

# the SCREE

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

May 2021

Volume 64, Number 6



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Fuller Lakes, Kenai Peninsula

Peak of the Month: Peak 3051, Keating Range

"Strength doesn't come from what you do. It comes from overcoming the things you once thought you couldn't."

— Rikki Rogers

**MONTHLY MEETINGS—Summer break until September.**

**Friday June 18th, Any Time - MCA Summer Solstice Flattop Social**

# 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."**

*This issue brought to you by: Editor—Gerrit Verbeek assisted by Dawn Munroe*

## Cover Photo

Zack Siemsen skiing Old Snowy's south gully. Black Cap in the background.

Photo by Shane Ohms

**MONTHLY MEETINGS**—Summer break until September.

## May General Meeting

The May MCA General Meeting was canceled after the Scree editing deadline. Apologies for any confusion.

Friday June 18th, Any Time - MCA Summer Solstice Flattop Social  
This annual tradition is an informal meet-up on the summit of Flattop Mountain with other MCA members. Hike at your own pace, show up at your own time, and please keep COVID in mind and hike at your own risk. Hope to see you there for a beverage! General meetings will resume in September

**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 11th 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. Send high resolution file photos separately, including captions for each photo. 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 don't forget to submit photo captions.

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## Trips

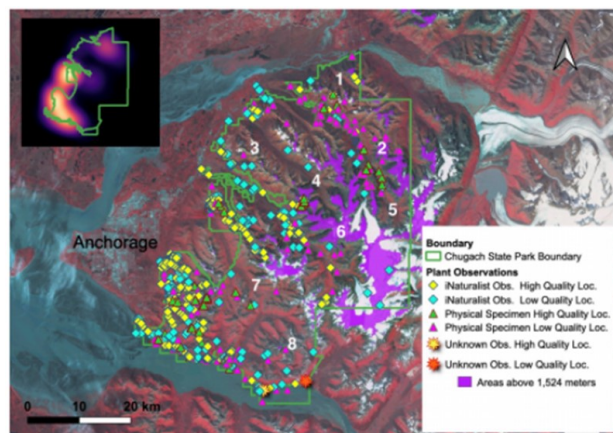
**July 16—24th:** MCA Summer Mountaineering School – The Bomber Traverse. Hiking, climbing, and glacier travel in the Talkeetna Mountains. Learn: Snow travel, ice tool use, ice climbing, glacier travel, navigation, route finding, rappelling, rock climbing, fun, exploration, leadership skills and confidence building. Basic Mountaineering instruction for accomplished backpackers. No fee for this training. Trip participants share group expenses. Trip Leader: Greg Bragiel, [unknownhiker@alaska.net](mailto:unknownhiker@alaska.net), 907-350-5146. **Assistant instructors needed, please contact Greg Bragiel. Critical need for a volunteer on July 23 to instruct rappelling and rock climbing.**



## Calling All Botanists

On behalf of the Alaska Native Plant Society, Aaron Wells asks: Are there any botanist mountaineers out there? If so, the AK Native Plant Society needs your help to record plant observations in remote areas of Chugach State Park. Check out the Flora of Chugach State Park progress report for more details, including a map of data gaps that we are looking to fill. [https://aknps.org/flora\\_of\\_csp\\_2020report](https://aknps.org/flora_of_csp_2020report)

Current data gaps specifically identified by the authors are Pioneer Peak and Goat Creek; the Bold Peak area; Little Peters Creek, Meadow Creek, and the Mount Magnificent area; Peters Creek; the Eklutna watershed; all areas above 5000 ft elevation; the Ship Creek watershed; and Bird Peak and the southeast corner of the Chugach State Park near Girdwood.



**Check Facebook for last-minute trips and activities. Or, schedule one that you want to organize.**

Online? Click me!





## Announcements

### Proposed Changes to MCA Membership

#### Categories and Dues

**Voting on this will take place at the MCA General Meeting in September.**

At the MCA board meeting on February 21, 2021, the Board voted to endorse the following changes to the MCA By-Laws regarding membership categories and fees. The next steps are to print the proposals in the Scree for the membership's consideration, and then to have a vote at a subsequent general membership meeting.

The proposals would, if adopted, take effect with the 2022 membership year.

The proposed changes in MCA annual membership categories and dues are:

**(new) Basic ("Dirtbag") Membership: \$20.00**

- (open to full-time students, persons under 20 years of age, active-duty military, and persons who believe that they cannot afford Regular individual MCA membership)

**(changed) Regular Individual Membership: \$30.00** (increase of \$10.00 over current individual membership dues)

**(changed) Family Membership: \$40.00** (increase of \$10.00 over current family membership dues)

**(new) MCA Life Membership: \$60.00** one-time payment for a MCA Life Membership.

- Qualifications for MCA Life Membership:
  - a. 30 or more years of substantially continuous membership in MCA
  - b. Payment of one-time Life Member fee of \$60.00
  - c. Review: MCA Board to review each Life Member application before approving it, including review of MCA membership data, to the extent it is available.

Hard-copy monthly *Scree* newsletters for each of the four membership categories above is at an additional yearly fee of \$45.00, at the member's option.

**(unchanged) Honorary MCA Lifetime Membership:** No annual fee

This category remains unchanged. It is to be awarded, after nomination by the MCA Honors and Awards Committee, at the discretion of the MCA Board, based on existing criteria of outstanding service to MCA and/or to Alaska mountaineering. The Honorary MCA Membership Award comes with a Certificate, a lifetime membership in MCA, and a complimentary lifetime subscription to the hard-copy monthly *Scree*.

### Huts Closed for Maintenance

The Mint hut will be closed for maintenance July 16-18. The Bomber hut will be closed July 19-21.

If you are traveling these areas, bring a tent and plan to camp outside

-Greg Bragiel, MCA Huts Committee

### Hut Volunteers Needed

The MCA has received a generous grant from the Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation, funding the renovation of Bomber Hut. A foyer will be added, as well as improvements to the weather and animal resistance of the structure.

Volunteers are needed to assist the construction team on site. Dates tentatively planned for the first week of September. An individual with carpentry or sheet metal experience would be highly valued, and could possibly be flown to the site. Another 3-4 laborers are needed, and would need to hike to the work site. Volunteers do not need to commit to the full week. As the hut will be under construction, the work crew will need to shelter in tents. We are hoping to have the work team roster finalized by July 1.

If you would like to help but can't make it to the Bomber Hut, we will have some work parties beforehand to pre-assemble lumber and paint.

If interested, inquire with Stan Olsen at [stan1olsen@yahoo.com](mailto:stan1olsen@yahoo.com) and provide a description of your experience and telephone number.

Thank you,

Bomber Renovation Team

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

## Summer Business

The days are getting longer, the snow is melting, and backcountry traffic at the hut systems is going to start increasing soon. Please do your part to keep the huts clean, and dispose of human waste properly. Toilet systems vary from hut to hut. The Eklutna Traverse huts use human waste barrels. Use the 5 gallon bucket in each hut, lined with a trash compactor bag and when you leave, place the tied bag into an onsite human waste barrel outside of the hut. 'Wag bags' are for packing out NOT placing into onsite human waste barrels.

Instructions for the Mint Hut toilet are printed below. Enjoy the huts this summer!

THE MINT outhouse sees significant use by less experienced users. Misuse results in increased expense for the club, and a less sanitary and enjoyable outhouse experience for all users. In part of an effort to reduce misuse, the board and huts committee have been working to improve signage. To educate users in style, local artist (and club member) Sarah Glaser created this sign (which has been modified to fit Scree's format). Installation should be accomplished before the snow falls.  
~JONATHAN STRONG

EVERYTHING YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT  
**MINT HUT'S  
USER-MAINTAINED OUTHOUSE**



**ONLY FOR POOP**  
NOT TRASH, NOT FOOD. IT COSTS \$1,300 TO HELICOPTER A BARREL OUT. WE CAN ONLY FLY OUT HUMAN WASTE. (NO PEE!)



**BURN TOILET PAPER**  
(AND ONLY TOILET PAPER) IN THE METAL CAN. SCATTER ASHES BEHIND OUTHOUSE (AFTER FLAMES ARE OUT).



**PEE OUTSIDE**  
URINE DIVERTER IS NOT PERFECT.

**WHEN TO CHANGE A BARREL:**



CHANGE WHEN FILLED TO 3-6" FROM TOP

USE GLOVES & GLASSES (IN THE MUD ROOM)



**WHEN TO CHANGE A BARREL:**

**NOT FULL** → **CHANGE NOW** → **TOO FULL!**

CHANGE WHEN FILLED TO 3-6" FROM TOP

**SECURE CHAMBER DOORS PROPERLY, WITHOUT GAPS!**  
IF THERE ARE GAPS, RAINWATER WILL GET INTO BARRELS.



**IF ONE BARREL IS EMPTY:**  
DISCONNECT DIVERTER HOSE. SWITCH SEAT TO EMPTY BARREL SIDE, & RECONNECT HOSE.

**IF BOTH BARRELS ARE FULL:**  
REMOVE BOTH FULL BARRELS

PLACE FULL BARRELS TO RIGHT FRONT SIDE OF OUTHOUSE, MIDDLE OF MEADOW ABOUT 60' BEHIND HUT

PUT ON LIDS (MATCH LID COLOR WITH BARREL FOR CORRECT SIZE) AND TIGHTEN

IF THE HOLDING CHAMBER (INSIDE OR OUTSIDE THE OUTHOUSE) NEEDS CLEANING, PLEASE CLEAN IT! ALL HUT USERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL MAINTENANCE.

ILLUSTRATED WITH CARE AND WISHES FOR HAPPY POOPING BY SARAH K. GLASER

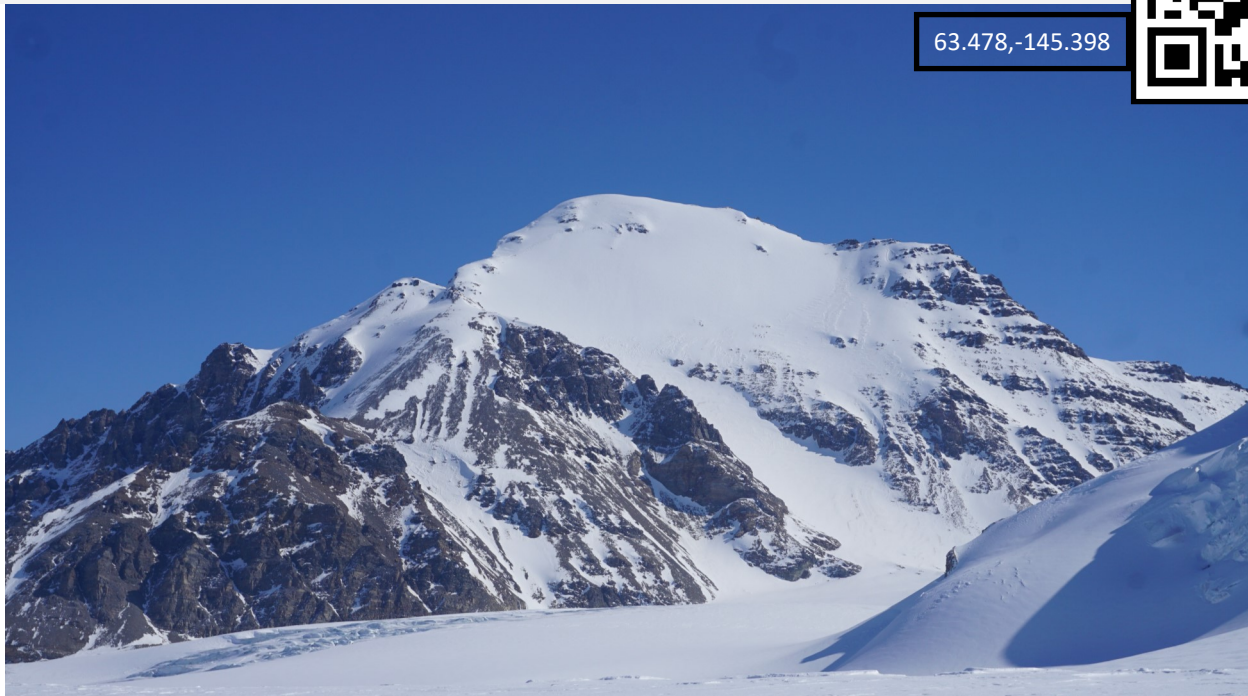


## Old Snowy (9750 feet) and the 8750s, Delta Range

Text by Shane Ohms



63.478,-145.398



*Old Snowy's south face seen from camp.*

*Photo by Shane Ohms*

Many more photos (including some referenced in this text) can be found online at <https://fromrockstorivers.com/2021/04/23/old-snowy-and-the-8750s/>.

Old Snowy was also the peak of the month in the January 2020 *Scree*. More information on some of Old Snowy's other routes can be found there.

The weather forecast was spelling out a bunch of bluebird days in the Delta Range. As Fairbanks mountaineers know all too well, this basically never happens. So Zack Siemsen and I took a Monday and Friday off work to capitalize on it. Strangely enough, the weather forecast didn't deteriorate and we were even blessed with a strong aurora show happening over 9600-foot Old Snowy on the second night.

### Friday, April 16th 2021

On Thursday after work, Zack and I met at the Castner Glacier Trailhead. We saw a little aurora that night and I'd heard some buzz about the aurora maybe being good, so we decided to pack a tripod. In the morning, we discovered a new car at the trailhead, along with a pair of skin tracks (someone had come for an even earlier start). We naturally came to the Caster ice cave, which neither Zack or I had ever been to. I was surprised by how super awesome it is. I guess I figured that it was an overrated attraction as a

result of being popularized, but it actually is super fun. I felt like a kid as I made echoes.

Around 10 a.m., the day started to crank up the heat. When traveling up the Castner Glacier you want to be on the right hand side (east side) for efficient and easy travel. At about 2 miles into the trip, there is a prominent 'lake ridge,' an unmistakable ridge with a lake on the left. You want to get on this ridge because it puts you on a moraine course with minimal wasted elevation gains for the rest of the way. Past this lake ridge, the next 5 miles are boring, the views don't change, and it feels like forever. It is like this on the way back too, so my recommendation is just to embrace the



*Zack Seimsen in the Castner Glacier ice cave.*

*Photo by Shane Ohms*

Castner slog. This was my 5th trip doing the Castner slog and while it doesn't get any better with time, you do grow more indifferent to how monotonous it is. But like all things good and bad; it came to pass, and we reached the intersection of the White Princess Branch, M'Ladies Branch, and Silvertip Branch.

From the intersection, you have lots of choices. The skiers whose tracks we'd been following split and went up the M'Ladies Branch, presumably en route for White Princess via the south ridge. We would be going up the White Princess Branch, en route for the O'Brien Icefall and peaks beyond! But as far as Friday was concerned, we called it a night before clambering up over the icefall. This was a good choice because we were pretty wiped from the 10 mile day with 40 pound packs and the pass, as we'd come to learn in the morning, is definitely better done while fresh versus at the end of a long day. We camped in almost the same spot I'd camped in May 2020 for an ascent of White Princess.

#### Saturday, April 17th 2021

Some things were consistent on this trip. We consistently woke up at 8 a.m. (because that is when sunlight would hit the tent and make us instantly start sweating in our sleeping bags), it consistently got "base layers" hot at 10 a.m., and the weather was consistently bluebird. I didn't see a cloud the entire 4 days (did I mention we are in the Delta Range?!?). Anyways, we were on our way up the O'Brien Icefall at 10 a.m. This was our first steep section of the trip and with all the warm weather, we were concerned about avalanches when planning this trip. However, in person, the snow was super stable and ideal for cramponing. The upper half of the O'Brien Icefall is actually pretty steep to get up, or maybe it just felt that way due to our ~50 pound packs now that skis had to be strapped to them. At the top of the icefall we were baking, so we took a good long break in the shady corner before skiing down and establishing our base camp for the next two nights.

After making camp, we went for the main objective of the trip: Old



*Zack Siemsen on the Castner slog.*

*Photo by Shane Ohms*

donned crampons to cut back onto course.

Once at the saddle, we were poised with a tough decision. It was pretty late in the day, around 7 p.m. Daylight wasn't an issue for us; camp was already set up and we could follow our tracks back in the dark. So... we could either ski down the iconic 1500' Old Snowy gully in perfect corn conditions, or we could spend 2 hours round tripping the summit, and return to an iced up gully that we'd have to strap our skis to our backs for and downclimb. On this day, we chose to be skiers. But first, we made a short climb to the bump

east of the saddle to get a good view. And what a view it was!



*Zack Siemsen skiing Old Snowy's south gully. Black Cap in the background.*

*Photo by Shane Ohms*

The ski down was great, it was still corny, but just starting to re-harden. Wow; 1500' is a lot to descend all at once. We took lots of little breaks. Back at camp, we bubbled with afterstroke and radiated sunburn. I would have to wear gloves for the rest of the trip and the bottom of my nose was especially displeased. Between intermittent sleeps I'd check out the door for the aurora, and around 1 a.m. it came full force.

This ranks in my top 30% of experiences in terms of aurora strength, but in terms of location this was the most remote, desolate, and exciting location I've ever photographed the northern lights. Bringing the tripod was a good call.

#### Sunday, April 18th 2021

In the morning, we got ready for our secondary objectives: some of the 8750ers across the way. So from our previous day's excursion we'd plotted a route through the crevasse fields to the pass between Middle and North 8750. Today, we set forth for that pass. It was windy today, which was welcomed since the sun was oh so hot



and it kept my hands (now confined to gloves) from sweating. At the pass, I was taken aback by how far and how abruptly the valley floor sunk from the mountain. Crumbling glaciers held on like flow-ers resisting wilt. For Middle 8750, Zack and I switched to crampons and went up the north ridge. We roped up after skirting the one and only gendarme early on. In the middle section of the climb we found and jumped one crevasse. The upper section was just snow on rocks. The top was flat and rocky, so we unroped and walked in circles gawking at everything twice, and then a third time just for good measure. This trip had so much good fortune!

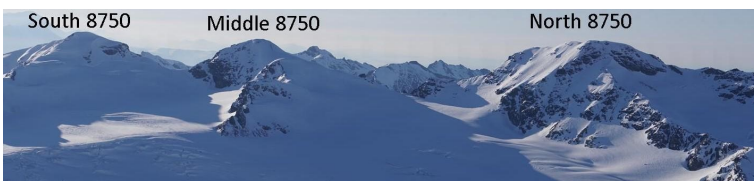
Upon returning home, I ran these peaks by Alaska's unofficial mountaineering historian Steve Gruhn and learned that South and Middle 8750s first reported ascents were by Tom Kensler and Dan Osborne back in 1969. Their party had started with the southern peak and traversed to the middle one. They intended to also climb the northern peak of 8750', but upon reaching the saddle (the same saddle Zack and I had left our skis at) their party encountered strong winds where the rocks make a V-gap creating a wind funnel and they decided to turn around. Middle 8750 has also been referred to as Peak A-120 in Vin Hoeman's unpublished manuscript on Alaska's mountains.

North 8750 didn't have a recorded ascent... until this trip. After taking our fill of photos, Zack and I reversed our footsteps and went back to our skis at the saddle. Zack wasn't feeling up for North 8750, but for me it wasn't an option: I couldn't be this close to a point over 500 feet of prominence and not give it an attempt! So an attempt I gave it via the south face. The snow was a bit saturated, but stable and (with the exception of some snow balling up under the crampons) and great for cramponing. Not wanting to keep Zack waiting too long, I worked at it pretty fast and round tripped the summit in under 2 hours. The only better view from this peak was the vantage point on Double Exposure (9350 feet) to the north. After regrouping with Zack, we retraced our tracks to base camp.

## Monday, April 19th 2021

I'd be lying if I said I wasn't somewhat anxious about downclimbing the O'Brien Icefall. After all, it was a steep one to come up with heavy packs, and also; we hadn't seen it in two days - what if the avalanche shed cycle had begun? Unlikely, but what if? We determined that we didn't want to be climbing on it as early in the morning as we had the first time; we wanted to get to the top at noon so the snow would be softer. On the way in we had also noted a possibility of coming down in some more 'navigatey,' but less steep, series of rock outcroppings. So after packing up camp we got to the pass and surveyed the alternative. It looked like a go. And the snow was a good softness too. Halfway down we put on our skis and finished the way down.

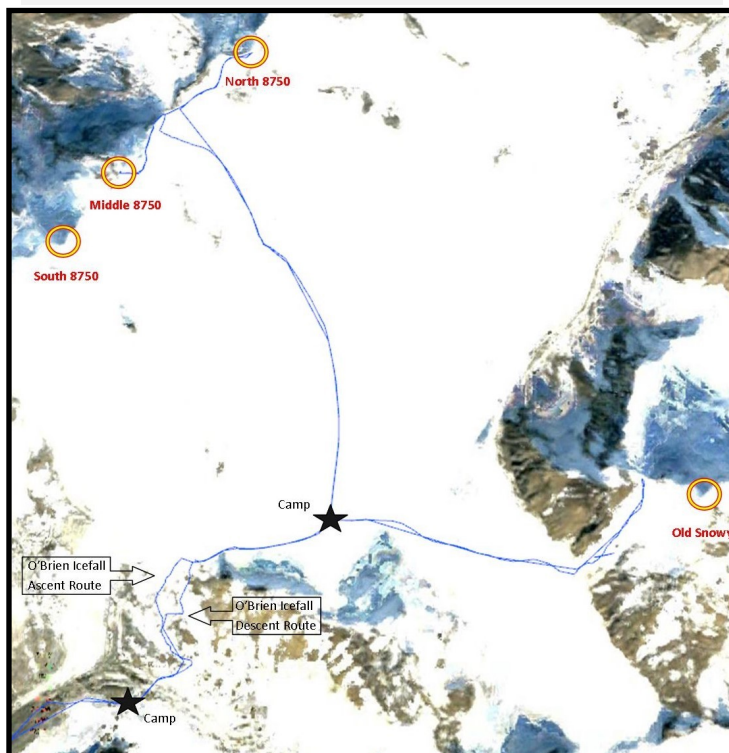
And so, we had the return slog left to do and it was hot, sooooo hot. Our friends from over on the M'Ladies Branch must've come back on Sunday judging by their melted return tracks. For us, the snow was one day closer to going isothermal. It hadn't yet, but a few patches around alders reminded me of some of my May-month miseries slogging out the Castner Glacier, sinking with two feet of saturated slush on top of your skis every step. This exit is my favorite Castner exit to date because it was faster than all the others.



*The 8750s seen from the bump.  
Photo by Zack Siemsen*



*Shane Ohms atop O'Brien Icefall with White Princess behind him.  
Photo by Zack Siemsen*



## Scandinavian Peaks, Central Chugach Mountains

Text and photos by Luke Konarzewski

61.592,-147.475



*Scandinavian Peaks Hut at dusk.*

10 a.m., August 16th, 2020. After four days of waiting, the clouds and snow finally departed, leaving blue skies and a glimpse of our goals. Facing the harsh reality of our situation, we packed our bags and headed down to the landing strip with our tails between our legs. Our flight out was scheduled for later that afternoon, and as much as we wanted to stay, jobs and responsibilities demanded our return to civilization.

As the Scandinavian Peaks Hut and Matanuska Glacier disappeared from view under clear skies, I couldn't help being overcome by a profound sense of defeat. It was as if the mountains were laughing right in our faces. I was pissed. But also inspired. I left a few dehydrated meals, bars, pancake mix, a nice nonstick pan to make them in, and vowed I'd be back.

April 20th, 2021. Go time. Barreling down the Glenn Highway from Anchorage to Mike Meekin's airstrip provided time to reflect. I thought about the near crevasse fall my friend took while we wandered around in a whiteout in August. I thought about the snowstorm that didn't let up and how thankful I was for the hut. Mostly I thought about the lasting impression the mountains left

on me that final day when the weather cleared. I told myself this trip would be different. The weather forecast looked perfect, and we'd have nearly twice as long to get something done.

Packing the last of my things into Meekin's Super Cub, I was the first of my two other partners to be flown to the landing strip 18 miles up the Matanuska Glacier. The solitude I experience while watching the plane leave over the horizon to retrieve the rest of the crew never gets old. 45 minutes or so to simply revel in your surroundings. It's extraordinary to be in such a wild place all alone. I'll always vie to be the first one in and last one out.

After humping back-breaking loads of 10 days worth of food and gear up the 1,000 feet from the landing strip to the hut, we enjoyed margaritas under completely clear skies. The clouds had cleared earlier that afternoon; little did we know, it would stay clear for the duration of our trip.

One of my favorite things to do upon opening the door to a MCA hut is to check the logbook. When I flipped through the pages, I was shocked to find that the last entry was from August 12-16th. My last trip to the Scandinavian Peaks. Was I the last person to stay here? Probably not, but I like to think the hut was exactly the same as we left it 8 months ago. Now that's special.

Our first objective of the trip was to scope and climb Norway Peak (8960 feet) via the south fork of the Scandinavian Glacier. Leaving at around 9 a.m., we made quick progress while the snow was hard. At around 7500 feet we ran into a small icefall, which was definitely the crux of the day. Crossing stable snow bridges, we picked our way through until we were deposited onto more mellow terrain at 8500 feet. From here it was an easy scramble to the summit via the south ridge. The wind was blowing hard, but it was cold and clear, providing incredible views from Denali to the Wrangell Mountains, and of course the snowy giants of the Chugach. From 9000 feet we skied unroped, following our tracks across snow bridges all the way back to the hut.

After a nice rest day lounging around the hut, it was time for the main objective: the queen, the crown jewel, Sweden Peak (9030 feet). One of the main reasons I love the Scandinavian Peaks area so much is the lack of beta. The main source of information is whatever you can find in the various logbook entries and photocopied papers in the hut. The best piece of beta was an old photocopied *Scree* article from Cory Hinds in 1997. Here, Cory writes



about climbing the east ridge and possibly making the first ascent of the peak.

Armed with our scraps of beta, we embarked on our journey, following our skin track up the south fork of the Scandinavian Glacier to the base of the east ridge of Sweden Peak. It's tough to know what you're in for until you're in it. Lots of ups and downs and traverses below gendarmes on terrible rock interspersed with steep snow sections brought us to a small north-facing ramp which appeared to be the key to the top. Finally I was able to break out the ice tools and cruise up a pitch of ice and some mixed. Slings a frozen boulder backed up by a half sunk screw, I brought my partner up. This anchor would later be a key element to our descent. We scrambled the rest of the exposed ridge to the summit.

This was perhaps the most rewarding climb I've ever done. It was a long time coming and lived up to the hype. Not to mention the views: Mount Thor, Mount Valhalla, and of course Mount Marcus Baker. There's a quote in a short writeup in "Climbing Alaska" by Colby Coombs which states the views on a clear day from the summit of a Scandinavian Peak provides a lifetime of inspiring options for climbers. Couldn't have been happier to see it for myself.

More "rest days" skiing around the hut before I got an inReach message from Mr. Mike Meekin. We'd have one more day before he'd have to come pick us up a couple of days early. The weather window of our dreams was coming to an end. Hell, seven days of clear skies and very little wind, we couldn't complain. There was one more peak on my mind, so we went to bed early and saddled up for one more, Iceland Peak (8870 feet).

We approached Iceland Peak from a slightly different angle than the other Scandinavian Peaks. This required skiing from the hut to the landing strip, then skinning up



the Nordic Glacier to its head at Iceland Pass (8050 feet) between Iceland and Latvia peaks. From here it was a rather sketchy scramble to the top, kicking steps in the shaded snow since we decided to leave the crampons in the hut. Not a smart decision, but it sure made an easy climb more interesting. From here, we enjoyed our best views of the upper Matanuska Glacier and Mount Marcus Baker. Once again at the head of the Nordic Glacier, we geared up for the best skiing of the trip: 4,500 blissful feet of uninterrupted glacier skiing from the pass to the landing strip. An extremely isothermic skin back up to the hut gave us a run for our sanity. Everything had been relatively cruiser up until that point, so of course we needed a little suffering on our last day.

Essentially collapsing into the hut, we drank the last of our whiskey and talked about how fortunate we had been for the last week. We tapped into an extremely inhospitable place under the best conditions we could have hoped for. Eight months I waited and got rewarded in the best way possible. Sharing this place with the best of friends and having successes like we did was unmatched in any of our lives. Now we move onto the next idea, the next captivating challenge. Thankfully, in Alaska, that's not hard to do.

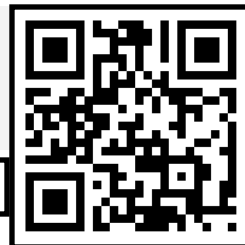
*Top: On Sweden Peak's varied East Ridge.*

*Middle: Classic Chugach choss on the east ridge of Sweden Peak. You can see the icy north facing ramp we used to gain the summit ridge.*

*Bottom: Summit of Norway Peak. Sweden Peak behind.*

# The Caboose (5010 feet) and El Tercero (5450 feet), Kenai Mountains

Text and photos by Brendan Lee



60.586,-149.362

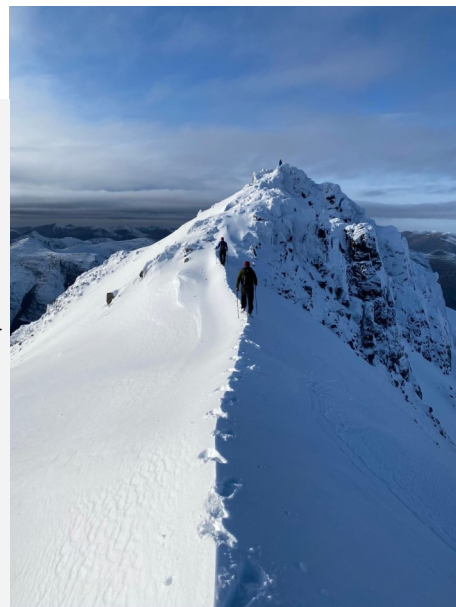


*Final steps to the summit along the southeast ridge of El Tercero.*

On the 21st of October, Dan Glatz, Laron Thomas, Joe Nyholm and I capitalized on the minimal brush and set our sights on the Kenai Mountain peaks of “The Caboose” and “El Tercero” via Johnson Pass Trail. First climbed by the Bludworth brothers in 1969, these peaks are all part of a greater railroad theme as highlighted in the Scree’s October 2000, February 2001 and March 2008 issues. El Tercero was of particular interest as it has 3,900ft+ of clean prominence. On frozen ground, we started near Moose Pass and biked up the Johnson Pass Trail. We ditched our bikes 5.5 miles into the ride. We hiked through hemlock, frozen bogs, zones of deadfall, leafless devil’s club and some alder until we were above brush line on the southeast face of The Caboose. Joe and Laron pressed westwards for Point 5010, Dan and I went straight for the ridgeline. The frozen ground transitioned to snow around 3500 feet. From the ridgeline, Dan and I watched Laron and Joe make the most of a shallow and unconsolidated snow pack, piecing together a very impressive traverse off the north-east summit block of Point 5010, connecting with us. At times, I couldn’t watch, and I told Dan to notify me when their traverse was over. Eventually we all reconvened on the ridge and pressed onward to The Caboose, where I was unable to locate a register in the snow. From the summit of The Caboose, we followed the scenic ridge to El Tercero. We traversed along the ridgeline north-east, then north. There’s a disheartening feeling when you drop over a thousand feet in altitude, and know that you’ll be slogging back up that same slope later on the return trip. We arrived on

*Right: Final steps to the summit along the southeast ridge of El Tercero.*

*Bottom: Heading for The Caboose with Point 5010 in the background. For what it’s worth: the Theodolite App angle tool measured Point 5010 as .01 degrees lower than The Caboose (Peak 5050).*



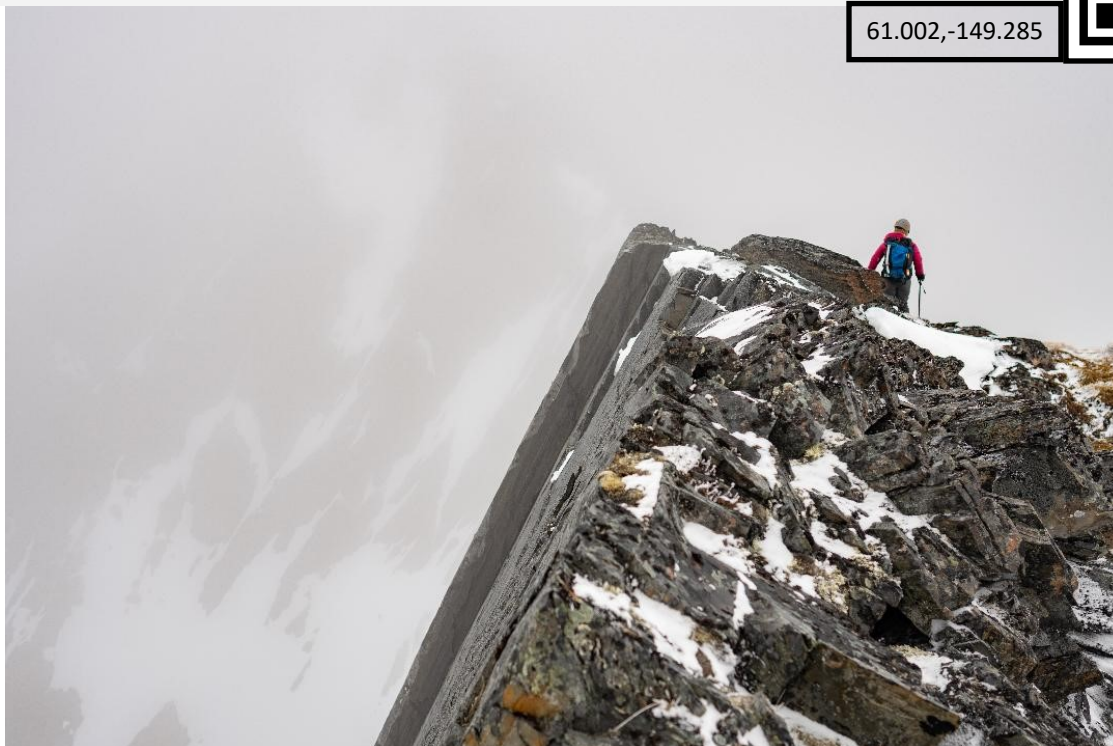


## Bird Peak (5505 feet), Western Chugach Mountains

Text and photos by Andrew Holman

May 9, 2021

61.002,-149.285



*Abbey Collins making her way up the ridge towards the summit.*

Thanks to some fresh beta from Kaleb Notte, Abbey Collins and I decided on Bird Peak for the weekend of May 9th.

While I wouldn't call this trip "fun," we were definitely glad we did it! We have previously done Nest Peak (5030 feet), but never ventured any further into "Bird Country."

The forecast looked lukewarm at best, but fun things never happen if you don't try, right? We reluctantly decided to hike in Saturday and camp, as we had heard so many things about this being a "big day" (correct). We got a late afternoon start because the days are long, perfect for sleeping in and having lunch at a brewery before hitting the trail.

The first few miles on the ATV trail were as straightforward as could be. Eventually we got to the sign that said we were leaving the ATV area. A squirrel then yelled at us continually while we snacked and hydrated.

We were only about 100 feet into the trail when we got off-route and found ourselves grunting over downed trees with overnight packs on. Neither of us remembered this from when we did Nest Peak last fall but...my memory for stuff like this is always rosier (probably the only reason I can tolerate mountain-craft as a "fun" hobby).

In a few minutes we were back on more familiar trail again. A few minutes later we left the trail and began our traverse, side-hilling towards the hanging valley. We ended up maintaining an elevation of roughly 1400 feet before steadily ascending to 2600 feet to drop down into the hanging valley. This decision was...OK. It wasn't a sufferfest, but it wasn't exactly great. There was definitely some bad snow and some alder-wrangling. The lack of any chlorophyll in any of the foliage made route-finding through it much easier...but there was still ample grunting and rubber-banding of branches.

Eventually we were at the "bump" at around 2600 feet and got our first look at the valley. There was a sizable amount of snow in there (as Kaleb had told me), but it was peppered with a decent amount of dry ground. It was hard to tell how flat the dry spots were from above. We briefly considered camping on the bump above the valley, but the winds picked up and made our minds for us (we'd soon learn it was also pretty damn windy in the valley!).

We made our way down into the valley and...the dry spots weren't that flat. We eventually found a localized "mound" formation in the valley that was dry and was easily the least-worst option for camping on flat ground. We set up camp, heated up dehydrat-

ed dinners (was it weird that we kind of...missed eating them?), and went to sleep listening to an audiobook.

The alarm woke us up at 5 a.m. and the view outside the tent was not inspiring. It was cloudy and drizzling. 6 a.m. came and it looked better for a few minutes. 6:15 came and...we knew what we had to do, even if it wasn't going to be a fun-in-the-sun day.

Rather than take the full ridge up Bird, we decided to go up-valley and then gain the ridge near "Point 4800"/"Point 4840" (I've heard it called both things, and on my map it isn't either of these elevations, anyone know where this name is documented?) [Ed. Note: The point is labeled as 4840 on the USGS Seward D-7 quads and other USGS maps labeled in feet, and as 1461 meters (4793 feet) on the 1984 USGS 1:25,000 map.] Anyway, we started ascending from the valley floor at roughly 60.9989°N, 149.3137°W.

It was mostly snow climbing on snow of marginal quality. Lower down it was very bad wallowing, so we climbed the rock bands. Eventually the rock bands ended and we were climbing a spine of snow (reminded me of the "hogsback" from my Mt. Hood climbing days!). It was straightforward ascending, but extremely bad visibility was a little anxiety-inducing. We were in and out of rolling whiteouts and there was so little contrast my camera couldn't auto-focus, ha! We kept taking the obvious gully up, and eventually were dumped out onto a flattish rock band. From there steep, firm snow climbing lead to the ridge proper. (we didn't put our crampons on for this, but we probably should have)

On the ridge, we aggressively side-hilled to avoid going up and over Point 48XX, a decision that didn't end up saving any time. Knife-hard, icy snow slopes peppered sloppy scree fields making



*Camp in the hanging valley.*

snow on it, so I noted it at 60.9981°N, 149.2958°W for a possible, hot-pizza-at-Moose's Tooth-preserving descent short-cut.

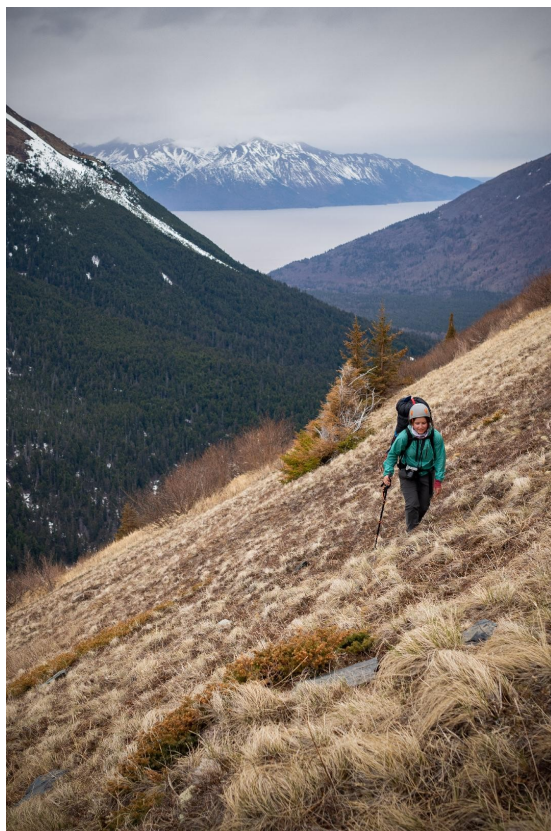
What we did next is hard to describe, but sticking to the ridge became difficult so we started side-hilling east towards the true

summit. Eventually we were on and off of really bad choss that was either dusted with half-melted powder or hardened by rime ice. I can see how this would be a fun scramble in the summer, but dodging icy gullies and scraping choss with crampons was not! Abbey found an "easy" icy ramp to the summit area (I thought it was kinda scary), and after front-pointing on some rime, we reached the snow-and-rime dome that is the Bird Peak summit...to absolutely zero views. Visibility was probably at 20-30 feet?

There was enough visibility for us to scout an easy snow ramp that would take us down from the summit. (Anything to avoid down-climbing the Abbey M0 variation!)

Long story short, the snow ramp was also extremely hard snow. It would've protected beautifully with even vertical pickets. We just kept our heads down

and slowly front-pointed down for what seemed like forever. Eventually, we got back down to the scree slopes, took the crampons off, and started side-hilling back to the ridge (west). We went directly to the descent line I had marked and...it still looked pretty good. I walked out over it and tested the snow. It was just



*Abbey side-hilling towards the hanging valley.*



too difficult to tell what the quality of the snow would be once we got out on it. I still had some mild anxiety from the summit downclimb and wasn't interested it going down a long slope with that level of firmness (especially with my crappy ultralight crampons, but that's for another time) We talked about it and, with some hesitancy, decided to go down the way we came up.

We didn't side-hill Peak 48XX this time, we stayed pretty high, and travel was much faster! We found where we had topped out on the ridge (60.9954°N, 149.3038°W), put our crampons on, and started down-climbing. The first small section was really steep, but eventually we were quickly plunge-stepping down the slopes. I decided to go left (south) down a different way than what we came up to make it a pure snow down-climb. Heavy, wet snow in this area made for perfect wet-cement, slow-and-steady glissade conditions.

We then trudged through chunky-soupy-snow back to our tent, and we quickly saturated our gaitered mountaineering boots.

We sheltered from the blistering winds in the tent and drank our final beers so we could carry them in our bellies instead of on our backs.

Getting back up to 2600 feet was irrationally punishing. Abbey suggested we try to stay really high for the traverse back and, despite it looking like very steep terrain in the Caltopo software's slope shading, this was the right call. Shockingly, we were never cliffed out and the alder wrangling was kept to a minimum. We saw what we thought were Dall sheep, but as we got close saw that they were mountain goats (way better). The hike out on ATV trail was uneventful, we were able to get hot pizza and cold beer in town because...that's why we climb, right?

Learnings: I'm glad we hiked in and camped. If we would have gone in really early Sunday morning and were greeted with whiteout weather...I'm not so sure we would've pushed on!

Rough times:

Trailhead to valley camp: 4 hrs

Camp to summit to camp: 8 hrs

Valley camp to trailhead: 3 hrs

See more photos and stories on Instagram at:

<https://www.instagram.com/aholphoto/>



*Abbey on the summit.*



*Working our way up the hanging valley to find our route up to the ridge*



*Point 48XX (note: Trond Jensen calls it 4800, Billy Finley calls it 4840, I can't find it listed on any maps or peakbagger...in caltopo it looks about 100 feet shorter than those numbers, at least).*

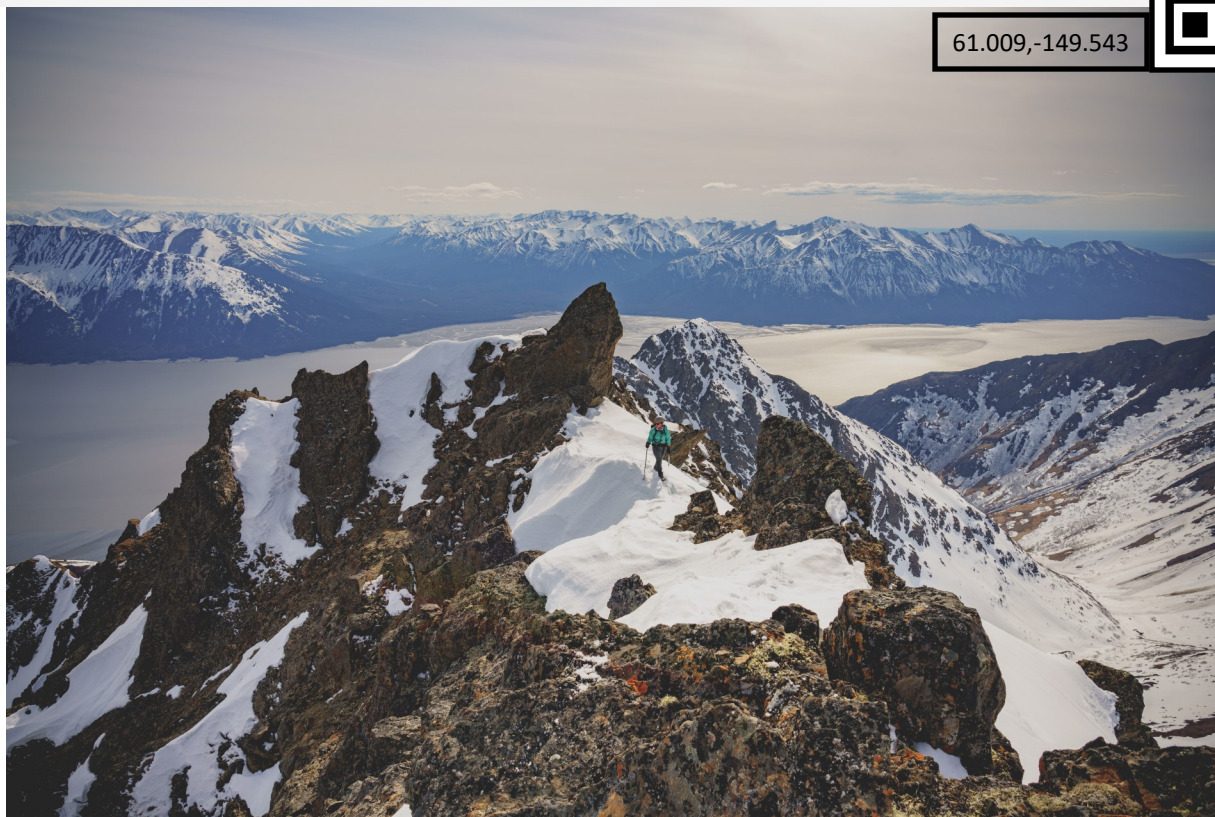
## Indianhouse Mountain (4350 feet), Western Chugach Mountains

Text and photos by Andrew Holman

May 1, 2021



61.009,-149.543



*Abbey walking the summit ridge to the true summit*

These were the best conditions I've ever experienced on Indianhouse Mountain!

I've been up twice. Once in late April, and once in early December. Abbey Collins hadn't been up yet, so we took a great weather day (and her birthday!) to see if we could get her a summit tick!

The trail was dry all the way to the traverse (a shocking amount of people were up there on Saturday, the other two times I've been up I didn't see a single soul). At the traverse, we avoided most of the snow by staying high (~3600 feet), but there were still some sections where we needed to use our ice axes. A few hundred feet lower, the traverse was just a non-technical slog, but you would have to cross numerous soggy snowfields (the post-holing isn't very bad though).

We went in high, and went out low. Low might have been a little faster but it was a lot more frustrating due to the soggy snowfields.

As far as the main couloir, the snow quality was decent. There was only mandatory snow climbing at the very beginning and

very end. For the middle section, we found the choss scrambling to be much more efficient. Our ice axes were helpful for the very final section that connects to the summit area, it's very steep there, with some icy sections. As for traction, I took flimsy aluminum crampons and they worked fine.



*Abbey approaching the main couloir.*



It took us just under 5 hours to reach the summit, including a handful of nice breaks.

There were great views from the summit, as always. This is the most 'Type I' time I've ever had on Indianhouse! The summit did get very windy though, which caused us to sip our summit birthday brews a little faster than we would've liked.

For the skiers: looks like skiing is over on this aspect of Indianhouse. If you are the type of human that wants to drop into Falls Creek drainage, there was still a TON of snow on that (west) side.

*Abbey about to top out in the final steep snow section of the main couloir.*



*Abbey heading back to our beer and snack spot after touching the true summit.*



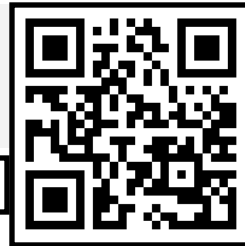
*Working our way back to the car after a fun day in the hills!*



## A Mini-Hike With Many Animals – Fuller Lakes, Kenai Peninsula

Text and photos by Wayne Todd

60.521,-150.061



The songs of varied thrushes punctuate the still morning as I hike up Fuller Lakes Trail on the Kenai Peninsula. I hear a few other birds also, including a woodpecker (I'm guessing a downy considering the volume of the pecking). The water flowing out from below the 'octopus tree' still intrigues me. This is my third recent hike here.

An annoyed and inquisitive squirrel chatters from a nearby branch.

A half mile from the lake, the mostly dry trail abruptly goes under a few feet of snow. With prior hiker imprints, I mostly stay on top. Most impressive, a few moose tracks even stay on top. That's firm snow! I'm surprised to see the lake still frozen, except for a small swath at the outlet. Motion there grabs my attention so I start filming, moving closer to a pair of Barrow's goldeneyes. After the tilted bridge, I'm still bird focused and just barely catch very close movement into the water. I just missed a beaver.

I settle on the bank and observe the goldeneyes, and the beaver that has a hole thirty yards out. After a while, the beaver suddenly starts swimming in circles, slapping and diving. That seems odd to me until I see a wolf walk on the lake, just on the other side of the beaver hole. Then a second wolf appears, this one collared. They are both very thin and one has a slight limp. They note me beyond the beaver and continue across the lake at a slow plod.

The beaver stops the slapping.

On the outward snow hike, I notice many of the moose post holes have blood on them. This was probably a rough year for moose, and possibly wolf. Back on dry trail again and renewed pace, a spruce grouse eyes me before roughly flying away (or is it 'ruffedly'? ). The varied thrush calls fill the air again as I continue down.



*Top: Ducks swimming in Fuller Lakes*

*Bottom: Wolves crossing the lake.*



*Beaver in Fuller Lakes*

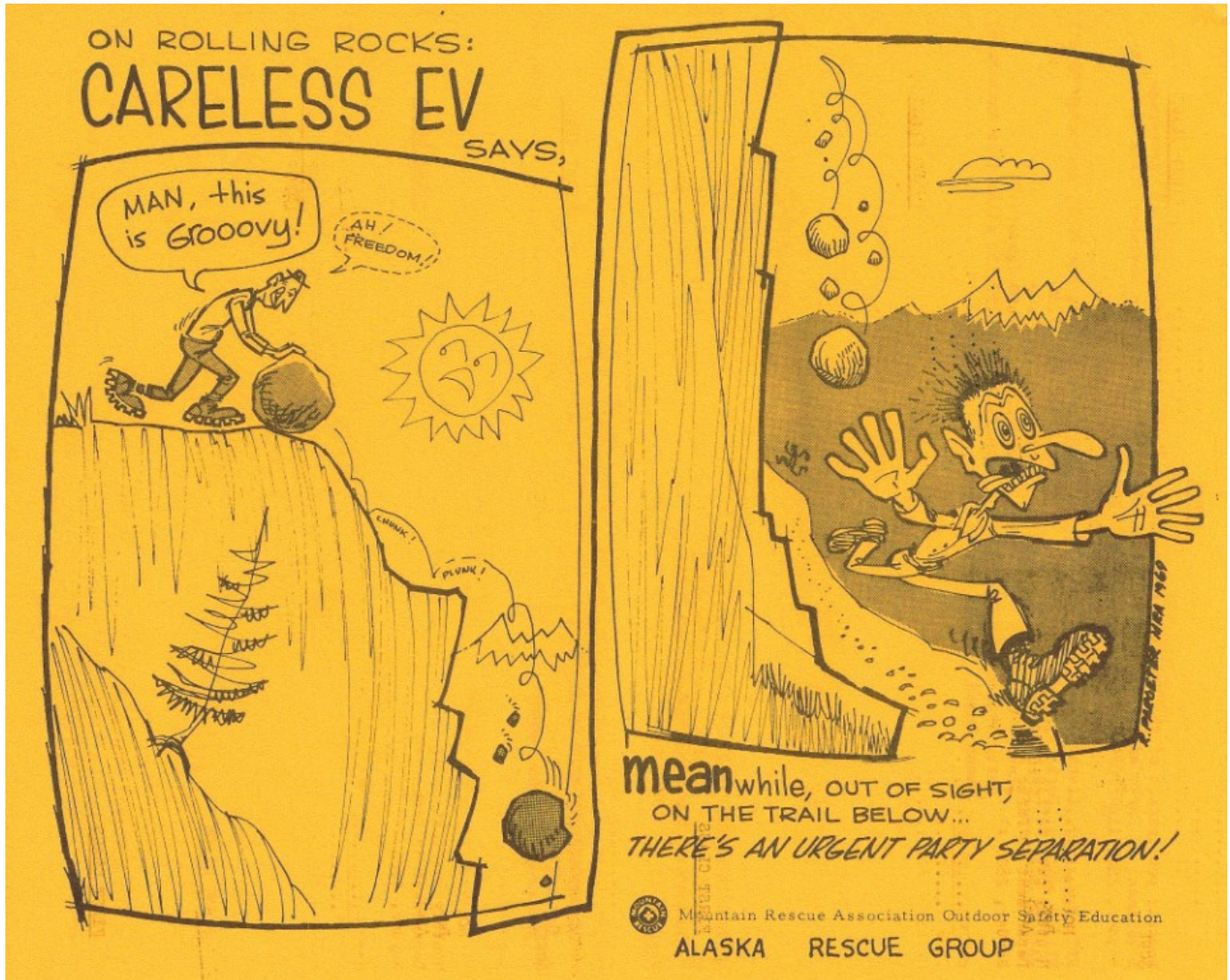




## The Return of Careless Ev(eryman)

The Mountaineering Club of Alaska was founded in 1958 to “to encourage mountain climbing interest, to instruct on climbing, encourage exploration and form mountain rescue teams.” (the Scree December 1958, quoting American Alpine News)

In 1971 the MCA-affiliated Alaska Rescue Group published a series of cartoons featuring Careless Ev, drawn by Dick Pargeter. Nearly fifty years later, human nature and natural hazards are still the same. So here are a few again, as they were printed on the Club’s signature goldenrod paper. Enjoy, and stay safe!



*Reprinted from the Scree, October 1971.*



## Peak of the Month: Peak 3051, Keating Range

Text by Steve Gruhn

**Mountain Range:** Etolin Island, Keating Range

**Borough:** City and Borough of Wrangell

**Drainages:** Mosman Inlet and Steamer Bay

**Latitude/Longitude:** 56° 8' 35" North, 132° 37' 11" West

**Elevation:** 3051 feet

**Adjacent Peaks:** Peak 820 in the Cooney Cove and Mosman Inlet drainages, Peak 1250 in the Kindergarten Bay and Mosman Inlet drainages, and Steamer Knoll (2115 feet)

**Distinctness:** 2711 feet from Peak 820

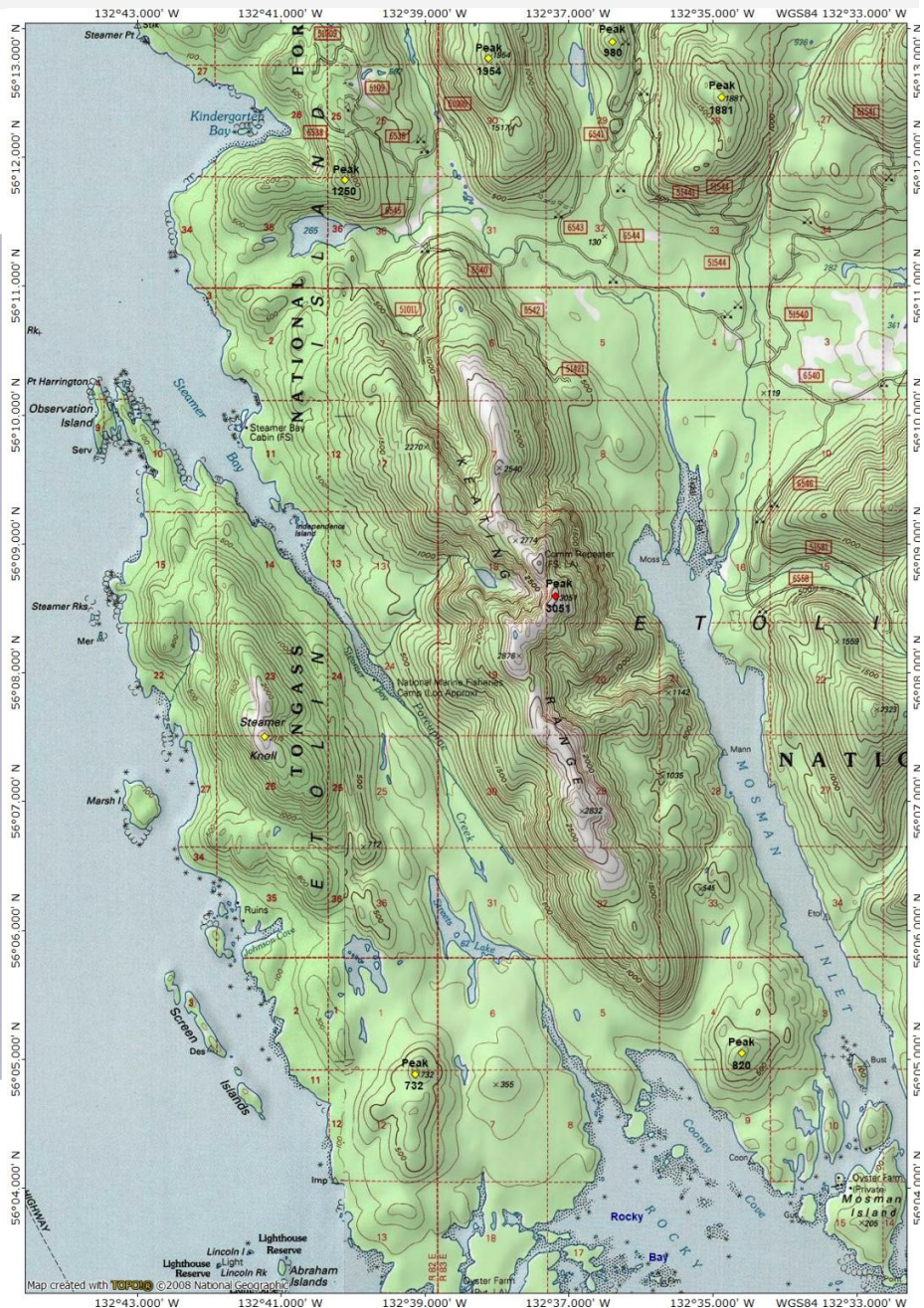
**Prominence:** 2871 feet from Alice Peak (3550 feet)

**USGS Maps:** 1:63,360: Petersburg (A-2); 1:25,000: Petersburg A-2 NW

**First Recorded Ascent:** 1921 by Arthur Francis "Bud" Buddington

**Route of First Recorded Ascent:** East aspect

**Access Point:** Head of Mosman Inlet



In 1921 as part of a USGS team, Bud Buddington conducted the first of five field seasons of geological investigations in southeastern Alaska. One of his first investigation sites was the large mountain in the Keating Range west of the head of Mosman Inlet. Buddington climbed this 3051-foot mountain from the east to investigate a large cirque on the northwest side of the peak that drained into Steamer Bay. It was a bit of a wonder that Buddington returned for the subsequent four field seasons; he recorded 87 rainy days during his 90-day field season in 1921.

Scree—June 2021

Buddington's photographs of Peak 3051, including some from the summit, are archived at the University of Alaska, Anchorage/Alaska Pacific University Consortium Library.

The information for this column came from Buddington's photographs, which are available in the Archives and Special Collections section at the UAA/APU Consortium Library and from Harold L. James' 1987 memoir of Buddington for the National Academy of Sciences.



## Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

April 28, 2021, at 6:30-8:00 p.m., conducted online via Zoom

### Roll Call

Mike Meyers (President) - Present  
Nathan Pooler (Vice-President) - Present  
Curtis Townsend (Secretary) - Present  
Katherine Cooper (Treasurer) - Present  
Tom Meacham (Director) - Present  
Heather Johnson (Director) - Present  
Andy Kubic (Director) - Absent  
Luke Konarzewski (Director) - Absent  
Branden Lee (Director) - Present  
Josh Pickle (Director) - Absent

**Scribe:** Curtis Townsend

### Committee Reports

#### President (Mike Meyers)

- The Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation has granted the MCA \$21,113 as of April 21, 2021
- Gerrit Verbeek is reviewing items in President's files to scan, preserve, or discard
- By-Laws are getting a review/refresh by Tom Meacham
- Tiered membership payments Board approved. After running in Scree it goes for member vote.

#### Vice President (Nathan Pooler)

- No presentation during the month of May.
- Heather Johnson offered to plan and organize a summer picnic activity.
- Nathan Pooler will organize Annual Flattop Summer Solstice June 2021.

#### Secretary (Curtis Townsend)

- BP energy center is closed through August 2021.

#### Treasurer (Katherine Cooper)

- Please let Katherine know if anyone has any issues with difficulties processing membership dues.
- The MSTPF Grant was approved for Bomber Hut work: \$21,113, in addition to the \$5k grant for Bomber Hut repairs that was received last summer.

#### Liability Committee (Tom Meacham)

- Nothing to report.

#### Awards Committee (Tom Meacham, Charlie Sink, Max Neale)

- Nothing to report.

#### the Scree (Gerrit Verbeek, Dawn Munroe)

- Nothing to report.

#### Trips Committee

- Greg Bragiel needs help for his summer mountaineering school June 16-24th.

#### Training Committee

- Gerrit Verbeek is recording a video version of trip leader training.

#### Huts Committee (Jonathan Rupp Strong, Greg Bragiel, Cory Hinds, Vicky Lytle)

- Bomber windows and foyer addition are now possible due to the MSTPF grant.
- Big thanks to Jonathan Strong for doing this grant for the MCA.
- Private donors interested in funding a new hut were told that a new hut is not currently feasible following the Huts Master Plan.

#### Mentorship (Lila Hobbs, Katherine Cooper)

- Nothing to report.

#### Communications Committee (Lila Hobbs)

- Money has been set aside for a new website - Heather reported that multiple people are working hard on creating the new website.

#### Calendar Committee (Vicky Ho, Lila Hobbs, Heather Johnson, Mike Meyers)

- Nothing to report.

### Date and Location of next Meeting

- General Meeting May 5th cancelled. Next General Meeting will be September 1st.
- Next Board Meeting on May 26, 2021 from 6:30-8:00 pm via Zoom.

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President Mike Meyers [president@mtnclubak.org](mailto:president@mtnclubak.org)  
Vice-President Nathan Pooler [vicepresident@mtnclubak.org](mailto:vicepresident@mtnclubak.org)  
Secretary Curtis Townsend [secretary@mtnclubak.org](mailto:secretary@mtnclubak.org)  
Treasurer Katherine Cooper [treasurer@mtnclubak.org](mailto:treasurer@mtnclubak.org)

Director 1 (term expires in 2021) Andy Kubic [andy.kubic@gmail.com](mailto:andy.kubic@gmail.com)  
Director 2 (term expires in 2021) Heather Johnson [hjohnson2211@gmail.com](mailto:hjohnson2211@gmail.com)  
Director 3 (term expires in 2021) Tom Meacham [tmeacham@pci.net](mailto:tmeacham@pci.net)  
Director 4 (term expires in 2022) Luke Konarzewski [lukekonzewski96@gmail.com](mailto:lukekonzewski96@gmail.com)  
Director 5 (term expires in 2022) Brendan Lee [brendanlee718@yahoo.com](mailto:brendanlee718@yahoo.com)  
Director 6 (term expires in 2022) Josh Pickle [joshuampickle@gmail.com](mailto:joshuampickle@gmail.com)

Annual membership dues: Single \$20, Family \$30

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address below. 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). Material should be submitted by the 11th 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.

Mailing list/database entry: Katherine Cooper — 209-253-8489 — [membership@mtnclubak.org](mailto:membership@mtnclubak.org)

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Vacant—[training@mtnclubak.org](mailto:training@mtnclubak.org)

Mentorship: Katherine Cooper and Lila Hobbs—[mentorship@mtnclubak.org](mailto:mentorship@mtnclubak.org)

Huts: Greg Bragiel—350-5146 or [huts@mtnclubak.org](mailto:huts@mtnclubak.org)

Calendar: Vicky Ho—512-470-8640 or [hovcky@gmail.com](mailto:hovcky@gmail.com)

Librarian: Gwen Higgins—[library@mtnclubak.org](mailto:library@mtnclubak.org)

*Scree* Editor: Gerrit Verbeek — [MCAScree@gmail.com](mailto:MCAScree@gmail.com) assisted by Dawn Munroe (350-5121 or [dawn.talbott@yahoo.com](mailto:dawn.talbott@yahoo.com))

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

Find MCAK listserv at <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/MCAK/info>.

*Abbey Collins traversing a stubborn section of icy snow on Indianhouse Mountain.  
Photo by Andrew Holman*

Mountaineering Club of Alaska  
Box 243561  
Anchorage, AK 99524-3561