

## ISSUE INCLUDES

Arrowhead Peak  
Point 8380 and Peak 7355  
Peak 5050  
Bystander Peak  
Nest Peak  
Penguin Peak  
Hale-Bopp Peak and Knik Mountain  
Adair Peak

# the SCREE

Mountaineering Club  
of Alaska

March 2018

Volume 61 Number 3



March Meeting: Tuesday, March 20,  
6 p.m. at the BP Energy Center at  
1014 Energy Court in Anchorage.  
Nick Baker will give a presentation  
on how to avoid drowning at high  
altitude and Jen Aschoff will speak  
on Rebirth in the Mountains.

“

It is better to have your head in the clouds, and know  
where you are ... than to breathe the clearer atmosphere  
below them, and think that you are in paradise.

- Henry David Thoreau

”



# The Mountaineering Club of Alaska [mtnclubak.org](http://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."*

**Cover Photo:** "On December 9th I was backcountry skiing down as Dana Strager and Kenton Curtis were touring up to the Microdot area. The contrast between the fresh snow and the gnarly clouds rolling in was incredible. Trying to make the most out of these dark winter days." - Breana Brendle

**Scree Editor:** Dave Hart

**Scree Layout/Design:** Paxson Woelber

## CHOATE'S CHUCKLE

### Inflicted by Tom Choate

**Q:** A first-class climbing area shares what characteristic with successful trees?

**A:** Good roots.

## CONNECT WITH THE MCA

**Meetup**

Check the Meetup site and Facebook for last minute trips and activities.



## March Meeting: Tuesday March 20, 6pm

At the BP Energy Center at 1014 Energy Court in Anchorage. Nick Baker will give a presentation on High Altitude Pulmonary Edema and Jen Aschoff will speak on Rebirth in the Mountains.

## Hiking and Climbing Schedule, July 13-21

MCA Summer Mountaineering Instructional Trip. Learn: trip organization, leadership, meal planning, navigation, route-finding, snow travel, running belays, snow anchors, knots, 10 essentials, terminology, glacier travel, ice climbing, belaying, crevasse rescue, wilderness medicine, bouldering, rock climbing, rappelling, and more while traveling the Bomber Traverse. Lead instructor: Greg Bragiel ([unknownhiker@alaska.net](mailto:unknownhiker@alaska.net)). Meet with Greg at the March MCA meeting.

## Family Dues

The MCA Board has proposed to increase the dues for family memberships from \$25 per year to \$30 per year. The membership will vote on this proposal at the April 17 membership meeting.

**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 19th of each month to appear in the next issue of *the Scree*. Do not submit material in the body of the email. Do not submit photos embedded in the text file. Send the photo files separately. 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. Please submit at least one vertically oriented photo for consideration for the cover. Please submit captions with photos.

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For the MCA Membership Application and Liability Waiver, visit <http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm?useaction=members.form>.

# Arrowhead Peak (5050 feet), Northeast Ridge, Arrigetch Peaks, Endicott Mountains, Brooks Range

Text and photos by Jason Schilling

In late July, Tim Halder and I ventured into the remote and mythical Arrigetch Peaks for three weeks of packrafting and climbing. I'd first read about this range in David Roberts' autobiography ([Moments of Doubt and Other Mountaineering Writings](#)) years ago, and dreamed about the granite towers, blueberries, and grayling in the heart of Alaska's Brooks Range. Dreams became a stark reality as we tried to manage a yard sale of climbing, fishing, and rafting gear on an Alatna River sand bar our first day of the trip. We floated to the confluence of Aiyagomahala Creek and were soon wading up the icy cold water to avoid dense riparian brush and bears. Two days of bushwhacking with large burdens found us in the shadow of Shot Tower (6096 feet) in an alpine fork of Aiyagomahala Creek that had rarely been visited. *[Ed. note: This fork was the stream that Dona Agosti reported had been called SADMKK by her 1976 party; see the September 1976 Scree.]*

We set our sights on a fine, arrowhead-shaped peak at the valley headwaters, on the ridge that divided the Alatna and Kobuk Rivers. Embarking on a marginal weather day in the middle of a tent-bound stretch, we intended to scope out the climbing potential of the upper valley and find a way across the Continental Divide to the headwaters of the Kobuk River. Finding a reasonable pass to the Kobuk, we started up a rotten gully on the southwest side of the divide and re-gained the divide in three long pitches. The rock quality improved above the divide and we continued up the northeast ridge of Arrowhead Peak for four moderate pitches to the top. We lounged in the sun on the windless summit, taking in the numerous nameless peaks and plotting our eventual course down the ribbon of the mysterious river that wound south.

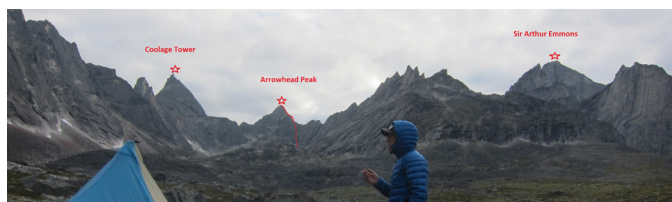
Eager to climb more peaks on the Kobuk River side, we took advantage of poor weather to retrieve our rafts down at the Alatna/Aiyagomahala confluence and shuttle our loads over the divide to a side valley of the Kobuk River. We waited in vain for a week in gloomy weather under the



Tim Halder climbing on the north ridge of Arrowhead Peak.

soggy and imposing northern walls before giving in to the irresistible pull of the wild and unknown Kobuk. We floated over 100 miles in five days through the wildest country we'd ever visited. Grizzly, moose, and wolves tracked every available stretch of sand and we pulled grayling out of crystal clear pools for sustenance as our supplies dwindled. The weather improved as the river widened and we often looked back to see the Arrigetch Peaks shrouded in storm clouds.

We have hopes to return, perhaps with just rafts and fishing rods. August might be the best time for avoiding mosquitoes and harvesting blueberries in the Brooks Range, but the weather is notoriously bad. Nevertheless, the Arrigetch have much yet to be explored by rafters and climbers. 📌



Tim Halder at camp on the east side of the Continental Divide, showing Arrowhead Peak and its neighbors Coolage Tower and Arthur Emmons Peak.

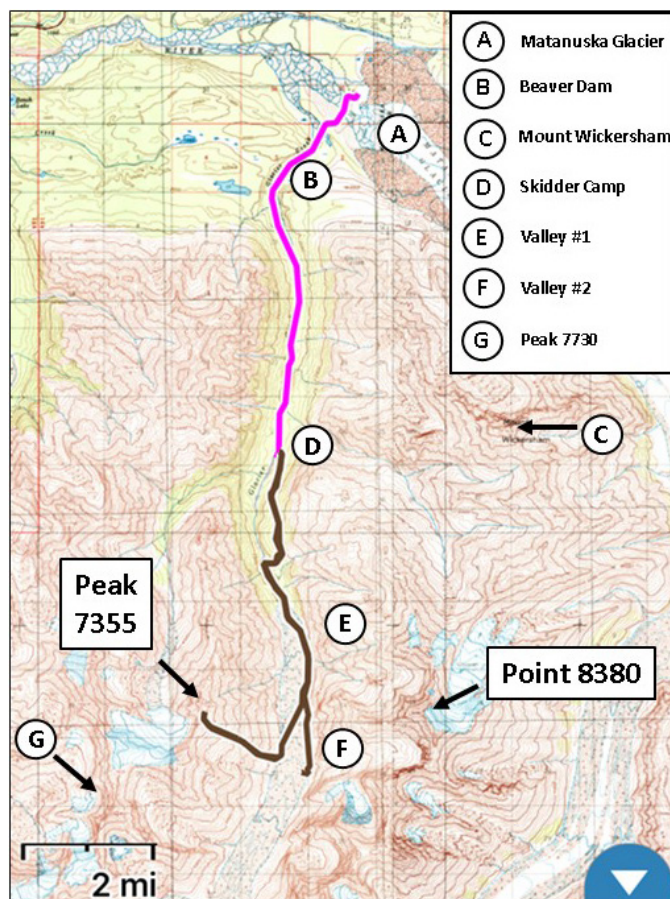
# Point 8380 Attempt, Peak 7355 Attempt, and a Tour of Glacier Creek Valley, Chugach Mountains

Text and photos by Joe Chmielowski

Every year after the MCA Icefest, a few intrepid souls do a hike afterward in the nearby mountains. This year Cory Hinds sent out an invite to climb Point 8380 in the Glacier Creek Valley and I enthusiastically accepted. On September 23rd and 24th, I attended the Icefest, where the highlight of the weekend was getting lowered inside of a moulin and climbing out. For those unfamiliar with a moulin, it is defined as “a vertical or nearly vertical shaft in a glacier, formed by surface water percolating through a crack in the ice.” Basically, it was a circular hole (15 feet in diameter) in the ice that went to the bottom of the Matanuska Glacier. It was a bit intimidating to look at, but our group enjoyed climbing in and out of this interesting feature.

At 2:00 p.m. on the 24th, I asked the Icefest coordinator, Jayme Mack, for permission to leave the ice early so that I could meet Cory and his friend Alexandra Janczewska in the parking lot. As planned, we met at Cory’s truck and converted our gear from technical ice climbing to alpine climbing. At 3:30 p.m., we were carrying our 45-pound packs to the Matanuska River, where we took off our pants and put on tennis shoes. Based on reports of previous trips by Cory, Wayne Todd, and Max Neale, I was prepared for this first obstacle. I wore a bright red pair of synthetic underwear with the idea that they would dry out quickly. Cory called them my “Superman undies” and laughed out loud. He led the way into the river which was moving fast, chocolate brown, deep, and wider than I had anticipated. Alexandra was next and I followed.

I must say, honestly, that is the coldest my feet have ever been in a stream or river crossing. At first it was unpleasant, then painful and finally, my feet and legs were just numb. It felt like blocks of concrete attached to my ankles. I was concerned that I couldn’t feel the bottom of the riverbed for holes or rocks and that this might cause me to trip and fall into the current. But after five agonizing minutes we were across and jumping up



Map of Glacier Creek with key points annotated

and down while cussing, trying to get our circulation going again. We donned our pants and quickly headed up Glacier Creek Valley.

Our first landmark was an old river bar airstrip. We then ascended a game trail into the forest and crossed a beaver lake via a beaver dam. Finally, we were on Glacier Creek proper and moving up the cobble-filled streambed when we heard a low rumble. Cory shouted, “The skidder!” In 2016, Cory and Max saw a gigantic piece of machinery, known as a skidder because it skids logs and other heavy things around. On this trip we were lucky enough to see it slowly trundling along the streambed and I snapped a photo of it from the bushes. We didn’t want to show ourselves, because Skidder Guy might have been dangerous. We imagined him wearing





**View of Mount Sergeant Robinson (10620 feet) at the head of the Glacier Creek Valley. First ascent via Gravel Creek Valley and the southeast ridge in August 8th, 1969, by German climbers Georg Gruber, W. Münster, and G. Mändl. The mountain was named for George Foster Robinson, who saved Secretary of State William H. Seward from an assassination attempt in 1865.**

a stained white tank top, smoking a cigar, and hunting moose by hanging his gun out the window. After he rolled on by we continued up the streambed, past Cory's old camping spot that he used to ascend Mount Wickersham (7415 feet) and Point 7700.

At 7:30 p.m., we stopped after 7 miles of hiking and set up our tent at Skidder Camp (we could see where the machine had flattened out some alders to do a three-point turn). That was probably also where Skidder Guy set up his annual moose camp, but no one knew for sure.

The next morning the alarm went off at 5:30 a.m., and after a luxurious breakfast, we started moving at 6:45 a.m. on a game trail I had noticed the night before. That game trail turned into an old bulldozer trail, probably made by a homesteader or miner 50 years ago. That saved us a lot of bushwhacking and we could move up the valley quickly. We connected various moose highways to get back down to the creek at 8:30 a.m. We then followed the creek to the nose of the rock glacier, where we continued up the lateral moraine to what we called Valley #1. We arrived at that landmark at 9:30 a.m. and was one of our potential starting points to climb Point 8380.

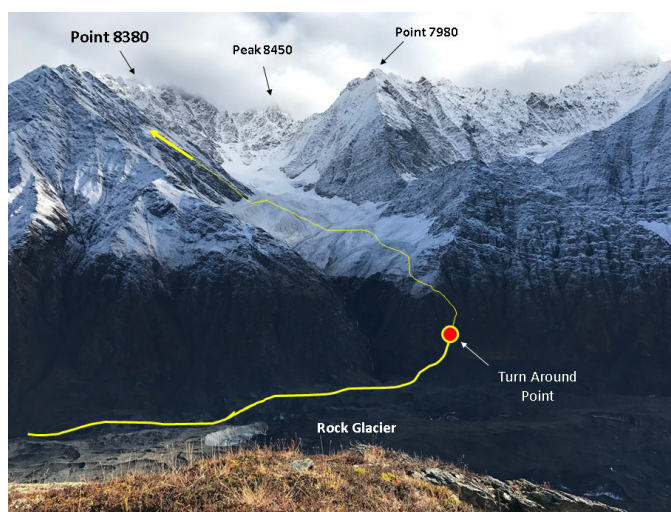
We briefly stopped at that valley to see if we could attain the ridge, but it looked too steep and the skiff of frost and snow made it hazardous. Instead, we chose to hike another two miles to Valley #2, which Google Earth indicated would be easier. The hike between the valleys (parallel to the rock glacier) was longer and slower than we had anticipated, due to alders and the lateral moraine.

That said, we arrived about 11:00 a.m., ready to start our ascent from the glacier, but one look at Valley #2 made my heart sink. It wasn't a valley at all, but a narrow slot canyon with vertical walls and a series of waterfalls cascading down it from a cirque above.

Instead of climbing the ridge on the left of Valley #2, Cory and I immediately headed up a scree fan to the right of the canyon. What looked like easy hiking turned out to be flat pieces of rock about the size and shape of tea saucers that were frozen in place with a skiff of frost on them. It was slick and steep and although a fall would not

have resulted in death, it would have ended up in a fierce cheese-grating. At the top of the fan, we noticed the gully necked down and turned into a 5th-class tundra climb on a diagonal ramp above a 300-foot cliff face. In addition, we couldn't see if the route would get us above the slot canyon, which contained a series of vertical waterfalls etched into the rock. Finally, the ridge to the summit of Point 8380 looked "steeper and meaner" than anticipated and the skiff of 2 to 8 inches of snow just made everything worse. By the time Alexandra booted up to our resting spot, Cory and I decided to save Point 8380 for another day with better conditions.

While standing disappointed near Valley #2, we



**A view of Point 8380 (less than 500 feet of prominence) with the team's turnaround point. Also highlighted is our potential route and the true peak, Peak 8450. However, 2 to 6 inches of fresh snow made conditions unsafe.**

looked across the rock glacier to the opposite side of Glacier Creek Valley and observed two very doable peaks: Peak 7730 and 7355. We decided that it would be nice to bag Peak 7355 because it looked like a walk-up with maybe some interesting features on the summit ridge. After five minutes of deliberation we headed down the frozen scree fan and crossed the rock glacier perpendicularly. The route was surprisingly smooth with ample dirt and rocks on top of the ice to make the walking easy and efficient. We avoided a large lake in the middle and in about 30 minutes we were standing on the opposite moraine. At that point (altitude 3500 feet) it was 11:45 a.m. and we were aware that any

summit ridge (7150 feet) at 3:30 p.m. The sunny weather was holding and the snow was nice and firm for a summit push. For a brief moment, everything seemed like it had finally come together.

I took a look toward Peak 7730, which looked nice and juicy and marveled at the fact that it was the only mountain between us and Mount Sergeant-Robinson (10620 feet high with an imposing 3,000-foot cliff face capped by a hanging icefield). As I waited for Alexandra to boot up to my position, I followed Cory's tracks up and onto a knife-edge ridge. It was composed of chossy rock about two feet wide and capped with a foot of snow. I

followed his tracks about 20 feet on the spicy ridge before turning back and shouting to Alexandra, "How are you with narrow ridges?" There was a pause and a blank look on her face, so I took that as a "No." I dropped down about 30 vertical feet and kicked in steps below and parallel to the ridge. At that point Cory popped up on the ridge and shouted, "The ridge is no good! Too many gendarmes between us and the summit." So, I continued traversing with the thought of getting under the summit itself and heading directly up.

I continued along, with Cory and Alexandra following, and it really felt like it was going to work. But we turned a

corner and were faced with a short scramble with a lot of exposure. At that point it was 4:00 p.m. and Cory said that they were going to head back and that I could push on if I wanted. I decided to continue because the snow was good and I could catch up with them on the way down. I worked my way up the nasty scramble, turned a few corners and plunged into crotch-deep powder at the top of a very steep couloir. I saw that a few of the other gullies had released the previous day, but that one had not. I also saw a huge



**Cory Hinds takes a break as the party attempts Peak 7355. Immediately above and behind Cory's helmet is Peak 8526 (also known as Frogfish Peak).**

summit push and return to camp were going to be late.

The climb up Peak 7355 was very steep, but straightforward. We were on super-squishy lichen and tundra, which sucked the energy out of each step, but we hammered out the vertical feet with a lunch stop at 1:00 p.m. and a short break to brew up one liter of water for each of us. By 3:00 p.m. and at 6500 feet, the snow was about 10 inches deep and improved travel, as Cory was able to kick in some steps up the steep terrain. We attained the

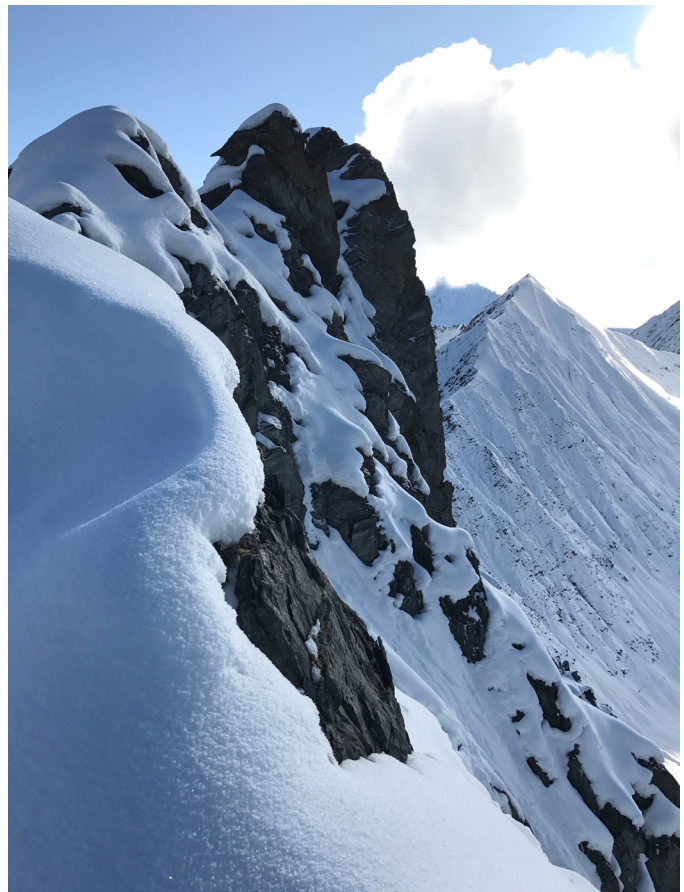


blank gendarme in front of me, another powder gully, and a tough looking summit pinnacle with no clear route. It would be at least 45 minutes of wallowing and climbing to get to the top and 30 minutes more to get back to that point. By that time, I would not be able to catch Cory and Alexandra before they got back on the rock glacier. So, at 4:15 p.m. and 7288 feet altitude, I reluctantly retreated from the summit ridge of Peak 7355.

I caught up with Cory and Alexandra at about 5500 feet altitude and we quickly dropped onto the rock glacier. That time, we hiked parallel to it in order to avoid the loose cobbles in the moraine and the patches of alder. Our hike out went quickly, and by 8:30 p.m., we were at the cottonwood forest and heading up the moose highway in the dark. I utilized my i-phone and Gaia GPS app to guide us for two hours back to our base camp (or Skidder Camp, as we affectionately called it). It was 10:30 p.m. when we arrived and were dog tired after moving for 16 hours over slow and tedious terrain.



**The upper route the party took on Peak 7355 with Joe Chmielowski's turnaround point (7288 feet) and summit annotated.**



**The view from Joe Chmielowski's high point (7288 feet) on the ridge of Peak 7355. This view is looking to the southwest with Peak 7730 in the distance.**

The next morning, we slept in until 8:00 a.m. and woke to a hard frost and frozen boots. Cory boiled up some water and poured it on Alexandra's shoes so that she could physically put them on (they were wet from stepping in a deep mud bog the night before). We cleared our camp and had a sunny hike out of the valley. The multiple Glacier Creek crossings went quickly, and by 2:00 p.m., we were crossing the Matanuska River, which seemed lower and slower than our initial crossing. We topped the adventure off with a burger at Long Rifle Lodge (which has new owners; the food is very good). While eating we stared up Glacier Creek Valley and could clearly see Peak 7355, Peak 7730, and Mount Sergeant Robinson. We all agreed that, although we did not summit our primary or secondary objectives, turning around was the right decision and that we could save these peaks for another year with better conditions. In the meantime, we had a grand tour of an amazing valley that had numerous burly peaks to ascend each year after Icefest. 🕒

# Peak 5050, Kenai Mountains: Almost Nothing Wrong

July 13, 2017

Text and photos by Wayne L. Todd

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**T**he trailhead parking lot is busy: women prepping horses, trailers, and numerous vehicles. Not at all what I am expecting for a weekday.

I hiked the Carter Lake Trail numerous times as a younger man with my brother Gary, who liked to fish at Carter Lake. Perhaps owing to experience or knowing the trail was just the pleasant greeting to the day ahead, it seems less steep and shorter than remembered.

Even before Carter Lake I view a “reasonable” route to the west that connects to Peak 5050. The waist-high verdant vegetation initially poses only modest resistance. These “open” areas became thicker and higher with ferns. Part of the route plan is to utilize treed areas, which have very little undergrowth. Where trees aren’t available, I learn the traveling is actually easier and faster in the alders, where the ferns are much less dense.



**Verdancy awaits**

This is a hot (by Alaska standards), dry, and smoky day. The shaded approach under trees and alders adds to their route viability. A few open oases within the trees beckon for a sleep or a break, but I resist. My slow, but steady, progress soon(?) bumps me out at alpine on a mounded area with a goat-hair-on-plant-accented trail.



**Upper Trail Lake and LV Ray Peak**

My pants are permanently imbedded with green pigment (perhaps a new fashion line of “Brush Rubbed.” Hey, it’s no more ridiculous than acid washed or ... A few alpine flowers dot the dry upper slope.

Views of Carter and Trail lakes with surrounding peaks open up as I hike to the ridge proper, hoping to glean more of a light breeze, most appreciated on such a day. Insects are also utilizing the ridge corridor. A flock of songbirds flitting about encourages me that they are making a significant reduction in the bug population.

Wrong Mountain (5260 feet) is the dominant point up ahead. As I’m a little light on water, but heavy on electronics, I judiciously make snowball snacks crossing over snow patches, first wiping off the top insect-laden layer. I don’t need the extra protein that badly.



**It’s really hot, and a little smoky**



The ridge angle tapers more onto a large mound with old, scattered wood and wire, presumably from an old survey. This is the top. A slight walk: south gleans the route for Wrong (I've previously been wronged), to the northwest Tern Lake, and to the east more of the Moose Pass community. I have a relaxed picnic with music, seven swigs of water, sundry snacks, and a drying of my feet and register (Ben Still was the last to enter his name). This has been designated a geo-cache – but “I Love the Chugach” stickers seem strange.

I exit south to access snow viewed from above for a “more efficient” exodus. A blue snowfield lake beckons from below. Gulls are feeding at the lake. They seem undisturbed by my presence, even when I go dipping in the seriously cold water.



**Wayne Todd scaring the birds away**

The day is so dry that a T-shirt I soak, rinse, and wear is dry in a half hour. Boot glissading along Carter Creek is fun and fast. I am careful not to travel directly over the water, which courses beneath. Alas, the snow ends and then it's creek hopping to stay on the easiest traveling terrain. A section on the north side is bursting with all colors of the rainbow, plus white, from wildflowers. I am forced off the creek at a gorge. The fun ends there, even though Carter Lake and Trail look so close.

Abruptly the traveling includes steep terrain with vegetation that obscures the ground. Below that, the dense ferns return with the complimentary biting flies. At least I have my music loud enough I'm not concerned about also trying to ring my bear bell, though what respectable bear would travel through this? That half mile drags on for a rather long half hour.

I emerge at a pleasant, vacant treed campsite, which connects to the main trail, and a reasonable three fourths of an hour later, I'm shedding plant clothes at the now mostly vacant trailhead.

Seven hours (including pictures), 7 miles, 4700 feet of elevation gain.

The rather obvious efficient mountaineering would be to climb Peak 5050, Wrong, and Pestle Peak (5320 feet), in one fell swoop.

I had a vertical gain efficiency index (VGEI) © of 2.1. If you climbed all three you'd have an VGEI of about 14.  $VGEI = (\#peaks\ climbed), squared / vertical\ gain\ in\ ten\ thousands\ of\ feet.$

A more elaborate formula, which includes time and distance, is the mountaineering efficiency index (MEI)©.  $MEI = Psquared / VGxDxT. (\#Peaks\ climbed), squared\ divided\ by\ vertical\ gain\ in\ ten\ thousands\ of\ feet\ times\ miles\ times\ hours.$  I had a 0.04 MEI, but all three together could be about 0.12. If you prefer numbers greater than one, add a 100 times multiplier to the equation. 🕒



**Hillside flowers and with LV Ray Peak backdrop**

# Standing by Bystander Peak (4972 feet), Kenai Mountains

**October 18, 2017 (too late), 12 hours, 17 miles (12 bicycle), 4000 feet of elevation gain**

**Text by Wayne L. Todd**

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**S**et camp and then climb Bystander Peak or climb Bystander and then set camp. That's a simple choice.

Having recently climbed a couple peaks just south of there and having seen a small lake nestled in a scenic valley just below, another trip was on. (Perhaps ignoring the upper-elevation seasonal changes and the forecast.)

Randy Howell and I bike from the south end of the Johnson Pass Trail. The trail is in excellent condition: no trailside leaves, very firm, and "dry" (i.e., frozen), but



**Randy Howell with the frozen trail and forest.  
Photo by Wayne L. Todd**

with few ice patches. About 6 miles in we stash bikes and head cross-country. The marshes I'd thought to avoid are actually good traveling, albeit similar to hiking on breakable crust. The initial mossy-with-mushrooms understory below tall hemlocks segues to occasional downed-timber dressage and leafless devil's-club obstacle courses.

Whenever traveling upward in alder, there always

seems to be a "greener" dead grass open slope to one side or the other. The brush thins and we pass from grass to alpine below crisp blue skies. At a break spot we determine the small glittering particles in the air are spindrift from snow thousands of feet above and a mile away (hmmm). I assume the "break" clothes I put on will be removed after a few minutes of travel.

Due to time we decide to first climb Bystander and then set camp. With increasing views we hike up



**Randy Howell above brushline looking east.  
Photo by Wayne L. Todd**

Bystander's southwest ridge. The wind presence becomes more direct as we enter a shallow hard-crust snow zone. The 20-plus-mile-per-hour headwind is damn cold, even with a down skirt/kilt. Approaching the 6-inch snow-covered summit block, the steepness reality sets in (the peak also looked steep from The Caboose, but at such distance I mistakenly assumed it would actually be gentler up close). With serious exposure on both sides of the ridge, coupled with myriad fresh-snow-covered steep sections,



**Wayne Todd wearing down kilt on Bystander Ridge.  
Photo by Randy Howell**





**Randy Howell on the southwest ridge of Bystander Peak at sunset. Photo by Wayne L. Todd**

This would just be higher risk than we're wanting. And it's damn cold and the sun is about to slide below a ridge.

And about that scenic lake: it's a gray ice block amidst a shadowed black-and-white, barren, wind-scoured landscape, and we only have a canopy for shelter. Run away! We mutually agree and head back the direction we've just ascended. I can't resist numerous pictures of the mountain vistas with low-angle light.

We just need water and a reasonably flat surface to bed down, ideally out of the wind. Lower on the ridge we toy with dropping to the creek just for the night, but opt out for brush and wind reasons.

We don headlamps and enter the brush zone. With a few brief, impressive exceptions, we easily travel down under forest canopy. Toward the flats we hear water and make our way to the creek. By headlamp we see myriad ornate ice tubes and chandeliers, created by splashing water on plants. A photo shoot ensues before acquiring water.

Following the streambed down, we enter a small canyon, wondering if we'll need to backtrack. Luckily it opens up, and on a bench

we decide campsite! With no wind below the trees, we skip the canopy and set inflatable pads on frozen leaves.

After freeze-dried dinners we nestle down with views of high tree-branch shadows and full stars. I foolishly don't implement all the bag, pad, and clothing options, so have a cool night, imagining how butt-ass cold and sleepless it would have been if we'd camped up high in the wind.

With shadowed morning light we easily make our way to the bicycles. A fun ride ensues, especially once we enter the direct sunshine zone. 🚲



**Randy Howell at creek ice formations. Photo by Wayne L. Todd**



# Bringing Our Eggs to Nest: Nest Peak (5030 feet), Western Chugach Mountains

Tuesday, January 9th, 2018

Text and photos by Shane Ohms

The forecast over Nest Peak read clouds with partial sun, low wind, and a temperature of about 15 degrees. Avalanche risk was at a low for the Turnagain Arm area. I pulled the trigger, which really just meant that I telephoned my hiking companion, John Perrin, to see if he'd bite on the plan. John and I attended UAF and were home in Anchorage for Christmas break. John was my longtime friend and had accompanied me on virtually every mountain I'd done, I figured Nest Peak would be no exception. Originally, I had wanted to bring skis and ski it; however, John opposed as we were not in our "summer shape" and we wouldn't be able to do 5,000 feet with the weight of skis and boots in such a short day. As it would turn out (due to low snow coverage and our physical limits), that was an excellent decision.

We arrived at the trailhead at 7 a.m. and immediately went to putting on our microspikes because the trail was icy. The trail miles were easy going, and after about two and a half miles we had reached the end of the all-terrain vehicle trail at 8:30. Another mile on a well-trodden path brought us out of the trees and into an avalanche runout at around 1000 feet. There were only a few inches of snow, but we decided to put gaiters

## Breaking out of the fog

on there. Then we could see that there was a wet, light fog surrounding us that we hadn't noticed earlier in the darkness of the trees.

Eventually we ran into a sheep trail going uphill and decided that we would follow that up to Nest's main southwest ridge. Once we reached 1500 feet, our spirits lifted when we saw blue sky above us and knew that we would eventually be breaking out of the fog. A short while later, we broke out at about 2000 feet and the view was spectacular. It was a chilly 12 degrees, so John put hand warmers in his boots while I took some awesome pre-sunrise panoramic photos with my camera. Rising above the sea of fog, we could see all of Penguin Ridge, Bird Ridge Point, and the more-distant Kenai Mountains.



John Perrin following the goat's choice of ridges up to Nest Peak's southwest ridge

At 11:15 we stopped for water and some of John's hard-boiled eggs. The eggs had grown some frost around them, but the protein tasted the same. At that stop we learned that the creature responsible for blazing our trail was actually a goat, not a sheep, when we saw the goat running off ahead of us. At that break we decided that we would descend on one of the ridges farther east because the goat ridge we were on was a fair bit steeper. A little after 12 p.m., we finally struck the 4000-foot southwest ridge at a point a little west of the point labeled on maps



as 4030 feet. I stripped down to my T-shirt now that we were in for some sunshine.



**Shane Ohms on the southwest ridge. Nest Peak (to the left of John Perrin) is still far away.**

We still had to cover about a mile and a half of ridgeline in order to reach the summit of Nest Peak. Fortunately, the goat had already broken trail for us and we followed it (in and out of some tricky places) nearly all the way to the summit.



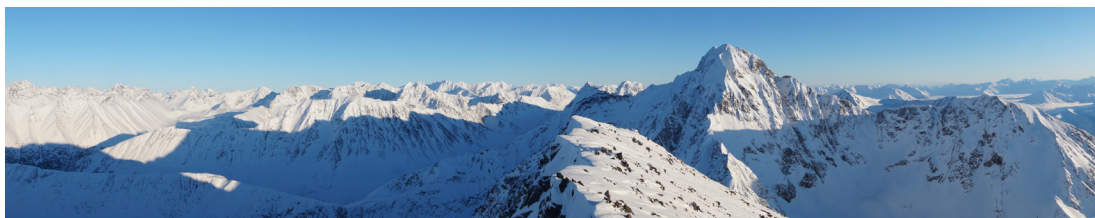
**John Perrin on the descent. Note how the goat trail weaved in and out.**

About a quarter mile from the summit, at 2 p.m., we decided to drop packs to speed things up. The final quarter mile was icy and with a prominent 1,000-foot drop below us, slipping was not an option. At 2:30 p.m., we summited Nest Peak. I took four quick panos to capture the amazing 360-degree view and two summit selfies with John. Then we quickly had

some of the frozen eggs John brought up in his pocket and, after spending less than 10 minutes on the summit, we were crossing back over the icy slope to our backpacks.

Getting off the mountain before dark was then an issue we were being pressed with. On the way up we had selected a southward ridge east of Point 4030 that would deposit us at a lower elevation where we could find our earlier tracks and return to the ATV trail.

So, we slowly and cautiously made our way down the ridge between the unideal hours of 3:30 and 6:00. At 6:30 we found what we believed to be our old tracks that would lead us to the ATV trail. Somehow we lost the trail and (stupidly) decided to follow the drainage down to Penguin Creek and just follow the creek to the ATV bridge. The drainage was relatively easy to descend, and by relatively, I mean there were fewer alders in it than were on our left and right. When we reached Penguin Creek at around 7 p.m., we saw that it was not frozen enough to walk on and that there were no game trails paralleling it. We were already spent from a long day in the mountains and now we were in for some nightmarish bushwhacking, the likes of which we had never encountered nor were we remotely prepared for. Imagine sniper crawling down tunnels of alders and tightrope walking up fallen trees, in the dark with only one headlamp to share with your partner. That was how we spent an agonizing two hours traveling what was, in reality, probably only a half mile. Eventually we happened upon our approach path, but truthfully we would have walked right past it if it hadn't been for a specific fallen tree with snow on it that I recognized walking past earlier that morning. We were so relieved to be on our trail again and by 9:45 we were piling into the car. The views had been phenomenal that day and I'd seen the most epic sunrise to date, but then it was time for us two hard-boiled and frozen eggs to return to Anchorage, our nest. 📍



**One of the summit panoramas showing the gnarly west and north faces of Bird Peak**

# Lessons Learned on Penguin Peak (4334 feet), Penguin Ridge, Western Chugach Mountains

**Text by Steve Gruhn; photos by Azriel Sellers**

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**H**iking with kids can be both rewarding and challenging. My daughter Lacey and I have enjoyed several hikes together, once I learned to slow my pace and to have frequent snack breaks.

On October 7 Azriel Sellers and I took our daughters, Calista (age 8) and Lacey (age 6), on a hike up Penguin Peak. In the previous two years, we'd hiked to the summits of several peaks together, so the girls had grown accustomed to gaining elevation and traveling off trail. In May we'd hiked to Bird Ridge Point (3505 feet) and I pointed out Penguin Peak across the Bird Creek valley to the east. So, we thought it would be neat to climb a peak in the vicinity of the one they had climbed in the spring.

As is often the case when hiking with children, we got off to a late start. It was nearly noon when we left the car at the Bird Valley parking area. We were surprised that there were a lot of cars in the parking lot. Az mentioned that there had been a Meetup group that had planned the same hike.

We hiked north up the old logging road, taking the right fork a couple hundred yards from the trailhead, and then turned right on a smaller trail just south of a clearing near the base of Penguin Peak. The girls were having a blast and were excited about seeing everything from puddles to birds. As we hiked, the trail became steeper, requiring the girls to use their hands in a few places. I was impressed with how well they did and how quickly they gained elevation. At about 2000 feet, we stopped for a break and the kids devoured sandwiches and candy.

Continuing on, the route opened up into fields of heather and we could see members of the Meetup group on the ridge to the northeast. A fresh snowfall had dusted the higher elevations in a white blanket. We hiked onward and took several breaks for the girls to lighten our loads of snacks and water. We met several people from the Meetup group who were descending after reaching

the first highpoint on the ridge northwest of the summit. One woman tried to dissuade us from continuing onward because of the snow. But the girls were accustomed to snow and the day was still young, so we chose to continue upward, taking frequent breaks to sit on the heather.



**Cal Sellers (left) and Lacey Gruhn hike up the tundra west of Penguin Peak. Snow dusts Indianhouse Mountain and South Suicide Peak (right) in the background.**

Az and Cal opted to try a more direct line to the northwest ridge while Lacey and I continued southeastward to a spur that descended to the southwest from the first highpoint on the northwest ridge. We hiked up this rocky spur with views of Turnagain Arm – and also of dark gray clouds moving in from the east.

Lacey and I reached the first highpoint as snow began to fall and the wind speed increased. Az and Cal were close behind us, but I didn't want to wait on that exposed point. Following goat tracks, we headed southeastward to a low point on the ridge. We waited in the lee of some rocks for Az and Cal, who joined us in short order. Pointing out the tower on the summit, I asked Lacey if she wanted to continue to that point. She was more interested in following the goat tracks than in the summit





**Cal Sellers ascends the northwest ridge of Penguin Peak.**

tower, but they led southeastward, so we followed them.

By that time the wind had picked up to the point where it was difficult to communicate and a few inches of snow had fallen. Lacey and I followed the goat tracks and Az and Cal followed us. The ridge between the first highpoint and the summit was rocky and exposed in places and the fresh snow made things a bit slippery, but the goat seemed to know the easiest route, so we followed its tracks.

In short order the goat tracks led us to the summit. I hadn't been there since the tower had been installed. Due to the wind, snow, and decreasing visibility, we didn't even spend a minute on the summit. Lacey wanted to follow the goat tracks down the northeast ridge, but I put the kibosh on that.

We retraced our steps, passing Az and Cal en route. I told him that we'd wait for them out of the wind and below the snow. I was really impressed at how well the girls had done in the face of worsening conditions. Soon we reached the first highpoint northwest of the summit. The spur ridge to the southeast seemed to define the limit of the foul weather. West of the spur, it wasn't raining or snowing and the wind speed was considerably less than on the east side of the spur. Lacey and I headed southwest in the lee of the spur ridge to a sheltered spot on the tundra below. We stopped there and I fed her a sandwich. She was disappointed that we hadn't seen the goat. Knowing that there was snow on the ridge, I'd carried a change of socks and shoes for Lacey. I

changed out her footwear and dried her feet and legs.

As we waited, I asked her the two questions I always ask on our outings – what was her favorite part and what did she learn on the trip. She said that her favorite part was seeing the goat tracks and that she learned that she could have fun outside even when it was stormy. A good lesson for us all, I thought.

Soon Az and Cal had joined us. After a snack break, the girls and Az led me downward with the renewed revelry that only lollipops can bring. Az led the girls to slide on their behinds on the tundra. They howled with glee.

I could see the storm coming toward us and rain would be falling soon, so I rushed to get Lacey down off the steep part of the trail before the rain would make it too slippery for her. Just as we got off the steep part of the trail and onto firm footing, the raindrops began to fall. We continued down to the old logging road where we waited for Az and Cal under the shelter of large hemlocks.

By that point the sun had set and twilight had come upon us. When I heard Az and Cal coming, I decided to play a prank. I hid behind a rootstock and growled like a bear as they approached. Az and Cal both yelled and I laughed. Az then told me that he was about ready to use his bear spray on me. The joke would have been on me!

We walked through the mist back to the car with the memories of the outing fresh in our minds. And a couple lessons stuck with me – we can have fun outside even when it's stormy, and never play a prank on someone who is carrying bear spray. 🐻



**Lacey Gruhn (left) and Steve Gruhn make the final push up the west ridge to the summit of Penguin Peak.**





**Marcin Ksok**

## Arctic to Indian Trail Work

The MCA recognizes Mark Smith, Sean McIlvenna, Marcin Ksok, and John McCormick for their work clearing trail January 20-21, 2018. The group worked the Arctic to Indian Trail from the Arctic Valley trailhead to the beaver pond approximately 5 miles south along the Ship Creek Trail. Thank you for your hard work.

**Photos by Greg Bragiel – Trip leader**



**Sean McIlvenna**



**Marcin Ksok (left) and Mark Smith at the beaver pond**



**John McCormick packing up**



# Hale-Bopp Peak (5850 feet) and Knik Mountain (4930 feet), Western Chugach Mountains: Access at Last

September 20, 2013

Text & photos by Wayne L. Todd, with Carrie Wang

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**A**ccess at last, access at last! After years of trying to procure a private land crossing (and triggering an avalanche there 20 years previous), we now have the approval and encouragement of the Knik River Lodge owners (Peter and Eva Schadee) to use their trail, which travels beneath both Hale-Bopp Peak and Knik Mountain. *[Editor's Note: David Hart, Ross Noffsinger, and Ben Still cleared a direct trail from the Lodge up to Hale-Bopp Peak and Knik Mountain the next summer on July 13, 2014.]*

Numerous cosmic factors came together to make this trip happen (and the desire, and choosing a good-weather day, and ...).

I'm excited at not only the prospect of climbing two new nearby peaks (quite difficult these days), but also at being on a new trail, and in new terrain. We make excellent time on the trail (albeit a bit muddy and slick) and appreciate the work that went into this trail, but alas, we are soon at our launching spot for Hale-Bopp. Just as some say, "Why would you jump out of a good airplane?", "Why would you leave a good trail?" (especially as we haven't even explored the lake at the end). I choose to go long, climb the highest peak first, and then we're more likely to climb the shorter peak on the return.

We're soon ascending our way through frosty devil's-club leaves and such, but by linking myriad moose trails, the bushwhacking is only BWIA2+ (though I did lose a pole section somewhere). We have views of brush-free higher ground, then work around patches and then enter a frozen alpine. Frost and snow crystals accent the beauty of the alpine plants.

This is a crisp, clear, calm, bluebird day and it feels damn good to be out and traveling.



**Carrie Wang in the frosty shrubbery**

After being deprived of direct sunlight earlier on this north-facing aspect, the warmth and intensity are delectable. Plants and micro-bumps soon have both a thawed and frozen side. Thin snow drapes the valley between Hale-Bopp and Knik.

The world is bright, walking into both direct and reflected rays. We briefly follow wolverine tracks, then cross bear tracks. Heavily frosted alpine stalks protrude above the white blanket on Hale-Bopp's flank. White-accented new views of the backsides of Chugach State Park peaks emerge as we approach Hale-Bopp's summit.



**Carrie Wang in the alpine, Knik Mountain behind**





**Ptarmigan print**

Many full-circle ptarmigan wing prints indicate a recent wild bird party. From the top we have views of the Knik Glacier and River, the deep Chugach including Mount Marcus Baker, and dozens of other snowy mountains and glaciers, and still snow-free valleys. Dang, we must leave and it's brisk in the breeze. We leave a register.

A second pole would be nice for descending. At the saddle a (the?) bear is sighted to the north. A dozen sheep graze on the warm south-facing hillside above Hunter Creek. Due to recent bad-weather-induced limited exercise, the short ascent to Knik has my legs complaining. The views are similar and a bit subtler from Knik. A hunter's(?) tent is pitched above all-terrain vehicle trails to the northwest. We hatch another summit register.

Soon we're scanning for the least brush-resistive



**Wayne Todd and Carrie Wang on Hale-Bopp Peak  
with the Hunter Creek Glacier behind**

descent in view of Knik River Lodge and other domiciles. Initially we travel well, use the steep frozen moose trails, but then end up away from animal trails and have a serious bushwhack descent that includes climbing down steep, slick, fallen trees and, of course, a cornucopia of devil's club.

We're doubly grateful when we intersect the trail. After meeting the trail hosts, we conclude a wonderful late fall day.

Ten hours, 8.5 miles, 6300 feet of elevation gain.

If you want to graciously utilize this trail, you need to check with Peter or Eva for parking, and trail information. Obviously, respect their lodge, cabin and restaurant business and better yet, directly support their business. In the summer months they also offer a helicopter flightseeing service. As a token of appreciation, a group of us later brushed out this trail to the lake the next summer on July 12, 2014. 📍



**Northeast view of Bashful Peak and Bold Peak**



# Peak of the Month: Adair Peak

By Steve Gruhn

<b>Mountain Range</b>	Eastern Chugach Mountains
<b>Borough</b>	Unorganized Borough
<b>Latitude/Longitude</b>	61° 2' 15" North, 143° 23' 34" West
<b>Elevation</b>	7420 ± 20 feet
<b>Adjacent Peaks</b>	Peak 7240 in the Monahan Creek and Pocket Creek drainages and Bridgnorth Peak (7550 feet)
<b>Distinctness</b>	930 feet from Peak 7240
<b>Prominence</b>	3060 feet from Bridgnorth Peak
<b>USGS Maps</b>	1:63,360: McCarthy (A-7) and 1:25,000: McCarthy A-7 SE
<b>First Recorded Ascent</b>	This peak might be unclimbed.
<b>Access Point</b>	Bremner Landing Strip



**West aspect of Adair Peak (left) and Peak 7240 (right). Photo by Danny Kost**

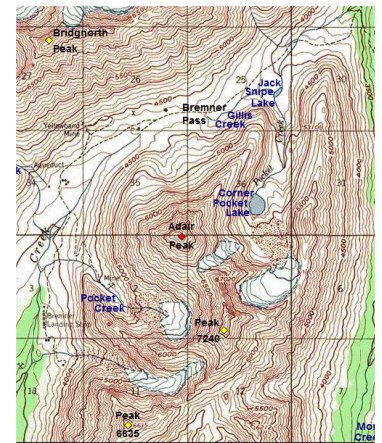
**A**dair Peak is the highest peak in the Monahan Creek drainage and is located about a half mile north-northwest of the Sheriff Mine in the Bremner Historic Mining District in Wrangell-Saint Elias National Park.

The Sheriff Prospect was located at an elevation of about 6200 feet on the northwest aspect of Peak 7240 by Charles A. Nelson in 1936. It was developed into a gold mine by Asa Columbus Baldwin in 1938 and by 1940 it was the only lode mine in operation in the Copper River region. Baldwin was an engineer who had worked from 1909 to 1913 on the survey of the international boundary between Alaska and the Yukon Territory along the 141st meridian, during which he made the earliest recorded ascents of 23 Alaska peaks. The mine was temporarily shut down in 1941. The mine's fate was sealed when Baldwin died on September 18, 1942, while seeking funding to re-open it.

Bivouac.com unofficially named Adair Peak after Fort Adair, a stockade established in what is now a northern part of Knoxville, Tennessee. The fort was named after Captain John Adair, a native of Ireland, who constructed it in 1791.

I don't know of any documented ascents of Adair Peak; yours could be the first.

The information for this column came from Robert G. Eppinger's, Paul H. Briggs', Danny Rosenkrans', and Vanessa Ballestrazze's USGS Professional Paper 1619 titled "Environmental Geotechnical Studies of Selected Mineral Deposits in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, Alaska;" from Paul J. White's article titled "Heads, Tails, and Decisions In-Between: The Archaeology of Mining Wastes," which appeared on pages 47 through 66 of *Industrial Archeology*, Volume 29, Number 2, published in 2003; from Becky M. Saleeby's *The Quest for Gold*; from bivouac.com (<https://bivouac.com//MtnPg.asp?MtnId=36049>); from White's *Cultural Landscape Report: Bremner Historic District, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, Alaska*; from J.C. "Jim" Tumblin's "Fountain Citians who Made a Difference," available at <http://www.fountaincitytnhistory.info/People2-Adair.htm>; from "Hike 22: Bremner Base Camp" in Greg Fensterman's *Hiking Alaska's Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve: From Day Hikes to Backcountry Treks*; from "Bremner Mine" in Danny Kost's *Hiking in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park*; and from my correspondence with Saleeby, Kost, and Colleen Metzger. 📌



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*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 19th of the month to appear in the next 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.

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**Northwest aspect of Adair Peak (left) with Peak 7240 (center) peeking out from behind the southwest slope. Photo by Colleen Metzger.**

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