



## Upcoming BCMC Social

### **Coast Mountain High Routes**

*October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025 at the Anza Club  
Presented by John Baldwin*

John will share photos and stories of the development of his new book Coast Mountain High Routes by John Baldwin. A guide to 46 summer high routes and alpine traverses in the Coast Mountains. These are the great skyline traverses – off-trail hikes through large remote mountainous regions, continuously in the alpine, and a bit like being on a summit for an entire trip. With elements of thru-hiking, backpacking and mountaineering, you carry your camp on your back, never retrace your steps, and travel over terrain that is always new.

The book describes routes varying from 3 days to 3 weeks and ranging from shorter trips in the Sea to Sky corridor to longer more remote trips in the high grasslands of the Chilcotin or above deep coastal inlets as far north as Bella Coola. All of the routes venture through wilderness regions.

Copies of Coast Mountain High Routes will be available for sale.

### **Bio**

Local mountaineer and author, John Baldwin has been exploring the Coast Mountains of western British Columbia for over 50 years. His contributions to the mountain community are widely known and recognized, including authoring 6 books. You may know him from books such as "Exploring the Coast Mountains on Skis". He is an honorary member of the BCMC.

*You're welcome to visit John's website in advance [www.johnbaldwin.ca](http://www.johnbaldwin.ca)*

## Submit Your Content

[editor@bcmc.ca](mailto:editor@bcmc.ca)

**Submissions:** We want you to write for us! Any submitted news, events, trip reports, letters relevant to the BCMC will be published unless the club executive decides otherwise.

**About Submissions:** For submitted photos, high resolutions are much appreciated. Submitted material may be edited for clarity or brevity, or for consistency with club policies. Opinions and comments expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the BCMC.

### **About the BCMC Newsletter**

The BCMC Newsletter is an official publication of the B.C. Mountaineering Club and is published 10 times per year (every month except July and August). All material within this newsletter is copyright © British Columbia Mountaineering Club.

**Cover Photo:** Gilberto Salazar on Assiniboine.  
Photo by Alizé Couzigou

## Club Updates

### The Newsletter Returns

We hope you have had a wonderful summer enjoying the warm air, dry rock and all that the season has to offer! During this period the newsletter publication has taken its regularly scheduled break, but with the advent of fall, its return is here. As always, your editor is seeking community trip reports or pertinent articles to share with the BCMC's members. Your content is what helps inspire others and keep the BCMC thriving. If you missed the chance to share your trips in this edition, please reach out to [editor@bcmc.ca](mailto:editor@bcmc.ca) to have your submissions included in the upcoming October issue. With that, please enjoy the community submitted content for this months newsletter:

### Winter Mentor and Mentee Open in October

BCMC is pleased to announce the launch of its Mentorship Program for the **Winter 2025-26 Season**. Starting **October 1, 2025**, we will accept Mentor and Mentee applications for mountain sports such as Backcountry Skiing, Splitboarding, Ski Mountaineering and Snowshoeing. Please note that availability of Mentors might impact our ability to include some of these mountain sports in the Mentorship Program.

For more information and to apply as a mentor or mentee check out the mentorship page on the BCMC website: <https://bcmc.ca/mentorship.php>.



## **Watersprite Lake trail extension to Crawford/Dreadnought col**

*By Paul Kubik*

The B.C. Mountaineering Club constructed a new summer hiking trail from the Watersprite Lake campsite to the alpine col east of the lake (unofficial name "Dreadnought col"). The lake and trail are within the Watersprite Lake Recreation Area about twenty kilometers east of Squamish, B.C. The trail is 1,100 meters in length, rises 200 meters, and has an average grade of 19%.

The trail was built to a Type III or IV standard, per standards set out in the B.C. Ministry of Forests' Recreation Manual. Type III trails are single-file, up to 3/4 meter in width. Type IV is up to 1/2 meter in width.

The project required 650 person-hours of work by a six-person skilled trail crew from Park Solutions Inc, owner Daniel Anderson, using hand tools and mechanical advantage (e.g. Come-along, Tirfor jacks and winches). The project came in at \$70,000 including taxes, including \$9,800 in flight costs associated with helicopter flight time for crew access, egress and toolboxes being flow in and out. The crew worked a four-day week over three weeks in September, 2025, camping on site. The club also received a competitive bid from Howler Contracting.

The B.C. Mountaineering Club conceived and administered the project. The B.C. Mountain Foundation provided aggregate funding for the project, with major financial contributions from B.C. Mountaineering Club (\$20,000 and in-kind contribution for crew accommodation at the club's Watersprite Lake hut), B.C. Parks Foundation from its Sea to Sky Legacy Fund (\$20,000), B.C. Mountain Foundation (\$18,132 for construction and contractor's site visit), Valhalla Pure Outfitters in Squamish from its Valhalla Squamish Trail Fund (\$15,000). Recreation Sites and Trails provided engineering support services for trail design and facilitated camping for the crew at the Watersprite Lake campground.

The trail was approved by Recreation Sites and Trails BC. In its authorization letter, it said,

*"Watersprite Lake is the busiest backcountry Recreation Site in the Sea to Sky District and also a fee for service reservation-based site with about 25 tent sites. It sees several hundred overnight and day users on a typical weekend day in the summer. Providing planned and properly laid out opportunities for these visitors, like this trail, is part of the larger development strategy for limiting the impacts of high use in the alpine environment. We have so far been successful managing use but there is an obvious need for a developed route to the alpine. Currently users find their own way and this is having unwanted impacts. In particular, we need to protect local mountain goat populations from disturbance by managing where people are recreating at the site. This trail leads users away from these areas and should provide a high quality experience, and route most people away from goat habitat."*

Addressing impacts of recreation in the alpine and limiting disturbance of threatened mountain goat populations is a district and branch priority. I would definitely say that this is higher priority project that addresses provincial, district and branch priorities. The fact that the B.C. Mountaineering Club is the partnership agreement holder for the site and has the capacity and knowledge to independently construct this trail means that we can achieve these benefits without

additional workload for Recreation Sites and Trails staff, this is a significant win as we would not have the capacity internally.



Contractor supplied photos used with permission.

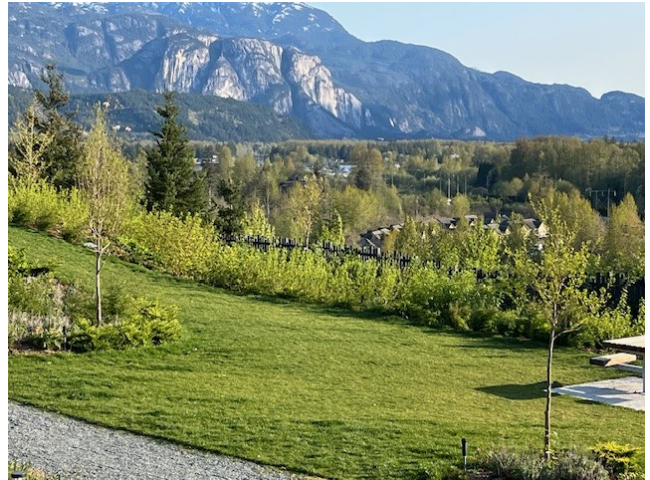
Special thank yous to Alistair McCrone, and Graham Roberge from Recreations Sites and Trails BC, Murray Sovereign from Valhalla Pure Outfitters in Squamish, and Kate Le Souef of BC Parks Foundation. Also, I thank David Scanlon for assisting with the site visit in July and supporting the project, and Cliff Escher for helping with communication and being on site to smooth things out. Also, the BCMC executive committee expressed strong support for the project. And, of course, the BC Mountain Foundation agreed to write the cheques.

## **Baldwin & Cooper Park Announcement**

*By Anders Ourom*

The Highline at Garibaldi Springs Strata, British Columbia Mountain Foundation, and British Columbia Mountaineering Club are pleased to announce the dedication of "Baldwin & Cooper

Park". The new park is at the Highline property in Squamish, about 5 km north of the Stawamus Chief (Siyám Smánit) and the central area of the town. It is in the traditional territory of Sḵw̱xwú7mesh Úxwumixw, the Squamish Nation. The park has a fine view of the Stawamus Chief, in particular of the Grand Wall, and has a variety of amenities. There is public access to it by a laneway through the Highline strata, and by a path from Dowad Drive. (The area is set aside for public use as part of the strata's development agreement with the town of Squamish.)



The park is named in honour of Jim Baldwin and Ed Cooper, pioneers of rock climbing at Squamish. Baldwin was a native of Prince Rupert, and Cooper was a native of New York state who lived in Seattle, Washington. In 1961 they did the first ascent of the Grand Wall, the first major route on the Chief. They went on with Glen Denny to make the first ascent of the Dihedral Wall of El Capitan in Yosemite National Park in 1962, the third route on that cliff. Baldwin died in a climbing accident on Washington Column in Yosemite in 1964. He was 26.

The park honours not only Cooper and Baldwin, but all the pioneers of rock climbing at Squamish and southwest B.C., and the contributions of climbing and climbers to the fabric of Squamish. In the near future a dedication sign will be placed at the park, as well as a directional sign from Dowad Drive.

There will be a dedication ceremony for the park on Sunday, October 5th, followed by a reception at Howe Sound Inn & Brewing Company. Members of both the Baldwin and Cooper families will be present. The events will be open to the public, with more information to follow. Pre-registration for the reception will be mandatory – if you plan to come, let us know.

*(If you want to stay at the Brew Pub October 4th, 5th, or 6th, contact them asap – <https://www.howesound.com/howesoundinn/>)*

This is a private initiative. Please donate to the B.C. Mountain Foundation, to help cover the costs of making the signs, the ceremony, reception, etc. It is a registered charity, so Canadian donors will receive a tax receipt.

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/british-columbia-mountain-foundation/campaign/baldwin--cooper-park-1/>

We gratefully acknowledge the following donors and supporters to date:

- Highline at Garibaldi Springs Strata
- British Columbia Mountain Foundation
- Polygon Homes Ltd.

- British Columbia Mountaineering Club
- Trish & Brad Forster

## **Kees & Clarie Hut is Looking for Custodians**

*By Marie-Chris Amante*

It's that time of year again! Kees and Claire Hut is recruiting custodians for the Winter 25/26 season.

Do you love being part of the backcountry community and enjoy serving guests? We're looking for custodians who can complete a minimum of 6 shifts per season (1 shift = 1 night) and can attend to guest check-ins and answer questions from 3-7 pm during their shift. Training will be provided at the hut on October 4, October 18, and December 6.

If you're interested, please complete this application by September 22nd. Applications will be reviewed and emails will be delivered to selected custodians the week of September 23rd.

New custodian application: <https://forms.gle/QwnK1Hsy87hREXFB8>

Returning custodian application (Completed a shift in the past 3 years):

<https://forms.gle/PfThBWawqU4LDi25A>

Questions? Please contact Head Custodian: [mariechris.amante@gmail.com](mailto:mariechris.amante@gmail.com)

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# WANTED



## VOLUNTEER HUT CUSTODIANS

KEES AND CLAIRE MEMORIAL HUT  
SPEARHEAD HUTS SOCIETY  
TRAINING AT THE HUT: OCT 4, OCT 18 AND DEC 6

**WINTER 25/26 TEAM**

Questions please contact: Marie Amante - Head Custodian - [mariechris.amante@gmail.com](mailto:mariechris.amante@gmail.com)

## Sep 30 is Orange Shirt Day / National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

*By Shashi Shanbhag*

Orange Shirt Day is an Indigenous-led grassroots commemorative day that honours the children who survived residential schools and remembers those who did not. Orange Shirt Day was first observed in 2013 by its founder Phyllis Webstad, whose personal clothing – including an orange shirt – was taken from her during her first day of residential school and never returned.

Starting in 2021, Sep 30 is also recognized as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. BCMC has been organizing Orange Shirt Day Hikes since 2021, and this year's hike is at Rice Lake on Sep 30, 2025 8:30 am. Sign up online here - <https://bcmc.ca/m/events/view/1757355339>



*BCMC - Orange Shirt Day Hike 2022 - Coqutilam Crunch*

## From the Community

### On the West Side

*By Chris Ludwig*

of the lake  
where the ripples  
sparkle under the falling  
sun of adventures  
yesterday, today  
and ones that never will happen

Flaky grey lichen  
coating the rocks  
on the western shore  
as the solitary wolverine  
passes across boulder and scree  
under the shadow  
of those far off barren cliffs



## Summer 2025 Alpine Climbing Mentorship

*By Danielle Schmidt*

I had the privilege of supporting 3 novice climbers in building their alpine climbing skills over the past few months. They wanted to develop skills that would enable them to be comfortable and confident leading easy multi-pitch and alpine routes. I spend a lot of time teaching folks, and tend to take a very measured and methodical approach. I like to make sure that everyone has time to grasp the skills in whatever way they learn best, and that they are supported as they try something new, thus eliminating the likelihood for missed steps or mistakes. We started off with a meetup at the climbing gym to get to know one another a bit indoors before heading outside. The second trip was a skills day where we covered all basic skills required for multi-pitch climbing while on the ground in a picnic shelter. We also went up the first and second peaks on the Chief to get an idea of everyone's hiking abilities in order to see how long future climbs might take.

The first climbing objective was to complete Frontside 180 and How did I get Here?, two easy multi-pitches in Cheakamus. These offered a lot of volume in order to increase speed and efficiency of transitions. Some great lessons were learnt, and everyone's comfort increased quickly. The second objective was Escape Velocity (Habrich), which was a route that offered both

gear and bolts, and would allow the climbers to experience rappelling off a route. The learning here was significant. Some of the top lessons were that route finding can be confusing without bolts, trees eat ropes, and climbing trails are steep! The third objective was Bastardo (Brandywine), which is a bolted route with a bit of an alpine feel. It was a longer objective as we walked from the lower lot and took the Metaldome/Classic route down. The goal here was to get in a bigger day to experience a bit of what that feels like. Sometimes long days can feel hard, and we had to pull out the jokes and enthusiasm to finish this one off, but it was a great day!



*Xavier Li on Bastardo*

I am grateful that the mentees I supported trusted my vision for learning and growth. All 3 of them meshed well and got along easily. They bought into the chosen objectives and learning and put a lot of effort into coming out and trying their best. While it was a lot of work and took time, watching folks grow and find their confidence is very inspiring!



*Finn Nguyen at the top of Bastardo*



*Finn Nguyen, Xavier Li, and Danielle Schmidt on the summit of Habrich*



*Ann Fu on the descent of Bastardo*

## Trip Reports

The editor is in need of more trip reports for future newsletters! Have an old trip you never got around to writing? We want to see it! Submit your reports to [editor@bcmc.ca](mailto:editor@bcmc.ca).

### Armchair Traverse – July 2025

By Neha Kulkarni

#### Hike up to Wedgemount Lake Campsite

On a warm, late-July day, Neil, Suhrud and I walked up the forested slopes of Wedgemount Lake trail. We were grateful for the cool shade offered by the old-growth forest, though it wasn't long before the bugs found us. The approach was steady and uneventful, with our conversations wandering between summer plans, our lives, and pros and cons of DEET bug sprays. Along the way, we met a party of two that was coming down after climbing Wedge Mountain. One of them described the terrible snow conditions they had encountered – but pushed on nonetheless. Later that day, a single glance at the snowless arete of the mountain confirmed their story – it looked brutal.

#### Wedgemount Lake

It was early afternoon when Wedgemount Lake greeted us in all its alpine glory – its turquoise waters gleaming under the summer sun. Across the lake to the north, our objectives for the next day – Mount Cook, Mount Weart, and the ridge connecting them – stood tall and cloud-free..

We chose to pitch our tents closer to the hut, hoping to shave off a little time from the next day's long climb. By around 6 or 7 pm, clouds began rolling into the upper reaches of the valley, completely engulfing the Armchair Traverse. We exchanged uneasy glances, somewhat unsure how much faith to place in the "clear" weather forecast. With a silent prayer to the mountain gods, we set our alarm for 5:45 am and crawled inside our tents.





## Mount Cook

We started hiking up Mount Cook at 6:45 am the next morning. The clouds still lingered in the valley, though there was no sign of precipitation. Hoping the sky would clear as the day unfolded, we pressed on. The hike was a steady slog, but relatively straightforward. Cairns marked the way – first leading us through patches of heather on a faint trail, and then up a series of switchbacks over scree and talus-covered slopes. As we reached the summit of Cook, grey clouds continued to swirl around us, limiting visibility to about 30 feet. However, we decided to carry on and reassess at the point where the terrain and navigation would become more technical. It had taken us 2 hours and 15 minutes to summit from the campsite.



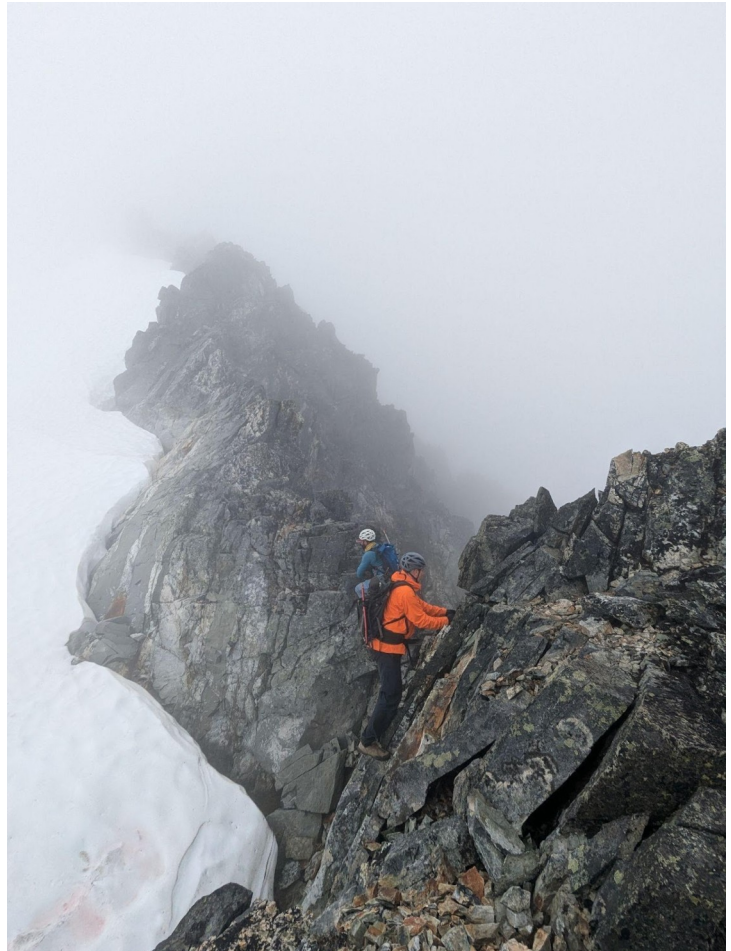
## The Traverse

The scramble began shortly after we left the summit of Mount Cook. The visibility was good enough for navigation but anything beyond the immediate vicinity was washed out by the clouds – a condition that would persist for most of the traverse. Fortunately, the route more or less follows the ridge connecting the two peaks, so navigation primarily involved choosing the safest line forward.

We often found ourselves balancing between two options: more exposed sections on relatively solid rock near the center of the ridge, or less exposed paths that were a chaotic mix of loose rock and talus. While we generally preferred the exposed but stable ridge crest, we occasionally dipped into side gullies and ramps when they offered a more reasonable alternative.

At times, we'd commit to a route only to be forced to retreat – confronted by cliffs or tall boulders with no easy way down. After a few such detours, we fell into a rhythm: scouting options individually and communicating before committing to a choice. This worked well and as time passed, our familiarity with the terrain increased. In the latter half, the route finding started to feel more intuitive even when we couldn't see our way beyond.

Overall, the traverse to the base of Mount Weart was a sustained Class 3/4 scramble and took us about three hours. The trickiest section was a down climb from a false summit that felt technical but still within Class 4 territory. We tackled it from the climber's right side rather than attempting a direct descent.



The final push up Mount Weart looked intimidating from a distance but the route always presented itself as we approached and we found lots of ledges along the way. As we reached the knife-edge, the clouds finally parted and Weart summit welcomed us with majestic views all around!





### Going down Mount Weart

We spent a few quiet minutes on the summit, taking in the vast expanse of the Weart Glacier and the panoramic views of Wedge, Parkhurst, and Rethel mountains. A long descent lay ahead, so we didn't linger. The initial stretch to a col felt straightforward, though it was full of loose rocks and talus. From the col onward, the descent began to live up to its rough reputation. We found ourselves navigating a minefield of unstable moraine, dust, and scree as we worked our way down to the first glacial lake basin. There was some route-finding involved, but cairns guided us, and we reached the basin without too much trouble. The lake was in the process of melting and therefore not crossable.

After weaving through a patchwork of moraine and melting snowfields, we arrived at the edge of a cliff overlooking the second glacial lake basin – and the real challenge began. Descending into this second basin was easily the worst part of the day. The slope was steep, the soil unbelievably loose, and nearly every step triggered movement beneath our feet. Despite our caution, we couldn't help but set off



small rockslides, so we moved in parallel to avoid endangering one another. We let out a collective sigh of relief when we finally reached the basin floor!

From the second basin, the route goes down to Upper Tupper lake alongside a creek. We encountered a cute family of mountain goats here! They paused their grazing in the meadow to eye us suspiciously, then reluctantly stepped aside as we passed along the narrow trail.

The rest of the descent went smoothly, involving a few creek crossings but no major obstacles. Back at Wedgemount Lake, we paused one last time to admire the traverse we had completed and began packing up camp for the final hike back to the parking lot.

The Armchair Traverse had been a true alpine adventure, marked by enjoyable scrambling, sustained route-finding, wild landscapes that felt straight out of Mordor, and most of all, excellent teamwork!



## **Kees & Claire Memorial Hut – BCMC Family-Friendly Summer Camp**

*By Shashi Shanbhag*

On August 1-4, 2025, the BCMC organized a family-friendly summer camp at the Kees and Claire Memorial Hut. Thirty people, with an age range of 2-77, attended the camp, making it one of the largest groups we have had on a BCMC trip.



*Group Photo by Aloke Surin*



*BCMC Youth Members: Photo by Aloke Surin*

About half of the group hiked up the Singing Pass trail from Whistler, while the rest of the group took the gondola up to Roundhouse Lodge and took the Musical Bumps trail.



*Musical Bumps Trail. Photo by Suhrud Lowalekar*

The Singing Pass trail was mostly in the shade, with a couple of creek crossings and had a gradual elevation gain. The Musical Bumps trail was in the alpine with no shade or water, but it offered stunning mountain views.



*Singing Pass. Photo by Simha*

Both trails converge at Singing Pass. From this junction, it is another 3 km to the Russet Lake. In early August, the wildflowers were in full bloom, and the area around Singing Pass made for some great shots.



*Russet Lake Trail. Photo by Shashi Shanbhag*

The Russet Lake trail from Singing Pass was relatively steep and definitely tested the patience of the kids in our group. So when we finally had a partial view of the hut, it was a big relief.



*Kees & Claire Memorial Hut. Photo by James Trougakos*



*Kees & Claire Memorial Hut. Photo by James Tougakos*



*Kasturi carrying water from the lake to the hut.  
Photo by Neha Kulkarni*

Marie, the head custodian at the hut was already there to welcome us and she gave us a quick orientation of the hut. The hut was unlike anything most of us had experienced in the backcountry, and it was a luxury to have such a nice facility with all the amenities.

There is no running water at the hut, and all water needed for drinking, washing dishes, and cooking has to be carried up from the lake (in summer). For the duration of our stay (four days), every guest had to get at least 20L of water from the lake. The hut also has two external frame packs to carry the jugs and pumps for filling water from the lake.



*BCMC Group on Whirlwind Peak*

Over the next few days, BCMC members enjoyed the lake and the hikes in the area. We had four youth members who summited Whirlwind Peak with their parent/guardian, and a few members scrambled to the summit of Overlord Peak as well. A couple of members also explored the Adit Lakes area on the other side of Cowboy Ridge.

We were lucky with the weather during the day and had clear skies at night as well. A few members captured some amazing shots and time-lapse videos of the night sky.

There was even an unofficial competition to see who could stay in the stream (at Russet Lake) the longest. Rajni emerged as the winner, having spent an impressive 45 minutes immersed in water (left most person in the photo below). Kudos to the two youth members, Chloe and Kavya, for dipping in the stream for 31 minutes.

On the final day, everyone, including the kids, helped clean up the facility. The majority of the group hiked down the Singing Pass trail and everyone was safely back by late in the afternoon.



*Melanie, Simha and Suhrud on Overlord Peak. Photo by Suhrud Lowalekar*



*Suhrud on Cowboy Ridge. Photo by Rahul Swan*



*Ait Lakes: Photo by Suhrud Lowalekar*



*Russet Lake. Photo by Rahul Sawn*



*Cold Plunge Challenge. Photo by Rajni Chada*

It was one of the most memorable trip for me and would like to thank our custodians Marie and Chris for their support during our stay at the hut. I would also like to thank the Spearhead Hut Society for allowing BCMC to make the group booking for 30 people.

If you have any ideas for next year's family-friendly summer camp, please send a note to me at [shashiraj8@gmail.com](mailto:shashiraj8@gmail.com)

# **BCMC Trip Report – Mount Assiniboine**

*By Alizé Couzigou*

## **PROLOGUE**

Earlier this year, my girlfriends and I discussed a trip to Lake Magog and Mount Assiniboine. We thought about flying into the Assiniboine lodge, to hike around Lake Magog, take pictures, read a book, and finally take time to watercolor a beautiful landscape. To simply enjoy a good time in a beautiful surrounding. But these plans fell through months ago. Except that a week prior to my August vacation, as I turn the pages of my agenda, I notice “Mount Assiniboine” pencilled in, still. Fast forward a week later, we summited Mount Assiniboine in the best possible conditions and I can’t believe I am writing this report to summarize this memorable adventure.

## **PREPARATION**

Don’t mention a mountain objective to Gil, he will make it happen! But it almost didn’t happen...: this National Park is popular and backcountry permits were sold out, as well as the Assiniboine lodge. I called the lodge as my last resort, hoping that the Hind Hut (the climbers’ hut) would have availability. And it did! I immediately connected with Gil to confirm plans and we decided to book 3 nights at the hut to ensure that we’d have a good weather window for the climb. The forecast announced sunny weather for most of the week, but a night storm mid-week, with temperatures dropping below 0°C at the mountain elevation. We planned on bringing ice axes, crampons, and mountaineering boots.

We start driving to our destination on Sunday, August 24 before dawn. Why not climb the Chief on the way there! After our traditional ice cream treat post-objective, we hit the road again, first stopping in Kamloops, then making our way to Canmore.

## **APPROACH**

Over the years, I’ve become a night owl so it goes without saying that the 4am alarm clock on Tuesday, August 26, after driving for 6 hours the day before, felt particularly difficult. But the excitement and nervousness of the day superseded over the foggy brain! We drive in the silent Kananaskis country with no one in sight. A beautiful alpine glow grazes the mountains and lakes of this Provincial Park.

We chose to hike the approach starting at the Mt Shark trailhead, in Alberta. We hiked for 30km to the Assiniboine Lodge, from Bryant Creek, through the Wonder Pass, to Lake Magog. Packs were heavy and my feet felt like sticks at that point. I love a good reward so the Coca-Cola and beer served at the afternoon tea of the lodge were very welcomed. Gil and I agreed that we would much rather not hike out the 30km and so we gave in to booking a heli ride out from the lodge on Friday, August 29! I’m very excited about the prospect of flying above this beautiful mountain range in a helicopter, which I had never done before!

After this much deserved break, we leave the crowds of cheerful hikers, National Geographic photographers, and cheerful campers, to pick up our bags, refill our water bottles, and head to

the Hind Hut before sunset. There will be no network at the Hind Hut so we check the weather forecast one last time: no changes. We keep to the plan.

Another 3km and 600m in elevation gain are waiting for us, with the first technical terrain: the Gmosers Ledges. Reports indicated that route finding would not be easy and these ledges should not be overlooked. Truly, the reports were accurate. We experienced the first of many steps in scree, searching for cairns, downclimbing some class 3 scramble. We scrambled our way up the gully, and reached the boulder field with less steepness before we lit our headlamps. We spotted the hut, hooray! It is 9:30pm. The total approach took 13 hours, 33.82km with 1,624m of positive elevation. Our bodies couldn't be happier to drop the packs and be fed a full, dehydrated meal! I also cannot be happier to make it to the hut: my very first hut trip!

The sun has set and the hut is asleep. It looks like 4 persons are asleep so we make dinner outside, in the silence of the night. I turn off my headlamp and there it stands, above me, immense and beautiful. I can't believe I am here, so small and intimidated. My brain is tired so I pull myself to finish my dinner even if the appetite isn't there, and get to sleep.



*Side note: the hut has incredibly comfortable mattresses!*

## **ASCENT DAY**

Wednesday, August 27. The alarm rang at 5am after 6 hours of intermittent sleep. There's no way that I can move my body and we agree to snooze for 6am! I step outside of the hut, the sun rises behind the mountain range like the horizon is on fire. Mount Assiniboine is appearing before my eyes, slowly showing its different bands, looking bigger than yesterday, it seems. Good morning, iconic mountain! As we prepare breakfast and re-pack our bags, we meet the other 4 climbers that are hiking out today. It was lovely to chat with them, Americans and Canadians, professional guides and long-time mountaineers. We got some beta from their climb the previous days. I just can't believe that I am standing in the middle of these experienced mountaineers, part of this incredible experience, and about to do that climb. They head out and we start our climb at 7:30am.



Reports are right: 2/3rd of the climb is horrible scree and quite challenging: Rockies style they say! We slowly but surely move up towards the red band. The combination of finding cairns and rappel stations confirmed we were on route. Staying on route isn't easy but Gil's biggest strength is route finding. As per many reports, if the climb feels out of route, it most likely is! We rope up and Gil leads the red band using a light alpine rack. We continued climbing the North ridge past the black band, up to the grey band - the much anticipated crux - where we had to traverse climbers right in order to avoid the overhang feature. After traversing this area, we found a long and exposed ridge with nice jugs that made the scrambling to the top more enjoyable.

By then, it's been a few hours and much exposure. The views are more and more incredible as we climb, but I keep cautious and level-headed in all my steps. The sustained exposure, scrambling up the ridge, plus the tired legs from the long approach put my endurance and mind to the test. The sun hits the ridge and keeps us comfortably warm. The summit doesn't show itself until a few meters away. I film my steps on the black rocks of the summit as I approach the summit register. Tears come up. I can't remember it all but I think I end up crying in Gil's arms. This was the most challenging athletic endeavour of my life. I started climbing for the very first

time on May 25, 2025 as part of the BCMC mentorship program in sport climbing. And I am here, at the summit of Mount Assiniboine, with the most hard working, talented climbing partner. Such a special moment I couldn't forget. SUMMIIIT!



The sky is dotted in small clouds and there are no storms in sight. We are sharing this moment, up at 3,618m, with two ravens, contemplative. Mount Assiniboine is the highest peak of the Southern Rockies. I take a moment to write in the register, words that couldn't express the amount of effort and the pride to be right there. We refuel our bodies with food, Gil mocks me for bringing carrots all the way up but indulges in the Toblerone chocolate bar: an epic summit treat, selected particularly as Mount Assiniboine is known as the Matterhorn of the Rockies!

We rarely speak of the descent, as our memories linger on the climb that carried us to the summit. But let me just say that the downclimb was long and technical. A group of 3 climbers summited an hour after us and were above us on the way down. We heard them yell "ROCKS!" countless times. We changed our route to avoid the direct trajectory of rock falls. Rocks bigger than my hand flew centimeters away from my body on two occasions. We lost our way but found it again, leaving a bit of gear behind for a couple of unofficial rappels. We maintained focus until we finally reached the chossy spire and looked at each other with the biggest relief. Let's be real: the real crux of Mount Assiniboine lay not in the summit push, but in the chossy terrain - loose, shifting rock that gave way underfoot, sliding us endlessly into scree. What a day! WHAT A DAY!



When I think I mentioned that mountain to Gil and a week later we submitted this iconic peak... I have no other words. Just a lot of big feelings of how exciting life is these days. Beyond my comprehension.

Participants: Gilberto Salazar and Alizé Couzigou

## **Kapella Headwaters Traverse**

*By Andrea Tate*

After the success of our Pantheons trip in 2024, Francis and I were eager for another big trip in the coast mountains. We spent months scouring past Canadian Alpine Journals and BCMC archives for areas that were potentially unclimbed, and eventually settled on this trip which would encircle the Kapella headwaters, taking us roughly 2 weeks and covering lots of beautiful terrain, some of it being potentially unclimbed.

On Monday, June 30th, after waiting for a few days due to low clouds and mediocre weather, we flew into the Kitimat range with Tweedsmuir Air. Our flight took roughly an hour and a half, placing us on one of the most remote alpine lakes we could have imagined. We docked at a small beach at the outflow of the large Kapella glacier, and were left in utter silence and isolation as the plane took off back down the valley.

Because it was already mid afternoon, we spent the first day making as much progress up onto the glacier as we could. Our bags were enormously heavy, making it near impossible to cross through dense alder and over large boulders, but we eventually made it into the alpine and to the imposing toe of the glacier. This lower part of the glacier was the most technical one we crossed on the trip, and we spent the majority of our day weaving back and forth through the deep blue icy crevasses. We broke camp as the sun set (around 10pm!), hiking up above the massive glacier to a lovely heather bench with expansive views.



When we awoke, we happily ditched all the heavy gear at camp, bringing the bare minimum of technical gear to go tackle the first of our summits. We brought a light alpine rack, glacier gear, crampons, snacks, and a few layers for the day, and ended up using almost none of it as the peak turned out to be at most class 2 or 3. We built a small cairn on the summit, and decided on the name "Selachii," beginning a trend of naming peaks with shark themes (since the most prominent peak in the area is called Shark's Teeth).

The rain moved in overnight unfortunately, and we spent the next couple days amidst clouds and intermittent precipitation, hiking the full length of the vast Kapella glacier, and then summiting another easy peak that we named "Hammerhead." The gloomy weather finally broke on day 3 when we reached the base of Encke, and we enjoyed some views of the range under cotton candy clouds.



As we climbed up and over the top of Encke to the glacier on its north side, we entered the start of being on much bigger glaciers and steeper snow. At one point, I had my ice axe out for 3 days straight as we navigated through the complex terrain! We were also slowed exponentially on this leg of our journey by an exceptionally heavy storm, and spent 6 days getting from Encke to Shark's Teeth Peaks (4 of which we were tent bound). A highlight during this section was

summiting Peak 7400, which is marked by three distinct rock towers that looked a lot like a mountainous shrine. The clouds cleared briefly for us on this summit, which we were grateful for because it allowed us to look north towards Shark's Teeth and the rest of our traverse beyond.



Shark's Teeth Peaks itself was less technical than it looked like it would be - the 2005 party reported that "the Shark's Teeth had no bite," which is a sentiment we would agree with. Its northern glacier posed a couple challenges though, and as we went up and over the summit and down to the base of its glacier, we roped up and did some weaving through large icy maws. The heather meadow beyond Shark's Teeth would have made an incredible place to camp, but we had extra time in our day and so pushed on



to the ridge beyond. We made it to the shoulder of Peak 6600 where more rain again forced us to stop for the day. At this spot, we had an excellent view of the lush Kapella river valley, so watching the storm roll in towards us was actually pretty breathtaking.

On day 11, we woke up to sun and a beautiful cloud inversion. This was great because we knew the "crux" of the trip lay on the other side of Peak 6600: a large notch and an "airy balcony traverse." We tackled this early in the day, making one long rappel into the notch, and then climbing up an easy 5.4 step back to the ridge. We believe this would have been a lot harder and more exposed if it wasn't for the massive chunk of unmelted snow that we were able to walk inside of, allowing us to skip any "airy" sections.



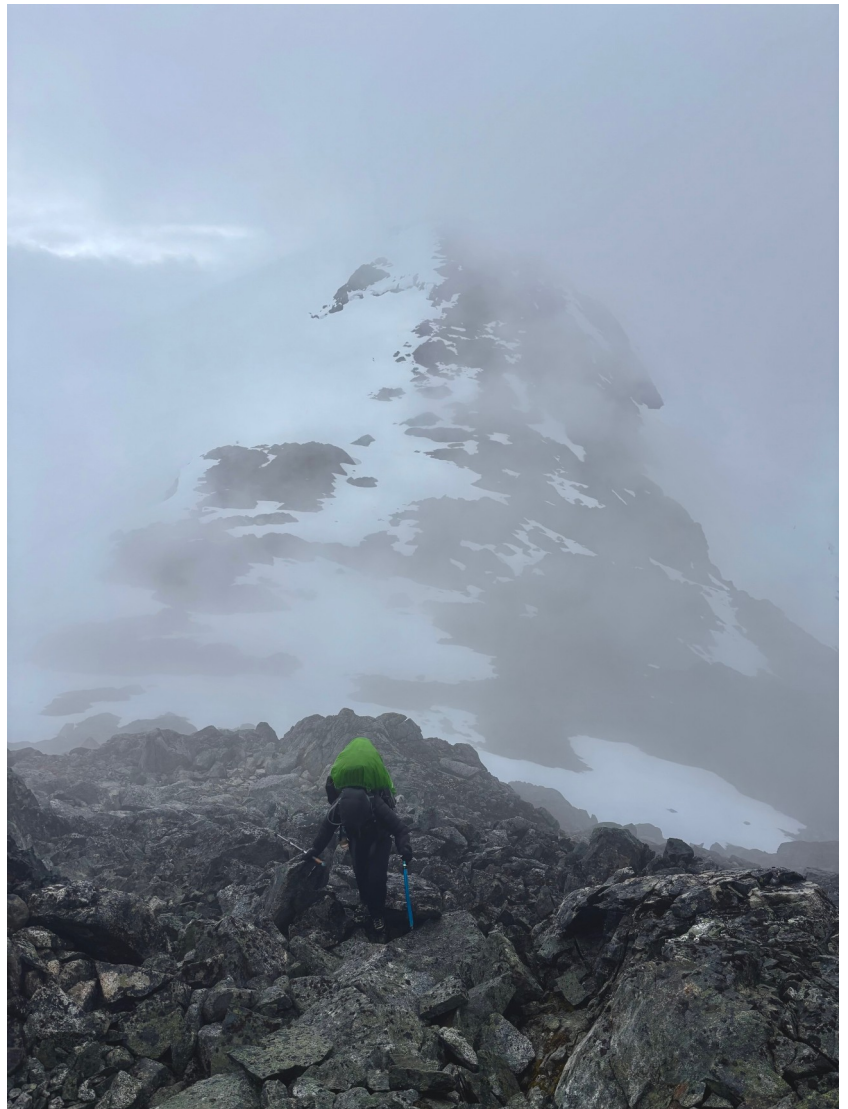
Back on flat ground, we cruised quickly towards Peak 7200, dumping our large packs and making the most of the sun by questing out onto a diverging (and unclimbed) ridge line. We named the two peaks along this ridge "Spiracle" and "Elasmo," which both had an easy hike to their respective summits.

As we returned to our overnight packs, a massive storm rolled in again at full force, marking a permanent end to sunshine on our trip. The winds and rain howled through the mountaintops, completely soaking us from head to toe. When we arrived at our camp at the base of Peak 7200, it was nearly 10pm and we built a hasty and mostly miserable camp inside a wind scoop which had slightly less heavy wind than the rest of the col.

On the following day with a horrendous forecast ahead of us, we debated staying put.. but due to only having 2 days until our return flight, we knew we would have to quest out into the storm. A small amount of progress was better than none at all, but we deeply resented the need to push into a 45km/h windstorm with wet and cold clothes.

The day was about as miserable as you could imagine.. If not more. The wind howled, flapping the hoods of our raincoats on our ears, and forcing us to yell back and forth. The ridgeline which would have been a fantastic 4th class scramble on a sunny day, was a slippery hell of wet black lichen on every surface. It took us an entire day to make it only 4km over the surprisingly technical terrain of Hindsight and Tipso Peaks, and we were forced to make another snowy camp on the shoulder of Peak 2270.

On the final day of our trip, we awoke in freezing temperatures to damp sleeping bags and more howling winds. None of our clothes from the previous day had dried even slightly overnight, and even our rain coats and pants were cold and crunchy with frost. Thankfully the rain had let up, which led us both to the decision to make a "hail mary" - wearing our last dry sleeping layers, in hopes that we'd make it down through the forest and to the float plane in time.





With some good luck and a short clearing in the clouds, we found an easy way to bypass Peak 2270 on its west slopes, and were happy to find ourselves in the meadow above Kimsquit lake around 11am – well before our pickup time at 12:30pm.

Despite only having 1km left, we ran into all the coastal culprits on our descent: wet alder, devil's club, large slippery logs, and steep, bluffy terrain. By the time we could hear the float plane landing, we were still 300 vertical meters above the lake! Neither of us had any desire to spend the night in this grizzly infested forest, so we took off at a sprint - half running and half falling through the forest. Francis was much faster at this, and thankfully managed to make it down to the lake shore in time to shout for the pilot to wait for us. I showed up a short time later at the beach where they now waited, with 3 massive rips in my pants and scrapes all over my body. I am sure we looked

like wild forest dwellers as we popped out of the dense forest - but no matter

We made the plane, and that was all that was important. A sunny day awaited us back in Nimpo Lake, and we were very happy to be warm again after so many days of cold. It was overall a very successful trip; in total we travelled ~80km across 11 summits, 5 of which were previously unclimbed.

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