty-two SAR members and five K9 teams were dropped into a remote area by helicopter and performed extensive searches through difficult wooded and technical terrain, but at the end of the day there were still no clues as to Laurence's whereabouts amidst the rugged mountains. Rod Szasz phoned Val and me that evening after returning from the search and told us that everyone was absolutely baffled. It was as if Laurence had disappeared off the face of the earth. If his vehicle wasn't parked where it was, one might have thought he had gone somewhere else to climb. Sadly, it appeared as though this missing person wasn't going to have any closure and we were going to be left with many unanswered questions. It wouldn't be easy shaking him from our thoughts.

During the months of July and August, friends went into the area with their own climbing objectives, but also knowing that Laurence was out there somewhere and, although not a pleasant thought, were hoping they might find him. Then on August 13, two climbers found Laurence's body not far from the ridge where he could have texted home on that first day of his trip. It was a bittersweet feeling, but now there was closure. We now knew where the accident had occurred and what most likely happened, but we didn't know why. All it took was an instant. A foot slipped or a hold came off in his hand. The weight of his pack probably pulled him over backwards. He stood no chance. This is how he left us, forever, with his dreams, his happiness. Sometimes words simply fail. His death has left everyone in shock. Our thoughts and condolences go out to his family, and the mountaineering community mourns the loss of a friend. As mountaineers we know only too well that there is this side to mountaineering. There is passion, but also pain.

I will remember Laurence for many things, but it was his love of adventure and his willingness to explore new places that brought us together in the mountains. I first met Laurence in 2013 on a work party to clear the trail to Rugged Mountain. We then did a trip in 2015 to Emerald Peak north of the Alava/Bate sanctuary. It was a little after Val's climbing accident in 2017 when I was looking for a regular climbing partner. Laurence was also looking at getting back into the mountains after his climbing competition accident and early retirement. It was a case of synchronicity. As on any trip to the mountains there is a lot of time to hear stories and Laurence was up for telling a few. In his younger days Laurence enjoyed speed both on his motorbike and on his skis at Mount Washington. Then there were the climbing stories. Although a competent climber, a couple of years ago while in Switzerland Laurence hired a guide rather than climb on his own. However, once the guide realized his client's competency, he took him on some more challenging routes. Finally, there were his stories of close calls while driving logging trucks and his super-snorkel log loader. Almost every

corner we drove around on the logging roads up island there was a story to tell. Laurence had worked his whole life up at Vernon Camp between Woss and Gold River and when his two boys were young, they used to go hiking in the area into some of the small beautiful lakes that nestled in the mountains to go fishing and swimming. Occasionally, he would climb some of the peaks with his cousin Ernie Klassen. Now he wanted to explore those mountains more thoroughly near where he had worked. With various other climbing friends, we climbed all the satellite peaks around Mount Maquilla, the three peaks of what we called Klahan Peak and nearby Mount Sebalhal. Then we started down the Tsitika Main climbing some of the obscure peaks surrounding Tsitika Mountain. The Bonanza Range was just across the valley so we did several day-trips scrambling around their summits. Then there were some climbs in the Mackenzie Range and the Prince of Wales Range. There was a never-ending list of peaks to climb. Laurence was meticulous in his research. He spent hours looking at Google Earth and plotting the roads on his GPS. When he wasn't climbing in the mountains, he could be found at the climbing wall in Campbell River, on average twice a week, with his gym partner Heidi Mulbacher. Together they climbed at a level higher than many of the younger jocks. Laurence also had his own goals and was keen to finish off his IQ's. One of his memorable climbs was the traverse of Mount Colonel Foster with Andreas Hinkkala. Andreas sent me the following few words about the trip:

"In 2015, I had the opportunity to complete the Colonel Foster traverse with Laurence. He was probably the fittest 60+ year-old climber I've ever met. He was a very experienced and low-key climber who never bothered discussing much about his climbing exploits. The year we did the traverse was an extremely hot summer and I remember getting truly cooked, while Laurence took it all in stride. Because of Laurence's comfort in soloing, we moved through the traverse fairly quickly and efficiently. We ended up bivying on the northeast summit due to lack of water anywhere else on the route. Unfortunately, not too long after the successful traverse Laurence broke his back during an indoor climbing competition. We kept in touch over the years, and had planned to head back out once his back was fully recovered. Laurence was an easy going yet incredibly tough climbing partner, and my only true regret is that we never returned to the alpine together again. He was an inspiration to me, and to this day I fondly reminisce of the Foster Traverse and the great partner I had for this trip."

Laurence completed his IQ's in 2019. But Laurence didn't always have to climb at the higher level as he enjoyed taking new climbers to the mountains. He also loved going into the mountains with his two boys, when they could get away from their work, where they could just enjoy the views and to be together in nature. Laurence was also a

devoted Grandfather and an amazing carpenter. He built his house in Black Creek, on property that he grew up on, and was constantly renovating and up-grading it to suit the needs of his family. In the summer of 2019, Laurence was there to support Val in her return to the mountains and in September 2020 we were looking forward to going to England and touring on a self-guided canal boat near Manchester with Laurence and his wife Lorraine. Instead, Val and I will just have to remember all the good times we had together with Laurence in the mountains and as a friend. Rest in peace mate!



Mounts Myra, Thelwood and Moyeha Explorations

Roxanne Stedman

October, 2017 – August, 2020

I think it all started with my first trip up Myra with Sandy Stedman during Thanksgiving weekend, October 8, 2017. We did it as a day hike. It was a cold and frosty morning as we started up in the dark. I had heard from my daughter's friend who had been there on an outdoor ed trip that it was spectacular terrain, and it was. It was a beautiful fall day with a thick frosty layer of ice and beautiful fall colours, which made for a great day out.

That Myra Trip got me thinking of Thelwood. *Island Alpine* describes it as superb terrain with a maze of granite crags and alpine lakes. I suggested it to Dave, but he didn't seem interested until Tak posted a trip to the area with the hopes of climbing Myra, Thelwood and maybe Moyeha on the weekend of July 6th, 2019. If I remember correctly, Tak's posting described it as "an easy paced trip!"

Our group (Tak Ogasawara (leader), Laura Darling, Graham Smith, Dave Suttill, Chloe Swabey, Ken Wong and Roxanne Stedman) camped at Sandbag lake, and in the morning we headed toward Thelwood in cloud and misty rain. Visibility was poor and navigating was a bit challenging with ~four GPS units and some snow on the route. After ~6.5 km along the ridge, we turned back. I had a nasty vertical fall going up a steep, slick, treed gully and whacked my sternum into a boulder that almost knocked me out. As the weather improved after dinner, the group went bouldering on the dome above Sandbag Lake to watch the sunset as I recovered at camp. We woke to a

glorious morning. We took a quick trip to the top of Myra, then returned to Sandbag Lake and hiked out.

Fast forward to August 25, 2019. After lots of planning and discussion, including the possibility of canoeing in on Jim Mitchell Lake or heading up the north shore of Tennent Lake, Dave Suttill and I headed back to the Thelwood area for an attempt on Thelwood and Moyha. The weather was looking great.

We decided to hike up the usual route to Sandbag Lake, which is becoming a busy area; we ran into Josh and his son just past Sandbag Lake. We camped on a granite mound above a small lake 1 km west of Carwithen Lake, just beyond our turn-around point on Tak's trip. It was hot.

At 6:50 a.m., we were on our way to Thelwood. We wound our way up the first of two very steep boulder-strewn gullies, including Crystal Pass. We were on the summit of Thelwood at ~11:15 on a beautiful day with views of the surrounding glaciers and mountains. After ~11 km, we were back at camp around 4 p.m. in time for a swim.

Dave had brought along the "*Exploring Strathcona Park*" book by Phil Stone. After reviewing route options, instead of heading back past Thelwood we decided to try a different approach to Moyeha the next day.

In the morning we headed down the creek bed to the east end of Upper Thelwood Lake from the lake outlet below our camp. We thought we were hiking along the south shore of Upper Thelwood Lake only to realize that we were on a peninsula. Dave tried to ford to the south shore, but the water was too cold and deep, so we had to back track to the end of the lake before continuing on to its south shore. We then went up the Thelwood Creek bed to the Bancroft-Thelwood pass. We continued along the pass to where we thought a good route up the north side of Moyeha would be.

Initially, the going was good but we soon realized we needed to head up the steep gully. We weren't sure where to exit the gully as we thought that if we exited to the east there might not be a connecting ridge to the summit, so we called it a day and turned around at ~1:30 p.m. It was hot, and I was grateful to cool off in the creek on our way back to Upper Thelwood Lake. Dave found a better route back to camp up the creek above Upper Thelwood Lake. We were at camp at around 7 p.m. after 18 km.

We hiked out the next day via Sandbag Lake.

Fast forward another year to August, 2020. Moyeha Mountain is best done from a base camp that is situated close to the mountain. This was the lesson learned from two previous attempts in 2019, the first of which can't really be counted as a serious attempt as our camp at Sandbag Lake was ridiculously far for even Mt Thelwood given the conditions.



Moyeha Mountain from Crystal Pass in 2019. (Photo by Dave Suttill)

Ken, Graham and Tak had tackled Thelwood and Moyeha a week earlier. I got a message from Ken when they got out to Campbell River and it sounded like it was a tough trip. I am so glad I didn't go with them!

Learning from their mistakes, Dave Suttill and I headed up a week later on August 25th, passing around the north end of Tennent Lake like Ken had done. The first half kilometer west of the lake was a bit of an ugly uphill bushwhack, but we had been assured that it was worth it, being the most direct route. The terrain around there was full of minor hillocks and bluffs interspersed with small lakes and tarns. We stopped to camp at 7 p.m. on a bluff by a tarn overlooking a small lake about 8.5 km along.

The next day, we rejoined the ridge-top route from our previous trip to Thelwood and camped where Ken had, overlooking Crystal Pass and the twin granite spires of Moyeha.

We started early at 6:15 a.m. We went down to the lake at the bottom of Crystal Pass, then headed down the gully descending on the east side of the creek draining south from Crystal Pass and into the Bancroft-Thelwood pass. This is the way Dave Campbell had told us he had returned to camp and the way Ken and Walter Moar had gone. The only real problem was avoiding the precipitous headwall of the creek. This meant about 100 m of semi-serious bushwhacking in the woods to detour around the headwall.

By 9:30 a.m. we reached the base of Moyeha, where a creek runs diagonally up to a bench on its NE side. Here the pass at the head of Thelwood Creek is a wide meadow like one might expect to find in the Rockies. We followed the diagonal creek up to where it opens out onto a sloping

bench. Here, we deviated from our previous route by going up to a wide sloping ledge that takes you to the SE gully of Moyeha, a little above the main bench. This is about where we had turned back in 2019. This time the SE gully had snow, making the going easier and safer.

We had no problem exiting the gully: at 1430 m elevation there was an easy access to the E ridge of Moyeha. Once on the ridge some easy route finding assisted by occasional cairns led to the summit block. We were able to avoid the glacier on the north side of Moyeha by edging along between the base of the rock wall and the snow leading to the summit.

We were on the top at 12:20. Dave had lugged up a new summit register and cannister, which Ken had signed before we left Victoria. We retraced our route and arrived back at camp at 6:30 p.m. It was

a beautiful but cool evening with crazy cloud formations falling and rising above the peaks.

It was a bit cold in the morning and Dave was using his spare shirt as a toque to keep warm. The Myra Falls route that Ken took on his way out sounded too brutal; we preferred a leisurely hike out via Sandbag Lake with another camp en route. We met three guys along the way who were acquaintances of Laurence Philippsen, who went missing in the Mount Filberg area earlier in the season. They told us we could bypass the steep gully that we were dreading descending by contouring to the south. Dave's response was "I was wondering about that!" Well, that was so much easier and safer. We camped in the rolling granite bluffs near the high point of the ridge to the west of Sandbag Lake. It was a nice spot, strewn with little tarns and a view of Mount Myra. As planned, it was an easy day, and we were at camp at 3:30 p.m.



Looking back at Moyeha. (Photo by Roxanne Stedman)

That evening, the light show was spectacular. Waves of clouds kept blowing in and out. It was 3°C in the morning based on Dave's MEC thermometer. Surprisingly, there was no one at Sandbag Lake as we made our way back.

Participants on various trips; Roxanne Stedman, Sandy Stedman, Tak Ogasawara, Laura Darling, Graham Smith, Chloe Swabey, Ken Wong, Dave Suttill.

Call of the Mountains

Tyler MacLachlan

June 22 – September 20, 2019

It started in the early spring of 2019, searching for objectives to appropriately challenge my current skill set as a climber. I dreamt of being a mountain guide, standing on the summits my idol's had written about; however I lacked experience. So I set an ambitious goal to climb a different mountain every weekend during the summer, and began route planning for various peaks on the Island. First on the list was the Northwest Ridge of Elkhorn Mountain.

So it begins, my journey to gain the knowledge and experience of those I admired and climb to my full potential. On June 14, 2019, I set off with my partner for an attempt on Elkhorn Mountain. We moved fast through the steep forested approach, our heavy packs were no match for the exuberance that overwhelmed us. Upon our arrival we realized the mountain had other plans for the day and the weather wouldn't permit a climb. We set up our bivy on the ridge and sat in awe of the beauty of Mount Colonel Foster, trying not to dwell on the feeling of defeat on the first objective for the season. Fast forward to June 22nd, it was time to go back for another attempt. This time we decided to leave the bivy gear behind so we could move fast and light. As we approached the base of the climb the gendarme starts to dominate the skyline. We climbed toward the wild feature jutting out of the ridge and traversed around it. A short scramble over lots of loose rock and we were standing on top of the second tallest mountain on Vancouver Island. Although thrilled with our experience on the mountain, all I could think about was climbing the east face of the Colonel. We retraced our steps from the summit back down to the northwest ridge. After a wonderful 14 hours we were back at the car, headed home and back to the drawing board.

After our success on Elkhorn I went on to climb the Scrambler's Route to the northwest summit of Triple Peak and an unsuccessful attempt of Indian Summer on Mount Tom Taylor. After Tom Taylor I was sharing my story of the adventure on Elkhorn Mountain with a friend when



Aaron standing next to the gendarme on Elkhorn during our descent. (Photo by Tyler MacLachlan)

he asked "have you thought about trying to do the Island Qualifiers?" Up until that moment I didn't know what the "IQs" were, and shortly after a new goal was set in place. To complete the Island Qualifiers in one season.

I buried my nose in "*The Island Alpine Select*" and went to work planning the next objective. Mount Septimus had been a mountain I admired for quite some time and it seemed perfect for my next mission. I explored options for a partner to join, but to no avail; so a solo mission it was. Route 1 really stood out to me: I took note of the climb but set out for the Standard Route. It was July 20, 2019, 5:00 a.m.; I left my family at Loveland Bay Campsite and set off for the Bedwell Trail parking lot. With my new love for moving fast through the mountains I set off for another day trip. 10.5 km, 850 m of elevation gained and four hours later I arrived at the Septimus glacier. I grabbed my ice axe, slid into my crampons, motored up the glacier and onto the west shoulder. From the shoulder I studied the west face; without hesitation I decided Route 1 would be my choice of ascent. I began making my way to the start of the climb, admiring the aesthetics of Love Lake and Nine Peaks to the Southeast. This would be my most significant solo to date, however at the time that didn't cross my mind. I moved fluidly and without doubt. As I stood on the summit I understood what it meant to be in the "flow state," something I had heard so much about. I took in the striking panoramic views of the park and beyond, then descended via the Standard Route. As I was finishing my second rappel I was reminded of the severity of this powerful place. A loose rock the size of a bowling ball was set free and exploded into million little pieces a few meters from where I stood. A terrifying reminder of my insignificance on the mountain and a lesson I'll never forget. The warm temperatures of the day warranted a boot ski down the Septimus glacier, an amazing way to end my time on the mountain. An unforgettable 11.5 hours later I found myself back at the car, cheesin' from ear to ear, off to plan for the next endeavour.



Looking back at Mount Rosseau from the summit of Mount Septimus. (Photo by Tyler MacLachlan)



Looking back to Argus Mountain and the Red Pillar from Mount Harmston. (Photo by Tyler MacLachlan)

It was a beautiful evening with the stars illuminating the sky as I prepared for the southeast ridge of Mount Harmston. July 26, 2019, myself and two friends left Nanaimo in the early morning to drive to Oshinow Lake with an ambitious goal of climbing both the Red Pillar and Mount Harmston in the same day. We set up camp on the ridge below Peak 1712 and took off toward the west shoulder of The Red Pillar. It was evident when we arrived at the west shoulder that not only was a climb of both peaks not plausible, but an ascent of Mount Harmston would be out of the question for the party as well. Therefore, we adjusted the objective accordingly for the day and set off for the west ridge of the Red Pillar. I tied into the rope and took off on the sharp end as my partners followed. A smooth ascent brought us to the summit but as the weather deteriorated so did our spirits. With thick cloud coverage, and one of my climbing partners suffering from a knee injury, we inched our way back to camp, arriving by headlamp 15 hours after our departure from Oshinow Lake. We shared a beer back at camp feeling the fulfillment of a challenging, successful day in the mountains, but my mind was still consumed with the summit of Mount Harmston. I knew given the time left in the season and the time I had to spend in the mountains that it was now or never if I wanted to see this through. Acquiring the knowledge of a large hole in my sleeping pad only solidified the decision to go for it on Sunday while the guys slept. In the end I wouldn't get much rest on the ropes. By 5:00 a.m. the next morning I was on the move; it felt like I was floating through the mountains despite the lack of rest. I was living the life I fantasized about. I moved quickly across the Cliffe Glacier, up the northeast ridge and to the summit of Mount Harmston. A little over five hours and I was back at camp to greet the guys as they awoke for breakfast. The final hike around Oshinow Lake was absolutely grueling for myself and I envied the group enjoying the beauty of the lake via canoe. Nonetheless the trip was a success and despite my fragile state I felt strong; "on to the next" I thought.

Another week of work and preparation, it was now time

for an attempt at the Nine Peaks summit traverse. It was August 2, 2019; I finished work for the week, packed my bag and set off with a solid group for Nine Peaks. We arrived at Bedwell Trail parking lot as the sun went down and hiked to Baby Bedwell campsite. The plan was to stay the night at Baby Bedwell, summit Big Interior, and camp around Bear Pass to prepare for the Traverse. Like most alpine adventures, plans changed. As we arrived at the creek crossing below Little Jim Lake, a member of the team suffered from some unfortunate back pain and couldn't continue much further with a heavy pack. We set up camp in the bowl below Big Interior. We had some time to kill, so the guys enjoyed a sublime ice bath in the glacial runoff as I wandered around taking photographs. The following day, bound for the summit, we set off from camp with our headlamps lighting the way. We cruised up the glacier of Big Interior, bypassing its summit and charging straight for the objective of the day. When we arrived at the first peak, Peak 9, we made quick work of the north ridge. Like most mountains on Vancouver Island some choss was encountered. We did our best to navigate through the variable terrain and soon arrived at the main summit, Peak 7. Emotions flooded in as I gazed back toward Mount Septimus. We were successful in summiting the mountain but still had six peaks left to traverse, so we quickly snapped a photo and continued forward. The rappel from the main summit proved to be the most interesting point of the climb. I can't speak for the group, but I had a euphoric feeling as the crux was behind us and we stood atop Peak 6. We continued the traverse, holding true to the ridges connecting the peaks as best we could. We then made our descent to the glacier, traversed back across it, over the rolling terrain and to the summit of Big Interior Mountain. A mentally and physically challenging 15.5 hours later we were sharing a cup of wine, celebrating the success of Kurt's last Island Qualifier.

Working as a part of the ski patrol team at Mount Cain during the 2018/19 winter lit my fire of fascination for The Haihte Range. I'd imagine myself traversing the range as



Kurt relaxing after the rappel from the main summit of Nine Peaks. (Photo by Tyler MacLachlan)

I sat on my shift on a bump at the upper tee. So on August 9, 2019, I was happy as a kid on Christmas as I made the solo drive to Rugged Mountain to attempt the south ridge Integrale.

I was travelling in my brother's Dodge Journey at the time so I could save some time and sleep in the back instead of setting up a tent. Leaving Nanaimo after work on a Friday with a four-hour drive, I wasn't interested in doing anything but sleeping upon my arrival. I drove up N20 as far as the car would carry me, which was not far. I woke up at 5:00 a.m. and took off up the N20 spur. Thankfully another group had their truck parked at the trailhead, as I'm not confident I would have found it that morning. I arrived at the base of Rugged Mountain to be greeted by the clouds that swarmed the mountain and into the valley. I located the Blades Couloir and continued upward, without much hope for success. To my surprise I found myself above the clouds at an alpine bench at 1300 m. At this point I knew I had a real chance to solo the route; the adrenaline kicked in and I moved as quickly as possible to the high blades col. I was thrilled with the quality of climbing and superb location as I climbed the southwest buttress of The Pitchfork. Then with extreme trepidation I stood at the top of The Pitchfork as the clouds consumed the range yet again. Determined to keep going I compromised by bypassing The Triplets and made my way toward Rugged South. As the clouds continued to roll in and out I learned to memorize the topography. Before long I was standing at the base of an orange blade known as The Lama De Lepore. Looking up at such a stunning pitch I could not simply traverse around it. This would be the best decision of the trip as it proved to be the best solo I've ever done and probably will ever do. One short rappel off the blade followed by some scrambling and I was standing on the summit of Rugged Mountain. It was as if I was trapped inside of a ping pong ball as I sat and read the summit registry. Being caught in the clouds soon didn't matter as I knew I'd be back for an attempt at the new route up the southwest face called



The southwest buttress of The Pitchfork on Rugged Mtn shining bright through the clouds. (Photo by Tyler MacLachlan)

“Thunderbird”. The following year, with two friends and clear skies, we did just that.

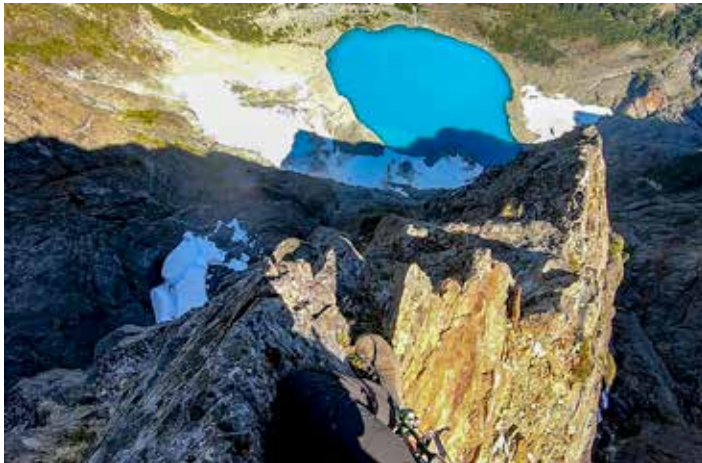
Now I have arrived at the crux of my Island Qualifier experience: Mount Colonel Foster, a truly breathtaking piece of rock. I was so inspired by the beauty of the Cataract Arête that there was no doubt this would be my way to the summit. Once again, lacking the ability to find a partner, I committed to a solo experience on the East Face. I went back to work for the week after the Rugged trip, however my mind lived at the summit of The Colonel. The next weekend I packed my things and took off for the Elk River Trail. I arrived at Foster Lake and yet again was accompanied by the clouds. “Patience is a virtue” I reminded myself as I turned around and drove back to Nanaimo.

Another week went by and I was headed back to the Elk River Trail parking lot, this time with a high pressure system. I hiked the ERT in the dark and camped at the provincial site before Landslide Lake. Another alpine start on August 26, 2019 and I was staring at the East Face as the sun came up. Approaching the climb, my nerves were setting in with the thought of 1200 m of tough climbing above. As soon as I crossed the glacier and gained the rock the uncertainty had vanished; it was time to experience what I had dreamt about for so long. I opted for the Cataract: Expressway Variation to bypass the 50 m free hanging rappel as I would only be carrying a 60 m rope. As I reached the notch before joining the true arête the nerves settled in again as I remember the words of Philip Stone from The Island Alpine Select, “make an exposed traverse left up steep face on crumbly, rusty coloured rock.” As I moved past what I considered to be the crux, given the quality of rock, I once again found myself flowing up the mountain without hesitation. I thought the Lama De Lepore would be the pinnacle of my solo climbing experience but the amazing exposure and quality of the arête on the upper half of the route was unfathomable. I arrived at the top of the Great West Couloir and continued on to the summit.

Aside from some folks at the lake, I was the only one on the mountain that day. It's hard to describe the emotion I felt standing on the summit; the euphoria of success was dampened by the bittersweet feeling of lacking a partner to share the experience with. I then retraced my steps back to the Upper Glacier, over the southwest and southeast peaks and on to the south col. Absolutely exhausted after 15 hours of intense climbing and hiking, I arrived back at my car. I imagined curling up in my tent and sleeping the night away below Landslide Lake; but as friends and family patiently awaited my notification that I was safe, I ran to the car, drove into service, made some calls, and fell asleep at a rest stop. A truly sublime climbing experience I am sure will go unmatched.



Knut signing the summit registry on Warden Peak. (Photo by Tyler MacLachlan)



Amazing exposure climbing the arête on Col Foster above Foster Lake. (Photo by Tyler MacLachlan)

The following weekend, August 30, 2019, my climbing partner Knut and myself set off with the goal to link Warden and Victoria Peak in one day. We drove White River Main up the spur as far as the car would take us, and set up camp for the night. We were left with 4.5 km of a logging road to walk; being accompanied by a herd of elk lifted our spirits, but we were behind schedule. We trashed our way up the slash and through the bushes to the lake nestled at the foot of the Victoria Glacier cirque. From there it's a short hike alongside the runoff from the glacier, over the knoll and to the base of the perfect Guilbride-Pfeiffer Route on Warden peak. A beautiful basalt staircase led us to the top, but clouds swarmed the sky for another summit. We signed the summit registry, enjoyed a Snickers bar and carried on. We made an effort to make our way to Victoria Peak, but with the weather deteriorating it was evident that the car would be the next destination of the day.

The weather forecast for the following day was also not promising, so we took advantage of the long weekend and returned the evening of September 1st, 2019, for an attempt

on Victoria Peak on Monday. We opted for another spur road off of White River Main to hopefully take us a bit higher and provide a more direct route to the West Ridge of Victoria Peak. This time we spent 6 km on the logging road by foot; but with the weather on our side we cruised up the logging road and through the slash full of enthusiasm. When we arrived above the clouds at the base of the west ridge, we had a snack and sat in appreciation of our current location, amongst the beautiful topography that surrounded us. Vancouver Island continues to amaze me every day. The climbing on the west ridge was superb and the best was yet to come. As we arrived at a prominent ledge we had two options for the final pitches to the summit, we choose to climb The Sceptre and took off toward the couloir. I tied into the rope and slipped into my rock shoes. The stemming out of the alcove and past the chockstone was incredible. I arrived at the top of the pitch, built an anchor, shouted "secure" to Knut, and put him on belay. From there we broke out of the narrow couloir and enjoyed some soloing to the summit. As we shared the splendour of the summit I was feeling especially electrified with the thought of having one mountain left of the Island Qualifiers. I expressed my gratitude to my partner Knut as he had stood on three of



Knut climbing above the couloir on the final scramble to the Summit of Victoria Peak. (Photo by Tyler MacLachlan)

nine IQ's with me. We descended the south face of the mountain via the Original Route, and a 14.5 hour round trip would bring us back to the car and we headed home for another week of work.

At 2,195 m, the Golden Hinde stands as the tallest mountain on Vancouver Island. An approach from Westmin Mines Road would be roughly 50 km long and 3,800 m total elevation gain for a round trip to the summit.

After the trip to Victoria Peak, the two weekends that followed produced unsuitable conditions for an enjoyable attempt on the Golden Hinde. Now with only four days left in the summer, and again another poor forecast for the weekend, it was time to ask for a favour of my boss. I needed the Friday off so I could reach the summit with the sunshine: without blinking he turned to me and said something along the lines of "are you kidding, go finish the job man." So on the evening of September 19, 2019, I took off from work for another long and tiring drive north. I only had the one day left before the rains came so I took some inspiration from some talented folks at Strathcona Park Lodge and decided I'd attempt the uphill marathon in a day. I slept for as long as I could, which didn't amount to much, in the driver's seat of my Dodge Neon. I woke up at 3:30 a.m. and set off up the hikers trail toward Arnica Lake with my vision limited to the range of my headlamp. This left me in a trance like state after a while, which seemed to pay off as I ran toward Phillips Ridge. The sky soon lost its stars to the light of the coming day as I travelled over Peak 1732 on Phillips Ridge. Knowing how popular the Golden Hinde has become, I was thrilled to find myself in isolation as I moved as fast as possible toward the summit. Eight hours after departing the car, I arrived at the southeast couloir; my fast pace diminishing to a crawl as I inched my way to the summit. Strong emotions took hold of me as neared the top, I thought about all the people that had played a major role in my education in the mountains; the people who provided me with the mental strength the technical skills to achieve such a goal. To those individuals at Strathcona Park Lodge, and beyond, I will be forever grateful. With the fire burning inside me I took off from the summit, moving faster than I had on the approach. After 15 hours I had travelled farther than I thought was possible of my body when I was brought back to reality. Progressively, a stabbing pain started to develop in my right knee. Knowing there was a good chance to spend the night out I had prepared accordingly, bringing enough food to bivvy the night. However, as I committed to my goal of a day trip, I was without a sleeping bag or a sleeping pad and with the forecasted rain on the horizon I didn't get much rest. Anxiety took over as I lay in my bivvy on the exposed ridge. As the sun rose so did I, and to my surprise I was gifted a stunning morning above the clouds. I ran around like a kid in a candy store, taking photographs of the surrounding peaks rising out of the clouds. The



Selfie on the summit of the Golden Hinde. (Photo by Tyler MacLachlan)

pain in my knee had significantly been reduced as I hiked back to the car. Plotting my next move in the mountains a quote from Barry Blanchard resonated deep to my core, "to the mountains, they all point up into the sky and lift us up physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. Climbing mountains is good for the soul."

Participants: Tyler MacLachlan, Knut Lokken, Daniel Fleury, Kurt Schluessel, Aaron Reynolds.

Fault Peak

Lindsay Elms

August 19, 2019

Over the years while climbing the peaks surrounding Zeballos, I have always looked across to a mountain/peak north of both Kaouk Peak (see IBWA 2005 p.6-7) and the old defunct Zeballos Iron Mine. It's not a peak with a distinctive shape, but a rounded semi-alpine summit over 4000 feet with vast karst outcroppings. Four thousand feet is an elevation I have chosen as a benchmark – to see how many mountains above that height that I can climb (on Vancouver Island). Earlier in the year when Rod Szasz and I were climbing Z6 above Zeballos Lake, I took note of the logging roads on the eastern slopes of the mountain across the valley. They switched-backed quite high and it appeared the mountain/peak could be a very easy day-trip. Val was wanting to get back into the mountains so this seemed a suitable first climb. Although she had climbed some moderate mountains in New Zealand and Australia, and local Mount Becher, this would be her first peak

where there was no trail—most likely it would be a bit of a bushwhack, but I was sure it wouldn't be much.

We drove into Zeballos and visited the museum, then drove back towards the Nomash Main turn-off, but a kilometre before the main we turned left onto an unmarked logging road and started driving up hill. The road was in great shape as it gradually, kilometre by kilometre, climbed higher. A couple of false spurs, but we kept finding another spur road that kept going up. Eventually, we came to the end of the highest road at about 980 m. There was a misty drizzle falling so we didn't sit around a fire that evening, but laid in the back of the vehicle reading. However, before reclining I did a quick recce into the trees and found flagging tape following the crest of the ridge. I thought it was possibly a trail established by some of the Zeballos locals who enjoy getting into the hills.

In the morning the drizzle had stopped but the clouds were still hanging low. We began following the flagging and found that it was a well-used trail. It minimized the amount of bushwhacking we would have to do.

As we approached the south summit, we encountered limestone/karst fissures, which we had to zig-zag around. I now assumed that the trail was established by the Island caving community. Any limestone/karst outcrop and the

cavers would be up there snooping around looking for sinkholes and caves to literally jam their bodies into like hermit crabs looking for a new shell.

Later, I emailed the lover of dark, damp places, Peter Curtis in Port McNeill, who told me that he and his fellow spelunkers had flagged the route up to the karst area. Below the south summit they found a polje—a large flat plain or field—and a 400 m-deep cave, but they figured there had to be a larger underground system judging from where water drains from the area into the timber on the contact zone. The cavers are trying to stop any further logging in the area as it is considered highly vulnerable karst, which they say should never have been logged in the first place. Val and I didn't know this at the time and were just traversing the south summit on our way to the main peak.



Val walking over the limestone outcrops on Fault Peak. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)



Val in thick bush near the summit of Fault Peak. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

Once across the karst we had a short descent down to a meadow and a tarn where we found evidence of a mining operation: the old dilapidated remains of a cabin and its paraphernalia, rusted out 44-gallon drums and the odd core sample. Again, I later found that this was from the late 1950's, early 1960's. There is nowhere that prospectors haven't been in the Zeballos vicinity. After inspecting the remains, we climbed up to a saddle and then ascended the bushy ridge towards the main summit. The higher we got the more karst intersected our route and the thicker the bush became. Finally, we found ourselves literally five feet off the ground scrambling over the bush searching for the high point according to our GPS. The bush was damp and we were getting wet so it wasn't a summit that we really wanted to 'hang out' on. However, before heading back down I wanted to look over to the west into Rowland Creek where there had been a large landslide similar to that in the upper Elk River in Strathcona Park in 1946. I haven't been able to confirm a date, but it was probably around the same time. There wasn't much evidence anymore as it is now



Fault Peak. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

overgrown, but I could see where the slide had originated from. A quick couple of photos to verify ‘been there, done that’ then we descended back to the meadow below and old cabin remains where we eventually had lunch.

Although the peak didn’t have either an official name or a local name from what I could gather, Val and I decided to call it Fault Peak (1337 m) after the creek below to the east.

Participants: Val Wootton, Lindsay Elms

Maynard Peak

Lindsay Elms

September 28, 2019

After talking with some of the local mountaineers/cavers in Port McNeill, I was unable to find a name for a peak two kilometres to the east of Maynard Lake. The most recognized mountain in the area is Merry Widow Mountain which is a little farther west of Maynard Lake but accessed via the same forestry service road. Val and I, therefore,

dubbed the mountain Maynard Peak (1419 m). Prior to leaving home we viewed Google Earth and saw relatively recent logging (within the last couple of years) to the south of the peak. I felt confident that the roads would be in good shape. Although it rains a lot up this end of the island, the terrain is different and I have found the logging roads don’t deteriorate as quickly as other more rugged areas (maybe they build them better).

Late Friday afternoon we drove a few kilometres beyond Port McNeill—towards Port Hardy – and then turned south onto the Keogh Main Forestry Road. We turned the GPS on and started tracking the twenty-five-kilometre drive to Maynard Lake. About one kilometre beyond the south end of the lake we found the logging road to the east that we hoped would take us up to about 900 m. The higher we drove the more overgrown (lightly) the road became, but it was just young alder saplings that we easily drove over. There were a couple of side spurs that we checked out, but we felt that if we continued a little farther south, we could gain a bit more in elevation. We did!



GPS track of the road and route to Maynard Peak. (Image by Lindsay Elms)

The next morning, we deeked-off the road into the trees and proceeded up over a small bump to gain a saddle at the bottom of the south ridge. We then continued up the ridge, occasionally stopping at rocky bluffs to look around. Near the top of the ridge we entered a recent burn area with some interesting looking burnt trees. We could see Shiva’s trident, a prancing horse, lizards and dragons. It reminded me of the summit of Mount Roraima in Venezuela where the local guides had given names to some of the thought-provoking sandstone features – the triffid, monkey rock and the leaping dolphin.

The burn covered a considerable area on the summit and made for easy travel. Eventually we saw a white radio tower poking above the ridge and angled towards it. As we



The Prancing Horse on Maynard Peak. (Photo by Val Wootton)

popped over the top, we saw a second tower on the highest point. Although it was a beautiful day there was a cold wind coming in from the north off the ocean.

We sat down in the lee of the tower and had lunch while being entertained by the ravens as they played on the thermals. They were showing off as they squawked and cawed at the tops of their voices. Ravens are intelligent birds and obviously enjoy being around us humans and displaying their talents. Sometimes we've heard them trying to mimic us by answering our calls. All they want is for us to take notice of them. A couple of the younger birds (I am just guessing that they were younger) came over to us and began riding the up-drafts beside the radio tower. As they neared the top they would stall, wings spread out to maximize the lift, and alight on the rounded, slippery peak of the tower, but unable to get a grasp they would slide down a few inches and then lift back into the air only to swoop down and repeat the sequence again. They reminded me of a trainee pilot as they practiced making repeated attempts to land. The other ravens laughed at them and we also laughed at them, and by the sound of it I think they were also laughing at themselves. It was amusing watching them. I couldn't help but compare them to my favourite New Zealand mountain parrot, the rascally kea, only ravens do not damage personal property or steal.

Looking out to the west we had a great view of Merry Widow Mountain (1405 m) and then to its south a whole slew of unnamed, probably unclimbed peaks. Somewhere in amongst the group was Snowsaddle Mountain (1400 m), but I couldn't pick out which one it was. However, to the northeast Castle Mountain (1343 m) languished in the fall light while to its southeast the Karmutzen Range, dominated by Karmutzen Mountain (1426 m) (see IBWA 1997 p.17-18), floated hazily in a cloudless sky. We both loved being surrounded by peaks we had climbed and peaks to be climbed.

When we reached the saddle before the last small bump



Val on the summit of Maynard Peak. (Photo by Lindsay Elms)

on the return journey, we descended down the gully to the west, in places following game trails. It was an easy descent and avoided the bushy bump. We came out onto a road, which we then hiked down and back around to the vehicle. The adventurer in us was piqued as we saw all these peaks to the southwest that were beckoning to be explored – next year.

Participants: Val Wootton, Lindsay Elms

Mount Rosseau – First Winter Ascent

Evan Devault

January 8 – 9, 2020

Around 9 a.m., January 13, 2019, Stefan and I stood atop the Septimus Glacier's West Shoulder. "Couple degrees warmer than forecasted, eh?" Our dreams had just been shattered. Looking out at the stunning southwest face of Mount Rosseau, it was clear the conditions were not in our favour. The glistening wall was shedding its rime ice. Pinwheels rolled down its steep snow patches, starting

small avalanches as they gained momentum. It was alive and roaring. Eleven months before, climbing Rousseau in winter had just been an (over)ambitious side objective on a bigger ski traverse across Strathcona Park. When conditions had not been right for it that time, we just brushed it off, and moved past it. After letting it stew in our imaginations for another year, it had been a bit tougher to pull the plug.

Fast forward to January 8, 2020: after seeing a very favourable though short break in the weather, it was time to try again. We leave Victoria around 7 p.m. Equipped with hefty peanut butter and banana sandwiches (thanks Jen!), we avoid the usual fast food stop. To our amusement, when stopping for gas, we realize Stefan had smeared half his peanut butter on the steering wheel. We get to the trailhead at around midnight, and after faffing about with some gear, we're off at around 1:15 a.m. The stoke for the mission had kept me from napping on the drive up, leaving me already fairly tired. The approach is relatively uneventful. We sleepily stumble our way through the different trail sections. Once the snow coverage deepens, we don our snowshoes, an unusual form of transportation for typical skiers, but the most suitable for the current conditions.

Upon arriving at Baby Bedwell Lake, we're eager to test the ice to see if we can shave time with a direct crossing. Our poles easily plunge through a thin, snowy, surface crust. "So much for that." As a consolation, the clear sky and moonlit vista of Tom Taylor are completely breathtaking. The reflection of the full moon on the snowy landscape also aids navigation. Getting through the bluffs up to Little Jim Lake is a peaceful saunter. Though shortly after, I start stumbling and nodding off, just trying my best to follow Stefan's tracks and keep my eyes open. I'm soon awakened and rejuvenated by the warm sunrise, just in time for the crushing slog up the Septimus Glacier. Winded, we pop over the col on the west shoulder to a stunning view of the southwest face of Rosseau. The face is still and quiet



Evan traversing toward the southwest face of Rosseau. (Photo by Stefan Gessinger)

unlike a year ago when the predominant sound was icefall and avalanches. It looks like something out of Patagonia, with steep, fluted features glazed in rime ice.

After taking a quick gander, we descend, and traverse across the wide snow slope to arrive at the beginning of the climb by 11 a.m.. We quickly stash our snowshoes, poles, and anything else unnecessary for the climb under a big rock outcropping. "This is it, we're farther than we've come before, conditions are stellar, we're doing this!" We solo up the steepening face until the slope angle encouraged us to pull out the rope.

From a piton anchor, Stefan climbs a lovely pitch up a mixture of steep névé and softer accumulated snow. The third pitch we simul climb, trench, and wallow up to our waists until I find a tree branch to dig out and belay from. The good climbing returns on pitch four, with more steep névé and an off-camber traverse around a rimy bulge. I arrive at the belay to find Stefan grinning at his anchor setup. Multiple equalized pins backed up with some snow pro. Certainly the most SERENE anchor of the climb, good, because the next pitch looks full on. I take the lead on pitch five. After climbing a few meters around a corner from the belay, there appeared to be three options: two



The southwest face of Rosseau in winter. (Photo by Stefan Gessinger)

gullies to the right and on the left, a short snowy face that probably ramps out on top. I chose the left (wrong) option. After pounding a solid picket into the plastic snow, I climb to the top of the short face and realize my assessment from below had been totally wrong. "Oh neat, a vertical drop off." Instead of a mellow ramp, the only option is actually more of a right trending, rime encrusted fin. I think about down climbing and trying a different line, but instead, I continue upward. I carefully mount the fin on rotten snow. I dig through it trying to find purchase on something with my ice tools, but also trying not to dig too much, destabilize the whole thing, and trundle off



Stefan starting up the face. (Photo by Evan Devault)



Stefan on the second pitch. (Photo by Evan Devault)

the precipitous edge.

I delicately step up with each crampon and practice “quiet feet” while searching for more hooks with my tools. Pulling over the top is a relief. Since I only placed one picket way down below, I try and flip the rope over some bulges to lead Stefan up one of the more solid gully options. I dig a very deep T-slot anchor and begin to belay Stefan up. He follows the same path up the fin and also has to fight with the rope that I flipped into the other gully, oh well. It looks like we’re pretty much on the summit now, but I’m skeptical at this point. Stefan inspects further, “We’re half way,” he says jokingly, as I come into view. We did it! The view is absolutely incredible from the top on this cold, clear winter day. We can see ships offshore from Tofino, Mount Arrowsmith to the southeast and all the prominent peaks of Strathcona Park. The wind on top is also pretty spectacular. We don’t hang out very long, it’s almost 4 p.m. and the sun is close to setting. Both of us are dreading going back down the same way we came up.

Stefan, having been up here in the summer

from several variations, thinks maybe a descent down the south gullies would be easier and leads off in that direction. He is right; they are slightly lower angle and filled with powder. We flop down with relative ease and are back at our gear stash in under an hour. On the way down, my phone rings. I ignore the call but take advantage of the cell service to let work know I definitely won’t be in tomorrow. After a quick snack break, we strap on the snowshoes and begin traversing. Climbing back up the relatively small hill to the west shoulder is a horrendous feeling at this point; good thing we broke a good trail on the way in. We’re pretty spent, and still hours away from the car. We contemplate a bivouac but decide against it, as the 60 cm of snow forecasted for tonight has already started to fall. It would be an absolute nightmare to re-break trail through that the next day. We trudge on, slow and steady. The sleepless fatigue sets in, and I begin to hallucinate.



Stefan above the final pitch on Rosseau. (Photo by Evan Devault)

Every so often my headlamp beam catches a branch or a snowdrift, and the resulting shadow morphs into an animal, slinking through the night. I shake my head, knowing it's not real, but I'm not able to make it stop. At quarter after midnight we arrive back at the truck, twenty-three hours after we started and a very long time since we've slept. The snow is dumping. Fearful that we'll get the truck stuck at the trailhead, Stefan drives us lower down, closer to the paved road. We dive into our sleeping bags and pass out in the front seats for a very content eight hours.

Participants: Evan Devault and Stefan Gessinger.

Mount Thelwood

Stefan Gessinger

February 29-March 2, 2020

With great access to Tennent Lake on Mount Myra, the connecting ride to Mount Thelwood and Moyeha Mountain looked like it would lend itself to ski touring. A trip to Moyeha was proposed with two date options in hopes for a decent window for weather and avalanche conditions. On a cold and sunny day, we set an almost knee-deep skin track and found a safe route to the day's high point. The large amounts of fresh snow made for slow progress and we changed our objective to Mount Thelwood, opting for a shorter outing.

We set up our camp with a stunning view overlooking Thelwood, Moyeha, Mariner and Tom Taylor.



Steep and deep on the way to Mount Thelwood. (Photo by Evan Devault)

The Coronavirus was spreading quickly in distant places and with no idea how radically the flow and behaviour of the global population was about to change, we passed around the whisky and were content as we ate dinner tucked into our sleeping bags. The next day we set off on



Camp with a view. (Photo by Evan Devault)



Evan Devault and Andrew Welsh on their way to Mount Thelwood. (Photo by Stefan Gessinger)

a more settled snowpack and mixed visibility. There are numerous possible routes to follow the wide ridge with the many lakes and ponds forming a lot of contoured terrain to negotiate. The approach to the summit block on Mount Thelwood went well on skis. Because the weather was starting to close in on us, we opted to stay on the ridge and negotiate several steep bulges in order to avoid some slopes we were not able to visually assess. Not expecting much steep terrain but also not knowing what to expect we had opted to bring a rope and one single ice axe among the three of us. A steep and crusty section required steps to be cut in order to climb it without crampons and ice axe. Evan was stoked and I handed him my 278 g Camp nano, weighs-nothing axe. It's the wrong tool for the job - comparable to digging a fence post hole with a fork. He concluded that in the future he would like for this axe to stay at home.

On that day, the summit was no place to linger. Windy, with no views; we had to consult the GPS to ensure that we had made it to the highest point and we quickly turned around to find a more sheltered lunch spot farther down the ridge. Skiing is just such a fun way to get off a mountain. The skis came off for a steep section and we rappelled two steep bulges for which we used a 120 cm dyneema sling harness coupled with a Munter hitch. Andrew always brings a big bag of tricks and impressed us with a body belay technique - with the rope wrapped around his outstretched arms he rappelled facing the descent slope. Evan, on the other hand always brings a small bag of tricks - somehow magically stashed into a small backpack that is always the same size

and never overflows, whether it is packed for three days or a day trip. Andrew and I discussed getting him a much bigger pack.

After spending the second night at our base camp we thought we would try a different route back to Tennent lake. We would need to ski down to McNish Lake from our camp on the ridge. From our perspective, a good route was not obvious with the lack of visibility. We opted for the drainage right from our camp which resulted in some steep and fun turns. Looking back on our descent route while skinning across McNish Lake we realized that we had stumbled upon the best descent route as all other options would have resulted with the rope having to come out again. It is amazing how quickly ski conditions can



The summit of Thelwood - we double checked. (Photo by Evan Devault)

change with time and elevation on Vancouver Island. The knee-deep fluffy powder we walked around in on Friday made for very difficult skiing back down to Tennent Lake by Sunday morning and this is the first time I have seen Andrew in snowplough and his skis not perfectly parallel. A great ski mountaineering trip enjoyed by all and unbeknown to us it would be the last winter trip in a fast changing 2020 season.

Participants: Andrew Welsh, Evan Devault, Stefan Gessinger.

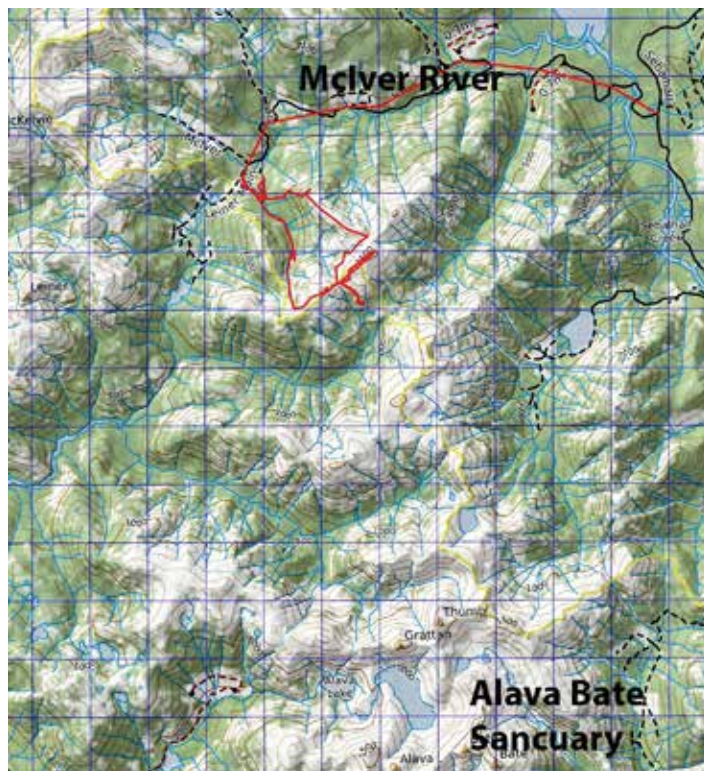
Peaks South of McIver Creek

Ramsay Dyer

18 – 22 June, 2020

This is a report of my exploration of the mountain south of upper McIver Creek. It was a rewarding trip, but it was not what I had in mind when I set out. I'd intended to do some of a "Tlupana Range traverse" from McIver Creek to the Perry River. But I don't want to present a report of my failure to make an objective; this is about four days of exploring a mountain, and it was a success, because at least I managed to get on top of it. The mountain doesn't have any name. It has three distinct prominent peaks, each of which has a 5000' contour on an NTS map. The middle peak is the highest, located at GR799380 (WGS84); it is called Peak 1553* (Sebalhal Outliers) on the VI Peaks list hosted at the Island Mountain Ramblers website.

The mountain is less than 15 km from my home in Tahsis, but I accessed it by driving up the McIver FSR. This is about a 2.5 hour drive from home and my wife Cheryl came with me so that she could take the truck back home (I was intending to hike home). I had done some exploration of this mountain two years earlier, when I climbed the south-western peak (1531 m on the BC basemap). I used the same drainage to ascend this time; it's the big southern branch of the upper McIver that passes near GR7839. The first 100 m of ascent from the cut-block at the road is steep, and on my previous trip my options were limited because I was constrained between the ravine of the creek to the east, and a smaller parallel creek (not shown on the map) to the west. In order to avoid a couple of bluff obstacles near the top where the ground levels out, I figured it would be good to try to ascend to the west of the smaller creek this time. However, to do that I should've located and crossed that little creek before I even left the road or cutblock, because by the time I'd traversed to it in the forest it was already a ravine that looked unattractive to try to cross. So, I



*inReach track of the route up the peaks south of McIver River.
(Ramsay Dyer)*

ascended the exact same way as previously. When I'd done it before, I remember being glad that I'd brought a rope so that I could rappel it on the way back, but when I did return to it I didn't feel the need to get out the rope. I had similar thoughts when I ascended this time with a big heavy pack, but I was not intending to come back this way anyway.

There are no significant obstacles after that. The forest is nice, but not characterized by large trees. I had forgotten that a large part of the route is through a forested boulder field (house-sized rocks). Again I had no incentive to try to cross the main creek to the left (east); it often sounded like it was a fair ways below me, like it was still a canyon. When the terrain was flat and I saw that the creek was crossable, I decided to cross since I knew the terrain would soon force me to anyway. But as I was crossing I looked up the creek and saw that I was already at the part where I'd be forced to cross anyway. So, I was closely following my footsteps from the trip two years earlier. I broke out of the trees just after noon and made my way up to a place where I could see up the tributary drainage on the left (east) that I wanted to take, around GR785380. I stopped there for lunch. I hadn't noticed before, but this tributary creek finishes its descent to this valley with a waterfall into a mini canyon. I arrived just above this canyon (I'd already crossed the little creek farther down, so I was south of it now), and was faced with a greasy black slab that I had to cross to continue. The slab was not steep, and if it were dry, you'd walk across it with your hands in your pockets. But it was not dry, it was really slick, and I did not feel at all comfortable with attempting to cross it. My memory of this



Looking SE from the summit of Peak 1531 towards Emerald Peaks. (Photo by Ramsay Dyer)

obstacle does not well convey the aspect that made it so hard for me to go ahead and cross it. I expect that looking on this spot another time or with different eyes, it might be difficult to understand why it spooked me so much. If the psychological discomfort I experienced is the only significant obstacle, then I expect this drainage is probably part of the easiest route up to the main peak, but I haven't laid eyes on all of it.

So now I would have to go all the way up the way I'd gone before, up the main drainage and over that SW Peak 1531 that I'd already climbed. This is a straight-forward slog up to the col SW of the peak, and then some pleasant easy scrambling up to the peak. On the way up to the col a snow-slab must've released somewhere above the wall on the east side, and a pile of snow and rocks funneled down onto my up-tracks just behind me. The drainage is wide though, and there was plenty of warning, so I expect I wouldn't have been damaged even if it had occurred a few minutes earlier. Anyway, it was a reminder that the spring



Looking south from the summit of Peak 1531 towards Peak 5150 (centre). Malaspina Peak can be seen on the right. (Photo by Ramsay Dyer)

snow movement had not entirely finished.

I camped that night on the summit of Peak 1531. It had taken me all day with my big pack to do what had been just a part of a day trip a couple of years ago. It was really nice to camp there though. I shared the summit with a ptarmigan who probably didn't appreciate the interruption of solitude. The plan now for the next day was to make my way up to the main summit of this mountain, and then get down into the unnamed valley to the south to the base of where I was going to ascend the other side. The north facing slopes of this valley that I could see from here have a bare rock alpine character all the way down, but the south-facing slope that I plan to descend is full forest.

Much of what the other side presents looks pretty intimidating viewed from this angle, but there were a few different options I could try as ascent routes. As it happened, I didn't even make it down to the valley, so I didn't begin to try any of those options. The clouds were thickening and lowering, but not much of my view was obscured yet. This was about to change; the rest of the trip would be spent in a cloud with plenty of rain. The next day I descended from the peak to the col to the NW. It took a while to find my way down there, but a route eventually presented itself. Once down, I dropped my pack and just took a light daypack to go to the main summit. It was a pleasant scramble to get up onto its SW ridge, and once there the travel was easy and I soon found myself on a peak, but this was just a sub-peak on the ridge (it has a 1530 m spot elevation on the basemap).

The descent from this looked bigger than what was indicated on the map, but I guess this was only a psychological artefact, perhaps aided by the mist and intermittent visibility, because it took no time to descend and continue on. Soon I was on the real top; I used my inReach to confirm that. I took some photos, but they mostly show how bad the visibility was. Rather than returning the way I'd come, I descended to the south side, rather than going back up to the sub-peak, and the travel was easy and much faster than the way I'd ascended. I returned to the col where I'd left my pack. In retrospect, it would've been better if I'd brought my pack up to near the sub-peak, because my plan was to descend by the rib that hosts the boundary line between the Leiner and Nimpkish watersheds. Instead of hauling my pack up there, I figured I'd just traverse over to that rib.

Looking at the map now, it is clear that the col is already too low to make traversing to the next rib to the east a likely option, even if I weren't doing a descending traverse. So I was going down the rib west of the one I had intended to follow. Anyway, the map doesn't give enough detail to be sure which rib is most likely to present a reasonable descent option. Descending this kind of terrain with a



Looking NE from the summit of Peak 1531. The Main peak is at right; Its subpeak is barely discernable in front of it, just to the right of the tip of the snow tongue. The unclimbed peak is left of it, and left of that is the bump at the start of the ridge I descended.

The terrain that gave me difficulty getting at that ridge is not visible, hidden behind a roll in the slope. (Photo by Ramsay Dyer)

heavy pack on probably doesn't push one to do the most penetrating kind of exploration. It was steep and bluffly and it was raining steadily, but I made progress on the descent until just below 1200 m. Then any further descent options presented an airiness that was too far beyond my comfort zone. I explored the width of the rib, from the enormous ravine to the west to the equally imposing one to the east. I was not going to continue my descent on this rib. I hiked back up a ways until I found ground suitable for making a camp. There was no trouble finding water.

At this point I abandoned the idea of trying to traverse to the Perry drainage. The thought of going up and trying to descend by a different rib didn't even occur. I was aiming for a five-day trip, but I was prepared for seven days, because I knew five might be optimistic. But seven days wasn't really realistic because we'd be leaving town for a month on the eighth day, and being this wet there was no way I could be ready for that. I decided to hike back to the McIver Valley. If I were quick and motivated, I could hike back home from there via the Leiner Valley.

It was raining when I got up the next day. I enjoyed a lazy morning and didn't start moving again until close to noon. I thought that I'd go and climb the third peak on the mountain, the most northerly and easterly one, and then descend to McIver Creek via the big NW ridge that extends from near the main summit. I ascended back to the col by a much better line than I'd taken down and stopped for lunch. The rain had subsided, but visibility was poor; I could see less than 100 m. I planned to proceed under the northern face of the main peak, but I'd have to feel my way. Progress was okay for a while, but then I was confronted with an imposing gully that blocked my traverse. After exploring it a bit and deciding that I couldn't see a way

that I'd be comfortable trying to cross it, I went back and down, trying to find a way to descend into the large drainage trough below me, but that wasn't going to happen either. Eventually I decided that I'd just go back to the col, and probably return to McIver the same way I'd come up. However, as I was ascending back up to my traverse track, the mist temporarily cleared a bit and I saw a snow field that went across to where I wanted to go. For some reason I had assumed that the gully that blocked me extended right to the cliffs above me, but it didn't. It just emerges from a benign snow shelf at the base of the cliffs. I was able to continue without further obstacles to the col between the main peak and the NW ridge.

By now it was late afternoon with intermittent rain and a strong wind that was not dispelling the mist. I knew that I was not going to make it to McIver Creek this day, but I decided that I wanted to get out of the alpine to get some shelter from the weather. Even though I couldn't see the NE peak, I knew that it was a walk up to the summit that was less than half a kilometre away and 100 m above me. But I no-longer felt a call to it, so I left that peak unclimbed. The ridge makes for really pleasant travel and would provide beautiful views on a clear day. It would be good to use it to access the main peak, but the challenge would be to find a nice line up to it. I descended in a westerly direction from the end of the alpine ridge.

The transition from fully alpine to fully treed is abrupt, just a thin band of subalpine, but it took me a while to find a way down to the trees. Then I descended a fair ways before I found a pocket of land flat enough to make a camp for the night. The next day I continued my descent through the bluffly terrain; a lot of scrambling down gullies was involved until the terrain relaxed at around 900 m. At around 700 m I could hear the creek clearly and I changed my course from west to north, aiming to the right (east) of the knoll represented on the base-map by the closed 660 m contour east of the creek. The forest in here had some impressively big trees in it; quite different from the other side of the creek. The fact that they hadn't been logged out was a good indication that there would be terrain obstacles that made it difficult to push a logging road up here. I was walking down a kind of valley, even though there wasn't a real creek running down it. I soon broke out to the edge of a big bluff, with a canyon to the east. I was looking down at the spur road that came up off the McIver Main right after the bridge just before the main road is blocked. I didn't see a way all the way down and didn't think my 30 m rope would be sufficient for a rappel. So, I headed west above the bluffs looking for a way down. At one point, there was a steep descent that I could've taken that would get me down a fair way, but it seemed likely that I'd still be bluffed out once I got to the bottom of that. I did not relish the idea of hauling myself and my big pack back up that if that were the case.



The eastern face of Peak 1531 that I descended. (Photo by Ramsay Dyer)

At that point, I decided that there was no point in exploring if I was that reluctant; I might as well go up and cross the creek and descend the way I'd come up. I was pretty much at the knoll here, so I just ascended the knoll, and then made my way south up the creek valley. I was able to cross the creek soon after I arrived at it, and I made my way to the small knoll that marked the top of the steep ascent from the road. I made a concerted effort but was unable to find the small ramp I'd used to ascend to here. When I'd done it a couple of years previously, I'd left an orange flag to mark where it popped out; I guess that flag had helped me more than I realized. I ended up rappelling down this bluff at a different spot, and went around and looked up at the ramp, which was indeed roughly where I'd thought, but I couldn't make out why it'd been invisible to me. I kept the rope out and did another short rappel at the next bluff, without even bothering to try to find how I'd come up. So I finally arrived at the road after another full day of travel. I camped at the start of the spur road just after the bridge; a fire ring and wood had been left there. The next day was day five. I hiked out the McIver Road and met Cheryl who came to pick me up as a detour on her way home from a trip to Campbell River.

Participant: Ramsay Dyer

A New Route on Colonel Foster

Phil Stone

July 14 – 15, 2020

Josh Overdijk and I headed up the Elk River Trail with the

west ridge in our sights. It was an ideal window of weather as much of the 2020 summer alpine season has been: moderate temperatures perfect for the exertion and clear and sunny for the soul. The hike up to Landslide Lake and on to Foster Lake was uneventful save for the proliferation of Instahikers posing at nearly every scenic point. We pushed on up the southeast chute to the south col finding the rock dry and generous snow cover for the top half leading into the col. Next morning we were out of camp for 7 a.m. and made a short ascent up the boulder field below the South Gullies to a small shoulder on a rib that opens the way to the traverse below the west face. It took about an hour to traverse the talus and remaining seasonal snow slopes to the base of the upper ridge.

It was easy to locate the transition from the lower ridge to the upper, climbable rock face, where we wanted to climb, as the slopes fanning out from the peaks end abruptly at the rim of a glacier-scoured cirque below the north-western half of the mountain. Nearing this feature, we turned our attention upward and started scrambling up a heather-filled gully alongside an outcrop of bright, white granite. A small headwall forced us leftward into another major gully identifiable by a bulging roof on the right-hand wall. By



Phil Stone in the second amphitheatre on the NW ridge of Col Foster. (Photo by Josh Overdijk)

now we were a total of about 200 m above the lower scree fans. Here the rock steepened and it was clear this was the point to pull out the ropes and move into pitched climbing. The first pitch was a full 60 m rope length up a clean slab on the left wall of the gully at around 5.7. A second, easier slab forced us into the gully where a small chockstone gave a short 5.6 step leading into a wide amphitheatre. From a belay at the head of this widening we followed an angled corner slab breaking off to the left of the main gully (5.7). Some fun climbing then led into a second, larger amphitheatre.

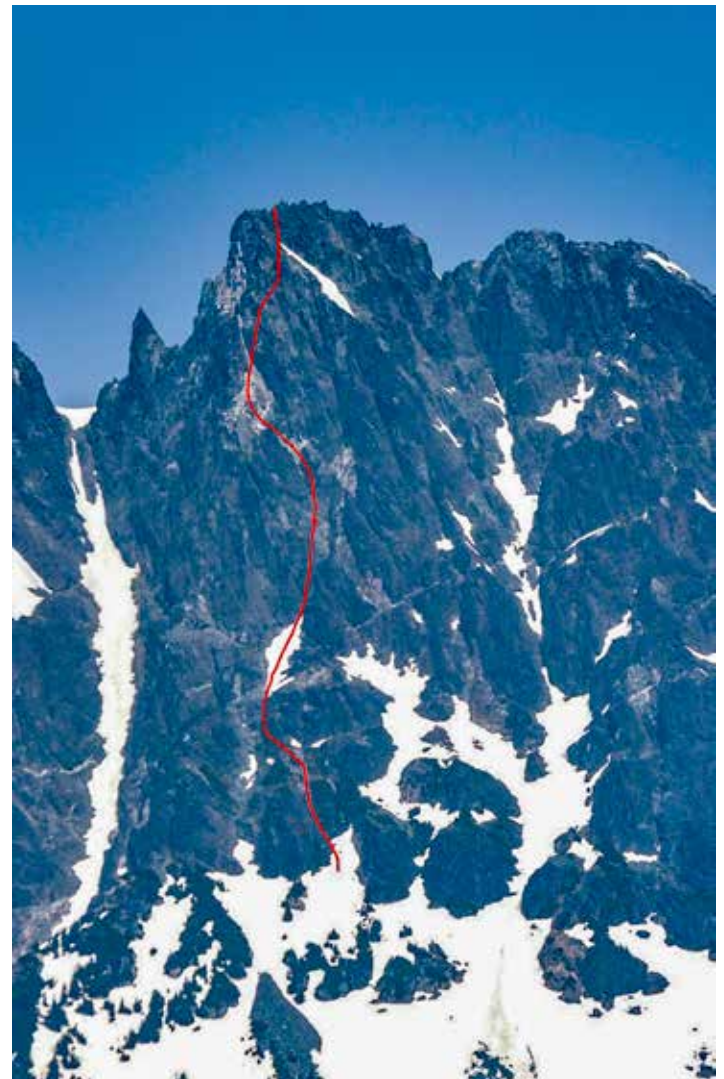
After close to another rope length pitch we belayed at the base of a band of granite running up the crest of the ridge. This was what I was hoping to find, a place straddling the Campbell and Ucona watersheds where, in the same stream, you could pee in the Pacific and Salish Sea! Looking up at this granite we were quite excited. It must be the west part of the same, familiar granite intrusion that is encountered on the east side of the mountain following the summit traverse line up from the small glacier up the Southwest Peak. Josh led off scrambling up over a series

of granite blocks above the belay and onto the crest of the west ridge. He disappeared out of sight and I belayed and wanted my turn. Following I found a jumble of boulders on the north side of the ridge which led into a beautiful granite corner. Here was one of the most enjoyable pitches of the route and being granite is a rare one at that.

A pair of spectacular 5.9 finger cracks led up to an airy belay where I found Josh straddling the now well-defined ridge crest. We laughed a bit after discovering that as beautiful a pitch as it was the thin cracks were totally avoidable by keeping to the south side of the ridge where a series of easy 4th class to low 5th class ledges led up to the same stance. There was some discussion about following an amazing granite sill which ran out across the left side of the upper arête but we were now a little past it so decided to tackle a second steep corner instead. This corner turned out to offer some more fun climbing with some strenuous 5.8 moves to reach a boulder field on the ridge crest. It turned out we had made a good choice because it looked like the enticing sill led into a jumble of loose boulders. Potential bullet dodged.



Josh Overdijk on the SW peak of Col Foster. (Photo by Phil Stone)



Mount Col Foster west couloir and ridge with the new route marked. (Photo by Phil Stone)

That was the end of the technical climbing and we scrambled up ~65 m of low 5th class and 4th class terrain through boulders and rock steps up to the crest of the summit ridge a little to the north of the top of the Southwest Peak.

It was a gorgeous day and it was only just about noon so we took our time on the peak having lunch and taking in the view. A few misty clouds drifted by giving us a little advance warning of the forecasted change in the weather. Repacked, we started to make our way along the summit ridge to the south. We took a look down the gully on the west side to get into the col but an exposed slab convinced us to make a quick rappel instead. We scrambled over the perched blocks jammed in the col between the southwest and southeast peaks and then a quick roped pitch up the awkward corner and narrow chimney onto the top of the southeast peak. We took the major gully to the southwest off the peak and were back in the South Col for around 4 p.m. We knew that the weather was on the change, so I quickly pitched a tarp on a flat heather shelf a little below the col as clouds piled up all around us. Sure enough the rain started in the early morning hours and we were thankful for the shelter as we packed and had breakfast. We had a soggy but uneventful descent down the snow and rock slabs back to Foster then Landslide Lakes.

4th class to 5.9 (III), 450 m, FA

Participants: Josh Overdijk, Philip Stone.

Tom Taylor to Mariner and Down into the Moyeha Valley

Barry Hansen

July 26 – August 1, 2020

I have a variety of alpine adventure companions with varying levels of compatibility. I enjoy easier excursions with people who lack the interest or ability for anything too challenging. I also enjoy outings with people who are capable of pushing a little harder but perhaps lack experience or confidence in more technical terrain. And then there are the more challenging trips that require a high level of compatibility to maximize the potential for a fun, safe, and successful adventure. I'm grateful to have people from each of these categories in my life.

In late July of 2018, I trekked with three high-compatibility companions from Mt. Washington to Mount Harmston via the Comox Range Traverse and then out to Buttle Lake via Shepard's Horn, Henshaw and Flower Ridge. It was

an incredible, unforgettable, and exhausting eight-day adventure that saw us bag nine summits along the way. I wanted to do another multiday, multi-peak epic with this same group in the summer of 2020 and so I formulated a plan for a circuit that would take us to the summits of Tom Taylor, Mariner, Moyeha, Thelwood, and Myra, in that order. We would start at the Bedwell trailhead and end at Westmin Mine.

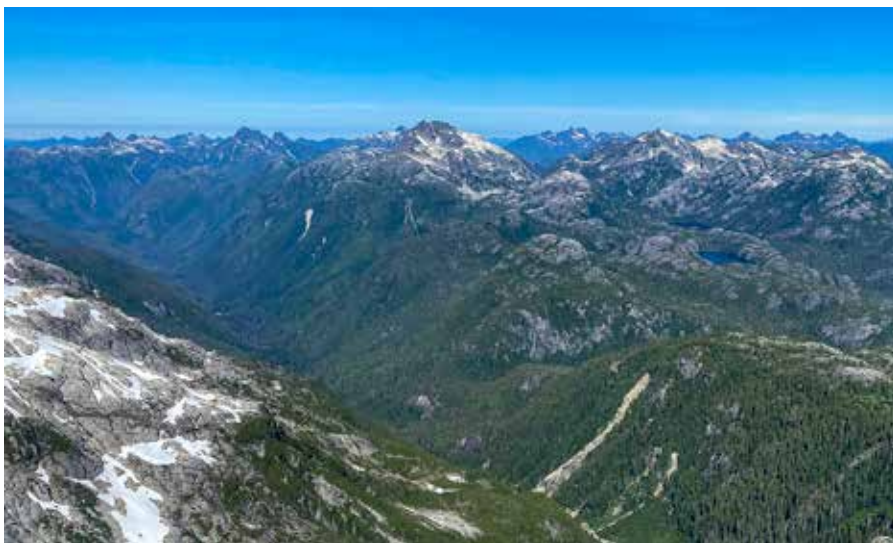
For those familiar with the topography of this area, you know that the Moyeha Valley separates the first two mountains from the latter three. My plan was to bridge this gap by going straight across the valley from Mariner Mountain to Moyeha Mountain. This section was the most enigmatic aspect of the plan because I couldn't find any record of anyone ever doing it. And since I'm the sort of person who likes to be as informed as possible, not having any information other than topo maps and satellite imagery was an ongoing source of anxiety—with a twinge of excitement. After all, who doesn't love a good mystery? I also wasn't under any illusion that there would be anything straightforward about it.

The first problem was deciding which route to take from Mariner into the valley. As useful as they are, topo maps and satellite imagery only tell you so much. Things look much different on the ground. For a variety of reasons, I settled on the wide drainage coming off the north glacier into the valley. It seemed to be the least bad option. The second problem was crossing the valley itself. We're talking pristine, old-growth, low elevation river valley terrain in the summertime: bushy and endless obstacles. It would be really slow going. The final problem was getting out of the valley to Moyeha Mountain. The only option is 1000 m of super steep forest before getting into manageable alpine terrain. A feature running almost the entire length looked the most promising on the topo and satellite. It would be a tough slog in hot weather with full packs and no water refilling options.

I mapped out our entire route with estimated campsites, allowing for 7-8 days, and reviewed the plan with my two companions, Quentin and Garrett (unfortunately, one member of our 2018 group had to opt out). We agreed it was an ambitious plan and we'd be open to reassessing and revising it as conditions warranted. The biggest concern for all of us was crossing the Moyeha Valley, especially after discovering on Sentinel Hub satellite imagery that a significant landslide occurred earlier in the year on our intended route out of the valley.

Day 1

Our objective for the first day was by far the easiest: drive from Nanaimo to drop off a vehicle at Westmin Mine, hop in the other vehicle and drive to the Bedwell trailhead, and then hike up to the unnamed lake at the base of the NE



Looking down the Moyeha Valley from Tom Taylor with Moyeha and Thelwood Mountains in the background. Recent landslide scar visible farther down valley on south flank of Moyeha Mountain. (Photo by Barry Hansen)

ridge of Tom Taylor. The day was made more challenging with the mercury hitting 30° C. We arrived early evening, set up camp, and enjoyed some beautiful alpenglow on Big Interior and Septimus reflected on Bedwell Lake below us before crawling into our tents.

Day 2

Today's objective was to summit Tom Taylor and continue westwards along the high ridge towards Mariner before dropping down to an alpine lake just above the narrow pass connecting Bedwell and Moyeha valleys. It was a gorgeous summer day in the alpine with stunning views but the heat was causing problems for two of us, slowing our pace and forcing frequent hydration stops. We reached the summit at noon, ate lunch, signed the register, and took some photos. We had an excellent view of the Moyeha valley and used Garrett's birding binoculars to reconnoiter our intended route out of the valley up Moyeha Mountain.

The recent landslide referenced previously was clearly visible from our high perch and we quickly agreed that our intended route wasn't feasible so we switched to Plan B, which would involve crossing the valley a few kilometers to the east, accessed from the high pass halfway between Tom Taylor and Mariner. This change also meant we would climb Mariner as a day trip from the pass. I was disappointed in the change of plans but knew it was the right call. We dropped from the summit onto the glacier and began the long traverse to our intended camp. This high traverse is some of the nicest alpine terrain I've experienced on the island, filled with beautiful and unique geological features and stunning vistas of the surrounding peaks and valleys.

As the day wore on, so did our energy levels as the extreme heat continued sapping our strength while we made our way up and down along the ridge. We stopped

for an early dinner just below the 1560 m high point in an attempt to reenergize. An hour later we reached the 1410 m knoll in the fading light. It was only one more kilometer and 300 m down to the lake but the dinner break had failed to revitalize me and Garrett—we were done. We found a nice flat bench by a tarn looking east over the upper Bedwell Valley nestled between Tom Taylor to the north and Big Interior and Nine Peaks to the south. Not too shabby. After setting up camp, we discussed our evolving itinerary. We knew we couldn't make it to and from Mariner as a day trip from our present location. But we also knew that our revised Moyeha valley crossing location bought us an extra day. So, we decided to indulge in an alpine rest day tomorrow at the lake below us.



Refilling water and a break from the heat on Tom Taylor north glacier. (Photo by Barry Hansen)

Day 3

We awoke refreshed and took our time breaking camp, knowing we had a full day of relaxing ahead of us. We quickly navigated down to the lake, pitched our tents, and went for a swim. The rest of the day consisted of eating, napping, swimming, sunbathing, and soaking in the gorgeous surroundings, which included spectacular views of the Bedwell River Valley feeding into Bedwell Sound and beyond to Meares Island and Tofino. We even had good cell reception so were able to check in with our loved ones back home. It was the perfect place to waste a day. Our original plan was to move 300 m lower later in the day to the lake just below the high point of the pass and up camp for the next two nights in preparation for our day trip to Mariner tomorrow. But apparently, we were having way too much fun because we forgot about the plan until we were watching the sunset. Oops.

Day 4

It was Mariner day and I was super excited. We headed out early but in hindsight not early enough. We navigated our way down to the col in the pass but it took longer than anticipated. And so, rather than descending through the boulder-field and forest to the lake a half-kilometer below us to set up camp, we decided to stash our non-day-trip gear and head directly to Mariner, knowing we had a big day ahead of us and that we were already running late.



Looking west towards Mariner and Bedwell Sound from 1560 m knoll with our 'rest day' lake visible in the foreground. (Photo by Barry Hansen)

We ascended the first 150 m through steep, dense forest before it opened up to the bluffy terrain of the 1480 m knoll, which we traversed on its south side before gaining its ridgeline and descending westward into the large basin below Mariner's east glacier. The views along this knoll are spectacular and allotted us a clear view of potential routes up from the basin to the glacier. What wasn't spectacular was the unabated heat wave, which was once again taking its toll on me and Garrett. We dropped into the basin, crossed over to the rocky slopes beneath the glacier, and followed a ramping drainage before discovering a beautiful basalt slab, which we scrambled up to the glacier.

The biggest obstacle remaining wasn't the two-kilometer distance and 450 m elevation gain between us and the summit; it was the hard fact that we were running out of day. My summit fever was getting doused in the cold reality my companions were gently splashing upon me. I was in a state of

disappointed shock. I couldn't believe it. The weather was perfect. The summit of Mariner was right there. How could we turn back now? I ran through every possible scenario, calculating times and distances, but the math always fell short. The reality was that we'd likely run out of daylight just heading back from our present location. Additionally, we were fatigued from the heat and had some tricky terrain to descend. And so, with a heavy heart, I resigned myself to the inevitable: I would not be on the summit of Mariner today. It would have been a different story if we had moved camp last night and had an alpine start this morning. Oh well, lesson learned—the hard way.

We took a few minutes to walk a short distance across the glacier and got buzzed by a low flying sight-seeing flight out of Tofino. We then downclimbed to the basin and had a quick meal beside a waterfall before retracing our steps back up the 1480 m knoll. I was on verge of heat stroke and had to stop frequently to hydrate and cool down. The sun was setting by the time we reached the top of the final steep forest section leading down to our gear stash. We crashed downward through the bush, emerging at the bottom in near darkness.

We packed up our gear and 1.5 hours later we were at the lakeshore. That's right, 1.5 hours to travel 500 m distance and drop 50 m elevation. What we hadn't realized is that the

boulder field and forest between the col and the lake was in fact a dense forest growing out of a boulder field, which



Quentin standing on west ridgeline of 1480 m knoll with Mariner in the background. (Photo by Barry Hansen)

we had to navigate in pitch black with our headlamps and fatigued minds and bodies. The boulders varied in size from small cars to houses, all jammed together with densely packed trees growing among them. It was a nightmare. We arrived at the lakeshore utterly spent and began the task of looking for a spot to pitch our tents, which wasn't an easy task because of the tree density and rocky shoreline.

Could it get any worse? Yes, when Garrett announced in a panicked voice that he couldn't find his \$900 binoculars. He had left them up in the col when we were repacking our stash. One thing was for sure, the binos were going to have a cold, lonely night. I assured Garrett I would hike back up with him in the morning to retrieve them. We had a quick dinner and then fell into bed utterly exhausted after 16 hours on the go.

Day 5

I woke at first light and enjoyed a cup of tea as the rising sun lit up the cliffs above the lake. I contemplated the remaining days and concluded there weren't enough left to summit Moyeha and Thelwood without pushing hard and rushing through the Moyeha Valley, which wasn't an option for me because besides summiting Tom Taylor and Mariner, spending a night in the Moyeha Valley was a priority. I didn't come all this way just to rush through it. I woke the other two and shared my thoughts with them. They agreed. Today's itinerary now consisted of retrieving Garrett's binoculars before descending to the Moyeha River, where we would spend the night.

Guess how long it took to hike from our camp back up to the col? 20 minutes. We found a meadow and a bear path that bypassed the nasty stuff we were trapped in for 1.5 hours last night. We retrieved the wayward binoculars, quickly returned to the lake, packed up, and then traversed through the beautiful ancient forest along the lakeshore before the pass narrowed and cascaded downwards in a series of waterfalls and bluffs. We were fortunate to find a bear path winding (and occasionally plummeting) downward. Bears are really good scramblers! We came to a long and wide meadow of alders that we gratefully avoided by following the dry rocky creek bed, which the water flowed underneath at this point. We spooked a bear who was enjoying the abundance of salmonberries as much as we were.

The meadow gave way to a magnificent forest that spilled downward into the valley below. We navigated the constant obstacles of boulders, bluffs, and crisscrossed fallen trees in varying states of decay, all overshadowed by the majestic ancient trees towering overhead. The ground gradually leveled and we stepped out onto a wide and dry riverbed. Wait? Where's the river? Was it filtering through the rocky ground beneath us in this section? Elation gave way to frustration. Not only were we ridiculously thirsty

again (yes, still in a heat wave but now made worse at low elevation) but I also didn't want to camp on a dry riverbed. While Garrett nursed some foot issues, Quentin and I set off to explore for water. We wandered up and down a maze of dry creek bed tributaries in both directions before deciding to bushwhack across the valley floor in hopes that the river was farther that way. Our theory paid off as we came to a roaring section of narrow river, which appeared to be a more recent development evidenced by the numerous trees fallen across it. Apparently, something happened upstream that changed the water course.

We returned to Garrett before wandering down the dry riverbed until it converged with the flowing river, revealing a perfect campsite on a wide, level sandy beach. The sand was littered with bear prints and scat. We pitched our tents and enjoyed a magical evening beside the hospitable waters of the Moyeha River surrounded by giants and wondering if anyone had been here before us. We slept deeply and peacefully as guests of the valley.



Our serene campsite in the Moyeha Valley. (Photo by Barry Hansen)

Day 6

I would have loved to spend another day in the valley but time insisted that we move along, and so we did. The river was shallow here, which made for an easy crossing. We then plunged into a bushy forest, battling our way 500 m upstream before turning our backs to the valley to begin the 600 m ascent up the steep forested slope back into the alpine. The terrain leveled out into a broad meadow that was hemmed in tightly on all sides and had a pretty lake in the middle. It was definitely swim time! Quentin dubbed this nameless waterbody Greenwich Lake, confusing it with Greenview Lake, which was across the narrow ridge just north of us. Regardless, the name stuck and we expect all future visitors to refer to it as thus.

Refreshed, we continued northward to the ridge separating us from Greenview Lake (the real one) and made our way

up its steep, bluffy slopes before navigating back down the other side, reaching the lakeshore just as a dense cloud rolled in, enveloping us in its coolness. We continued on to Upper Thelwood Lake and set camp at the eastern end of it. Over dinner, we discussed tomorrow's plan. Our revised itinerary had been to navigate a route traversing upward from Upper Thelwood Lake to Sandbag Lake and then climb Myra before descending to our vehicle at Westmin Mine. But the weather was causing us concern so we got a weather update via my inReach: unsettled for the next few days with high probability of rain. And so, once again, a change of itinerary. We opted for what we anticipated would be an easy exit via Thelwood and Jim Michell Lakes, which meant tomorrow was our last day.

Day 7

The last day of a longer trek always produces mixed feelings. There's a sense of loss (the end of an adventure), a sense of accomplishment (we did it!), and a sense of excitement (I get to sleep in my own bed tonight). I felt all three when I woke up. The sky was looking pretty clear and I briefly contemplated switching back to Plan C (we were presently on Plan D) but I know that clear skies in the morning don't mean clear skies all day in the mountains, and navigating unknown technical terrain in poor weather is never appealing. And so, we packed up, located a not-well-trodden trail, and headed eastward and downward. We quickly discovered that the supposedly well-marked trail from Upper Thelwood Lake to Thelwood Lake was no longer well-marked. It was overgrown with intermittent bits of flagging. We were occasionally on trail but mostly navigating through forest, bluff, ravine, meadow, bog, and thick bush, which took much longer than anticipated.

We eventually reached the shore of Thelwood Lake and were surprised by the unnatural and unsightly appearance of its shoreline, which looks like every other dammed lake I've seen. It was a disappointing contrast to the wild beauty we lived within for the previous six days. As we worked

our way alongside it, I occasionally glanced up at the ridge to the north above us where Sandbag Lake rested at the foot of Mt. Myra, wondering if we made the right decision. The cloudless blue sky taunted me.

We reached the dam at the end of Thelwood Lake, took a quick break, and tried to assess the route down to Jim Mitchell Lake. We weren't expecting such challenging terrain: steep on both sides with water rushing among massive boulders. The route description we had didn't make sense and so we slowly navigated our way down the best we could. We finally reached the shoreline of Jim Mitchell, which looked the same as Thelwood Lake above. Tired and disappointed, we worked our way along the challenging shoreline until we reached a road. Home free! Or so we thought. Our elation gave way to more disappointment as the road disappeared into the water, leaving a 200 m gap between us and the end of the lake, forcing us to navigate the very steep slope above the shoreline before reaching Jim Mitchell Road and back to our vehicle at the Bedwell trailhead.



West shoreline of Jim Mitchell Lake. (Photo by Barry Hansen)

It was an unsatisfying ending to an otherwise spectacular trip. Writing this, I still regret our decision to exit via that route. Especially since the unfavourable weather forecast never materialized. We could have camped at Sandbag Lake that night and gone up Myra in the morning before hiking out to Westmin Mine. But you know what they say about hindsight. I know one thing for sure: I won't hike the Jim Mitchell/Thelwood route again. But the traverse from Tom Taylor to Mariner is definitely worth a redo. And I plan to.

Participants: Barry Hansen, Quentin Thomas, Garrett Beisel



Cooling off in Greenwich Lake. (Photo by Barry Hansen)

Thelwood and Moyeha, August 2020

Graham Smith

August 7-12

Tak Ogasawara, Ken Wong and I had been trying to get a period of good weather and scheduling to tackle Mt Thelwood and Mt Moyeha together. Dave Campbell's article on his trip (*Island Bushwhacker* 2012, 40:50-51) was a great instruction and we decided to try and follow his route, the only change being to return via the Myra Creek route rather than back over the Thelwood Ridge. We also decided to give ourselves more time as none of us are Dave Campbell.

Day one started with the usual grunt up from the mine to Tennent Lake. At the lake, we went west and tried to find the easiest way around the shoreline. Staying inland from the shoreline for the first half allows you to take advantage of bluff and avoid the worst of the bush around the water.



The dam. (Photo by Graham Smith)

The second half of the lake is bushy but manageable. The gully itself is only a 100 m bushwhack and then you arrive at a small lake and the lower entrance to the alpine.

The route to the main ridge takes time in order to avoid bluff and water but we weren't looking to set any speed records and enjoyed the views along the way. Once on the main ridge, we headed due west over the granite bluffs and finally to Crystal Pass at 6:30 p.m. We decided to camp 100m above the small lake at the pass in order to get a later sunset.

The next morning we had a 6 a.m. start and felt great at summiting Thelwood by 9 a.m. After photos, snacks and filling out the registry, we headed down the gully between Thelwood's main and false peaks south towards Moyeha. Our first mistake of the day was deciding to try for Moyeha's northwest gully access without fully understanding our route. Several trial and errors ate up time and left us wondering. Although we think we ultimately did find the right gully, the rock was wet and slippery and we were running out of time. We decided to pass on the summit and focus on the fastest route up to Crystal Pass so that we could have a smooth start the following day and summit Moyeha.

This approach led to our second mistake of the day. Rather than follow Dave Campbell's route towards the west end of Upper Thelwood Lake, we decided to tackle a gully at higher elevation, just opposite the entrance to the traditional route up Moyeha.

This would allow us to avoid creek travel to Upper Thelwood Lake and the loss of elevation that came with it. After substantial bushwhacking, tree climbing and wet gully scrambling, we eventually made it to the top of the snow gully leading up to Thelwood, exhausted. After a twelve-hour day, we had very little to show for it other than the first three hours.



Ridge heading to Crystal Pass. (Photo by Graham Smith)



Crystal Pass campsite. (Photo by Graham Smith)

Day three we left camp just after 6 a.m. and dropped down the gully from the little lake in Crystal Pass towards Moyeha. The route required bluff and creek management but overall was quite passable. The bottom was just a steep cuppa bush descent.

The following creek hike involved a combination of boulder hopping, bush management, and traversing around water features caused by the elevation change. Although it took time, there was nothing too challenging and, like the rest of the trip, we were not looking to break any speed records.

Moyeha was a fun mountain to climb. The bottom boulder scramble led to a snow traverse to the main snow gully. A look up the gully confirmed it was no longer passable, however, so we went left to the granite bluffs and zig



Moyeha snowfield. (Photo by Graham Smith)

zagged our way up the side. Once at the top of the bluffs, we had a choice to either traverse the snow field as is normal, or try and go straight up the steep heather and cross the spine of the upper ridge between the first and second false peaks. As we weren't sure of the conditions on the back side of those peaks, we decided on the traditional snow traverse which went smoothly on the sunny afternoon.

The peak of Moyeha is a little hard to find as it wasn't visible when we came to the end of the snow. It is the last peak and required a little rock scramble to get to. All very straight forward. There was a small cairn at the top but no registry could be found, unfortunately. We consoled ourselves with photos and snacks and a nice sit down at the peak.

On the way down the mountain, we left the snow field early and took advantage of the steep heather on the back side to drop down in a more direct way. Other than that, our route down just followed our track on the way up. The creek hike also went quite quickly as we had worked out the challenges on our way up.

For the gully, we decided to see if we could find Dave Campbell's route which we understood entered right at the headwall in the gully. This was not a great choice and resulted in a lot of bluff and tree management. Maybe we missed where he veered out of the gully. We would have been better sticking with our track down, entering to the west of the ravine and simply dealing with steep Cuppa Bush terrain. Ultimately, we connected with our previous track and made it back to camp in the same time it took us to descend in the morning. Having the track worked out was a big time saver.



Early start to Moyeha. (Photo by Graham Smith)

The following day we slept in and left camp at 10 a.m. towards the Thelwood – Bancroft divide. It is a beautiful descent into the valley below through a lovely meadow with sizeable waterfall. A substantial bushwhack up the valley to the plateau on the other side led to our last source of water for some time. From there, a series of bluffs and a substantial amount of bushwhacking saw us progress along the ridge above the Myra Creek Valley.

As we were approaching mid August, this area had no water so our camp for the night, although situated on a beautiful bluff overlooking the valleys on both sides, was dry. Thankfully, we had enough water to last the night and get us farther down the ridge the next morning. Although there were lots of signs of bears in the area, we had no issues.



Camping on Myra Falls route out. (Photo by Graham Smith)

Our final morning saw us leave camp at 6 a.m. and restart our bushwhacking down the ridge towards Myra Falls. A fair amount of zig zagging around rock features made this somewhat slow going but it was a beautiful morning and the steep sides to the ridge made it pretty obvious where to go.

It's funny how sometimes the things that you think are going to be the easiest turn out to be the most challenging. We made the assumption that as we approached Myra Falls along Myra Creek we would have an easy hop onto the well-maintained trail from the falls to the parking lot.

We failed to research the exact location of the falls, however, and we missed correctly ascertaining what is the main creek and what were the tributaries. As such we continued to bushwhack in parallel to the maintained parks trail without being able to figure out how we were missing it. I think fatigue was impacting our problem-solving abilities. Finally, we hit a series of bluffs that forced us to stop. Either we would go down to the creek where the trail must be or we just climb above the bluffs and keep going.

Getting tired of the debate and the ongoing old growth slog, I went up. As I went over the top, I was startled to see a family of five, complete with bear bells and drink cooler, stopped and staring at me, presumably thinking I was a bear scrambling through the forest. I asked politely, "Would you happen to be on the Myra Falls Trail?" They answered yes and I called down to the others that we had found the trail. A string of expletives came back from below.

Once together, our embarrassment at missing such an obvious navigation feature quickly turned to laughter as we patted each other on the back for getting through a long a challenging journey. Myra and Thelwood offer a wonderful trip and I would recommend them to anyone. The Tennent Lake gully is a significant time saver over the Sandbag Lake route and makes getting to the west portion of the ridge far faster. If you decide on the Myra Creek route back, be prepared for lot of ups and downs and a lot of bush. Still a wonderful route, though. My final recommendation is to put a waypoint at Myra Falls!

Participants: Graham Smith, Tak Ogasawara and Ken Wong

All Women Beginner Friendly Trip to Crest Mountain

Janelle Curtis

7-9 August 2020

Research shows that people have an easier time meditating and being mindful in green space. Indeed, people are calmer in wilderness, including alpine areas. A small amount of time outdoors also improves involuntary attention while they experience the wonders of the natural world. Involuntarily, one listens to melodious bird songs, smells the fragrant air, feels the soft wind kissing a cheek, samples sweet berries, and enjoys the serene beauty of flowers and trees. This allows one's voluntary attention to have a break from life's day-to-day demands. So, spending time in nature rests the brain and improves its performance. Having sustained a serious head injury in 2016, I was always grateful to spend time healing my brain in natural places. And because of the many challenges associated with the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, I was more than happy to spend a few days exploring Strathcona Park with a lovely group of women who joined ACCVI's All Women Beginner Friendly hike to Crest Mountain, which is close to Gold River.

Lenka Visnovska and I have co-led a number of all women beginner friendly hikes since 2013. We described our trip



Here we are just about to start our hike. From left to right – Laura Darling, Anne Flanagan, Elizabeth Robertson, Jamieson Gordon-Mason, and Janelle Curtis. (Photo by an anonymous hiker at the trailhead)

to Crest Mountain as a great way to review the basics of backcountry hiking and camping with a group of like-minded women. We planned to hike up the relatively straightforward but steep trail and then find a suitable place to set up camp on the plateau. We suggested that we could bushwhack to the summit of Idsardi Mountain on the second day if the group felt like it. We also committed to following provincial health guidelines to reduce the risk of transmitting the coronavirus, including limiting our group to six people.

Lenka and I organized a virtual pre-trip planning meeting during a weekend in late July to review the basics of preparing for an overnight hiking trip into the backcountry. 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. In the end, Lenka decided not to join us because she was already preparing for the unexpected – she was pregnant with twins! Fortunately, Laura Darling kindly agreed to come in Lenka's place and share her knowledge and experience with our group.

Eighteen women expressed interest in joining us on that trip, but in the end, there were five of us: me, Laura and her equally experienced friend Anne, Elizabeth, who had been on a few overnight hikes in the backcountry, and Jamieson, who had quite a bit of outdoor experience but had never camped in the backcountry. We had a range of experiences and interests and we all learned much from each other during our hike.

I met Laura, Anne, Elizabeth, and Jamieson in person for the first time at the trailhead near Drum Lake just past the Elk River Valley. I knew Laura from virtual ACCVI Executive Committee meetings and Jamieson from the pre-trip planning meeting a few weeks before our hike. We

introduced ourselves, signed waivers, and then I showed everyone where I keep maps, route descriptions, my 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 we all come back safely.

Although we had all just met that morning, I knew on the way up to the plateau that this was going to be a delightful adventure, in part because everyone had an excellent sense of humour, a curiosity about native plants, and a positive outlook despite the rain. We took a few breaks along the steep trail to catch our breath and take in the stunning beauty of the forest. We climbed about 1100 m in elevation until we reached the open ridge which normally gives views of the Elk River Valley. Although there was a limited view of Kings Peak and other nearby mountains because



Laura, Janelle, and Anne hanging food off a cliff because the trees were not very suitable for hanging food. (Photo by Elizabeth Robertson)



A selfie photo - 'for the newsletter' - at the summit cairn. (Photo by Laura Darling)



Elizabeth enjoying our camp. (Photo by Janelle Curtis)

of fog and clouds that first day, the picturesque tarn at the top of the trail to the plateau had its own “wow factor.” We then found a quiet spot among trees next to a very small tarn to set up our tents and enjoyed a lovely dinner together.

After dinner we looked for places to hang our food and other fragrant consumables. Those subalpine trees,



Jamieson grateful to be there! (Photo by Janelle Curtis)

however, were not very suitable for hanging our food, so we worked together to find somewhere on a cliff close to the big tarn at the top of the trail to hang it out of reach of hungry wildlife.

The sun came out the next day so we could appreciate the morning light and inspiring views all around. We spent the second day exploring the plateau and winding our way to the summit of Crest Mountain.

In the end, we decided not to head to Idsardi Mountain, not least because it seemed like it would be a big day of bushwhacking. Instead, we hiked 1-2 km past the Crest Mountain summit cairn and took lots of photos for ourselves and the *Island Bushwhacker Newsletter*. We enjoyed each other’s company while feeling tremendous gratitude and exploring that beautiful landscape, including more glassy tarns.

The next morning, we ate breakfast under a clear blue sky and then slowly made our way back down to the trailhead.

On the way home, we stopped for a bit of food in Campbell River and learned more from each other, including the contents of a good first aid kit. After spending the weekend on Crest Mountain with this group, I was definitely feeling calmer and more mindful. And I’m looking forward to more adventures with these wonderful women!

Participants: Janelle Curtis (co-leader), Laura Darling (co-leader), Anne Flanagan, Jamieson Gordon-Mason, Elizabeth Robertson.



Group photo before leaving Crest Mountain. (Photo by Elizabeth Robertson)

Colonel Foster Summit Traverse: The Grand Finale IQ

Barry Hansen

August 14-16, 2020

My primary alpine objective for 2020 was to complete the Island Qualifiers. The only thing standing between me and that goal were the summits of Rugged, Elkhorn, and Colonel Foster. Fortunately, my primary climbing partner, Rich Priebe, had shared ambitions and so plans were formulated as the summer climbing season approached.

Every alpinist knows that the ‘best laid plans of mice and men’ principle immortalized by Robert Burns also applies to mountaineering objectives and said plans ‘going awry’ are frequently experienced. Unfavourable weather and route conditions, health issues, life interruptions, scheduling challenges, equipment failures, injuries, and a plethora of other circumstances (including a raging pandemic) can all conspire to upend our alpine dreams.

But not in 2020. Instead, we experienced a year of abundant alpine harvest, plucking and savouring the fruits of our labour along the way, including this list of three. First on the list was Rugged Mountain, which we successfully summited on the final weekend of June. Next was Colonel Foster for mid-August and then Elkhorn in September. August arrived and a perfect three-day weather window opened for ‘The Colonel’ and so we committed to it.

But then the unexpected happened. Three days prior to the trip I was longing to get out and asked Rich if he was available and interested in a spontaneous day trip. He suggested Elkhorn. Elkhorn? That was supposed to be in September. But why not Elkhorn? And so, Elkhorn it was. I was thrilled at the possibility that my IQ ambition might be achieved sooner than expected. 13.5 hours, 2100 m, and 24 km later, I had a tired body but a very happy heart. One more IQ to go, in three days.

Now, a little personal background info on Mount Colonel Foster. In years past, photos of it always thoroughly intimidated me. And the first time I visited Landslide Lake and looked up at Colonel Foster’s north aspect, I was terrified at the thought of climbing it. It looked well beyond my reach, and it was. But that didn’t stop me from dreaming the impossible dream. I threw myself into skills development and experience acquisition and as they increased, so did my confidence that one day I might just be ready to attempt this beautiful beast. Rich

had the same respect for The Colonel as I did and after a great alpine season in 2019, we both felt ready to make the commitment.

And so, with a healthy dose of nervous excitement, we set out the morning of August 14, 2020, drove to the ERT parking lot, donned our burdens, made quick work of the well-trodden path to Landslide Lake, and then on to Foster Lake before leaving the final vestiges of backcountry civilization to navigate upward over rock and snow to the south col. While along the lakeshores, numerous parties queried our intentions upon spotting our alpine gear. We simply pointed upward at the magnificent east face, both to their amazement and our own. We were really doing this.

Up in the South Col under clearing skies, we battled mosquitoes while preparing dinner before settling down to restless sleep in our bivvies in anticipation of the coming day. We awoke early and began our preparations. It was cloudless, windless, and quickly warming as darkness gave way to light. A perfect day was dawning. Two other parties of two were also up and preparing for their own day. One was doing the summit traverse and the other just the two south summits. The traverse party had a one-hour head start on us, which was fortuitous for two reasons: 1) It prevented us from knocking rocks on each other as we alternately ascended and descended the five peaks, and 2) It allowed us to observe, photograph, and briefly converse with each other from across the narrow gaps that frequently separated us.



South col bivy with Elkhorn in background. (Photo by Barry Hansen)

Before starting out, we hydrated and then filled our vessels to capacity, knowing there would be little to no water refilling opportunities until completing the traverse. The upper glacier was the exception, of course, but we didn’t want to waste precious time melting snow so early in the day. Instead, our strategy was to carefully ration the water we began with, which worked fine until it didn’t. More

about that in a bit.

With the rising sun at our backs, we ascended the south gullies and reached the Southeast Peak fairly quickly before dropping down to the notch between it and the Southwest Peak. This is where the adrenaline kicked in and the real fun started. The IAS description is to ‘shimmy across the precariously perched boulders jammed in the gap.’ I started to shimmy but then Rich said, “Hey, stand up. It’s a great shot!” Since I’m not one to deny a great shot, I gladly submitted to Rich’s request and stood upright on the narrow bridge with breathtaking exposure on either side. Oh yeah!

Once across the gap, we quickly scrambled



Looking south from the main summit of Col Foster. (Photo by Barry Hansen)



Not shimmying across the narrow, exposed bridge between the SE and SW peaks. (Photo by Rich Priebe)

up the Southwest Peak and then a few rappels down to the upper glacier. We topped up our water bottles with snow, crossed the glacier, and then climbed the short steep wall to the narrow ridge that bridges to the main summit. There’s a good view from here of the route to the summit, which first involves traversing a wide ledge before heading up a steep, narrow gully. The ledge was presently occupied by the two climbers in front of us, which made for some great perspective photos.

We continued on, placing some pro on the short but steep and exposed pinnacle between us and the main summit ledge. Once on the ledge, we carefully stepped past the exposed corner described in IAS that ‘abruptly drops 1000 feet’ and scrambled upward, reaching the scree slope just below the main summit. We met the other party here coming down from the summit and exchanged some congratulatory words before parting ways again. I traversed an obvious ledge that ramps upward to the left while Rich

opted for a more challenging direct line.

Our paths converged a few meters shy of the summit and a few minutes later we were standing on top of Mount Colonel Foster. And it felt amazing. We took a few minutes to eat, take photos, write in the summit register, and bask in the glory of it before continuing on. After all, we were only halfway—and the hard half was still to come.

We down-climbed and rappelled to the notch between the main summit and the Northeast Peak. From here, IAS describes a short steep 20 m scramble but ‘wickedly exposed’ should be added to the description. We set a belay and Rich led the pitch but didn’t like what he encountered above and so came back down. We discussed options and pored over the various beta we had accumulated from various sources before deciding to rappel down from the notch about 50 m on the west side to what we believed would be a low sloping gully leading up to the Northeast Peak. It did and we suddenly found ourselves on top of the fourth peak of the day. (*Note: There’s a good bivy shelter here and beside it was a beachball sized snowball, the only snow we saw between the upper glacier and the north-facing ledges above the evacuation gully.)

After a couple more photos and a quick snack, we began a long series of rappels toward the notch between the two north peaks. On one particularly awkward section, our rope got jammed and we couldn’t free it up. I volunteered Rich to climb back up, which he did. I made a mental note that I owed him one. Along our descent, we observed the party ahead of us slowly ascending the final peak. We yelled a few words of encouragement and grabbed some cool pics of them. A few more rappels brought us to the base of the Northwest Peak. Fatigue was setting in as we ascended to our final summit. And our water supply was now depleted. We really should have taken a few minutes to melt a piece of that big snowball.



Climber on the summit of the northwest peak of Col Foster. (Photo by Barry Hansen)

Our mentally and physically exhausted state wasn't prepared for the obstacle awaiting us at the final few meters. We anticipated a scramble like the previous four peaks but instead encountered a wide shelf with a short vertical face separating us from the top. It would have been manageable under normal conditions but we were feeling pretty spent after 13 hours on the go.

We searched for an easy way up but it doesn't exist. The most obvious route has a couple of tricky 5th class moves. Rich gave it a go but just didn't have enough fuel in the tank. I seriously contemplated resigning to 'four out of five peaks ain't bad' but I knew Rich wouldn't and that I would quickly regret such a decision. I also knew it was my turn to repay Rich for his rope-retrieval foray on the previous peak and so I mustered what remained of my mental and physical energy, dug into some deep volitional reserves, somehow managed to make the moves, and then belayed Rich up. Mission accomplished. All five peaks. Well, almost accomplished. We still had to get off the mountain.

From the NW peak, a knife-edge ridge runs towards the North Tower. To the northwest, the ridge falls steeply into a wide bowl that narrows into a gully dropping off to the west. We observed a bomber rap station here but based upon our interpretation of available beta, we opted for the

narrow ridge. However, a short distance along it I told Rich I wasn't feeling super confident about our choice and would like to look at the bowl option again. He agreed and so we backtracked to the rap station. We spotted another rap station farther down and a faint path in the scree that traversed the bowl with some large cairns along the way. Much better!

We followed this route, which took us around and then downward to a crossroads of sorts. A series of slings headed down into the evacuation gully and another series paralleled the gully along the north face of the NW Peak. We knew the gully route came with bergschrund warnings but we opted for it because the sun was quickly setting and the party ahead of us had gone that way (we spotted them much farther down, but along the lower slopes of the North Tower).

After taking a few minutes to melt some precious snow to quench our severely dehydrated bodies, we made multiple rappels to the top of the gully as the sun disappeared on the horizon. After drinking our fill of icy water, we began the descent in dark, wet, and cool conditions that sharply contrasted the previous 15 hours.

We carefully navigated the anticipated obstacles of loose rock and patchy snow and occasionally encountered haphazardly placed pieces of webbing and cordelette, which we gratefully used to assist our descent.

Mild anxiety set in after donning our headlamps to rappel a steep snowy section only to have the rope get jammed while pulling it. We decided that Rich would work at freeing the rope while I recced our next move in the pitch black. At this point, the gully dropped sharply, forcing me slightly upwards to the north to a wide, gentle sloping feature. I searched for a rap station or obvious route down but could locate neither. But then I discovered something better: a small, nearly level spot where the slope met the vertical bluff above. An almost perfect bivy site that could be made more perfect with a little effort.

I walked back to where Rich could hear me and communicated my findings. He agreed but was still working to free the rope and so I went to work upgrading the bivy. Two large rocks required moving. I rolled the first flatter one a couple of times until it was clear. The second rounder one rolled much easier. In fact, a bit too easy as it took on a life of its own. I watched as it slowly rolled towards the main drainage on the left before disappearing into the darkness in a thunderous roar that pierced the sacred silence and lasted an uncomfortable length of time. I yelled to Rich, "Sorry, that was me!"

After freeing the rope, Rich joined me at our bivy site, which we finished together before crawling into our bivy sacks after 16 hours on the move. I should have been hungry but only had enough strength to scarf down a



Melting snow in the fading light before dropping into evacuation gully. (Photo by Barry Hansen)

Larabar and guzzle another half-litre of water. My thirst was unquenchable. We laid on our backs under the warm, starry, still, and mosquito-less summer sky and drifted off to sleep.

Since there was no need for anything resembling an alpine start, we allowed our minds and bodies the luxury of sleeping in until it was light.

We slowly packed up and then quickly found a bomber rap station with six solid pieces of webbing at the far edge of the slope we spent the night on. Four raps later we were officially off the mountain. It would have been extremely difficult to locate these anchors and safely rappel down in the dark, especially since a couple of them were overhanging, freefall drops. And so, sitting tight last night was right.



Happy endings at Landslide Lake. (Photo by Barry Hansen)

We descended the lower snow field, crossed over the north shoulder, and dropped 600 m through the forest to the outflow of Landslide Lake. It was around noon, getting hot, and an alpine bath was in order. And so, we indulged. Cold water never felt so good. We redressed, repacked, and quickly retraced our steps back down the ERT to our awaiting chariot.

Would I do it again? Absolutely. Would I do anything different? Yes, I'd definitely avoid the evacuation gully, opting for the cleaner and safer descent down the north face of the Northwest Peak. I'd also manage my hydration better. And I'd possibly consider going north to south instead—but that would be a completely different adventure.

Participants: Barry Hansen, Rich Priebe

Bushwhacking Overdose: a Linkup of 5040, Nahmint, & Adder

Pat Malavi

August 15-16, 2020

5040 Peak, Mt Nahmint, and Mt Adder are fine individual objectives but also tantalizingly close neighbours, at least as the crow flies. Could they be linked up in some way to maximize time spent in the alpine? After considering a few route options in Google Earth, I eventually devised a 55 km loop, hopefully doable within a single day. While perhaps a little audacious, I felt it was within my ability coming from a trail running / adventure racing background with plenty of time spent thrashing around in the bush.

Several unknowns existed on this trip. First, I'd not been to this area or done any of the peaks individually. Any beta I found was from combing the internet. Also, route finding would be a challenge, particularly off-trail in darkness. I knew I'd have to rely heavily on GPS when entering and exiting Nahmint Valley.

The day started well as my wife's Mazda 5 made it 4 km up Marion Main FSR. After sleeping in the car, I started pre-dawn and made the summit of 5040 with no issues (Hišimȳawił is fantastic – most breathtaking outhouse view ever!). From the summit, I saw large chunks of the



Top: Ridge leading to Nahmint from 5040. Bottom: Triple Peak at dawn from 5040. (Photo by Pat Malavi)

day's route: the ridge shooting east to Nahmint Mountain, Nahmint Valley below, and Adder to the northwest.

The connecting ridge from 5040 to Nahmint was a highlight of the day – an enjoyable alpine ramble passing the sapphire blue Beverley Lake and ending in a scramble up Nahmint.

The real “fun” began when dropping from the alpine into Nahmint Valley using a treed ridge northwest of Nahmint's summit. I had downloaded a gpx file and route description from hiketheisland.com that mentions a flagged trail here. I allocated ~two hours to cover this section but in reality, it took three times that. The reference track on my phone ignored numerous micro-terrain features and following it closely was futile. I found only a small handful of flags, thick bush, and endless cliff bands that required precariously clinging on to heather to skirt around them (“veggie-belaying”). Not ideal to do solo with dwindling light while halfway through a committed loop.

I felt waves of relief when I finally emerged onto a logging road off Nahmint Main FSR. At this point, I would have gladly hitchhiked to Port Alberni if I saw anyone heading that way. Unfortunately, I seemed to be the only person in the valley and my fastest exit was up and over Adder Mountain.

I had thought the bushwhacking coming off Nahmint was challenging but even this paled in comparison to the east ridge of Adder. Darkness fell and I missed the entrance of the normal route (presumably flagged) from a hairpin in the logging road. Instead, I found myself bushwhacking with a headlamp, trying to avoid steep terrain near creeks. Visibility and progress were bad enough that at 1 am, I sent an inReach message to my wife saying that I'm bivvying with my emergency blanket on a bed of moss on the east slopes of Adder. Thankfully temps were warm, bugs were non-existent, and I had ample food and water.



GPS track of the loop, start/finish on Marion Main.

Around civil twilight I set off again, breaking into the alpine just after sunrise. I felt lucky to be at the right spot at the right time to see Adder's heather slopes cast in a golden light.

By this point, I had gained the proper flagging and finished the pleasant scramble up Adder. I descended the main trail to Highway 4 then across to Marion Main, lightly running where possible. The car was a welcome sight.



The upper Nahmint Valley from the east slopes of Adder just after sunrise. (Photo by Pat Malavi)



All grins early in the day on top of 5040. (Photo by a volunteer hut builder I met at the summit)

A few lessons learned on this trip:

1. Don't follow unverified GPS tracks downloaded from the internet. They may be just eyeballed routes, not actual tracks.
2. Unplanned bivvies can offer terrific dusk/dawn "magic hour" photo opportunities otherwise not possible.
3. Bushwhacking on the island is not the same as on the mainland – another level of gnarly!

All in all, a great introduction to the terrain outside Port Alberni. Although it was much more than I bargained for, I learned a lot in the process. I'm looking forward to my next chance to explore this enchanting region.

Participant: Pat Malavi

A Return to Mount Bate: Remembering the Wild Mountain Time

Rob Macdonald

September 9 – 12, 2020

How bittersweet it is to look at old slides and indulge oneself in remembrance of things past or, perhaps more accurately, *À la recherche du temps perdu*. In mid September, 1982, Paul Erickson and I had headed out on the Island Highway with our minds set on exploration and, perhaps, a peak bag or two. For some quirky reason I remember Jackson Browne's *Running on Empty* playing as we topped the Malahat – and now here I am, thinking

back to the years gone by like so many summer fields. In that distant summer Paul and I knew full well what we were getting into. Two years earlier we had peered over the summit of Alava to see this magical, unknown sanctuary: a cobalt blue lake surrounded by mountains and ridges broken only by snowy passes leading to who knew where. Among those mountains one in particular – Mt Bate – beckoned. That panoramic sight eclipsed all memory of the bushwhack. As they say, the rest is history. Paul and I got our adventure, we bagged Mt Bate in one very long day (IB, 1982, 10:3/4:2-5), and went on to other adventures in the sanctuary and elsewhere.

In this year of the plague we have all been challenged to find adventure without exposing ourselves or others to Covid. Paul came up with the idea that the two of us might return to the Alava-Bate sanctuary and repeat the original route, which went up the wide cirque between Alava and Bate and onto the west ridge of Mt Bate. A convoluted way to gain Bate's summit if you are camped in the Shangri La valley, but this route up from Peter Lake offers views and varied challenges that place it in that class of adventure described as being fun at the time and fun to talk about later. So, in September of 2020 during a spell of clear weather, Paul organized a helicopter and we dashed up to Gold River where, masked like bandits, we hopped our ride at two in the afternoon, and within minutes were beyond the bushwhack, standing on the small beach at the southern end of Peter Lake. As silence descended, the memories of this place crowded in. Surrounded by these red walls, looking out over the clear water of Peter Lake, I found myself time-warped into a state where every rock, ridge and mountain had a surreal sharpness. Partly the clear air and partly the mirrored surface of the lake seemed to bring out an indescribable soft intensity to these crystalline mountains.

We set up our tents and explored the surrounds, clambering up and over giant boulders, and appreciating the flowers. And finding two large piles of bear scat. This was the first



Our camp at the south end of Peter Lake. (Photo by Rob Macdonald)

sign I'd seen of a large animal in the sanctuary; we hung our food and I decided to sleep with my ice axe close at hand. Justincase. Truth is, there is not much for a bear to do in there except prowl on to a better place for foraging. As the sun dropped toward Alava's north ridge, the sun angle became just right to produce a vertical rainbow at the bottom of the waterfall that cascaded down Mt Bate's north face. As the sun further declined, the spectrum crept upward until a few minutes later it vanished into the rock-strewn ledges at the top of the falls. One could not help but notice that this high waterfall cascaded directly onto a stony talus slope where, back in 1982 and 1991, there had been a very healthy snowfield. Snow was also absent from the talus slope leading up to the cirque between Alava and Bate. Although I have been back to the sanctuary several times, most recently in 2017, the absence of snow in 2020 seemed out of the ordinary.

I was restless that first night, partly because the enclosing cliffs were releasing the day's heat and it seemed we were camped at the focal point of a valley-sized, parabolic stone reflector. On looking out at about midnight, I saw the stars in a way you never see them now in the city. "Is this what Van Gogh saw that starry night long ago?" I asked myself. No wonder he dashed off that painting. I lay face up half



Sequence of pictures of the north Face of Mt Bate: Top; Sept. 15, 1982; Middle - Oct. 5, 1991; Bottom - Sept 10, 1920. (Photos by Rob Macdonald)



The waterfall rainbow cascading down the north face of Mt Bate. (Photo by Rob Macdonald)

out of the tent, mesmerized for an hour or so, humming Don McLean's song to myself, and thought I, too, now understood what Van Gogh was trying to say (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BbgrHnbgoDU>). That swirling night sky took me back to other times, like the night I stood in a backyard of London with my brother in 1958 as Sputnik ghosted across the sky. It is a sad loss to think that the magic of a midnight blaze of stars and the milky way will not become part of many childhood memories today. But, at least, it remains to be viewed by those willing to go to wild places.

The next day dawned clear and promised to be as warm as



The much diminished snowfield below the waterfall on Sept. 10, 2020. (Photo by Rob Macdonald)



Paul Erickson crossing the cirque between Alava and Bate in Sept. 15, 1982. (Photo by Rob Macdonald)



Paul Erickson crossing the cirque between Alava and Bate in Sept. 10, 2020. (Photo by Rob Macdonald)

the day we arrived. In the event, it proved to be warmer, topping 36°C. We set off up the rock/sand/talus slope that leads into the cirque between Alava and Bate, struggling with the hard-scrabble slope covered here and there with loose gravel and low bushes. Nasty.

Finally we topped out, passing through large, monolithic boulders, and found a flat spot to strap on our lightweight crampons. The snow filling the broad, shallow-sloped cirque had really thinned out and the height of the late summer snow pack seemed to be much diminished from what I remembered. This was not the glacier that once jettisoned those large boulders onto the top of the talus. Our original 1982 route had gone upward across this small icefield to its top left-hand corner where a short, snow-filled gully gave direct access to the col between Alava and Bate. Now, in 2020, that route looked very unappealing. The snow was gone; instead there was a steepish ramp, overlain with unstable dirt and rock.

We veered right and gained elevation across the hard snow, detouring around a few crevasses. The surface of the snow,

especially along the ridges of the snow cups, was littered everywhere with the bodies of flying ants. Thousands and thousands of them. A small flock of grey-crowned rosy finches chirped together while foraging this easy breakfast, bringing back a long-forgotten memory of ancestral finches foraging here in the same way in 1982. I guess this little clutch of finches would be ten or more generations down the road, and one wonders if, in a few years, these little alpine birds will be squeezed completely out of this diminishing habitat. We quickly reached the head of the cirque and then exited onto rock and traversed leftward across ledges, finding little difficulty in reaching the start of Bate's west ridge.

At this point we began to realize that our friend, the perfect weather, had now become an enemy. It was still early, but the sun blazed down and temperatures rose past 30°C. We continued on up the steep west ridge, working our way through the slippery 'bloomin' heather, interspersed with short, broken bluffs. Funny the things you forget. Finally we arrived at the point where the ridge lays back and allows

you to walk easily to the summit massif. Just below that point, however, is another one of those little awkwardnesses this route throws at you. I did not even remember this place, but there it was – a steep, short, exposed bluff just below the easier terrain above. We had rope, harness, slings and a few nuts, so were ready for climbing and rappelling, but these accoutrements had become more of a hindrance than a help just by being more dead weight in the pack. We had been sweating mightily, but you would not know it because it dried instantly. Both of us had drained most of our water, and here it was two in the afternoon and the ridge was bone dry. We took a break and had a snack while pondering the heat, the dehydration, the distance still to go, the distance to return – and the heat. Lethargy won: we decided to turn back and get ourselves down to a small snow patch at the col where water slowly seeped at the bottom. I would have liked to have seen that upper ridge, and I wanted once again to walk along the ledge in the bergschrund to see what had happened to the snow of that upper snowfield in the intervening years. But it was not to be and instead we spent a good hour just rehydrating and cooling our heels along with the rest of bodies. We got back to the tents by four pm and spent some more time cooling off in Peter Lake and drinking water.

As we sat there in the evening, we saw what looked like marine cloud pushing its way through the gap between Alava and Grattan at the north end of Peter Lake. As it turned out, that golden evening cloud bank was actually smoke arriving from the fires in Washington and Oregon and by the next day the valleys to the south of us were filled with it. Camped at the bottom of Bate's north face and surrounded by ridges and peaks, we remained blissfully unaware of this unfolding smoke drama.



Smoke beginning to drift into the gap between Alava and Grattan at the north end of Peter Lake. (Photo by Rob Macdonald)

After another Van Gogh night, we awoke to clear skies – another day in paradise. We decided to climb the ridge on the east side of Peter Lake leading up to Grattan and the Thumb. This was the only connecting route that neither of us had previously explored. Again, the temperature climbed and water was in scant supply. But we did make it up the top of the ridge from which we got a panoramic, silhouette view of the mountains to the south. Glorious Vancouver Island. But now we could see the smoke and it was becoming slightly worrisome in terms of our exit moves from the sanctuary. We took advantage of our high perch to radio the helicopter pilot to arrange departure the next day, one day earlier than planned.

The next morning the helicopter, due at 9 a.m., did not arrive. We waited. We waited some more in our 'radio-silent' alcove beneath Mt Bate. And some more. Finally, well after 10 am, a welcoming thump thump echoed through Shangri-La pass and we dove into action with the packs. The pilot informed us that the blanket of smoke to the south of Mt Bate was covering large parts of central



A panorama of the mountains of Strathcona Park to the south of us taken from just below Mt Grattan. (Photo by Rob Macdonald)



The hole in the smoke through which we descended into the Muchlat Valley. (Photo by Rob Macdonald)



A murky exit through a smoke-choked valley. (Photo by Rob Macdonald)

Vancouver Island, socking in valleys, and he'd had to go all the way from Gold River to Campbell Lake to find a way up through it. Heading back, we luckily spotted a hole in the smoke, suitable for one small helicopter, and that allowed us to drop down into the darkness below where we followed the Muchlat River while keeping a sketchy visual on trees largely hidden by smoke. We got out of the sanctuary, but only just. Waiting another day might have left us, probably like that wandering bear, on very short rations for a few days. The new normal for Vancouver Island in late summer season seems to be retreating snow and advancing smoke. The drive home has also changed. We have a fast highway that bypasses that old meandering road along the coast, and our traditional stop back in the 1980s, the Brico (a ship beached at Fanny Bay and converted to a restaurant), is no longer servicing cables or tables. If it is true that you cannot step into the same stream twice, then it is doubly true that you cannot climb the same mountain twice. This Island's alpine areas are changing but, still, Mt Bate and its surrounding ridges, lakes and passes seem as remote and sublime now as they were 40 years ago when we first gazed down upon them.

Participants: Paul Erickson & Rob Macdonald

All Women Beginner Friendly Trip to Kwai Lake and Cruickshank Canyon

Janelle Curtis

October 3 – 4, 2020

I was keen to lead a few trips into the backcountry this year in part because few hikes were posted on the ACCVI schedule, presumably in response to everyone's concern about the pandemic. But because I am still recovering from an accident in the mountains a few years ago, I wanted to post trips that would be a relatively short distance to hike with not very much elevation gain. Especially after hiking up to Crest Mountain and Flower Ridge in August!

My initial plan was to lead an ACCVI hike along the Elk River Trail and up to Landslide and Iceberg Lakes in late September, but I decided to cancel that trip because of strong winds and rain. Fortunately, we lucked out with a window in the wet weather during the first weekend of October and spent a lovely couple of days hiking the loop on Forbidden Plateau that goes past Battleship, Lady, Croteau, Kwai, and Helen Mackenzie Lakes in Strathcona Park. We also hiked to Cruickshank Canyon Lookout.

This was ACCVI's second all women beginner friendly hike of 2020. I described our trip to Kwai Lake and Cruickshank Canyon as a great way to review the basics of backcountry hiking and camping with a group of like-minded women. Kwai Lake is one of prettiest sub-alpine lakes in Strathcona Park and is conveniently close to Raven Lodge at Mount Washington. Our planned itinerary was to hike there on the Saturday and then take in the views at the lookout over Cruickshank Canyon. 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.

Eleven women expressed interest in joining us, but we limited our group to six people. 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 range of experiences and interests in our group and we all learned much from each other during our hike. Vivian and I have a fair amount of experience in the backcountry, but neither of us had been to Cruickshank Canyon Lookout before. Jamieson had come on the ACCVI hike to Crest Mountain two months before and wanted to learn more about spending time in remote wilderness. Carmen hiked regularly but was also keen to learn more about overnight trips. Tami had a fair amount of experience and was aiming



One of many selfie shots. From L-R Jamieson, Vivian, Carmen, Janelle, Chai, and Tami. (Photo by Jamieson Gordon-Mason)

to connect with other like-minded women. And Chai wanted to learn more about leading hiking trips.

I carpooled with Vivian to Raven Lodge where we met Carmen, Chai, Jamieson, and Tami shortly after lunch. To protect ourselves, we wore masks and had plenty of ventilation in the car. Vivian and I have been friends for the past decade, and I recently met Jamieson on Crest Mountain. We all introduced ourselves, signed waivers, and then I showed everyone where I keep maps, route descriptions, my 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 we all came back safely. I knew before we left Raven Lodge that I was going to enjoy hiking with this charming group of active women.

We didn't expect it to be as busy as it was in early October, but the large parking area close to the trailhead at Raven Lodge was almost full. Fortunately, the few people we encountered on the way to Kwai Lake were very respectful and gave us plenty of room to pass.

The trail to Kwai Lake via Lady and Croteau Lakes takes hikers past a few picturesque swimming spots and some stunning views of nearby mountains, including Mount Albert Edward. There is a new group campsite at Croteau Lake, so we stopped there to check it out, enjoy a quick snack, check our feet for blisters, and dip ourselves in the cool water. From there, we passed the trail that leads to Mount Becher, crossed Murray Meadows, and made a short steep ascent to Kwai Lake.

We arrived at Kwai Lake after a few hours of hiking and made our way past the fifteen marked campsites to the far end of the lake looking for somewhere to set up our six

tents. But in a year of increased interest in getting outdoors, those sites were already occupied. We remembered there was an overflow camping area on the northwest side of the lake and eventually found it. Apart from a quiet couple camped under some trees, we were the only ones in the overflow area. It felt like we were alone in a secret and remote part of Strathcona Park. Despite feeling like we were far from it all, we appreciated the convenience of bear caches and a toilet not too far from where we camped. After setting up our tents, we shared stories, laughed, and enjoyed dinner together by the water.

I woke up to the gentle and relaxing sound of soft rain on my tent the next morning, but it had stopped raining by the time we were having our breakfast. After we enjoyed some warm drinks and another meal together, we headed off to the Cruikshank Canyon Lookout. It's only about 1.5 km to get there from Kwai Lake. So, I anticipated that we would be back within an hour or so, but we took several hours to hike there and back before we packed up our gear and



A beautiful group of women on the way to Lake Beautiful. (Photo by Janelle Curtis)



On the way back from Cruikshank Canyon Lookout to pick up our gear before heading home. (Photo by Janelle Curtis)

returned to Raven Lodge. It was easy to find our way to the lookout along the trails because they are so well-marked. The spur trail to the lookout passes the west shores of Mariwood Lake and Lake Beautiful.

When we arrived at the lookout on the rim of Cruickshank Canyon, I appreciated the foggy weather because it hid the clear-cut logging in the canyon below and made it seem even more natural. The scenic mountain views to the west across the valley must have been particularly breathtaking before logging began. While we were admiring the spellbinding views, we had the creative idea of spelling ACCVI with our silhouetted bodies – “for the newsletter” of course! After spending a bit of time in that magical place, we headed back toward Kwai Lake, just as the sun was starting to shine through the mist and fog.

Only Vivian and I had hiked along Lake Helen Mackenzie before. We decided as a group to go that way instead of returning via Croteau Lake so others could also experience a different part of the park. We hiked past the unused



Jamieson being a wild woman of the woods. (Photo by Tami Gwilt)

BC Parks Ranger Cabin and then down to Lake Helen Mackenzie. That part of the trail is in shady forest between Mount Allan Brooks and Mount Elma. The trail is often muddy, has a lot of roots to negotiate, and is washed out in places. But where the trail meets the Helen Mackenzie Loop on the north side of the lake, there is another beautiful place for a swim. We stopped there for a snack and admired some gray jays by the shore.

Because we arrived at Raven Lodge later than we thought we would, we decided not to meet afterwards to debrief over food and drinks. I was sad to say goodbye to everyone and look forward to being on another adventure with them. On our way home, Vivian and I had our own little debrief when we stopped in Cumberland for Mexicana coffees.

Participants: Vivian Addison, Janelle Curtis (leader), Jamieson Gordon-Mason, Tami Gwilt, Chai Marfisi, Carmen Simpson

House Arrest: the Tale of a Mishap

Liz Williams

October 6, 2020

Now I know how it feels to be shackled, under house arrest: a particularly unpleasant state for an active outdoor person. Since retiring eight years ago I’ve travelled and trekked widely, from Cairo to Corsica, Khartoum to Kathmandu, but the timing of this mishap could not have been better – covid lockdown and no travel plans!

It was a warm, early October day when the Wednesday Wonderers set out on the Kludahk Trail, which traverses the height of land between Jordan River and Port Renfrew, accessible from blacktop only by driving 15 km up rough logging roads with a 4x4 vehicle. Although the trail barely



Our group spelling ACCVI out for you. (Photo by Tami Gwilt)



Raven Lake. (Photo by Hugh Waller)

exceeds 3,500', cool air banks up from the Juan de Fuca Strait creating a true sub-alpine ecosystem of Mountain hemlock and Yellow cedar interspersed with meadows of asphodel, marsh marigold, and bog orchid, and shallow tarns that were still bearing buckbean and fading water lilies on this lovely golden day.

Catastrophe struck at quarter to four. A simple slide on the muddy trail, tree roots tightly looped in the forest duff, a reflexive action to right oneself, and then — agony. I fell onto the path with blue flames coming from my mouth and knew immediately that had I been a horse, I'd have been promptly dispatched with the shotgun. How could this possibly be? Only three weeks ago I'd backpacked six days



On the trail. (Photo by Jane Renfroe)

to Cape Scott.

Three went ahead to try and get a cell signal (the Kludahk is not renowned for its cell coverage). Two stayed with me and started gathering firewood, and one returned with the good news that a 911 call had been sent and received. As experienced hikers, we had what it takes to weather the storm or, in this case, to sit it out overnight with a broken ankle. The ignominy of the situation is seldom described, and it needs to be said what stellar and supportive companions I was with. Having kept myself well-hydrated I needed to pee — often! My pals would disappear round the bend of the trail. I'd then pee in situ, and drag up the three clothing layers afterwards while supporting myself on one foot. Later in the hospital emergency ward I released a large quantity of pine needles and forest duff in their washroom!



Roaring fire. (Janet Renfroe)

I'd been a member of Juan de Fuca Search and Rescue for ten years, and estimated the earliest that they could reach us would be 10 p.m. Imagine my soaring heart when I saw a multitude of headlamps approaching about 9.30 p.m.! As a JDF SAR member I'd done numerous training days on packing and carrying a stretcher, all the time thinking that it would be sheer hell to have something broken and have a long, rugged trip out. How wrong I was. After vitals were taken and I'd been packed in the stretcher I could hardly have been more comfortable. It took two hours to get me to a vehicle on the narrow, steep up-and-down trail in the dark. The SAR folk caterpillared, squeezed round trees, reversed the orientation of my head depending on whether we were going up or down, all the time checking that I was doing OK. They did a fantastic job and my hiking pals were rightly astounded at their professionalism and expertise.

Time moved on. By 2 a.m. I arrived at VGH Emergency via a waiting ambulance from Port Renfrew: a long night, X-rays, CT scan, blood work, heart monitor. Home via taxi for a much-needed hot bath, then back for surgery for a tri-malleolar ankle fracture the next day. Note: orthopods these days look barely old enough to tie their own shoe laces but



Meccano set. (Photo by Liz Williams)



Chestnut-backed chickadee. (Photo by Liz Williams)

are adept with their Meccano sets, half of one now being screwed into my lower leg for eternity.

House Arrest! The Mafia had put a lump of concrete round my leg, and if they didn't want to throw me in the drink, I was going to do it myself. Or hang myself from the apple tree but I couldn't reach it! I'd never known such stasis, such restriction, not since I'd spent six weeks in hospital as a 14 year old, having fallen off a pony and fractured my lumbar vertebrae. I rented a knee walker to get around the house, which proved vastly superior to crutches. Friends dropped by with all manner of food, groceries, goodies and books, I even had a delivery of firewood, split and stacked! Sometimes I was taken out into the real world for a waterfront drive or a gourmet lunch. October afternoons turned into glorious vistas of amber, orange and cherry red in the low bright sun. I sat on my deck looking out on all the garden clean-up to be done, bulbs to be planted, leaves to be raked, but could only enjoy the visitors to my birdfeeders. It was ten weeks before I could drive again and three full months before I could take my first short hike on rough ground in Mount Doug Park. I realize now that ankle surgery and eight weeks in a cast does a real number on the nerves, muscles, tendons and blood supply of one's hoof. I've been told that while I don't have a screw loose (from the Meccano set, that is) it could be a year for full recovery.

Lessons Learned and Saving Graces:

- Be prepared at all times of the year to keep warm and dry overnight (we'd had a dry day on the Kludahk but my pals would have had to build a shelter if it had been raining).
- Have your comms and First Aid with you, and (in a similar case) get that boot off quickly.
- Try to travel with others (a minimum of four – two to stay, two to go for help).
- Once incarcerated, a sunny outlook with birdfeeders and binoculars on hand was a sanity-saver, as was a feline lap-person with his Briggs and Stratton motor.



Wrapped in concrete. (Photo by Liz Williams)

- In such a condition, there's a lot to be said for wine, chocolate and Netflix (after dark).
- Most importantly – you find out who your friends are, and they are beyond wonderful.



Kludahk colours. (Photo by Hugh Waller)

All Women Beginner-Friendly Trip to Drabble Lakes

Janelle Curtis

17-18 October, 2020

The Forbidden Plateau is steeped in a false legend about K'omoks women and children disappearing there during a raid by the Cowichan tribe. But this part of Strathcona Park is also steeped in the peace and magic of a subalpine forest embellished by delicate meadows and refreshing lakes. A network of hiking trails connects Paradise Meadows near Mt. Washington with Mount Becher near the abandoned ski hill on Wood Mountain. Those trails form the backbone of the Forbidden Plateau Traverse.

I have backcountry skied to Mount Becher a few times and to Douglas and McKenzie Lakes from Wood Mountain. And in 2019, I hiked the Forbidden Plateau Traverse with members of the ACCVI and Island Mountain Ramblers. During that hike, we spent the first night at the developed campground at Kwai Lake and the second night in the backcountry at dreamy Drabble Lakes which are in a wide valley between Indianhead Mountain and Mount Drabble.

Originally, I had planned to lead a three-day hike along the Elk River Trail and up to Landslide and Iceberg Lakes over

the Thanksgiving Weekend, but I decided to cancel that trip because of strong winds and rain. Although there was still rain in the forecast, I proposed to head to Drabble Lakes for two days the following weekend, this time leaving from the Wood Mountain parking lot. This was ACCVI's third all women beginner friendly hike of 2020.

I described this hike as a great way to review the basics of backcountry hiking and camping on benign terrain with a group of like-minded women. We would hike up to Drabble Lakes on the Saturday, set up camp by one of the lakes, and hike to the summit of Mount Drabble before dinner if we were feeling up to it. On Sunday, we would break camp, hike back toward the trailhead, take a detour to hike to Mount Becher, and maybe debrief over food and drinks on the way home. Depending on any side trips, I guessed that we would be hiking 15-25 km that weekend. 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.

Thirteen women expressed interest in joining us, but in the end, we were a group of three. 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. Jamieson had come on two other 2020 ACCVI hikes to Crest Mountain and Kwai Lakes and was keen to learn more about spending time in remote wilderness. Colleen had a fair amount of backcountry experience, having led many trips with the ACC's Vancouver Section on the mainland before moving to Victoria. She was aiming to connect with other like-minded women.

I met Colleen and Jamieson at the Wood Mountain parking lot. We introduced ourselves, signed waivers, and then I showed them where I keep maps, route descriptions, my 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 we all came back safely. We also decided to bring my lightweight tarp just in case it was raining while we were in camp. I knew before we left the parking lot that I was going to enjoy hiking with these two lovely and active women.

We started our adventure by hiking through alder forest on the abandoned ski runs and following what we thought was the route along sections of logging road and overgrown hiking trails. But, even with our GPS units, we missed a turn and got off route a little bit. So, we ended up bushwhacking through damp forest for a few hundred metres to get back onto a gravel road that leads to Mount

Becher. Then we found our way to the junction in the trail marked by signs to McKenzie and Kwai Lakes and followed that trail northwest.

When we set off on our hike, there were many cars in the



A group selfie photo at the junction between a trail that leads to Mount Becher and one that continues along the Forbidden Plateau Traverse. From L-R: Jamieson, Colleen, and Janelle. Photo by Jamieson Gordon-mason)



Grateful to arrive at the junction where a trail leads to Drabble Lakes before it started to rain. (Photo by Janelle Curtis)

parking lot, but we saw relatively few people on the trail, especially during our bushwhack and after we left the trail to Mt. Becher.

We arrived at Drabble Lakes after a few hours of hiking in the subalpine forest on the well-marked trails that the Comox District Mountaineering Club (CDMC) had recently maintained.

The weather was very cloudy, but we were dry until we arrived in camp. Just as we were setting up our tents, it started to rain. We were grateful that we had the tarp, and together, we figured out how to set it up so we would have a dry and comfortable spot to enjoy our meals and a misty view of the lake. This was a cool and wet weekend.

After setting up the tarp and putting our food and other consumables away, we started hiking up the trail to the summit of Mount Drabble. The trail was relatively straightforward to hike. None of us had been there before, so we made sure to take in the views on the way. Sometimes it cleared up enough that we could see the outlines of islands in the Salish Sea and perhaps a few nearby hills and mountains.

When we were relatively close to the summit of Mount Drabble an hour or so later, we arrived at a short rocky



Colleen leading the way through a series of meadows in the subalpine forest just past the junction that leads to many peaceful and magical features on the Forbidden Plateau. (Photo by Janelle Curtis)



Colleen and Jamieson taking in the views on the slope of Mount Drabble. (Photo by Janelle Curtis)

outcrop that seemed a bit more challenging to climb. The outcrop had a lot of good hand and foot holds, but it was steep and very wet. Although I was confident that I could scramble up there, I worried about slipping off while down climbing it. So, I decided that that was as far as I was going that day. Colleen and Jamieson agreed. We bushwhacked again to see if we could find an alternative route around the rock, but the terrain was covered in slippery moss. That, and we were close to our turn-around time. So, we agreed to head back to camp. Although we were a bit disappointed, Mount Drabble will still be there to climb another day.

By the time we arrived in camp, it was time for dinner. Because it was still raining, we set ourselves up comfortably beneath the tarp and enjoyed a lovely dinner together. We laughed and shared many stories.

That night, I fell asleep to the sound of gentle rain on my tent, but it had stopped raining by the time we were having our breakfast. After we enjoyed some warm drinks and another meal together, we headed back toward the trailhead.

We spent the weekend feeling grateful for many things, including the beauty of this area, a few shared treats, and each other's encouraging and pleasant company. We also



Jamieson getting comfortable under our tarp just before dinner. (Photo by Janelle Curtis)

learned a few things together, like how to set up a tarp and identify some edible fungi. In the end, we decided not to hike to the summit of Mount Becher, in part because the trails were very muddy with a few small ponds that had grown in the rain. We knew that Mount Becher would still be there for us when we were ready to hike or ski to the top and enjoy some clear views of the surrounding landscape. Surprisingly, there were no cars in the parking lot when we returned. There, we said our goodbyes, but I'm looking forward to more adventures with these two dynamic women.

Participants: Colleen Craig, Janelle Curtis (leader), Jamieson Gordon-Mason

Mount Ginger Goodwin

Catrin Brown

November 10, 2020

We wanted to check out the key to Comox Lake Main using the new ACC-VI access agreement with Mosaic deliberately on a day with active logging. Mt Ginger Goodwin had piqued my interest for a while - the name and history as much as the mountain, and now we could access it without gate closure restrictions. Then there was the promise of new snow, and the chance to get the first crunches of the season underfoot.

It was a successful day on all three counts. Following the instructions on our website for use of the key, we had contacted Mosaic the day before and been given friendly

guidance from the site manager. Picking up the key and radios from Val's place in Courtenay was barely a diversion off our route, and we radioed frequently as per instructions while on the logging road. There wasn't much industrial traffic, but the vehicles we did see were moving fast and would definitely have the upper-hand. Defensive driving is



The route up Mt Ginger Goodwin. (Screen shot of Gaia)



Comox Lake and Cruikshank River from the trail. (Photo by Catrin Brown)

key, so to speak.

We parked at 250 m above the Cruikshank River, and followed the Capes Lake Trail steeply up the ridge, at first postholing through fallen bigleaf maple leaves and broken branches before reaching consistent snow at 500 m. The views down and across to Comox Lake were expansive, though Comox Glacier stayed elusive through the clouds. From the high saddle we looked briefly and failed to find a marked route to the summit, so the last 200 m vertical was slower going as we negotiated steep bush, second growth, and eventually old growth broken up by steep and slick dripping-moss bluffs. Classic Vancouver Island stuff. From the flat summit, patches of blue sky teased us making winter's long shadows on the snow.

The descent was efficient following our snow prints, but with some significant DNP (do not plummet) moves on the snow-covered rock.

The headlamps only came out for the last half hour on the old logging road - so this is a perfect length trip for this time of year. (By the way Lindsay confirms that there is



Do not plummet. (Photo by Catrin Brown)



Not quite enough daylight. (Photo by Catrin Brown)



Summit joy. (Photo by Erich Schellhammer)

a flagged trail to the summit - which we would have seen apparently if we had gone 100 m or so further along the Capes Lake trail before turning north. But I'm sure our route was more fun!)

The Comox Lake gate was locked on our return, so we needed the digital key for getting out and for locking the gate behind us as well. No part of this is difficult, and the opportunities beyond the gate are definitely worth the bit of effort.

Participants: Erich Schellhammer and Catrin Brown

Aren't You Afraid? A Solo Woman's Journey on the Great Divide Trail

Krysta Norwick

July 20 – September 6, 2020

I made the decision to attempt a thru-hike of Sections A through F of the Great Divide Trail (GDT) one dark day in January 2020. My planned thru-hike would require me to hike 950 km over a six-week timeframe, 550 km of which would be solo. I knew deep in my heart that I needed an extended trip in the mountains to reconnect with myself and the earth.

I had been struggling to step into myself, trust myself, and live authentically. I had just spent a year saying yes to

MAINLAND



Krysta at the trailhead in Waterton Lakes. (Photo by Brian Norwick)

spending time in the city, which meant I was saying no to myself.

Planning the logistics was no small feat on its own. I spent the spring of 2020 dehydrating meals, ordering any gear I needed, and purchasing the various required permits. As time went on, I started to believe that I was really going to do it.

My husband, Brian, drove me to the trailhead in Waterton Lakes on a sunny day in July. He smiled with tears in his eyes as he wished me luck. My belly had butterflies, not knowing what the trail had in store for me. An older couple walked past us and asked why I had a backpack and Brian didn't. I explained that I would be hiking for three weeks alone. The woman's face could not hide her fear. She was utterly terrified for me. She told me that I was making a mistake and questioned my ability to keep myself safe. I smiled and told her I was quite experienced in the backcountry and that I knew I could handle myself. Internally, her fear fueled my own.

I took my first few strides of my 950 km journey. I looked back to see Brian waving and smiling at me and once I

rounded the corner and couldn't see him, tears streamed down my face as my heart ached to be with him and my self-doubt starting to sink in.

The first two days of hiking were easy. I had planned shorter days on purpose to allow my body time to adapt to being on trail. I struggled to find viable water sources at both my first and second camps. The forest fire damage was immense, eliminating the natural shade that would normally be offered by the trees.

I had a hard time falling asleep the first couple nights. Each small sound around my tent seemed menacing. I lay in my tent on the second night imagining I was looking down at myself from above. It dawned on me how vulnerable I was alone in the wilderness, with no other hikers nearby.

My third day was the hardest day of my entire hike. I hiked from Jutland Creek along Barnaby Ridge to Southfork Lakes. This section of trail spanned 22 kilometers and consisted of 2,100 vertical meters of elevation gain and 2,100 vertical meters of elevation loss. I knew it would be a big day, but I didn't know how exposed it would be.

It was a windy day, which makes ridge exposure feel even more dramatic. My Garmin inReach stopped working and I couldn't send or receive messages. I felt alone and isolated. I hadn't seen another soul in days.

Barnaby Ridge is a sharp spine of a ridge in places and a sweeping broad ridge in others. There were sections of bushwhacking and sections of high-level scrambling. There were panoramic views of the Rocky Mountains for the entire day. I barely saw the views. My pace felt unbearably slow and I was terrified with every step that I would fall off the ridge. At one point, the ridge became so narrow I crawled along it to keep myself from being blown off.

When I finally dropped down off the ridge to Southfork Lakes at sunset and I realized I had done it, relief washed



A windy and beautiful day on Barnaby Ridge. (Photo by Krysta Norwick)

over me. As I lay in bed that night reflecting on the day, I felt more worried about the hike than I ever had. I hoped that I hadn't planned any other days as gnarly as this one for the rest of the hike.

I settled into a hiking rhythm as I dropped out of the mountains and into the valley towards Coleman, my first resupply point. I struggled with my appetite feeling both anxious about the long hike that stretched ahead of me and affected by the heat. I learned that even your wrists can sweat when it's hot enough. I drank 6-7 liters of water per day.

My fifth day brought me into Coleman through ATV tracks and logging roads, with surprising sweeping views of the dry and rugged mountains. I rested for two nights here and picked up my resupply box.

With Section A of the GDT complete I started to feel more confident. I walked along the highway, then to gravel roads, and finally to the start of the High Rock Trail, a Section B alternate route. As I climbed into the alpine, my anxiety that had built while I left town started to melt away. I arrived at Window Mountain Lake at sunset. As the sun dropped behind the towering wall of the Great Divide, I found an inner calm. I was starting to adapt to being alone all day.

The next few days were long and physically taxing, which left no time for thoughts and processing. The trail weaved through alpine meadows with wildflowers blooming and climbed up and over mountain pass after mountain pass. The beauty was incredible and moved me to tears on many occasions.

On the morning of day 10, my body had finally adapted to hiking 20-30 km per day. My legs and core felt stronger. The deep aching my legs had been experiencing for several days now started to subside. I had a run in with a juvenile grizzly, but he simply startled and ran off into the woods.



*Krysta happy and thriving on the High Rock Trail alternate route.
(Photo by Krysta Norwick)*

I made it to a stunning alpine lake, Elk Lake, and had my first swim of the trip.

I resupplied again at Boulton Creek Campground area. Family members brought me my resupply and my appetite had returned!

My feet started to carry me swiftly over the kilometers. I challenged myself with four 30 km days in a row at the start of Section C. I settled into the simplicity of the life of a thru-hiker. All I had to do each day was eat, walk, eat, sleep. I felt at peace. I felt deeply happy.

A few days later, my pace slowed down due to permits as I began the Rockwall Trail, a section of the GDT. This left more time during the day for rest and reflection. My body needed it, as my legs had begun to feel achy again. But my mind struggled with the stillness.

While the third day of my hike on Barnaby Ridge had been the most physically challenging, these next two days were the most mentally challenging. I noticed myself falling into old thought patterns of self-doubt and fear. I had nothing to distract myself with, no books and no hiking partners.

The image of the woman I met at the start of my hike, with her terrified facial expression, kept swirling around my mind. I also recalled all the times people had asked me,



A tiny home sits beside the towering Rockwall. (Photo by Krysta Norwick)



The stunning alpine we hiked through on Section E of the Great Divide Trail. (Photo by Brian Norwick)

“aren’t you afraid?” I realized the truth was, I was way more afraid of not stepping into myself and not saying yes to what I needed most. My mind and body were the healthiest they had felt in years. Prior to this hike, I was slowly withering away as I said no to myself and my deep desires to spend more time in the mountains.

The truth is, I feel more afraid of what happens to me if I don’t spend time alone outside.

The next few days I regained my stride. I walked along the towering divide, through blooming alpine meadows, along glacier fed streams, and through healthy forests. I felt more like myself than I ever had.

My husband joined me for the next three weeks. It felt like an entirely different journey once he joined. In Section D we forded river after river. In Section E we stayed high in the alpine, climbing up and over pass after pass. We completed the Six Passes alternate and neither of us had ever seen anything so beautiful. We ran out of food on our last day of Section E and learned to be kind with one another when battling hunger. In Section F we trudged through mud for days, to eventually be rewarded with the most stunning alpine pass called Moose Pass.

We finished the hike at the Mount Robson terminus on a drizzly day. We squeezed each other’s hand as we took those final few hundred steps together, with the enormity of what we had just accomplished starting to sink in.

Was I afraid? Sometimes. But with the right knowledge, preparation, and gear I was able to manage my safety and

fear. What happened when I pushed past that fear is the very reason the mountains draw us over and over. I became truly connected with myself, my partner, and nature.

Participants: Krysta (leader) and Brian Norwick



DISTANT PLACES



Travels in the Pyrenées

Martin Hofmann and Alcina De Oliveira
May 30-June 8, 2019

For many years I have wanted to visit the Pyrenées. I have spent a fair amount of time in the Alps but I wanted to see something different and less touristy, and the Pyrenées sounded like a good alternative. There are three coast-to-coast routes through the Pyrenées, the GR10 through France, the GR11 through Spain and the HRP (Haute

Randonnée Pyrénéenne) which stays more in the alpine through France, Spain and Andorra. However we wanted to have a more flexible trip, so shortly after starting my retirement we caught a plane from Victoria to Pau with no definite plans except to meet my daughter and granddaughter in about a month.

We spent a couple of days in Pau enjoying the French patisseries and researching public transport. We also searched out the local Alpine Club and became members, which gave us a reduced rate at some of the refuges and was a chance to talk to some of the local mountain people. It turned out to be too early in the season for many buses into the mountains, and too late for the ski buses. Fortunately the concierge of the Airbnb where we were staying offered to give us a lift to the village of Laruns, ~40 km. We did a few warm up hikes around Laruns which gave us some glimpses of the Pyrénéenne mountains. Public transport out of Laruns was no better so we decided to resort to hitchhiking and we walked to the edge of town and stuck our thumbs out. It had been many years (decades) since we had travelled in this manner and we tried to suppress the memories of hours standing at the side of a road. The waiting was actually minimal and hitchhiking became our main mode of local transport. The advantage of this mode of travel is that we got to meet the locals and get some local flavour of the Pyrénées and the people.

Our plan was to stay in the mountain “refuges” and eat our dinners there but be self-sufficient for breakfast and lunch. So we got our supplies and headed for the mountains. Our first hike would take us around the Pic du Midi d’Ossau, a spectacular pointy volcanic core. Everyone was warning us about snow and saying to avoid the mountain passes so we started out cautiously and went around rather than over some of the higher passes. As time went on we went over higher passes and crossed larger snow fields. After spending a night at the Refuge d’Ayous, with views of the Pic across Lac d’Ayous, we crossed over in the Aspe



Chemin de la Mature. (Photo by Martin Hofmann)

valley, at least in part to check out the Chemin de la Mature. This is a path carved out of a sheer limestone cliff to facilitate the transport of large trees to the coast for ship construction. These days there are more rock climbers than lumberjacks.

In the Vallée d’Aspe we made our base in the village of Lescun from where we did day hikes including into the beautiful Vallée d’Ansabère. As we familiarized ourselves with the refuges and the trails we realized that we had too much stuff so we decided to drop some of it in Pau. So we left Lescun in the pouring rain, hitchhiking. We actually got a ride fairly quickly and got to the train station to take us back to Pau. Once again the Airbnb concierge was very obliging and allowed to store our extra stuff for a couple of weeks.

With lighter packs we continued by train to Cauterets and then after spending a night there and stocking up we headed up to the Pont d’Espagne and then up to the Marcadieu refuge. We had heard mixed reviews about this refuge, it was indeed in need of some work. It was old and dark and gloomy and cold. We had heard that there were plans for an upgrade and sure enough I checked



Pic du Midi d’Ossau. (Photo by Martin Hofmann)



Pic d'Ansabère. (Photo by Martin Hofmann)

their website and that is currently happening. That will make staying in that area a much better experience; the surroundings are beautiful and worth visiting. We did a day trip to some higher lakes from there. The next day we packed up and headed over the Puerto de Marcadau into Spain. There was a lot of snow on the pass but with crampons and GPS we had no problem finding our way to the Refugio de Bachimaña. We didn't even see footprints going over the pass but once we met the main trail to Bachimaña we met up the hordes on the GR11. Exploring around the refugio I caught my first glimpses of the isard, the Pyrenean chamois.

From Bachimaña we went down to Baños Panticosa, a spa resort, from there we hitchhiked over to the village of Torla-Ordesa. The Parque Nacional de Ordesa and Monte Perdido in Spain and the Parc National des Pyrénées in France are kind of like the Banff and Lake Louise of the Pyrénées, beautiful but lots of tourists! Our original plan was to hike back to France from here but some of the refuges were closed for renovations and that made that plan impractical so we just did some day trips in the area, avoiding the more accessible (i.e. more tourists) areas. One of

the most distinctive features of the area is the Brèche de Roland, an impressive break in a wall of rocks along the ridge separating France and Spain. We could see it at a distance on the ridge to Monte Perdido but we would get a closer look from the other side in a few days.

To get back to France we travelled through the Tunnel de



Massif de Néouvielle. (Photo by Martin Hofmann)



Refuge de la Glère. (Photo by Martin Hofmann)



Cirque de Gavarnie. (Photo by Martin Hofmann)



Brèche de Roland. (Photo by Martin Hofmann)

Bielsa and into the Néouvielle region. We got a ride from some locals with whom we had lunch and learned a lot about the area and local skiing. Definitely high on bucket list to go back there in the winter, post-covid. Starting at Lac d'Orédon we hiked up into the Vallée de Bastan and stayed at the Refuge de Bastan for a couple of days. We ascended the Pic de Bastan as a day trip; there were a couple of sketchy sections where the snow hadn't melted on the steep slopes but we made it up and down safely. From there we could look out over the Réserve Naturelle Nationale du Néouvielle and all the potential ski terrain. We then headed down to the village of Barèges for supplies and then back up to the Refuge de la Glère for a couple of nights, stopping for a snack at Chez Louisette. From the refuge we hiked up to a ridge which gave us some spectacular views of the main range above Gavarnie in the Parc National des Pyrénées, including Mont Perdido and the Brèche de Roland. The Néouvielle region was one of my favourite places, lots of areas for hiking and so much skiing potential. There are enough alternative routes that it is easy to find less crowded areas away from the GR10.

After leaving the Néouvielle area we headed over to Gavarnie to see the sights. We stayed out of town in a smaller gîte, Gîte Le Gypaète, which has an impressive collection of beer bottles, including BC beers. Not that I was drinking beer - I was enjoying the ciders that the French do very well. That afternoon we headed through town towards the Cirque de Gavarnie. The next day we caught a ride up to the Col de Tentes and hiked up to the Brèche de Roland. We then hiked down past the Cirque de Gavarnie and back to town. Even here tourists can be avoided by taking longer or more difficult trails and being flexible enough not to have to get back to a car.

The next day we set off for our final and highest refuge, Refuge de Baysellance, 2651 m. We spent the night there and the next headed back down to the Pont de Espagne, summiting Petit Vignemale, 3032 m on the way. We were getting near the end of June and there were more people

and less snow everywhere we went. The refuges were getting full on the weekends and had to be booked ahead of time. The food at the refuges varied widely depending on the distance from a road and the culinary talents of the custodians, we had some delicious meals and a few that were barely edible. Generally they were good and had decent vegetarian options; the refuges in Spain included wine with the meals. The accommodation also varied, everything from private rooms to crowded bench beds to sagging bunk beds in a freezing tent.

But it was time to get back to Pau and meet our daughter and granddaughter who had flown over to meet us. It was just about then that the heat wave started with temperatures forecast in the high 30s. We had rented a car to make travel easier with the family and make day trips possible. We figured that the temperatures would be lower in the mountains, so the plan was to spend as much time up high as we could. We had seen some areas at the beginning of our travels we wanted to revisit so first we headed back to Lescun for a shorter,



Three Generations hiking in the Ossau area. (Photo by Martin Hofmann)

but hotter, hike there. On the way back to Pau we stopped off at the Lindt factory on Olorons. If you love chocolate this is the place to visit, we bought kilos of chocolate there! We had brought along a cooler and an ice pack to try and keep all that chocolate from melting in the scorching heat. We even managed to get some of it back to Canada. The next day we revisited the Pic du Midi d'Ossau area and had lunch at the refuge where we had spent our second night almost a month before. The nice thing about day trips was being able to have fresh croissants for breakfast and pastries for afternoon snacks. The last couple of days were for exploring the city of Pau and trying to avoid the heat, before flying to Paris. All in all we only explored small sections of the Pyrenées, we didn't get anywhere near Andorra or either of the coasts, so there is still lots more to visit when we go back there, and we will.

Participants: Martin Hofmann & Alcina de Oliveira

Climbing Mt Balbi, Bougainville

Liz Williams

February 11 – 18, 2020

In the fall of 2019, there was some uncertainty about the level of civil unrest that might be apparent in Bougainville, a Melanesian island province of Papua New Guinea. Between 1988 and 1998, their civil war had claimed over 15,000 lives. The subsequent peace agreement included the promise of a referendum on independence from Papua New Guinea, to be held by December 2019. Of the valid votes, 98% of the population were in favour of full independence, thus the risk of unrest was unfounded.

The Lonely Planet Guide has all of a page dedicated to the island of Bougainville with the caution that this is a DIY destination. But it did note that a 3-day trek up Mt Babli, a Holocene stratovolcano, and the highest point on the island at 2,715 m, was a possibility. From the capital, Buka, which sits on a separate island to the north, I eventually found a contact. 'Steward' arrived about 9:30 a.m. on the agreed day and relieved me of 500 kina (about \$200 CAD) as his admin fee. At 1 p.m., just as we were going to kiss the funds goodbye, he returned with a boat to take us over to the main island of Bougainville where we soon found a PMV (Public Motor Vehicle aka dilapidated minibus stuffed to the gills) which could drop us at Wakunai, halfway down the east coast.

By late afternoon we were dropped at the turn-off for the village of Togerau, 30 km up into heart of the Rotokas Region, the starting point for a trek up Mt Balbi. After a couple more hours it was apparent that no PMV was

heading up to Togerau that night. It started to rain. We could hire a 'private vehicle' at exorbitant cost – and so we did. Another half hour, and along came an ancient landcruiser with a rabble of locals in the back. We set off on what my travel companion (who has travelled in many poor countries) said was – simply – the worst road he'd ever been on. We crossed several rivers, one of which the driver said he sometimes waits four hours for the water to subside; at one point we went into a hole and I thought the axle had to be broken; I kept my eye on the odometer but it had stuck in place eons ago.

The whole day had been pretty sketchy, not least with the relentless heat and humidity. We arrived in Togerau in fast-diminishing light and were shown to a two-room guesthouse built for Australian Aid workers. Praise the Lord! It was beautiful! There was an outside tap fed from the nearby river, thin foam mattresses on the bamboo floor, a private deck, and even time to walk down to the river for a bathe before dinner of baked taro and sweet potato.



Setting off for Mount Balbi. (Photo by local villager)



Stone Fields of Mt Balbi. (Photo by Liz Williams)

Two days later we set off for Mt Balbi, along with a guide, Luke; three porters: Vincent, Wilfred, and Jacob; plus Carson age 13; and Asab, the husband of the village matriarch. Our crew were barefoot to a man, and carried but a few tarps and their trusty bush knives.

For two hours we climbed gently, passing through fields of choco (chayote), introduced by the Japanese in WWII. Despite its invasiveness it's now a local cash crop, and taken to market in Buka. As we started to climb up through dense jungle we had views of Mt Bagana, 1,750m, smoking to the south - one of Melanesia's youngest and most active volcanoes. We headed to 'Camp 2' where our crew set up tarps on bamboo poles and got a fire going for a supper of taro, wild yams, greens, and a large avocado. Sleeping was a challenge, sliding downhill with a high wind blowing all night, no sleeping bags or foamies here!

The next day we left camp at 8 am and headed up to a montane ecosystem of spiky plants and grasses above the tree-line. We could see the ridges and valleys of the 'Stone Fields' extending up to the five craters of Mt Balbi. It was a strange volcanic landscape with a thin crust of cooled magma over gravel, deeply gouged by water. As we edged along precipitous ridges we were enveloped in cloud and choking sulphur dioxide fumes. We opted to turn back a little before the summit, knowing there was only danger ahead. On the way up, in front of me, Carson and Vincent were suddenly holding an enormous fruit bat! They'd grabbed it from its perch and tonight it was going to be supper. Our guide, Luke, was none too pleased that they'd caught this endemic Bougainville Monkey-faced Bat, thought to be extinct until recently. But he also was hungry and bushmeat was bushmeat.

Back at Camp 2 the wind was howling, literally blowing our packs down the slope. After a meal of palm hearts, choco, and passion fruit we bedded down. Mercifully it didn't rain but no-one slept a wink that cold night on Mt



Bushmeat for dinner. (Photo by Liz Williams)



Togerau Village. (Photo by Liz Williams)

Balbi. The next morning, after two cups of Starbucks sachet coffee and some boiled wild yam we set off for the long hike down to Togerau. Back at the village, all the men tramped in with a special fern in their hair, signifying their ascent of Mt Balbi. Awaiting us was hot tea, huge bananas and a delicious vegetable stew with sardines; even an offer to do our laundry!

We spent a week in Togerau being guided by Luke to the local villages, waterfalls, and sulfur springs. We were met with dance and song put on especially for us; elaborate village feasts including roast possum; drinks from the enormous coconuts of the Rotokas Region. Many of the children had never seen white people before. We received hospitality and graciousness everywhere.

Participants: Liz Williams and Graham Maddocks



White out on Mt Balbi. (Photo by Liz Williams)

2020 PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS



Vancouver Island

Triple Peak from Hišim'yawił

Photo: Finn Battersby



**Vancouver Island
(Honorable Mention)**

Peter Lake

Photo: Rob Macdonald

**Vancouver Island
(Honorable Mention)**

5040 Sunset Welcome Party

Photo: Lauren Attorp





Summer Activity

Looking South from Victoria Peak

Photo: Linnea Hansen



Summer Activity (Honorable Mention)

Larke La

Photo: Martin Hofmann

**Summer Activity
(Honorable Mention)**

*Mount Robson Guards the Great
Divide Trail Terminus*

Photo: Brian Norwick



**Humour
(Honorable Mention)**

Picture Perfect on the Howse Flood Plain

Photo: Brian Norwick



Winter Activity

Ian Brown Near Duffy Lake

Photo: Rudy Brugger

Winter Activity (Honorable Mention)

Joffre Sun

Photo: Dave Fishwick





**Humour
(Honorable Mention)**

Forest Zombie

Photo: Dave Suttill

**Winter Activity
(Honorable Mention)**

Cold Cobalt Swimming as Winter Arrives

Photo: Lisa Spellacy





Nature

Mountain Coyote

Photo: Rob Macdonald

**Nature
(Honorable Mention)**

Whoo

Photo: Christine Fordham





**Nature
(Honorable Mention)**

Flowers at Sunset on Flower Ridge

Photo: Jesssica MacNeil-Mah

Humour

Do Not Walk on Rocks in Canmore!

Photo: Jenny Feick





Mountain Scenery

Peak 6863

Photo: Martin Hofmann

Winter Activity Honorable Mention

VI Cabin Views

Photo: Deon Towle



