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*"..Adventure – in the grand old manner –  
is obsolete, having been either exalted to a  
specialist's job or degraded to a stunt."*

*--Peter Flemming, Brazilian Adventure (1933)*

Monthly Meeting:  
Wednesday, September 21, at 6:30 p.m.  
Program: The Chugach State Park  
by Carl Battreal.



# the SCREE

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

September 2011  
Volume 54 Number 9

# The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

[www.mtnclubak.org](http://www.mtnclubak.org)

*"To maintain, promote and perpetuate the association of persons who are interested in promoting, sponsoring, improving, stimulating and contributing to the exercise of skill and safety in the Art and Science of Mountaineering"*

Join us for our club meetings the third Wednesday of the month at the BP Energy Center, 900 East Benson Boulevard, Anchorage, Alaska  
[www.akpeac.org/conference/BPEC\\_map\\_06-04-03.pdf](http://www.akpeac.org/conference/BPEC_map_06-04-03.pdf)

**Cover Photo: Ascending Karstens Ridge. Story on page 7. Photo by Luc Mehl.**

## Article Submission:

Text and photography submissions for the *Scree* can be sent as attachments to [mcascree@gmail.com](mailto:mcascree@gmail.com). Articles should be submitted by the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month to appear in the following month's *Scree*. Do not submit material in the body of the email. We prefer articles that are under 1,000 words. If you have a blog, website, video or photo links, send us the link. Cover photo selections are based on portraits of human endeavor in the outdoors.

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On-line? – click me



For best viewing of the *Scree* on a monitor using Adobe Reader, click on 'View' and 'Full Screen.'

## Anchor-Bolting Clinic

I met Kelsey Gray (author of *Alaska Rock Climbing Guide*) at the Hatcher Pass Rock-Climbing weekend. He has put a lot of effort into replacing bad bolt anchors on a number of popular routes near Anchorage, Hatcher Pass, and other crags. He has offered to put together a clinic to teach others how to place safe bolts. There are still a lot of bad anchors out there that need replacement and more people are needed to devote some time to bring these routes up to modern safety standards. The clinic will be held Thursday, September 22, from 5:30 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. Class size is limited and preference will be given to MCA rock-climbing instructors and other MCA climbers with intermediate to advanced rock leading skills. The cost is \$20 and all proceeds will go to Kelsey's anchor replacement fund. Please email me (Tim Silvers at [President@mtnclubak.org](mailto:President@mtnclubak.org)) if you are interested in participating.

## Hiking and Climbing Schedule

September 15: Paddle climb up Mount Susitna leaving September 15 for a week or so. Very leisurely trail-clearing ascent planned. Return to Ship Creek. Contact Stu Grenier with questions. Email [qinkmenow@hotmail.com](mailto:qinkmenow@hotmail.com) or phone 337-5127.

## SUMMER IS WINDING DOWN, LET'S PLAN SOME MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA (MCA) TRIPS FOR THIS AUTUMN

Do you want to get out in the mountains after work, on the weekends, or perhaps for longer trips? Where do you want to go - to an old favorite, or explore new territory? Want to meet some new people with similar interests?

In the past there were short (half-hour) meetings before the general meeting to discuss future trips. If you are interested in a small group discussion to plan trips, let me know and I will try to arrange something. Or, simply email me with

(continued on the next page)



ideas where you would like to go, and I will try to help arrange trips and/or hook up like-minded people.

Just a reminder if you want to participate in a trip: Only sanctioned MCA trips are posted on the MCA website (<http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm/What-We-Do/Events-Calendar>).

Anyone can announce a trip through the MCA Yahoo! Group. Anyone can join the MCA meetup group and sign up for a trip or suggest a trip. <http://www.meetup.com/TheAlaskaMountaineers/>. These are especially handy for last-minute trips and are not “official” MCA trips.

Finally - a bit of semantics. Official MCA trips are no longer classified as “A, B, C, etc.” The board has replaced this with Class 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 to better correspond to international standards (e.g., Class 5 requires a rope). If you want the nitty-gritty details, download the whole policy here: <http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm/What-We-Do/MCA-Trips>.

I hope everyone is having a great summer. Don't get hung up in all the details of how to organize a trip; email me with your ideas and I will see how I can help.

---Vicky Lytle, Chair, MCA Hiking and Climbing Committee

## **Training Schedule**

The Annual MCA Ice Fest will be Friday, September 30 to Sunday, October 2, 2011, with a mandatory meeting from 7 to 9 p.m. on Wednesday, September 28, at the BP Energy Center. For more information check out the MCA website or contact training coordinator Jayme Mack at [mca\\_icefest@yahoo.com](mailto:mca_icefest@yahoo.com) or phone 907-382-0212.

## **MCA Calendar**

It's almost time again for the annual MCA Calendar contest. The calendar orientation is VERTICAL this year and Stu Grenier needs hard copies of the photos by the start of the October 19 meeting. We are still looking for a layout specialist to help with the project. The categories are climbing, hiking, scenery, and people. 8"x10" or 8"x12" photos are preferred. We will need a digital image if your picture is selected. Photos need to have been taken in or around Alaska. Contact Stu at [pinkmenow@hotmail.com](mailto:pinkmenow@hotmail.com) with questions.

## **Note of Thanks**

The MCA would like to thank Don Hansen for donating mountaineering and climbing gear to the club for use in our training classes. Thanks a lot!

## **Club Elections in October – Nominations Needed**

It is that time of year again. We are looking for nominations for Officers and Board Members for the MCA. Elections will be at the October Meeting. There are up to three board positions open, and all the officers (President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer) are up for election. Officer terms are for one year; Board members are two-year positions. If you would like to run for one of these prestigious positions (or if you would like to nominate someone else), please contact Vicky Lytle ([victoria.lytle@gmail.com](mailto:victoria.lytle@gmail.com)). It is a great way to help out the club, and get to know other members.

## **Wilderness First Aid Training**

The Red Cross is offering Wilderness First Aid (WFA) classes for \$135 in Anchorage. Currently there is one class remaining on the schedule ([http://alaska.redcross.org/media/Course\\_Schedule\\_-\\_Anchorage\\_-\\_2011\\_Q3.pdf](http://alaska.redcross.org/media/Course_Schedule_-_Anchorage_-_2011_Q3.pdf)) Saturday and Sunday, September 17 and 18. The MCA **Training to Trips** program provides a partial reimbursement of WFA cost to MCA volunteers that lead trips or instruct for five days. Let Tim Silvers ([President@mtclubak.org](mailto:President@mtclubak.org)) know if you are interested in that program.

## **Peak Register Committee**

Several peaks in Chugach State Park are currently in need of summit registers. If you are planning on climbing any of these peaks, it would be appreciated if you would contact Ben Radakovich at (208) 816-1789, or send an email to [peakregisters@mtclubak.org](mailto:peakregisters@mtclubak.org). The MCA can provide you with a register to place on the summit. If you find registers with wet or damaged materials, please recover them so they can be archived by the MCA and so we can take note that the peak will need a new register. Also, if you climb a peak that does not have a register, you can contact the MCA so we can send a register up there with some future climber. Below is a list of peaks that currently could use registers.

Mount Eklutna  
Vista Peak  
Flaketop Peak  
Ptarmigan Peak

Mile High Peak  
Hurdygurdy Mountain  
Indianhouse Mountain  
Penguin Peak



Hoodoo. Photo by Paul Hanis.

## Alaskan Hoodoos?

By Stu Grenier

I'll tell you how this subject made it into the Scree, which is kind of an interesting story since I have never actually seen an Alaskan hoodoo or even knew what a hoodoo was.

It all started last winter back when I discovered Facebook. I imagine now most folks know that Facebook is a wonderful way to share photos, as well as trip accounts, with friends. Well, Paul

Hanis was known to me, as well as a lot of other people, for his submissions to the MCA calendar and for his first-rate Scree articles and presentations at MCA meetings, (plus saving that girl who got bit in the butt by a grizzly bear up the Eagle River Valley a few years ago).

Anyway, after Paul and I became Facebook friends, I started perusing his photo collections and that is when I found this photo. "What the heck is that?" I asked. Paul told me it was like 20 feet high and he had seen it in the Wrangell Mountains. We speculated on how it was formed and were able to deduce - correctly, it turned out - that the weight of the cap rock solidified the material below it enough to keep it from eroding away, which is what happened to the material that was previously around it.

I was satisfied with our conclusion and kind of envious of Paul for being able to go to such remote areas and being lucky enough to see such cool stuff, when about three months later I was walking into the Costco on Debarr Road and there on the wide-screen televisions for sale was a bunch of those same geologic formations.

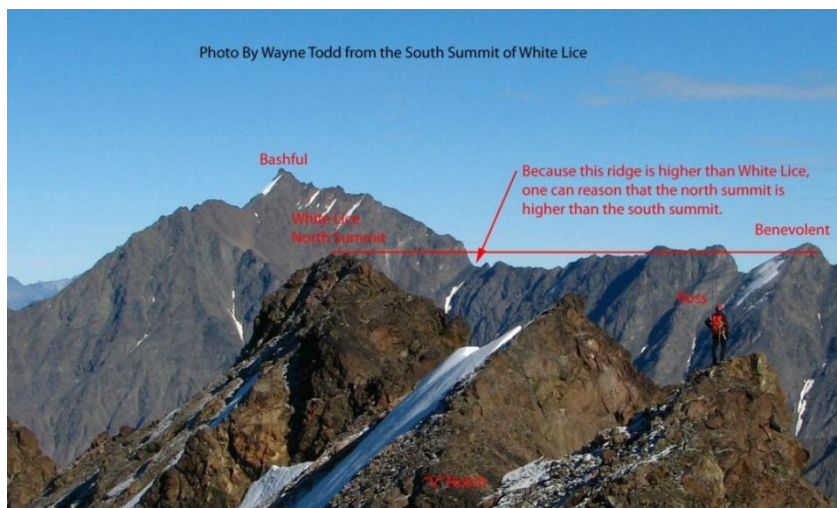
I moved up to listen to the program and they were calling them hoodoos and there were some parks in the Lower 48 that had a bunch of them.

So there you have it. Paul wasn't interested in writing up this story, so I did it. You may want to google hoodoos to see more of them. Also, if anyone knows where we have some Alaskan Hoodoos, please document them in the Scree and if you don't want to do that, just email me ([oinkmenow@hotmail.com](mailto:oinkmenow@hotmail.com)) a photo of it and tell me where you saw it. I would love to go take a look, if there are some you can hike or kayak to.



Carrie Wang on Mountaineer's Peak; article on page 16. Photo by Wayne Todd.





# Finding the True Summit of White Lice Mountain

by Ross Noffsinger

Anyone who has been to the summit ridge of White Lice Mountain has been presented with a perplexing question: Where is the summit? Initially one sees five possible candidates: two south and three north of the distinctive "V" notch. Wayne Todd and I reached the two bumps south of the "V" notch last September while doing a circumnavigation of the Mitre/Ovis/White Lice ridge that included a brief stop at Peak 5010. Even though I felt a sense of accomplishment for reaching the south summit via the south ridge, which involved a lot of steep scree slogging and some scrambling on steep rotten rock, I was not satisfied that I had actually climbed the peak. I remember Solo Sam (Sam Griffiths) saying that White Lice is just one of those peaks where you can't

tell (like Pleasant Mountain, Rook Mountain, and Thunder Bird Peak) so you just have to climb all of the bumps. Since neither Wayne nor I felt bold enough to take on the formidable "V" notch, the bumps on the north side would have to wait.

After studying photos taken from the south summit, I became nearly convinced the true summit was north of the "V" notch. I just couldn't tell which bump it was. I asked others who had been to the summit ridge, like Richard

Baranow, Tom Choate, and Jim Saylor, if they knew which bump constituted the true summit and found that they were not really certain. Jim recalled that reaching the north summit was just a walk-up from the Ovis/White Lice col. This tidbit provided enough motivation for me to gamble a precious kitchen pass on a very questionable weather forecast and join Dave Hart and David Stchyrba for an attempt.

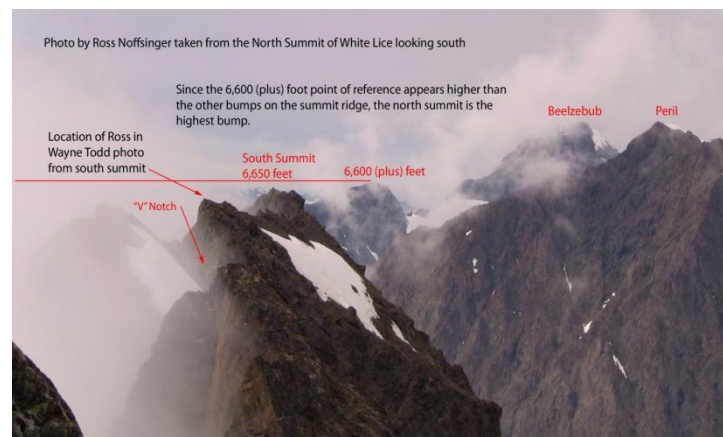
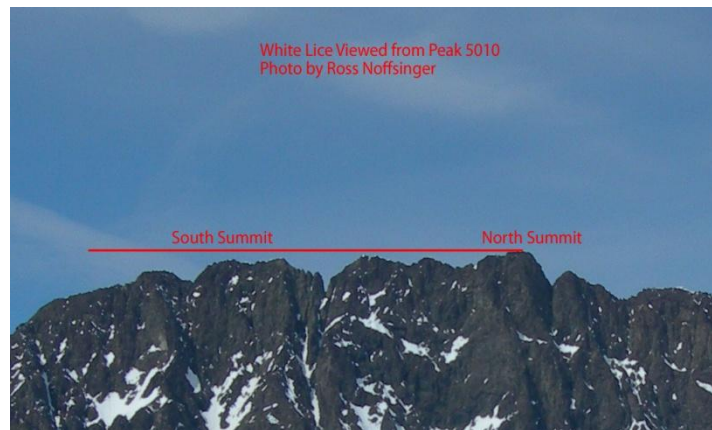
On July 29 we hiked into Pichler's Perch. The following morning we used the ridge northeast of the hut to access the Ovis/White Lice ridge. The route is very direct and offers class 3 scrambling on decent rock with some eye-catching exposure followed by front-pointing up snow (or mixed snow and ice, as was our case) to the ridge crest. From here the Ovis/White Lice ridge is basically difficult hiking until you reach the notch due north of the north summit (see photo taken from Peters Peak). In order to remain on the ridge crest, one would have to do about 30 feet of exposed class 4 or 5 climbing. Dave Hart found an alternate route that involved descending 130 feet down a steep, loose gully, then doing a hairy little

traverse into an easier gully, which we ascended to the slope on the south side of the notch. From here steep hiking on scree and rock with a bit of scrambling got us to the summit. I wouldn't consider this a walk-up, but maybe Jim did it earlier in the season when snow might have provided easier travel. From the north summit, it is not readily apparent that you are on the true summit. This is probably why no cairn is present. We attempted the water-bottle-level trick, but it was inconclusive. We became fairly confident that none of the intermediate bumps were higher, but we were not sure about the southernmost bump.

Getting on with the agenda, we descended the White Lice/Ovis ridge to the col, traversed west along the base of a rock buttress and ascended a class 4 gully to the *main* class 2 gully. Note that we could have avoided the class 4 gully by traversing further west to the base of the *main* class 2 gully. This *main* gully intersects the Ovis/White Lice ridge about 200 feet below the summit. From here one scrambles the ridge to the top. There is a roughly 20-foot section of class 4, but the rock is relatively good. I would consider Ovis Peak to be the easiest peak to climb from Pichler's Perch; however, when you have no visibility it can be challenging. In June 2009, Randy Howell and I climbed Ovis in whiteout conditions as a consolation prize. Our intent was to climb Peril Peak, but the weather would not cooperate. Not being able to see the route, we navigated by altimeter and intuition. We made it to the summit, but subjected ourselves to a much more circuitous and difficult route. The easiest way to access Ovis from Pichler's is to ascend the ridge northeast of the hut to 5,100 feet, where you arrive on a flat shoulder, and then traverse northeast onto the glacier in the bowl south of Ovis. This option avoids steep slopes and loses minimal elevation. From here the route is obvious.

It wasn't until I analyzed photos from four separate trips that I became convinced that White Lice's northernmost summit is the true summit. The analysis requires a reference point of known elevation, and is based on a simple principle: Compare the elevation of the object in question to a distant object of known elevation. The closer the objects align, the easier the comparison. The photos taken from the north and south summits illustrate this point. As additional backup I have included photos taken from east (Peak 5010) and west (Peters Peak) of the White Lice summit ridge. Please note that these photos are just a sampling from many that show the same result. Some may not find this evidence convincing and I am fine with that because I also believe in *climbing all of the bumps*.

From the summit of White Lice, one can look directly over the top of The Mitre and see a lower ridge in the distance, thus establishing White Lice as the high point on the Mitre/Ovis/White Lice massif. The narrowness and extreme relief on both the east and west sides of this massif make it one of the most spectacular geological features in the Chugach State Park. In the vicinity of The Mitre, the relief on both the east and west sides of the ridge exceeds 5,000 vertical feet of rise in less than one mile of horizontal distance.



**Bold Peak with Peril Peak splitting the Eklutna Glacier**

## Bleak Peak and Bright Peak

By Keith Sanfacon

Bleak Peak (5430) and Bright Peak (5745) lie at the head of Bold Creek, which drains into Eklutna Lake. On August 12, 2011, I started the day at the Eklutna Lake Trailhead (parking \$5 per day or State Park pass). The Eklutna Lakeside Trail is a well maintained gravel road that is ideal for biking and is closed to all-terrain vehicles on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays.

The Bold Ridge Trail begins just after the Bold Creek Bridge at Mile 5. With my bike safely hidden in the woods, I started up the steep double-track, which made frequent switchbacks.

At about 1,900 feet, Bold Creek splits to form Sdaylent Creek and Bold Creek. Oddly enough Bold Creek heads away from the Bold Ridge





**Hunters Peak - left, Troublesome Peak - center**

Trail and Bold Peak. Above the confluence, the Bold Ridge Trail parallels Sdaylent Creek.

Berry alert!

- 2,100 feet: watermelon berries aplenty;
- 3,000 to 3,500 feet: killer blueberries / crowberries.

I left the Bold Ridge Trail at 3,000 feet and traversed north, crossing Sdaylent Creek, and working my way around a sub-ridge, before dropping a bit lower to cross Bold Creek. The creek crossings were straightforward and I was able to stay dry after a bit of scouting. Elevation preservation was pointless through the deep, but soft, brush and there was a lot of up and down.

At about 3,000 feet, Bold Creek splits into two forks. From this junction, I pointed it up the southwest ridge of Bleak (between the two forks of Bold Creek). The next 1,000 feet of vertical was through waist-deep vegetation, but it slowly transformed into soft tundra with blueberries aplenty. The Southwest Ridge is a crusher, but it gets the job done quickly. (3:50)

The ridge between Bleak and Bright appeared technical, so from the pass between Bleak and Bright I descended south to about 4,500 feet, and

traversed into a steep south-facing scree gully. The gully was exhausting due to extremely loose gravel, scree, and mud. After finally gaining the ridge at 5,600 feet, I was ready for steady footing and less of an angle, but it was not to be. The loose scree/mud/gravel continued to aggravate right up to the summit; however, the views more than made up for the effort.

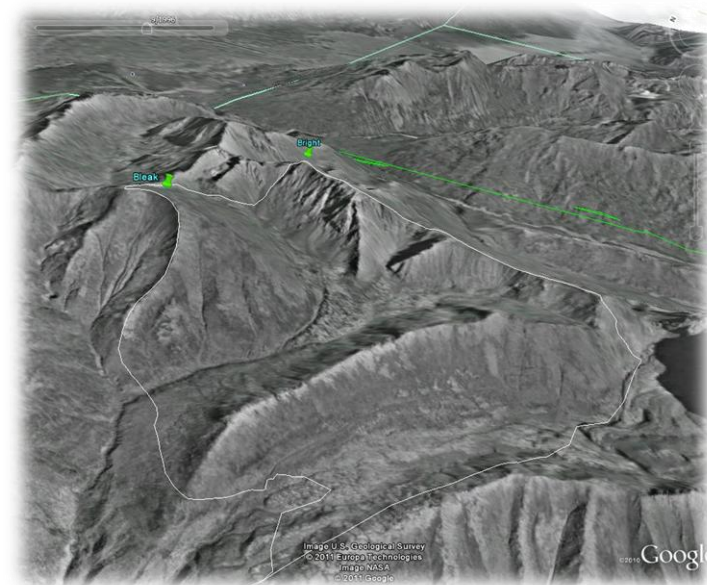
Bright was farther back than I had expected. The easiest way back to the Bold Ridge Trail is to follow the gentle ridge off of Bright heading south toward Hunter Creek Pass and Bold Peak. Game trails make for quick travel. At Hunter Creek Pass, descend into the valley under Bold's huge north face. Conveniently located springs provide much needed relief.

Reenergized and rehydrated, I was able to pick up the pace. Eventually a thin trail appeared and gradually thickened. Before long I was back on the Bold Ridge Trail. Blueberries were best at 3,000 feet to 3,500 feet, but they were ripening quickly up to 4,500 feet. At 3,000 feet I recognized where I had left the trail earlier in the day and breathed a sigh of relief. The hike back down to the lake was uneventful and I was grateful that I had stashed my bike.

24 miles round trip (10 miles of this were flat biking)

7,000 feet vertical.

8.5 hours total



**Bleak Peak and Bright Peak route**



Bicycle crew, with Denali in the background

## Four Supported by Forty

By Luc Mehl

Early in the winter, Brad Marden asked if I was interested in “doing something on the Muldrow” in May. I knew “the Muldrow” was a glacier in the Alaska Range, and I like glaciers, so I signed up. A month or so later I learned that that meant going up Denali from the north.

I’ve never been very interested in Denali because the standard West Buttress route sounded like such a scene. After studying the maps and pricing flights, I proposed that we go road-to-road: bike in, ski over, raft out. It took no effort to rope in Josh Mumm and Eben Sargent.

I don’t know if a trip like this is possible outside of Alaska. We borrowed equipment, found legs and shoulders to help carry the load, and were buoyed up by our incredible friendships during the 25-day traverse. It was awesome.

We met Friday night at a Search and Rescue fundraiser in Healy. Nine friends were on board for the bike in. We discovered a handful of classic “small world” Alaska connections. Anne Beaulaurier, our local connection and the key to getting our bikes out of the park, was childhood friends with Alex Nord, a good college friend of mine. Kevin Sullivan was friends with Eben’s roommate in college and was supposed to have stayed there on his drive to Alaska this winter. Katie Moerlein biked our skis in; Hannah Griego, Mike Mumm, Jeremy Wood, and Alex Schutz all took a trailer as well. Alex impressed everyone by wearing jeans and a cotton jacket.

The real wildcards were Jeff Crompton and Melk, the Swiss architect. I’m still not really sure how these guys got drawn into the fold. Jeff and I had some ski partners in common, but hadn’t skied together. Melk was hilarious. The 13 of us spent that night on the floors of Anne’s and Shannon’s cabins at McKinley Village. I slept next to Melk, he gave me his “party” ear plugs to bring on the trip in case it got windy. I said in a sweet familial voice, “Good niiiight, Mellllk.” And he responded in the same tone, “Good niiiight. Wait. What’s your name?”

Jeff, Melk, and Mike Mumm (Josh’s brother) spent an extra day helping with our approach, which was huge. Melk kept saying things like, “Is it okay if I start pushing my bike through the snow?” and, “Is it okay if I start carrying this pack up there?” “Yes, yes! Go for it, Melk!”

As we approached Wonder Lake we caught up with the snow plows. The upside was that the snow coverage was good enough that we were able to ski almost the entire approach to the Muldrow Glacier. We left our bikes about five miles short of Wonder

Lake and sent a message to Anne with the location so that she could coordinate picking up the bikes once the road was clear.

Snow and weather conditions were ideal through the approach to McGonagall Pass, Muldrow Glacier, the icefalls, and Karstens Ridge. We made it to Denali Pass, 18,200 feet, in seven days from the bike drop-off. That evening the summit was engulfed by lenticular clouds, so we knew we were in for some wind. But we were above the only exposed part of the route (Karstens Ridge) and the excellent travel conditions left us with 18 days of food and fuel.

We sat out the wind storm for seven days at a camp at 16,600 feet. We took turns reinforcing our snow wall when there were lulls in the wind. Two of those days Josh didn’t even step out of the tent. It was interesting to reflect (there was a lot of time for reflection!) on how good we were at moving fast, but how bad we were at waiting.



Eben Sargent and Brad Marden ascending Karstens Ridge





**Group photo on summit of Denali**

When the storm broke we cranked up to the summit. It was great to be up there by ourselves for a little while before the Swedish team of Andreas Fransson and Magnus joined us. We watched Andreas start his ski descent of the south face, a line that hadn't been skied before. Scraper! We all felt reasonably good at the summit. Short of breath and pretty weak, but without headaches. Eben and I skied back to camp and Brad and Josh soon joined us. We all had headaches back at camp.

The next days were a blast. We cruised through the 17,000-foot camp and found our friends Kevin Wright, Anthony Larson, Mike and Mic, and Michael Burmeister. It was so great to see our friends! We continued down and spent the night at the 14,000-foot camp. I was trying to find Billy Finley to see if he could take some of our gear out for us, but the Hilleberg tent I approached turned out to be that of Vern Tejas. He was psyched about our traverse.

At base camp the next day we unburied our packrafts that Thomas Bailly buried for us, and after hobnobbing a little, we found Pat, an Alaska Mountaineering School guide, who was

willing to take some of our altitude gear out to Talkeetna to be left with John Sykes. Awesome, awesome friendships!

The ski to the Pika Glacier from base camp was amazing. With a solid morning crust and tail wind we were able to cruise downglacier, skate skiing most of it. Eben suffered from AVS (Acute Valley Sickness) and managed to throw up his dinner the first night. Josh drank water from a little pond and then discovered a dead bird in it.

We met Sarah Heck and Erica Madison on the Pika Glacier. They brought in apples, strawberries, glorious heavy dinners (fajitas with moose backstrap, chili with reindeer, curry, yum!), and loud, giggly, one-sided conversations. We were a little late for good couloir-skiing conditions, but we spent three days touring and skiing some scrappy/soggy lines.

The exit to the Tokositna River was harder than we expected. We were able to ski to the Granite Creek Glacier via a couloir behind camp rather than backtrack to Exit Pass, but the snow was pretty gross. Traveling was good on the Granite Creek Glacier until we reached the moraine, which was shifty because it was



**The end of the snow**



**Packrafting out to Talkeetna**

so young. We spent a night in the tundra across from Granite Creek and fried some fiddleheads that Josh collected.

The next day we climbed to our final pass - it was awesome to look out and know that we had 80 miles of downhill waiting. After a day of snow-slogging and bushwhacking we punched out to the bank of the Kanikula River just a few miles upstream from the Tokositna River. Everyone took a very welcome rinse in the river and we built a huge fire.

The raft out was uneventful, which was nice. We spent one night at the mouth of the Ruth River, and then floated to Talkeetna the next day. At Talkeetna we completed our 20,000-foot elevation drop. I don't know where else that is possible.

We spent a couple days in Talkeetna at Art and Karen Mannix's house waiting for Kevin's crew to fly out. Nobody was ready to jump back into the real world, so this transition was very welcome. Much ice cream was eaten.

(More photos and story at <http://thingstolucat.com/denali-traverse/>)



## Peak 2250, aka Mount Sku

by James Milek

For the last three years I had spent every day that the clouds allowed looking north from the beach to the looming peak on the north side of Kayakers Cove in Resurrection Bay. The steep cliffs on the Resurrection Bay side, easily viewed from the water between Humpy Cove and Kayakers Cove, made it appear as if the only way to summit would be with the proper climbing equipment and a partner.

However, seeing that mountain goats frequented it, I was convinced there had to be an accessible route. A few things needed to happen before starting out. I needed a clear-weather day and a long enough break in work in order to give myself time to find a route and enjoy the beauty from above.

On August 27, 2010, I started out mid-morning on a clear day after waiting 10 days for a break in the weather. The trail begins at the beach of Kayakers Cove and winds its way through the dense forest up to the bowl. This part of the trail is well maintained and frequently used by the guests staying at Kayakers Cove. As the trail leaves the trees, a giant boulder sits

in the hanging valley and is usually the final stop for most people hiking out of Kayakers Cove.

From the giant boulder I planned the route up to the north saddle connecting the Killer Bay and Resurrection Bay drainages. It is a great spot to plan your hike and check for wildlife that could pose a threat. It's very common to see black bears using this route, but today the coast was clear. I scrambled through the rock field following cairns until the end of the trail and then made my way up to the tundra and continued on following a goat and bear trail to the saddle. Great views from the saddle looking west to the Harding Icefield and east toward Day Harbor and on clear days like this one can see as far as Montague Island.

Having been at this saddle a few times before, I knew the route would not be that easy to find. I decided to head down the Killer Bay drainage a ways in order to look at the backside for a clear route. It took a little while before I found a semi-clear shot to the peak. The last 1,000-foot climb I encountered a combination of loose rock, "green carpets," and small 10-foot pitches of climbing. Along the way there were three mountain goats grazing and multiple hoary marmots. With each step the view continued to grow.

I rounded the small saddle between the two peaks after leaving Kayakers Cove two hours earlier. There were stunning views of Humpy Cove to the north and Fox Island to the south. From the saddle I first ventured east toward Killer Bay to the higher of the two peaks. It was easy scampering, following a game trail and playing on the rocks along the way. After catching a breather and enjoying the view, I headed back west toward the other peak, following the ridgeline and dropping down on both sides to explore new views. The top of the east peak gave the best view of Resurrection Bay due to the steep cliffs dropping on all sides. After a while at the top, I decided I would try a new route down, hoping for a quicker route to the top, one that didn't include going over the saddle and then down the Killer Bay drainage.

I found a spot that looked decent, east of the saddle I had come up. I wouldn't recommend this route unless equipped with proper climbing gear. There were many steep pitches, little to no vegetation for grip, and after being cliffed out multiple times, I found a steep narrow drainage to shimmy my way down. The way down took twice as long due to these circumstances and wasn't worth the time. This route enters the bowl just below the ascending route and then continued down toward Kayakers Cove. It's a tough hike up there, but the view says it all. There's nothing like a clear day to look out over Resurrection Bay and see the Harding Icefield stretch on toward the horizon from a brand new vantage point.



# Adventure on the Northwest Fork of the Lacuna Glacier

By Graham Zimmerman

*"..Adventure – in the grand old manner – is obsolete, having been either exalted to a specialist's job or degraded to a stunt."*

--Peter Flemming, *Brazilian Adventure* (1933)

Flemming's book is about the exploration of the Amazonian interior in the 1920s. It is a story about getting lost in the wilds of the world, exploring what was then a large, blank spot on the map. I first read this quote when I was 20 years old, while pinned down on the weather-stricken west coast of New Zealand. I took the word "specialist" to refer to "climbers," and took pride in being one of those who might be able to participate in adventure "in the grand, old manner."

I was in the process of cutting my teeth amongst the steep ice and rock of the Southern Alps and chasing dreams that I hoped would one day lead me to the greater ranges. This exploration of the unknown was the drawing card. This was the reason for my dreams and for my planned progressions into the big mountains.

Five years later, a relatively short amount of time by many accounts, including graduation from University, seven expeditions, and seemingly countless months on the road, had put me in a different realm of thinking about the world and the mountains. I had found that many of the far-away places were, in fact, well known, that the discovery of the new areas was an opportunity to be relished and sought, but was not always easy to find. So I continued the progression on routes new and old, always with a keen ear to the ground for these lands unknown.

In the winter of 2010 my good friend and climbing partner Mark Allen called me about a photo he had come across of a glacier in Alaska of which we had never heard. We determined that it was possibly accessible with skis from the epicenter of Kahiltna Base Camp and by all accounts unknown. With a bit of work, photos lined up to maps, together showing steep terrain and big relief, our excitement built. We planned for the Alaska Range in the spring.

In the Lower 48 Mark and I trained and watched as winter loosened its grip for the year and we prepared for another trip into the big mountains. Between us, we had taken more than a dozen expeditions into the Alaska Range and because of this the process of getting into the mountains felt routine. Before long we were on the glacier with our heavy rations of pork product, quesadillas, and whiskey.

Our goal was to access the Northwest Fork of the Lacuna Glacier, a small area located between the Yentna Glacier and the massive bulk of Mount Foraker. We knew that some of the peaks had been climbed from the opposite (Yentna Glacier) side by our friends from New



Graham Zimmerman on Pitch 3 of the south-face central buttress (Nebula Arete). Photo by Mark Allen.

Hampshire during previous seasons, but we had found no evidence that anyone had climbed from the Lacuna Glacier (east) side. So we set our sights to cross under the south face of Mount Foraker and wander into the unknowns beyond.

It took us four days to reach the Northwest Fork on our first trip. Two areas on the map that looked to be low angle and no big deal turned out to be heavily crevassed icefalls surrounded by loaded slopes.

With patience and persistence we eventually reached our goal, having traveled a total of 27 kilometers from Kahiltna Base Camp. And while it might not have been remote compared with the old timers who walked into the range, we both felt as though we might as well have been on the moon.

Entering the Northwest Fork was magnificent as we were greeted by the massive southern and eastern features of unclimbed Peak 12213 with its series of aesthetic buttresses pouring down at steep angles towards us. To find an untouched zone, and within it such a peak, was a combination of intimidation and dream come true.

We immediately set up a camp at its base and the next evening started an attempt on one of the buttresses on the right side of its south face. Excellent mixed climbing led to desperate and terrifying ridge climbing. Moving slower than expected, we made it through the worst

and reached the broader ridge above, where we spent a comfortable night on a well-protected and almost-big-enough perch.

The next day, on the ridge to the summit, what we had anticipated to be easy climbing was, in fact, deep, faceted, dangerous snow on steep



**The approach to the Lacuna Glacier. Photo by Mark Allen.**

aspects. With three weeks left in the range, we bailed, with the intention of letting the mountain cure, in order to make the transition out of the dangerous winter snowpack into the safer and faster spring conditions we needed.

So we returned to Kahiltna Base Camp; to the pork, the whiskey, and the people. To fill our time we climbed the West Ridge of Mount Hunter, a classic in the true sense of the word. While not on route we caught up on podcasts,

watched “Lord of the Rings,” shot a thug life video, and waited.

Within a week the conditions had improved and it was time to return. This time the ski to the Lacuna Glacier took us two days and we felt much more comfortable with our setting. The

longer, steeper buttresses in the middle of the face seemed to offer more technical climbing with less scary ridges and we happily opted for this option.

Starting the next evening we embarked onto some of the best mixed climbing I have experienced anywhere: wild exposure and aesthetic, steep, technical climbing with a few bits and pieces that I wouldn't wish on anyone. The cornices and ridge climbing were also still very much present and accounted for, but we made it back to the summit ridge without too many dramas.

Upon reaching the ridge we were forced to look out with disdain on the large black clouds close at hand. The remoteness and the high consequences of heavy

snowfall on our descent had us turned around and back on the glacier a few hours later, watching the clouds swirl on the peak above.

The next morning we found ourselves near the end of our trip, two days from base camp, with dwindling food and clearing skies. As we lounged, awake in the sun-warmed tent, resting from the 26-hour push the day before, we independently considered the proposition of heading back up on the mountain. By the time we finally started the conversation it was



already clear that we were going to stay on the Lacuna a little longer.

Slowly we packed, ate our meager rations, and continued to rest. Essentially we were to use our food for getting back to Kahiltna Base Camp for one last attempt on Peak 12213 and, therefore, would ski back without food. We both knew we could do it. We both also knew that it would hurt.

But subtle glimpses of magic are always afoot and we found in the bottom of a bag two packets of instant coffee which to two fellas from western Washington might as well have been gold. With bags packed and the face out of the heat of the day, we slugged down lukewarm strong coffee and felt the power surge back into our bodies.

Six hours later we were standing on top of

Peak 12213, having climbed a direct couloir on the south face, an easier, but more threatened 4,500-foot line that we were able to simul-climb in two super-long pitches. The climbing consisted of brilliant steep neve with the odd moderate mixed move, and fantastic fast terrain. On top we were able to look down over the Yentna Glacier and into the wide-open tundra beyond. The ski back was no longer a concern, simply a matter of continuing the perseverance and good decision making a little while longer. We had achieved our goal of climbing a new mountain and had an adventure “in the grand old manner,” just as I had dreamed of so many years before.

*Graham and Mark coined Peak 12213 “Voyager Peak” after the Voyager Satellite that launched in 1977 that is still exploring deep space. They would like to offer huge thanks to those who helped make this trip happen: The New Zealand Alpine Club, The Mount Everest Foundation, and Outdoor Research, with additional support from Julbo USA, Cascade Designs, and Feathered Friends.*

*For videos from this trip please check out OR's Verticulture Blog (<http://www.outdoorresearchverticulture.com/2011/06/alaska-expedition-2011-kahiltna/>).*



**Voyager Peak. Photo by Graham Zimmerman.**



**Eben Sargent in a couloir above the Pika Glacier; story on page 8. Photo by Luc Mehl.**



Will Wacker climbing up lower slabs on Rockfall Tower

## Lynn Canal: A Mountain Paradise

By Ben Still

I find myself flying from Juneau to Haines early on the morning of August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010, to meet up with my friend Will Wacker for another mountain-climbing adventure. Overnight the weather cleared and two days of sun is in the forecast. Will picks me up at the airport and we head into town to pick up his Lund skiff. After a couple of hours of prepping the boat and our climbing gear, we head to Letnikof Cove to launch our boat.

We cruise around the Chilkat Peninsula, admiring the many mountains along Lynn Canal. Our goal for this trip is the summit of the

probably unclimbed Peak 6650, which is one of the higher peaks along the east side of Lynn Canal, but is mostly hidden from view.

The glassy water makes for a quick boat ride and we are at Yeldagalga Creek ready to pull the boat above the high tide mark up a rocky slab. We use a come-along anchored to a horn and some brute force to get the boat high enough to miss the next couple of high tides.

Into the forest we go climbing up steep mossy slopes with Sitka spruce, western hemlock, and the occasional thick patch of blueberries and devil's club. The

first thousand feet of elevation is gained easily following the south side of Yeldagalga Creek. From here the valley levels out and the brush becomes thicker and less inviting.

We are able to connect several muskegs to make the going easier, but overall our pace slows and surprisingly warm temperatures beat us down as the day continues. We cross the south fork of Yeldagalga Creek and continue up the valley to a beautiful alpine basin, which sits at the base of the towering north face of Sinclair Mountain.

Will and I find ourselves at 3,500 feet, the start of the snow climbing. There is a decently flat rock outcrop, which we begin making cozy for the evening. As I am moving some small rocks around, I hear a weird whooshing noise. I turn my head up slope to see a 4-foot-diameter boulder flying down the snow slope straight for us. BOOM! An explosion of granite shrapnel and dust fills the air.

Will and I are running as fast as we can and quickly realize there was only one rock flying down the mountain. Will is covered in granite dust and we are both okay. Luckily the boulder smashed into a larger boulder that we were standing behind; otherwise we would have been crushed. Hmmm, maybe a bad spot to bivy?

We move back down the mountain and around the corner onto a prominent moraine ridge and make a nice flat spot for the night. All night long we hear a barrage of rocks crashing down the north side of Sinclair Mountain making for uneasy sleep.



Path of the boulder that nearly got them





**The Davidson Glacier and Mount Fairweather in the distance**

We wake up early the next morning, stash our camping gear and start the ascent up to the 4,800-foot pass between Sinclair Mountain and Peak 6650, which we start calling The Gunsight. We climb up the snow slopes following the path of the boulder. As we near the pass, the boulder path curves up to the north toward the rotten south face of Peak 6650.

From the pass (The Gunsight), we are able to make out Mount Fairweather in the distance. We descend several hundred feet down the east side of the pass, weaving around a few crevasses and looking for a way to access the easier southeast slopes of the peak. We find a small ledge, which leads us off the glacier, and climb around the corner to hopefully find easier ground.

We find a couple hundred feet of fourth-class slab climbing next to a waterfall that will bring us to easier snow slopes. The climbing is easy enough, but the adjacent waterfall has made for some slick holds. We carefully climb up past the waterfall and onto the easy snow slopes above. Finally we are able to see our route up

the peak. There is a 200-foot rock band at the top of the snow. We make quick work of the snow slope climbing up to the rock band. We find a weakness in the center and climb some more slabs with some low- fifth-class moves on rotten red rock.

Once over the rock band, 45-degree snow leads to easy scree up to the summit. The panoramic views are amazing, looking out west is the Fairweather Range towering over the smaller Chilkat Mountains in front and the peaks of the Juneau Icefield surround

us to the north, east, and south. We linger on the summit taking in the view and searching for future routes up many of the peaks. We build a cairn on the summit before starting the descent.

Our descent down the peak is quick with one rappel down the rock band and some fun downclimbing on the lower slabs. Back at camp, we brew up some coffee before we have to descend into the long bushwhack out Yeldagalga Creek.



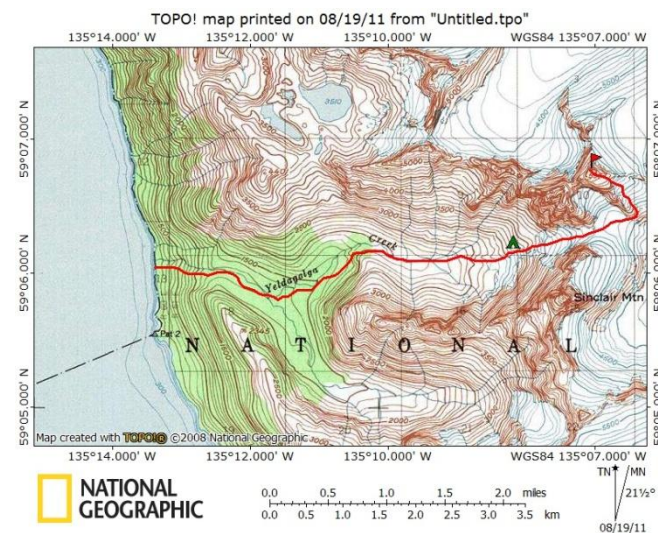
**Sinclair Mountain from Rockfall Tower**

Hiking out is taxing, as the day gets hot and our loads are heavy. We make it back to the skiff exhausted. As we push off the rocks and begin the boat ride back, a giant cruise ship passes by unaware of the adventures being had on the mountains and glaciers they pass.

After some discussion we think Rockfall Tower fits this summit.



**Ben Still and Will Wacker on the summit of Rockfall Tower**



**Route map**



Mountaineer's Peak as seen from Mount Palmer

Photos by Wayne Todd.

## Peak of the Month: Mountaineer's Peak

By Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Western Chugach Mountains  
Borough: Municipality of Anchorage  
Drainages: Mountaineer's Spur Glacier and Lake Fork of the Knik River  
Latitude/Longitude: 61° 20' 13" North, 148° 39' 0" West  
Elevation: 7265 feet  
Prominence: 1,315 feet from Troublesome Peak (7465)

Adjacent Peaks: Devil's Club Peak (7240), Mount Palmer (6940), and The Gorgemeister (5755)

Distinctness: 715 feet from Devil's Club Peak

USGS Map: Anchorage (B-5)

First Recorded Ascent: July 28, 1989, by William G. Hersman, Jeff McCarthy, and Jim Sayler

Route of First Recorded Ascent: South ridge

Access Point: Hunter Creek Bridge on Knik River Road

On July 25, 1989, Willy Hersman, Jeff McCarthy, and Jim Sayler set out up the Hunter Creek Trail, which starts southeast of the Hunter Creek Bridge on Knik River Road. Legal access can be difficult and once obtained, this trail can be very challenging to follow. Those who fail to meet the challenges can be greeted by irate landowners, deep mud, alders, devil's club, swamps, wasp nests, difficult creek crossings, and steep moraine. For one stretch of steep alder, Willy reported taking three hours to travel a quarter mile. They set a camp at the foot of the Hunter Creek Glacier and the following day made the first ascent of Devil's Club Peak.

On July 28, the trio started from a camp at 5,100 feet on the Hunter Creek Glacier and attained the 6,000-foot saddle between Mount Palmer and the south ridge of Mountaineer's Peak. They followed the ridge northward to the summit. The easy climb took them three and a half hours, and resulted in the ascent of the last virgin 7,000-foot peak in the Western Chugach Mountains. The ascent of all 21 named 7,000-foot peaks in the Western Chugach Mountains would become a sought-after goal. Willy became the first to accomplish that feat the next year.

Because the summit sits only a mile south-southeast of Devil's Club Peak and because the MCA was at the forefront of exploring and naming the mountains in the area, Willy proposed the name "Mountaineering Club Peak." Jim, however, nixed that idea. They eventually settled on the name Mountaineer's Peak. Willy's trip report, entitled "Last of the Firsts – Western Chugach," appeared in the September 1989 *Scree* and his brief report, entitled "'Bounty Peak,' P 7240 and P 7265," appeared on page 160 of the 1990 *American Alpine Journal*.

Jim returned to the summit of Mountaineer's Peak by the same route with John and Karen Cafmeyer on July 24, 1992.

Mikki Hand, Dave Hart, and Jonathan Rose made the third ascent of Mountaineer's Peak on July 2, 1994, via the south ridge. They avoided the access problems by taking a helicopter to the 4,600-foot level of the Hunter



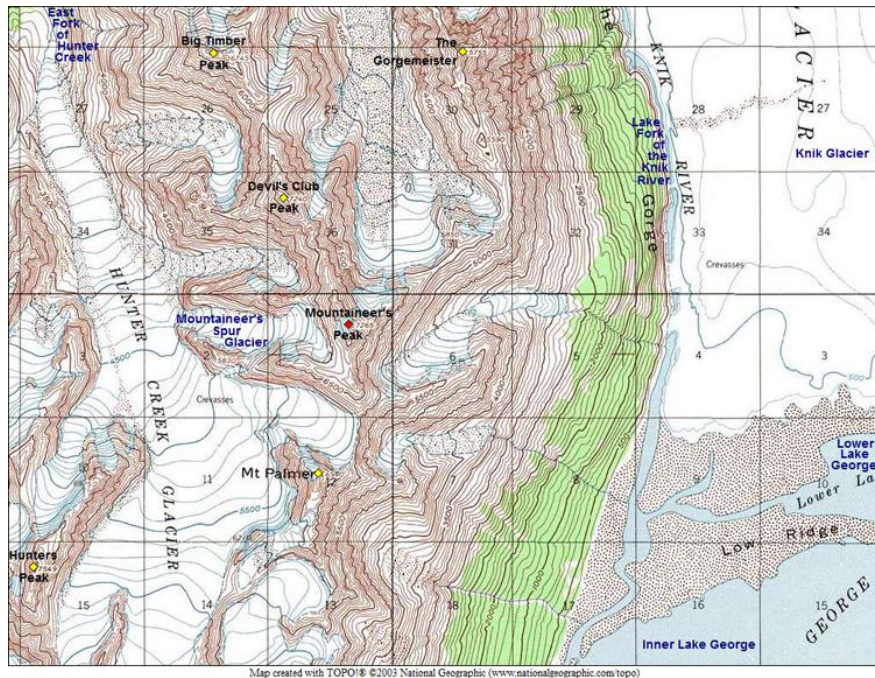
Creek Glacier. Jonathan's trip report, entitled "Hunter Creek Peaks," appeared in the August 1994 *Scree*. Dave's trip report, entitled "Hunter Creek Peaks, Chugach Mountains" appeared on page 143 of the 1995 *American Alpine Journal*.

Richard Baranow and Wendy Sanem made the fourth ascent in July 1997. They approached the peak by starting from Eklutna Lake.

Tom Choate, Bruce Kittredge, and I made the fifth ascent on May 28, 1998, via the Mountaineer's Spur Glacier and the west face of the south ridge. My trip report, entitled "Hunter Creek Glacier Climbs," appeared in the October 1998 *Scree*.

Jim Sprott, Kneely Taylor, and Niles Woods made the sixth ascent on June 9, 1999, via the southwest ridge, which they accessed via its southern aspect.

Wayne Todd and Carrie Wang made the seventh ascent on June 8, 2004, via the south ridge in foggy weather. Uncertain of whether they had actually reached the summit, they returned to the summit in better visibility via the same route on June 13, 2004, to make the eighth ascent of Mountaineer's Peak, confirming that they had, indeed, visited the summit five days earlier.



Above: Carrie Wang ascending Mountaineer's Peak; snowy Mount Palmer looms in the background.



Right: Carrie Wang on the summit of Mountaineer's Peak

# Mountaineering Club of Alaska Ice Fest 2011



**Want to learn to ice climb  
or improve your current techniques?**

**When: September 30th to October 2nd, 2011**

Learn modern ice climbing techniques, rope management skills and socialize with other local climbers in a weekend out on a local glacier. All abilities welcome. Must be 18 years old.

Cost: \$75 before 9/26/2011. Late registration fee: \$90.  
(MCA membership required: \$15 individual or \$20 family).

Visit [www.mtnclubak.org](http://www.mtnclubak.org) for more info or  
email: [mca\\_icefest@yahoo.com](mailto:mca_icefest@yahoo.com).

Contact: Jayme Mack, 907-382-0212.



## MCA Board Meeting Minutes, August 3, 2011

**Note:** Tasks to be completed in ***bold italics***.

*Board and Executive Committee members present:* Tim Silvers, Randy Plant, Brian Aho, Wayne Todd, Vicky Lytle, Mark Smith, John Recktenwald, Jim Sellers.

- Recap of July picnic: Good location, went well, approximately 40-50 members showed up. Expenses were roughly \$300. Suggestion: find volunteer(s) at general meeting before July picnic to help with organization.
- Awards (March - July): ***need to compile lists*** w/ names for gift certificate drawing. Tim/Jayne: instructors, Vicky: trip leaders, John: scree contributors. Tim to ***buy three \$50 gift certificates*** at Alaska Mountaineering & Hiking.
- Benefits sharing w/ other mountaineering clubs: Jim has meeting tomorrow, will pursue discussion about shared benefits between mountaineering clubs outside of Alaska.
- MCA Liability / insurance: no change since last board meeting.
- New Library: space at Jim's office building not available at this time. Library has been moved to heated storage unit until permanent home is found. \$65/month (month-to-month), Tim will ***notify Alaska Avalanche school***. Approximately 18' x 8' shelf space is necessary (currently stored as 6' x 6' x 4' pile of boxes).
- Chugach State Park Management Plan: Comments submitted by Mark, Tim regarding proposed ban on placing new permanent rock anchors. ***Comments regarding Eklutna Traverse hut use are being drafted.***
- Advertising: MCA logo stickers (2 1/2" diameter) have been printed. Will be distributed at MCA meetings at no cost. Board voted unanimously to

make \$200 ***donation to Kelsey Gray for advertising MCA*** in Alaska Rock Climbing Guide.

- MCA elections process: Vicky will ***send email to inform membership***.
- Policy updates: ***update outdated information*** (Brian). New rates for advertising in Scree: Current rates are \$60 for a full page, \$40 for a half page, \$30 for a third of a page and \$25 for a quarter page space. Changes approved by unanimous vote.

**Next board meeting: TBA**

----Brian Aho, secretary

## MCA General Meeting Minutes, August 17, 2011

- Treasurer: MCA on budget for revenue and slightly above budgeted expenses to date
- Peak Registers: Register for Mt. Significant is ready to go
- Awards: ***We need another committee volunteer***. Winners of the Volunteer Awards drawing: Steve Gruhn (Trip Leader category), Amy Murphy (Scree Articles), Jesse Lind (Instructor category). Volunteer T-shirt for Tom Choate.
- Equipment: Need to re-inventory gear and update the gear log. ***Any Volunteers?***
- Library: has been moved to secure heated storage unit until permanent home is found.
- Huts Committee Report: See [www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm/Huts/](http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm/Huts/) for a current list of hut needs. Please let us know about anything else that needs to be repaired or replaced.
- Parks Advisory: Cory Hinds is at the Chugach State Park Management Plan

meeting. The ***Deadline for comments is September 9th, 2011***. More information at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/units/chugach/planning.htm>

- Calendar: Will have vertical format for 2011, submit printed pictures before or at October meeting. Contact Stu Grenier at [oinkmenow@hotmail.com](mailto:oinkmenow@hotmail.com) for more information.
- Training: Hatcher Pass rock climbing training went well - had sun, rain and hail. Not much feedback for additional Anchor Building clinic so far. Let Tim know if you are interested in a Bolting Clinic and he will coordinate with Kelsey Gray (maybe early September?). Also: 2011 MCA Ice Fest will be Sept 28 – Oct 2 at the Matanuska Glacier.
- Hiking and Climbing Committee: see events calendar on MCA website ([www.mtnclubak.org](http://www.mtnclubak.org)) + meetup group ([www.meetup.com/TheAlaskaMountaineers](http://www.meetup.com/TheAlaskaMountaineers))
- MCA Basecamp: Monthly social meetup at BP Energy Center (6-9 PM). This month (08/30/2011): Get ready for the upcoming ice festival and ice climbing season.
- Announcements:
  - Elections coming up for all officer positions and certain board positions.
  - MCA stickers and business cards are available at meetings to advertise the club activities.
- Slide Show Presentation by Dave Lynch: Climbing in Little Switzerland
- Next general meeting: Wednesday, September 21st at BP Energy Center, 6:30 p.m.

---Brian Aho, secretary

# Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Tim Silvers	250-3374	Board member	Wayne Todd	522-6354
Vice-President	Jayme Mack	382-0212	Board member	Mark Smith	868-3155
Secretary	Brian Aho	223-4758	Board member	Vicky Lytle	351-8246
Treasurer	Randy Plant	243-1438	Board member	John Recktenwald	346-2589
			Board member	Jim Sellers	360-2560

Annual membership dues: Single \$15, Family \$20

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address at right. If you want a membership card, please fill out a club waiver and mail it with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you fail to receive the newsletter or have questions about your membership, contact the Club Membership Committee at [membership@mtnclubak.org](mailto:membership@mtnclubak.org).

The 'Scree' is a monthly publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Articles, notes and letters submitted for publication in the newsletter should be emailed to [MCAScree@gmail.com](mailto:MCAScree@gmail.com). Articles should be submitted by the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month to appear in the following month's Scree.

Paid ads may be submitted to the attention of the Vice-President at the club address and should be in electronic format and pre-paid. Ads can be emailed to [vicepresident@mtnclubak.org](mailto:vicepresident@mtnclubak.org).

Missing your MCA membership card? Stop by the monthly meeting to pick one up or send a self-addressed stamped envelope and we'll mail it to you.

Mailing list/database entry: Yukiko Hayano and Randy Plant - 243-1438

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Vicky Lytle - [hcc@mtnclubak.org](mailto:hcc@mtnclubak.org)

Huts: Greg Bragiel - 569-3008

Calendar: Stuart Grenier - 337-5127

Scree Editor: [MCAScree@gmail.com](mailto:MCAScree@gmail.com) Steve Gruhn (344-1219) assisted by Amy Murphy (338-3979)

Web: [www.mtnclubak.org](http://www.mtnclubak.org) (change your address here)

Mailing list service: [MCAK@yahoogroups.com](mailto:MCAK@yahoogroups.com)

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