

THE B.C. MOUNTAINEER



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Cover photos:

Front Cover: Silke Gumplinger on the summit of Chilko Mtn. (p. 97). Photo - P. Gumplinger.

Inside Front Cover: top - Mt. Asgard in the Valhallas (p. 133). Photo: E. Feller.
bottom - North Creek sunset (p. 72). Photo: A. Sharif.

Inside Back Cover: Mulvey Basin sunrise, Valhallas (p. 133). Photo: E. Feller.

Back Cover: Camp 2 on the Powell traverse (p. 74). Photo: L. Baile.

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THE BRITISH COLUMBIA MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

Club Philosophy

The British Columbia Mountaineering Club is an incorporated society founded in 1907 which celebrated its centennial in 2007. Its pioneer members did much of the early exploration and mapping of the then unexplored mountains near the young city of Vancouver. Most of the mountains in the lower mainland of B.C. were first climbed by BCMC members.

Today, the BCMC is dedicated to the enjoyment and exploration of the mountains, valleys, and alpine regions of British Columbia through activities such as climbing, hiking, backpacking and ski touring. The primary mode of travel is by foot. Mechanized transport is secondary and is restricted to access only. The club feels that pedestrian access allows the greatest appreciation of the mountains with the least impact.

In addition to direct involvement in the outdoors through trips and camps, the Club is active in conservation, trail and hut construction and maintenance, mountain safety, and education. The club has assisted in publishing several guidebooks, including Kevin McLane's "Alpine Select" guide, the Alpine Guide to Southwestern B.C., 103 Hikes in Southwestern British Columbia, A Climber's Guide to the Squamish Chief, Guide to Climbing in South-western British Columbia, and the Stein Valley Wilderness Guidebook. Club members regularly act as volunteer instructors in basic summer and winter mountaineering courses offered by the club to its members.

The club has been very active in conservation land use issues almost from its inception. The existence today of Garibaldi Park is a direct result of the discovery and exploration of the area by the Club. After the 1926 camp, members of the club petitioned the provincial government requesting protection of the area as a park, and in 1927, the Garibaldi Park Act was proclaimed.

More recently, in the 1970's it was a club member who first drew the attention of society to the values of the Stein Valley. During the 1980's it was club members who were most active in defending the interests of wilderness ski tourers against commercial heliskiers. In the 1990's, club

members were involved in B.C.'s Protected Area Strategy and have been instrumental in the establishment of Pinecone – Burke and Tantalus provincial parks, as well as others. Today, club members are actively involved in attempts to protect some areas against the intrusion of motorized recreation, particularly snowmobiles. The club continues to play an active role in land use issues relevant to B.C. mountaineering.

Club Trips and Activities

The Club runs a website (www.bcmc.ca) in which its various activities are described.

The most important function of the Club is the running of an extensive schedule of different grades of hiking, climbing, and ski touring trips. Usually, a variety of overnight and day trips is scheduled each weekend throughout the year. These trips are all free and are also open to prospective members.

Club members organize yearly summer climbing camps/expeditions to various parts of the province. Numerous climbs, many of them first ascents or new routes, have been made in such areas as the Kakwa, Kawdacha, and Monkman areas, N. Rockies, (1993-1995), Chilko Lake area (1992), Pantheon Range (1991), Clendenning Ck. (1990) Banff park (1989), Premier Range (1987), Lake Lovely water (1999-2005), Garibaldi park (most recently in 2007 - 2009), Stein valley area (most recently in 2003 and 2004), Falls River/



**Club trips visit many beautiful mountain areas.
Photo: J. van der Burg.**

Tchaikazan region (1986, 1988), Ape Lake area (1983 and 2001), Mt. Waddington area (most recently in 1999, 2000, and 2004), Mt. Fairweather (2007), Bendor Range (2002-2003), and the Selkirk Mountains (most recently in 1999 and 2000).

Occasionally, expeditions are organized by the club to more remote areas such as in Alaska or South America. Extended hiking trips are also organized, most recently to the South Chilcotin mountains (2003, 2005, and 2007), Tweedsmuir park (2009), and the Mt. Edziza-Spectrum Range area (2004 -2006).

The ski touring program occurs throughout the winter and spring. This has included a Christ-



Club members enjoying snow holes and blizzards on ski trips. Photos: J. van der Burg.

Rock climbing practice is held mid-week during the summer months. Beginners can receive instruction and more advanced climbers can hone

their skills. Rock practice is held in the evening at Lighthouse Park, Murrin Park, the Chief, or at Smoke Bluffs. In winter, mid-week night skiing is organized at the local ski hills.

To help the beginner in developing his or her climbing skills, the Club organizes instruction courses and from time to time organizes training climbs. The purpose of these climbs is to allow people to gain experience on roped climbs.



Club members tackle more challenging climbs (top), but can find themselves geographically embarrassed at times (bottom). Photos: J. van der Burg (top); M. Dell (bottom).

In December and June the club publishes its 6 monthly trips programs. Updates are given in club newsletters and on the club's website.

Social Events

Social gatherings are held monthly from September through June on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 pm, in the upstairs room at the ANZA Club, corner of 8th Avenue and Ontario Street in Vancouver. The meetings are informal and the

chairs comfortable. Beginning with general club business, there is usually a slide show, film, or talk on some aspect of mountaineering. In the past we have also featured product demonstrations by local mountaineering stores, auctions, and equipment swap meets. Refreshments and cookies are served. Beer can be obtained from the licenced premises below the meeting hall. At the November social the Club conducts its Annual General Meeting.

Details of these events and other special activities are announced in advance in the monthly club newsletter and on the club website.



Club trips can be social events. Photos: T. Ponzini.

Membership

The BCMC has several categories of membership: active, associate, youth, life, senior, and honorary. Persons interested in joining the Club can obtain further information by phoning the Mem-

bership Chair (778-230-7528), viewing the website, or by attending a club social event. Club social events and trips are open to non-members as well as members. The Membership Chair can also be contacted by email: info@bcmc.ca

Library and Publications

The Club maintains a library with an extensive collection of books, photographs, guidebooks, and periodicals on mountaineering. It is open to use by members and details about the collection and its use can be obtained by contacting the Club executive.

The Club produces ten issues per year of its newsletter. The newsletter contains club news, trip schedules, access information, trip reports and other news. This club journal, the B.C. Mountaineer, is produced every two years and contains accounts of recent climbs, camps, expeditions, photographs and other material.

Huts and Shelters

There are five BCMC huts, all of which are open to the public and which are free to club members. Shelters located in Garibaldi Park have been donated to B.C. Parks and the public. Club shelters and their general locations are:

HIMMELSBACH:	Russet Lake, Garibaldi Park
MOUNTAIN LAKE:	Mount Sheer, Britannia Beach
NORTHCREEK:	North Creek, Lillooet Valley
PLUMMER:	Claw Ridge, Mt. Waddington
WEDGEMOUNT:	Wedgemount Lake, Garibaldi Park.

Conservation Guidelines

In order to conserve the alpine environment, Club trips try to adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Pack out all garbage.
2. Where pit toilets are not provided, select a screened spot at least 50 metres from any water and dig a hole 15 to 30 cm deep. Cover the hole with soil and ground cover. Keep water sources free of contamination.
3. Alpine life, whether flora or fauna, is fragile and not in abundance. Plants and animals are not killed unless in an emergency.
4. Stay on trails and do not cut corners on trail switchbacks to avoid erosion.
5. Light small campfires. Use only dead wood

and remove traces of the fire site. Ensure that fires are properly extinguished. Do not light fires in alpine areas or in areas where fires are not allowed.

6. Camp in forests or on non-vegetated areas to avoid damage to meadows, lakeshores and stream banks.



Well dressed and equiped club members in 2007, the club's centennial year. Photo: G. Kollmuss.



Club trips can be very relaxing. Photo: J. van der Burg.



Club members build and maintain trails and huts. Photos: P. Malacarne (top); C. Oldham (bottom).

OVERSEAS AND FAR AWAY

GRAND TETONS, 12-26 July, 2009

By David Hughes

During the winter of 2008/09 Erich and Ehleen Hinze and Adrienne and David Hughes had the chance to join a trip to the Grand Tetons that was being organized by Bob Brusse of the ACC. The Grand Tetons are one of the most spectacular ranges in the contiguous United States. The Teton Range is relatively small – extending 65 km north and south by 25 km east and west. The Teton Fault led to the formation of a very steep abrupt mountain range and a flat valley to its east that was scoured by glacier to become known as Jackson Hole. The valley drops from 2060m at Jackson Lake in the north to 1860m just south of the town of Jackson. The southern end of the range includes the Jackson Hole ski area, one of the big vertical drop lift serviced ski areas in North America. The Grand Teton at 4200m is the high point of the range and is positioned a little south of the range's mid-point.

As July rolled around, the four of us became the hiking-climbing party, as Bob had to drop out due to knee trouble. Unfortunately the rest of the group from the Alpine Club also evaporated, but undaunted, the four of us in a fully loaded Pathfinder started on our 1800 km trip to Jackson, Wyoming.

We approached the Grand Tetons on July 13th from the Idaho side and passed over the southern end of the range at Teton Pass, 2630m.

We had made arrangements to stay at the American Alpine Club Climbers' Ranch, which is situated almost directly below the Grand Teton at 2040m. This facility includes cabins, most to be shared with other climbers/hikers, covered outside eating area with a barbeque and propane stoves, washrooms with showers, laundry facilities and a good library. The library contained several past *B.C. Mountaineers*. It is a great facility and is cheaper than most of the area's campsites. It is also a great spot to view wildlife right from your front door, as it is a wildlife corridor. We saw deer, ground squirrels and

pronghorn antelopes every night and several moose were also spotted along the riverbanks.

Our first day was used to acclimatize and so we chose a hike to Holly Lake in the Paintbrush Canyon. After summiting the Paintbrush divide at 3260m we returned the same way, although a round trip that drops to Solitude Lake then back via Cascade Canyon is only a little longer.

Day 2 found us hiking to Surprise and Amphitheater Lakes and to a high point of 2957m. This is a very pretty area that provides close up views of the southeast face of the Grand Teton. Early attempts on the Grand were from Amphitheater Lake, but what appears to be a direct route summit block is an illusion. Approximately one-half way up, the route ends at the 3542m disappointment Peak, which does connect directly to the Grand Teton.

Day 3 brought sightseeing: a trip to Jackson and a Ranger station for a two-night permit for Erich and I to the Grand Teton. Overnight camping is regulated to preset camping spots. During the peak of the summer, you may have to line up for a chance to camp at the Grand-Middle Teton col, the jumping off spot for most climbs on the Grand Teton.

On Day 4 with excellent weather again, the four of us headed off to the Grand-Middle Teton col via Garnett Canyon. The girls turned back at the headwall below the col and Erich and I completed the hike via a fixed rope up the headwall arriving at the col at 2 pm,



The climber's ranch with the Grand Teton on the left. Photo: D. Hughes.

approximately a 6-hour trip from the valley. This col at 3550m is called the Lower Saddle. (The Upper Saddle separates the west face of the main peak from a subsidiary west peak).

The Lower Saddle col has a number of good rock campsites and two tent shelters—one for the guides and one for the Park Rangers. During most of the summer, there will be at least two guided parties per day with a total of 12 to 14 people. Guided parties have usually just finished a 3-day course and, depending on their performance and weather, they will be taken up either the standard Owen-Spalding or the more technical, Upper Exum Ridge route.

The guides and two parties were up and away by 4 am. We followed the Exum group shortly thereafter and we managed to keep sight of them until they crossed the Central Rib to traverse over to the Upper Exum Ridge. There is only one access point onto the Upper Exum Ridge, an upward sloping ramp called “Wall Street”. This ramp is easy until the final corner just before reaching the ridge. This corner is very exposed and hard to protect. Once on the ridge, the best route is directly up on a section that is called the Golden Stair for 90m – nice climbing to low 5th. Several somewhat convoluted sections that are more physical than difficult bring you to the Friction Pitch. This pitch is the crux of the climb. This next 25m lead is difficult in climbing boots as it is steep, smooth and offers very little protection. Above the Friction Pitch, there are several other climbing sections before finally arriving at the top.

On top we were greeted with great views of the Teton Range and a leisurely lunch. A local climbing instructor who was guiding his friend now joined us. He gave us a great rundown on the local climbing scene as well as guiding us down the Owen-Spalding route on the descent.

The crux of the descent is a 35m overhanging rappel that is used by nearly all climbers for all routes on the mountain. The rappel has two stations – the first with fixed bolts – you will need a 20m plus rope or two ropes to reach the bottom from this station. The second uses webbing slings and this station allows you to traverse to the descender’s left and you might make it with an 18m rope from this one. Once down from the rappel, we were at the Upper Saddle. It was still more than an hour to the Lower Saddle as there still is a fair amount of route finding on the Central Rib to the col.

Back at the Lower Saddle and camp, we decided to stay a second night to enjoy the sunset. The next day brought a change in the weather so we retreated down to the Climbers’ Ranch getting rained on several times.

Day 7 brought a rest and tourist day. We travelled to Jackson Lake and Coulter Bay and dared a swim in the cool water. Our plans now had to be changed as knee injuries were coming home to roost making technical climbs out of the question for Erich. Plans for several nights backpack to the Alaska Basin on the southern end of the range were shelved because of injuries and we were a little early, as the snow had not yet retreated from the Basin.

We had to settle for two long day hikes. The first was up Granite Canyon to approach the Jackson Hole ski area for a welcome ride down. This canyon valley presented us with wonderful meadows and flowers. The second was up Death Canyon and, despite the name, was perhaps the most scenic hike. The hiking in the Grand Tetons is exceptional in that the trails were well marked, moderately graded and a good mixture of shade and spectacular vistas. The wildflowers were magnificent as they were now reaching their peak.



Death Canyon. Photo: D. Hughes.

We met some interesting Park Rangers on the second hike. The first was Bert, a local Native American who had been a long-time employee of the park and was very well liked by his fellow Rangers. When the bureaucracy changed the personal identification rules a few years ago, Bert arrived for work and was not allowed into the park because he did not have any official identification such as a passport or driver’s license. It evidently



From top left, clockwise - Meadows near Jackson Hole; Exum ridge from below; on Exum Ridge; Grand Teton (centre) with pass to left; rappelling down; view from the summit down to Jackson Lake. Photos: D. Hughes.



took several days to get him an exemption from the new rules even though he had worked in the park for close to 40 years.

The other was Black George, an 85-year-old Ranger at the Death Canyon station next to the parking lot. All tourists must report in, sign his guest book and have one of his free root beer floats, an experience not to be missed!

We returned via the east side of the Teton Range and through Yellowstone, America's oldest and busiest National Park. Yellowstone is a very different place both as to scenery and atmosphere. Grand Tetons is less crowded and in general has a very active visitor clientele. Yellowstone is more akin to nature's Disneyland.

The Grand Teton National Park is a great climbing and hiking destination with lots of other outdoor activities – a place well worth a visit or two.

NO WHERE TO GO BUT UP – FRENCHMAN'S

COULEE, 26 April – 4 May, 2008

By David Scanlon

Looking up. Way, way up, is a vertical column that seems to go on forever. And the person standing beside you says that it will take almost all of your 60 m rope to reach the top. Climb or go home. Nowhere to go but up.

At Vantage, Washington state, AKA Frenchman's Coulee climbing area, the vertical basaltic columns can be very intimidating to a first time visitor. Some sport climbs need as many as 12-13, even "14", quick draws, and need almost all of a 60m rope. For a first time visitor, to stand at the base of one of those columns and look straight up is an awe-inspiring experience. The drive from the lower mainland is all on interstate highways taking about 4½ hours to the Columbian Plateau area of eastern Washington state. This area is classified as a shrub-steppe environment. Not a desert as such, but to us from the lower mainland rain belt, darn close. Sagebrush is the dominant shrub here. Very little rain comes to the area and spring and fall are the prime climbing times as the summer temperatures average about 30°C and above, getting much warmer on the southern exposures. Its not a desert but still gets very, very,

hot in mid summer. The climbing book goes on to say that one can climb here in mid winter on those special days in the sun when it may get to about 12 –15°C.

There aren't any specific hazards at Frenchman's Coulee, except perhaps for the odd friendly rattlesnake. Not to worry though. Keeping an eye out for the odd rattlesnake is a good idea but they are few and far between. As April can still be quite cool they aren't out and about that much. In our first two years there we saw none; last year 4 - two adults and two babies. We ignored them and they ignored us. Well we didn't exactly ignore them. We all kept a very close eye as to where they were going, until they went out of sight, and we didn't climb close to where they disappeared either.

Seven of us went down this year; down from the 11 from last year. I don't know why. Maybe I'll have to be clearer next year saying that participants do not have to stay all week. Those still in the labor market have jobs to get back to. I keep forgetting that, having recently retired myself. One can just stay a few days then go home. As it was; two left on the Friday, and three of us came home on the Saturday.

Arriving on a Saturday there were many climbers at the Coulee. As in past years, everyone left Sunday and we had the place to ourselves the rest of the week until Thursday when 4 others showed up – the joys of having the week off – being able to go anywhere you want and knowing that you will be able to climb wherever you want and not have to worry about having anyone else there.



The group at camp. Photo: R. Woodhouse.

The weather co-operated much better for us this year compared to last. We had only three windy days. With this being a shrub-steppe environment it is very dry, and dusty. When the wind blows, dust (sand) gets into everything and can be VERY annoying. Taking your 4 season tent (with no interior mesh) to keep most of the sand out of your tent is the best way to go. Tiring of the wind after a day or so, we went into town for supper one evening. The next day the wind was gone again and the rest of the week was fine. It was generally slightly overcast, with the day time temperature about 20°C and evening temperature about 6°C - which made for good sleeping.

Oh yeah – the climbing. That is why we came. The “Feathers” area was closest to camp, being all of a 10 minute walk – great for coming back to camp for lunch. There are all kinds of sport routes there from 5.4 to a 10-C. It is great for newcomers to get the feel of the place, and for anyone to get warmed up on before going to the Sunshine wall area where the BIG climbs are. Sunday we went to “Zig Zag” wall, 12 minutes from camp, spending the day climbing there 5.5 5.8 5.9 5.10s. Monday we spent at “Kotick Wall” where our one newcomer was introduced to part of the “Sunshine Wall” area. Getting the full panoramic view of Echo Basin on the approach is truly one of nature’s most spectacular views on earth. Seventeen million years ago the earth opened up and spewed massive lava flows over Washington, Idaho and Oregon covering thousands of square km at a time. There are layers and layers of lava a thousand metres or more thick here. This leftover huge flat area is known today as the Columbian plateau. During the following millions of years massive ice ages came and went. Each thaw had huge rivers of melt water scour the landscape. The subsequent erosion is what caused Frenchman’s Coulee to be formed. Basaltic columns, waterfalls, sand dunes, sagebrush, rattlesnakes, the Columbia River – all make for a truly scenic and varied landscape. So on Tuesday we went for a hike to explore. We came across a small lake full of birds, and from previous experience we knew fish were there also. Then we came across a second even larger lake. Here were even old signs of beaver – a dam and even a beaver lodge no less. No recent activity though. One thing we did not see, however, were

deer. Tracks were abundant but no deer were to be seen. Following the outflow of this second lake we found that it became a waterfall over a cliff. This only happening during spring flood though, as the water course was dry when we were there. There was a small pond at the cliff’s edge with many small trees, grasses, and shrubs around. With the water here, bird life was abundant. Looking down over the cliff edge we saw one of the areas of sand dunes and off in the distance the Columbia River. A perfect place and time for lunch.

OK one and all. A skill testing question here for you. Who knows what a Geocache is? Don’t know? Don’t feel bad. I didn’t either. After lunch and exploring Anja found one on a high point of rock just to the north of us. Geocaching is a high tech treasure hunt that blends scavenger hunts with a GPS and a computer. Cachers leave hidden “treasure” at designated sites, then list the coordinates on a web site for others to track. Apparently after finding a cache you can take one small item, then replace it with something else. And so on and so on. For more info on this fun thing to do there is a website – Geocaching.com

OK! OK! The climbing. There was a rock island that we could see from the rise of rock where the geocache was so we went down to get our packs and were off. This special place is just as described – an island of rock in the middle of a flat plateau. My reason for wanting to go there was a picture in the climbing book. The picture showed this separate column apart from the main mass of rock. And there it was. Woo Hoo. How exciting! Finally: there it was



The rock column. Photo: R. Woodhouse.

right in front of us. I slowly stopped and looked at it. I stared from one side, then another to see if it was climbable at all. Anja shouted from the top of the rock island that there was a bolt on it part way up. No way I thought to myself! Then I saw it. A bolt. Then there was another. Someone had come all the way to this tower in the middle of nowhere and bolted it. Well then, that was settled! I just had to try to climb it. It wasn't very big, diameter wise - only a meter or so across. And the lean! Oh the lean! And lastly, that crack half way up. It looked as if that crack went all the way through and the darned thing might fall at any moment. But what the heck! It's been there for probably thousands of years and what were the odds that it would come down today? Lets try the darned thing anyway. It might have been a 5.7, and after all was said and done, 4 of us climbed it. What a hoot. Lots of great shots to show how heroic (or stupid!) we were. .

Onward then - over and down to the sand dunes. Some tried to slide down on plastic bags but it wasn't



Climbing the column. Photos: R. Woodhouse.

steep enough. This is really cool place to just wander around. Heading north now we crossed the mouth area of Echo Basin towards the climbing area called Sunset Park. Arriving there we climbed two short routes – a 5.7 and a 5.8. Climbing upwards we went east across the top of the plateau to camp to end a great fun day. And that was only Tuesday.

The next day we climbed at the areas called the King Pins in the morning and then back to the Feathers in the afternoon. As it had been quite windy for the last couple of days or so the decision was made to go into town for supper for a change and a break from the wind, AND no sand in the food. Unless you have experienced it, the wind can wear you down, always fighting it. It was always there, night and day. So to town – the small village called Vantage. The local restaurant was the same as the previous year – not fancy but having lots of good basic foods. And did we ever pig out! Wow. Those of us who were there will remember just how much we put away. Remember?



Sand and rock in the area. Photos: R. Woodhouse.

On Thursday, Bob, Serena and Donna decided to go on another hike, this time going north into the large basin with the big waterfall we could see on the way into the Coulee. The road leading down into the Coulee was old, narrow, and winding, with many open cliffs and over the years some cars have gone over the cliffs. Some by accident I suppose, but most look as if they were pushed on purpose. And the tires! Lots of tires down at the cliff bottom. We guessed that on Saturday nights the locals sent old tires over the cliffs just for the fun of it along with the

odd car. I'll bet that they sure did bounce – the tires that is. Those cars sure were flattened. I'd like to do just that some day myself but won't though. The party took some great pictures of the old cars with themselves hamming it up.

Thursday and Friday we were at Corn Wall, Millennium Wall, and Riverview Park. All in all we climbed well. Melissa was the surprise, surprising even herself. During one discussion as to whether or not she should try to lead a 5.10, I just pulled the rope down leaving her with no option. And she did lead it. And well too! At week's end she improved to lead a 5.10B. Melissa was the new member. We all



improved and climbed harder with many more hard routes than in previous years. Some 5.7s, some 5.8s, more 5.9s, and half a dozen 5.10As and 5.10Bs this year. Bob surprised himself by having his first lead a 5.7. We beat him to the easiest climb in the area leaving him to wait or just go for it. Good for you Bob. Anja and Werner climb a lot together at other places

during the year and they both were more experienced than last year. Serena had fun during her climbs. Donna had a few more lead climbs than last year and had a great time.

Friday morning saw Bob and Serena leave. Donna, Melissa and I decided to leave Saturday morning. Melissa had school on Monday and Donna had work on Monday and they liked the idea of having the extra day to clean up. We said our goodbyes and were homeward bound.

Anja and Werner stayed until today Monday – two full days more than us. The keeners! Good for them.

They both finally led three climbs they wanted to try. Good stuff.

Are we going back again next year? Probably – see the next article.

Participants: Bob Woodhouse, Serena Levy, Anja Pakendorf, Werner Grzimek, Melissa Faulkner, Donna Scanlon, and David Scanlon (organizer).

FRENCHMANS COULEE, 9-17 May, 2009

By David Scanlon

Wow! What an interesting trip this year's was. Not so much with the climbing as with all of the other events overshadowing it – the whipped cream and the porcupine for example.

Oh to be a trip organizer! Some times things just fall together with no problems at all and then there are trips like this one that has its last minute panic attack. To start from the beginning – in past years there have been portapotties at the Vantage parking area. They have been paid for and put there by the Climbers Access Society, this being one of the many good deeds that they do. A month before our trip, however, Peter Woodsworth emailed saying that they were no longer there but a Seattle school group was there with one that they had rented for themselves. He gave me the phone number of the company. I called and made arrangements to have one delivered for the group for the week. All was well, right? Wrong. The company didn't work on



The 2009 camp. Photo: Donna Scanlon.

weekends so my wife and I had to go down a day early for delivery, which we did. All was well, right? Wrong. We happened to stop in the store in Vantage and, talking with the owner, found out that there was to be a concert the following weekend at the gorge amphitheatre nearby, meaning that there would be hundreds of partiers at the free Vantage camping area that weekend. We wanted no part of that and I proceeded to call home to tell everyone that we were leaving Vantage early the next weekend before the party animals arrived. This meant that one person couldn't make it. I also called to have our portapotty picked up two days early. All was well, right? Finally – yes.

So Donna and I went to the Vantage camping area to find SO many people already there. Why so many? That evening we counted 35 tents, 1 motor home, 2 truck campers, various people sleeping in their vehicles, dogs all over, and kids running every which way. We were thinking that there was going to be a concert this weekend also. It turned out there was to be singing though. The authors of the climbing book for the area had organized an event to raise money to put towards a permanent facility with the Washington state Fish and Wildlife Department. So on Saturday night some of us went over and gave a contribution and listened to the band. The band turned out to be a group from Rossland. Good on us Canucks making up a good portion of the climbing crowd. It was a real fun family atmosphere that we enjoyed.

Yeah yeah I know, on to the trip. Ok then. We climbed and went home. Well no, more than that happened. The actual climbing did start as usual with everyone going to the nearby Feathers to warm up on the easier shorter climbs and get the kinks out. We were on the north side for a while and then decided to go to the sunny south side to get warmer in the sun. Getting there we saw that no one was climbing; they were just all standing back from the rock. It turned out that a belayer was just standing there doing her thing and heard a sort of plop a couple of meters away. Looking over, there was a rattlesnake which had somehow climbed up between the columns and then fallen out and was then just going back and forth, presumably looking for a place to hide. After everyone took pictures the snake finally went into a crack and disappeared. So on to the climbing with everyone looking between the cracks for more



Climbing at Frenchman's Coulee. Photos: Donna Scanlon.

snakes – spooky. And me! Well it was now time to go for lunch so finishing climbing first, I went down the trail back to the camp to eat. Then dammed if I almost stepped on another rattlesnake right on the trail. Now that was close! Real close! He was telling me loud and clear with his rattle to keep away and I was having no trouble at all in doing just that!

So we climbed on Saturday, Sunday and Monday deciding to take the next day off to go for a hike. I'll just add a note here that after everyone left Sunday, and after the fundraiser there were just two other cars left – peace and quiet as it should be. Now on

to our hike – to the south was an old jeep road that we followed to a small lake with lots of birds. There are also fish there as we have seen them and had some given to us on other trips by locals who we think were over their limit. We didn't mind eating them. Following the outflow from the lake there was this beautiful small green valley full of lush plants – trees and flowers from the stream. Our flower girl Carol named some flowers for us - Larkspur, bitterroot, blue camus, hog fennel, balsam root, large flowered Brodiaea, wild flax, poison ivy, lupines, and more not named.

The stream ended at a cliff where usually the stream became a waterfall. But not that day. The howling west wind was such that the water went over the edge of the cliff and was then carried straight up and back by the wind. Wild! – a backwards waterfall. Continuing south from there we came to another much larger lake – all very pretty country with the sage, wildflowers, and all. I'd seen deer tracks a few times but had never seen any in the flesh although I kept looking. Following along the lakeshore we came upon old beaver sign – chewed trees, a beaver house and dam. Then there was a porcupine in a tree. This was very special as they are not abundant and less often seen. He was very co-operative though as he sat in a tree to let us take his picture over and over and over. No one wanted to miss out on this guy. We also found huge anthills scattered about just teeming with ants. I have never seen any ant hills as big as these were. Donna just had to poke them. We followed the shore line of this second lake then turned west towards the Columbia River heading for a line of cliffs. The outflow from the lake disappeared underground but all you had to do was follow the depression to find where it came out over another cliff. The day was still very windy and as we came to the cliff edge the wind was howling. We threw a couple of small dead branches over the edge. They went straight up and back for a couple of hundred meters before stopping. Then Peter threw a small flat stone over the edge. It went out, and then up, and then back just missing me. That wind was strong! Wow! And just over the cliff edge was a huge sand dune.

We then went and hunkered down, trying to get out of the wind as much as possible and had lunch. After lunch we went over a small pass to a rock tower that some of us climbed the previous year. My plan had been to climb it again but with the wind so strong as to blow you over with gusts, the decision was made to not climb it that day. And boy did that tower ever look fragile from last year. It is one of those things that might be there for another 500 years or it might come down tomorrow. You just don't know. So we backtracked and went on down to the sand dune. At the bottom there were some tumbleweeds so we entertained ourselves throwing some of them up into the wind to watch them taken straight up and out of sight. Some fun. Here we turned back to the north towards camp and the

Sunshine Wall climbing area. We then went north turning east again up the valley and saw 3 deer. I can't remember who saw them first, but I know it wasn't me though. A first for us seeing them. Soon after there was another one and finally a last one making 5 in all – a fitting end to a 6 hour jaunt day. The next day we got a wind warning from our weatherman, Peter Malacarne, who had his little radio on for the forecasts. The sun awning was then taken down so it wouldn't get blown down like the one we had last year – a prudent precaution.

On we went to the Sunshine Wall climbing area where 60 meter ropes were needed for the TALL climbs there. Great exposure there folks. Come on down next year. If you haven't been here before, come on down. The next few days we climbed, and ate, and climbed and drank, and ate and climbed. And the whipped cream came out. Dinners were fun too. You had to be there.

There was one time during the week that we had a couple of drops of rain but that was all. No one was hurt and we all climbed like heroes. A couple left a couple of days early, someone else left a day early, thus leaving 5 of us in the final morning making a mad dash for the portapotty as the truck came early to pick it up. They just had to use it one last time to get their moneys worth.

We had fun. Thanks to all who came.

Participants: Carol Macmillan, Bob Woodhouse, Serena Levy, Donna Scanlon, Anja Pakendorf, Peter Woodsworth, Peter Malacarne, Werner Grzimek, and David Scanlon (organizer).

A HOOD AND ST. HELENS HIATUS, 16-18 May, 2009

By Jane Weller

She was twitchy, alert and full of questions at 11 pm at night. We were tired and smelled of crusty sweat and moldy boots.

"Camping were you?" she barked. "What protection did you have with you?"

I choked down a giggle: border guards are intolerant of mistakes.

"I've a pocket knife and an ice axe," Ron ventured. Miss Authority seemed happy.

That same morning we had skied to the top of Mt Hood; the previous day we'd skied off the summit of Mt St Helens. Now the border was a rainy, snarly mess of irate drivers. Inadvertently, we found ourselves in the NEXIS lane; like a fly in a spider web, it was impossible to escape. A definitive SIN, even to Canadian border guards who refused to be polite to compatriots.

Two days earlier we had left Vancouver. Seven people assembled at Cougar, Washington, where we exchanged our \$22 on-line reservation for a tag, rather like a mortician's pin on the toes of the deceased in the morgue. A hundred permits a day: They were all spoken for - sold out the previous week. It was not to be a solitary experience.

The 5 am start from the Mt St. Helens parking lot was inauspicious. We skied through high elevation fir and scrubby pine as the sun rose higher. We passed gangs of walkers with Buddha like physiques, snow shoers – and most interesting of all – people *carrying* skies with climbing skins carefully adhered.

Us Canadians, two Germans and one Iranian all got to the corniced summit in between 3 and 4.5 hours. The breeze was slight and the sun continued a steady arc over our heads. I peered into the caldera, privy to a strange, sinister world. Puffs of steam rose in the primeval landscape. Twenty nine years earlier (18 May, 1980) Mt. St. Helen's had erupted and had made startling news around the world. Harry Truman refused to leave, and his charred corpse no doubt sank to the depths of Spirit Lake. His legend lives on. Fifty-seven people were killed or never found. Had the eruption occurred one day later, when loggers would have been at work, rather than on a Sunday, the death toll would almost certainly have been much higher.

We left a group of Americans on the rim. They were exhausted. We skied up to the true summit, where, incredibly no one had yet ventured for several days. Back at the parking lot by noon, we sat around drinking Cinder Cone Red Ale. We basked in our success. We ate Behnam's chicken pizza. We stood barefoot on the hot tarmac parking lot and thought life was pretty darn great.

Ape Cave, just down the road is an extraordinary 12 mike long tubular affair. I looked methodically for



Ascending Mt. St. Helens. Photos: J. Weller.

Monday (Victoria Day) as the dawn broke, Ian and I set off at 5 am with a grainy wind buffeting my progress and choking my breath. Ron and Anja had



left an hour earlier and Peter and Silke were taking up the rear. Andrew, wisely, was still in bed. We skied beside the seemingly endless downhill chair lifts in

silence. The snow was hard and wind blasted, forming large bobbles that caught my tips. We rammed our skis into the frozen snow at 3,200 m (the top of the “hogs back”) and cramponed across the frozen slope to then climb 70 meters up a more vertical (yet easy) slope to the narrow ridge.

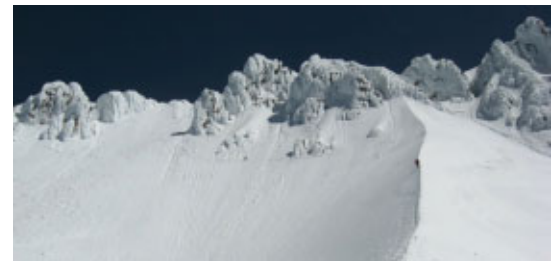
We got to the windy 3500m summit - elated. The following day, this thread was posted on the Cascades Climbing Forum:

Conditions for climbing beyond the hogs back were dangerous. The snow is frozen dense and hard - very difficult to cut secure footholds. Even for roped teams, one slip... everyone goes down on hard snow. Only four brave souls out of 25 made the summit that day.

They were wrong, of course. Six brave souls made the summit.



The people living south of the line are a strange lot. As soon as one crosses the 49th parallel, the world changes. The cars get bigger, the shopping malls longer, the highway sumpier, wider, faster, more crowded. A land of superlatives.



Ian (top) and Ian and Jane (middle) on the summit of St. Helens; Ian skiing down (bottom). Photos: J. Weller and J. Weller collection.

Looking down (top) and up (bottom) the narrow ridge to the summit area. Photos: J. Weller.

Regardless, the very tops of the mountains that weekend were empty: left empty just for us. Thank you Peter Gumplinger and Silke.

Participants: Andrew Brown, Ron Groom, Behnam Giwi, Anja Pakendorf, Peter and Silke Gumplinger (organizers), Ian McGillivray, and Jane Weller.

FROM FRANCE TO SPAIN THROUGH THE PYRENEES, July, 2009

By Michael Feller

After a series of train rides followed by a bus trip, we found ourselves in Cauterets, a small town in the French Pyrenees. Once popular as a spa town, Cauterets has reinvented itself as a recreation resort with downhill and cross-country skiing in winter and hiking and sight-seeing in summer. I was finally able to indulge in one of my dreams – a traverse from France to Spain through the Pyrenees via some mountain tops. The plan was to hike from Cauterets to the town of Torla in Spain. A reasonably fit person could do this in 2 days, but we planned some side trips to climb a few peaks and explore some valleys, spending about 11 days in the area.

I had planned the trip based on the information in a couple of Cicerone guidebooks to the Pyrenees. As we were to discover, these books were full of errors, vague descriptions, and out-of-date route descriptions. They could be used as rough guides only. I had purchased a French map via the internet. In Cauterets the map was readily available for half the price. I also purchased a Spanish map there which covered our entire route. As we were later to discover, the Spanish map was also inaccurate, in one case placing a lodge in which we intended to stay about 3 km from where it was actually located. We later encountered a German couple whose German guidebook was substantially more accurate and comprehensive than ours. These extra challenges posed by map and guidebooks did not really detract from our trip, however. They simply caused us to communicate more with others to get accurate information.

Originally we were to spend one day in Cauterets before heading off. However, the hut we planned to stay in for the first night was booked out 2 weeks in advance when I tried to make a reservation – gone

are the days of being able to wander into a European mountain hut without a reservation.

Our extra day in Cauterets was spent “acclimatizing” by hiking up the Soum des Aulhères, a 2200m peak east of the town. This involved a 1200m ascent (the greatest for the trip as subsequent daily ascents were typically 600 – 900m) on initially a road for about 2km, followed by a wide, well-graded trail. Until about 1600m we traversed through mixed conifer – deciduous hardwood forest. Higher we entered subalpine meadows, dominated by grasses, scattered flowers and masses of flowering red rhododendrons. The trail switchbacked up at a steady gradient to a pass about 1km north of our summit. On the other side of the pass were the lifts of a downhill ski area and masses of cow- and sheep- dung, accompanied by countless non-biting, but annoying, flies, like Australian bush flies, one mosquito and a few horseflies and deerfly-type flies. The blood-sucking insects were vastly outnumbered by the nectar-sucking ones, beautiful butterflies being particularly prominent. Bug dope was never needed.

We found a shady spot for lunch as it was quite warm (high 20’s), contemplated the views of dominantly rocky mountains with patchy snow – similar to Washington’s Cascades, then continued up the open slopes. Above us on a ridge of soil, probably the result of excavations for snowboarders, we saw a solitary vulture, whose numbers had declined from many thousands to a hundred or so in France and about 2000 in Spain before restoration efforts had built their populations back up to currently about 700 in France and several thousand in Spain. We were later to see a number of eagles and hawks, but of their prey we saw nothing except marmots. Apart from marmots and birds we saw no wildlife. The last Pyrenean bear had been shot by a farmer several years earlier. Interestingly, this resulted in massive pro-bear demonstrations in France and was followed by a reintroduction program. Some maps will even tell you now how many bears are in different areas. Our trip went through bear habitat, but we saw neither bears nor bear footprints.

We arrived at the top of our peak to find the top of a ski lift only 20m below it. The guide book described a trail from the peak to the south, leading back to our ascent trail. To reach the trail, however, we had to descend beside an impenetrable ski area boundary

fence, then slide under an electric fence. Near the treeline, on the descent, it was a question of following intuition rather than the map – our first indication that our maps might not be that accurate – as we encountered a gravel road not shown on the map. Intuition got us down to a small restaurant overlooking Cauterets, which we reached after a drink and a rest.

The other day from Cauterets we decided to walk half of the distance to our first hut, up to an old bridge – the Pont d'Espagne. It would be easier with light day packs and when we did set out on our extended trip, we could get a bus to the Pont d'Espagne, reducing our first day with full packs, but still able to claim that we had walked the entire distance from Cauterets.

The guidebook provided a singularly inaccurate description of where the trail started, but again intuition took us to its start, beside an old abandoned spa, complete with water smelling of rotten eggs (H₂S). A wide, well-graded trail lead us through dominantly hardwood forest upvalley. After 2 km the trail dropped to the valley bottom at the old spa-resort of La Raillère. The trail then entered the Jéret valley, keeping close to the creek with its many magnificent waterfalls, cascades, and small canyons. Although a paved road went up the other side of the creek, one was rarely reminded of its presence. The trail did appear to provide a popular day trip from La Raillère, however. Cauterets, derived from an old Roman word for hot springs, was made



In the valley of Cauterets. Photo: M. Feller.

fashionable in the 19th century by people such as Napoleon and Victor Hugo. Tennyson visited it and the valley above it became the inspiration for one of his poems – “In the valley of Cauteretz”. His poem started –

“All along the valley, stream that flashest white”. After 4 impressive km beside a flashing white stream, the old stone Pont d'Espagne appeared. We ascended a switchback and suddenly a large colourful restaurant / hotel rose up out of nowhere. Recovering from the shock, we crossed the pont to find a lunch spot beside yet another superb waterfall. After lunch we followed yet another well graded and very popular trail up the Gaube valley to a large lake – the Lac de Gaube – with its accompanying



restaurant/hotel. It was here that the floristic diversity of the subalpine meadows became apparent, and where my flower photography began in earnest. Of the multitudes of flowers we saw, deep blue gentians and yellow-orange-red *Lotus alpinus* (Lotier or chicken's foot in



En route (above) to Lac de Gaube (below). Photos: M. Feller.

French or Spanish, respectively) became my favourites, although blue and yellow native irises that we came across later in Spain were also superb. Some species were familiar from B.C. – moss campion, fireweed, and mountain avens, in particular. Many genera were also familiar from B.C., including *Gentiana*, *Campanula*, *Cirsium*,

Heracleum, *Lilium*, *Pedicularis*, *Ranunculus*, *Saxifraga*, *Thalictrum*, *Valeriana*, and *Veratrum*. Some appeared identical to BC species (e.g. *Veratrum viride* and *Heracleum lanatum*) but are given different species names in Europe. Having determined a genus, I thought it would be easy to key out the species. This was so in some cases, but not for most due to the great diversity of species. With over 30 species of *Gentiana*, and about 50 species of *Campanula*, 40 species of *Ranunculus*, and 80 species of *Saxifraga*, species identification was not always possible in the time available. (In all of BC from sea level to alpine, the number of species of *Gentiana*, *Campanula*, *Ranunculus*, and *Saxifraga*, is 8, 7, 36, and 28, respectively.)

Although it was warm (mid 20's), the lake water was from melting snow and glaciers so it was too cold for a swim. We watched the multitudes walking to the restaurant from the top of a gondola about 1km away, photographed flowers, then descended to the Pont d'Espagne, where we took a bus back to Caunterets.

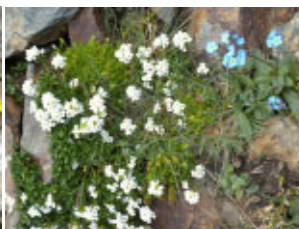
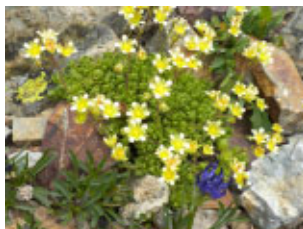
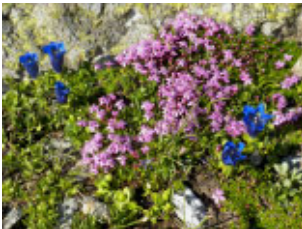


Heading up the Marcadau valley. Photo: M. Feller.

On a Sunday we finally headed out, taking the bus back to the pont. The first day was to be our easiest on the extended trip, only 5 km horizontally and 350m vertically, on a well defined and well graded trail. We hiked through grassy meadows up the Marcadau valley. Everywhere were small groups of people. The

abundance of families with children was exceptional and pleasing. The only problem was finding an unoccupied shady spot for lunch. This was a day of very easy, extremely scenic hiking up a valley, surrounded by rocky peaks and ridges. Rounding a corner in the

valley, we came to our first hut – Refuge Wallon. As it was only early afternoon, we found a shady spot beside a crystal-clear stream and rested, still slightly jet-lagged. We finally ambled to the hut to get our bunks. We actually had a tiny 2-bunk room to ourselves. Subsequent mountain huts saw us in larger dormitories. At this hut, and subsequent mountain huts, dinner involved soup, a meat main course, a slice of nice Pyreneen cheese, then a



A few of the many alpine flowers seen (at 2650m), including moss campion and gentians (top left), saxifrages (top middle and right), Lotus (bottom middle), forget-me-nots (bottom right), and penstemons (above). Photos: M. Feller.

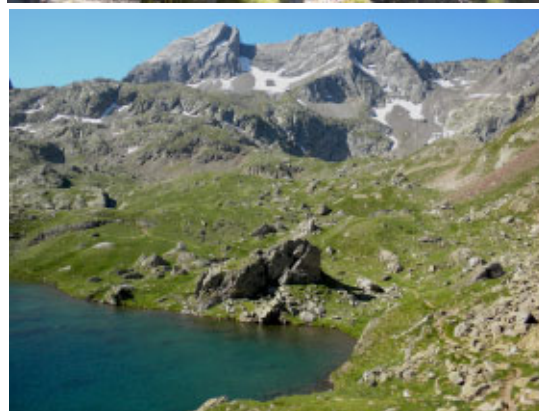
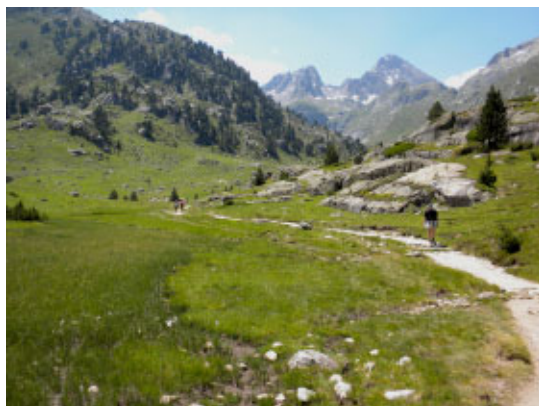


Refuge Wallon. Photo: M. Feller.

small fruity dessert. Breakfasts were the typical European bread, butter, jam, and a hot drink, sometimes with orange juice.

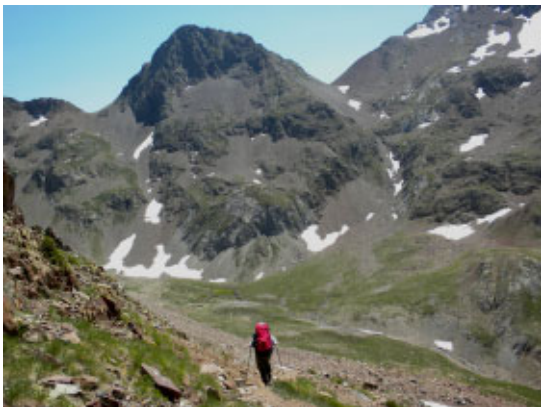
The following day was longer – about 8 km and just over 700m vertical. We followed the usual well-graded trail up to the head of the valley to a pass – the Col d'Arratille. From that very windy pass we dropped down into the head of the Ara valley in Spain, down which we were to travel later. We traversed across the head of the Ara valley then climbed up to another pass – the Col des Mulets – and back into France. From there we descended 400m to the next hut – the Refuge des Oulettes de Gaube, in the upper Gaube valley, with superb views of the spectacular north face of the Vignemale group at the head of the Gaube valley. It was a photograph of this face which gave me the impetus to visit this area. The trail descended steep slopes, bypassing snow patches and switchbacking down at a pleasant gradient.

The meadows around the hut were alive with flowers and the moist flats upvalley from the hut were covered with a cotton grass in its seeding finery, just as in Jasper park in Alberta. In an approximately 1.5 square metre patch of greenery in a talus slope, I counted 26 species of herbaceous plants (in such an environment in BC, less than half that number would typically be observed). A campsite was at the edge of the flats close to the hut. Camping is forbidden everywhere except at a few designated sites, all close to huts in this part of the Pyrenees. Tents, however, cannot be set up until 7pm and must be down by 7am. The huts have special kitchen rooms to accommodate campers.



Heading up to the Col d'Arratille. Photos: M. Feller.

The cook at this refuge took pride in his meals, and provided the best fare of the 3 mountain huts we visited. At dinner we met a German couple from Hamburg. We learned that better guidebooks than



Over the Col des Mulets, with the first view of the Vignemale (top left) and the view from the Oulettes de Gaube refuge (below). Photos: M. Feller.

ours exist for the Pyrenees, and that the best route down the Ara valley was not the one described in our guide. They were both journalists, he working for the 580,000 members of German Greenpeace. Swapping environment stories, it was clear that BC



Refuge des Oulettes de Gaube. Photo: M. Feller.

and Canada lagged well behind Germany and most of western Europe with regard to reducing CO₂ emissions and implementing other environmental initiatives.

Instead of heading down the Ara valley, climbs of some Vignemale peaks were on the schedule, so the next day we climbed up to another pass out of the Gaube valley, crossing the ridge running east of Vignemale. The first peak above the pass towards Vignemale was Petit Vignemale. At 3032m high, it was only 300m above the pass and an easy hike/scramble. So easy, in fact, that we passed a mother taking her 6 – 7-year-old daughter up, holding her hand and keeping her away from the impressive vertical north face. They eventually made it, and I wondered how many girls her age had climbed a 3000m peak – probably quite a few in Europe. The wind was still with us, although not as strong as the previous day, but it was cool enough to justify a parka for the first time on the trip. The summit offered superb views, including one of our proposed route the next day up the Ossoue glacier to Vignemale itself, at 3289m being the highest peak in the French Pyrenees, the border with Spain running over its summit.

Due to weight considerations, we had not brought crampons. I had reasoned that many people were likely to have established steps in any snow routes we would do. If we left a bit later in the morning, we would have perfect step conditions, assuming there was snow and not ice. Looking down at the glacier, I was relieved to see a good set of steps and very little ice – in contrast to past photos that showed a heavily crevassed and dominantly icy landscape. We did have a rope, harnesses, and prussiks,

however, in view of the crevasses. Few crevasses were visible from above, and we later found out that snowfall the previous winter had been heavy so crevasses and ice were scarce.

Pleased with the appearance of the route, we left the summit, descending back to the pass. From there it was a short 80m vertical descent to our next



Heading up the Petit Vignemale with views down to the Refuge de Baysellance (bottom). Photos: M. Feller.



The Refuge de Baysellance. Photo: M. Feller.

hut, the Refuge de Baysellance. At 2650m elevation, this was the highest manned hut in the Pyrenees. Shaped like two massive culverts forming a cross, it was located on a rocky spur, well protected from avalanches which had to peel off the surrounding steep slopes. It also featured barbaric squat-and-let-fly toilets, which are clearly not designed for women's anatomy.

The hut was surrounded by natural rock gardens containing myriads of delicate and dramatically beautiful flowers, blue gentians as well as native dandelions, moss campion, and *Lotus* being particularly prominent. A floral paradise at such an elevation (about the same height as the summit of BC's Mt. James Turner) surrounded by rock and snow, was not easy to comprehend, even if the latitude was only 43°.

The next day, we descended 200m then left the main trail to follow a rough one to the base of the Ossoue Glacier. This glacier, at 1.5 km long, is the largest in the Pyrenees. The toppling seracs that the guidebook warned about had long since melted back to a sloping retreating snout. The glacier is being actively studied and its rate of retreat has recently been up to 3m per year. One photo of it shows essentially all bare ice with just a thin strip of snow around its upper edge. This year only two small patches of ice, both easily avoided, were visible. There were only a few parties ahead of us, a couple using crampons on the perfect step-kicking snow,

Ascending the Vignemale, the highest peak shown in the 2nd top photo; View from the summit towards Petit Vignemale (2nd bottom photo); View from the col at the head of the glacier (bottom). Photos: M. Feller.



but we easily ascended the staircase. No-one roped up so, in view of the well-trodden path, neither did we. Near the head of the glacier we climbed up a steep band of red rock which the guidebook described as an easy scramble. I rated it as a stiff class 3; it had many good holds but was quite steep and exposed. We eventually reached the summit, just a few metres higher than Mt. Baker, but all rock and containing vigorous clumps of bright flowers – at elevations above 3200m.

Impressive views were photographed, then we descended, waiting to let 2 other parties climb up, to avoid rockfall. Back on the glacier, we ascended to a col at its head, passing the Grottes Russel en route. These were a couple of caves excavated well into the rock by Count Henry Russel who climbed every Pyrenean mountain of note during the 1800s and had a love affair with the Vignemale, wanting to spend as much time as possible on the mountain, which he climbed at least 33 times. He hired workers with explosives and tools to build the caves, one of which was constructed close to the summit. There, at the age of 60, he celebrated the “silver wedding” of his first ascent. He was even given a lease for 99 years for the 4 summits of the Vignemale, for the sum of 1 franc per year.

At the time of our visit, the upper caves were still heavily snowed up inside, so we walked past to have lunch at the col. After lunch an uneventful descent had us back at the Baysellance hut, photographing yet more flowers and looking at the clouds starting to build up.

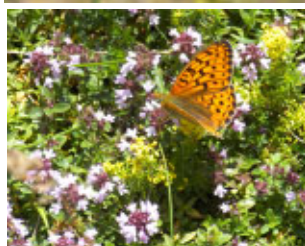
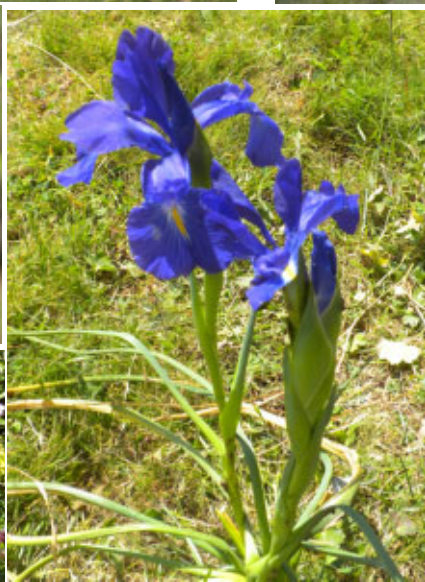
The next day was another easy one – just back up to the pass then down to the Refuge des Oulettes de Gaube, so we had a late start then took a side trip up to another pass, where we encountered our German friends again. Back at the refuge we met a Frenchman who was 26 days into his planned 40 day traverse of the Pyrenees from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean along the Haute Randonnée Pyrénéenne – one of the best long distance walking routes around.

That night, the clouds that had been increasing turned into one of the most active lightning storms I have ever experienced, with flashes every few seconds over an approximately 10 minute period. Accompanied by intense, heavy hail, it was a classic Pyrenean storm about which books warn you. The following morning, we had a long day ahead and

the weather did not look very good. We set off in thick cloud and drizzle – the first bad weather of the trip – and had difficulty locating the start of the trail up to the Col des Mulets, since its lower section was not well defined. About 400m above the valley, the clouds miraculously began to thin and after another 100m we were beneath blue skies with the cloud below us. This augered well for our long descent down the Ara valley. We crossed the col into Spain, noting that the French valleys were still socked in while the Spanish valleys were clear and sunny – a common occurrence we read.

The first 4 km of the Ara valley had no well-defined trail, so we picked our way down through meadows and rocks, using sections of cow or human trails when possible. We crossed the river a couple of times as it was a narrow and shallow, to avoid a cliffy section, then soon got lost in flowers – kilometers of meadows full of flowers. An iris appeared, followed by entire meadows of them. Beautiful purple and blue thistles appeared, followed by rose bushes. After a few more km, tall shrubs and trees appeared, adding to the immense beauty of the valley, which was surrounded by rocky peaks and ridges. An idyllic lunch spot was in the shade of a large boulder surrounded by flowers on a slope above the valley bottom.

A trail had come down a side valley, so we followed it down. A section across a cliff had a concrete base and hand rails – a far cry from BC! Six km from our lunch stop, the trail reached an old stone hut at the end of a gravel road (closed to vehicles) around 1600m in elevation. Another side trail from the west also lead to the hut. Several parties appeared as we were now within the day-hiking region from the end of the driveable road, about 4.5 km down valley. As we moved from the hiking trail to the road, we left the open meadows and entered a dense, mainly deciduous hardwood, forest with a few conifers. Rising above us on open slopes between cliff bands were vast bright yellow areas covered with a yellow-flowering shrub. This was *Erizón* (*Echinopartum horridum*), which has no English name, but translates to “hedgehog” or “prickle”. As the shrub occurs as dense animal-like cushions and has extremely prickly leaves, the name could be translated either way. Vast south-facing areas between 1500 and 2100m were covered almost completely by this one plant.



Heading down from the Refuge de Baysellance (top); descending the upper Ara valley (middle), with its many attractions (bottom), including meadows of wild irises. Photos: M. Feller.

As we headed down the road, the landscape began to resemble that of the Canadian Rockies, with cliff bands appearing on most peaks. The driveable road ended at the small hamlet of Bujaruelo, with a drive-in campground, a stone hotel, and a picturesque ancient stone bridge across the river. A powerline coming down a side valley from France detracted from the scene. Our Spanish map indicated that our destination for the night (Refugio y Camping Valle de Bujaruelo) was here. Our guidebook suggested it was 3 km further down the road. The guidebook was correct for a change.

The extra 3 km was worth it as we reached the high point of our accommodation for the trip. The refugio was a series of stone buildings set on a steep slope beneath cliffs. Between a hotel and a mountain hut, it offered a hot shower, a warm comfortable room, a bed with sheets, and an excellent meal.

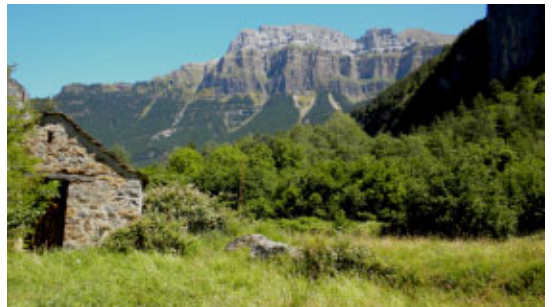
Refreshed and cheerful, we set off on the last leg of our trip – an easy 8 km down valley to the town of Torla. A road could take us there, but a more enjoyable hiking trail climbed 200m above the valley, then traversed along the side, complete with metal sections across cliffs and superb views of the now strongly Rocky Mountain landscape, particularly up the Ordesa valley to the east – our destination for the following day. Half way to Torla, the main trail descended to the Ara, to cross it on another stone bridge, across which a sealed road headed from Torla into the Ordesa valley – the heart of a national park. We continued down, past several people fishing, on the hiking trail which followed a disused aqueduct, then a small gravel road, past abandoned clearings and picturesque old stone buildings with slate roofs. Signs indicated no motorized vehicles or bikes were allowed and none, not even tread marks on the ground, were seen. Unlike BC, motorized and mechanized users respected pedestrian-only trails.

Near Torla we reached a vehicle road, crossed the Ara again, then climbed up a cobbled path through stone walls and pastures up to the main road and the wonderfully picturesque town with its medieval centre of stone buildings and narrow stone roads, so narrow that a car cannot pass pedestrians on them.

After locating our hotel, the afternoon was spent around the town, photographing furiously, buying books to assist plant identification, and some fresh

food, including a still-warm baguette, which did not last very long. Evening drinks were with the German couple we bumped into again. They had taken a different route to Torla.

Although our extended hike had finished, we still planned an extra day hike up the Ordesa canyon, which had looked spectacularly beautiful in photos. Consequently, the next morning we traveled by bus up the paved road beside the Ara then climbed up to an old car park in the lower Ordesa valley. This valley forms the heart of a national park and has become so heavily visited that cars are no longer allowed to drive into it. As at Yosemite, access is by bus only. From the carpark, complete with its refreshment/restaurant building, our trail crossed the river then climbed up an exceedingly steep 600m through mainly deciduous hardwood forest. The average gradient of the slope was 45 degrees, with several steeper cliff bands. The average gradient of the trail was considerably less, however, as numerous switchbacks and strategically placed metal bridges made it tolerable. We were reversing the guidebook



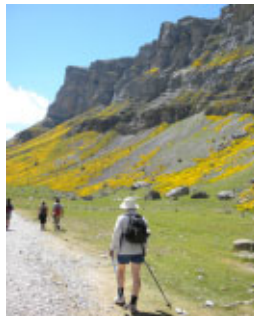
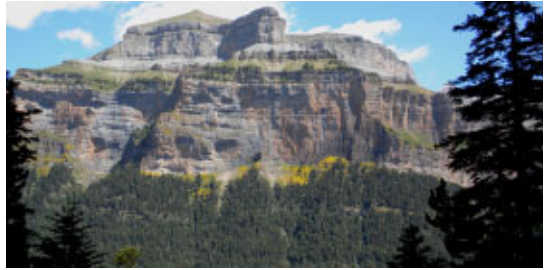
**The lower Ara valley (above) near Torla (below).
Photos: M. Feller.**

circuit route as I had no wish to wreck already delicate knees with a descent of the trail.

Around 1900m the trail came to a tiny chest-high hut with a lookout (the Mirador de Calcillarruego) offering spectacular views up and down the valley. The trail then followed a series of benches and slopes between the cliff bands, keeping close to 1900m for 6 km to the head of the valley. Whether it was views of the rocky mountains, the cliffs and rock formations nearby, myriads of flowers, including the Erizón-covered slopes across the valley, or the blue river below cascading in waterfalls over multiple cliff bands, it was certainly one of the most spectacularly attractive valleys I had ever visited. About half way up we bumped into the German couple again having lunch as the trees thinned out to a subalpine parkland. The last km was through open meadows. The trail finally dropped to the valley bottom and led to a large waterfall over the valley's headwall.

We had encountered several parties, totaling about 15 people on our way up the valley, so it was with some shock that we ran into several hundred people from numerous parties draped over most of the rocks and meadows below the waterfall. They had all walked up the valley-bottom trail, which was to be our descent route. Spanish groups were wearing scarves or jackets or shirts identifying them as belonging to one organization or another. Perhaps amidst the masses it makes it easier to identify one's party – a very colourful scene. Imagine if all members of a BCMC party were to wear scarves with our green and orange crest!

We found an unoccupied shady spot beside a boulder then had lunch while watching our German friends high above us climb through the headwall en route to a mountain hut 2km away. After lunch we had a pleasant hike down the valley, stopping frequently for photos. The absence of cattle greatly enhanced the day. Around treeline, for the first time in the Pyrenees, we encountered luxuriant flowering subalpine herb meadows, dominated by a *Heracleum* species, very similar to BC's cow parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum*). Passing the superb step waterfalls we eventually entered dense forest then arrived at the carpark and the bus back to Torla. The next day involved a bus trip to the nearest railway station, then trains back to the cities. One superb train from Zaragoza to Barcelona cruised at an average speed around 300 km/hr.



Scenery in the Ordesa canyon, with yellow flowers of Erizón prominent. Photos: M. Feller.

DÉJÀ VU DAVID

Have ever you heard of the Land of Beyond,
That dreams at the gates of the day?
Alluring it lies at the skirts of the skies,
And ever so far away.

Robert Service

Dorothy accused Earle of pushing the dying David
over the
rock face.

Earle denied the charges.
The epic poem is a fiction,
is it not?

There are some who have spent years on the
white
towers and ancient sentinels,
rock slabs and inviting summits.

Some have seen bodies fall like rag dolls down
unforgiving jagged rocks,
finally impaled by the spearhead and
fang of time carved granite.

Some have seen friends buried alive in avalanche
snow cement, transceivers, probes and
shovels of little aid,
bodies, finally, frozen and unfound.

Some have lost friends down crevasses when ice
axe
failed, anchors pulled out,
belaying to a safe place was but the deepest of all
desires.

And how do those who have had to cut the rope of
their dearest to save the group live ever forward
and onwards?

Dorothy accused Earle of pushing the dying David
over the
rock ledge.
It was just a poem and fiction Earle insisted.

Some spend days at memorial huts and cabins
where
memories of soul friends will not die, wondering
about the Land of Beyond.
La Lotta Continua

Ron Dart



Rappelling in the Bugaboos. Photo: R. Dart.



In the Lake District, England. Photo: M. Feller.

CONRAD KAIN AND PHYLLIS MUNDAY: MOUNT ROBSON (1924)

By Ron Dart

"There! Lady! You are the first woman on the top of Mt. Robson" I said out loud "Thank Heaven!" for it was a four-year-old ambition at last achieved.

Conrad Kain to Phyllis Munday

The first summit ascent of Mount Robson (then thought to be the highest mountain in BC) was done by Conrad Kain in 1913, and the dramatic nature of the climb is well recounted in **Where The Clouds Can Go** (Chapter 14). A read of 'The Mt. Robson Adventure' and 'The First Ascent of Mt. Robson' walks the curious reader into a mountain adventure that

cannot but hold the imagination spellbound. Those who have studied the well wrought life of Kain often linger at his initial climb of Robson, and, in doing so, miss the rather tense and almost fatal climb he did of Mount Robson with Phyllis Munday and friends in 1924. The 1924 climb of Robson was not recorded in **Where The Clouds Can Go**, but Phyllis Munday wrote an account of the arduous trek.

Phyllis and Don Munday are known as the dean and grand lady of mountaineering in the Coastal Range of BC. It was the Mundays who initiated the interest in Mount Waddington (higher than Robson), and they made many trips to the Waddington region from 1925-1940. **Phyllis Munday: Mountaineer** (2002) and **A Passion for Mountains: The Lives of Don and Phyllis Munday** (2006) tell the tale of their well lived lives in evocative depth and detail (the latter book being finer than the former).

Phyllis Munday wrote about the Kain-Munday climb of Robson in 1924, and her article, 'First Ascent of Mount Robson by Lady Members', was published in the 1924 edition of the Canadian Alpine Journal. The article recounts in graphic and not to be forgotten poignant images, the harrowing trip to the summit and the equally challenging descent to base camp. The article by Munday is well worth the read, and it fills in an often ignored trip to Robson that was led by Kain.

'First Ascent of Mount Robson by Lady Members' (pgs. 68-74) is Phyllis Munday at her literary, descriptive and artistic best. She was initially surprised, so she tells us, when Mr. Wheeler gave her the green light to do the 'big climb'. Kain was the leader and guide on this ACC trip. The two groups rose at 2:30 am and were well on their rock scrambling way by 3:30 am. It was an arduous trip upwards from the rocks to the many thin ledges and glacier. The ice axe of one of the guides went into a crevasse, and a couple of hours were spent retrieving the axe and skirting some rather threatening glaciers. There was even a slip into a crevasse that took time for the recovery. It was Phyllis Munday who held firm as two members of her rope went into the ice blue crevasse. These accidents slowed up the pace, and it was not until '9:30 am we lunched on the rocks, about 10,500 feet, in sight of the great ice wall'. The summit of Robson was not reached until 4:30 pm, and the care taken by Kain to get both groups to the peak took time. The group

had been on the move for 13 hours when they bagged Robson's alluring peak, and the descent had yet to be done.

'On the glacier below we found our tracks all obliterated by heavy avalanche snow' and Phyllis Munday, feeling like a spider on a thin rope filament, slipped over an ice edge, looking for the 'first foothold'. Fortunately, her instincts were right, and the group roped down to the rocks. The day was thick with smoke from a fire and a storm was moving closer to Robson. Twilight and night were inching ever closer, and Kain decided to bivouac for the night about 10:30 pm at 9,500 feet. The climbing party had been on the mountain for 19 hours, and they were still far from base camp. *'We were mighty thankful there was no rain or snow, as clouds were down on the glacier and all the shoulders and cliffs of the mountain were hidden'*

The group was up and on the move by 3:30 am (24 hours after they had begun the trip), and they reached high camp by 5 am. The trek downwards took them to Lake Kinney Camp by 8 am *'where we prepared a good second breakfast'*. The group did not reach Main Camp until 2 pm. *'having been on the go almost thirty-five hours'*.

Munday finished her article by saying *'One is denied opportunity of studying the many interesting details of such a magnificent mountain when roped together, so that my ambition was then, and still is, to climb Mt. Robson again'*. Don/Phyllis Munday never did climb Mount Robson again. Their attention turned to the Waddington Range so well described by Don Serl in **The Waddington Guide: Alpine Climbs in one of the World's Great Ranges** (2003). It was Conrad Kain, though, that made it possible for Phyllis Munday to be *'the first woman on the top of Mt. Robson'*.

Phyllis Munday took a helicopter trip to the Waddington Range with Sir Edmund Hillary in 1955 (Canadian Alpine Journal, 1956), and when she was 87, a generous donor made it possible for her to fly to Waddington yet again to relive many a tender memory (Beautiful British Columbia, Spring 1983). If it had not been for Conrad Kain the young Phyllis Munday (30 years old at the time) might never have been the first woman to climb Mount Robson, and both Kain and Munday should be recognized and honoured for their unique accomplishment on Robson's white clad throne.

WHATCOM PK. AND MT. CHALLENGER, 27 June – 1 July, 2009

By Peter Gumpfinger

These two elusive summits stand as the northern anchors of the Picket Range in North Cascades National Park (NCNP). This area is arguably the most rugged and remote mountain wilderness in the lower 48 states of the US. Challenger and the majority of the Pickets are not visible from any road and no trails offer particularly good views of the area. The authors of *Selected Climbs in the Cascades, Vol 1* rave about the objective in the following words: *“Mt. Challenger is a remote and highly satisfying climb that makes for an almost spiritual experience... (emphasis added). The route represents the best of traditional Cascades mountaineering. Guarded by long, rugged approaches that inflict real hardship, Challenger inspires the imagination and offers rewards unsurpassed in the Cascades”*.

So then why did my club trip only attract one volunteer, Dan Carey, an expatriate American? My wife, Silke, had no choice in the matter. She was needed to get us up the 5th class summit block. Is it because most trip reports agree that Challenger lives up to its name? The long and arduous approaches require at least 4 or 5 days (round trip) by any of the three standard approaches. My plan involved taking the Ross Lake Resort water taxi up the lake to the Little Beaver Trail, hike 27 km to Whatcom Pass, scramble over the top of Whatcom Peak via its North Ridge to access Perfect Pass, traverse Challenger Glacier to connect with the route up from Challenger Arm, dump overnight packs, go climb the summit, and retreat via the Wiley Ridge to Beaver Pass, hike Big Beaver Trail some 22 km back to Ross Lake and finally take a water taxi out. This makes for a traverse and has only one downhill bushwhack section. An option would have been to traverse around Whatcom's summit instead. This is reputed to be dangerous due to falling and sliding ice below Whatcom Glacier. Silke prefers the aesthetics of climbing up and down ridges and bagging other summits in the process and since Fred Beckey does not elaborate much on the North Ridge, I figured it was probably not too big a deal. The other often taken route from Hannegan Pass, along Easy Ridge with the “Perfect Impasse” blocking easy access to Perfect Pass never

appealed to me because of stories I read surrounding the Impasse and because it does not make for a traverse without a long car shuttle. The stiff fare for the water taxi – \$125 to Little Beaver, \$50 from Big Beaver (APT) – did not factor much in the comparison. In the old days, Canadians accessed Whatcom Pass from Chilliwack Lake but this cross border trail no longer exists on the Canadian side. Experienced people have gone looking for it but found it disappeared underwater very quickly. At Little Beaver Camp I learned from canoeists that it is still straight forward, even post 9/11, to cross the US border on the Skagit Road at Hozomeen, and get camping permits from a US Ranger for campsites in the Ross Lake National Recreation Area. The ranger told me that it was only about a 2.5-hour canoe to Little Beaver. Had I known this beforehand, I would have probably pursued a plan for a self-supported trip from cars, hiking only parts of Little Beaver Trail in both directions (The Big Beaver Trail drops from Beaver Pass into the Little Beaver valley about two-thirds of the way up), assuming that the ranger was also authorized to issue permits for the North Cascades national park. So much for red tape. The weather forecast was stellar – no rain and almost no clouds predicted for a week. We left Vancouver Friday evening after dinner. The border took all but ten minutes. Debating a beer stop while driving Hwy 20 just west of Concrete we came upon the octagonal building of the Birdsvew Washington Brewing Co. It was still going to be open for another hour. Enough time to taste a pint of IPA, Amber and Pilsner (one for each). Our waitress turned out to be the brew master's daughter and the one who wrote the history printed on the menu of how the Voigt family came to operate the business. She introduced us to her Dad and we chatted beer, signed the guest book, and vowed to come back in five days' time a lot more thirsty. The day ended with us pitching our tents well after dark in Howard Miller Steelhead Park in Rockport.

There was a lot of dew the next morning only meters from the Skagit River. We had set an early alarm to be at the ranger station in Marblemount just as it opened at 7am, so we had no time to dry our tents. Other climbers were getting permits but none were for the Pickets. In fact, the issuing ranger had not yet written a permit for Challenger that year. The whole procedure took only a few minutes and off we went

looking for a place to eat breakfast. We started the 1km hike down from Hwy 20 with painfully heavy packs. Our scheduled rendezvous with the boat on the shores of Ross Lake was at 10 am. I used the resort phone at the bottom of the trail to call for the water taxi. After a brief stop at the resort office to swipe the credit card and prepay for the return trip, we were cruising effortlessly up the lake in a fast boat large enough for six climbers with gear.

The water around the boat float at Little Beaver Camp was teeming with little fish. We explored the camp then headed up the trail. At

first, the trail climbed a series of switchbacks seemingly going in the wrong direction before it descended into the valley bottom. This section offered some great views over the lake. We quickly settled into a comfortable all-day pace. There was evidence of fresh trail work all along and so it was no surprise when we came upon a work crew of five. They were installing a new log bridge across a deep, stagnant, old arm of Redoubt Creek. I chatted with the foreman for quite a while. He has been doing this for decades and knew about the condition of the Chilliwack Trail - no work is being done downriver from Bear Creek Campsite, while Little Beaver Trail was being upgraded to stock standard. With breaks at Perry Creek Shelter, Redoubt Creek, and Stillwell, the easy but mindless hike seemed to take forever before we finally plopped down at Twin Rocks campsite and chilled out with the bugs. It was now close to 7pm, we had been hiking all afternoon. Silke started a little fire to keep the bugs at bay.

Next morning we were hiking at 9. The trail had not seen recent work from here on but was still easy to follow. The views opened up as we gained elevation. The huge waterfalls streaming from the north side of Wiley Ridge were especially impressive. Then, we suddenly came across a new trail, twice as wide and pronounced as the trail had been - stock standard - but it wasn't long before this freeway disappeared under a narrow swath of avalanche debris. The usual type trail continued on the other



Whatcom Pk. Photo: D. Carey.

side. Many switchbacks later, some in quite short succession up a steep scree gully, beyond which the trail flattened near the pass, we abruptly came to continuous snow. After a short lunch break above the pass, we ascended towards the steepening North Ridge of Whatcom Pk. An intervening high point allowed good views of our route ahead. Here we donned crampons and switched poles for an ice axe. The knife edge ridge was snow-covered for a long way up except for a couple short breaks. The snow had perfect consistency – soft enough to kick bucket steps, but not slushy, and no postholing. Reports indicated the ridge was easier than it appeared from a distance and this we found also. The scrambling was a bit loose and exposed but not as bad as some reports had claimed. We found a line which took us parallel to, and as high as, the highest snow patch. At that point we traversed right onto the west side with 3rd class scrambling up the open face all the way to the summit. Whatcom is a superior vantage point: Perfect Pass, Challenger and our route for the next day up the glacier were clearly laid out before us; Bear Mtn, Mt. Redoubt and Mt. Spickard were behind us to the northeast; and Mt. Shuksan and Mt. Baker were to the west, to name only the most prominent peaks. There was one more very prominent mountain to the southwest, which we later identified as Mt. Blum. After climbing down a 3rd-class rock ridge for a short way, we made



Little Beaver Ck. cirque (top left); Looking down Big Beaver Ck. (top right); on snow ridge above Little Beaver Ck. (middle left); Whatcom Pk. with the N ridge to the right (middle right); on the N ridge of Whatcom Pk. (bottom left). Photos: D. Carey (top right and bottom left) and P. Gumplinger.

quick time glissading down snow to Perfect Pass where we camped for the night. There it was quite windy and cool while our sojourn at the summit had been mild and calm. We had no difficulties finding runnels for water and a site flat enough to camp. Later that evening a mama goat with two kids appeared on a distant snowfield. It seemed as though we were where she wanted to go but now didn't quite dare. Silke said she heard them around our tents in the early morning hours, probably looking for our pee spots and the prized salt.

The climb down from here to the lower Challenger Glacier, a route taken later in the year by some, was completely out of the question. A huge cornice, half broken off already, blocked the way. But why would we want to descend, when in June, a line climbs south up snow behind the cornice, crosses a band of rocks (with a couple of cairns) to a snow slope beyond that isn't all that steep? Gaining more elevation, we outflanked some crevasses before turning east toward a flat area in the middle of the Challenger Glacier. We stopped for a short break near a nunatak, which was quite distinct from Whatcom's summit. Traversing east some more, we arrived at the climbing route up from Challenger Arm and dumped most of what we had in our packs.



From there the route up to the summit pyramid, although the pyramid itself was not visible from that spot, was well laid out. It was clear that a notorious bergschrund was not going to pose any problems for us so early in the year. In fact, fresh goat tracks led the way across it. An easy but exposed snow arête lead to the eastern-most extension of the rock tower. We negotiated a few more precarious steps on now hard snow at the base of the tower before we dropped the campons and ice axes. Silke in her usual enthusiasm immediately attacked the ridge crest proper to get over to the vertical part of the tower, only to find that a bench below provided less exposure and easier access. In all, there are four rusty old pitons protecting the metre or so to and from the one solid fifth class move. Some claim the move is as easy as 5.4, the guide book says 5.7+. I found it about as hard as I wanted to climb with mountaineering boots even when Silke had me on a tight rope. We all got up it, though I certainly didn't make it look easy. A short scramble along the exposed summit slabs lead to a precarious 3m block that felt



Whatcom Pk. above camp at Perfect Pass (top); Mt. Challenger from Watcom Pk. (middle); On the Challenger Glacier (bottom left). Mt. Fury beyond camp above Wiley Lake.



Photos: D. Carey (middle) and P. Gumplinger.



Route up Mt. Challenger (top); Mt. Challenger summit block (middle); Silke rappelling off the summit of Mt. Challenger (bottom). Photos: D. Carey (middle) and P. Gumlinger.

awkward climbing up. You could almost touch the summit. If it lay on flat ground there would be no worries but up there it had 300m of exposure on

one side and it was scary enough on the other. A flake at the edge facing us was probably the easiest way to clamber up. Silke protected us with a sling. We thoroughly basked in our success with feet dangling over nothingness. We looked for a register but couldn't find one.

On the way down, we rappelled from many slings and a rappel ring left behind by previous parties. Our 30 meter rope was long enough to get us down. Off the rock and down the snow, we stopped and Dan used the satellite phone to call a friend from his previous Challenger attempt. In quick succession we returned to our cache, packed up and dropped down to where our route back climbed up to Peak 7374'. There was no way off that peak, except down a steep snow cirque next to rocks and back up a dirty scree gully to a notch to the right. I had bypassed this route on the way up because it didn't look appealing. It turned out that the conditions were fine and it wasn't that bad. From the notch it was a walk to a camp with a spectacular amphitheater at the pass above Wiley Lake. An obvious flat area was found not far from a melt puddle, but it was windy again and not so easy to find shelter for a kitchen.

We hiked mostly on snow on the southeast side of the ridge to Eiley Lake. We wondered whether Eiley and Wiley come from German words, Eile and Weile, meaning 'haste' and 'while', as in: "you only made it to Eiley Lake so you better hurry the next day", while "you made it to Wiley Lake now you can take awhile to get to Challenger's summit" for parties on the approach.

Before long we arrived at Eiley Lake, but what next? All descriptions I had read, and the descriptions were all for on the way in, talk about dropping to Eiley Lake. I had also brought a computer print out from what I thought at the time was a GPS track I found on the internet that showed a party going up and around Eiley Lake, up what appeared to be a very ugly scree gully somewhat above and behind the lake. Dan told us of his campsite from two years ago, two ridges over and far below the level of Eiley Lake. He suggested dropping low. The ridge ahead of us had a cliff facing us interrupted only somewhat at one place and the aforementioned gully and it didn't look to me that the cliff petered out anywhere above where some serious krummholz started. Before a decision could be reached, Silke was off

investigating the ugly gully. She promised she'd turn around if it was any harder than the one we negotiated the day before. An almost continuous flood of crashing boulders and dust clouds from the gully indicated she was still climbing up. I assumed that she felt she was beyond the point of no-return and could only flee upward. She raced into the notch but soon hollered down to us that there was no way down the other side. I didn't dare watch as she now had to make her way back down that ugly gully.

She arrived exhausted but in one piece, proclaiming that her recent experience was worse than anything we had faced on the trip so far. We only allowed her a short break because we had lost much precious time. At this point, the second option above the lake was no longer in contention. Had I not read any trip reports and had nobody's tracks, that's the way I would have gone. It shows you that too much information can be misleading! Off we went down the slope. We made good time and soon I made out what looked like a short, but krummholz-choked break, in the cliff. I wasn't going to drop any lower and forced my way through and up over the ridge. The pain was short but tolerance. An open heather slope was found and followed back up and into a large basin. It was here that Dan had camped before. He knew the way now, though I was skeptical, when he led us out of this basin again by dropping even further down to some benches. Goat paths were followed below a picturesque waterfall and a stream-filled draw was climbed back into a second basin. Here we stopped for lunch.

We continued up a flower-filled slope that led to some thin trees and what looked like a snowfield beyond. We took this route and found relatively easy going into a grass and dirt gully. This we were obviously meant to climb, so we did while looking for options to traverse further. Just then near a bunch of bleached wood trunks, pointing up into the sky in all directions, a defined trail became apparent. Thus, we took the low route described in some guide books as generally contouring at the 1800m level. Except for the short krummholz section this was probably a lot better and faster than the high route near the craggy crest which looked to me to have much steeper slopes and more precarious traversing, though I can understand why parties coming in are not particularly inclined to drop so low once on or near the ridge crest.

Overlooking Beaver Pass, we stopped for one more break, then we dropped, still on snow, to the lowest open bench at the far right (south) corner of the forested slope above the pass. GPS, compass and careful map reading of creek drainages over on the opposite slope told us the location of the broad pass with a shelter. We found a trail and a cairn, then we dropped into the bush, avoiding a light green vegetated gully to our left. There were many cliff bands but we were not caught. Most of our descent was through mature forest with no green vegetation on the ground, only countless dead branches and twigs, but not even many downed trees. Eventually the slope eased and an understory of devil's club and berry bushes became unavoidable. Three branches of Big Beaver Creek had to be crossed before we stumbled upon Big Beaver Trail near the horse camp. We made short order of the hike to Luna Camp.

We hiked the last 11 km to Ross Lake on Canada Day. It was a pleasant hike, passing through mature old-growth, an impressive grove of giant western redcedar, a beautiful series of little lakes filled with the turquoise waters of a meandering Big Beaver Creek, and finally the crowded Big Beaver Landing campsites. We arrived in good time for a dip in the lake and to laze around the floating dock. A (roaming) park ranger bummed a ride from us. He had hiked the "Beaver Loop" in three days and had heard about a climbing party catching a boat ride at 5pm – we gather from the packhorse party which had come up Big Beaver during the day. On the way home we stopped again at the Birdsvew Brew Pub, had a couple of pitchers and some excellent burgers. And thus ended a super mountaineering trip.

PETER, DAN AND GREG, AND THE UNTAMED WOMEN OF THE OLYMPIC PENINSULA, 28 June – 1 July, 2008.

By Jenn Burt

I wasn't sure what to expect, as this was my first BCMC trip since becoming a member. Although his intention was to call me to announce the trip was full, Peter asked about my alpine experience and after a somewhat lengthy discussion proclaimed in a less than enthusiastic tone, "I guess I have to let you come now." Yeeeeeeeeesss. After me, Sam

and Elaine were also accepted to the team. So then the group was 10. I felt immediately comforted after meeting most of the group over breakfast in Port Townsend and hearing that Peter has been known to accept extras onto his initial group size. In fact, it was noted over a few laughs that it may not have been a coincidence that he allowed 3 extra *girls* to join, greatly slanting the group ratio: 7 women to 3 men. Over breakfast conversation I got a glimpse of the different personalities that I would be getting to know over the next 4 days of our Mt. Olympus exploration. Ilze is always on the move, downing 5 cups of coffee while telling tales of past epic adventures between marching into the kitchen in search of milk (not cream). Dan can, and loves to, calculate anything. He knows exactly how many kilometers of driving/hiking/elevation we have, how many litres of gas he needs for 3 days of meals and how many grams per calorie for all the food he has packed for the trip. Silvia is clearly the group photographer. She is ready with camera in hand for all possible moments and poses (natural and highly staged). Mary is always smiling with lots of stories. Peter and Silke argue in German over something I'm not sure about, and Silke laughs as someone comments that she and Peter are a guaranteed part of the weekend's entertainment. At the Olympic Park permit office, the ranger cautioned us that only one group had so far summited Olympus this year, the trail was only partially flagged and that this group was reported to have taken 8 hours in a running belay to cover the 3 km stretch of trail leading to our second camp at Glacier Meadows. This did not seem to bother Peter in the slightest as he replied in a relaxed and confident tone "we are a mountaineering club from BC and I have been up this mountain twice before - I'm sure we'll be fine." We finally hit the trail at 4pm on Saturday for our first 14 km of trail. Silvia learned what a "manicured" (not to be confused with pedicured) trail looks like... and was so comfortable with it she decided to hike the 24 or so km in her crocks! The trail was nothing short of magic, winding through pristine old growth forest of shimmering green and gold, towering cedar and spruce, moss laden Dr. Suessesque giant maples interwoven by an understory carpet of delicate wildflowers, dew glistened ferns and trickling streams. Arriving at the Olympic ranger station we were greeted by Greg



The party is overwhelmed by old-growth western redcedar. Photo: S. Bakovic.

and Elaine who had left on an earlier ferry and we all set up camp in the picturesque group site adjacent to the Hoh river.

The following day was similar to our first – a leisurely start, with half the team in tivas or crocs and a flat trail through forested wonderland. We crossed the mighty Hoh as it roared through a narrow canyon, then started to gain a thousand metres or so of elevation, breaking broke up the day with a heavenly swim (okay, for most people it was more like a very fast dunk n' run) in Elk lake. The trail was far from the treacherous description given to us at the permit station, with a rather steep scree slope descent as our biggest obstacle. We camped that night, as Peter suspected, on snow at Glacier Meadows located just 1.6 km down from the moraine that would lead us the next morning onto the ice field of



Evening campfire. Photo: S. Bakovic.



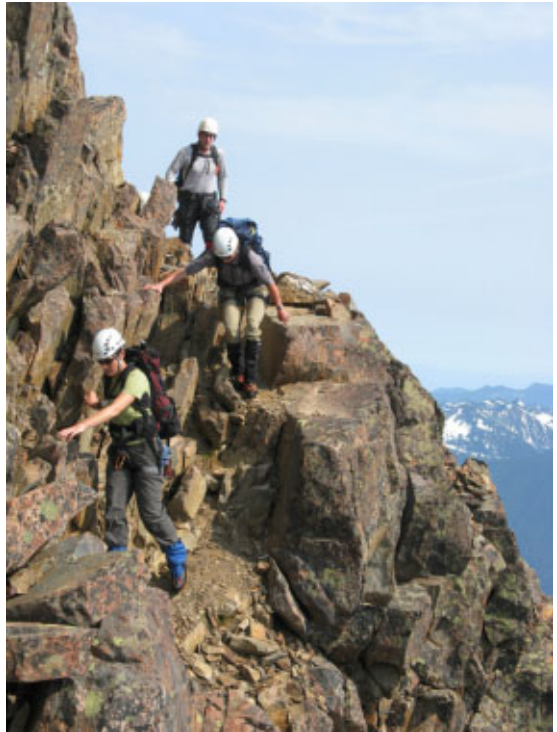
Mt. Olympus and scenes on the ascent. Photos: S Bakovic (bottom right) and P. Gumplinger.

Olympus. Our wake up time was determined, and alarms were set.

At 3:30am I awoke to the loud and distinct cry of the rare alpine rooster which seemed to originate from the vicinity of Greg's tent: "COCK-A-DOODLE DOOooooooo..." rang through the air and I was awake and excited as if it was Christmas morning. Ilze and Silvia were also ready with bags packed and harnesses on before they even had breakfast. They denied having slept in their harnesses, but I wasn't too sure. We were up and off at 4:45 and the wind was warm as if it was blowing in from Hawaii – a strange sensation when you're on snow hiking up towards a towering blue glacier! We geared up in harnesses, crampons and helmets (and Peter in his truly awesome giant round mirror lens sunglasses) and started the long and slow slog up the steep Snow Dome as the sun illuminated the icefall beside us. We had Olympus all to ourselves! At the top of Snow Dome we examined potential approaches to the summit. A pair of tracks led off in a very direct approach but Peter lead us on an alternative route that wound around the back of Center Pk. We thanked Peter for this decision soon after as we discovered the 'direct' tracks led only to the edge of a massive 6m wide bergschrund – like a huge impassable moat surrounding the last pitch toward the summit. After a short but very steep snow slope, we took off our crampons for the last rock scramble to the top. The route was about a class 3 scramble with a short 3m crux led by Silke who belayed the rest of us up. And then there we were – on top of the world at 2430m. It is hard not to feel acutely aware of your privilege when you can hike through kilometres of old growth rain forest, climb a glacier mountain top and view ocean on three sides backed by blue snow peak spires glistening in warm blue sky sunshine. No wonder Peter keeps coming back here!

We descended our mountain tower, retraced our steps to the top of Snow Dome and whizzed down some seriously excellent bum sliding slopes that had seemed to take forever to trudge up earlier. I said good bye to Olympus as we headed down off the moraine and we were soon back at Glacier Meadows packing up camp. Although we were at the summit around 11am, our day had only just begun. We still had 16 km to go. We all had different strategies to get us through the day. Many of us were

re-energized by another dip in Elk lake. Ilze took an energizer bunny approach and kept going and going and going. Greg looked like he could walk forever if he had to. If you're on a steep slope, you'll know he's behind you because earth and rocks will come a tumbling as he comes charging down beside you to overtake. Dan and Mary had an excellent mantra: "lunch is often plural". They were often found pausing



Scrambling upwards (top) with Peter arriving on the summit (bottom). Photos: S. Bakovic.

to snack on their smorgasbord of treats or cooking mid-trail meals perched on a bridge. Silvia stayed way ahead driven by fear that Peter would catch her and take her up on an earlier offer to carry the rope! Despite some aching feet and a never ending last km, we made it. We arrived at camp 17hours and 27 km after our rooster call wake up and after a good 14 hours of hiking. We also made it out the next day, leaving behind the insulating calm and immense beauty of the forest for the hustle and bustle of car parks and day visitors. Peter's experience as a trip leader shone through as he went to retrieve the beers he had stashed in a nearby pond to keep cool for our return. A big cheer and a round of congrats, marked the end of our journey (not including some post trip Mexican food, a VERY late ferry and a 1am boarder crossing). Thanks to Peter and everyone for an amazing experience.

Participants: Silvia Bakovic, Jenn Burt, Dan Carey, Samantha Drove, Peter Gumplinger (organizer), Silke Gumplinger, Mary Hearnden, Elaine Naisby, Iize Rupners, and Greg Stoltmann.

CATHEDRAL PARK TRAVERSE, 2-10 August, 2008 By Stephanie Sersli and Scott Tebbutt

The original trip planned had been a joint Kootenay Mountaineers and BCMC east-west traverse of Garibaldi Park. However, due to a rock slide at Murrin Park that closed Highway 99, our original objective was thwarted. Several of the party dropped out, leaving only four intrepid adventurers, deciding to do an 8 day west-east traverse of Cathedral Lakes Park instead. Our heroes consisted of three crusty poms and a native Vancouverite. After dropping off one car at the Ewart Creek trailhead, which marks the northeastern entrance to the park, we took Peter's battered but trusty pick-up truck to the Wall Creek trailhead, complete with moose sighting in the marshy area. Recent clearcutting activity just outside of the park's perimeter has rendered the Centennial trailhead heading west virtually unfindable. It is uncertain if this trail is going to be restored or not.

We had anticipated encountering major deadfall (we had heard there were 500 trees that had fallen across the trail), but fortunately for us, it turned out that a group of cadets had been there a few

weekends earlier and had kindly cleared the way for other hikers. The climbers' base camp at the Wall Creek headwaters is a beautiful area with forest glades, wildflower meadows and easy access to stream water, with fantastic views of the south face of Grimface Mountain, as well as Orthodox Mountain and the Deacon. There are a few make-shift bear hangs, and due to the increasing popularity of Wall Creek as a base camp for wilderness explorations in this part of the park (only a few kilometers from the US border), putting in a composting toilet would probably be a good idea. We spent two nights here, and one full day exploring the ridgelines and scrambles of the Deacon and Orthodox Mountain. We met a party that had been rock climbing on the main face of the Deacon, and another party that were intent on crossing the border to explore the Cathedral Peak area itself. The head of the Wall Creek valley is an excellent base from which to



The effort of locating himself causes a crusty pom to take a deep sleep. Photos: S. Sersli.

explore this part of the park, offering excellent scrambles and climbs, and none of the crowds usually associated with the Core Area.

Day 3 saw us up early to break camp and get as high as possible on the south side of Grimface before the rising sun caught up with us. With full packs and 6 days' worth of supplies, we slowly picked our way up the grass and scree slopes leading to the rim of the Core area. We dropped our packs at a point just west of the start of the scramble heading up the northwest ridge of Grimface Mountain. According to Matt Gunn's Scrambles guide, the northwest ridge of Grimface Mountain is a three-star moderate scramble, on excellent granite. Following his description, it was a straightforward ascent, and we had the peak to ourselves. It was calm, warm and sunny, and the rock was fantastic. We got to the summit at 2635 m and had 360 degree breathtaking views. Although it wasn't on the itinerary for this trip, we were sorely tempted to explore the south east area of the Park, which includes the Boxcar, Haystack Mountain and the Haystack Lakes – a trip for another time.

Heading northwest along Cathedral Ridge (otherwise known as the 'Rim'), we managed to lose the trail at least once. This was quite the accomplishment for our intrepid mountaineers, who obviously preferred to descend a steep and unstable scree slope rather than continue along the well-worn and marked trail! Quite how this happened is still a mystery to us. Eventually we regained the rim, and came across the famous Devil's Cleft, one of several named features that characterize this part of the Park. Brian and Peter, hardy mountain goats that they are, scrambled down the chasm of the Cleft to gather snow to replenish our water bottles. A little further along the rim, we encountered the much photographed Smokey the Bear, which actually does resemble Smokey the Bear, much to our delight. We set up camp along the top of the ridge, with views of the Park below us, and Mount Baker on the distant westerly horizon. Mountain goats and marmots were our inquisitive neighbours, and we were amazed at how close the goats came even with their young ones.

From our high eerie campsite, we spied a hilarious scene the next morning. A group of hikers ascending from the core area were being closely followed by a pack of mountain goats, who eventually impatiently

passed them. Goats are definitely king of this terrain! Anxious to explore the rim unencumbered, we cached our packs in the rocks, hoping that curious goats wouldn't root through them. We spent the day investigating the many diverse features of the rim, making our way over the Devil's Woodpile, detouring along the fun ridgeline scramble of Pyramid Mountain, where we used Peter's field glasses to spy on the tourists at the Cathedral Lakes Lodge, and admiring the varied geology of this area and spectacular lake views. We retrieved our packs and descended the loose trail and spent a pleasant night camping in the valley.

The next day we made our way to Quiniscoe Lake, where we checked out the campsite and privately-run lodge. There were numerous people, from high-rollers staying at the lodge itself, to families with small children staying at the campground, likely due to accessibility of this area thanks to the shuttle service offered by the Lodge. It was our brief foray back to 'civilization', but by late afternoon we had escaped and were on the high grassy moorlands to the north of Lakeview Peak that mark yet another change in the Park's varied terrain. To get there, we rejoined the Centennial trail that climbs out of the core area through lovely sub-alpine meadows. We also encountered a highly curious spruce grouse seemingly intent on joining our party, but who decided instead to follow another group of hikers heading in the opposite direction. Perhaps their smell was more agreeable than ours?

The moorlands were a not unwelcome change from the steep buttresses and craggy ridgelines that had characterized the earlier part of our trip, and had made the poms reminisce about earlier youthful adventures in the Pennines of Britain. We made a quick side trip to Lakeview Mountain the next day, under darkening skies and increasing wind. The Centennial Trail to the Twin Buttes was not well marked. However, the terrain is open and almost karst-like in appearance at times, and we thoroughly enjoyed the wildflowers and distant vistas. The Twin Buttes are two amazing little peaks, covered in basaltic rock columns and scree, surrounded by subalpine pine groves. We weren't able to find the campsite or the trail leading to or from the Buttes, so we used our orienteering skills (i.e., blundered our way through the forest in a generally downward motion) until we found the trail proper marked with



Scenes on the traverse, including the alpine lakes area (top 2 right) and Grimface Mtn. with the party on the ridge (bottom 2 right).
Photos: Top right - B. Wood; bottom right - P. Wood; all others - S. Sersli.



Cathedral Park inhabitants check out the visitors. Photos: Goat - S. Tebbutt; grouse - P. Wood.

flagging tape heading down to

Mountain Goat Ck. Expecting to encounter far more deadfall along this stretch than we actually did, we were now ahead of schedule. Under threatening skies, we decided to camp as soon as a suitable site presented itself to us. We had just enough time to eat dinner and tuck ourselves into bed before the electrical storm began in earnest. Every few seconds the inside of our tents completely lit up, followed immediately by thunderous roars which seemed to make the earth shake. We each silently contemplated the very real possibility that we were camping in a tinderbox (which seems to characterize the entire park during the summer months) and wondered if the forest around us would catch fire (which it actually did during a subsequent storm one week later). It was an exciting and memorable night, relieved only by the knowledge of the creek nearby and a satellite phone in Brian's backpack. It was a short walk out the following morning down Ewert Creek, where we encountered pack horses and a local family of four heading into the back country for a week's fishing.

Participants: Peter Wood and Brian Wood (organizers), Stephanie Sersli, and Scott Tebbutt.

GRIMFACE MTN., CATHEDRAL PARK, 10-12

October, 2009

By Peter Gumlinger

What is it with keen folks who email very early about joining trips, sometimes months in advance? I have

yet to see one of these people actually join my trips. Diligently I follow up with these early birds closer to the date and often get a surprised response as the long range planner has forgotten all about the trip. It is so easy to fire off an email to get your foot in the door for a trip perceived to be popular and filling up fast. This trip filled fast and people were turned away before the calls from the dropouts late on Thursday and only five were left.

With one car leaving Vancouver (at 6:15am from Grandview Hwy and Boundary) and one from Chilliwack, we didn't rendezvous until just before the bridge across the Similkameen River. A couple of cell phone calls along the way and we arrived there around the same time. The weather was clear and biting cold – just what the weatherman had predicted. We drove the well-graded Ashnola River FSR to where a new pedestrian bridge crosses the Ashnola at km 38.1. This new start (since about 2000) has shortened the Wall Creek approach by about 2km from where the original crossing had been further up the road. We hiked along the Centennial Trail for about 1.5 hours to the first and only sign for Quiniscoe Lake. A few meters before that sign a haphazard bundle of sticks blocked off Wall Creek Trail where it branched right. This trail was just as easy to follow, in good shape, and essentially free of dead fall. We stopped for a late lunch at a small clearing, trying to soak up as much warmth as possible from the sun. The thermometer read -8°C. Side creeks we had crossed were frozen solid and resembled little ice rinks. At least we didn't have to worry about getting bogged down by the swamps further along, or being tortured by menacing hordes of mosquitoes, as summer climbing trips into Wall Creek Meadows consistently report. We arrived at the first of the meadows at about 4pm, in a little less than five hours total of leisurely hiking. There was a convenient brook nearby that had not yet completely frozen. The south face of Grimface Mtn. above us radiated golden in the setting sun. We started a little fire tucked in next to a big boulder and hurried to get dinner cooked before the sun disappeared behind Orthodox Mtn. and the thermometer dropped to -15°C.

From camp we left the trail and scampered up open forest, then slopes of heather and some scree to a knoll across from the NW ridge of Grimface, stopping only once when the sun finally appeared over the



Evening glow on Grimface (top left); Grimface summit block (top right); views around the upper slopes of Grimface (middle); descending (bottom left) to Ladyslipper Lake (bottom right). Photos: D. Lalonde (top row, 2nd top left); P. Sorokin (all other photos).

Deakon-Denture pass at the head of Wall Creek. Denis and Les were not longer with us. They had gone back to their truck because Denis had a bruised kidney that gave him more trouble than anticipated. We left most of our gear at the knoll before heading down to the pass and the base of the climb. There was some snow in shady hollows and ledges but not enough to make the climb any harder. It was a moderate then easy 3rd class scramble following Matt Gun's description through a narrow cleft directly above the chock-stone gully. This route goes straight up and does not make the dogleg drawn on Matt's photograph. From my only previous climb I remembered veering right too and an exposed traverse over some leaning slabs. This is not necessary – trust the cleft as it'll go. Due to crisp dry conditions, we enjoyed incredible distant vistas from the summit. There was little wind so the frigid temperature was bearable. Far to the west, Mt. Baker and Silvertip Mtn. were prominent. We could even make out most of the peaks of the Chilliwack Valley. Before long we were hiking north along the Rim Trail and over nondescript Ovis Mtn. Thereafter, the more traveled path skirted to the west of the crest and arrived at the leaning signpost for the Giant Cleft. Pavel and I ascended loose scree to check it out while Silke used the break to absorb autumn rays. After another photo-op at 'Smokey the Bear' we headed down to Ladyslipper Lake, traversing through a beautiful larch forest in stunning fall colors. Ladyslipper Lake was starting to freeze over and we knew it was going to get even colder than the night before. We camped not far from where the November, 2009, BCBC newsletter photo was taken by Michael Feller who, unknown to us, had also been in the area earlier that day. It was only 3:30pm and the day had not been strenuous at all. We could have no fire that evening so turned in early, glad to have down jackets and winter bags.

It was again biting cold Monday morning. The little MEC thermometer on my pack read -18°C even as the sun came up from behind Lakeview Mtn. We aimed for the east ridge of Pyramid Mtn with great views back down to Ladyslipper and Glacier Lakes. This scramble was easy but a bit loose in places. Not careful enough I dislodged a piece of flat shale that slid down to Pavel who deflected it with his hiking pole. The metal was so cold and brittle that the pole snapped on impact. Fortunately that was the only



Views from the Rim. Photos: D. Lalonde (top); P. Sorokin (middle and bottom).

damage. The summit was little more than the end of a ridge, which we then followed, avoiding difficulties off the ridge to the right. We decided to climb Quiniscoe Mtn. as well before heading west cross-country along a broad ridge that parallels the east tributary of Wall Creek. This was very pleasant going. Below tree line the forest was open as we descended just next to a patch of burnt trees. The route

intersected the Centennial Trail at the very pass where it left the Wall Creek drainage and where there was a wilderness campsite. The trail did one switchback then contoured for a while high above the valley floor before finally dropping to the junction with the Wall Creek trail, where our horseshoe route was complete.

We were back at the car and driving by 4pm. We stopped to refuel with food and beer at the Copper Mountain Bar & Grill off Hwy 3 just west of Princeton and still were back in Vancouver at a decent time. This trip tops several good trips I've had to Cathedral Park for the Thanksgiving weekend. We saw much of the core area and hiked most of the Rim Trail, using an access that was much prettier than the road or trail up Lakeview Ck.

Participants: Pavel Sorokin, Denis Lalonde, Les Pitt, Silke Gumplinger and Peter Gumplinger (organiser).

FIVE FINGERS AREA, 12-16 September, 2007

By Jos van der Burg

It had been about four years ago that I last attempted to climb the Five Fingers with 3 other poor souls. Not having forgotten the horrible bushwhack in and out, I did remember how beautiful the alpine area was. I knew that I wanted to go back sometime. It wasn't until Esther convinced me to go back that I seriously started to think about it. Having gone in the hard way before I decided we didn't have to be punished a second time. But with the area inside a provincial park, helicopter access is rightly prohibited. Another option was to fly in with a floatplane to Widgeon Lake and hike up into the alpine from the northwest end of the lake. After checking into the pricing for the flight in we decided the cost was worth it, even though we had no information on how bad it would be to climb up from the lake. Reinhardt Fabische had been in there and reported that it wasn't too bad. But then what isn't bad for one person can be murderous for another.

On September 12 four of us met at the south airport at the Seair floatplane terminal for our scheduled flight at 9 am. We left a little late but we were finally on our way. The weather looked promising for most of the five days except for the weekend which looked undecided, as it had been all summer. But we were going to enjoy it while it lasted. The flight in was

spectacular as we flew over the suburbs into the wilderness north of Port Coquitlam and into the hanging valley with Widgeon Lake, where we landed smoothly at around 10 am. We quickly unloaded on the beach at the northwest end and watched the plane leave. Silence enveloped us and it didn't take long for the feeling of adventure to set in. With great weather and lots of time we didn't need to rush so we started off at a relaxed pace. We flagged our route on the way in to ease our minds for the way out. Travel went smoothly in the old growth but we encountered some bad bush reminiscent of 4 years previously for short sections. It took no more than an hour to reach a muddy pond where we were surrounded by granite cliffs but we could see a gully through the band that would give us relatively easy access to the alpine.

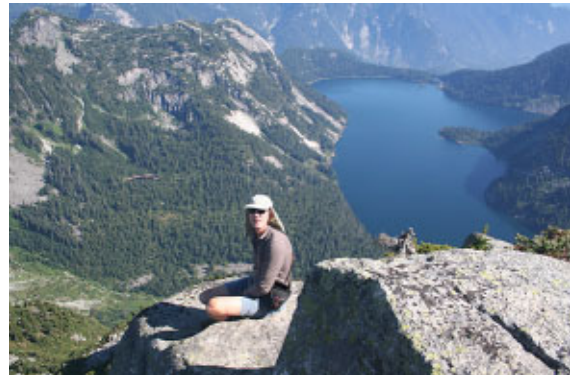
There were a few sections where we had to take packs off to get up some cliffs but otherwise it went effortlessly. Another hour from the muddy pond saw us near the top of the gully. There was no need to go higher as the lake I wanted to get to was near the elevation at which we left the gully and there was a broad bench to follow with beautiful meadows. Another half hour later we reached the lake which, to our surprise, was still partly ice covered and surrounded by snow. There would be no campsite there with a nice beach and lots of swimming. We would have to look for another swimming hole or have the polar bear swim early this year. So we found an incredible campsite on a bench overlooking Widgeon Lake down into Pitt Polder and the Fraser Valley. After setting up camp we still had lots of time to start exploring the surrounding area. We headed off to the northeast to a point where we might have a good view of the whole area and the route over to the Five Fingers. When we reached the high point and had a good view of the route to the Five Fingers, which looked a long way off, Esther suddenly noticed something unusual. We went to investigate we came upon an old plane wreck. Denis being a previous army man realized soon enough it was an old army plane. Old pieces of clothing and shoes were still lying about as were parachutes and of course lots of plane parts. We were very intrigued but none of us were aware of what might have happened. We decided to Google it when we got home which we did. We found out that it was a B25 bomber which had been purchased privately and

was alleged to be involved in the smuggling of Nazi gold in the early fifties. Another myth was born. But it was a neat find for the first day. We had a relaxing evening watching the sun set and the lights come on in the valley. The next day we were going to have a relaxing start and climb Peneplain Pk.

After a pancake breakfast and soaking up the morning sun until 11 am, we decided it was time to start the climb. We had a pleasant hike over a minor bump down into a pass before the final rise to the peak. We ended up climbing it from the south east after giving some room to a bear which was not about to move. The north ridge would have been an interesting class 4, or maybe class 5, ramble but we opted for the easiest route. We had great views from the summit of all the familiar peaks near Vancouver and of Widgeon Lake itself. On the way down we spotted our perfect swimming hole for the next few days. A quick dip in the refreshing water perked us up. The next day it was decided to go for the Five Fingers while the weather was still good. We would have an earlier start than for Peneplain Pk.

At 7 am three of us left while Esther decided to relax for the day. The hike along the divide between the Coquitlam and Pitt watersheds was spectacular with beautiful meadows, lots of granite slabs to walk on and lots of lakes and ponds to admire. We had some fun scrambling/climbing on Sharkfin Pk. and some tricky down climbing on hard frozen snow with little edging from the boots. It was around noon when we reached Obelisk Pk. and had our first view of the upper Consolation Lake and the area I had been into previously. The middle Finger and the highest peak still looked about 2 hours away. After lunch and some relaxation it was decided to forgo our goal because it would have meant traveling back in the dark at some point. We had done most of what we had set out to do, and we all agreed that it would be worth coming back another time. As we hiked back we could see marine cloud developing down in the valleys. When we reached camp Widgeon Lake and the Fraser Valley were no longer

**From the top down -
Denis with Five Fingers behind;
Upper Consolation Lake and Five Fingers;
Widgeon Lake from Peneplain Pk.;
Climbing on the Sharkfin.
Photos: J. van der Burg.**





**Mt. Judge Howay rises above misty valleys (top);
campsite above the clouds (left). Photos: J. van
der Burg.**

visible. From camp we watched the clouds rise and as we turned in for the night we were completely enveloped.

The next morning we were in the fog and everything was wet from the dew. It was a day to relax and just go for a short walks.

The following morning brought light rain and everything was now more or less soaked. We quickly broke camp without having breakfast and headed out in a Scotch mist. After some searching we managed to find the correct gully down and we had to take care because everything was slippery and wet. There were a fair number of slips. At the bottom of the gully we took a different route to bypass the bad bush. We stayed in the creek bed as long as we could but we ended up in a different area and we became disorientated. After a GPS and compass reading we were soon on the right track again.

We had all been silently wondering if we would be flying out in that weather and when we reached the lake we soon realized that that was not going to happen. We were then soaked to the bone, everything was damp, and we had no place to go. After a few calls we decided to set up our tents and warm up in our sleeping bags before we became hypothermic. When I talked to Seair, they mentioned Harbour Air and when they started flying they would come and get us. We weren't sure what they meant by that, but the mystery was answered when the fog briefly lifted from the lake. At the south west end of the lake we saw two floatplanes parked on shore and a large tent community. We were too wet and cold to take the time to investigate but after a little while I spotted four figures coming out of the fog to see where we were. It appeared the maintenance staff of Harbour Air had decided to have their retreat at Widgeon Lake for the weekend and now they were stuck as well. They had flown in 320 kg of beer and lots of food for the thirty or so personnel. They invited us to join them but we where warming up nicely in our sleeping bags and were not keen to get soaking wet again so declined. After phoning work and loved ones

letting them know we wouldn't be home that night, we turned in.

The next morning the lake was still fogged in and the waiting began. The weather improved and the sun would come out at times but the east end of the lake stayed fogged in until the afternoon. Our neighbors brought us over some cans of soup which we gladly accepted. Just when I went to visit them to see if they could ferry us to the east end of the lake so we could hike out, the fog lifted and they started flying out. The pilot contacted Sear to let them know that the conditions were ok to start flying. An hour later our pilot showed up and the adventure was over. It is a worthy area to revisit. It had been a great trip with a good group of friends.

Participants: Brad Badelt, Denis Lalonde, Esther Lehmann, and Jos van der Burg (organizer).

GARIBALDI PARK TRAVERSE, 18-26 April, 2008 By David Scanlon

I'd led a trip into part of the park in the summer of 2007 as one of the BCMC's centennial events. Somehow it came up that we should do a winter trip into the area. At a social in 2007, I announced that the participants of that 2007 summer camp were planning on doing the trip in winter. Right afterwards, 3 non camp members asked if they could come along. We said sure. The usual happened though, as events occurred forcing people to drop out leaving 6 of us to go. Six ended up being a really good number as the access vehicle we ended up using could only take 7 with all our gear.

The car shuttle was solved by us leaving our cars in Whistler and taking a Whistler taxi (i.e. a small bus) past Pemberton and then some 40 km down the Lillooet River main line, crossing the river at Tenas narrows to the west side, and then onwards another 10 km to our logging road access point. I had asked for and was told that we were getting a 4 wheel drive vehicle (I later found out that it had broken down, and they forgot to tell us). It wasn't what showed up though: but our driver, John, put the pedal to the metal and went quickly up the road, very quickly I would add, and went until the road was blocked by snow. He just kept on going until he got stuck. With some shoveling, and rocking back and forth, he got

clear and off we went again only to find that after about 100 m further that was that – snow. Time to unload. We gave our driver a sizable tip for all his efforts and off he went, leaving each of us with our own individual thoughts as the quiet reality set in. We were there and about to start on a new adventure. Having been here 4 years earlier, I knew the way. So off we went, skinning up the snow-covered logging road to its end, then up into the open forest to make



our first camp in the trees.

Next day we continued on up with the forest opening up the higher we went and finally gained the ridge top. Following the undulating ridge brought peak 2380m into view, then Talon, then Nivalis Peak. We stopped here for lunch in the brilliant sunshine

First camp. Photo: A. Dzijukova. enjoying the view.

Our day ended with a steep descent down onto the Nivalis Glacier, then shortly after making camp.

We discussed whether or not we should try to get around the south ridge of Nivalis to the plateau between it and Sir Richard. The reports indicated that it could be problematic, and, with the 30cm or so of new snow, we opted to detour around the north ridge of Nivalis, then approach Sir Richard from the north side on the McBride Glacier. As it turned out we had a most pleasant ski down, and a mostly level skin along this route coming around the ridge's bottom north end. Then, with Sir Richard right there in our faces in the brilliant sunshine we ate. Camp was made part way up the McBride Glacier that evening, leaving us to get to the summit of Sir Richard the next day.

The last two evenings had been a bit cool at -15°C. Our summit morning had quite a wind as we started, making it even colder, and the trail breaking was hard work with the fresh snow and also we were getting some altitude. But it was still sunny. Our



Above the Lillooet valley (top); approaching Pk. 2400m (middle); Nivalis Mtn. (bottom).

Heading towards the Nivalis Glacier (top); Nivalis Mtn. (middle) and Talon Pk. above the Nivalis Glacier (bottom). Photos: A. Dzjukova and R. Woodsworth.



Near the Nivalis - Orphans col (top); Dave in front of Nivalis Mtn. (middle); looking back to the Nivalis - Orphans col (bottom). Photos: A. Djukova and R. Woodsworth.

packs were left near the foot of the summit pyramid and we then skied to the summit of Sir Richard – 2710m. Whoo Hoo! High point of the trip.

Peter and Silke wanted to go over to the Nivalis summit also, as did I. Others didn't. Knowing that if I did I'd be tired and done for the day I struggled with



Camp near Wolverine Pass. Photo: R. Woodsworth.

what to do. I ended up leaving Peter and Silke to go on alone with Silke giving Peter a very explicit 4 o'clock turnaround time. They were a team and arrangements were made that if they didn't catch up with us that day they would camp alone and we would wait for them on the morrow. The remaining four of us carried on skinning along the top of the Ubysey Glacier, down past the Gatekeeper towards Wolverine Pass to camp for the day. Conditions were great for getting past the Gatekeeper where reports we'd read had others parties having to retreat and wait for conditions to improve. Our only difficulty was having to wait a bit for some clouds to clear to see. And then, there they were! Tired and smiling. Peter and Silke had made it to the summit of Nivalis! Yeah! Good for them!

I'd decided the next day was to be a sleep-in day for us all. We all did and even had a chance to dry out some things a bit. Bob said that he hadn't slept the night before at all and didn't know why. Finally we all were ready to get away – at the crack of 11 am. A steep ski up and out of camp put us onto the Forger Glacier where we approached Forger Peak. At its southeastern edge we had another sunny lunch, and, leaving our packs, 4 of us went up to the summit. One advantage of this was also that we could see most of our route for the rest of the day. It turned out that Peter was right and I was wrong! We had different views as to which way to go. This was all pertaining to a talk we'd had on our way there earlier. Carrying on brought us to the western end of the Forger Glacier where we had the most

awesome ski run down onto Drop Pass to our day-ending camp.



Skiing up was followed by a sometimes less than awesome ski down, at least for Dave. Photos: A. Dzjukova and R. Woodsworth.

Dinner was just finishing, daylight just fading away, and a few clouds starting to come in. I was sitting quietly when I started to think I was hearing something. Listening for a minute, the sound continued. Was I losing it? There was nothing out here! I sheepishly asked if anyone else heard anything? Silke listened a moment and said she thought there were some Canada geese fling over. We pulled off our hoods and toques and sure enough that's what it was – a flock of either Canada or snow geese flying over. I hadn't gone bonkers just yet thank goodness.

They don't call it Drop Pass for nothing, as you really have to lose elevation to get down into it. BUT you really have to again climb back up and out of it again. Next morning Bob said he didn't sleep well and that it felt as if his lungs were full of fluid on the right side. That didn't sound good. He said he would just carry on, only slower.

Peter, Silke, and Bob had ski crampons. I, Radmila, and Alena didn't. I mention this because to get out of this hole called Drop Pass, they used their ski crampons and skied up and out, while the other three of us had to carry our skis and boot step up the steep slope to get out – that was a grunt and a half. Our efforts now had us up on what is aptly named Sinister Ridge, with huge waves of snow to cross. Up one only to see another, then another. Up and down, up and down. Then half booting, half skiing down a steep rocky ridge drop off. Still following the general ridge top, we continued on. And we started to really lose our visibility with the forecasted clouds coming in and the wind picking up along with it. Fortunately, just when we thought that we were done, a break would come and we could once again see our way. Then Hour Pk. opened up for a moment.



Panorama from Forger Pk, looking at Fake Pk. (left of centre) above Drop Pass, Sinister Ridge with Garibaldi behind, and Watchdog Mtn. (far right). Photos: A. Dzjukova.



On the summit of Forger Pk. (top); near its summit (middle); heading towards Fake Pk. (bottom). Photos: A. Dzjukova and R. Woodsworth.

We were to go up and around its eastern side to access the Mt. Luxor – Crosscut Ridge col. Firstly though, there was one more obstacle – a steep face to descend. Once again 4 of us booted it down, while Peter and Silke sidestepped down on skis.

As you may have figured out by now, Peter and Silke were the better skiers in the group, especially Peter. As they were skiing and we were booting it down in different places, I said to Peter that when he could see, to go on ahead and we would follow his tracks. This worked out very well. Later on we all finally caught up to him, and followed him to our next camp. The latter part of the day was mostly in a whiteout, as was the evening camp.

We got up Friday in a whiteout, and finally reached the Mt. Luxor – Crosscut Ridge col, which we passed through then stopped to rope up, knowing that in the whiteout we couldn't see any crevasses. Bob was slower again today in keeping up. Peter was last coming down and cranked to a stop about 6m in front of us and proceeded to fall and roll over twice – away from the hole he had just opened up. Darned if he didn't open up a small crevasse right there in front of us! Then 4 of us roped up and had the other two follow behind, staying spread out following our tracks. In this manner we reached Gray pass – the final pass of our trip before going on up and topping out near the Bookworms where it would then be all downhill to home. After lunch we again started up for the last time, up into the worsening weather. Part

way up I stopped to wait for Bob to catch up, telling the others to go on ahead. Forty minutes later I could finally see him struggling up the hill. He had said that he hadn't been feeling well these last couple of days, and was getting slower each day. It was at this point that I made up my mind that I was going to make the call for S.A.R. to get him flown out. We finally caught up to the others in a blowing snowy whiteout, where there was some discussion as to carry on or not. I said that we were making camp right there and then and was going to call out as soon as the tents were up and the stoves going. I got the call through to meet the

S.A.R. in the morning at the VOC hut at the eastern end of Garibaldi Lake.

In the 9 am call to the S.A.R. team the next morning (Saturday), John, their team leader, asked if we had heard the chopper. We answered no. He went on to say that the visibility at the lake was about 1800m and they had a team at the VOC hut already, so could we get down asap while the chopper could



Ski tracks down to Drop Pass (top) before clouds near The Minute Hand (middle), then snow at the last camp (bottom) enveloped the party. Photos: A. Dzjukova.

still see to fly. We were at about 2400m giving us 550m or so to get below the cloud to meet them and get Bob out. Visibility was nil. We roped up again and started down so painfully slowly. Finally we could see the lake! Then there were the SAR people! Soon now.

Then things began to happen quickly. Off the Sphinx Glacier we unroped and went as fast as we could (which wasn't all that fast) down to them. They then took over, telling us what was going to happen and where to stop. I was 5th to reach them and upon arriving they said that I was going out with Bob. Confused, I asked why. Because I was his tent mate, they said. They just presumed I was leaving also as there was room for one more. I said no, that I was going to finish the trip with the others. So within 5 minutes or so of us meeting the chopper, Bob was on it and away with the SAR members, leaving us alone again. We were one less then. The quiet was deafening. The night before I'd said a prayer for Bob and hoped that he would be OK.

The 5 of us left carried on to the VOC hut to have lunch. In a hut out of the wind – what a treat. As this was day 8 and we had food for 10 days, we had lots left to be eaten as we would be out that night. So we pigged out, eating as much as we could. Across Garibaldi Lake and down the trail and we were almost finished. As there was no snow for the last km, we carried our skies to the summer parking lot. It was time to call the taxi and ski down the unplowed summer access road to asphalt. Then the usual change of clothes, off to a pub for a burp and a bite then home.

Memories from our 2008 Garibaldi Park east to west traverse -

A small unidentified animal Alena and I saw just past Sir Richard.

At camp in Drop pass with the invisible Canada geese honking over us.

During a break in the clouds just before Hour Peak as two Golden eagles flew over us.

The quiet just after Bob was flown away, leaving us with our own private thoughts.

Arriving at the end of the trail seeing green, smelling the trees, hearing the birds singing again.

The absolutely fantastic world mother nature provided for us to view.

Bob came home from Squamish Hospital on the following Monday. The diagnosis was respiratory pneumonia, with symptoms of pulmonary edema. Within a few weeks he would be as good as new again.

Lastly, my friends: Peter and Silke Gumplinger, Radmila Jaksic, Alena Dzjukova, and Bob Woodhouse.

THE MISTY ICEFIELDS, 18-28 April, 2009

By David Scanlon

Off we went again, into the heart of Garibaldi Park for the third year in a row. In '07 we did a summer trip in towards Sir Richard. In '08 we did an 8 day version of the McBride traverse. This year a second ski traverse was the plan – from the Lillooet river in the north to Pitt Lake in the south, called the Misty Icefields Traverse.

As always with a trip of this magnitude, getting to the start, and then arranging pick up at the other end can be problematic on it's own. With some coercion, sweet talk, arm twisting, and good old fashioned bribery, we managed to get two drivers to get us to the start of the trip. So Saturday April 18th we packed up and were away and dropped off at the snowline on the Chief Paul Creek logging road, 73 km from Pemberton. We then unpacked the cars, said so long to our drivers, and our trip was under way.

Day one then continued with us skiing up the logging road to it's upper end and as it was then 5pm, that was day one. There was no use in pushing the first day any further than necessary. With light snow falling we ate and bedded down for the night, our view being north west up the valley we had just that day come down.

The next morning we followed Alena's GPS route from the previous summer. Just to step back a moment, in John Baldwin's book; 'Exploring The Coast mountains On Skis' it is stated that the terrain for this trip is "complex". And the difficulty rating is a 3. Well, we were to find out only too well the truth of that statement over the next 10 days.

The next morning had a slight trace of snow and cloud – almost a mist and quite damp. Alena's GPS route was followed and, as most of us know, a summer route is a whole different ballgame than a winter one. The snow changes everything. And those topo maps with which we all have that love – hate relationship: those contour lines sure do miss a lot of micro terrain – up, down, over, and around. So many times we had to go south to in order to go north, and vice-versa. So many times our route finding was to be questioned and changed. We backtracked many times those first few days until we finally came out into the alpine clear of the trees. Continuing on with day two: in less than an hour we were up into the alpine with cloud and fog and a

slight drizzle following us. We tried to follow the GPS route, but many times we just followed our noses and made out reasonably well. Making camp saw us crashing fast as the mist changed to a fine rain. It was still raining slightly in the morning. We were not too happy as nothing had really dried out, and the mist and cloud followed us.

The approach to the Ice mantle glacier was very problematic, still due to the lack of visibility which for the most part was nil. We had to stop many times and just wait – wait for something to see. It was terribly steep. In hindsight, maybe we shouldn't even have gone that way. We waited only to finally see that in front of us was an impassably steep slope, so we had to backtrack and try another route. Eventually our patience paid off and a break came. We skied across an avalanche slope, up a steep side hill and on to a level spot, then had to wait again. Another break and we were in the clear again. This time it stayed clear for us, so finally we went across the Ice mantle Glacier between Greymantle and Greenmantle mountains with clear views all about us. Curving around Greenmantle Mountain we camped for the day with a fantastic view of Mt Pitt. And the sunshine – after the inclement weather of the past few days this was a great relief for us and we hung out a lot of our gear to dry out.

The next day dawned bright and clear and as Greenmantle was right there, up we went. We all took off our skis just below the summit except Francis who went all the way on his. After pictures the first real skiing took place. The slopes were icy but the fun of finally skiing something dulled any thoughts of the poor conditions. Our next camp was to be at or near the Tuwasus col at the west end of Snowcap Lake, the route there involving a long downhill meandering ski that was fun for the most part. The



In a camp kitchen. Photo: A. Dzukova.



From top to bottom - Camp on lower Snowcap Lake; Greenmantle Pk. from Snowcap Lake; On Snowcap glacier with Mt. Pitt behind; Below Pukulkul Pk. above skiers to right; Right - En route to Old Pierre Mtn.; Dave Scanlon skiing to the Remote-Pillum col. Photos: R. Woodsworth.

day really warmed up and as time went on, the snow turned to mush. The route finding was actually fun but the conditions were deteriorating fast. The last slope down to the lake was very mushy and unstable – the crappiest snow I have ever experienced. Dave was caught in a small avalanche he set off, becoming partially buried. The scary part for him was that after coming to a stop the snow above still kept coming down while he was unable to move. He was partially covered with both legs trapped with the weight of all the snow. Help arrived to dig him out though and no harm was done. We all finally made it down and set up camp just beside the lake. We made an unscheduled call out that evening for a weather update. Crap. That was the forecast. The freezing level was going up to 2400 m and rain pellets and rain were in the forecast.

That night it poured, and the rain pellets did materialize, and the wind came. The next morning we could see nothing and our snow walls were just about all gone from the rain. We just hung out and talked. Bob was getting very philosophical about then; talking about the circle of life. Eat, go to the pit of death (the outhouse), return, when bored – repeat.

We were inside a cloud – so much for our plan to go up Mt Pitt that day. Then it started to clear later in the afternoon. It was just about then that I spotted a mountain goat on a slope above us. No one else saw it and they weren't sure whether to believe me or not. After a while others finally saw him, so I was not just seeing things. We then started talking about our long term plans for the remaining days of our trip. It was suggested to pass up Mt Pitt because that would take a full day from our schedule. With the possibility of maybe bagging more smaller peaks along the way we all decided that this was to be our best option.

Our next day, day 6, was rather uneventful – except for the icy slopes. Remember the rain? Well the freezing level fell and all of that rain-soaked snow gave us an icy surface on which to try to ski. I had newer wider skis with my old, i.e. “narrow”, skins on them. Everyone else had their wide skins and had hardly any trouble going uphill. Not me though! I was slipping all over the place with so much more of my ski surface showing, and was working my butt off trying to keep up. This problem stayed with me for the rest of the trip. With clear skies and a bit of wind we climbed up from Snowcap Lake on the Griffen Glacier, over the Snowcap Icefield, climbing Snowcap Peak on the way, to camp close to Stave Peak. Those of us who weren't too tired (Monika and Francis) went off for an evening ski. The rest of us just hung out, rested, and ate, enjoying the view. Next day we crossed the Misty Icefield, then the upper Stave Glacier, planning to go over Corbold Peak as it was our shortest way. The closer we got to Corbold Peak, however, the windier it became and the cloudier it got, ending up with us on top in a very stiff wind and no visibility at all. We floundered around a bit – not too much though as it seemed that no matter which way we went we encountered cliffs. Finally after waiting a while a small break in the cloud came and a way down seemed to appear. Almost back the way we had come, though, and that didn't seem quite right. Another break came, a little longer lasting and sure enough, that appeared to be the only way to go – another of those places where you had to go north to get south. So in between whiteouts off we went – a long curving roundabout way, but it worked. Leading on down to our best ski yet of the trip, we ended up at our lowest elevation of the trip - 1450m on the shore of a lake.

At this camp the paparazzi were here in the name of Alena. She took pictures of everything that moved and most things that didn't.

The next morning an OOPS occurred. I misread our way on the map putting us in the position of having to turn back, or trying to go on, hoping that the route would go. Everyone was kind enough to not rub my mistake in too much and we decided to go on and explore. Up until the last minute none of us were sure whether or not we could get through, but the way went! It ended up being perhaps better than the recommended route. We ended up uneventfully near Old Pierre Mountain where we camped. Old Pierre is a recommended ski ascent so 4 of us went up



and climbed it. We skied to within a few metres of the top then had another fun ski back to camp.

The weather report was good and holding for us. Next morning we went on past Old Pierre doing another end run going east to finally end up going west. AND we had the best skiing yet by far of the trip – just awesome. Up



Skiing up towards the Staircase Glacier (top): camp near Old Pierre Mtn. (bottom). Photos: A. Dzijukova.

and across another icefield to the col between Remote and Piluk peaks for lunch. The plan was to then go up Remote Peak, but we found that we had gone too far. To get up Remote required a retreat a long way around and we decided that it would take too long, so we decided to carry on. It probably would have us coming out a day late also.

We were then on the south side of Remote Peak and trying to find a way down. After some back and forth searching for the easiest way down, a route was chosen – the best of the worst. Over the years I have skied some very steep stuff, and some steep stuff with a full pack, but this was pushing it a bit. A very steep couloir seemed to be the easiest way and it had a large rock outcrop part way down – just for intimidating purposes. Well we all made it! A deep breath stilled our beating hearts. The suggested way was to then go on down and cross a lake then sidehill a minor bump to regain a ridge further to the west. This was much easier said than done. After some debate we chose a route which started out with a steep ski down the lake outflow stream, no less, leading us into steep trees – trees and brush so steep and thick that most of us just carried our skis and walked straight down. We finally came out in a slide path and started heading west, sidehilling all the way. It was not pleasant as the hillside was steep. Some of had trouble keeping our skins on too and the old faithful duct tape was really handy in keeping them on. With Alena's GPS and knowing the elevation we wanted to crest the ridge, our route finding was spot on, bringing us out to within 15m of where we wanted to be. There it was – right in front of us! Our way down and out! The newest logging roads here go up to 1350m and there it was, just 100m below us.

We then used the sat phone to call Earl and Bobbie from Pitt Lake Water Taxi, telling them we would meet them the next day. We then called Monika's brother and my wife, Donna, telling them an approximate time to pick us up the next day. Finally we ate and enjoyed the view and contemplated our past 9 days. We also pigged out somewhat on our remaining food.

With the end in sight, and this being our final day, our ski out began – on snow that was a bit icy on top over softer snow. We eventually had to take our skis off 5 times and then one final time, carrying them on our packs when the snow ran out. Then there were

the ATV tracks in the snow! I phoned Earl saying that we had seen ATV tracks and were they theirs. He said yes and that he was coming to get us. Yahoo! We had made prior arrangements for the Pitt Lake Water Taxi people to come and pick us up in their truck to give us a ride to the lake, so we didn't have to walk out with all of our gear. Earl came and it was a sight to see another person. We loaded up the truck and down we went. We picked up his wife Bobbie and then went to the dock. Then the long 35 minute boat ride to the dock at Grant Narrows, where the lake ends and the river starts. That Pitt Lake is big! And there were Monika's brother and my wife. We shared beers, had hugs, changed clothes. We looked better but still smelled!

Don't you just love it when a plan all comes together. A heck of a trip. Not for beginners though. Our longest day according to the topo map was 10 km, but according to the GPS unit, we really did 16 km with all of our back and forth route finding. Total for the trip was 93km in 10 days with one day stopped. No wonder I lost 4.5kg, Bob 3.5kg, and Alena about 2.5kg.

So after crossing 4 glaciers, 4 icefields, 93km, and 10 days, it all came to an end. I still sit down and look at the maps and think of the magnitude of that trip. Wow! It was a good one. I know that others have gone faster, further, and higher, but for me the trip was at least right up there as being one of my best.

Thanks to the group – to our drivers Dan Lord and Peter Margetak; then to Radmila Jaksic, Alena Dzukova, and Bob Woodhouse, for going 3 years in a row with me on an extended wilderness trip; to the newbies to our group – Francis St-Pierre and Monika Bittel; and to Monika's brother and my wife for picking us up.

Thanks to you all for making this trip as great as it was.

GARIBALDI SPRING SKIING OR 3RD TIME LUCKY – NIVALIS MTN., 10-18 April, 2010

By David Scanlon

I'd been into this area twice before on skis and once as a summer trip in BCMC's 2007 centennial year. The nemesis of both ski trips, in 2003 and 2008, was Nivalis Mountain. This was the objective once again of our 2010 ski mountaineering trip. So with 9

others, off I went again, hoping for a 3rd time lucky on Nivalis.

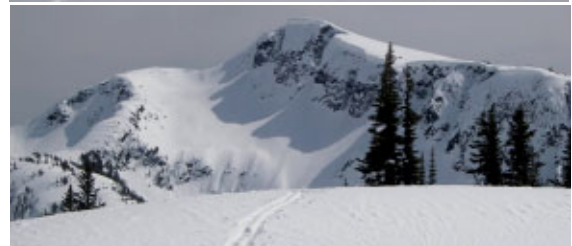
We met at the church at 6:30am, drove to Pemberton to get revitalized one last time with a real coffee / caffeine fix. We then had a long drive through Mt Currie, 30 km south down the Lillooet main line to the Tenas Narrows bridge, then another 10 km south to the Flood Creek main line logging road. At this point your intrepid organizer had a bit of a brain fart trying to decide which turn to take, but after a bit of back and forth the correct turn off was determined and off we went. The road was still in good shape and we were able to drive right to the 600m level where the snow started. Things were looking good! I was surprised that at the beginning no one complained about the early 6.30am start at the church in North Vancouver. This actually turned out to be a blessing.

Bruce had brought along a scale to weigh our packs! I still don't know whether this was good or not. Don't do that again!!! Personally, I really didn't want to know what my pack weighed, but it was found to weigh 30kg. Some packs weighed a similar amount with two being over 32kg. Wow! What happened was that we all got into the base camp thinking mode and we all brought too much – way, way too much. Even with the huge loads though, we ended up getting to the end of the logging road about 2:30pm. That logging road went back and forth giving some great views back down to the Lillooet Lake and River. I was planning to have had the first night's camp at the end of the logging road but, after having a snack and talking the matter over, everyone decided that this was way too early to stop, so we all carried on. This was the steepest part of the way in so we all went quite slowly with our oversized packs. Even more slowly for Françoise as her skins just would not grip. She had the most difficult time of it. I know, as I waited for her and tried to be as helpful as I could. I heard some very descriptive combinations of English and French words that I'd never heard before as she sometimes tried in vain to get up the steeper portions of the route. OOO! Such language! The others were not that far ahead of us though, and we finally caught up to them were they had decided to camp for the night. Strangely enough, Françoise never had any trouble after that with her skins. Good thing too. My ears were getting sore from listening to all of the yelling!



First camp. Photo: D. Robertson.

The next day was fairly straightforward as we gained the alpine ridge in short order and followed it to where we decided to camp. Camp was to have been down on the Nivalis Glacier and that meant dropping down about 200m and then going back up about the same



Heading to base camp. Photos: D. Robertson.

amount to make our base camp. The group decided to not drop down though and to make our base camp at an elevation of about 2000m and not lose all of that elevation. That also meant not having to carry our full packs up when it was time to leave, and that we could get rid of our packs right there and then! So there we were – base camp for the next week. The digging in and wall building began, never to fully stop for the whole time that we were there. Ilze began to build up her snow walls.



Ilze working on her snow walls. Photo: D. Robertson.

Monday morning and off we went to the Orphans for our first day's adventure, heading for the easternmost and highest of the two. Ok. Here was where our organizer was a little off in his recollection of the down route from camp to the Nivalis Glacier. We ended up being too high. David Hughes and Bruce went ahead following my instructions, straight into very, very steep terrain. The rest followed. It turned out to be one of those places where it was best to just carry on than to try to turn around, so everyone followed. To say that I was concerned was to understate the moment. The short comment here is to just say that we all came through this crisis ok! After crossing the Nivalis Glacier the route went up to the col between the Orphans. It was steep with all of us having our skis in the highest climbing mode climbing up and a lesson was learned. Denis lost a ski. It went all of the way down to the glacier below, but the brake was on!! As it turned out we all, or at least some of us learned that when you have your AT gear (some AT gear at least) in the middle mode you have very little of your brake working, and in your highest climbing mode you have no brake at all!!!!

Lesson learned. It was a good thing that there was just the glacier below and not a long open slope or even a forest. A ski could have been lost. From then on some of us wore makeshift tethers for our skis. The col between the Orphans was where we all stopped for lunch and the debate began over the route to take for the summit. With the day really warming up, sloughs were really starting to come down. The last storm had come through the previous Thursday, leaving lots of snow on all of the steepest slopes. David Hughes then started going up with Bruce and Ilze following at a distance. Your intrepid organizer started up half heartedly but didn't get very far before deciding that not trying this route that day was the best thing to do. The snow was crap – soft, thin, not very stable, and getting warmer all the time. David Hughes meanwhile kept on going, disappearing out of sight. He ended up getting to the top with the rest of us retreating and waiting for his return. So day one ended with one of the party getting to the highest of the Orphans.

In the meantime we had to get back to camp. It was warm and the route back was very soft with sloughs coming down all around. Whenever we took a turn we set off a large amount of soft snow sliding downhill. Some snow lumps turned into those huge pinwheels. The base, however, seemed to be stable with only the surface snow moving, so we carried on down but stayed spread out just in case something big did let loose. The ski down and across the glacier was fast, covering a km or so in about a minute or two. There were no avalanches that day anywhere that we could see. The base seemed to be very consolidated with just those pesky sloughs coming down from all steep rock faces.

We decided to try getting back up to camp by a different route, going down past the end of the glacier, losing a bit of elevation, but finding a safer, shorter route back up to camp (a shorter steep part but still a bit of elevation to be gained). It worked out very well. This new route ended up being our ascent and descent route to and from our camp for the rest of the week. As we were finishing our meals a few flakes of snow starting to come down, perhaps an omen for the morrow? Ilze worked on her snow walls.

Tuesday was to be our Nivalis day with a 5:30am early start, weather permitting of course. NOT that day! After looking out at the snow and nil visibility we

just stayed in our sleeping bags an extra couple of hours before venturing out for breakfast. It was one of those mornings when the struggle between the push of the bladder and the suction of the sleeping bag occurs. We all know that eventually the bladder always wins though, so it is a losing battle. We all fight but always lose – just delaying the inevitable. After breakfast, after a nap, a bit of boredom set in, so, what to do? Ilze worked on her snow walls, as did the rest of us but that didn't last forever. Then the outhouse was moved, not necessarily because it had to be, but just for something to do. Then major work started on renovating our kitchens. Françoise's and mine was the largest and eventually everyone else came and made seats by us for our gatherings. I think that it was Bruce who started a trend and it was inspiring. He made the most awesome snow arch in front of his and Denis' tent for an entranceway. Then he started on something else and it was a long time before we could make out what it was. A rabbit! Not any ordinary rabbit though; not just the Alice in Wonderland rabbit; not a cute little Easter bunny either. It was the mother of all snow rabbits of all time ever in Garibaldi Park – big enough to give us nightmares. A pair of huge ears stood up with one having a curl at it's end. Then the piercing eyes with of course eyebrows (made out of snack food) and the nose and mouth made out of juice crystals – kool!

Then Françoise started making something and after a bit of probing she said that it was going to be a mushroom. Not your ordinary little toadstool or mushroom though. Oh no, that would have been too easy. It was to be huge. If it was to have been one of those magic mushrooms, WOW! We would still be there!! Woo Hoo! Not to be outdone, your organizer just had to get into the act by building his own version of an Inukshuk. Even all of that came to an eventual grinding halt, so we had lunch, then went back into our tents to read some more as the snow had become mostly rain by that time. Great! And it was only 1.20pm. So the rest of the day was spent just snacking, having dinner, then an early bed time.

Yahoo! The good times were back for Wednesday morning though and at 5.30am we were off to Nivalis Mountain as the weather had cleared. So down the steep icy slope, up and across the glacier to the col between Nivalis and the Orphans to where the real

fun started with a nice long ski down northern slopes. But what goes down must come back up, so up we climbed. We skinned up to a low place on the North ridge of Nivalis (it was a bit steep but passable) and turned south going up the ridge crest itself, coming eventually to the west side of the main summit pyramid. Then the last lead to the top. Somehow the group became split with 4 of us going right of the summit pyramid and the rest going left. Six of us then had a short snow climb then a boot step up to the summit. The only down side to this was that the other 4 beat us to the summit! Drat! And they were to ski to the top also! Double drat!! But we made it! Yeah! Finally - third time lucky, Bob, and the view was fantastic as we had a clear day. It was a revelation for most of the group as only Bob and I had been here in the area before. Seeing a lot of our favourite mountains from the east was different and they were hard to name at first from this side. It sure was satisfying to share this with the group. They were surprised too when I brought out the club flag for the summit shots. The trip back down and out to



Heading up to, then on, the N Ridge of Nivalis Mtn. Photos: D. Robertson.



Looking south from Nivalis towards Mt. Pitt.



Mt. Sir Richard seen from Nivalis.



Heading back from Nivalis to camp (right column), with Talon Pk. (left) and Nivalis Mtn. (right) above the skiers in the bottom photo.

Skiing down from Nivalis (left and bottom left).

All photos: D. Robertson.



camp was uneventful. We had some very good skiing, and nearing the end a bit of crust just to keep us honest. It was an 11 hour 45 minute day and so very very satisfying. Ilze still had time to work on her snow walls again.

After the Nivalis day we just slept in. There wasn't any real decision made to do this; we were all tired and it just happened. Later, after breakfast, Peak 2380m, just at our doorstep, was to be our next challenge. The ascent was right up from camp so off we went. We skied up as far as we could then kick stepped up the steep snow. After leading this short step, the rope was lowered to belay up the rest of the crew. The next slope turned out to have thin snow cover over rock. With the heat of the day it was not stable at all – an ice axe would only go in



Pk. 2380m rises above base camp on the ridge. Photo: D. Robertson.

half way at most, giving no protection at all so we unanimously decided to back off and go back down to camp. As the days were warm (up to 18 – 19°C) and the nights not very cold (temperatures dropped to freezing or a little below – just cold enough to form a crust each morning), many sloughs of snow came down and the snow was very soft during the day, helping to explain why the attempt on Peak 2380m didn't get far at all. All the south facing slopes softened up very soon each day. The ski down turned out to be quite good on the northern aspects, however. After getting back to camp we just ate and lounged around trying to make a dent in the massive amount of food we brought. More sculptures were done and Ilze worked on her snow walls.

Friday, the week was winding down, and the day's travel destination was to be Talon Peak – a very

symmetrical peak right across the valley from camp, with a very imposing cornice on it's east-facing side that we looked at every day. So off we went again down the early morning's icy descent to the Nivalis Glacier below camp, side slipping all the way and trying the odd turn once reaching the lower end of the slope. It was a somewhat daunting descent as it was fairly steep. The run-out, though, was OK in that there weren't any cliff bands below – just a long slide if you slipped.

Then Brian fell! I only saw him fall and then he was out of sight, finally coming back into sight much lower down as he came to a stop near the bottom of the slope. I kept saying over and over to myself: "come on Brian, move, move", as I was thinking that if he moved he would be all right with nothing broken. He was moving – good – more like a thrashing around, but he was moving. Ok! Then I had to get to him to see what if any help he needed. Ilze retrieved one of Brian's skis. As I arrived, Brian said that he was all right but his shoulders were very sore. All of his limbs were working, albeit stiffly, with the worst being his shoulders. He said that he didn't hurt anywhere else – no back nor stomach pain, and his legs were all OK.

Strangely enough his sunglasses never came off during the fall. Brian then very, very, stiffly fumbled about getting himself sorted out, in obvious pain managing to get his back pack on, but just barely, then his skis. He insisted that he was all right and skied a short way towards the rest of the group then stopped and said that we should all carry on. He was quite insistent that we do this. He would just rest for a couple of hours, wait in the sun and snack waiting for the snow to soften up then just go back to camp on his own. He assured me that he was all right, that he would be careful, and that we should go on. Our frank conversation assured me that what he said was true, so the rest of the group carried on. Also, for a good part of where we were going we could see Brian and after our talk I rested easy thinking he would be OK.

Talon – I had been here about 8 years ago with Todd Ponzini and we went up the east side with just a short snow scramble at the top. This year our group arrived at a juncture where we were undecided as to how to carry on. David Hughes explored a route going up the western side, saying that it looked OK to get to the top. Here I was undecided as to what to

do. I said to everyone that I was unsure about David's route as it looked steep and that I thought of going back to the route that I had done before. It was, I think, the fall that Brian took earlier that maybe rattled me a bit; I don't know. I voiced my thoughts though and finally did retreat to try the old tried and true way I'd gone before. So David Hughes, Bob and Ilze went up the western side and the rest went with me to explore the eastern side. The concern with the east side was a huge cornice we could see from camp and no one, myself included, wanted to get anywhere below it. The route up was great – kick stepping up a steep slope, then walking up a snow arête with some exposure and then seeing the way to the top. And then a head looked down on us. The other 3 had beaten us to the top. Drat. Not that we were racing – oh no – jjust the competitiveness in me coming out. Ok. Drat again, it still would have been nice to have been first up though!

Last time the last bit wasn't too difficult. This time, though, there was a definite overhang and as it turned out having the other 3 on top really did help in getting up. They lowered a rope from an ice axe tied in to 3 slings to aid the climb up. The next one up was Bruce, who brought his shovel along and, as he hung off the now lowered rope, proceeded to shovel away at the cornice to make it easier for the rest of us to come up. So we celebrated another major summit on another fine day of mountaineering using all of the gear once again. The views were once again great as we ate, took more pictures and enjoyed the day. And yes the flag was still with us. A very interesting sight was to be had from this peak – looking southeast we could see Harrison Lake and looking northeast we could see Lillooet lake. Another first for us all.

As we were fooling around having fun, we could see our descent route down from camp, as well as watch Brian getting back to camp. He was progressing so very slowly! I was concerned that he may have been injured more than he let on. When we left him he was very insistent that all was well and we carry on, but after watching him ever so slowly get back to camp I was having my doubts about that. I was at the point of thinking that he might have to be flown out.

Anyway, enough of the worrying for now – the ski down was coming up and we were all looking forward to that. We 6 left and were belayed down and went to

our skis and, not waiting for the others, started down



Ascending Talon Pk. (top 2 photos); on the summit with Nivalis Mtn. behind (2nd bottom photo); descent tracks (bottom). Photos: D. Robertson and D. Robertson collection.

what turned out to be the best skiing of the trip – just awesome snow on a perfect slope. We waited for the others but not before going most of the way down enjoying the untracked snow. It didn't have anything to do with them beating us to the summit. Really, it didn't!! Anyway, they eventually joined us and then we all skied down together to once again, for the last time, do the grunt up the steep hill back to camp. The first thing that I said to Brian after arriving at camp was that I was thinking of flying him out. He insisted that that was not necessary and he would be fine, saying that maybe some of us could help him carry some of his gear on the way out. I mentioned that he was so badly off that he might fall somewhere on the way out and injure himself even more. Also that he might fall in the forest and make any kind of rescue that much more complicated as we would have to move him to a place where the helicopter could land to get him. So we checked out Brian's shoulders for any bruising or marking of any kind but there was none. That done we all carried on with the evening's activities, and Ilze continued to built up her snow walls.

The next morning we found Brian so very stiff and sore that he had hardly slept at all even though he took some 292's that David Hughes gave him the evening before. And the first thing he said that morning was that we were right and that he couldn't ski out. So the satellite phone once again proved its worth as the Whistler RCMP were contacted and arrangements were made for Brian to be flown out. After missing us on the first pass the helicopter turned around, found us and landed. Brian was put on board and off he went. While loading Brian, the search and rescue guys gave us a weather report and it wasn't good. It was calling for rain and a very high freezing level. So Ilze built up her snow walls. That made our next decision easy. As our plan was to move camp towards our cars anyway and as we were packing up already, we just carried on packing. Fifteen minutes after the helicopter left the cloud moved in and we couldn't see anything at all. We were now in move-out mode but in a whiteout so we carried on as best we could. Believe it or not, the in-track from the previous week was still visible, well mostly anyway, so we were able to follow it out. And it was the same old story – the further out we went the lower we got; the lower we got the more it rained. We came to the last of the alpine starting down into

the forest, so off came the skins and the really interesting part of the ski out began – a steep forest in wet heavy snow, trying to follow the up-track. I think that we each fell at least once and with the rain we were quite damp. Then we finally came to the clearcut just above the logging road. This turned out to be the most dangerous yet – very steep, very wet, heavy snow. The best way to get down was to traverse all of the way across from left to right. A couple of us tried to go lower and got into real trouble setting off large slides in the wet heavy snow. We all eventually got to the logging road and began the long snowplow down to the cars. As the weather had been so warm and so much snow had melted out, we ended up having to walk about half a km back to the cars. Not to worry though, as the cars signified the end of the week, dry clothes, a beer for those who had brought one, and the thought that we were going to have a hot restaurant meal that night – yahoo! Two days to get in to base camp, one day to get out with our smaller lighter packs. After all, it was mostly downhill.

After arriving in Pemberton, we called Brian to find out how he was doing, to find out that he was already home and in his bath. He did end up with a broken bone in his left arm and was still very sore all over from his fall. Flying him out was the only decision and to let him try to get out on his own would have been most foolish.

So the trip was a success. Bob's and my objective – Nivalis – was attained, finally on the 3rd time lucky. Five of the participants who had never been on a backcountry week trip before, all said that they had had a great time and all learned something. We all used all of our toys – rope, ice axes, harnesses, shovels, and slings. We skied, scrambled, walked, kick stepped, slid, crawled, up, onto, over, beside, through, all kinds of snow, and fell – just ask Brian on that one! A song was born on the top of Talon peak as we all wandered around. I am sure you can all relate to it:

Lets all dance upon the cornice
Lets all jump up and down
Lets see how many jumps it takes
To bring this cornice down.

A dream came on one of those long nights, a fanciful one I think, but cute:

Dancing white kittens on the snowy ridge
With the Yeti right behind!

So will another trip into Garibaldi Park happen next year, making it 5 years in a row? Would you believe it that there are already plans in the works for just that very thing? Tune in next year for another update. And the contest winners for this trip were:

Bill Tubbs	Mr. Clean
David Hughes	The snow climber
Bruce Cassels	Trail breaker, sculpter
Denis Lalonde	The ski loser
David Robertson	The quiet one
Brian Wood	The Faller
Françoise Thibault	Linguistic artist, sculpter
Bob Woodhouse	The singular
Ilse Rupners	The wall builder
David Scanlon	Organizer, and we'll leave it at that.

The best thing about writing one of these is that no one can say anything about the writer! [Not true – the editor has the last say – ed's comment].

MT ROHR IN AN IGLOO, 7-8 March, 2009

By Françoise Thibault

My first trip with the BCMC, and my second winter overnighter, was amazing. I joined a weekend trip in early March 2009 to Mt Rohr off the Duffy Lake Road. On this trip I got spanked hard but was more excited than ever to get out again.

All my life I had dreamed of climbing peaks. As an East Coast girl who recently moved out West, I was eager to meet some people who were as passionate as me about the mountains. Back home in New Brunswick, I was a small-time snowboarder and did a bit of X-country skiing when I was a kid, but that was about it. When I moved to Vancouver and started working at MEC in the fall, I fell in love with backcountry skiing after taking an avalanche course offered by my work. After a second trip out in the Joffre Lakes area with work folks again, I felt like I was ready for more. After hearing good things about BCMC trips, I signed up on-line for Brian Wood's Mt. Rohr trip. The trip was rated B/2 or 3, something fairly easy, and it also included some igloo building, which sounded like fun.

On Saturday, March 7th, I drove out to the meeting point, the church parking lot on Taylor Way in North Vancouver, picking up one of the guys on the way. The weather was pleasant when we arrived at the trailhead with a light snow falling. I was stoked to

start skinning up. Everyone else was in a good mood too. We headed towards the start of the trail and started to do a beacon check when we realized two men were missing. They had gone ahead without telling anyone, which made some of us a bit worried. I would later learn that some people just don't like to wait for anyone! Ah, the BCMC... We finally just went on and eventually caught up with them along the logging road.

After reuniting, we continued along the road until its end at a marked forest trail, about an hour after we left the cars. After a little while the trail steepened, but skinning was still fairly easy, even for a beginner like me. An hour into the trees, the trail divided at a trail sign pointing in one direction to the Wendy Thompson hut in the Marriot Basin and the other to Mt Rohr. We followed the trail to Mt Rohr.

A little while later we stopped for lunch and to have a look at the map. Then we heard people coming up the trail. Two women on snowshoes had lost the rest of their party who were on skis. They were planning to go to the Wendy Thompson hut but we told them that they were headed the wrong way. After discussing with us a bit, they decided to keep going, pretty certain that we were wrong and that this was the way the rest of their friends had gone. We all wished them luck—at least they had sleeping bags and a tent.

It turns out that we were wrong! We had taken the trail to Mt Rohr, but lost the trail markers and ended up on the other trail. Thankfully we realized our error and backtracked and side-hilled until we found the right trail again. An hour or so later, we arrived at a meadow at the bottom of a steep headwall. We tried to spot a higher place to camp, since the lower levels are often colder, but the only good flat spot seemed to be the one we were standing on. So we decided to make it our home.

Because of a first less-than-cozy experience winter camping, I knew that the most important thing for me to do right away was to get warm. So, right away, I switched to thicker pants and put on my down jacket. Some people had brought their own tents or dug snow caves but I was interested in learning how to build an igloo.

First, along with four other team members, I watched our trip leader as he showed us how to flatten the snow to make it good for block cutting. Then, we divided ourselves in two teams. Our leader built one

igloo with two people and another fellow and I watched and made our own, next to the first one. With our skis on, we marked the perimeter of the igloo by flattening the snow in a circle, the size of which would delineate the floor of our igloo. After it was well compacted, we took our skis off and packed the area down even more with our boots. This whole process took about an hour. Apparently, it is very important to pack the snow well in order to be able to cut out good strong blocks. We took a tea break to let the snow settle.

After about half an hour, it was time to start cutting blocks. We used snow saws, which although probably not obligatory, work much better than shovels since it is much easier to place the blocks if they are straight. The best and most efficient way is to start cutting the blocks out of the middle of the floor. That way, you dig the floor as you are putting up the walls. It goes faster and allows you to start closing your walls in right away, without getting stuck with a low roof. The hard part is that the blocks have to lean inward so that the walls close in. At first my igloo buddy and I were a bit shy with the incline of our blocks and at one point we got worried that our igloo would turn into a tower instead of a dome! Luckily, it hadn't gone too far and we managed to fix it

The other trick in making a solid igloo is to try to make the blocks consistent in size and shape. It is good to carve in the bottom of the blocks with a snow saw to give them two contact points, and then do the same to the side that will lean against the previous block. That creates a third contact point. We learned the hard way that leaning the blocks on one another is also an art to master. Not having enough contact points or shoving too hard to place the block and you find yourself covered in snow with blocks collapsing on your head. Frustrating!

Finally we placed the last block to close the roof by standing on the tip of our toes. The whole thing took about 5 hours! It was definitely time to eat after that, and I was getting cold, especially my toes. One of the guys saved my life that night by lending me his hut booties. How he did without them, I am not sure. All I know is that I will now never go winter camping without my own pair anymore, for fear of losing a toe – seriously. In exchange for his heroic gesture, I gave him the Cadbury Cream egg I had brought and had kept warm in my down jacket!



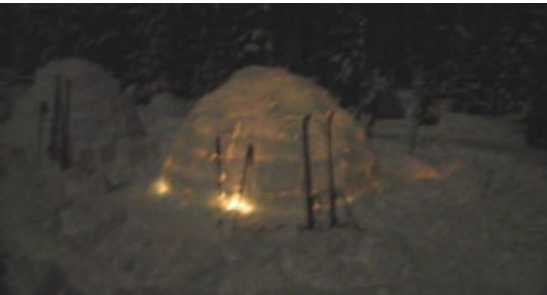
Igloo building. Photos: B. Wood.

My stove was the next problem. The temperature had dipped to -15°C . Apparently, my propane canister-fuelled MSR Reactor was not the best option at that temperature. Even some liquid fuel stoves had troubles. Luckily, my igloo-mate's stove was still functioning. For dinner I ate delicious dehydrated beef stroganoff in a bag. It looked more like soup but tasted just perfect. After everyone had



gone off to bed, two of my new friends and I shared the carton of wine that I had humped all the way there.

The night was cold – it went down to -17°C , but inside the igloo it was



The final products by day and by night.

cozy. I had a -20 bag and a Thermarest and slept like a baby. In the morning, it was so quiet we had to poke our heads out to see if anyone was up since the snow muffled all the voices outside. We made “cowboy coffee “ (just dump coffee grounds into boiling water and wait to drink until they settle to the bottom), and oatmeal, the breakfast of champions, and then packed a day bag and started skinning up towards Mt. Rohr. My frozen hands and feet warmed up after half an hour of skinning.

I was impressed by my surroundings and took in every chance to apply what I had learned in my avalanche class, assessing the terrain ahead and trying to choose the safest route. Along the way we came to a long flat part with a steeper slope on its left side. There were signs of past avalanches in some areas, so we spread out and crossed one at a time to be safe. Not much further, the slope started to ascend towards the summit, which was still out of sight. Some team members had gone ahead and seemed to be headed for the top.

The trip leader wasn't planning on having everyone summit since some of us were beginners, and it was already pretty late in the day, due to our late start. I wanted to summit, but my binding had given me trouble a couple of times on the way up, releasing randomly, so I chose to just take it easy. There would be more trips.

We went up to the first big ridge and decided to ski down from there, while three guys went for the summit. It was cold and windy. The ski down from Mt. Rohr was pretty mellow until we got to the headwall, right before the camp. The snow was fairly good that day, so I wasn't scared to just drop down. Unfortunately, as I started carving turns into deep fluffy snow, my left binding decided to release, and I ended up on my back with one ski stuck and the other one buried. I calmly dug it out and put the ski back on. I got going down again, trying not to carve too hard, but the same thing happened to the other side. And again, about five times along the slope... what a waste! Out of exasperation, I took out my multitool and cranked the DIN setting way up. I finally made it down the rest of the slope by straight lining, trying not to move too much sideways. Back at camp, I had a look at the bindings to see if there was anything to do, but the verdict was that they were just



Skiing up Mt. Rohr. All photos: B. Wood.

crappy and old (courtesy of free staff rentals) and I had to accept the fact that it would be a tough way down through the trees.

The summit team arrived back to camp a mere 45 minutes after the rest of us. We ate a bite together and packed up to head back out. As I had predicted, the way down was not easy. The snow was crusty, the trees tight, and every time I carved too hard, one of my skis would pop off. Time after time I would end up on my back stuck like a turtle with my 60 litre pack, beneath me. Every time, I'd just breathe in, breathe out, and get back up. One of the more experienced guys stayed with me in the back to make sure I was ok, and I was glad for that.

Back on the logging road leading back to the cars, we ran into another party who were still in shock after witnessing an avalanche in the Marriot Basin area carry one of their party down the slope, thankfully without injury. We were pretty surprised to hear about the avalanche, considering that we had not seen any real signs of concern. It just goes to show how different snow conditions can be in areas so close together.

Even though my trip down was very frustrating and I felt like such a rookie for not having checked my gear before going, I sucked it up and finally made it back to the car safely. I guess its part of the learning process. A meal and a beer later, at the Mexican Restaurant near Pemberton, I was exhausted but so happy with my first BCMC trip. Some tough moments, but I had definitely learned a lot and met a great bunch of people. By the end of dinner I had my next trip planned.

Trip members: Brian Wood (organizer), Jeff Rabinovitch, Thomas Price, Thomas Schroeder, Peter Woodsworth, James Clarke, Diana Diaconu, Douglas Flemming, and Françoise Thibault.

NORTH CREEK SUMMER CAMP 2008,

9-17 August, 2008

Photos by A. Sharif.

A party comprised of Norbert Eckert, John Halliday, Bob Woodhouse, Peter Woodsworth, and Arman Sharif, with David Scanlon as organizer, spent a week at the club cabin. The following photos illustrate yet another enjoyable trip to the cabin:



John, Bob, and Dave en route to Thiassi.



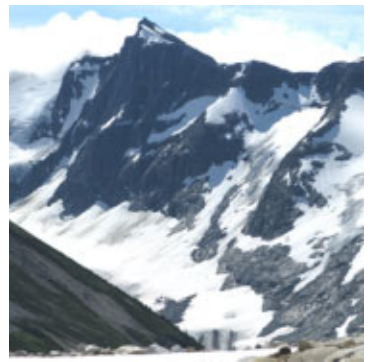
Mt. Thiassi from the south.



On the Boomerang Glacier.



Looking west over the Pebble Glacier.



Mt. Delilah from Sessel Mtn.



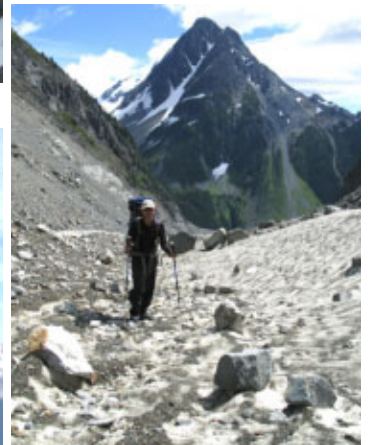
Norbert, Dave, and Peter peakspotting from Delilah.



Peter bouldering.



Arman, Norbert, Peter, and Dave on the summit of Mt. Delilah.



Arman heading up to the Pebble glacier with the Delilah ridge behind.



Approaching (top), then on the Boomerang Glacier beneath Mt. Delilah.



Looking SW from near the summit of Mt. Delilah.

POWELL TRAVERSE, 16-31 July, 2005

By Peter Paré

In the summer of 2005 Linda Bily, John Baldwin, Lisa Baile and Peter Paré decided to follow in John Clarke's footsteps once again and do a traverse of the mountains east of Powell River – a traverse that John had pioneered but not completed. (CAJ; 1985, p 28). Logistics were important. We wanted to walk out since this would give us more control of the

timing and reduce our environmental footprint. We chose this trip for the summer of 2005 because it involved little glacier travel, and 2005 was a very low snow year. A traverse involving significant glacier travel would have meant many open crevasses.

Friday, July 16: After hectic packing we crammed into one car and caught the 8:25 pm ferry to Langdale, to hole up in a cheap motel before completing the trip to Powell River the next day, and connecting with Matt at Ocean View Helicopters. After dropping Linda and John at the Heli terminal Lisa and Peter then turned tail and drove back toward the Saltry Bay ferry terminal turning north on Goat Main, a long logging road that penetrates deeply into the ranges east of Powell Lakes and west of Jervis inlet where we planned to exit. We drove to 52 km, turned east on a spur up Carey Cr (also know as "B Branch" by the loggers), to where a trail descended from Emma Lake, then used the satellite phone to notify Matt of our location. However, as the cloud ceiling was too low to fly we retreated to the Eldred R. and had a lovely evening camping on a pristine sandbar.

July 17: Next morning dawned fine; John and Linda placed food drops at future camps 4 & 8 along our intended route before being deposited at 1700m on the shoulder of Julian Peak (2129m) just south-east of the head of Toba Inlet. The chopper then picked us up (10am) and re-united us at the start of the walk. The flight, in perfect weather, took 20 minutes to cover the route that would take us 2 weeks to retrace on foot! (~ 40km as the crow flies and ~70km as feet walk).

The views from Camp 1 were breathtaking. We were perched on flat slabs 1.7km above the meandering Toba River; immediately below us the Toba joined



Above the meandering Toba R. Photo: P. Paré/L. Baile.



Running around camp 1. Photo: L. Baile/P. Paré.

the ocean. Across the inlet we could see the Tahumming River entering the inlet and the bridge crossing it – close to where we had started the Tahumming traverse in 2001. To the south, layers of peaks extended as far as the eye could see along our intended route. We could even see Mount Alfred (2380m) some 35 km away, which we planned to climb en route. It was such a spectacular spot that we decided not to move, set up the tents on the slabs, and ran around exploring the area. John Clarke had started his solo trip at sea level September 1, 1984 and packed south up the ridge that starts at 50° 28.265N – 124° 22.607W. He joined the divide south of Julian Pk.

July 18: L&P were off early to keep ahead of the younger, stronger, faster, deeper sleepers, J&L. This was a pattern that repeated itself throughout the trip. We were atop Julian by 9am and upset a ptarmigan with her flock of new chicks – tiny balls of fluff – as we descended from the peak. We worked our way up and down along the ridge toward our pre-arranged location for Camp 2. There were fantastic views in all directions including Grenville and Peak 2907m to the north. The col (50° 25.113N – 124° 15.319W) looked bleak and cold, so we chose a remarkably flat slab of rock complete with built in tarn, sitting in the snow field about 60m above the col. J&L arrived about 7:30pm, having set up

camp a hundred metres or so higher on a heather bench. It was sunny until 9pm, but cool.

July 19: Clear but 4°C in the morning so we waited until the sun hit the tent to have breakfast on the slab. It was a “rest day” with a pack-less side trip to peak 1929m (50° 23.896N – 124° 17.060W) Just getting to the col was awe-inspiring with effusive wows at the incredible scenery. Over the col it was straight down to lake 1241m four hundred and fifty metres below us, with terraces of heather studded with tarns and stunted trees. The landscape was an intricate mesh of rugged U-shaped valleys

whose sides were made up of steep smooth slabs; a thousand metres or so of uninterrupted granite. It is amazing that we could actually move around in this country but the narrow ridges that linked the maze were relatively straight forward. We ascended snow slopes on the north side of peak 1929m, which was topped by an arched cornice complete with snow bridge, which made for an awesome photo op. On the peak we found a cairn and a note from John within a film canister with a message that, with very little variation except the date, we were to find on all the peaks between here and Mount Alfred: *“Sept 13, 1984, Hi there. Please contact me. I’d like to hear about your trip. My address is at Mountain Equipment Coop, Vancouver BC. Member # 28-1 John Clarke. Cheers. Much new snow. Holed up here for 5 days.”*

We dragged ourselves away from the peak by 3pm and were back near camp in time for a chilly dip in a wonderful hanging tarn. “Tarning” was a prominent feature of the trip as it always is when John B is along. He has trouble passing them without stripping off. As the weather warmed during this traverse we would stop up to 5 times a day for refreshing plunges.

July 20: 6°C at 7:30 and a dewy tent. We were off by 8:40am. A 300m descent on steep slabs and pocket gardens of moss and alpine fireweed brought us to another col (50° 25.020N – 124° 14.531W) and then along the divide over peaks 1990m and 2017m



Left top - Summit of Pk. 1929m
Left middle - Snow slopes on the north side of Pk. 1929m
Left bottom - Scenic camp 2.
Right top - En route to Pk. 2197m
Right middle - On the summit of Pk. 2197m.
Photos: L. Baile/P. Paré.

before slogging up Pk. 2197m, which is marked incorrectly on the map; the real peak is right on the divide and is at 2223m by GPS. John Clarke's film canister on the peak was damp and empty; a bit of water must have dissolved his note completely. We followed goat prints most of the day and at one point, looking back, we saw a family of 5 with one kid following us! Just before reaching Camp 3, which was perched at 2100m, we surprised another nanny goat and kid; she said 'baaaaa' in disbelief and scampered away.

July 21: Sun poured into the tent at 6am. We could see our route back and forward for many kilometers and in the distance JB identified Elaho, Tinniswood, Albert and more. We circumvented a steep section of the divide on snow slopes to the east and on regaining the ridge came upon a near perfect tarn. It was hot by this point and we frolicked in and out of the water taking pictures wearing just gaiters, just hats and neither! Linda meant them to be for the MEC catalogue but we haven't seen them yet. We disturbed a goat taking a dust bath and L&P took a spur ridge in an attempt to climb Pk. 1864m one km south-west of the divide, but turned back because of steep unstable snow with a long run out to a cold looking lake. We arrived at the Camp 4 food drop at 4:30 and were soon joined by sunburned J&L – another photo op. We could see our route laid out before us for the next 5 days – a series of sinuous curving ridges ending near Mt Alfred.

July 22: Sunny again. Up and over the peaks west and south-west of lake 1446m and another John Clarke message was found in the film canister in a well-built cairn at the summit of a minor peak. Peter was for keeping the John Clarke notes and transcribing them onto fresh note paper to return to the canisters but John B said, "There'll be another 100 wet JC notes like this one". He was for letting them be to return to the earth in the Haida way. We descended to the col below, with a deep blue lake to our left 300m below. Heather and rock terraces fell away, seeming impossibly difficult to negotiate from above, but each one was miraculously connected. We lunched high above two lakes which were lodged between v-shaped smooth slabs of polished granite. As we relaxed and soaked in the view below we imagined what it would be like to be skate boarders hurtling down the 45° slopes straight into the water!



Lunch spot above the two lakes. Photo: L. Baile/P. Paré.

At ~5:30 we arrived at flat slabs on the ridge as the clouds built, and flipped a coin to see if this spot was to be Camp 5; it was. Clouds kept lowering and the mist moved up the ridge and even a few drops of rain splattered down during dinner.

July 23: At 7am there were some cloud but it looked promising. We packed down and around to the south ridge of Pk. 1917m and left the packs to back track to the peak and the compulsory tarn on top. This day we faced the major uncertainty of the trip – a step in the ridge that had challenged John Clarke: *"The ridge systems were reasonable going all the way, with one exception. There is a big cliff omitted from the map just south of peak 6520, 2 ½ miles south-west of lake 3,490 ft in the Skwawka River. An escape ledge into the head of Pildolla Creek from the col just north-west of peak 6218 saved the situation however."*

John B, however, had studied the terrain on the flight in and was confident that we could get around via slabs to the west. We climbed snow slopes to the west buttress of Pk. 1990m and then to the peak (twice since Lisa left her camera on top) and west along the long flank of Pk. 1990m until just east of Pk. 1811m, where we set up Camp 6.

July 24: An incredibly clear, sunny, crisp day. Our swimming tarn from the previous night was covered by a thin layer of ice. Ptarmigans were clucking and eying us from the top of a boulder as we ate breakfast. We had a slow start but by 9:40am we headed down the slabs to our "escape" route and, with some careful route finding among clumps of trees on the

bluffs, we made it round and regained the divide for another tarn event and lunch. Then we followed a long hot ridge staying mostly on snow to Pk. 1960m where we enjoyed the breeze, sitting on the edge of a massive lichen-covered block, looking across to our slab-route of the morning which seemed impossibly vertical. It was a beautiful evening but there was a cool breeze so we were early into the tent.

July 25: Another flawless day. It was lovely cruising along the ridge – tongues of pale granite interspersed with swaths of flowering heather. The next food drop was just below Pk. 1972m which we gained by snow and rock ladders to the right of the peak; we needed a hand line to pass up the packs. We located the buckets near granite slabs gently sloping into deep tarns, then we lay on the “beach” and rummaged through the food buckets for treats. Later we wandered up a smoothly curving snow ridge to the peak 60m above in fabulous evening light and found another message from John C.

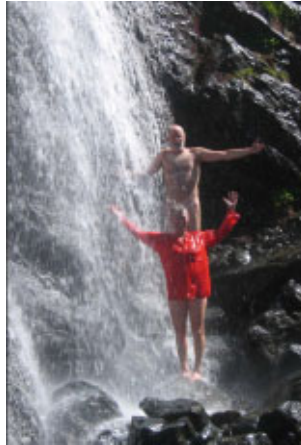
July 26: Many ups and downs this day. Hot! We followed the divide around the lake at 1195m. It was here that John Clarke had to abandon his solo traverse:

“The first drop was intact but the second had been eaten by animals.”

John had to exit west down the uppermost branches of the Eldred river.

We had a brief tarn at lunch and then descended to the valley bottom and through a lupine-studded wetland at 1430m. Trudging up toward Pk. 1905m (Mt Ironface) there was a sudden loud whoop; J&L had discovered an Olympic-sized world class tarn and we did some lengths before completing the grind to the peak by 7pm. Bugs were in overabundance despite the altitude and we had a hard time finding a flat place for the tent.

July 27: Bugs droning outside the tent. We had a quick breakfast on the peak and then went down, down into the steep forest south of Split Pk. and west of the icefall coming down off Mt Alfred. We emerged from the trees to see steep, rocky, and wet meadowed slopes parallel to the cascading glacier. As we picked our way up the loose slope, we heard whoops from John who was ahead and had discovered a swimming opportunity. He was standing in a pool under a terrific waterfall! Bypassing the icefall we reached 1980m where the



Peter and Lisa in the terrific waterfall.
Photo: L. Baile/P. Paré collection.

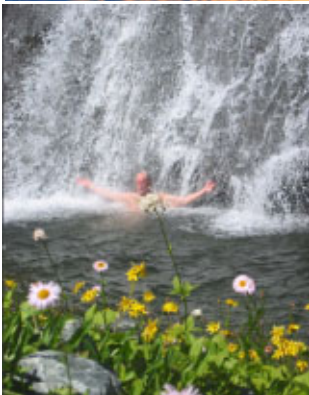
slope flattened and we gained the glacier and trugged some 2km to the base of the south ridge. There we left packs and reached the summit of Alfred by 4:30. At 2380m we were higher than anything for km around and the views were stupendous.

Jervis inlet was below us to the east and we could see Waddington, Garibaldi, Tantalus and even Mt Pitt (?). We spent over 2 hours on the peak enjoying the panorama and, in perfect evening light, slowly descended to make camp 10 at the edge of the glacier.

July 28: Fine again. A big descent to the valley below (>900m). We angled south-east from Camp 10, down complicated steep slabs and benches laced with waterfalls, toward the head of Lausmann Creek. We lunched at 1pm still trying to find the bottom. Some tree hanging was required to finally emerge on more level ground and the reward of a flower-encircled pool into which a roaring cascade of waterfalls emptied. Frolicking in the pool for an hour, John defined a new alpine activity – waterfalling – like tarning but better. We then went across the valley to Coffee Lake and up once again to the col between Pks. 1835m and 1766m.

July 29: A 5 tarn day beginning with a dip at the col to start the day. It was pretty easy going along the divide except for one step coming down from Pk. 1564m, which was best avoided by deviating to the right (north). Camp 11 was on the next bump with a tarn 1m from the front door.

July 30: A few rain drops pattered on the tent in the morning but it soon cleared and we packed over the ridge, lunching on the slabs above Emma Lake. After lunch we soon picked up the trail from Carey Creek and arrived at the western end of the lake in early afternoon. The shock of impending “civilization” – at the end of the lake we saw the cabin of the Powell River Forest Service. We camped on the flat



Left column from top - Camp 7; Camp 8; Wandering up Pk. 1972m; Waterfalling.

Right column from top - On Mt. Alfred; Last camp at Emma Lake; Camp 10.

Photos: L. Baile/P. Paré.



slabs right at the water's edge beside a huge erratic. It started raining in the night and it drained into the hollows in the rock under our tent!

July 31 (Day 15): Damp morning. We left at 8:10 for a wet, bug-infested dash down the trail to the waiting Rav 4 by 10:20am and to Vancouver by late evening. En route we toasted our inspiration: John Clarke who had it a lot tougher during his solo trip. As he reported:

"It took 23 days to get across, with almost half of this time spent pinned down in snow and rain storms."
What a guy!

NORTH COAST TRAIL, 6-13 September, 2009 By Peter Gumplinger

The North Coast Trail (NCT) has become quite popular. We've been told that some one thousand people hiked the trail this season (2009) adding to the 500 or so who did it in its first year. The best advice came from a friend who suggested we should set up our car shuttle BEFORE the trip. This gives you the advantage that you are not bound by a taxi reservation and you can modify your hiking itinerary as you please according to how you go or the weather. This has the additional advantage that you are only paying for the driver and that you are free to visit the Scarlet Ibis Restaurant and Pub in Holberg at your leisure after the hike. The pub has a porch that doesn't overlook a parking lot but rather the scenic end of Holberg Inlet. It serves Okanagan Springs Pale Ale on tap (rare for a northern town to serve good brewer's beer and even rarer for what is mostly a logging camp) and the tastiest fries I have encountered. The burgers and fish and chips were great too. The pub's friendly lady owner told us that Al Huddleston, the driver and owner of North Coast Trail Shuttle, didn't stop there nearly as often that year as he did the previous year. There are two more sights you might also like to see at your own pace: the "Be Prepared for the Unexpected" sign and the "Shoe Tree" along the road back to Port Hardy. With no shuttle to catch, you also don't have to camp in the woods away from the beach on your last night either at Fisherman River or Eric Lake, or start an early 'death march' covering >10km before noon from Nissan or Nels Bight.

But on the other hand, Al did us a huge favour! He rescheduled his pickup of hikers on Saturday for an hour later to 3pm. This allowed me to easily make it from Nanaimo, arriving there by ferry from Horseshoe Bay at 7:55am, to Port Hardy and out to the Cape Scott trail head (about another 1.5 hours drive on a gravel road). In fact, we even had enough time for a quick lunch at Captain Hardy's Fish & Chips in downtown Port Hardy. He had waited for me since the morning when he had dropped off a couple of west-east traveling hikers and while his load of returning hikers was meanwhile enjoying the pub in Holberg.

We stayed for the night in the Hudsons' Home Bed and Breakfast, which we already knew from an earlier visit serves the best gourmet breakfast. That evening, while hiking the trail along the Quatse River Estuary we had our first close encounter with a black bear. We brought a satellite phone for safety. I managed to find out the Port Hardy weather phone number: 250-949-7147.

We had an appointment with Cape Scott Water Taxi to take us to Shushartie Bay at 8am. We shared the boat with halibut fishermen from Calgary. On route a humpback whale breached near us with its body completely out of the water. We also saw a gray whale and a large male killer whale. The captain maneuvered the boat perfectly and it was easy to get off and onto the rock at a tide of 1.3m (Cape Scott Tide Table - <http://www.waterlevels.gc.ca/cgi-bin/tide-shc.cgi>). There were divers at Dillon Rock but otherwise we were soon alone. The NCT part of our trip remained without further human encounters



Boardwalk at Shushartie Bay. Photo: P. gumplinger

except for two hikers we knew who hiked the opposite direction. This was very different to the stories I heard from the fellows on the shuttle bus. Only the previous week there were sometimes no unoccupied tent pads. Mind you, we never once camped on those and much preferred the beach, even when it was raining.

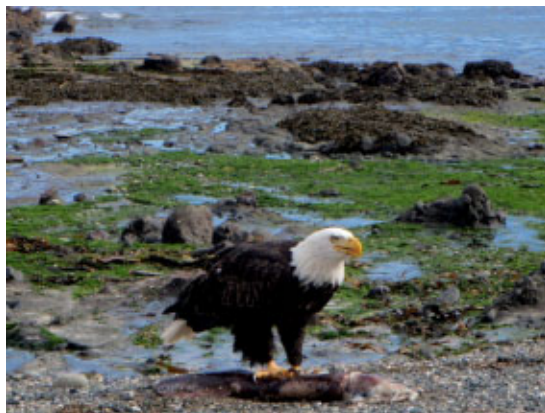
It is true that you should expect the best part of a full day of hiking to simply reach Skinner Ck. It was raining off and on and the trail was sometimes very muddy but we did not find the knee-deep puddles some have reported. The first edition of the North Coast Trail map and pocket guide is way off the mark in its description of this section as "moderate". Day one and two are the most strenuous. Then it gets easier. Also, over 90% of the visitors to the NCT hike it from east to west and hence opposite to the guide's description. The nicest beach camp at Skinner Ck. is east of the creek. With all the rain before and during the first part of our hike (it stopped at noon of day 3), we had to ford barefoot or with sandals Skinner, Ivory and Laura Creeks. They were all impossible and too deep to cross with hiking boots. We also found a good stream emptying onto the beach at Cape Sutil after I had carried plenty of water from the stream over the waterfall and pool just west of Long Leg Hill (Nahwitti Stairs).

We waited at that location for almost four hours for the tide to drop to 2.2m in order to get around the next impassable section. This outcrop area has caves and arches which allow you to side step the surf-battered corner at a tide of maybe 2.5m, but we couldn't see and didn't know that at the time. What followed was the steepest vertical mud, most horrendous section of the entire trip. Right then, my MSR water flask slipped out from underneath my pack's lid and bounced below the trail to a tiny pocket beach. It's rugged, well made and didn't burst, but in retrieving it I came upon a patch of Cow Parsnip, a plant about which we were warned at trail signs. The plant contains phytotoxins which act on contact with skin and exposure to UV light, causing anything from a mild rash to blistering, to severe dermatitis, depending on the sensitivity of the individual. In my case, days later, my forearms still itched as if bitten by a swarm of mosquitoes. The yurt at Cape Sutil was not open and there was no ranger. We camped out of the rain on the porch. It is supposedly open to the public after September 15. I just don't know who

hikes the trail then when both the water and the van taxi have ceased operation for the season. We were told that Al had picked up people the previous day, September 6. Another hiker at Nissan Bight could not proceed because he could not secure a water taxi.

Both cable cars of the NCT worked like a charm for us. We came upon a black bear on a narrow beach just before reaching Christensen Point. It was not threatening but it was also not scared. In fact, the bear employed the same tactics we humans are supposed to deploy. Find a high point, make yourself tall, and provide a commanding posture. It did all that and then went back to the business of feeding in the sea weed. With bear bangers and spray in hand we waited until it chose to let us pass. I knew not to shoot the banger at the bear because at close range it'll overfly the bear and explode behind it, and the bear will run to you for cover! Instead, you need to shoot it up into the air or out over the water. Laura Ck. campsite also had a resident bear which was more frightened, but was around evening and morning.

We followed the suggestion of continuing the same day to Nel's Bight from Nissan Bight although that beach was a lot more busy with campers. What followed was a day trip with light pack to Cape Scott. We were able to follow the shore line (tide <2m) of Experiment Bight instead of cutting across to Guise Bay. Rough bypass trails continue to the Dune Neck from the east to the west portions of Experiment Bight. It was here that we came very close to a bald eagle feeding on a Red Devil carcass. Days earlier



Bald eagle with red devil. Photo: P. Gumplinger.



**Left column -
Top - between east and west
portions of Experiment Bight
Middle - sea stacks
Bottom - sunset on day 1.**

**Right column -
Top - sea stacks near Cape
Scott
Middle - east portion of Experi-
ment Bight
Bottom - heading around the
headland between between the
two San Josef Bay beaches.**

Photos: P. Gumplinger.

we saw a raven on another such carcass – a clear sign of the invasive range expansion by the Humboldt Squid – another indicator of global warming.

We were glad not to have missed the side trail down to spectacular sea stacks before we reached the Cape Scott light house. This short trail sees no maintenance and was already badly overgrown, but was well worth it. It gave access to the most spectacular scenery of the entire trip. I was terribly disappointed with the end of the trail at the light house. I had been there before, back in the early 80s, and have photos of the continuation to the very tip of land, a trail that involved a long staircase and a suspension bridge. This continuation is no more. The suspension bridge has been pulled and the staircase now looks like the ruins at Angkor Wat. We could still see the swath through the bush at the edge of the lawn. This lead to the staircase which



San Josef Bay rock formations (top) and camp (bottom). Photos: P. Gumplinger.

still has a solid appearance and feel. I saw the pulled cables further along but eventually the path led to an overlook over the West Coast of the Cape. I heard sea lions barking. The original trail went straight ahead but I gave up looking for it in all that salal.

I missed seeing the giant Sitka spruce north of Eric Lake but not for lack of looking. The second beach at San Josef Bay had a good drinking water stream and another resident bear. Doug at San Josef Heritage Park was interested in how our trip went. He had kept an eye on my car all these days. We talked mushrooms. Silke had found so many good chanterelles which supplemented our diet almost every day to the point that we had nearly half of our freeze dried dinner pouches left after the trip and these Baully dinners were the best freeze dried money can buy.

My verdict – both the WCT and the Nootka Trail have more spectacular scenery. The challenges of the NCT are slippery roots (many opportunities to hurt yourself tripping over or slipping off them), deep extended mud puddles, and tedious cobble beaches. As on the WCT, much of the potential for injury is a result of so many people having walked before you. It's not a surprise to me that the speed record set on opening day is still unbroken.

STRATHCONA PARK MINI TRAVERSE, 8-16 August 2009

By Brian Wood

After weeks of sunny and dry weather, I had expected problems with park closures due to wildfires, and then, just before our departure date, the long dry spell broke and the weather forecast reverted to the west coast summer classic – rain. I guess nearly everyone believed the forecasts, and my original list of perhaps eighteen participants ended up as being just three, Iveta Janot from Pitt Meadows, my brother Peter from the Kootenays, and me. This trip had started off as an FMCBC/BCMC advertised joint trip with any Vancouver Island club to traverse a yet-to-be determined route in Strathcona Park. However, no members from Vancouver Island signed up – perhaps they knew something that we “Mainlanders” didn't know, or they did not trust our blissful blundering about in their rugged wilderness backyard! Anyway, even though no Islanders dared

to accompany us, I did receive some valuable first hand advice from the locals, and this advice saved us a lot of grunt, and probably avoided an “epic”. (For more information on epics, their endangerment and avoidance, please see my 1990 article, “The Endangered Epic”, re-printed on page 272 of the BCMC Centennial Journal 2007.)

The route itself went through four iterations and so was a work-in-progress until the last day of the trip. This changing of the route was OK as none of the party had been to Strathcona Park before and so everything was new to us. Plan A was to canoe or motor boat across Buttle Lake from the “Parkway” (Highway 28) to get easy access to the Marble Meadows trail. This would have provided us with the relatively easy classic and scenic “horseshoe traverse” following much of the Phillips Creek watershed and Phillips Ridge route, taking us out to Arnica Lake and down to a shuttle car at the Boliden (formerly Westmin) mine site. After the sudden reduction in party numbers a few days before departure, we adopted Plan B to eliminate the lake crossing and car shuttle hassles. This meant changing the trip from a horseshoe to a loop route which started and finished at the same place. As the Boliden Mine site is the only road access for the Phillips watershed route, this was the easiest access point. However, several locals warned us of the two “cruxes” in the proposed loop route, namely crossing Phillips Creek and the intimidating steep bush (up or down) the forested north ridge of Mt Phillips. So we decided to monitor our progress and make a final decision before we reached the “point of no return” on the loop. This is a classic “epic avoidance protocol” which is usually favoured by experienced wussies!

After spending the night at my son’s family house in Courtenay, on Saturday morning we started driving in rain but by the time we were heading south along Buttle Lake the weather was improving. Amazingly, after we had parked at the trailhead past the Boliden Mine site and their huge tailing pond, the weather was sunny. We followed the well-maintained (by Comox District Mountaineering Club) trail to Arnica Lake and were impressed with the quiet sub-alpine lakes and several well-placed tent pads at the campsite. The thousand meter climb up to the lake took us about 4 hours, not too bad with our 8 days of supplies – perhaps our time was shortened by



Arnica Lake camp. Photo: B. Wood.

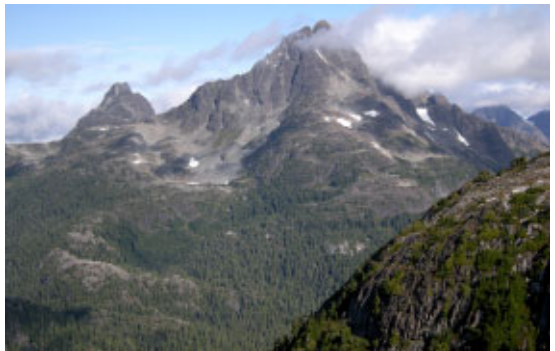
hurrying after being stung following a surprise encounter with a hornet’s nest on the trail. While enjoying our evening meal, the weather seemed to look more promising and so perhaps we might have a dry hike after all.

Sunday dawned with a high overcast, and while we were having breakfast at about 8 am a solo hiker stopped by for a chat. He had driven from his home that morning and was just doing a short trip to the alpine ridge to get back for dinner. Wow, these locals do not waste time! After we found the narrow trail from the lake we easily reached the alpine ridge with its scattering of late season alpine flowers nestled in gaps between exposed bands of limestone rock. We noticed small fossils embedded in the rock and Peter, our resident biologist, identified them as Crinoids, small marine creatures. The trail mostly followed the height of land, and we were rewarded by spectacular views all round, although the clouds were now increasing and darkening. We met four separate small parties leaving the area on the way to our second campsite – maybe they knew the weather patterns and were leaving while the going was good. By late afternoon after a steep descent into a narrow pass we came across a creek draining some late season snow and decided we should find a nearby campsite as we had been told that water could be a problem on this route. The pass itself was too windy and rocky, but we found two small reasonably level areas on the climb out of the pass where we could just squeeze in the tents. It was good job we had lost so many of the original eighteen people as there would have been no room for all of them at this campsite. As Peter and I had

the bigger 2-person tent we used the slightly larger and perhaps flatter area, leaving the smaller bumpier area for Iveta in the solo tent, which she accepted with her normal cheerfulness. For the remainder of our trip we men tended to get the bigger, often flatter, areas for our tent, and Iveta made do with the smaller, often bumpier, area. This was not very gallant or gentlemanly, but it is reality in this new era of gender equality and Iveta was not the type to whimper about special considerations for women! After supper the rain settled in for most of the night, and as the site was not well sheltered it was a disturbed night due to the gusting wind and rain.

We were slow leaving our campsite on Monday morning as there was low cloud and little to see as we made our way slowly along the undulating ridge in steadily increasing rain. At noon we had a snack in a rather exposed place, and being pretty wet by then it took us a long time to warm up after that stop. Our spirits were raised when we came across an almost flat area with a shallow pool of water which looked like it would be a relatively sheltered campsite, and even though it was only 1 pm we decided to camp there and to get warm again over lunch with hot tea – what a luxury! We spent the rest of the day in the tents keeping dry, and wondered how much we would actually see of this traverse. As we were less than 1 km from Schjelderup Lake, we were also concerned about our average speed and slow progress, and how much more terrain we had to cover if we were to complete the loop. A “code yellow” warning light was flickering on the “EpicAlert” monitor screen, but we still felt we could catch up on our schedule!

At least it was not raining on Tuesday morning as we had breakfast, but now we had little water as the nearby shallow pool had disappeared – one of the hazards of camping in a karst (porous limestone) landscape. Next time we should collect and store water while it was there! We shouldered our packs at 9 am and set off with some urgency as we were trying to make up time for the relatively short hike of the previous day. Our spirits were higher as the weather had improved sufficiently for us to see many of the surrounding peaks, including at last the Strathcona brandname peak – the Golden Hinde – which was just occasionally draped in light clouds. As usual the route mostly followed the height of land,



Scenery along the ridge traverse, including the Golden Hinde (2nd top). Photos: top - I. Janot; others - B. Wood.

and we were often following strips of exposed rock with small flowers opening to catch the weak sunshine. As we approached Grieg Ridge, we could see a large white tent in an exposed location on that ridge which piqued our curiosity. After a short climb onto the intersection of Grieg Ridge with Phillips Ridge, we found a nice sheltered spot with views, and so had a surprisingly pleasantly warm lunch, which relaxed us so much that all motivation to catch up with our “schedule” evaporated like the puddles of water on the rocks. After two rather rough and exposed campsites, this was the best campsite so far and so we decided it was too nice to miss, provided there was water. We descended the hill we had just climbed up to locate a shallow pool that we had just passed but we could not find that pool again. Wow, either it was our failing memories or this porous limestone was always playing tricks with us mainlanders. So, we climbed back up the hill and found a nice snow patch for water and that confirmed our camp site, even though it was only 2 pm. We rationalised this decision by looking at the map and seeing how far it was around the remainder of the loop, and realized that it would be a real “epic-tempting” grunt to complete the loop per Plan B. By camping early we would have a chance to visit the big white tent and walk along a bit of Greig Ridge without our packs – what a nice thought! So we strolled along Greig Ridge and found the tent, which was the standard “geologist” rugged metal-framed canvas ridge tent guyed to a massive wooden platform, but no one was around. We thought it would be strange if geologists were still prospecting in BC’s oldest provincial park, but we knew mining was “king” in BC land use, and who knows what power mining companies have? Back at our campsite we were starting dinner and heard a



The Marmot Recovery Team’s tent. Photo: I. Janot.

chopper arrive at the tent and decided we would wait until the next day to make contact with the new arrivals.

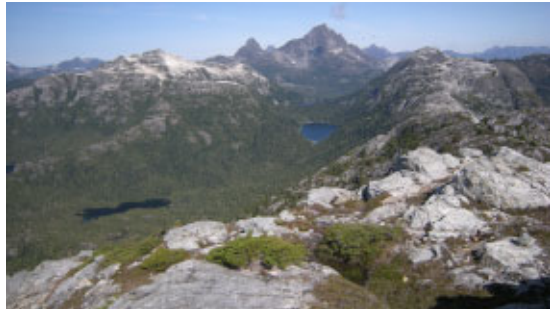
After breakfast on Wednesday we visited the big tent and met Dave Horton and Adrian Pendergast, two researchers with the Vancouver Island Marmot Recovery Team. They were planning to use their radio tracking devices to monitor progress of an extended marmot family transplanted into that area from the captive breeding program. During a short chat they strongly recommended that we visit at least the Limestone Cap, as it now seemed unlikely that we could make it to Marble Meadows and the complete circuit across Mt. Phillips. All of these destinations were part of our original plan B, which we were contemplating changing due to our rate of progress and the unstable weather. Back at camp we decided on a day trip to the Limestone Cap and returning to camp at the same place. Whew! What a relief to finally decide what to do, even if it was now Plan C! The “Epic Alert” monitor screen warning light reverted to a flickering “code green”, thus showing this was probably a sensible decision to avoid an epic!

There were many high clouds when we set off at about 10.30 am from camp, travelling with shared light loads and making good progress, mostly following the ridge from which we could see ever-more impressive views of the surprisingly large and white Limestone Cap with its vertical south west wall with classic multi-coloured sedimentary layers. We dropped down to a fairly broad rocky pass where we hid out of the wind for lunch, while viewing the next section of the route which looked tricky. We could see that we would have to scramble up a short steep section at the bottom of the next bump, and after lunch Peter showed us the way. This is where the guidebook recommends lowering the packs with a rope when coming the other way from the Limestone Cap, but I was glad we had our rope with us just for climbing up this portion. As we topped out on the next section of the ridge by mid afternoon we could see the Cap was very extensive and soon came across many of the typical deep fissures or crevasses in the white limestone. We took our time wandering around this unusual landscape which had an overall shallow slope to it but was covered with many deep “rocky crevasses” defined by walls of narrow “blades”, which were separated by

patches of vegetation containing some colourful alpine flowers. Many of the rock surfaces contained small fossils as before, and with the marvels of digital photography, we could take close-up photos of them. It was a truly amazing area and we were so lucky to have good weather and time to examine the terrain. I could not imagine a worse place to camp – impossible as far I was concerned. By about 4.30 pm the weather seemed to be closing in and we decided we had better head back to camp. So we reversed our way back to the tricky steep section and were glad that we knew what we were looking for as we had only just come from there. The several vegetated ledges that ran across the face had been well walked over by parties looking for the relatively easy way down, and so we were glad we had good light and good weather to see the tattered bits of rope left there by previous parties. We thankfully used our own rope to descend safely, and again I was glad we did not have a large party for this sort of thing. From our lunch pass we did not follow our outbound route over the ridge and instead took the recommended low level traverse on the east side of the ridge back to a col. The rain finally started as we climbed back up to the junction with Greig Ridge arriving at the tents at about 6.30 pm. After dinner when the rain stopped the marmot researchers joined us for a chat before bed.

Thursday started off with high clouds and sunshine, and before 9 am we set off to return to Arnica Lake using our outbound route. After a short while we noted two figures in the distance following our route and rapidly gaining on us. They soon caught up with us and turned out to be the marmot researchers who were now carrying their radio monitoring gear. We all walked to a good view point overlooking a steep sided, partially wooded valley and Dave and Adrian soon picked up radio signals from the marmot family. Some of the individual marmots could be identified by their radio frequencies and it was interesting to hear the researchers talking about the individual marmots and incremental improvements in the captive breeding program. We left the researchers at about 11 am in promising sunshine and so now we could see parts of the route that we did not see on our outbound route. We had our warmest lunch yet in a nice setting which was quite near Monday's campsite and we could now appreciate the spectacular scenery. Yet when

we climbed over the next ridge the weather rapidly changed, starting with thunder followed by hail which



More scenery and a sunny camp site on the ridge traverse. Photos: B. Wood.

covered the trail in a very short time – typical mountain weather which we felt justified our retreat. Of course the hail did not last long but it was followed by scattered rain squalls, and so at 4.30 pm as we were descending the slope near Sunday's campsite we decided to look for a campsite before we were completely soaked. Sunday's campsite looked pretty flooded and so we left the trail and searched for level rock-free ground, which as usual was difficult to find. Once again I realized that it was a good thing we had only two tents. After a bit of rock removal we had a pair of reasonable tent sites, and made supper melting snow from old avalanche debris. This was a much more sheltered site than Sunday's, which was just as well as it seemed to rain most of that evening.

The weather cleared overnight and we had a cool but sunny morning walk, a warm leisurely lunch, and a pleasant scenic afternoon dawdle with lots of stops while following the trail down to Arnica Lake campsite, arriving there shortly after 5 pm. It was Friday evening and there were more campers around than on the previous Saturday evening. We



Iveta and Brian in front of the Golden Hinde (top). Photo: P. Wood. Mt. Phillips summit (bottom). Photo: B. Wood.

learnt that the weather forecast was more optimistic than before. Over dinner we discussed changing old Plan C (retreating the next day to the car in the anticipated rain) to Plan D which, assuming a pleasant Saturday morning, we would do a light pack day trip to Mt Phillips.

Saturday, sunny and clear, saw us travelling light and climbing through easy bush generally eastwards until we gained the broad south ridge of Mt. Phillips, where we found the "trail" marked by flagging tape and cairns. We then started heading north, passing small pools of water, creeks, and patches of flowers, mostly in beautiful open country. We had some good views into the eastern portion of the park beyond Buttle Lake, and saw the occasional deer, butterflies and a few birds. There were the usual false summits which fooled us into thinking we were at the top, only to find another descent to another col followed by another climb. Finally we arrived at the summit and enjoyed a sunny lunch with marvelous views all around.

We then reversed the last portion of our ascent route but somehow missed the middle portion of our route and had to revert to GPS, map, and compass to save us from taking the wrong direction in some bush that had "mysteriously appeared" since our visit earlier that day! We were too near camp and the weather and light were too good for the Epic Warning light to switch from code green to code yellow! In my opinion, after the satellite phone (which we were carrying with us!), the GPS unit is the biggest threat to epics! One advantage of a failing memory is that even reversing a recently completed outbound route seems to be a totally new trip! We left the ridge in the correct place and headed steeply down and west back to camp by 6.30 pm, after again taking what seemed to be a different route from that morning, but who knows if we cannot remember.

On Sunday we were back at the car by noon, and home that evening. I felt that our trip was probably about the same overall distance as the complete loop of Plan B, but some of it was without overnight packs and also without the epic-tempting fighting the bush on the north ridge of Mt. Phillips and the crossing of Phillips Ck. The scenery convinced us to return to see Marble Meadows and more great country in this rugged park, BC's first provincial park that will be one hundred years old in 2011.

SOUTHERN CHILCOTIN, 27 July – 6 August, 2007

By Ellen Woodd

The 10 day hike through parts of the Southern Chilcotin was breathtaking with its beautiful peaks and meadows, good variety of wildlife and a stellar group of fellow backpackers.

After three trips flying into Lorna Lake we shouldered our heavy packs and started out. The crossing of Big Ck. proved a little damp for Alice as she slipped off the greasy log into the water. The second crossing was over Grant Ck. and we were able to make our way easily through the log jam. After that we made our way up through the lush meadows and willow scrub. Shortly before we camped for the night a large grizzly bear was sighted – it wasn't very far away feeding in the willows. When it stood up on its hind legs we were suitably impressed and decided to tighten our ranks and not spread out. This grizzly was not very perturbed by us and sat on the other side of the creek for quite a while just watching.

That night it started to rain and blow. We remained in our respective tents throughout most of the morning listening to the patter of raindrops on them. In the afternoon it slowly started to clear and Geoff went and climbed Mt. Dorrie, Fred climbed up the ridge to the north and Karl, Bert, and John headed up to Iron Pass to check out the next day's objectives. Later that evening we had another grizzly sighting as a large light coloured male came across the valley hunting marmots.

July 30th dawned clear and sunny. It wasn't long before camp was broken and we were heading up to the pass. Instead going straight to Iron Pass, we angled to the north and where it finally leveled off we took off our packs and Karl held a secret vote. Remote Mt. Vic had been one of the objectives of this trip. However, it was a long way and we had just lost a day to weather. The majority decided that we would rather hike packless to Powell Pass and walk the ridges back. By mid-afternoon we were

shouldering our packs again and making our way to Iron Pass and down the other side into the

Battlement Creek drainage. A couple of us had developed some heel blisters by this time and Peter even had some under his pack straps.

The trail down this drainage was hard to follow and even though we eventually crossed the creek, the trail still was elusive. We ended up using the mining road, which we now believe is the main route. The gold mine site at the Taseko River junction was interesting and we explored the old buildings for part of the afternoon. Again, reluctant to use the mining road, we searched in vain for the elusive trail before falling back onto the road. We met up with a wrangler from Barry Menhenniks Spruce Lake Tours. He told us that a group of Swiss were on their way in our direction. So after we had cooled our heels in the icy waters and Holly had failed again catching any fish, we started off. It wasn't long before we were passed by the 29 horses and their Swiss riders. Needless to say, after that the trail was no longer difficult to find! Our aesthetic camp that evening was high above the confluence of Feo and Denair Creeks. It was only 11 am and we were below Mt. Warner. All but Ellen, who had been told to get her blisters under control, headed up the peak.

The following day was a long one! Up and over the pass we hiked, followed by the long descent to Warner Lake. We lunched at the small southern one, and again Holly had no luck catching a fish. There was talk about bushwhacking and angling up towards Deer Pass. In the end we decided to drop the 250m and catch the trail. This was a steep trail that climbed 400+m to the pass and was



**Ice-cored moraine on the NW side of Mt. Sheba.
Photo: K. Ricker.**



**Left -
top - the party on the summit
of Mt. Warner. Photo: E.
Woodd.
middle - looking up Grant Ck.
to Iron Pass. Photo: E.
Woodd.
bottom - Camp 2 in front of a
fluted moraine. Photo: K.
Ricker.**

**Right -
Maele and Marilyn at camp 4
beneath an active rock gla-
cier and the SW ridge of Mt.
Warner. Photo: K. Ricker.**

popular with mountain bikers. We could often see signs of their stubby tires in the hardened mud. We were a pretty tired troop that set up our tents and camp just below the pass that evening.

We woke to the sound of thunder, but were fortunate to be able to break camp before it started raining. We climbed Mt. Gommorah in sleet and hail and then started to walk the ridges towards Mt. Sheba. We took a route too high below the peak and ended up having to slide down some steep scree before coming to the small lake and the desolate moonscape where we would set up camp. Between showers we scrambled up the two peaks of Mt. Sheba before returning to camp and our evening meal.

This long day started with a harbinger of good karma in the form of a magnificent mountain sheep silhouetted on Sheba's ridge in the early morning light. We were soon spread out along the ridges as we slowly descended to Spruce Lake. Holly found the fishing excellent and we soon had two good sized rainbow trout. These were cleaned and stowed in a plastic bag before we headed to the south end of the lake and up to Windy Pass. This was another steep climb and we met a group of about a dozen mountain bikers. They were very wet and muddy as we had been in rain as we ascended into the pass. "Alice's Camp" was on a flat piece of meadow that had been further sculptured by a recent large avalanche. This provided the wood for a fire and the trout were cooked to perfection and appreciated by all.

Poor Peter had truly been suffering during the hike. His son had had to pull out from the trip at the last minute and Peter's pack was horrendously huge. Besides suffering from blisters on his shoulders, he was also wearing a knee brace. He was not interested in playing on the ridges today, and chose to struggle on to our next camp at Eldorado Basin. He ended up taking the wrong fork in the trail and when we arrived at camp we could see him across the valley. Fred took the tent poles and fly that Maelle had been carrying, and raced across to try and catch him and give him his gear. They did meet up, but Peter didn't want his poles etc. as he was just going to try and make it back to his car that night. We had a couple of good rain squalls that evening and later found out that Peter had got quite wet.



Top - Old mining hut at the Taylor-Windfall mine.

Middle - Looking at a recent moraine-dammed lake near Iron Pass.

Bottom - On the ridge north of Iron Pass.

Photos: K. Ricker (top, middle); E. Woodd (bottom).

The next day was brilliant and crystal clear, and the early morning sun hit our tent causing us to rise. We had an easy walk down the High Trail for an hour before reaching the mining road. This was steep and most of us had toes that were banging into the front of our boots. Just before noon and while we were discussing the merits of hiking the main road vs. the trail to Tyax, Bert appeared. He had raced

ahead of us and was there taking our packs and placing them in the back of his Jeep. I crawled into the front seat and he drove me back to get my car. Then we did a couple of ferry trips to bring the team back to Tyax Lodge for a swim/shower and a cold beer – an excellent way to end a trip!

We were: Karl Ricker (Organizer), Maelle Ricker, Marilyn Cram, Carol MacMillan, Geoff Mumford, Fred Douglas, Alice Purdey, Peter Stange, Bert Park, Holly Colquhoun, John Halliday and Ellen Woodd.

NATURAL HISTORY OBSERVATIONS – SOUTH CHILCOTIN TRAVERSE, 27 July – 6 August, 2007 By Karl Ricker, Marilyn Cram and Alice Purdey

The South Chilcotin Ranges are a paradise for wanna-be naturalists and professional scientists alike. Our third trip to this region focussed on the flora and fauna with an extra effort put toward alpine flowers, fortified by many digital images to assist in a better reckoning of what was cursorily noted in the field. This trip began by moving westward from Lorna Lake over Iron Pass to Taseko Valley, and then returning eastward by way of Warner Pass to Warner Lake and thence up to Deer Pass and onto the ridge between Gun and Tyaughton Creeks to re-join the route used in 2003. So the notes to follow will focus mainly on the western region and the reader is referred to the BCMC Journals (2004, 2006) to grasp the entire picture, especially the geological and topographic settings.

Geological Notes

Sediments and volcanics, in several formations of the Mesozoic Era, underlie the entire route, alternating between “soft” topography where shale-sandstones are the underlying rock, and bold cliffy terrain where volcanics are exposed. The latter are pronounced on portions of Cluckata Ridge (lower Grant Valley) and are glaringly exposed on well-named Battlement Ridge to the west, and again at Mts. Warner and Sheba. Old Taylor-Windfall gold mine provided some curiosity on lower Battlement Creek with chalcopyrite (copper) and specular-hematite (iron) found in the old waste dump. Mine exploration is again active in this area. Gossan zones are strongly developed on the ridges between

Battlement and Denain valleys to provide the encouragement.

Moraines are the outstanding features of Battlement Valley. Reaching the valley by crossing over well-named Iron Pass from Grant Valley provides an outstanding close view of a moraine dammed lake, followed by a lengthy ground-terminal moraine complex, with colourful oxidized debris, farther along on the axis of the valley floor. Moraines on the right side of Grant Valley, by comparison, are subdued and lengthy, hinting at a much older glacial time interval than those in Battlement which are “fresh” Little Ice Age features of the last few centuries. An encroaching active rock glacier at the campsite just west of Warner Pass is the obvious feature of note. Between Deer Pass and Mt. Sheba the intermediate form of the ice/rock glacier is an ice-cored moraine on the north side of the ridge. However, talus slopes are the ubiquitous feature throughout the traverse, varying from blocky rubble in areas of volcanic lithology to much finer rubble (scree) where shale-sandstones are the source.

Solifluction lobes on open turfy slopes in Grant and Denain Valleys, stone nets in the higher rubble zone near Warner Pass, and ice wedge(?) polygons above Deer Pass near Gomorrah Mountain, which also has a beautiful display of stone stripes, are all very noteworthy features.

Flora and Fauna Notes

Wildlife sightings on this trek were outstanding, providing interest almost daily. Birds (32 species identified), mammals (9 species), and Holly’s Rainbow trout catch from Spruce Lake were significant. On the botanical side, trees (5 species) with highest elevations noted for some, shrubs (18 genera and several more species) and about 60 genera of alpine flowers were identified. All are itemized on the following lists with notes on location and/or habitat. Certainly, the grizzly bears seen on the first two days generated the overall interest. Surprisingly, goats were not seen on typical steeprocky-cliffy terrain, but were spotted on the soft sloping fine sediments of Windy Pass, being an easy target for a large predator. Wolves provided excitement while hiking off Open Heart Mtn. to Spruce Lake, because they were on our trail, and several of us literally bumped into them!

FAUNA

Mammals – (ID's by everyone): 9 spp

- Beaver (lodges) Grant Valley (alpine zone!)
- Hoary marmot Grant Valley (10+), Powell Pass, Battlement Valley
- Grizzly bear Grant Valley (2), Warner Lake (1), tracks at Powell Pass, tearout craters on Tosh-Grant divide, and tracks in Battlement Valley
- Rocky Mtn. Goats 4 adults and 1 kid at Windy Pass
- Wolf Big, Grant, Battlement & Denain valley tracks; Open Heart Mtn. (3)
- California Bighorn Sheep tracks at Warner Pass, one animal at Sheba camp
- NW Chipmunk Battlement and Pearson Valleys
- Mule deer Grant, Battlement and Eldorado Valleys; tracks at Warner Pass, Open Heart Mtn. and Eldorado Basin
- Moose Big Creek Valley (tracks only)

Amphibians

- Toad

Fish

- Rainbow trout Spruce Lake

Birds (ID's by K. Ricker & Marilyn Cram): 32 spp

- Common loon Tyaughton Lake (1), Spruce Lake (1)
- Mallards Tyaughton Lake (few)
- Bald eagle Taseko Valley (1)
- Golden eagle Deer Pass trail (2)
- Small falcon species Deer Pass trail (Kestrel or Merlin – 1)
- Rock ptarmigan Grant/Tosh divide (1)
- White-tailed ptarmigan Grant Valley (several), brood above Deer Pass
- Gull sp Mt. Sheba (2)
- Northern Pygmy-owl Windy Pass camp (1)
- Rufous hummingbird Battlement and Grant Valleys, Eldorado Basin, Windy Pass trail (few)
- Olive-sided flycatcher Open Heart Mtn. (few)
- Western Wood peewee Deer Pass trail (1)
- Violet-green swallow Powell Pass (2)
- Barn swallow Tyaughton Lake (many)
- Clark's nutcracker Lorna Lake, Grant Valley, etc. (ubiquitous), all elevations
- Common raven Tyaughton Lake (few), Spruce Lake
- Mountain chickadee east side of Warner Pass (few)
- Red-breasted nuthatch Pearson Basin (few)
- Winter wren Pearson Basin (few)
- Horned lark Grant Valley, Battlement Valley (few)
- Hermit thrush Eldorado Basin (few)
- American robin Tyaughton Lake, Warner Pass, Open Heart Mtn.
- American pipit Denain, Battlement and Grant Valleys (abundant); Grant/Tosh divide, Warner Pass, Mt. Sheba area (few)
- Yellow-rumped warbler Battlement Valley (few)
- Yellow warbler Tyaughton Lake (few)
- Golden-crowned sparrow Grant Valley (few)
- Song sparrow Tyaughton Lake (few)
- Dark-eyed Oregon junco Windy Pass trail (few)
- Gray-crowned rosy finch Mt. Warner (1)
- Purple finch Taseko Valley (1)
- Finch sp Tyaughton Lake (several)

- Pine grosbeak Eldorado and Pearson Basins (several)
- Pine siskin Tyaughton Lake, Battlement Valley, Pearson and Eldorado Basins (flocks)

FLORA

Trees (ID's by everyone): 5 spp

- *Abies lasiocarpa* (Sub-alpine fir) – highest at Battlement Camp (2185 m) and Denain Camp (2160 m) near Warner Pass
- *Picea engelmannii* (Engelmann spruce) – highest at 2377 m on Windy Pass summit
- *Pinus contorta* (Lodgepole pine) – Big Ck. & Pearson Ck. Valleys
- *Pinus albicaulis* (White-barked pine) – treeline areas; highest elevations noted: 2250 m Tosh/Grant divide and upper Denain Valley; 2377 m Windy Pass summit
- *Tsuga mertensiana* (Mtn. hemlock)

Shrubs (ID's by Marilyn Cram and Karl Ricker): 18 genera, 19+ species

- *Amelanchier alnifolia* (Saskatoon) – valley in dry sites
- *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* (Kinnikinnick) – everywhere in dry sites
- *Betula glandulosa* (Dwarf birch) – damp valley floor
- *Cassiope mertensiana* ? (White Mtn. heather) – alpine, sub-alpine
- *Juniperus communis* (Ground juniper) – dry slopes, etc.
- *Kalmia microphylla* (Western bog-laurel) – wet sub-alpine meadows
- *Ledum* spp. (2 or 3) (Labrador tea) – damp forest floor
- *Linnaea borealis* (Twin flower) – scarce, from valley floor to alpine
- *Lonicera involucrata* (Black twinberry) – damp valley floor – Gun Ck.
- *Pachistima myrsinites* (Falsebox) – dry slopes Warner-Gun-Windy Pass trails
- *Phyllodoce empetrififormis* (Pink Mtn. heather) – alpine, sub-alpine
- *Phyllodoce glanduliflora* (Yellow Mtn. heather) – alpine, sub-alpine
- *Ribes* spp. (several) (Currant/gooseberry)
- *Rubus* spp. (several) (Black/Thimble/Salmon etc., berries)
- *Salix* spp. (several) (Willow-Drummond's, Arctic and Netted) – everywhere
- *Shepherdia canadensis* (Soopolallie) – Warner-Gun-Windy Pass trails
- *Spiraea densiflora* (Sub-alpine spirea) – sub-alpine moist areas
- *Vaccinium* spp. (several) (Blueberry) – everywhere

Flowers (Forbs) (ID's by Marilyn Cram, Alice Purdey and Karl Ricker): 62 genera, 90+ species

White

- *Achillea millefolium* (Yarrow) – ubiquitous on raw soils
- *Anaphalis margaritacea* (bearly everlasting) – Big Creek Valley floor
- *Anemone occidentalis* (Tow-headed baby) – sub-alpine, alpine meadows
- *Antennaria* spp. (Pussytoes 1 or 2 sp) – alpine
- *Caltha leptosepala* (Marsh marigold) – Grant Valley
- *Cerastium arvense* ? (Chickweed) – sub-alpine to treeline
- *Claytonia lanceolata* (Western spring beauty) – moist meadows
- *Cornus canadensis* (Bunchberry) – forest floors
- *Dryas octopetala* (Mtn. avens) – alpine
- *Erigeron peregrinus* (Sub-alpine daisy) – ubiquitous above treeline
- *Fragaria vesca* ? (Strawberry) – Big Creek valley floor
- *Heracleum lanatum* (Cow parsnip) – Gun Creek Valley at Warner Lake, Pearson Valley road
- *Luetkea pectinata* (Partridge foot) – Windy Pass
- *Minuartia rubella* (or *Arenaria obusiloba*) (Alpine or Boreal sandwort) – alpine
- *Oxytropis monticola* (Mtn. locoweed) – alpine/sub-alpine dry sites
- *Parnassia fimbriata* (Fringed grass of parnassus) – Windy Pass
- *Platanthera* spp. (Rein orchids) – sub-alpine to treeline
- *Saxifraga bronchialis* (Spotted saxifrage) – rocky alpine

- *Saxifraga* spp. (Several species of saxifrage) – widespread
- *Silene douglasii* ? (Douglas' campion) – dry sub-alpine, alpine
- *Smilacina* spp. (Solomon's seal) – Denain Valley
- *Stellaria longipes* (Long-stalked starwort) – alpine
- *Stellaria* spp. (Tiny-flowered starworts) – alpine, sub-alpine
- *Valeriana sitchensis* (Mtn. valerian) – ubiquitous

Greenish-White

- *Silene parryi* ? (Parry's campion) – sub-alpine, alpine

Whitish Pink to Purple

- *Anemone drummondii* (Drummond's anemone) – sub-alpine meadows
- *Astragalus* spp. (Alpine milk vetch) – ubiquitous
- *Lewisia pygmaea* (Alpine lewisia) – alpine
- *Phlox diffusa* (Spreading phlox) – Warner Pass, Deer Pass, Gun Creek Valley
- *Polygonum viviparum* (Alpine bistort) – Denain and Battlement Valleys
- *Streptopus* spp. (Twisted stalk) – Denain Valley

Pink

- *Douglasia laevigata* (Cliff douglasia) – alpine
- *Epilobium alpinum* (Alpine willowherb) – Pearson Valley
- *Erigeron speciosus* (Showy fleabane) – open forest floor
- *Rosa* sp. (Wildrose) – forest floor of Gun, Pearson and Taseko Valleys
- *Silene acaulis* (Moss campion) – ubiquitous in alpine
- *Silene scouleri* ? (Scouler's campion) – very rare, sub-alpine
- *Thalictrum occidentale* or *T. alpinum* (Meadowrue) – Denain Valley

Red

- *Antennaria rosea* (Rosy pussytoe) – Grant Valley
- *Aquilegia formosa* (Red columbine) – several valleys (on floor)
- *Castilleja miniata* ? (Red paintbrush) – sub-alpine ubiquitous
- *Sedum integrifolium* (Roseroot) – alpine

Wine

- *Castilleja parviflora* (Small flowered paintbrush) – alpine/sub-alpine
- *Epilobium angustifolium* (Fireweed) – Tyaughton and Pearson Valleys
- *Epilobium latifolium* (Alpine fireweed) – alpine
- *Pedicularis groenlandica* (Elephant's head lousewort) – sub-alpine
- *Pedicularis ornithorhyncha* (Bird's-beak lousewort) – alpine

Purple / Violet

- *Aster* spp. (Alpine asters) – alpine
- *Cirsium edule* (Indian thistle) – Gun Valley, Eldorado Basin
- *Gentiana* / *Gentianella* spp. (Several species, gentians) – sub-alpine to valley floors
- *Phacelia sericea* (Silky phacelia) – sub-alpine / alpine dry sites
- *Polemonium pulcherrimum* (Showy Jacob's ladder) – ubiquitous

Purplish Blue

- *Delphinium* spp. (Larkspurs) – Gun Valley
- *Gentiana glauca* (Inky gentian) – alpine
- *Veronica wormskjoldii* (Alpine speedwell) – Pearson Valley

Blue

- *Lupinus arcticus* (Arctic lupine) – ubiquitous
- *Lupinus bicolor* (Bicoloured lupine) – Gun Valley
- *Lupinus lyallii* (Dwarf Mtn. lupine) – Windy, Iron and Deer Passes
- *Myosotis alpestris* (Mtn. forget-me-not) – alpine/sub-alpine
- *Myosotis laxa* ? (Form of above? small flowered) – Deer Pass to Mt. Sheba

Yellow

- *Agoseris* spp. (Agoseris) – dry sites in sub-alpine/alpine
- *Arnica chamissonis* (Meadow arnica) – moist meadows
- *Arnica cordifolia* (Heart-leaved arnica) – valley floors
- *Arnica gracilis* (High mtn. arnica) – sub-alpine/alpine ubiquitous
- *Arnica latifolia* (Mtn. arnica) – sub-alpine/alpine ubiquitous
- *Aquilegia formosa* ? (Red columbine) – can have yellow petals
- *Balsamorhiza saggittata* (Arrowroot) – Warner and Gun valleys, Windy Pass trail
- *Castilleja* sp. (Yellow paintbrush)
- *Crepis nana* (Dwarf hawksbeard) – Deer Pass to Mt. Sheba
- *Draba* spp. (Drabas 2 or 3 spp) – sub-alpine/alpine
- *Erigeron aureus* (Golden fleabane) – Deer Pass to Mt. Sheba
- *Eriogonum umbellatum* (Sulphur buckwheat) – as above
- *Haplopappus lyallii* (Lyll's goldenrod) – alpine/sub-alpine
- *Hieracium* spp. (Hawkweeds)
- *Pedicularis bracteosa* (Bracted lousewort) – sub-alpine
- *Potentilla diversifolia* (Mtn. meadow cinquefoil) – ubiquitous
- *Potentilla flabellifolia* ? (Fan-leaved cinquefoil)
- *Ranunculus eschscholtzii* (Mtn. buttercup) – ubiquitous
- *Ranunculus* spp. (Snow? Cooleys?)
- *Sedum divergens* (Spreading stonecrop) – alpine raw soils
- *Senecio canus* (Wooly groundsel) – dry sites, sub-alpine/alpine
- *Senecio integerrinus* ? (Western groundsel) – valley floor to sub-alpine
- *Senecio lugens* or *elmeri* (Black-tipped groundsel)
- *Senecio triangularis* (Arrow-leaved groundsel) – valley floor to sub-alpine
- *Solidago multiradiata* (Goldenrod) – sub-alpine/alpine ubiquitous
- *Taraxacum officinale* ssp. *ceratophorum* (Horned dandelion) – Grant Valley
- Unidentified cushion plant Windy Pass

Yellowish Orange or Green

- *Agoseris aurantiaca* (Orange agoseris) – ubiquitous
- *Arnica* spp. (Arnicas) – sub-alpine/alpine
- *Lilium columbianum* (Tiger lily) – Windy Pass trail
- *Veratrum viride* (Indian hellebore) – most valley bottoms

Greenish Red

- *Oxyria digyna* (Mtn. sorrel) – at all passes

Sedges and Grasses (no firm species ID's)

- *Eriophorum* spp. (Cotton grass) – Battlement Valley
- *Carex* spp. (Sedges 3 or more spp) – wet areas, all elevations

Mosses (ignored except for the following)

- *Dicranoweisia crispula* (Curly thatch cushion moss) – Windy Pass

Lichens (again, ignored except for the following)

- *Cladina* sp. (Caribou moss) – open areas
- *Cladonia* spp. (Pixie cup, etc, several spp) – sub-alpine
- *Rhizocarpon geographicum* (Map lichen) – all alpine areas

“ZEIT FÜR DRESDEN” - A TRAVERSE OF THE MOUNTAINS SOUTHWEST OF CHILKO LAKE,

7-22 July, 2006.

By Peter Gumlinger

Dresden Mtn. is a minor peak on the high ridge between the Goddard Glacier and Norrington Creek. The

mountain's name derives indirectly from the capital city of the German federal state of Saxony. It was actually named after one of the cruisers in World War I. The ship was part of the German East Asiatic squadron, five ships

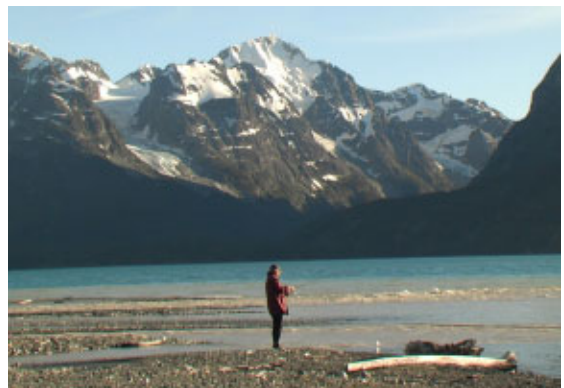
under the command of Vice Admiral Graf von Spee. Beside the SMS Dresden were the armoured cruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau plus two more light cruisers, the SMS Leipzig and the SMS Nürnberg. The squadron was left to fend for itself at the outset of the war which it did by attacking British outposts and disrupting coal supplies [1]. The British sent a fleet under Rear-Admiral Cradock consisting of two armoured cruisers, the HMS Good Hope and the HMS Monmouth, the light cruiser Glasgow, a converted liner, the HMS Otranto and an old battleship, the HMS Canopus, to engage the German squadron and put an end to their marauding. They, minus the slow Canopus, caught up with the Germans on the west coast of central Chile near the city of Coronel on November 1, 1914. Eager to attack at once, Cradock soon found himself silhouetted against the setting sun while the German ships were hard to make out against the darkening shores. The flagship Good Hope was sunk along with the Monmouth. Sixteen hundred British men were dead, with Cradock among them. The Glasgow and Otranto both escaped. It wasn't long before the British navy took revenge and almost completely annihilated Admiral von Spee's squadron in the Battle of the Falkland Islands. Only the SMS Dresden escaped, chased around Cape Horn, and

hiding in the fjords of Patagonia for weeks. Their time would come in the shallow harbour of the small Chilean island of Más a Tierra (today known as Robinson Crusoe Island). The British attacked in violation of the rules of engagement during war, as

Chile was neutral. The Dresden ran up a white flag and sent a lieutenant to negotiate. However, this was only a ruse to buy time so the crew could abandon ship and scuttle her. Today the wreck is gaining popularity with recreational Scuba divers [2].

The biggest peaks in the Chilko Lake area were named in 1923 by R.P. Bishop and G.

Durham after the Good Hope and the Monmouth, no doubt to commemorate the tremendous loss of British lives. In the 1950s it was popular to name mountains following a theme. The “Battle of Coronel” provided just such a theme and so in 1953 an Alpine Club of Canada party named several more peaks in the area after the remaining British ships, as well as Admiral Ridge, Mt. Coronel and Mt. Cradock. The theme was expanded on by another ACC party in 1957, by including the German ships Dresden, Leipzig and Scharnhorst [1], although the peaks given these names are minor. The



Chilko Lake peace. Photo: F. Meutzner.

Gneisenau and Nürnberg were missed altogether and so in 2006 our all-German climbing team would wish to name the two unnamed prominences along the ridge between Otranto and Marston - Gneisenau Mtn. (51° 4' 24" N, 124° 12' 53" W), and Nürnberg Mtn. (51° 4' 40" N, 124° 11' 59" W).

In this age of the Internet and social networking sites, it may not be unusual that one receives an email from a complete stranger, but in April 2000, long before Facebook, a certain Gert Bürgel, a resident of Dresden, sent an email titled "Anfrage bzgl. eines Mount Dresden in B.C." to a .ca address, asking me in German whether I had any knowledge of such a mountain. What a coincidence, because not only did I understand his inquiry in our mother tongue, I knew all about the mountain from my good climbing buddy and fellow BCMC member, Brian Gavin, who had climbed it years before. What's more, I already knew how it had been named, thanks to Robin Tivy's bivouac.com mountain encyclopedia. The stranger had found me with an early search engine because I had developed the BCMC's first portal on the World Wide Web when I had been the club's climbing chair. And how can you doubt the nationality with a last name like mine! Two years earlier, another stranger from Germany had found out about me much the same way when she was researching mountaineering clubs in Vancouver. By the time of our expedition into the mountains of Chilko Lake she was my wife of five years and my constant companion in all outdoor pursuits. But I am getting off topic! Gert Bürgel's reply to my information was titled "Ostern und Weihnachten auf einen Tag!!!!!!!" (Easter and Christmas on the same day) because not only was he researching place names in the world after his home town, he was also a private scholar on the history of 'the little cruiser Dresden' whose story had since become the darling of naval war historians. In another twist of fate, I also have relatives who were born in Dresden. It wasn't long before Gert suggested that fitter persons, not him, should mount an expedition and climb the mountain in 2006, on the occasion of Dresden's eight hundred year anniversary of its foundation. Gert arranged for me to give a slide show to the Dresden Section of the German Alpine Club (DAV) presenting the idea while I happened to be in Germany during the summer of 2000. The slides came courtesy of Brian Gavin and were from his first recorded traverse of

the Good Hope Mountain area in July 1992 [3]. The idea was well received although I came away with the impression that the alpinists in the audience were not really prepared for the travails awaiting a BC wilderness explorer. The year 2006 was still some years off and the email channels between Vancouver and Dresden went very quiet. In early 2005 I began to have my doubts about a joint BCMC/ DAV expedition but undaunted, I was going to pick up Gert's idea and simply organize a BCMC trip to fulfill his hope. I was motivated by the beauty of Chilko Lake with which I was familiar from a whitewater kayaking trip to the rivers draining it and neighbouring Taseko Lake. Just then an email from Gert arrived suggesting I get in touch with Frank Meutzner, a mountain sport journalist and cameraman who, he explained, was a celebrity in Dresden outdoor circles with extensive Himalaya experience, including a first German ascent of Makalu, 8463m, without supplementary oxygen. Frank strongly wanted to undertake an "Anniversary Ascent: Ein 8000er zum 8000ersten" (an eight-thousander on the 800th anniversary), in reference to the 8714 feet elevation of Dresden Mtn. and no doubt a phrase coined to catch the fascination Germans have for the really big peaks. With Frank on board our climbing ambitions became a part of the planning for the official celebrations by the "Dresden 800 Anniversary" organizing committee, albeit with no financial support from the city. Silke and I met with Frank in Germany the following Christmas where we presented him with plans to climb not only Dresden Mtn. – something I argued was too puny on its own to be worthy of the celebration – but more. We would follow instead in the earlier BCMC party's footsteps and attempt a traverse from Franklyn Arm to the south end of Chilko Lake, complete with canoe crossings of the lake. Another German expatriate, Roland Class, who lives by a lake near Nemaiah Valley and operates the only commercial motorboat on Chilko Lake, was going to shuttle the boats between the two ends. Frank would film our adventure and premiere the film at his "3rd annual Bergsichten Film Festival" [4]. We would also relay up-to-date reports via satellite phone to a friend who would then transcribe them to Frank's website in near real time [5]. We figured that never before had a climber from Saxony stood on the snow-covered summit of Dresden Mtn.

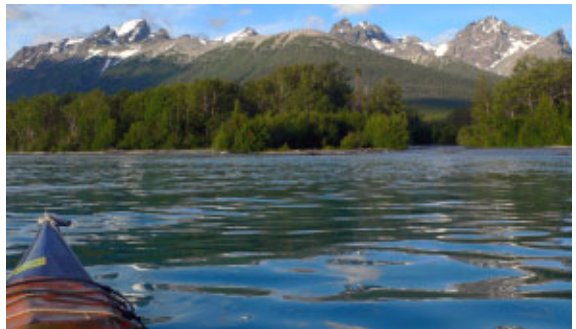
in an area rarely visited, far from civilization and in BC's remote untracked wilderness.

With a nod to our history the expedition would include not only Frank's regular climbing partner, Götz Wiegand - with four 8000m peaks under his belt - and Frank's long time friend, Christian Unger, but also more climbers from Canada and even Chile. Such a large group never materialized and in the end only the original five were committed. Our accomplished Dresden climbers had high hopes, if not for some first ascents, then at least to put up some new and more technical routes in the area. The gear list expanded. Combined with Frank's extensive filming equipment, it soon became clear that we needed a helicopter food drop to distribute the food at least. This was not going to be cheap and not really the unsupported trip I had originally envisioned. But the concept was quite novel to our Himalaya climbers and would make for some great movie footage. The helicopter drop was arranged with Mike King of White Saddle Air, home base at Tatla Lake. To help defray some of the costs, Frank was able to secure various commercial sponsorships. During the month leading up to the trip a press conference was held in Dresden. The numerous journalists present were treated to a show of a training run on the river Elbe where our three German partners received instructions from a local authority in the handling of an ocean kayak. Then, only days before their departure from Germany, Götz had to withdraw because of a family health emergency.

Frank arrived in Vancouver on July 1st. The weather for his reception was superb – 26°C and blue skies. We took him up the Grouse Grind, actually the more scenic "Flint and Feathers" trail. He was impressed with the number of people climbing the stair master, the special timing system, and the apparent ambitions by many to beat their personal best. We, however, took our time and enjoyed the view from a bluff half way up. Frank's climbing gear was coming with Christian at the end of the week, so a training climb up Mt. Baker was out. Besides, it was hot, so we opted to take him ocean kayaking between the Pasley Islands north of Bowen Island. He was in the stable double kayak with Silke, and although there were sizable waves and some wind, his fear of the lake crossing was somewhat calmed. A trade mark and sponsorship gimmick of Frank's/Götz's

"Gipfelträume" (summit dreams) expeditions are greeting cards (see P. 97). A recipient buys them over the Internet and provides his/her address with the expectation of receiving it signed by all expedition members and sent from base camp. The design of the attractive cards was only finalized in June but since then five hundred of them were sold and printed. Consequently, Frank went to the local post office and bought 500 international stamps. Not surprisingly he was stared at with astonishment. We spent an entire afternoon signing them all. Our base camp was our living room. One evening Silke took Frank flying over the city in the same little Cessna 172 that will take them to Konni Lake airstrip in the Nemaiah Valley.

July 7: We meet Silke's former flight instructor, Mike Langford, at Boundary Bay airport early in the morning. We had asked Mike to fly the plane back and he was happy to oblige. The weather isn't exactly the best for flying in the mountains and the chances of flying directly over the mountains and part of our planned route are slim. Silke, Frank and Mike still hope the cloud layer will be high enough to allow a sneak VFR (visual flight rule) route through Railroad and Warner passes to Taseko Lake and the Nemaiah Valley. They will then fly low over Roland's home on the shores of Big Lake and he'll hop into his truck and fetch them at the nearby rough dirt strip. I am not going with them for I am to meet Christian at YVR that evening and drive the 900km with him and all our gear and the two boats the next day. Christian arrives tired after the long flight but before he can rest he has to sign all those greeting cards first.



Paddling on Chilko Lake with the Liberated Group on the skyline. Photo: C. Unger.

July 8: We arrive at Roland's home mid afternoon after an uneventful drive. A few raindrops keep the dust down on the long gravel road from Lee's Corner on Hwy 20. Roland has lived here with his wife, Udette, for the last 16 years. They operate a small B&B and boat service during the summer. Their son, Jesaja, was born here. Home-schooled, he can name every plant and critter around and he has fun calling birds. You can see Mt. Ts'yl-os (Mt. Tatlow) from their living room window. The view is so spectacular that visitors, and we are no exception, can't help but point at the lone tall mountain. Roland couldn't warn us fast enough that you must not point at it, or else, as the local Xení Gwet'in First Nation people will say it'll bring bad weather and bad luck!

July 9: We arrive just in time on the bluff above the Ts'yl-os Provincial Park's Nu Chugh Beniz campsite. The last kilometers are on a tough dirt track barely drivable with a low clearance 2WD. Apparently, Parks likes to keep it that way to keep visitation low. The helicopter lands in concert with our arrival. We quickly fetch the designated food containers, all hop in, including Jesaja, with room to spare, and off we fly across the lake. Our pilot beelines for a high pass next to Glasgow Mtn. The pass is just below a scattered layer of clouds. As soon as we are through the pass our pilot puts the machine into a rapid descent to the divide between the head of Farrow Creek and Boulanger Creek. The map shows a lake here but there is no lake. It drained suddenly in July 1994, producing a jökulhlaup (an Icelandic term for 'glacier-flood') that traveled 11km down Farrow Creek into Chilko Lake. The lake drained via a subglacial tunnel at the margin of the Goddard Glacier following a lengthy period of glacier downwasting and retreat [5]. We rush to deposit our containers in a small pile on top of a lateral moraine and fly again down Farrow Creek, which still shows all the signs of great devastation. I look back trying to remember the place and spot where our food was left. The experience was fast, quick, and surreal. Now the helicopter has gone again and it is silent as we survey the lake from our vantage up on the bluff. We notice that the wind is picking up and whitecaps appear on the lake! Oh, have we heard stories about the wind on Chilko Lake! Robin Tivy has a few tales and Roland advises us against an attempt this day. And it is still only mid-morning! We

pack the kayak and prepare the canoe. Silke and I go for a trial run with the empty spray-covered canoe. The water is numbingly cold. We paddle against the wind and precariously bounce in the waves between Duff Island and Canoe Point. Even the trial run was not a good idea for I am scared to turn the canoe around, being momentarily broadside to the wind and waves. I finally recover my courage. Everything goes well and we surf back to shore, landing where Roland has a little footbridge and where he docks his boat. We wait and wait into the evening but the wind does not subside. There will be no lake crossing today.

July 10: Anxious for the earliest start, we get up before daybreak and slide our boats quietly into mirror calm water. What a change from yesterday. We know fierce gales can whip up with little warning, so as soon as we are afloat, we paddle at a furious pace in an effort to get the lake crossing behind us. We figure once across we can hug the shore and always haul out in an emergency. We move through the calm water while enjoying a postcard view of the western shore below the beautiful Liberated and Capital Group of mountains. We reach Bateman Island, a tiny islet at the entrance to Franklyn Arm. It is still hours before noon but we need a breather to gather strength for the remainder of the paddle. Always vigilant we sense some movement in the air as we begin to pack up. We can't believe it but by the time we are in our boats again wind squalls have picked up head-on down Franklyn Arm. In and out, we negotiate small headlands on the Arm's north shore, but progress is slow and we must eventually face crossing over to the delta of Good Hope Creek in a gale force wind. The crossing seems like a ferry against waves and wind, but we make it. There is a one-room trapper's log cabin here with a rickety wooden dock. We unload and line the boats back to the gravel delta where we pull them way out of the water but to where they are easy for Roland to see. He won't ferry them to the other end of our traverse. Instead, he'll pick us up with his motorboat. This change of plan was a result of Christian's tight flight schedule back to Frankurt.

After a deserved rest, we shoulder our humongous packs and start trotting down a well-established path leading to some waterfalls on Good Hope Creek. This place is sometimes visited by tour boats from Chilko Lake Resort. Much too soon the trail ends

and we turn uphill trying to parallel the creek on a forested bench. At first there isn't much underbrush in the old growth. But that isn't much of a bonus because the space between trees is littered with up to three layers of gnarly deadfall. It is just impossible to find an easy route through this mess. We have to climb up and over, often finding ourselves so far off the ground that a slip could result in serious injury. A couple of slide paths through the forest allow us to judge progress and get our bearings.

Near evening we arrive at the edge of the tall trees. From a brief opening we can see the valley ahead. We are on course but continually have to avoid getting sucked down to the creek. We still have a way to go and now endure tightly packed krummholz. We bush-bash for another couple of hours and suddenly emerge onto a little meadow next to the creek. Brian had told me about this meadow. It is going to be our first encampment. We sure are pleased with our progress today - an 8 hour paddle and some 5 hours of bushwhacking. I had prodded the team through the struggle with accounts of what it would have been like, had the bush been wet.

July 11: There was a little scare this morning. Christian and Frank were negligent for a moment, leaving their dome tent untied sitting in the grass. A sudden wind gust picked it up and began to roll it into the creek. I imagined it submerged, smashed, and with folded poles, but luckily they chased it down not a second too soon. We are in high spirits moseying up the valley. The going is easy now except for the occasional clamber over boulder fields. We can see the headwall of Good Hope Glacier further up the valley as it begins to rain. The downpour does not let up. Silke and I put on rain gear and keep the course but our two partners are last seen floundering far below. It's becoming clear they aren't going to come. Eventually Christian climbs up to us and informs us of their decision to get out of the rain and stay put. They had found a little flat area big enough for just two tents, cleared in the middle of the rubble for probably a similar predicament. It was a very wet ending to a hopeful day.

July 12: The rain had subsided overnight but it was still damp and was going to drizzle. We explain to our partners, who were obviously not familiar with this type of weather, that in these parts a little drizzle



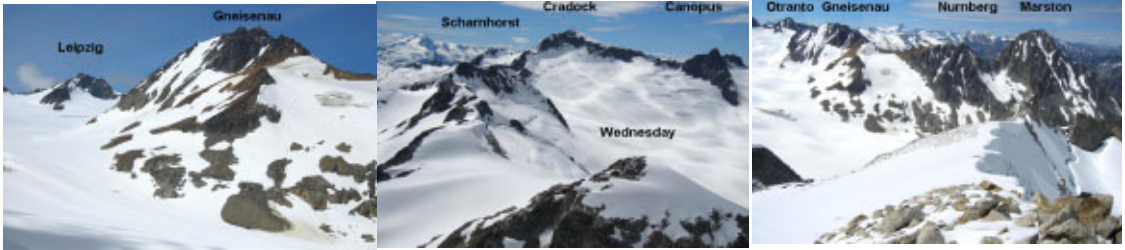
On the high shoulder on Mt. Marston. Photo: P. Gumplinger.

and fog is no reason to hunker down. Better dressed we all leave for the glacier, the lower parts of which are bare so that crevasses, although numerous, are quite obvious. We zig-zag through this maze to gain the upper bowl where there are fewer cracks but they are covered with old snow. We rope up and blunder into the white-out. Eventually I lead us up a steeper section to what appears to be the side of a col on the shoulder of Good Hope Mtn. We are socked in. We trust it is our col – the one we were planning to cross and descend to our food drop.

July 13: It snowed all night and icicles had formed on tent guy lines. There is no chance for a climb of Mt. Good Hope and neither do we feel like descending under these conditions. Silke and I had been careful with our rations but Frank and Christian are telling us that they are nearing the end of their



The Goddard Glacier. Photo: F. Meutzner.



Top - peaks around the Goddard Glacier. Photos: P. Gumplinger.
 Middle - approaching the summit of Dresden Mtn.
 Bottom - Silke and Peter on the summit. Photos: C. Unger.

Middle - views of Dresden Mtn. Photos: C. Unger (heavy loads) and P. Gumplinger.
 Bottom - Good Hope Mtn. rises above the Goddard Glacier. Photo: F. Meutzner.

supplies. We decide to hope for a better day tomorrow. The snow storm continues all day and all through the night.



A snowy camp. Photo: C. Unger

July 14: No change in the weather! It is dismal outside but our partner's empty stomachs are calling for action. Christian goes down a little way from our camp to investigate the col to determine access to the glacier below. He comes back out of the fog with the report: "good news, the route should go". So, we pack up and bail down to the Goddard, dashing hopes of climbing the highest mountain around. The snow slope steepens. It isn't the "walk off" Brian had told me about. Are we off route or is it the shrinkage of the glacier during the intervening years? No matter, we are now committed to descent. Frank decides on a rappel and out comes the rope. It turns out to be a good decision. Our chosen gully becomes narrow and broken up and would be hard to down-climb.

Safely gaining the glacier with the help of the rope, we continue on down. Confidence replaces doubt about being on track. Our surroundings, as far as we can see, agree with the map. It is now only a question of how far down we should descend on the glacier before crossing left to gain a ridge rising up from the Farrow-Boulanger pass. We are starting to get below the clouds and things look more promising. We climb to the ridge crest over loose scree but it soon becomes apparent that we cannot go down for long following my route description. The slabby ridge is very slick from the drizzle and we are carrying unwieldy loads. We find better traction on a scree slope off to the right but this funnels into an unstable gully with a waterfall lower down. Obviously, not a good line, unless we can exit the

top of the gully to the left again. After some trepidation we just manage to escape the terrain trap and are now searching for ways to regain the ridge. The prospects aren't good and any route is going to be bushy. Just then Frank returns from a reconnaissance claiming he'd found a way down the grassy slopes to the side of our gully. This works well with the usual vegetable belays. Function overrides form - we are not 'on camera'!

We are really happy as we break out of the trees onto the broad pass on whose far side our food drop awaits amid hordes of blood sucking insects – a nuisance virtually nonexistent in the European Alps. With no more lake draining into Boulanger Creek there is no rushing creek for us to cross, so we are able to nonchalantly walk over to a couple of ponds and a perfect site for a base camp. To our delight, our containers had not been ransacked by a passing grizzly, so life is good and food is plentiful. The sun appears for a moment. We have high hopes of drying all our wet gear the following day.

July 15: Wonderfully, the weather does seem to improve. It's not perfect yet, by no means, but showers are short and the sun is trying to break through. We go on an excursion up the west side of Mt. Marston with the possibility of gaining a glacier beyond and below Gneisenau Mtn. From this side we have little hope of finding a route up Gneisenau Mtn. We are not ambitious and when the glacier is found far below us and the weather still iffy, we turn around. We even forgo an attempt at Marston although we are not far from the top and the route above looks achievable. It is late afternoon when we take in the mountain panorama. What a spectacular place looking down at our campsite and beyond to Farrow Creek then Chilko Lake.

July 16: A star-filled night, a perfect morning, and we are off to climb Dresden Mtn. We don crampons as soon as we step on to the Goddard Glacier. It is a fairly easy glacier but there are many slots. The best route of ascent appears to be on the far side from us so we cross in an ascending traverse. Before long Silke and I are kick-stepping up the centre of the slope below Wednesday Col. Frank and Christian have kept to the very side of the glacier and are now roped up and side gouging. Once we are reunited we decide on an attempt of what is



Heading up Mt. Chilko. Photo: P. Gumplinger



Route up Gneisenau Mtn.



Nürnberg Mtn. Photo: F. Meutzner.



Camp just N of Mt. Chilko's summit. Photos and graphics this column: P. Gumplinger.



Camp on the ridge between the forks of Norrington Ck. Photo: C. Unger.

probably a new route and proceed directly up from the col towards the summit of Dresden Mtn. This is relatively simple, a bit steep at first, but not technical. At the top of this section we gain a glacier slope that leads easily to a rocky ridge crest from where we can simply walk to the top.

We are ecstatic being on the summit. The weather and views are perfect. We spend a full two hours at the top taking pictures and filming a simulation of our earlier arrival at the peak. Frank and Christian give lengthy interviews. Frank also questions the rest of us about our feelings and exuberance.

Celebrity shy, I barely say a word. Silke plays her part effortlessly [6]. We raise the Dresden anniversary banner and the flag with the BCMC crest for more photographs. Inside the summit cairn for the next visitors, we bury a small canister with the

Dresden flag and our story. We descend via the “standard” SW route, if you can talk about a standard on a mountain so seldom climbed. On our way we stash extra gear, clothing and food below Dresden’s southern slopes, for we will be back later during the continuation of the traverse. That evening, each with a can of German beer that Frank had prudently added to our food provisions, we toast our success.

July 17: What happened to our weather? The sky is cloudy and looks triste. Only Silke and I are motivated enough to go and attempt a climb of Mt. Cradock, the highest peak surrounding Goddard Glacier. Below Wednesday Col it becomes apparent that we’ll get into a whiteout if we proceed to the head of the glacier and the col that give access to the final slope on Mt. Cradock. Two on a rope on a glacier in a whiteout is never a good idea, so we opt for the closer, prominent south-facing snow gully on Gneisenau. The weather deteriorates but the snow conditions are good and we are able to kick bucket steps. I become very keen with hopes of maybe scoring a first ever ascent of the mountain. My aspiration remains when our gully abruptly ends before gaining any kind of ridge. It is difficult to get off the snow and onto the rock but I find a way and tear up a rocky rib with my crampons on. Silke, usually not timid, is starting to question my judgment. We leave the crampons behind and continue. A precarious step leads across a little face and into an open scree gully that we ascend carefully to below the summit block. This is gained by negotiating more loose slabs. It’s unclear whether we are really approaching the highest point when, to my great disappointment, a little cairn appears at our feet. Later research leads me to believe that an earlier party had come up following the ridge from the col with Otranto – not an option for us because we left crampons behind but also not so trivial looking as there would be at least one rappel off the summit for that option. We retrace our steps, while snow falling makes our retreat even more treacherous.

July 18: For the last time we ascend the Goddard Glacier, cross Wednesday Col, and pass by our cache from two days earlier – an extra burden for the three more days of our traverse. What are we carrying? The weather is a fine mix of sun and clouds. We continue to contour around the base of

Dresden Mtn., then drop to a shallow pass at the head of the NE fork of Durham Creek. We find beautiful pools of water hemmed in by snow banks and granite slabs – a good place to stop and revitalize. From here we need to reach a broad ridge from where a snowfield should give direct access down to a glacier at the head of the other arm of Norrington Creek. We arrive at a set of small tarns – a place just too idyllic to pass up for an overnight stop.

July 19: I fall into a hollow next to a large boulder still barely covered by snow, but luckily break only a hiking pole. Our objective for the day is a low point north of Chilko Mtn. from where we hope to find the easy descent down to Chilko Lake. To get there I choose a circumspect route. We brush past the snout of the Norrington Glacier, then strike north, partly circumnavigating the bump at grid ref. 225/543. We contour out over a moraine until we finally arrive directly below our objective. We strap crampons on as we alternately climb steep grass, heather and snow. The sky becomes cloudy and starts to look ominous as we toil on. We set up camp exhausted. In hindsight it would have been better to traverse directly over Chilko’s summit.

July 20: What a gorgeous morning – not a cloud in the sky. Silke and I are off to bag Chilko Mtn. Our partners have camped some distance from us; we don’t know where exactly. They don’t seem to be up yet so we plod up several easy snowfields to where the climb steepens for a short section. We find this to be easy scrambling and soon arrive at the summit, which is adorned with a huge cairn, taller than any man. We have time. Our partners were last seen crossing a snowfield near our camp, and so we lounge in the sun and enjoy the view across the awesome expanse of the turquoise lake far below. We descend, crossing paths with the others just as they come up the scramble section, then wait for them at camp. We are all a bit apprehensive about how we are going to get off the ridge and onto the glacier on the Chilko Lake side. No previous account mentioned any difficulties here but the glacier has shrunk and there is now a vertical, in places even overhanging, wall to descend. Frank rappels first but soon finds himself in a very precarious situation. His top-heavy pack tilts him over backwards as he

faces head down into the moat. Luckily, he manages to right himself and gets off the rope ok. Thus forewarned, the rest of us lower our packs first then rappel unencumbered.

It is a beautiful walk down the slushy glacier as we face the 65km long lake stretched out below us. We walk out to a round knoll (and, shall I reveal, a perfect site for a European-style mountain hut complete with veranda and beer garden), then continue on down the spine of a ridge. This is surprisingly easy going almost all the way down to the mouth of Norrington Creek. We are close to our agreed pick-up location on a large beach at the far side of the delta but first we must ford a deep and slow-flowing arm of the creek. Hot and sticky, we are harangued by mosquitoes. We hope to find a shallow sandbar just where the arm empties into the lake, or else the crossing could be rather problematic. As we push branches out of the way to catch a glimpse of the lake, we see Roland fishing from his boat some distance away – too far for him to see us or hear us yelling. Our good fortune – I know how to whistle loudly through my fingers. Roland seems to have heard it but can he see us mostly hidden behind tree branches? Yes, he does, starts his motor and plucks us from the jungle. Oh, are we happy as we speed down the lake and look back at Chilko Mtn., the knoll, and the ridge. Roland steers towards one of his favourite campsites on Chilko Lake. We start a big fire, try our hand at fishing, then settle in for the night.

July 21: Another hot day in paradise. We start out with more fishing for Dolly Varden. After my six respectable catches, Roland takes the party across the lake for an excursion to the Kellerhals' cabin. Their retreat is beside a small lake below Mt. Mirriam. The setting is even more stunning than the one depicted on our old Canadian \$20 bill. Back at Roland's house, Udetta prepares our catch and adds organic greens from her garden, creating a meal fit for royalty.

July 22: My 'rusty but trusty' old Subaru Loyal is packed full to the gunwales with four adults, all our gear and the two large boats on the roof. There is no more give in the suspension and, despite the 38°C temperatures and a radiator temperature indicator often in the critical red zone, we ride back to Vancouver

without a single hiccup. As a bonus for our overseas guests I drive via Lillooet and Whistler to Squamish and the Shady Tree pub. We meet the usual BCMC weekend warriors who tell stories of heat exhaustion and retreat on a day that broke heat records for the year. Christian is off to Frankurt the next morning while Frank enjoys several more summer days in Vancouver, climbing on the apron in Squamish and being awed by the 'Symphony of Fire'.

Participants: Frank Meutzner, Christian Unger, Silke Gumpfinger, and Peter Gumpfinger.

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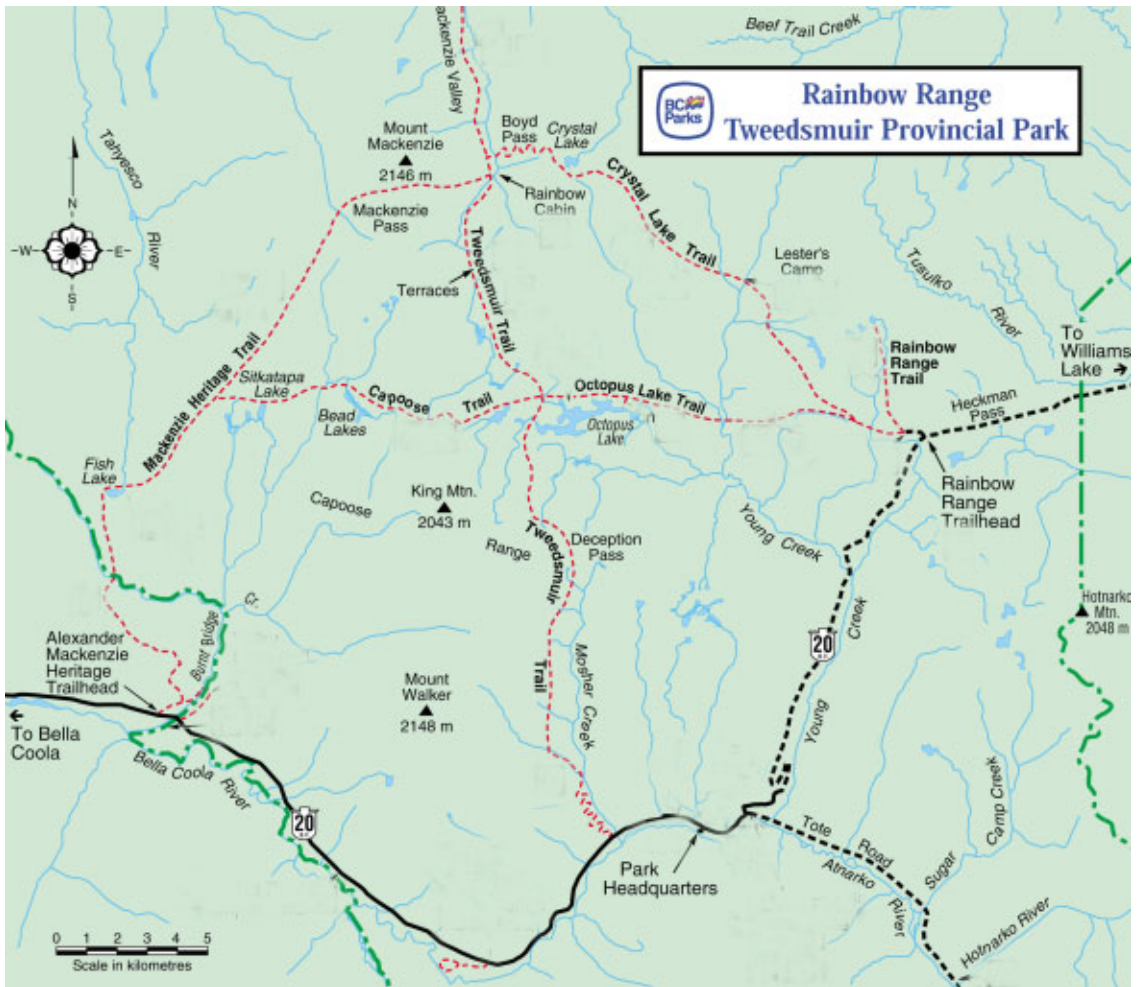
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TWEEDSMUIR PROVINCIAL PARK, 17-26 July, 2009

By David Scanlon

Tweedsmuir Provincial Park is about 360 km west of Williams lake and is huge. So huge that it is governed by two different BC park districts, one in the north and the other in the south. It is named after the 15th Governor General of Canada – John Buchan, or Baron Tweedsmuir. It is located in the western central interior part of the province bounded by the Coast Mountains, the Interior Plateau, and the Whitesail Lakes. The first white person into the area was Sir Alexander Mackenzie who crossed the area in 1793, reaching what is now Bella Coola on the 22nd of July of that year.

Our route was to take us to the Rainbow Range area of the park in the southeast followed by crossing the park from the east to the west to come out at the Alexander Mackenzie Heritage trailhead



Map of the Rainbow Range region of Tweedsmuir Park, adapted from the BC Parks website. The route traversed from the Rainbow Range trailhead to the Alexander Mackenzie Heritage trailhead, via Crystal Lake trail and the Mackenzie Heritage trail.

where hwy #20 crosses the Burnt Bridge River. In the local First Nations dialect, the word Tsitsutl means painted mountains. Hence the Rainbow Range name – and they were truly painted. The vibrant colors there are caused by the eroded lava and fragmented rock showing breathtaking colors of red, orange, yellow and lavender.

The wildlife there is truly remarkable as we were to find out. We saw the most mountain goats that I've ever seen on any trip into the backcountry. Caribou

were there in abundance. We saw them mostly on patches of snow trying to keep cool and get away from the mosquitoes. And the grizzlies! A mom and her two cubs that we ended up getting a little too close to on day 2! Days later, we saw another mother grizzly, and she had 3 cubs. They were at a far more comfortable distance away than the first we saw. The only black bear seen was spotted at the parking lot by the first arrivals and he took off right away. No black tailed deer or beaver were spotted but their

tracks were seen in different places in the park. Wolves – hardly ever seen and we were not to see one this trip either. We saw tracks on many of our days though and even looking every day through our binoculars far and wide we never could see one. A couple of red squirrels were seen as they scampered up and away from us. Many different birds were seen throughout the trip as well, so there was always some kind of animal to be seen every day.

So 4 of us – Donna, Barb, Clarence and myself – drove to Williams Lake on the Thursday prior to the start of the trip to break up the long drive to the Park, proceeding the next day to meet the rest of the group. Another reason for doing this was so we could have one last hearty breakfast in town before having to have our camp food for the next 10 days. The drive to the park along hwy#20 provided great viewing as the whole interior plateau opens up and you can see so far. As we were driving along I was really surprised to suddenly see a sign saying that we were at Heckman Pass. Well, where was it? I was looking for your typical mountain pass at an elevation of 1680m. Wrong. Heckman pass is at the end of the interior plateau and the start of the long drop down to the valley bottom on the road to Bella Coola. The earth just starts to drop! So we did a quick u-turn, retreated a bit and found the turn off for the meeting place. This was the parking lot where some of our cars were to be left. Some of the group was already there so our 1st order of business was to meet everyone, unload, and then to do the vehicle shuffle.

We had to drive 51km to the other end of the park to leave cars for our return trip and that was a long time-consuming thing in itself. Ever been to Bella Coola? That road has a part on it called “the hill”. It drops about 1500m down to the valley bottom at the Bella Coola River via steep switchbacks from Heckman pass and is not paved, and has NO guardrails, anywhere! It must be horrible to drive in the winter. Summer is bad enough with the dust, sharp 1st gear switchbacks, and the smell of the brake shoes. The exposure is quite spectacular. And yes we are talking of exposure: from a car no less: We have all driven roads where there are those runaway lanes, but here there were none! There were no places to put them so heaven help anyone who loses their brakes!



So, getting back to the trailhead – after many, many pictures from 12 of us with nearly as many cameras, taking different poses, we were finally underway! Our first day was finally started and after a short 2 hours later we made camp for the first night. A short day time wise but enough to start us getting into



Mosquitoes, grizzlies, and mountain goats. Photos: J. Castonguay (top) and C. Kornatowsky.

our routine. Another thing about our start was that we were already at 1700m and we only climbed about 60m making this a very pleasant 1st day hike. The next morning we had a bit of an early shower about 5:30 am but it was brief. And the forecast was looking good for us. So we packed up and made our way to the next camp, passing some very pretty lakes and streams. There were many wildflowers along the way and there were to be many more - a

very pretty area. Our camp was made next to a large lake and as we were in the high alpine country the views were great and far seeing. This was to be another short day with our full packs, and we had our next camp set up and were off for a hike all by 2 pm. Our objective was a nearby peak not too far off nor difficult. In wandering about on the way there I came across a split in the ground, as though part of the hillside was sliding down away from another part leaving a great slash in the earth – something I'd never seen before. This was about 12m deep in



a couple of spots, still with snow in the bottom. It made for some fun scrambling deep down into them where it was dark and cold. This also made for some great photo opportunities.

Exploring the slash in the ground.

Photo: J. Castonguay.

Hiking onwards we came to a col, made a right turn and started up onto a windy ridge as the weather cooled and the wind came up. Holly yelled and we all looked over and down and there were 6 or so caribou running in the far valley bottom. They were all males with great racks on them. What a great sight! After arriving at the summit we looked around at the vista before us as a little bit of rain started with an on again and off again sprinkle. Out came the binoculars to watch the caribou as they ran off. I looked around the valley floor and there was – a bear? Whoo hoo – a grizzly! No, two of them, No, three of them! It was a mother and her two cubs. Everyone was now focusing on them as this wasn't an every day occurrence – the heck with the caribou! What a sight to see – with the cubs frolicking around, running and falling over each other. We watched them for a while. But all good things have to end; so,

as the rain started falling, we all packed up and left leaving the bears to go about their business. Going back down the mountain we passed two tardy members of our party who were late starting and were just now going up to the summit and we told them to have a look at the bears in the next valley. Once down off the windy ridge we slowed right down and as the rain had stopped we took off our rain jackets. After a short walk we heard someone yelling but couldn't make out what they were saying. What was all the commotion? We looked back and saw the 2 tardy girls running full tilt towards us yelling their heads off. What was going on! We could now finally make out what they were saying. Grizzly!! With all of their yelling we were focusing on them, we now looked around and there they were! The mom and her two cubs had come almost between us. They must have come up from the other valley and were heading down into ours. We yelled back to the girls and suddenly the mom bear stopped, stood up, and looked at us. We looked at her. And what was I thinking at that point? I'm still not too sure about that. I do remember looking at her thinking what an absolutely magnificent animal!! My first encounter with a grizzly up close. What a magnificent animal! I was trying to figure out what was going on. Maybe with the girls yelling and running, she didn't spot us until we yelled back to them. Then she dropped down onto all fours after seeing us and turned around, and slowly walked away from us back over the col to the next valley. How close was she? That distance varies directly with the amount of alcohol the teller has been drinking and how excited he or she was at the time of telling. Did we ever have a story to tell the others when we arrived back in camp, but the hike wasn't over quite yet. There, suddenly right in front of us was a caribou; he ran right in front of us away down into the valley below. What had happened was that he had almost run into camp before seeing the people there and then in running away from them almost ran into us. He disappeared down into the valley below us. And what was that caribou thinking – where did all these people come from? After another stop to explore the cleft / hole in the slope with the others who missed it on the way up, we arrived back in camp. What a day this was! Wow!!! And this was only day 2! The next day, in the sun, we moved camp again going over the pass into the next valley where we

first saw the grizzlies the day before. Yeah, that was our planned route. Right where they were the day before. And were we ever vigilant! The grizzlies were not seen though. Not even the caribou were around. We crossed the valley bottom then side-hilled up to a sharp pass looking down to a beautiful alpine lake in the next valley. This was to be our camp for the next two days and a great spot it was – a pretty lake with a stream running away from it. Good drinking water there. During the camp set up we spotted a goat on a high nearby summit watching us. He was probably on the summit looking for a breeze, trying to get away from the bugs. And there were still lots of bugs around us.

Day 4 was to be a no full backpack day: just our day packs with lunch as we went on a wander around the area. It didn't take long for us to start seeing mountain goats and again more caribou. There were 2 rams, two ewes and their kid goats, and 10 caribou including 4 calves. The caribou were fairly easy to see as they were trying to stay cool on large snow patches across the small valley from us. And one of the mother goats and her kid were most co-operative in that they stayed still for the longest time. We all took many pictures of them – they became stars! We bagged a couple of small bumps (not really big enough to be called peaks), and after lunch we wandered back to camp a different way, just enjoying the day. A fire was started that evening to try to deter the bugs but the only thing that happened was we all got smokey. The only person seemingly unaffected by them was Geoff and we were starting to wonder why. He wandered around in shirts and a t-shirt and seemed oblivious to the bugs. He said that he was using 95% deet – some of the old really potent stuff. No wonder the bugs didn't bother him. Good for you Geoff. The rest of us just wore our bug netting and carried on as best we could.

The next day camp was on the move again with the group splitting up and the more energetic of us bagging a couple of peaks en route. The rest went down into the valley to wait for us. There was nothing exceptionally demanding – just great open ridge walking and windswept summits, mostly rock, with the Rainbow Range colors in the distance looking beautiful. One thing that worked really well for us that day was that we had two radios with us and

Views of the Rainbow Range (top) and lakes en route. Photos: C. Kornatowsky.



Carol, Geoff, Clarence, Ellen, Karl, Barb, Donna, Dave, Selena, Marrilyn, Holly, and Julie (left to right). Photo: C. Kornatowsky.



each group was able to communicate with the other. It was great to be in touch. Our group decided to have lunch on a summit, looking WAY down into the valley below to the others. Our views were fabulous and we had the added bonus of a breeze on top keeping the bugs away. During lunch we were always looking for more bears and other wildlife, but none were spotted. After lunch we dropped down to regroup and then we all carried on to the next camp at another beautiful lake. We were going to get our water from this lake until someone spotted a dead duck in it. Ugh! We decided then to get our water from a stream further away. Further away – but much much better and more appealing. During the setting up of camp we looked up and – there were 4 caribou walking right past us. Were these the ones we had seen earlier down the valley? We would never know. It seemed as though they didn't see us, or didn't care. Whatever, we didn't care either and were happy to watch them go by. Next day, day 6, we moved on, bagging one small peak that we called Flat Top. We saw one caribou and one mountain goat that day en route to what we called Round Lake where we camped. Why was it



called this? Because it was round of course! There were many small lakes and ponds in the area but Round Lake had the best camping, and finally a place where the bugs, although not gone, were fewer



Left - bug avoidance on the route and at camp. Above - views of camp beside the lake and of the Rainbow Range. Photos: top right - C. Kornatowsky; all others: J. Castonguay.

in number. Nearby was a fast flowing stream where we got our drinking water and bathed. It sure felt good to get in a bit of a wash.

We started our trip on the Rainbow Range Trail, going off on our own for the first few days straight north to see the Rainbow mountains early. I mean off on our own as in going off the main trail system. On day 7, we cut back onto the park's main trail system – the Crystal Lake portion of it. So the next day saw us hiking past Crystal Lake, which had a porta potty at the camping area. It seemed totally out of place out in the middle of nowhere, but the view from it was fantastic! This was where many come into the park from the west, stop, and then go back out again. Our plan was to go on past the lake and then down the Boyd trail to cross the valley bottom, go up the other side, and get as close to Mt. Mackenzie as we could. We wondered how far we'd get as it was starting to get very hot. Anyway, after a lunch break we got down to the valley bottom and back into the greenery again and managed to follow the faint trail through a swamp to the Rainbow Cabin where we rested a while. Carrying on through more swamp we came to, and crossed, Kohasganko Ck. then started going up the other side of the valley. One thing we started looking for in that valley were moose as there were a lot of their tracks in the swamp, but none were seen.

So we started the uphill grind. And a grind it was as it was hot and nearing the end of the day. The pass we were aiming for was getting closer though and I was following Donna who was slowing a bit. While waiting I got out my binoculars and scanned the valley bottom, to just look around a bit – and spotted another grizzly! All right!!!! – another one!! Donna started blowing her whistle to alert the others and they all stopped and looked. It was a mom grizzly and “3” cubs. Wow! What a way to end the day. They finally wandered out of sight after a short while. Another 5-10 minutes travel brought us to a place to camp – one of the few flatter places on the trail with the added luxury of having running water close by. The grizzlies were the topic of conversation at dinner time that night. Later on that evening after eating I looked to the other side of the valley and there they were again – the grizzlies. We watched then until they once again disappeared. What a day.

Day 8 started out warm, even in the early hours. We broke camp and went up to the pass just above us



Karl, Dave, and Donna on the summit of Mt. Mackenzie. Photo: J. Castonguay.

to drop our packs and scramble up Mt. Mackenzie. Two of us scrambled straight up the nose to the top, beating the others by a few minutes. It felt good to get in a little scramble again after just hiking for days. In the distance we saw 4 more mountain goats – 3 adults and a kid – as the rest of the group arrived. The high point of the trip, elevation wise, for us was the summit at 2146m. There was a Geographical Survey of Canada marker on the summit that made for some interesting pictures, with some of us sitting or standing on it. The history of the day was not lost on us, as we thought of Sir Alexander Mackenzie being here in 1793 – the first non-native ever – after a long, long overland trek. A pause for thought for us all. After taking all of our obligatory pictures we again started to go down. We were starting to get down into the high alpine again and the trees and bushes were slowly getting thicker as we went on. There were now cairns to mark the trail. The whole trail system in the park was poor to nonexistent. We passed an old fallen-down cabin in the woods and came to a lake. Was this the Hump Lake that we were looking for? There seemed to be some confusion as to whether or not this was it. There were no places to camp there in the forest at all. There should have been a place to camp according to our information but we didn't see any and were starting to think that we would have to camp where we were. I dropped my pack and went on for a short distance, finding a large, good, grassy camping area, fire pit and all, just beside the lake. Were we ever happy to have found this spot. We called this Lily Pad Lake for the obvious reason. It was a good sized lake and was made by beavers who had built

a huge dam holding back the water – another very pretty place to camp with a large grassy meadow, trees and a water source. And it was still getting hotter. There were once again lots of moose tracks but no moose were seen and that would have been a thrill. Boy was it ever getting hot! I can't remember who had the idea to start the next day earlier getting up at 5 am to try to beat some of the heat. So we did. At the start of the next day we discussed whether or not we would / could get all of the way out in one day. Well, it started out even hotter than before and we were starting to get a bit worn out from it and secretly I think we all wanted to get out and get home. No wildlife was seen at all. The only untoward things that happened that day was the crossing of a part of Fish Lake and later on a tributary of the Burnt Bridge River. At Fish Lake we'd been told that there was a detour but didn't see one, so we just walked through the water. Some of us just tied up our boot laces as tight as possible and took the 4-5 steps to get through as fast as possibly and to heck with it. The later river crossing was much larger so we took our boots off and waded over. There was, I think, one exception to this – someone left their boots on and just walked on over. After lots of ringing out of socks we were away again. We'd come past one lake that we mistakenly took for Hump Lake, but it wasn't until that day that we realized our mistake. We had much farther to go than we thought, and that turned out to be very discouraging. We were tired, hot, and frustrated and starting to think that there was to be one more night of camping before getting out. We came to a small wide place in the trail and our leader called a halt. Some of us wanted to carry on and get out, and some wanted to stay. Our leader – Ellen – bless her heart, made the hard decision for us all to camp there for the night. It was not the best place to camp, but there was water to be had so we made the best of it. After we did come out we all said that she did make the right call. Thanks Ellen. Once again that evening there were huge clouds to the east looking just like the smoke clouds from the Kelowna fires years ago. The debate was whether this was smoke from fires or not. If so they were huge! And there was some talk that, if these were fire clouds, they looked to be right where we had left our cars. Oh my. Cause to worry. Last day, #10. Up again at 5 to get an early start following the trail over, down, and finally out to the

highway at the Sir Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trailhead. Was it ever hot! Thank goodness we were going down. If we had had this weather on the way in, we never would have made it. So we were done – finally! We took some pictures at the trailhead sign and then walked to our cars where clean clothes awaited. We didn't change right away though, as a wash/bath was to be first on the agenda. We walked straight over to the river and right into it. BOY! Did that ever feel good. And we all smelled much better again. Then we drove back to the trailhead, regrouped and sorted our gear, then went to a restaurant where we ate some real food – lots! Then our goodbyes and the long drive home.

Would I ever do this trip again? Probably not. Just for one reason – the bugs! The worst ever in all my years of the outdoors. We had virtually no evening socializing, nor much socializing at all for that matter because of the bugs. We would put on our bug hats first thing in the morning before leaving the tents and didn't take them off until getting back into our tents at day's end. And let's not even talk about trying to get out of and back into the tents to go to the bathroom! After each trip you had to spend 10 minutes swatting all of the bugs that came in with you – no fun.

It is a recommended trip for the scenery; the wildlife was amazing, and there were lots of rivers and lakes. If you can time it without the bugs, go for it. There were 3 best things of the trip for me. One was to just have been invited. Thanks Karl and Ellen. Number two was the wildlife. Number three was the group. Thanks to everyone.

Party: Ellen Woodd (organizer), Clarence and Barb Kornatowsky, Holly Colquhoun, Karl Ricker, Geoff Mumford, Selena Davis, Julie Castonguay, Marilyn Cram, Carol MacMillan, and Donna and Dave Scanlon.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES – TWEEDSMUIR PARK, 17-26 July, 2009
By Karl Ricker

This trip traversed the eastern edge of the park, north of Highway 20 to the front ridges of the Rainbow Range and then west to the Alexander Mackenzie Heritage trail which was followed to its exit at Burnt



Karl in action. Photo: C. Kornatowski.

Bridge Creek on Highway 20. Eight camps were set up on the traverse with two nights spent at Camp 3. The following indicates the approximate whereabouts of each camp using the UTM coordinates (NAD, 1927): Camp 1 (Elev. 1761 m) – on Rainbow Range trail at “Fishhook Lake” (UTM 307583E, 5828622 N – Zone 10)

Camp 2 (1824 m) – at north end of RR Trail near pass to Beef Trail Creek on south edge of lake below Pk. 7218 (UTM 306773E, 5873473N – Zone 10)

Camp 3 (1935 m) – on small cirque lake to northeast of Camp 2 (UTM 312237E, 5836190N – Zone 10)

Camp 4 (1832 m) – on north edge of lake slightly north of Camp 2 (UTM 306508E, 5874842N – Zone 10)

Camp 5 (1848 m) – in rolling meadows southwest of “Table Mtn.” about midway to Crystal Lake, entrance to Boyd Pass (UTM 301390E, 5833388N – Zone 10)

Camp 6 (1757 m) – on Alex Mackenzie Trail north of Mackenzie Pass immediately below Mt. Mackenzie in headwater tributary of Kohasganko Creek (UTM 697662E, 5832657N – Zone 9)

Camp 7 (1405 m) – on “Lily Pad Lake”, roughly half way between Mt. Mackenzie and Highway 20 at Burnt Bridge Creek (UTM 692002E, 5824765N – Zone 9)

Camp 8 (1360 m) – near Hump Lake on escarpment overlooking the Bella Coola valley (UTM 689360E, 5816200N – Zone 9)

Natural history notes are located according to campsites.

GEOLOGY (Observer: Karl Ricker)

The Chilcotin is covered by a succession of flat lying sheets of volcanic rock, primarily dark coloured basalts and andesite, roughly 1.1 to 26 million years old. It covers a much more complex and older series of rocks that reappeared on the exit route of our traverse along the eastern side of the park. The core of the Rainbow Range exposes slightly older and colourful layers of steeply dipping volcanic strata, punched up on edge, and surrounded by the younger flat volcanic flows. The age of these tilted volcanics is about 6.7 to 8.7 million years, initially poured out onto the surface as flat lying flows, or low relief domes, before uplift into the ragged-edged ridges that are now present. Camps 1 and 2 were on the flat lying youngest volcanics whereas Camp 3 was on the older tilted volcanics. Camps 4 and 5 appeared to be back on the younger strata, because the flows were flat lying, whereas Camp 6 under Mt. Mackenzie was on the tilted strata. Two geological maps of the area are not in total agreement and thus are not too helpful in the delineation of each series of volcanics.

Boyd Pass Valley provided the first glimpse of the much older rocks that underlie the volcanics. Lunch was on a knob of granitic rock. Beyond Camp 7 the younger volcanic rocks were absent altogether, with the underlying older granitic and metamorphic rocks fully exposed at Fish Lake, and beyond to the escarpment overlooking Bella Coola valley. Their age is about 150 million years and older.

Overlying all rock strata were the vestiges of continental glaciation: striations indicating two directions of glacier flow (Camp 1), scoured out lake basins, and a broadcast array of smothering erratic rock rubble, quite dissimilar to the volcanic rock on which it overlies. The highest glacial rubble was on the saddle (el. 2028 m) above Camp 2, but I didn't see any on “Table Mtn.” (el. 2079m). Above the zone of glacial rubble there were dazzling arrays of patterned rock rubble arranged in circles, polygons and stripes. From Camp 3 to the ridge of “Holly's Peak” and “Little Goat Mtn.” these features were exquisitely displayed. In the vegetated alpine turf zone, however, there were festoons of terracettes, one to two metres high on the riser edge, called “Kumquats” by Ellen, but in the scientific literature they are known as solifluction lobes. At Camp 6 each tent site was located on its own solifluction



Observing in Tweedsmuir park. Photo: C. Kornatowski.

lobe. The patterned ground and lobes were a product of the influence of underlying permafrost. Seasonal freeze-thaw above the permafrost table generates both features. On the steep valley slopes where cliffs release large blocky rubble, the other outstanding features of the permafrost environment are rock glaciers. A large one at Camp 1 off “Grizzly View Mtn.” (Pk. 2173m) shows both active and inactive zones. Several other smaller ones were visible from “Omission Mtn.” (and adjacent “Mt. Scamlon”) and a steep spectacular one was seen on the south valley wall at Boyd Pass.

White Flowers

Shrubs

- *Cassiope mertensiana* (White Mtn. heather) – Trailhead to Camp 1 to Hump Lake

Herbs

- *Achillea borealis* (Yarrow) – Camp 2 and Hump Lake to trail end (sparse!)
- *Anaphalis margaritacea* (Pearly everlasting) – Roadside at both trail heads
- *Anemone occidentalis* (Western anemone) (Western Pasque flower) – Camp 1 to 2, elsewhere in krummholz zone
- *Anemone parviflora* (N. Anemone) – moist subalpine sites
- *Antennaria alpina* (Alpine pussytoes) – Camp 1 to 6 (spotty)
- *Antennaria dimorpha* (Low pussytoes) – above Camps 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, tiny plants (spotty)
- *Antennaria monocephala* (One headed pussytoes) Camp 1 to 6 (spotty)
- *Antennaria pulcherrima* (Showy pussytoes) – subalpine, trailheads to Camp 1 and to 8
- *Antennaria umbrinella* (Amber pussytoes) – at and above Camps 2 to 6 on dry sites
- *Arenaria capillaris* (Three-leaved sandwort) – dry sites at and above Camps 1 to 6
- Other *Arenaria* spp. – no I.D.’s but present as for *A. capillaris*
- *Caltha leptosepala* (Marsh-marigold) – most areas at or near all camps and wherever trail intersects moist areas
- *Cerastium arvense* (Meadow chickweed) – difficult to differentiate from *Stellaria* but one confirmed I.D. based on 5 parted pistil seen by Holly’s sharp eyes (Camp 3)
- *Cerastium beeringianum* (Bering chickweed) – one I.D. at Camp 3
- *Dryas hookeriana* and/or *octopetala* – throughout subalpine and alpine, MacKinnon et al (1992) maintains that *octopetala* occurs in B.C. only near the Yukon border, whereas Lyons and Merilees (1995) say it occurs throughout the province. Neither reference offer distinguishing features to identify each!
- *Erigeron compositus* (Dwarf Mtn. fleabane) – Camp 3, photogenic, rocky sites
- *Erigeron humilis*(?) (Arctic daisy) – Camp 2 to 7 in damp areas and on dry rocky sites(?)

BOTANICAL NOTES (Observers: Marilyn Cram, Carol McMillan and Karl Ricker)

The BCMC had a botanical expedition to the Rainbow Range back in the early days when Fred Perry was one of the stalwarts of the club’s Natural History Section. With this in mind, two botanical field guides were taken on the trek – Mackinnon, Pojar, and Coupe’s “Plants of Northern British Columbia” (BC Ministry of Forests, Lone Pine Publishing), with its excellent colour photos, in Marilyn’s packsack and Lyons and Merilees’ “Trees, Shrubs and Flowers to Know in British Columbia and Washington” (Lone Pine Publishing) in Karl’s pack sack. Our attention focussed on the vegetation in the alpine zone, whenever the mosquitoes relented to let us do so! Grasses, most sedges, lichens and tiny flowers were bypassed in the quasi-survey, and shrubs were given only a passing glance below treeline. Thus, the list of about 150 species which follows is hardly exhaustive and in it there are several quasi ID’s (marked ?). The list of flowers is organized by colour, in keeping with the traditional methodology used by C.P. Lyons for his guides.

- *Fragaria* spp. (Strawberries) – Camps 5 to 6 to 7
- *Geranium erianthum* (not pink) x *richardsonii* (leaves don't match) (Northern geranium hybrid?)
- *Heracleum lanatum* (Cow parsnip) – Camp 6, Boyd Pass to Mackenzie Cabin
- *Menyanthes trifoliata* (Buckbean) – Camp 6 to 7, Marilyn with excellent photo!
- Mystery flower – (5 sepal, 5 petals, 5 stamens, 5 part pistils, hairy leaf petioles, stipules at leaf base, large white flower, petals not notched.
- *Platanthera dilatata* (White bog-orchid) – wet subalpine/alpine areas at all camps and especially at Mackenzie Cabin meadows
- *Polygonum bistortoides* (Alpine bistort) – Camp 3 to 7, spotty in dry to wet alpine/subalpine areas
- *Rubus pubescens* (Trailing raspberry) – Camp 8 to trail end
- *Saxifraga bronchialis* (Spotted saxifrage)
- *Saxifraga cespitosa* (Tufted saxifrage)
- *Saxifraga lyallii* (Lyall's saxifrage) – Seen throughout all subalpine/alpine areas from Camp 1 to Camp 7; despite sporadic searches purple and yellow species (*S. oppositifolia* and *S. flagellaris*) were not found, surprisingly.
- *Saxifraga tolmiei* (Tolmie's saxifrage)
- *Saxifraga tricuspidata* (Three toothed saxifrage)
- *Silene* spp. (Campion) – seen rarely at Camps 2 to 3 to 4. Could be *S. douglasii*, *S. parryi* or other species not shown in field book
- *Stellaria longipes* (Long stalked starwort) – sparse, but seen at all campsites and areas between; however confusion with chickweeds in I.D.
- *Stellaria* spp. (other starworts?) – tiny flowered species requiring “treatise” books (and hand lens!) to I.D.
- *Valeriana sitchensis* (Sitka valerian) – ubiquitous

Yellow Flowers

Shrubs

- *Phyllodoce glandulifera* (Yellow Mtn. heather) – Camp 1 to Camp 8 (spotty occurrences)

Herbs

- *Agoseris glauca* (Pale agoseris) – few at Camp 4
- *Arnica angustifolia* (or *alpina*) (Alpine arnica) – singlehead, trailhead to Camp 1 to Hump lake
- *Arnica frigida* (Northern arnica) – has noddinghead (spotty occurrences) Camp 1 to 6
- *Arnica latifolia* (Broadleaf arnica) – multiheads, subalpine meadows, Camp 7 to Hump Lake
- *Arnica mollis* (Hairy arnica) – singlehead, Camp 1 to Camp 2 and 4 (v. spotty occurrences)
- *Castilleja sulphurea* (?) (Sulphur paintbrush) – Camp 1 to 2 to 3
- *Crepis nana* (Dwarf hawkbeard) – in loose fine talus between Camps 3 and 4
- *Draba alpina* (Alpine draba) – above Camp 2 on “Grizzly View Mtn.”, Camp 2 to 4
- *Dryas drummondii* (Yellow Mtn. avens) – rarely seen, dry sites, slopes above Camps 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6
- *Eriophyllum lanatum* ? (Woolly sunflower) – Camp 4
- *Heuchera chlorantha* (Meadow alumroot) – Camp 7 to 8
- *Hieracium gracile* (Hairy hawkweed) – Camp 4 to 5 on dry turf
- *Nuphar lutea* (Pond lily) – at Camp 7
- *Pedicularis bracteosa* (Bracted lousewort) – subalpine, Camp 7 to 8
- *Pedicularis labradorica* (Labrador lousewort) – Camp 2 to 4, probably elsewhere
- *Potentilla anserina* (Silverweed) – Camp 4 to Hump Lake, damp areas
- *Potentilla diversifolia* (Mtn. meadow cinquefoil) – Camp 2
- *Potentilla flabellifolia* (Fan-leaved cinquefoil) – trailhead to Camp 1
- *Potentilla villosa* ? (Hairy cinquefoil) – above Camp 2 and 3 on dry sites (+ *Pot. uniflora*?)
- *Ranunculus eschscholtzii* (Subalpine buttercup) – trailhead to Hump Lake but only rarely at dry sites; other buttercup species also probably present but not sussed out
- *Sedum divergens* (Spreading stoncrop) – dry sites throughout trip
- *Senecio canus* (Woolly groundsel) – Camp 2
- *Senecio pauciflorus* (Rayless alpine butterweed) – burnt orange disc, seen sparingly throughout alpine route – Camp 1 to 6
- *Senecio pauperculus* ? (Canadian butterweed) – Camp 4

- *Senecio pseud aureus* (Steambank groundsel) – Camp 2, Camp 4-7
- *Senecio triangularis* (Arrow-leafed groundsel) – at all camps, scarce above krummholz zone
- *Solidago multiradiata* (Alpine goldenrod) – ubiquitous Camp 1 to Camp 8
- *Solidago spathulata* (Spikelike goldenrod) – Camps 3 to 4

Pink Flowers

Shrubs

- *Chimaphila umbellata* (Prince's-pine) – Camp 8 to trail end
- *Kalmia microphylla* (Bog-laurel) – trailhead to Hump Lake, dominant showy flower in wet areas; two subspecies in area of our trek – smaller *K. microphylla* above krummholz zone
- *Phyllodoce empetriformis* (Pink Mtn. heather) – trailhead to Camp 1 to Hump Lake

Herbs

- *Antennaria microphylla* (Rosy pussytoes) – Camp 1 area (rare)
- *Claytonia lanceolata* (West. spring beauty) – Camp 7 to 8
- *Epilobium anagallidifolium* (Alpine willowherb) – notched petals, rare, dry and wet areas, Camps 1 to 7
- *Epilobium angustifolium* (Fireweed) – at trail end (Burnt Bridge Creek)
- *Epilobium latifolium* (Broad-leaved willowherb) – entire petals, dry sites throughout and on summit of “Fireweed Mtn.”(!)
- *Erigeron compositus* (Dwarf Mtn. fleabane) – dry alpine above camps 3, 4, 5 and 6
- *Erigeron humilis* (Arctic daisy) – wet areas throughout, hairy bracts
- *Erigeron peregrinus* (Subalpine daisy) – throughout trail system – single flower head on stem
- *Oxyria digyna* (Mtn. sorrel) – sparse throughout alpine zone, edible
- *Pedicularis ornithorhyncha* (Bird's beak lousewort) – Camp 2 to 3 and throughout alpine/subalpine to Camp 7
- *Pedicularis sudetica* and/or *capitata* (Sudentens and Capitate louseworts) – creamish pink flowers (could not differentiate the two)
- *Petasites frigidus* (Sweet coltsfoot) – wet to moist areas throughout subalpine to alpine areas of traverse; other species possibly in forest zone
- *Silene acaulis* (Moss campion) – ubiquitous (alpine, subalpine – at all camps, disappears on final descent to Burnt Bridge trailhead)

Bluish to Greenish Flowers (all Herbs)

- *Gentiana glauca* (Inky gentian) – trailhead to Camp 7 (and beyond), spotty occurrences
- *Lupinus arcticus* (Arctic lupine) – trailhead to trailhead – patchy distribution in high alpine, albino forms seen near Camps 2 and 7
- *Lupinus lyallii* (Dwarf Mtn. lupine) – high alpine ridges about Camps 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 (less than 15 cm tall, silky sheen to leaves), very spotty occurrences
- *Veronica wormskjoldii* (Alpine speedwell) – trailhead to Camp 4, Camp 6 to 8, Fish Lake

Green Flowers (all Herbs)

- *Artemisia arctica* (Mtn. wormwood, Mtn. sagewort) – Camps 2 to 7 (rarely above them)
- *Platanthera obtusata* (One-leaved rein orchid) – Camp 2 to 3 and probably elsewhere in west alpine/subalpine meadows
- *Tofieldia* spp. (False asphodel) – Camp 7 to 8
- *Veratrum viride* (Green false or Indian hellebore) – Boyd Pass to Mackenzie cabin

Greenish to Rusty Brown Flowers (all Herbs)

- *Rumex acetosa* ssp. *alpestris* (Dock/sorrel) – Camp 4 to 7 usually near moist areas

Blue-Purple Flowers (all Herbs)

- *Aster alpinus* ? (Alpine aster) – single head, at Camp 1 to 2
- *Aster foliaceus*? (Leafy aster) – single to multihead, ubiquitous, confused with *Erigeron peregrinus*!!
- *Aster sibiricus* ? (Arctic aster) – multihead, at Camp 1 to 4
- *Campanula lasiocarpa* (Mtn. harebell) – Camps 1 to 6 (and above), on dry areas, large flowers, ubiquitous
- *Campanula rotundifolia* (Common harebell) – not seen until Camp 7 to 8 region reached, multiple flowers on taller stock
- *Campanula uniflora* (Arctic harebell) – tiny flowers on dry mountain tops about Camps 2, 3 and 4

- *Erigeron speciosus* (Showy fleabane) – Camp 3 to 4
- *Erigeron* spp. (*philadelphicus* or ?) – subalpine to forest, tall daisies (no detailed examination)
- *Myosotis alpestris* (Mtn. Forget-me-not) – Camps 1 to 7, throughout alpine zone
- *Penstemon procerus* (Small-flowered penstemon) – Camp 1 to 7 and alpine zone, very common
- *Phacelia sericea* (Silky phacelia) – spotty distribution in alpine zone in predominantly dry sites
- *Polemonium caeruleum* (Tall Jacob's ladder) – moist areas, not noticed until Camp 7 reached, and seen thereon to Burnt Bridge Creek crossing; subalpine/forest interface is zone of dominant presence
- *Polemonium pulcherrimum* (Showy Jacob's ladder) – throughout alpine zone with dwarfed specimens in driest mountain top sites
- *Potentilla palustris* (Marsh cinquefoil) – Camp 4, Hump Lake in wet marsh areas
- *Sedum integrifolium* (Roseroot) – Camp 2 to 4 in alpine zone

Orange-Red Flowers (all Herbs)

- *Agoseris aurantiaca* (Orange agoseris) – spotty distribution see from camp to camp
- *Aquilegia formosa* (Red columbine) – sparingly seen from Camp 7 to bluff overlooking Bella Coola valley
- *Castilleja hispida* (Harsh paintbrush) – orange-red – Camp 1 to 5
- *Castilleja miniata* (Scarlet paintbrush) – Camp 1 to Camp 8, spotty in places, scarce above Camp 3
- *Castilleja parviflora* (Small flowered paintbrush) – Camp 1 to 7
- *Castilleja* sp. – soft orange colour (atypical of *C. parviflora*) – Camp 1 to 5

Trees & Shrubs not in flower

- *Betula glandulosa* (Scrub or Dwarf birch) – few thickets in krummholz zone
- *Empetrum nigrum* (Crowberry) – Camp 1 to Camp 2 and not common
- *Juniperus communis* (Common juniper) – throughout trailway and above Camp 3, spotty occurrence limited to dry ground
- *Menziesia ferruginea* (False azalea) – Camp 7 to 8
- *Oplopanax horridus* (Devil's club) – one creek gully between Camp 8 to trail end
- *Pinus albicaulis* (White-barked pine) – alpine areas to highest peak ascended (2300 m)
- *Pinus contorta* (Lodgepole pine) – trailhead to Camp 2 (to 1800 m), Camp 6 to trail end
- *Pseudotsuga menziesii* (Douglas fir) – below elev. 800 m to trail end
- *Rhododendron albiflorum* (White-flowered rhododendron) – Boyd Pass to Mackenzie meadows, Camp 6 to Hump Lake to trail end
- *Ribes* spp. (Currants and Gooseberries) – Camp 5 to 8, lack of flowers and fruits discouraged identification
- *Rosa acicularis* (Prickly rose) – Camp 8 to trail end
- *Rubus spectabilis* (Salmonberry) – Camp 7 to trail end
- *Salix alaxensis* (Felt-leaved willow) – Camp 3
- *Salix arctica* (Arctic willow) – throughout alpine and subalpine, leaves dull
- *Salix barclayi* ? (Barclay's willow) – Mackenzie meadows
- *Salix planifolia* (Tea-leaved willows) – thickets in alpine/subalpine Camp 3 to 7
- *Salix polaris* (Polar willow) – throughout alpine areas, patchy, shiny leaves
- *Salix reticulata* (Net veined willow) – alpine above Camp 6
- *Salix* spp. (willow, tall shrub and trees) – several species not I.D.'d
- *Shepherdia canadensis* (Soopolallie) – Camp 8 to trail end
- *Sorbus sitchensis* (Sitka Mtn. ash) – Camp 7 to 8
- *Thuja plicata* (Western red cedar) – Camp 8 to trail end
- *Tsuga mertensiana* (Mtn. hemlock) – Camp 7 to near trail end
- *Vaccinium membranaceum* (Black huckleberry) – Camp 6 to trail end
- *Vaccinium uliginosum* (Bog blueberry) – Camp 1 to 5 alpine dry and moist sites
- *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* (Lingonberry) – Camp 4 to 5, probably went unnoticed elsewhere

Sedge, Rush (some)

- *Carex albonigra* (Two-toned sedge) – Camp 4 to 5, dry sites
- *Carex nigricans* (Black alpine sedge) – Camp 4, wet sites
- *Carex phaeocephala* and/or *C. macloviana* – Camp 4 to 5
- *Carex* spp. – many(?) other species!
- *Eriophorum angustifolium* (Narrow-leaved cotton-grass) – Camp 7 to Hump Lake

- *Kobresia myosuroides* (Bellard's Kobresia rush) – Camp 4 to 5
- *Luzula parviflora* (Small-flowered woodrush) – Camp 4 to 5
- *Scirpus* sp. (Small flowered bulrush) – Camp 1 to 2, wet areas

Horsetail

- *Equisetum scirpoides* (Dwarf scouring-rush) – surprisingly on dry site near summit of “Table Mtn.”

Lichens (Some)

- *Cladonia borealis* (Red pixie cup) – Camp 7 to 8
- *Rhizocarpon geographicum* (Map lichen) – all alpine areas
- *Xanthoria elegans* (Red-orange lichen) – on “Fireweed Mtn.”

WILDLIFE NOTES

Birds, mammals and lone amphibian (toad) were noted throughout the traverse, with the exception of the small mammals comprising mice, lemmings and voles. No reptiles were seen. Herds of Mountain caribou, goats and two Grizzly bear families were the highlights for all party members, but the significant feature was the discovery of a major breeding area

for American pipits and the observation of Solitary sandpipers in the marsh areas along the Alexander Mackenzie Trail. The tally of 27 species of birds and 18 species of mammals is not outstanding but not bad for casual observations on a pack-laden traverse.

BIRDS (Observers: Karl Ricker, with all others helping to spot them)

- Canada goose – July 25: 16 north of Fish Lake, 6 south of Fish Lake
- Barrow's goldeneye (duck) – July 17: 2 on lake, ca 3 km from trailhead on Rainbow Trail
 - July 18: 3 on lake at Camp 2
 - July 21: 2 and chicks at Camp 3
 - July 22: 1 at Camp 4
 - July 23: 1 at Camp 5; 1 and 8 ducklings at Crystal Lake
 - July 25: 1 at Hump Lake
- Bald eagle – July 24: 1 at Camp 7
- N. Harrier hawk – July 21: 1 at “Double-double Mtn.”
- Solitary sandpiper – July 24: 2 in territorial display north of “Lily Pad Lake”, (Camp 7)
 - July 25: 2 near Fish Lake, one near Camp 7
- Rufous hummingbird – July 18: at Camp 1 and another on trail to Camp 2
 - July 19: 1 enroute to Camp 3
 - July 23: 1 at Camps 5 to 6; 1 at Boyd Pass; 1 at cabin; 1 at Camp 6
 - July 24: 1 at Mt. Mackenzie; 1 at Camps 6 to 7
 - July 25: 4 at Camps 7 to 8
- Bonaparte gull – July 24: 1 at Camp 7
- Spruce grouse – July 25: 1 near Burnt Br. Creek (Camps 7 to 8)
- White-tailed ptarmigan – July 17: near Camp 1 on Rainbow Trail
 - July 19: 1 above Camp 1; 1 male on the way to Camp 3
 - July 21: 2 families at Camps 3 to 4; nest on “Double-double Mtn.”
 - July 22: 5 + 10 chicks at Camps 4 to 5
 - July 24: 1 chick at Camps 6 to 7
- Woodpecker sp. – July 25: 1 north of Burnt Br. Creek crossing, Camp 7 to 8

- Common raven
 - July 21: 1 at Camps 3 to 4
 - July 24: 1 at Camps 6 to 7
- Clark's nutcracker
 - July 19: 6 birds from Camp 2 to 3
 - July 20: 4 east of Camp 3
 - July 21: 2 at Camps 3 to 4
 - July 22: 1 at Camp 4
 - July 23: 4 at Boyd Pass to Camp 6; 2 at Camp 6
 - July 24: 1 at Mt. Mackenzie; 3 at Camps 6 to 7
 - July 25: 5 at Camps 7 to 8
- Gray jay
 - July 17: 2 on trail ca 3 km from Rainbow Trailhead
 - July 19: 1 at Camp 2
 - July 23: 2 at Camp 7
 - July 24: 1 at Camp 7
 - July 25: 1 at Fish Lake; 2 near Camp 8
- American dipper
- Mountain chickadee
 - July 26: 2 at Burnt Br. Creek bridge (highway)
 - July 17: 1 heard ca 3 km from Rainbow Trailhead
 - July 18: between Camps 1 and 2 – 2 birds
 - July 21: 1 at Camps 3 to 4
 - July 22: 1 at Camp 4
 - July 23: 1 at Camp 5
 - July 26: 1 at Camp 8
- Yellow-rumped warbler
- Horned lark
 - July 22: 1 at Camp 4
 - July 19: 1 above Camp 2
 - July 23: 1 near Crystal Lake
 - July 24: 1 at Camps 6 to 7
- Townsend's solitaire
- Hermit thrush
 - July 20: 1 on "Mt. Scamlon"
 - July 17: 1 on trail ca 3 km from Rainbow Trailhead
 - July 18: 1 on trail at Camps 1 to 2; 2 at Camp 2
 - July 20: 1 at Camp 3
 - July 23: 2 at Boyd Pass Trail
 - July 25: 1 near Camp 8; 1 at Camps 7 to 8
 - July 26: 2 at Camp 8
- Robin
 - July 18: 1 at Camp 2
 - July 19: 2 on the way to Camp 3
 - July 21: 2 at Camps 3 to 4
 - July 22: 1 at Camp 4 and 1 at Camp 5
- American pipit
 - July 18: 2 at Camp 2; several (20+) nesting above Camp 2 on the way to "Grizzly View Mtn."
 - July 19: several on the way to Camp 3; several east of Camp 3
 - July 20: nesting at Camp 3
 - July 21: several nesting at Camps 3 to 4
 - July 22: many at Camps 4 to 5
 - July 23: several at Camps 5 to 6
 - July 24: many at Camps 6 to 7
- Nesting behaviour at all areas
- Golden-crowned sparrow
 - July 17: 1 at Camp 1 on Rainbow Trail
 - July 18: 2 on the way to Camps 2 and 3

- July 21: 1 at Camps 3 to 4
- July 22: 1 at Camp 4
- July 23: 2 at Boyd Pass
- July 24: 1 at Camp 6; 4 at Camps 6 to 7
- Chipping sparrow
 - July 21: 1 at “Goat Track Mtn.”
 - July 25: 2 at Camps 7 to 8
- Fox sparrow
 - July 23: 1 at Mackenzie cabin
- Gray-crowned rosy finch
 - July 18: 1 between Camps 1 and 2 on Rainbow Trail
 - July 22: 6 at Camp 4
- Pine grosbeak
 - July 25: 3 north of Burnt Br. Creek (Camps 7 to 8)
- Slate-coloured junco
 - July 20: 5 on “Mt. Scamlon’
 - July 25: 1 near Camp 8

MAMMALS & AMPHIBIANS (Observers: Dave Scanlon, Marilyn Cram, Karl Ricker)

- Black bear
 - July 17: 1 at Heckman Pass, Rainbow Trailhead
- Grizzly bear
 - July 18: 1 + 2 cubs near Camp 1
 - July 23: 1 + 3 cubs near Camp 6
- Wolf
 - July 23: tracks near Crystal Lake
 - July 24: much scat Camps 6 to 7
 - July 25: tracks at Camps 7 to 8
- American Mtn. Goat
 - July 19: 1 male on “Mt. Scamlon”
 - July 20: 5 females and 3 kids at “Holly’s Peak”; “Kid Goat Mtn.”
 - July 21: 2 females and 2 kids at Camps 3 to 4; 1 billy above Camp 3; deep goat trails on “Goat Track Mtn.” in coarse talus
 - July 22: 1 near Camp 4
 - July 24: 4 on shoulder of Mt. Mackenzie
- Moose, American
 - July 23: tracks at Mackenzie (Rainbow) Cabin to Camp 6
 - July 25: tracks at Camps 7 to 8
- Deer, Black-tail
 - July 23: tracks at Mackenzie (Rainbow) Cabin to Camp 6
 - July 25: tracks at Camps 7 to 8
- Beaver, American
 - July 23: at Mackenzie (Rainbow) Cabin
 - July 25: dams only Camp 7 to Fish Lake
- Caribou, Mtn.
 - July 17: tracks near Camp 1
 - July 18: 5 above Camp 1 and 1 at Camp 1 (all bulls)
 - July 20: 6 females and 4 calves south of “Omission Mtn.”
 - July 21: 5 southwest of Camp 4 and 4 at Camp 4
 - July 22: 2 near “Fireweed Mtn.”, 1 bull on “Table Mtn.”
- Squirrel, Red
 - July 25 & 26: Camps 7 to 8 to trail end – few
- Marmot, Hoary
 - July 17: 2 at Heckman Pass
 - July 18: colony above Camp 2
 - July 19: colony at base of “Goat Track Mtn.”, another colony at Camp 3
 - July 20: scattered about Camp 3 day trips
 - July 21: 2 at Camp 4 towards “Fireweed Mtn.”
 - July 22: colony at Camp 5
 - July 23: southwest of Camp 5 to 6
 - July 24: colony on Mt. Mackenzie at Camp 6
- Wood rat
 - July 26: 1 on trail below Hump Lake
- Vole(?)
 - July 24: 1 at Camp 6 to 7
- Chipmunk, Northwest
 - July 22: 1 near Camp 4

- Rocky Mtn. Pika – July 18: 1 near Camp 1
- July 21: 1 at Camps 3 to 4
- Varying hare – July 26: 1 juvenile below Hump Lake on trail
- Toad, Western – July 17: 1 KP 3 (+/-) on Rainbow Trail
- July 24: 2 at Camps 6 to 7
- Tadpoles (species?) – July 24: at Camp 7 – “Lily Pad Lake”
- July 25: at Fish Lake (Holly didn't unleash her rod)
- Fish spp. – July 25: at Fish Lake

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A 2006 EDZIZA ADVENTURE, 31 July – 10 August, 2006

By David and Donna Scanlon

It was an Alice Purdey organized trip to Mount Edziza Provincial Park in the wilds of northwestern BC. It was a two days drive to the rustic Tatogga Lodge located in one of the middle of nowhere places of the far north where we stayed prior to flying in to Buckley Lake for the start of our hike. We stayed in one of the small cabins at the lodge, one with running water. Some of the group stayed in other more rustic cabins with nothing but running mice! Not nice! The lodge itself is a bit of a misnomer as it is one of those store-restaurant combinations of remote places where everyone knows everyone else, and if one of the locals sees that you need more coffee they just pour it for you – gotta love the north's hospitality.

The fly in to Buckley Lake was uneventful. The only thing we noticed was that the float plane sure took a long run to get airborne with a full load. Just load her up boys!

At Buckley Lake we ended up at a horse camp by the dock, and stayed there for the first night to get an early start the next day. It had a large grassy area for us to camp so we just took advantage of the place even though it was still early in the day. Going for an early evening walk, we saw the first of many grizzly tracks, as well as some old moose antlers and

some bones from we don't know what. Should we be scared?

So the hike began. What I like best about going on a trip that someone else organizes is that all I have to do is mindlessly follow and enjoy myself, so this was a real treat. The trail was very pleasant – gradual with no real boggy places. More bear tracks all over and as we were still in forest we were cautious. Still lots of moose sign too and we came across a set of antlers with 13 points. In other words – very big. This big boy must have died of old age as no wolf could have taken him down as he would have been too big.

Alice, being the great leader she is, had breaks every hour or so for us that we really appreciated. However, the weather gods seemed to have it in for us that first day as every time we stopped it sprinkled. Oh well, we carried on. That evening after setting up camp and eating I went for a walk and spotted a large bush off in the distance. It was odd though as there were no other bushes around as we were now out of the trees and in the alpine. I kept looking and was confused as it seemed to have moved. So I went back to camp to get my binoculars. Others came to look and it turned out to be a caribou! Who hoo – exciting! It was to be the first of many we were to see and the perfect ending to the day.

It was a cool camp there as we had to break the ice to get our water in the morning. BRRR! On the previous day we could see Eve Cone in the distance getting a bit closer and that cool morning we were



Heading to Eve Cone. Photo: G. Mumford.

finally up to it. We dropped our packs and climbed to the top. This is reputed to be one of the most recent active volcanic areas in the province with Eve Cone being the most symmetrical of all cones in the park. Neat! On the return to our packs I found some seemingly undiscovered lava tubes, so after calling the others we just had to crawl down into and through some of them – all much fun and exciting. The whole area was lava covered to various degrees and there were lava tubes everywhere. Back on the trail we saw a few more caribou in the distance. Well, just being the silly guy I can be, I had the bright idea of trying to sneak up on them to get some close up pictures. What happened was that while I was sneaking, they spooked, going back and forth and finally going out of sight over the horizon. Oops – so much for the Davey Crocket thing. An hour later camp was made in a large river valley that was grassy and pleasant. At this camp nothing extraordinary happened except that Clarence went looking for more caribou and lost his glasses. Barb was not impressed. He did find them later on though. As he also saw some more caribou he was rewarded in that regard and got some great pictures. One thing that we did not know about this camp was that we were not the only ones there. A party following our route, but a day behind us, was looking at us through their binoculars from afar and saw 2 wolves watching us. This they told us later. Up to then we had been looking for wolves but only saw their prints. It was good to hear that they were that close. Meanwhile I had to look after my beloved. She was having trouble

sleeping and she said that she was cold at night, so we traded sleeping bags as she said that mine was warmer. It must have been warmer as from then on she was warmer and happier. Remember guys. A happy wife makes for a happy life! If I leave that line in here I'll pay for it later on! Oh well.

A bit here about the route we were following. There is no marked trail as such in this part of the park, although there were supposed to be cairns marking the way, according to the parks office. Well there were some cairns but they were hard to find, and sometimes we had to use our binoculars to find them, but we always did. This was one of those times we had the binoculars out. We didn't see any cairns at first. There were caribou though! Not just one or even some but a whole herd of them! Wow – what a thrill! Even better was that our group had become split up and the group ahead startled the herd causing them to swing around going past the rear group to within a few yards of them. They just stood still taking pictures and counting on their good fortune – a great thrill for us all. We all just hung around for a while to watch them. They didn't go far and soon settled down and started eating as though we weren't there. I guess they hardly ever see any humans. This was verified by the parks people saying that there might be only 50 or so people passing through each year, making this a true wilderness experience.

The next day was also very rewarding as we got up what was called Tsekone Ridge, then carried on south between it and the Edziza massif itself. Well we did get a bit confused that day. We were not lost, just off route, right! A couple of us climbed a small



In front of Mt. Edziza. Photo: Donna Scanlon.

bluff ahead of us, thinking that that was the way to go but it wasn't. There were a bunch of small lakes ahead of us on a large flat plateau but no cairns. It was really cold up there and after wandering around a bit we saw ice! Under this plateau was an arm of the Edziza glacier all covered with rock and other debris. This was not marked on the map and must have been a recent movement. To get around it we had to go almost a kilometer to the west to outflank it, past the outflow stream. We took some pictures of this for our records and then went on. After a few small creek crossings later we made camp for the day. It was in a small depression about 2 m below the surrounding area, protecting us somewhat from the wind – a good camp near one of the small creeks. This was to have been our base camp for those climbing Mt Edziza the next day. We were looking forward to that. That evening some of us went for a wander with Fred, seeing some sheep including some babies. As it was cool and somewhat windy, some of the party just hung around drinking hot chocolate and snacking on chocolate bars. Not us though. After a recent hot trip all of our chocolate bars melted so we never brought any this time. OOPS! We could have. Those not doing the climb the next day were looking forward to sleeping in so off to bed we went. But not until after playing a dice game that Larry brought called "Bones". Barb kicked butt big time and won handily. Morning came again and Karl called out "is it a go?" "Not today Karl." There was a snowfall during the night and the mountain was covered with low clouds, leaving us with next to no visibility. We could see that higher up the snow was deeper, so the climb was cancelled. We all went back to bed and didn't go anywhere until about 10 am. We wandered around on the bottom of the ice for a while, finding a dead mouse and some bones of we knew not what. We did see another group of 4 hikers that came quite close to and below us, but they never seemed to spot us, perhaps because the weather was intermittent rain and visibility was poor. If we looked down to the west we could see below the clouds, so 4 of us wandered over towards a large valley. Sitting down to just look around, the binoculars came out and we scanned the area and, lo and behold, saw some mountain goats in the distance. They were really far away on the other side of the valley. There were 14 of them! Looking around in a different



Camp 3. Photo: G. Mumford.



Snowy camp. Photo: Donna Scanlon.

direction we saw another couple of goats with another baby on some cliffs to our left. Score! We were the only ones to have seen them.

This was the Sezill River gorge we were seeing and the Sezill River begins there, originating at the Edziza Glacier. This is a grand valley – very imposing, very pretty, and very big, with hot springs at its bottom. Our map actually showed a trail going down into it's bottom to the hot springs, then going up the other side, but we weren't interested in doing all that and taking another day to go down and up. Well, we were interested but it was too far to go taking another full day. Clarence did spot a "white thing" way over on our way back. We could not figure out what it was, but Clarence just had to find out, so off he went and we 3 just sat and watched him go. That white thing turned out to be quite a long way away and the "white thing" turned out to be another antler.

To bed for another quiet night, except that Donna heard – what? A grizzly bear's creaky knees? She was scared! Then she heard Clare putting on his boots and she thought that he was getting up to check on the noise. I had to have a look outside to see what was going to happen, and it was snowing

again! Donna thought the sounds of the snow and wind on the tent were the creaking knees of an old grizzly! Well now maybe I could get some sleep! The next morning I did get up first and give Donna a hot drink right in the tent. Remember the happy wife rule?

That day was Cocoa day, not the drink kind but the crater kind. Cocoa Crater was its name and get up it we did. It was a day of meandering over beautiful sand dunes, creek crossings, and hills, and through small valleys. At times it was lightly snowing, and at others times clear. Wandering along I found an animal just sleeping on the grass so I signaled everyone to be quiet. I snuck up on it and jabbed it with my hiking pole and everyone jumped! It turned out to be just a rolled up ball of fur from some animal that some hunter had skinned probably brought there by some animal. Everyone sure did jump though! We all laughed so hard and Karl put it on his head so the cameras came out for the silly pictures. We did have fun with it. Alice left it on the top of one of the cairns for others to see.

After Cocoa we had a Coffee evening. We had set up camp right beside Coffee Crater and that evening we scrambled up it also. Another big crater with, strangely enough, a set of antlers at its bottom – another weird thing to have seen. Did the animal die there or were the antlers dragged there by some predator? We'll never know.

Coffee Crater was at the extreme southern end of the Edziza Glacier ice sheet and that arm of it was called the Tencho Glacier. The Glacier around Mount Edziza is massive, being 8 km long and almost 5 km wide, with the actual Edziza summit a rocky pinnacle protruding out of it. From Coffee Crater we could look north and get a spectacular view of its size, the ice stretching off into the distance. That evening there was another enlightening outdoor lesson for Donna. Barb showed her how to make a cone of snow to use in place of toilet paper. Another cold event in the mountains!

And let there be light! Alice was up in the night and saw one of nature's wonders – the northern lights. She decided to let the rest of us sleep, being a thoughtful person. I would have liked to have seen them, however. That night was the coldest yet, freezing our water bottles in the tents. It did not deter Larry from having his daily bath though, and he made me shiver just to think of it. BRRR!



Coffee Crater. Photo: G. Mumford.



Donna and Dave beside Coffee Crater. Photo: Donna Scanlon collection.



Looking west from Coffee Crater. Photo: Donna Scanlon.

Leaving Coffee Crater the next day, we thought of having a go at Cappucino Crater, but changed our minds as it was a bit off our route. We walked for the longest time on what we called kitty litter, as that is exactly what it looked like and felt like. It was somewhat hard to walk on and the best way to describe it would be to compare it to trying to walk on sand at the beach with a full pack on. Then later we then had to negotiate our way through an obsidian and lava field. There was lots of obsidian just lying around for the taking, and I do mean lots. The brochures all stated that no-one was to take any as there wasn't much there and we adhered to what they asked. Really! We did! We also found an

old prospector's claim post and wondered about the history of that. Apparently long ago the Indians of the area had quite a trade going on with the coastal natives trading obsidian for goods from them. Then the first settlers came and found the place followed by prospectors. The area was open to mining claims prior to it becoming a park and that is probably where the mining claim post came from. Why nothing ever came from it was probably the isolation of the place as there was no easy way to get the mineral to any market.

So on we went towards Cartoona Pk. and saw our first stone sheep. These are magnificent animals. A ram and ewe played hide-and-seek with us, peeking over the rocks a couple of times, thinking that we couldn't see them before they disappeared for good. The group then dropped their packs and we headed up to the top where lunch was served. We all had a fun time looking around and back at where we had been for the last few days, calling out all of the peaks and trying to see our route. That is always fun to do. There were lots of sheep tracks all over the top and there seemed to be a healthy population of them. We took out the BCMC flag for the summit pictures – another day, another peak. Then off we went again, down to our packs and down into the valley on the other side of the pass – a grassy valley with meandering streams in it, where we made camp. It then started to rain and got cooler and we were wondering if it was going to snow again. Camp was



Geoff, Barb, John, Alice, Fred, Peter (standing), and Karl, Nina, David, Ziff, Donna, and Dave (sitting) from left to right, unfurl the BCMC flag. Photo: G. Mumford.



Cartoona Pk. Photo: G. Mumford.



Looking down to Coffee Crater from Cartoona Pk. Photo: G. Mumford.

made with Clarence erecting a tarp to protect us from the wind and rain, while we wondered if we would have a group meeting that night or wait until the morning. We had a group meeting every evening to discuss the plans for the next day and talk about the day just finished. Thanks for the tarp Clarence. We ate in the tarp's shelter, reminiscing on the day's events. We had hiked on snow, lava, sand, grassy meadows, and rocky creek beds, and were somewhat tired that night. And then: what was that? An umbrella went flying past us in the wind just as the sound of pounding boots approached. Then Ziff went flying past us chasing his umbrella – down the hill through a stream with water flying everywhere – trying to catch up to it! What a sight that was. Did we ever have a laugh at that – poor Ziff!

Karl in his wanderings around camp found an old sheep's horn that we all photographed, wondering



Camp 4 in a dry lake bed. Photo: G. Mumford.

again what the story was behind it being here. That was not to be one of our better nights, as somehow the tent was slanted and I was on the up-side while Donna was on the down-side where a small leak had started. She was not a happy camper as it dripped on her and I rolled on her. She woke up Barb and Clarence with all of her “nattering”. They then offered to help us move our tent if we wanted but she whispered that she was going to “just suck it up”. She did. From then on she just “belly ached to me in a whisper instead”. She said “why do I always get the slanting, leaking side of the tent with bear knees creaking?”

Much to our surprise, we survived the night and for doing so mother nature rewarded us with a rainbow to start the next day. Nice – a fine day! After starting out to go up through a pass Geoff was in the lead. All of a sudden he said that there was a wolf there right in front of him and that it just turned around and went away the other way. It was only Geoff and one other person who saw it. I thought that maybe it wanted to keep on going the way it was going, so I ran up the hill away from the pass on a hunch and there it was. I'd finally seen a wolf in the wild. It had retreated and circled around and continued on in the direction it was originally going only now way above us. So cool!

At the pass we reached a trail from the Spectrum Range to the south which then followed the same route out as us down to Modade Lake. To follow the trail up you would end up in Raspberry Pass. Everyone then dropped their packs at the pass to climb up the trail to try to see any part of the Spectrum Range. The terrain didn't permit that but great views were had anyway and pictures were taken. Then we all went down the trail to our exit point of the trip – there was a trail to follow once again. Down the trail

we had to leave the alpine and there was nothing but trees below us in the valley – the headwaters of Chakima Creek that drains into Modade Lake where we were to get picked up and flown out – out to hot showers and hot food! But enough of that. We were not there yet with 3 days still to go.

A strange thing happened then. One member of the group had always been out in front the entire trip and suddenly he was in the middle of the group. Why would that be? Without asking we thought that it was because we were then in forest and in a lot of brush where visibility was limited. In other words, if there any bears around you couldn't see them before they saw you. We followed the trail down and came to our camp for the night – an old hunter's horse camp with enough room for all of our tents. There was lots of junk around too – old stirrups, horseshoes, old bits of tarps, and a lot of old propane cylinders. What intrigued everyone most was the home made toilet facilities that were crude to say the least. Lest I go into information overload I am just going to leave this one to your imagination. Barb's topic of the night was about BCMC pink candles. I don't know what that was all about and was not going to ask! During the evening some of us watched a herd of stone sheep on a high ridge on the other side of the valley from us. There must have been 25 of them in all with moms, dads, and babies.

We woke up the next day to BACON frying. Who had the bacon? It was the Stange guys – Peter and his son David had bacon! It was a good thing there were two of them as if there had only had been one we would have overpowered him and taken it away! We just settled down to our usual oatmeal. Another thing about being in the forest again was the mosquitoes. They were back in numbers and out came the bug nets. Fred set out to have a look at the trail nearest camp to find the easiest way for us to start the day. He came back saying that there was a stream crossing that was only knee deep not too far away. That didn't impress Barb at all. Fred is 190 cm tall and she is only 155 cm tall, so knee deep for him would be waist deep for her, and that would never do at all! Well, a way was found to get around that part of the stream and Barb didn't drown so all went ok. Some crossings were up to our knees, though, and we were getting wet. Meandering was the order of the day – back and forth, crossing and

recrossing the river, through marshes and swamps, coming across, of all things, a green mushroom. Nobody wanted to take a bite of that to see if it was ok to eat.

The water finally got to our knees for a long time and we came to a bridge. It was a fine bridge – a very well built bridge. The problem was that it was right in the middle of a river – not spanning it but in the middle. It seems that the beavers had continually built dams backing up the river making the bridge useless. Some of us walked over it just because it was there. Why not? With the water up to our knees and no way to get around it we just waded through. Then it happened – a shout from someone in front yelling “the lake!” Finally, Modade Lake. The next thing that happened was totally unexpected as a float plane flew overhead and seemed to land on the lake right in front of us. We had to see what was going on. There in front of us materialized the Modade lake camp site with lots of “big” grizzly tracks about. We dropped our packs and followed the noise of the plane to a trail that wound its way to a small dock where there were 4 people waiting for it. The



Walking through the swamps (top) to Modade Lake (bottom). Photos: G. Mumford.

plane was a day late due to bad weather and had just arrived to pick them up. Maybe that bad weather was our Godsend. Could we get out that day too? We asked the pilot and were rewarded with a yes answer!! Oh yeah!! Going home baby!! Hot food and hot showers, a shave and a shampoo.

Tagogga Lodge here we come! Well, it turned out that it was full but we found a just-as-good place just down the road for the night. At breakfast the next morning back at the lodge we ate well and said our good byes and thanked Alice for all of her fine work. Saying good bye to the north, we headed home from another fine adventure.

The actors in this saga were: Barb and Clarence Kornatowsky, Fred Douglas, Karl Ricker, Nina Evans-Locke, John Halliday, Ziff House, Larry Leonard, Geoff Mumford, Peter and David Stange, Alice Purdey (organizer), and Donna and David Scanlon.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES – MT. EDZIZA PARK,

31 July – 10 August, 2006

By Karl Ricker

Again, another fine BCMC traverse, over aiplands of the Big Raven Plateau on the Tahltan Highlands in northwestern British Columbia, but in very unstable weather. The heavy backpacks weighed against the inclusion of identification books to the park's outstanding biota and natural features, although Dr. J.G. Souther's very colourful and detailed 1:50,000 scale geological map was taken along, serving as a useful navigational tool as well as a guide to avoid undesirable terrain such as blocky lava flows.

Recognition of alpine flora was severely hampered by lack of illustrative books. Many species had to be overlooked, while others were identified only to generic level. Birds and mammals were also recorded, although small species of the latter were ignored. Geological observations were limited to recent surficial features. Volcanic lava flows, cones, ash layers, etc., are more than adequately outlined on Dr. Souther's precise map, and fully described in his memoir.

Upon completion of the traverse, various guides were consulted in the compilation of the biota observed, supported by our limited notes to some extent. The provisional listings would benefit from a

more thorough analysis, using a collection of field specimens.

TOPOGRAPHY AND LOCAL PHYSIOGRAPHY

Mt. Edziza Provincial Park is situated on the Tahltan Highlands, a physiographic unit located east of the Boundary Ranges of the Coast Mountains. The park is bounded by the Klastline and Mess tributaries of the Stikine River to the west and northeast respectively, and the Iskut River to the southeast. A chain of lakes lie in Kakaddi Valley, a tributary of the Klastline, which marks the park's east boundary. Therein, Mowdade Lake is the floatplane beachhead for the usual exit from the park whereas Buckley Lake, on the plateau surface, marks the northwest boundary of the park and the entry for our party that disembarked from the floatplane. Locally, the park lies over three plateaux that are part of the Tahltan Highlands: Big Raven on the north half, and north of Raspberry Pass, and the Kitsu and Arctic to the south. Two previous BCMC trips trekked over the latter two, exiting by way of Raspberry Pass, which was the route traversed by the Northwest Telegraph Line, that connected the Yukon to central British Columbia with communication services for about 30 years in the early 1900s.

Elevations on the trek varied from 834 m at Buckley Lake, rising gradually to about 2,750 m on Mt. Edziza, and dropping as low as 800 m on the saturated muskeg valley bottom between Mowdade and Kakiddi Lakes. The exit trail descended from the Big Raven Plateau to these lakes by way of Chakima Creek valley. Elevations of Mess Creek valley on the western edge of the park are considerably lower (ca 500 m). Our trip traversed the Big Raven Plateau with the breached crater of Mt. Edziza rising up to the east of the route. Historically, the mountain was at least 600 m higher but a violent explosive eruption had blown off its top, in the same manner that decapitated Mt. Mazama in Oregon, leaving the Crater Lake Caldera basin in its wake. At Mt. Edziza, however, the crater is filled instead with glacier ice, lying as a flat ice dome 2.0 to 2.5 km in diameter at about 2,650 m, or roughly 1000 m above the plateau surface. Outlet glaciers from the dome are broad and gently sloped on the northwest sides of the now dormant volcano, but are narrow and steep on its east, plunging toward Kakiddi Valley. Our route avoided any glacier traversing, although some ice-

cored moraines were inadvertently encountered. By and large the route was an open-sky gentle rolling terrain, unconfined until the exit off the plateau into the Chakima valley to reach the chain of lakes on the east side of the park.

GEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

Dr. Souther's geological map (GSC No. 1623A) defines 47 different units of bedrock and ash, mainly volcanic in origin, ranging in age from Paleozoic (>250 million years) to Holocene (1320 years before present). The "core" of the plateau is underlain by Paleozoic and Mesozoic (>250 to 60 million years) rock but it is largely hidden from view by the outpouring of younger volcanics which began in the Eocene Epoch (ca 50 million years ago) and continued to 630 A.D.

The first outpouring, the Sloko Group, is exposed in some valleys and on lower hilltops west of our route. This volcanic episode, however, is not directly related to the Mt. Edziza period of prolonged eruptions which began millions of years later during the Late Miocene, about 10-14 million years ago, and continued spasmodically to 1320 years ago. Dr. Souther has divided the Edziza volcanic pile into fourteen formations, based on time breaks in the volcanism, and/or distinct geographic separation of one pile of lava from another. Indeed, co-mingled lava flows from different centres of eruption add much complexity to the geology, with the identification of "members" in several formations. One formation with many members, Big Raven, is post-ice age era (less than 10,000 years old) providing the walking surface for the first two days of the trip. Another several older formations (Klastline, Mt. Edziza, Kakiddi, Pillow Ridge, Ice Peak Pyramid and Arctic Lake) are distinct outpourings occurring during the growth and disintegration of the Pleistocene ice sheets that covered the province. Five formations erupted onto the plateau prior to glaciation (Pliocene to Miocene in age), labelled the Spectrum, Nido, Armadillo, Little Iskut and Raspberry Formations. However, our traverse across the northern part of the park did not encounter the Spectrum or Little Iskut formations. Previous BCMC traverses across the southern half of the park, however, were by and large over these formations as well as the Nido, Armadillo, Klastline, Raspberry, Ice Peak, and possibly the Big Raven. The interaction of "ice and

fire" (volcanism with glacier ice), both during the Pleistocene and Recent epochs, is what makes the Mt. Edziza Provincial Park so unique to the geological community — a marvelous interlocking stew of the products of two geological processes. While our trekkers marvelled at the stunning volcanic features on the Big Raven Plateau (cones, sharp-edged lava flows laced with hidden booby traps, broad sheets of volcanic ash, floating pumice in creeks, subtle domes, and tiered successions of colourful lava flows exposed in creek canyons), there were other geological features around. Glaciers spilling off the Mt. Edziza icefield have recessed somewhat, leaving curious ice-cored terminal moraines and intervening forefields of rubble, scoured bedrock, and small lakes.

Outside the limits of modern-day glacier limits, the tundra is covered with an assortment of periglacial features, i.e. smaller landforms produced by the action of cold climate, seasonal frost, and short periods of summer thawing. On the slopes, if sod-covered, the ubiquitous solifluction lobes are distinctive, especially if stepping up from one to another. On flatter surfaces there are curious cracks arranged in irregular polygons, likely underlain by a wedge of ice that expands each winter after the addition of summer melt-moisture. A few rock glaciers lie below cliffs of blocky lava flows. They are still moving but at a snail's pace compared to that of glacier ice. Added to the above are the kaleidoscope of colours exhibited by the varying weathering processes on the rubble spilling off the tiers of lava flows. Yes, the rubble on the sides of Cocoa Crater is indeed chocolate brown, and that on Coffee Crater is blackish.

For the BCMC traverse, the landforms of sloggers delight were the sloping bogs and fens (muskeg) encountered on the first and last two days of trekking. Normally wet boggy terrain lies on flat surfaces, but in the north country, where permafrost foils the percolation of moisture into the deeper zones of soil or rock, the shallow slopes will also retain moisture at the surface where some species of mosses, sedges and shrubs grow in profusion to stymie downslope drainage, creating the ultimate quagmire to trek through. If we walked quickly, and lightly, submergence in the "glop" was limited to boot tops, but for the slow sloggers it was a shin- to knee-deep thrash.

Modern-day glaciers, like elsewhere, are in retreat phase on the west side of the Edziza area, as shown by fresh moraines somewhat removed from the tongues of glacier ice. The Edziza icefield radiates out from a dome at about 2,650 m elevation that fills the caldera. The icesheet beyond this edifice is elongate, about 15 km on the north-south axis and 2-5 km in width. From this central mass of ice there are short outlet glaciers, 0.5 to 3.5 km in length, which, in plan view, resemble an octopus or starfish. The outlets are fairly broad and gently sloped on the north, west, and south sides, as opposed to elongate and narrow, steep and strongly confined by steep walls of lava flows on the east side. The broad outlet between Ornostay Bluff and Triangle Cone is about 1.5 km wide and has receded about 1.5 km from its recent historic maximum extent, marked by an ice-cored moraine crest, but the intervening forefield of rubble that extends to the present day glacier margin is mainly devoid of any residual ice. Examination of the ice surface by everyone, fairly carefully, did not reveal any sign of aboriginal presence, although organic matter (ungulate feces?) was discovered in several spots. Next to the Bluff the glacier's lateral moraine is bicrosted; the younger (inner) crest lacked lichen growth on its rubble, whereas the older (outer) which was much higher, had *Rhizocarpon geographicum* ("Map" lichen) crusts on its rocky rubble measuring 2-3 cm in diameter. It would appear that the glacier has surged at least twice over the last few hundred years. Examination of the stratified ice and debris in the ice-cored moraine will undoubtedly reveal an even much more complex recent glacial history.

BIRDS

Never abundant in any day of the traverse, although pipits were seen nearly every day; 29 species were positively identified while two others, a finch and sandpiper, eluded definitive scrutiny. Some other waterfowl may have been missed on Buckley Lake, however, because they were too far away. The highest flyers were the ravens but a Merlin on the crest of Eve Cone was also a pleasant surprise, especially when it or another chased a pipit into one of our tents! Although no young broods of chicks were seen we suspect that plovers had nested on the Big Raven Plateau. Surprisingly, ptarmigan were

not encountered despite the vast tracts of suitable habitat. The following species were encountered:

American dipper,
American pipit (pale Asiatic form),
American robin,
Baird's sandpiper,
Bald eagle,
Barn swallow,
Barrow's goldeneye,
Belted kingfisher,
Black-capped chickadee,
Caspian tern (out of range),
Common nighthawk,
Common raven,
Dark-eyed junco,
Eared grebe (out of range?),
Finch - either a gray-crowned, rosy, or a purple finch,
Fox sparrow,
Glaucous-winged gull,
Golden-crowned sparrow,
Gray jay,
Horned lark,
Merlin,
Olive-sided flycatcher,
Pacific(?) or American(?) Golden plover,
Red-shafted flicker,
Semi-palmated plover,
Song sparrow,
Spruce grouse,
Tree swallow,
Unidentified shorebird - a Wandering tattler or Surfbird(?),
White-crowned sparrow,
White-winged scoter,

MAMMALS

The Tahltan Plateau is a big game hunter's paradise. Indeed, the development of trails, other than the telegraph route, is through the efforts of the outfitters and they have camps at Buckley Lake and in the Chakima Valley. Ungulates are the obvious attraction though undoubtedly bears have also been hunted. Smaller than shoe-sized mammals were dismissed in the following observations: Moose, Stone (thinhorn) sheep, Mountain goat, Osborn caribou, Parry ground squirrel, Wolf, Red squirrel and Hoary marmot. Black bear and Red fox were also seen on the highway between Eddontenajon and Dease Lakes. Not to go unnoticed were several fresh Grizzly bear tracks on the trail and Wolverine tracks on the glacier above the Ornostay Bluff camp and near Cocoa Crater. Distribution of the ungulates was interesting and puzzling. Four herds



Karl sporting a head covering made from the remains of the local fauna. Photo: Donna Scanlon.

of caribou, the largest 39 in number, were seen exclusively to the north of the Elwyn Creek drainage. Goats were most numerous on the cliff bands of Segill Creek valley, and the Dall sheep to the south

in the Cartoona Pass and drainage basins of Walkout Creek and Chakima Creek valleys.

FLORA

Alice Purdey and the writer spent a fair amount of time each day trying to identify the alpine flora, making notes and photos of those which we could not identify to species. There are two that defied generic designation. About 70 trees, shrubs, grasses and flowers were identified to genus level and about 90 were carried onto species level, with the caveat that at least nine are tentative, employing the designation (?). In the lists that follow, the scientific (Latin) name is used, followed by the common name in brackets.



Admiring an alpine meadow full of flowers. Photo: Donna Scanlon.

Trees

Abies lasiocarpa (alpine fir), *Picea engelmannii* (Engelmann or hybrid to white spruce), *Picea mariana* (black), *Pinus contorta*, and *Populus tremuloides* (aspen).

Tall Shrubs (waist-high and up)

Alnus spp. (alders), *Betula glandulosa* (dwarf birch), *Ledum groenlandicum* (Labrador tea), *Menziesia ferruginea* (false azalea), *Oploplanax horridus* (devil's club), *Ribes lacustre* (gooseberry), *Salix* spp. (willows), *Shepherdia canadensis* (soopalallie), *Vaccinium* spp. (huckleberries and blueberries) and *Viburnum edule* (cranberry).

Low Shrubs

Cassiope tetragona (white heather), *Empetrum nigrum* (crowberry), *Phyllodoce empetriformis* (pink heather), *Potentilla fruticosa* (shrubby cinquefoil), *Potentilla uniflora* (?) (one-flowered cinquefoil), *Salix arctica* (Arctic willow), *Salix polaris* (polar willow), *Salix reticulata* (net-veined willow), and *Vaccinium* spp. (huckleberries and blueberries).

Flowers (Forbs)

- **Yellow-green flowers:** *Artemisia arctica* (?) (mtn. sagewort), *Saxifraga occidentalis* (western), and *Veratrum viride* (hellebore).
- **Yellow flowers:** *Arnica* spp. (2 or more), *Castilleja* spp. (paintbrush), *Crepis nana* (dwarf hawksbeard), *Draba alpina* (?) (alpine draba), *Pedicularis labradorica* (Labrador lousewort), *Potentilla diversiflora* (diverse leaf cinquefoil), *Ranunculus* spp. (buttercups), *Saxifraga aizoides* (evergreen saxifrage), *Saxifraga flagellaris* (stoloniferous saxifrage), *Sedum divergens* (spreading stone-crop), *Sedum lanceolatum* (lance-leafed stonecrop), *Senecio pauciflorus* (rayless groundsel), *Senecio triangularis* (arrow leafed groundsel), *Solidago multiradiata* (northern goldenrod), *Taraxacum ceratophorum* (horned dandelion).
- **White flowers:** *Achillea millefolium* (yarrow), *Anaphalis margaritacea* (pearly everlasting), *Arenaria lateriflora* (?) (blunt-leafed sandwort), *Cerastium arvense* (field chickweed), *Cornus canadensis* (bunchberry), *Draba nivalis* (?) (snow draba), *Dryas integrifolia* (mtn. avens), *Fragaria* sp. (wild strawberry), *Heracleum lanatum* (cow parsnip), *Leptarrhena pyrolifolia* (leatherleafed saxifrage), *Leutkea pectinata* (partridge foot), *Pedicularis capitata* (capitate lousewort), *Polygonum viviparum* (alpine bistort), *Saxifraga lyallii* (?) (red stemmed saxifrage), *Saxifraga tricuspidata* (?) (3 toothed saxifrage), *Smilacina*

sp. (false Solomon's-seal), *Stellaria longipes* (starwort), *Tolfieldia pusilla* (?) (false asphodel), *Valeriana sitchensis* (Sitka valerian).

- **Pinkish flowers:** *Claytonia sarmentosa* (spring beauty), *Pedicularis groenlandica* (?) (beaked lousewort), *Pedicularis langsdoiffii* (Langsdorf's lousewort), *Pedicularis sudetica* (Sudeten lousewort), *Polemonium pulcherrimum* (Jacob's ladder), *Pyrola asarifolia* (wintergreen), and *Silene acaulis* (moss campion).
- **Orange flowers:** *Agoseris aurantiaca* (orange agoseris).
- **Blue flowers:** *Campanula lasiocarpa* (mtn. harebell), *Campanula uniflora* (arctic harebell), *Gentiana glauca* (inky gentian), *Mertensia paniculata* (tall bluebell), *Myosotis alpestris* (mtn. forget-me-not), *Myosotis laxa* (?) (small flowered forget-me-not), *Polemonium caeruleum* (tall Jacob's ladder), and *Veronica wormskjoldii* (speedwell).
- **Purple flowers:** *Aconitum delphiniifolium* (monkshood), *Delphinium glaucum* (larkspur), *Epilobium angustifolium* (fireweed), *Epilobium latifolium* (?) (broad-leafed willowherb), *Erigeron humilus* (arctic fleabane), *Galium* sp. (bedstraw), *Oxyria digyna* (mtn. sorrel), *Oxytropis nigrescens* (locoweed), *Penstemon procerus* (?) (small flowered penstemon), *Petasites frigidus* (coltsfoot), *Saxifraga oppositifolia* (purple mtn. saxifrage), *Sedum integrifolium* (roseroot), *Sedum lanceolatum* (lance leafed stonecrop).

Sedges, etc.

Carex spp. (sedges), *Equisetum* spp. (horsetails), *Eriophorum angustifolium* (cotton grass), *Juncus* sp. (rush), *Lycopodium* sp. (clubmoss), and ferns not identified.

The foregoing is very incomplete. However, missing from the list, and they were looked for every day in the alplands, are *Phlox diffusa*, a puzzling absence, and anemones which likely bloomed and went into senescence before our arrival in August.

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VALHALLA VIEWS - EVENTUALLY, 18-25 August, 2007

By Brian Wood

It had rained heavily most of the first night (Saturday) of our trip, and when the grey light filtered through the tent it was still raining, with heavy clouds covering the surrounding peaks. I was thinking how could it rain like this, when only a week before we were discussing an alternative "Plan B" destination just in case this area was closed due to raging forest fires in nearby valleys? The question was – did we somehow offend the weather god? How could she (?) bring such bad weather on the second day of our week-long trip, after providing over two months of unseasonably hot and dry weather? Those who had bothered to check the weather forecast chose to ignore any pessimistic predictions of a change in the weather. After all predicting when the change will occur is the tricky part. As this was the first rain in many weeks, doubtless it would be welcomed by the locals to quench the raging fires and it would probably also improve our views if and when the clouds eventually lifted. There were no signs of activity outside our tent apart from some browsing mule deer, so we rolled over and caught up on lost sleep. Later on, when bodily needs forced us out of the tent, we could see the widespread overcast, and after a brief exchange with others who had got up, we retreated back to our tent to eat our food supplies to reduce our loads when we left, and then to read for most of that day.

As I lay in the tent listening to the steady rain, I reviewed the trip plan and the previous day's surprisingly successful start to the trip. This was a joint trip of the BCMC and the Kootenay Mountaineering Club (KMC) and was part of an initiative of the Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC (FMCBC) to encourage its member clubs to arrange joint trips in each other's areas. As the BCMC had been founded one hundred

years ago that year, it seemed appropriate to share this occasion with another club which had also been around for a long time. Like other trips these days, it was also a fundraiser for a worthwhile cause, namely the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS), through the Bigwild.ca program which was jointly sponsored by Mountain Equipment Co-operative (MEC). My input for the trip was limited to organizing the basics, but my brother, Peter Wood (PW) of South Slocan and a long time KMC'er and a recent BCMC'er, was our local guide.

The original plan was to traverse in an easterly direction a southern portion of Valhalla Provincial Park, and to try to scramble up a few of the adjacent peaks. The country is rugged with steep rocky peaks, many pretty lakes and few maintained trails. Being in the wet interior, the vegetation extended to quite high elevations (2000-2500 m) and the weather is highly variable in the summer. The BCMC group comprised Lisa Baile, Peter Pare (PP), Peter Woodsworth (PD), Evelyn Feller, Marilyn Cram, Jan St. Amand and me. The KMC group originally comprised Chris Lalonde, Guy Lupien, Ross Bates, and of course, PW. At the last minute Ross reduced his trip to a one day trip, but his driving contribution assisted the car shuttle immensely. Our final party of 10 had an average age of about 60 years, the youngest being 49 and the oldest being 67.

The previous day, Saturday, had dawned quite promisingly, and after a few delays to get the whole party in one place, the car shuttle and parking went smoothly. As porcupines are quite common in the area, following the local practice we protected all parked vehicles with low chicken wire fences. By 11 am our first party of 8 had left two vehicles at the parking lot on the Hoder Creek road, and started the steady climb to Drinnen Lake in nice weather. After a snack at the Lake the first party followed the undulating trail 4-5 km to the official campsite at Gwillim Lakes, arriving at about 1 pm just as the weather began to deteriorate. As other campers had arrived before us, we pitched our tents on the few remaining tent pads located in a small area near the lake to reduce the wear and tear of camping in this beautiful and popular sub-alpine area. Our second party of 3 left two vehicles at the Mulvey Creek parking lot and then drove to the Hoder Creek parking lot and eventually joined us by about 3 pm in light rain at the campsite, having completed the

walk in much less time than the first party. Ross was part of the second party, and as soon as he arrived at the campsite he said his goodbyes and returned to his vehicle and drove home. Being a local perhaps he knew that this first rain after many weeks of dry weather was not just a passing shower. We filled the official food cache with some of our food and the excess was slung from a dead tree. The damp weather did not encourage us to sit around, and so most of us had an early night.

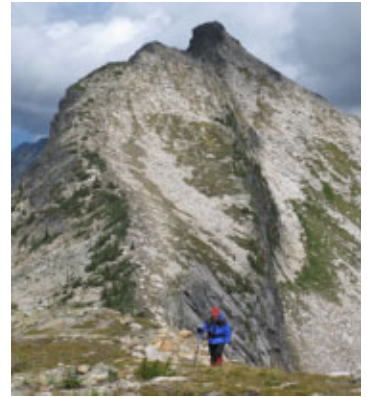
After spending most of Sunday in our tents as the visibility was so limited, on Monday morning we were determined not to be discouraged by some straggly clouds hanging around the higher peaks. After a quick breakfast we set off from our tents by about 8.30 am and climbed to the base of the southeast ridge of nearby Lucifer Pk. After some class 3 scrambling for a short while we were enveloped in cloud and the rocks were getting damp. There was some exposure along sections of the ridge but everyone made it to the summit with no complaints except that we had no views in return for our efforts. It was too cool to spend much time on the summit, and so we reversed some of our ascent route, and then traversed northwest to the saddle between Lucifer and the Black Prince. After some short scrambling sections the rain turned to slushy snow, and the rocks became too challenging for some who decided to reverse the route and return to camp as there was no indication that the weather would improve. Those who continued on the route had a cold, wet, windy and viewless short visit and snack on the Black Prince's small summit, then traversed the summit and followed an easier descent route and returned to camp. This was not an optimistic start for our trip which required good visibility for the tricky route finding yet to come.

We could barely believe our ears and eyes on Tuesday morning when the rain seemed heavier and the clouds seemed to be lower than the day before. After breakfast I heard serious mutinous murmurings from some members of the party who felt their patience was being tested, and so I thought that a weather check might help us make a rational decision. So we used (or abused?) our "emergency only" satellite phone to phone PW's wife, Ann, to give us a report on the 10-day local weather forecasts as found on computer websites. She reported relatively negative forecasts, which

increased the mutinous murmurings. However, Ann's forecasts were later contradicted by a young couple who arrived at the campsite that evening and had more optimistic forecasts, and so naturally we chose the couple's forecasts as their forecasts were more encouraging!

All this debate gave the weather an opportunity to improve, and in typical mountain fashion, a possible "sucker hole" of better weather convinced us to set off at about 9.30 am to climb an easy peak called locally "Scout Pk." after the boy scouts who frequent this area. We soon arrived at the summit, but again the weather turned to a mixture of rain, wet snow and occasional sunny spells. Our spirits were raised during a particularly long sunny spell where we even took some photos, and we decided it was worthwhile to have a go at climbing Gregorio Pk., an imposing peak due south of Gwillim Lakes. After a snack we descended a little and traversed a ridge southeast towards Gregorio, but were forced onto a steep heathery and gravelly side-hill, which was wet and loose in parts. After one particularly persistent snow flurry we decided that the side-hilling on slushy snow was too unpleasant, and so we reversed to a saddle, crossed over the ridge and descended towards camp. Needless to say, once we had aborted the Gregorio attempt we were then blessed with warm sun and blue skies, and this turned out to be the best part of the day. Back at camp some hardy souls took a quick dip in the lake, but others were content merely to sit and admire the striking views – of the mountains, not of the swimmers! Over dinner in very pleasant weather (it is amazing how a bit of evening sunshine can generate optimism) we decided to follow our original plan to strike camp the next day and start our eastwards traverse towards Mulvey Basin.

Our optimism paid off and we were rewarded by a beautiful Wednesday morning, the best day yet. Shouldering our packs with our remaining 3-4 days of supplies we left camp at about 9 am in high spirits-the special part of the trip was finally "a go"! We reversed a little of our undulating inbound trail to Wicca Lake, and then took a steady rising traverse on a broken side-hill to cross a ridge to the north of Drinnon Pk. where we had a snack in warm sun. From here we could see the rugged country we had to cross, and it was a little intimidating to some of us. The east side of our ridge dropped steeply, but a



From top left clockwise -

Near Gwillim Lakes campsite looking at Asgard (left) and Midgard (centre);
From "Scout Pk." looking south towards Gregorio;
Heading up to the ice pitch;
From Gwillim Lakes looking at Midgard (left), Prestley (centre) and Drinnon (right);
At Wicca Lakes below Drinnon Pk.
Photos: E. Feller (bottom right) and B. Wood (others).



southeasterly traverse below the ridge through some bush took us to a gully which we could descend quite comfortably, especially as some of us had our packs lowered on a short length of our emergency rope. By mid-afternoon we were traversing a wide basin of grassy patches mixed with smooth granite slabs, and then we headed up through a narrow gap full of huge boulders which eventually led us to the northern end of Valhalla Lake. It was here that PP discovered that several centimeters of the heel of one of his boots had separated from a foam-cushioned inner portion of the boot itself, and the heel was hanging as a loose flap. We tried to use duct tape to hold the heel flap temporarily in place but knew it would not last long. After walking a few hundred meters further along the lake, we pitched out tents in a beautiful setting in late afternoon sun. For the next hour or so the “fix-it crew” entertained themselves using fishing twine and PD’s nylon straps to make a clamping system to hold the heel tightly in place. Guy supplied an unknown type of plastic glue from his amazingly comprehensive emergency repair kit. The final tightening of the twine was effected by using the tapered arms of pot grabbers as wedges between the boot and twine. We hoped that the glue would cure overnight if it were kept sufficiently warm, and so PP slept with the clamped boot, kept inside a plastic bag, in this sleeping bag! The TV “fix-it guy”, Red Green, would have been impressed except that we abandoned use of duct tape as it could not stick to the boot. That night there were even some bugs—a small price to pay for such good weather.

Thursday dawned as another promising day, and we had an early but leisurely breakfast in warm morning sun. We removed the boot clamps on PP’s boot heel, but as we did not trust the glue, for added security we rigged tight twine to pass from a cord wrapped around the boot ankle portion through clearance grooves we had cut in his heel. PP assured us it was quite comfortable, and the amazing thing is that this “bodged” tie job lasted throughout the rest of the trip with no more problems! We left camp by 8.30 am, crossed the outflow from the lake and headed upwards towards a gap on a ridge to the east of Valhalla Lake. Once through the gap, we descended an easy slope, crossed a creek and ascended another ridge. Resting on the ridge, while enjoying one of our many snacks, we

contemplated a potential problem we could see on the next ridge, beyond an intervening broken valley and creek. This problem was a snowy and icy-looking slope leading to a saddle to the east of Asgard Pk. which we planned to use to access the Mulvey Basin. There was no apparent easier alternative route to this slope. We were not carrying crampons as PW and I had followed this route in reverse some five years ago in September when we did not encounter ice as the remaining summer snow was easy to traverse. We could see that this year was quite different than before, because this year’s summer snow had melted leaving old ice exposed. Was this more evidence of global warming, or just seasonal temperature fluctuations?

After wandering around the ridge to find an easy way down, the traverse across the valley and creek was pleasant and scenic, and a short snack and rest gave us the energy to climb to the base of the snow and ice slope, arriving there at about mid-afternoon. The lower part of the slope was soft snow which became ice towards the top, and the icy section was probably about 70-80 m from its lower portion to its top at a rocky ridge. While the slope was not *all that* steep, it was intimidating to those unaccustomed to ice without the comforting grip of crampons as it had a long exposed run-out finishing in some rocks. For the next two hours or so, the (almost!) youngest and the oldest, Guy and PW, chopped a long set of steps in the ice with their ice axes, while the rest of the party searched their failing memories for how to tie Prussik knots, while wishing they had brought crampons and a longer rope! Our intrepid ice climbers tied PD’s two short emergency ropes together and set them as a freely hanging hand line anchored in the rocky ridge at the top of the slope and extending to about half way down the slope. Over the next hour or so our party of eight

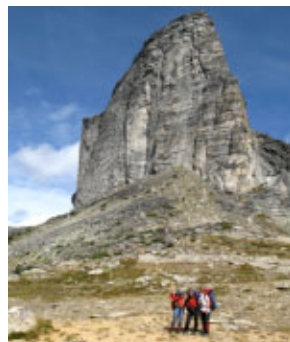


Cutting steps. Photo: B. Wood.

made their way gingerly up the icy steps, some folks being helped by PW who was up and down the slope like a yo-yoing mountain goat,



From top left clockwise - On Black Prince with Mt. Lucifer behind; Mt. Dag (left) and Bat's Wing (right) in evening light; last campsite by a lower Mulvey Lake; Gimli Pk.; campsite at NW end of Valhalla Lake; view of Devil's Range from the ridge south of Gwillim Ck. Photos: B. Wood.



giving encouragement and taking packs when needed. The first portion of the ice slope was well below the end of the hand line, and most folks were very thankful to arrive at the line and tie on their Prussik loops to continue on to the top and the relative security of the rocks there.

We were all on the ridge by early evening, probably about 6.30 pm, and it then got cool. I had a feeling that an “epic” was brewing, and that it might be a long day - or night! We then had views of the Mulvey Lakes which are located far below the ridge in a basin surrounded by impressive peaks which



somehow seemed more ominous in the lengthening shadows. We made our way wearily but carefully down a broad gulley, as it would be easy to miss a footing in the dusk. One by one we put on our headlights as we descended over a seemingly endless boulder field



which extended right to the shore of the lowest of the three larger lakes at about 2100 m. It was not



Left column - *Epilobium latifolium* in the Mulvey Basin (top); Lisa, Marilyn, Evelyn, and Guy on Mt. Midgard with Gimli behind (middle); a Mulvey Lake below Bat’s Wing (left) and Wolf’s Ears (right) (bottom).

Right column - upper Mulvey Lake below Mt. Dag (centre) (top); camp at a lower Mulvey Lake beneath Mt. Dag (middle); Mt. Gladshiem above upper Mulvey Lake. Photos: B. Wood.

encouraging to be boulder hopping in the dark along the edge of the lake where it seemed almost impossible to walk, never mind to pitch a tent. Suddenly, at about 8.30 pm, there was a call from the front of the party that they had found a small area of flat dry grass (and also sedges, according to PW, our resident biologist). We slowly realized that there was enough room to pitch all our tents, and thereby the potential epic was narrowly averted. After a hurried dinner, which was quite short for some who were too tired to cook something complicated, we crawled into our tents. Grateful to be lying in our sleeping bags instead of sitting up in some cold and windy bivvy, most of us realized that this day would last in our memories for a long time, as postulated in the “endangered epic” theory of the 1980’s.

Some of us were trying to squeeze a few more minutes of sleep on Friday morning when we were rudely awakened at about 7.30 am by the yelling and splashes of some keen swimmers! Wasn’t the previous day’s almost-epic enough to satisfy some folks? Eventually heat from the sun moved even the most reluctant sleeper, and soon we were all enjoying breakfast in some of the most impressive scenery in this part of the world. Looking across our lake in the slanting morning rays we had wonderful views of the impressive steep faces and ridges of Gimli Pk., the Wolf’s Ears and Mount Dag. The day was spent in many different ways. Some explored the lakes and scrambled up the nearby Midgard Pk., while others wandered down the Mulvey Basin to enjoy the wildflowers and examine the site of a now-removed cabin which had been built in 1969 by the KMC. Later in the day, some relaxed and read, while others climbed up to the ridge just west of Gimli Pk. ridge to “recce” and prepare the route out of the basin to ensure there would be no problems on the following day. To reward ourselves for the previous day’s efforts and small dinners, and to reduce the loads in our packs for the walk-out, we had snacked all day and now made large evening meals with negligible problems from bugs – I guess we had earned some peace from them. All things considered, it was a nice relaxing way to spend a day in the mountains.

Saturday promised to be another gorgeous day and it seemed a shame to be leaving the mountains in such conditions, but we all had commitments and

so started hiking out by about 8.30 am. It was quite a steep climb towards the exit ridge and soon we were at the base of another icy slope extending upwards to the final ridge. Luckily the second icy slope was shorter and shallower than the first icy slope of the other day, and the steps cut by PW and Guy the previous day were still intact. Thus we did not spend much time negotiating the second icy slope, and by 11 am we were snacking and basking in the sun on the opposite side of the exit ridge, and could look down towards the north fork of Bannock Burn. We traversed this ridge towards the base of the impressive south ridge of Gimli Pk. and met the first people we had seen since Wednesday. We were now on a well defined trail which was a welcome change from the rough country we had been travelling through for the last three days. The descent trail, which is about 3-4 km, wound its way down a scenic alpine ridge before entering the forests through which the trail continued until we reached the parked cars at the Gimli Pk. parking area. After removing the anti-porcupine chicken wire we squeezed into the two trucks and headed down to the Forest Service Recreation Site at the Upper Little Slokan Lake. Here, some of the party swam while others drove up the Hoder Creek road to collect the vehicles left at the start. Back in South Slokan there was even time for a clean-up before a farewell restaurant dinner to celebrate a safe return, good views due to a sky washed of forest fire smoke by the rain in the first few days, and the survival of PP’s boot heel through all that rough country.

THE SEVEN PASS TRAVERSE IN JASPER NATIONAL PARK, 10-19 August, 2008

By Karl Ricker

Introduction

For years I have heard accounts of a fabulous alpine trek in Jasper National Park. The route crosses seven or eight passes, and traverses through some eye-popping scenery. A Jasper visit by the BCMC was long-overdue and what would be better to undertake the trek in the year of the park’s 100th anniversary year – or so I thought. The year 2007 was their centenary, which came to light at the conclusion of the trip. The route, all on trails of the pack train vintage, lies east of and parallel to the

Icefields-Parkway Highway and actually has its south trailhead inside Banff National Park near Parker Ridge. The trip was belatedly scheduled for August 1-10, 2008, but did not move out until August 10th because of scheduling hang-ups with some participants and with the park authorities issuing the trail-use permits. The delay fortuitously put us into a good weather window that followed an early August snow storm, which helped to reduce the annoyance of mosquitoes. Most of this traverse is normally done in August. Lingering winter snow blocks portions of the trail in July and by early September new snowfall and cold night temperatures often occur.

As many are aware, National Parks now schedule overnight use of their trail systems, and tents are to be pitched in their designated campsites, regardless of the logic of where trekkers would want to camp. The number of tents per night at any site is strictly regulated at the booking desk and varies from 3 to 10 on the Seven Pass route. The sites on the north end, near Jasper, are booked up months in advance and a reservation on a weekend is next to impossible in the prime month. Edmontonians on weekend trips besiege the booking desk long before any outsiders have their summer plans firmed up. In 2008, tent site fees were \$9.70/night/person and there was a \$15 group fee/trip as well. It doesn't stop there. There was also a park entrance fee for the vehicle and occupants: \$57 for a car with senior, and it went up from there. Obviously, if the trek experiences a week of bad weather it is a financial bust! For our endeavour the problem was to find a date where the initial campsites to be used were not already taken up. The only opening was Sunday night, the 10th, after weekend traffic was on its way homeward, but only from the south trail head near Parker Ridge in Banff National Park, and this was negotiated in early June!

Yet in early June the participants were in flux; the maximum of ten per party was wavering and two had to drop out when the Jasper Park office had to have committed names and fees paid. The group of 8 who paid up, in chronologic age order were: Bert Parke (Logan Lake), Norm Hansen (Merritt), the writer (Whistler), Fred Douglas and Alice Purdey (Burnaby), Geoff Mumford (Nanaimo), Holly Colquhoun (Summerland) and Hart Kemp (Vancouver) - average age 64.5!

The logistics of planting vehicles at both ends of the route was complicated by leaving another one at Maligne Lake where Holly would have to forsake the last one third of the trek because of work commitments. So, I followed Holly to Maligne and then the two of us back-tracked to Jasper where Geoff met us on Sunday morning in order to leave my car at the north trailhead nearby Edith Lake. Then the three of us motored south to the Nigel Creek trailhead at Parker Ridge, arriving well ahead of the others coming from the south. The situation became more complicated when the toll attendant tried to charge Geoff two extra entry fees at the Icefield-Parkway toll booth. He could not fathom that we were leaving vehicles behind us and would be hiking to retrieve them nine days later.

This traverse is broken up into three sections in the Trail Guide of The Canadian Rockies, because each has its own entrance and exit from the blacktop. Our traverse began in the South Section, known as Jonas Pass in the guidebook, which has its trailhead in Banff National Park. We were unable to initiate a start on the north section, the most popular Skyline Trail, because campsites were fully booked. As it turned out, the south approach was better because it avoided long and tedious ascents that were more easily descended on all sections of the route. However, the Jonas Pass section shared a rival trek which can plug up the first three campsites: Boulder, Four Point, and Jonas Cutoff. The Middle Section – Maligne Pass, is by far the least travelled, but offers the best mountaineering opportunities with the drawback that the campsites are far removed from the pass. Parks are extremely protective of the vast alpine areas of Jonas, neighbouring Pobotkan, and Maligne Passes and will not permit camping on them, even if the site may be nothing more than a sheet of rubble. Their efforts to protect the dwindling numbers of Mountain caribou is the main reason for this closure and there are signs everywhere that indicate the range and sensitivities of these ungulates. For the Skyline Trail, apparently the caribou are not the issue – three campsites there are at or above tree line, although horses are not allowed on the trail. According to maps and the guidebook, the highest point on the route is "The Notch", a pass on the Skyline Trail with an advertised elevation of 2510 m. However, two members of our party brought map tracking GPS units that had

excellent multi-satellite reception on the days of reckoning. They read “The Notch” at 2496 m, whereas Jonas Shoulder (pass) on the Jonas Pass section lay at 2508 m [and not 2440 (guide) or 2450 (posted)].

Section 1 (South): Nigel Pass Trailhead – Jonas Pass – Pobotkan Creek

Finally, after delays and timetable adjustments, our trek was about to begin. The Nigel Pass trailhead parking area was not obvious for those of us travelling south from Jasper. Farther down the road from the Parker Ridge pull-out than what we were led to believe, it would be a very difficult find in darkness. Several cars were already parked in the lot, but none from our gang. Were the campsites already filled, or was there a weekend crowd on their way out? Clouds around us were rising now and then to reveal an overnight snowfall down to tree line. The cold, stormy early August weather was still around! Our wayward gang appeared one vehicle at a time along with other backpackers. It was almost noon before packs with ten days’ food aboard were hoisted, then after a mandatory group photo, we were off, crossing Nigel Creek on a footbridge, and into mixed forest and meadows. Misty weather, coupled with some showers finally changed to snow pellet flurries just below Nigel pass, our first pass of seven to cross. Awesome limestone/dolomite slopes and faces were ahead and to our right (east) side. Less than 50 m below the pass the Brazeau River flowed parallel to the ridge crest, and myriad stepping stones were used to avoid fording it, though Norm waded through anyhow with his high-tech, shin-high, outdoorsmen’s boots. Unnamed peaks rising to about 3000 m on both sides of the pass would have been worthy objectives if we had left the car park at 7 a.m. Once across the river the trail climbed above pass level on a bouldery side-hill traverse before descending to the meadows of the floodplain to a bridge crossing over the channel, there constricted into a narrow gorge. The large party ahead of us dropped their packs at Boulder Camp – they were going to White Goat Wilderness outside the national parks.

A long sinuous bridge avoided another potential ford on nearby Boulder Creek, and it was back into an open forest for the remaining 3 km hike to our “appointed” Four Point Campground, located at the

junction of Brazeau River with Four Point Creek. Our first initiation with a back country campsite began here: numbered tent platforms on concrete-hard dirt mounds, picnic tables far removed from the tent sites for questionable convenience, fireplaces, cables for high rigging your packs overnight from molesting bears and large rodents (but not mice!) and located well beyond the tables, and a unique outdoor solid plastic biffy which attracts gnawing animals. All eight tent sites, four assigned to us, were soon filled with, oops, one tent too many. A party with an ill member elected not to move on that day. The ridiculousness of the campground bookings was then becoming apparent, and at this site there was room for several dozen tents over and above the eight numbered sites. Norm emphasized the point by setting up his bivy shelter on nearby soft mossy ground and did so every night thereafter.

Day two of the trek began with a continuation of the overnight rain and again to a new snowline that dropped down to alpine tree level. This was to be reputedly the longest distance one day hike of the trip – 20.1 km according to the guide or 22.7 km on the glossy, shaded-relief, contoured Gem Trek maps. So wet or dry, we had to move up Four Point Valley in initial open forest cover. It was wet, increasingly so in the sub-alpine shrub zone where bushes crowd the narrow trail – a legacy of the days when horseback parties toured the uplands of the Rockies. Ahead lay a misty alpine plain, though drier at leg level. Long-striding Norm in his super boots was the first to reach the Jonas Pass cairn, adorned with an old set of weather-bleached caribou antlers. Clouds began to lift during a cool lunch stop there. To the west an endless series of steep walled cirques hinted to serious mountaineering required to reach any of the multitude of nameless summits, the highest at 3019 m. Our trip was gearless for serious climbing – the task ahead was the long traversing ascent to awkwardly named “Jonas Shoulder”, actually a ridge to the east of the pass running SE-NW from the Brazeau River 28 km plus northward to the Pobotkan Creek Warden’s Station on the Icefields-Parkway Highway. At the base of the ridge a grove of krummholz provided shelter from the biting wind. The sun appeared, and refuelled, it was a spirited slog up the ever-steepening trail to the pass, our third, with a sign posted 2450 m scree



Boulder Ck. bridge. Photo: A. Purdey.



Karl, Fred, and Alice at Jonas Pass. Photo: A. Purdey collection.



In the Brazeau River valley. Photo: G. Mumford.



The trail. Photo: A. Purdey.



Karl in the Pobotkin Ck. valley. Photo: G. Mumford.



Alpine flowers en route. Photo: A. Purdey.



Heading up to Pobotkin Pass. Photo: G. Mumford.

elevation. Our two GPS units didn't buy it, and 400 readings later (averaged) the result was 2508, Norm's reading slightly higher than Fred's. With a felt-tipped magic marker, the sign was corrected. Sh-sh, a fineable misdemeanour. Descent from the

scree on the north side of the pass led to a soggy upland meadow in sunshine, no less, and stunning views of the ridge beyond: "Le Grand Brazeau" with its 3233 m high Pobotkan Peak. Jonas Cutoff Campsite was soon reached, with one solo pot-smoking hiker already there. We took over the remaining numbered sites, with Norm and Hart opting for softer heather spots nearby. According to the GPS men, the day's walking amounted to only 17.0 km, and not the 20+ that was advertised.

Day three on the trail was to be a short one, because the booking clerk said that all campsites further along the trail were filled. For this segment of the route there is no Gem Trek Map coverage and the federal 1:50,000 scale maps loaded into the GPS units were not at all helpful with trail and campsite locations. The new 1:200,000 Jasper park map was our best guide, other than the notes in the Guidebook which Alice carefully read, and the rest of us ignored! As it was a short day, and the sun was out, the ladies declared a dry-out of two days worth of soggy gear before packing up. It took awhile, no complaints though, and by late morning the campsite was vacated using a bypass trail to a bridge crossing on Pobotkan Creek. With time to kill, five of us dropped our packs for a side trip to nearby Pobotkan Pass. Hart elected to rest a sore ankle and guard the packs, but Alice, with an aching hip, and Fred, decided to move on slowly. Pobotkan Pass is definitely a scenic highlight, and several parties were doing the circuit of Jonas-Pobotkan passes by way of descending the Brazeau River to a Brazeau Lake tributary and then ascending the John-John Creek trailhead to reach Pobotkan Pass. From this pass, however, the descent into John-John Valley, with mighty Flat Ridge as a backdrop, appears to be a "Black Hole".

Returning to the bridge, and Hart patiently waiting, the descent of Pobotkan Creek valley began in warm afternoon sun. Presently, two cheerful elderly ladies were encountered, remarking on the well built trail in the lower valley, but the last two hours had been on a much narrower root-tripping path. Soon after, the obvious pathway led us to the flood plain of Pobotkan Creek and its five fords, some of which had to be waded, boots off, except Norm. Fortunately, it was warm and the nonsense was tolerated, but

why had the ladies not mentioned it? After ascending the river bank for a much needed rest, a short stroll led to a trail junction with sign: horses to the right, hikers to the left! We had been sucked onto the horse trail(!), and not so marked on the upstream end. Alice, however, who had digested the guidebook notes, managed to persuade Fred to leave the horse route in time to find the disguised hiker's route. Yes, down-valley from this junction the trail improved markedly to a rutless 2 metre wide swath, soon reaching the Waterfall Warden Station. Not to be too confused, the station is so named because of a picturesque waterfall entering Pobotkan Valley on a tributary to the west in plain view of the cabin. Similarly named Waterfall Campground, however, and located another 1.8 km down-valley is so named because Pobotkan Creek tumbles through a picturesque stony cataract at that site. There we caught Fred and Alice about to set up tents for the night. The campground was otherwise empty. Around the campfire that evening the highlights of the day were discussed. The classic remarks came from this exchange, after discussing the multi-ford crossings and how Alice (and Fred) managed to avoid them: Bert said, "When we met up with those old ladies, they did not mention anything about crossing the river". Holly retorted, "Bert, you are older than those ladies!!". Great guffaws erupted.

Day four was to be much longer, featuring the crossover of Maligne Pass on the next section of the trip, but it began with the continuation of the descent of Pobotkan Valley to the trail junction located 6 km from the highway. Along the way, an unknown (to us) and empty campsite without a name was encountered, followed shortly thereafter by a larger and also empty campsite at the junction. The permit rangers at Jasper inferred that neither were present! We could have easily hiked the extra 10-11 km the previous day to reach either. This would have given us valuable rambling time on the next day at the pass. At the junction, however, Hart decided that his weakened ankles were too sore to continue on the trek, opting to finish that day by hiking out to the highway and then hitchhiking back to Jasper. So, we were down to seven, with a new elevated average age of 66.9, and so began the ascent to Maligne Pass.

Section 2 (Middle): Maligne Pass, Valley and Lake

It was midmorning on day four; a Gem Trek Map indicated a 5 km ascent to the Avalanche Campground on a trail that crossed Poligne Creek six times, all on foot bridges. It was about a 300 m ascent, not at all a sweat, and surprisingly the campsite appeared at 3.7 km, and there we took a lunch break. It was an attractive site at tree line, but with only 3 terribly constructed tent pads, and not in use. Two tents already there had wisely been set up on softer ground. Our permit read that we were to camp here, but civil disobedience reigned as the day was early. Hoisting our packs it was a very pleasant ramble up to the pass where a cairn was reconstructed on the rocky outcrop overlooking a small lake with two outlets – one draining south-easterly into Poligne Creek and the other north-westward into the Maligne River. Several peaks on Endless Chain Ridge to the west had easy routes, as did Replica Peak (2793 m) immediately above us on the east. The latter could have been quite doable if we had camped at or near Pobotkan Junction. Reluctantly, this beautiful oasis had to be left for another day.

The map (but not the guide) indicated that Mary Vaux Campground should be the new day's objective located on the forested floor of Maligne Valley, supposedly 3.4 km away on the west bank. Gem Trek was in error. About 2.4 km from the pass the trail crossed to the east (right) side and another 2 km of downstream hoofing through many very fresh animal tracks led to mosquito-laden Mary Vaux and its three designated and rarely used campsites. Along the way, Norm spotted one large caribou hoof track with a large equally fresh wolf track right on it. No wonder the caribou herd is in severe jeopardy! The descent to the campsite featured outstanding views of Mt. Mary Vaux (3200 m), named after an



At Maligne Pass. Photo: G. Mumford.



Porcupine, Franklin Grouse, and Rocky Mountain sheep seen en route. Photos: A. Purdey.

American who measured glaciers at Rogers Pass at the turn of the 20th century. At the campsite, however, the down-valley views to Llysfran Peak (3140 m) and connecting ridge to Mt. Unwin (3300 m) gave us an outstanding perspective horizon. A



Descending from Maligne Pass. Photo: G. Mumford.

big smoky fire was used to drive off the mosquitoes and to highlight the evening discussions.

Day five, to come, raised all sorts of dialogue, and angst. It looked like one hell-of-a-long ramble down a forested valley, providing little in scenic enjoyment. Some had no desire to go the advertised 24.5 km to Trapper Camp located at the valley exit to Maligne Lake. The discussion jockeyed between the permit-designated Mary Schäffer campsite at a too short 10-11 km away or to the crossing of the Maligne about 4 km farther downstream. Trail condition on day five was the usual horse hoof rut, barely boot width wide, and usually shin deep and definitely not easy to look around while hiking as Holly found when she tripped and fell off the track. Soon Old Horse Camp was reached, but definitely not used yet that season; it would have been a much better site for us (note: it is also marked incorrectly on the west side of the river on the map). Continuing on the east side of the valley, several wide open zones of “buck-brush” were traversed, and all too soon, even before lunch, the Schäffer Camp was reached. Two younger ladies had just departed, heading to Maligne Pass – the only overnight hikers we encountered between there and Maligne Lake. So, the early arrival there ruled out an overnight stop, and consensus refocused on more civil disobedience to move on to either Maligne river crossing, or to any convenient spot thereafter – more civil disobedience in the offing, not using a designed campsite at all!

More open buck brushy meadows gave us good views of peaks to the east side of Maligne Lake while hiking to the bridge, where a very attractive old campsite was found at river’s edge. It was very tempting to stop there, but it was only early afternoon. The vote was to move on, and ascend the west bank

which was not as taxing as it appeared on the map. Farther along, a creek crossing (ford) did not provide the expected nice campsite. To everyone’s surprise, after more easy hiking, an empty Trapper Campsite (not to be used for our permit) was reached mid-afternoon, before expectations, to round out what actually turned out to be only 18.9 km of travel for the entire day, and not the 24.5 indicated! Moreover, it had been pleasant hiking, though it would not have been, if it had been a wet day.

Day six now appeared to be a lax one but it began with hiccups. Norm awoke from his usual mossy bivy site and could not find his camera which he set on the ground beside his GPS unit. Kibitzers suggested it was already in his pack, hanging on a nearby tree, or left at the campfire site by the picnic tables, but no luck. The blame then fell to a hungry bear or pack (wood) rat. Bushes around the site were scoured – no bear poo anywhere, and no sign of rat chewings. Satisfied that all was lost, or that it was in someone else’s pack, departure was again delayed. There weren’t enough satellites for GPS reception and with growing impatience, the crew departed in pairs with Norm’s unit finally receiving shaky reception – only to discover some signals were rogue, putting his reception signal on the opposite side of Maligne Lake! And to this point on the trip we had a perfect track plotted on the unit’s in-board map! Soon the trail widened through pot-holed terrain (kettles), leading to Moose Lake junction, where juxtaposed trail signs provided two quite different distances to Maligne Pass (33 and 49 km!). Neither were close to correct; about 28 km was our measurement. Suddenly, we were in the zone of day hikers and an ever-broadening trail ended at Holly’s car in the parking lot. Beer in her car cooler was still in chilled phase! The dozen were quickly slaked down before bidding this one tough lady goodbye, as she had to hurry back to Summerland for a teaching workshop in their school district. Shouldering the packs for Stage 3, and a few hours before predicted departure, we were then 6, average age increasing to 68.5. If two more were to leave us, the average would be above 70!

Section 3: The Skyline Trail – Maligne Lake to Edith Lake Trailhead

Compared to Maligne Pass and its lack of traffic, this section almost required a highway patrol. There

were many backpack groups of 2 to 10 in party size, one day trail runners everywhere, and large power-walking groups, plus trail riders in Curator Basin where horse traffic is allowed on the trail in order to reach Watchtower Basin from Wabasso Lake (Icefields Parkway). It is the proverbial zoo, especially on weekends when Edmontonians blitz the area. This section also has the highest sustained alpine traversing terrain, well over 30 km, which is why it is so popular. However, there are strategic logistics in play. It is much easier to begin this section from the south end at Maligne Lake and thus avoid the boring and monotonous 8+ km uphill grind (900+ m) on an old fire road to Signal Mtn. from the north end.

We were in the Friday afternoon traffic on our way to the designated Evelyn Creek campground located at the base of the first significant hill climb for this route. The trail was wide, well-maintained, and in forest with little underbrush. Now fully acclimatized, the campsite was reached early in the afternoon; and it was still empty. More civil disobedience – should we move on to the next one at tree line? Alice nixed it. Geoff could not stand the afternoon of idleness and departed on a side trail to the Bald Hills Lookout for a view of Maligne Lake. The rest of us slowly washed off six days' sweat and dirt in the creek and nursed other minor repairs. Meanwhile, hoards of day hikers and overnights were passing by. The latter were overnights at the Snowbowl Campsite, the largest on the entire route and the only one above tree line in the alpine tundra zone. That was one campground we could not obtain a permit to use, nor the smaller one before it, Little Shovel, located at just below tree line. The evening routine had to change on the Skyline as campfires were verboten; otherwise the woods would be massacred!

Day seven dawned clear and warm. Quickly 14 switchbacks were ascended to Little Shovel Campground. Apparently, the camp was only half-filled according to those still there, despite being told in June that it was booked up. Yes, by now we were smelling serious flaws in Parks Canada's booking system. Shortly after, Little Shovel Pass, the first pass of 3 or 4 on this section, was reached. Packs were dropped instantly to bag a peak beside it, Sunset Peak, except for Bert who elected to keep plugging at his pace for the rest of his day to Big Shovel Pass. The ascent to the peak provided

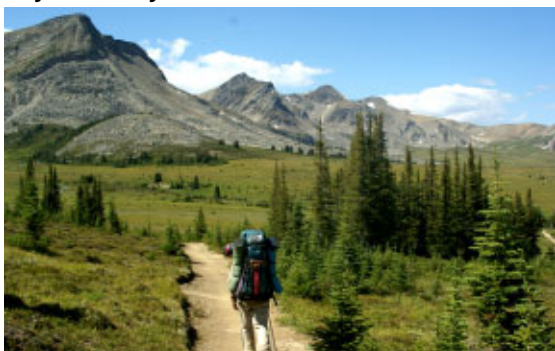
outstanding views of rock glaciers which are the stunning and ubiquitous feature on this section of the trek. By now it was a seriously warm day with the mercury in the alpine heading to 30°C. Norm brought only one pair of pants – warm water/wind proof – and had to resort to climbing Sunset in his undies and continuing in that exposed state for the remainder of the day.

Descending quickly, the packs were moved ahead to the now emptied Snow Bowl Camp, the former location of a ski cabin shown on old park maps. In the labyrinth of campsites Alice found the biffy a challenge to locate. The afternoon was dedicated to the long and hot ascent to the stony barrens of Big Shovel Pass, situated above the final few hundred metres of alpine tundra vegetation. The thermometers now registered 30°C and up. A group of four ahead of us was stalled at the pass, one suffering from heat stroke. Her pack was emptied, divided among the eight of us, and the entourage descended Curator Basin to the campsite at tree line. Bert, already there, intercepted the lass and quickly plunged her head in a nearby pool, bringing surprisingly quick results – alive! Just below the camp was the outfitter's rather modest lodge and corral. An after-dinner visit to the lodge was worthwhile. Customers have to bring their own spirits, and many actually hike to the lodge using the horses for conveyancing their gear. One gentleman, so impressed by our undertaking, immediately re-liberated his beer to us. The wranglers at the camp noted that we were, as far as he was aware, the first party to do all three sections that year, and it was not often done in the past. There had been no horse parties, as we expected, and only one trip by wardens was carried out, on horse, at the start of the season. For the Skyline Section they had had only one visit by the Park's Warden Service. Yes, it's now the era of armchair wardening, with the computer, and the coffee mug as the accompanying protective side-arm!

Another clear sky for **day eight**; a steep grungy climb through rubble in Curator Basin went past its desolate lake shores and lead to the various scree trails used to skirt around the cornice that guards their exit into "The Notch". A slightly inflated posted elevation read 2500 m, or 10 metres less than that on the map and guidebook. It was another warm day, packs off, and all dashed to the nearby unnamed



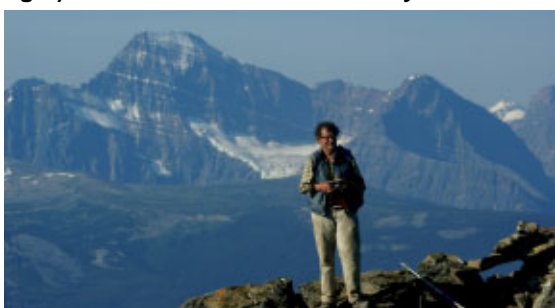
Day 5 scenery. Photo: G. Mumford.



Heading through The Snowbowl. Photo: G. Mumford.



Norm, Alice, Karl, Bert, Fred, and Geoff (left to right) at The Notch. Photo: A. Purdey.



Approaching The Notch. Photo: A. Purdey.



Fred and Alice on an unnamed peak with The Watchtower behind. Photo: A. Purdey collection.



Norm and Geoff (above) and Karl (left) ridge walking with Mt. Edith Cavell behind. Photos: A. Purdey (above) and G. Mumford (left).

summit with a slightly precarious scramble to its highest pinnacle. Wow – a terrific view of The Watchtower (2791 m), which is a steep-sided and ragged-ridged adorned hunk of rock, and views of more spectacular rock glaciers between it and us. Smoke haze lying beyond in all directions, however, blurred out the view of the tall peaks although some could still be identified. We quickly bounced downslope to the pass, and then headed off on the true “skyline” portion of the trail. It stayed on or near the ridge crest, passing over the summit of Amber Mtn. (2565 m). This segment was about 4 km in length, followed by a switchbacked descent to an unnamed lake basin, east of Tekarra Mtn. The trail was routed downslope beside, rather than over, a rock glacier. Reaching the glacier toe, a stream provided our gang with their first sip ever of rock glacier melt water – tasty, with a zip. From there, about 3 km of alpine meadow strolling past the picturesque lake, and the imposing southeast buttress of Tekarra Mtn. (2693 m), ended at Tekarra Campground. The permit officialdom said it was full for the night (a Sunday), and we would have to move to the next one, Signal, roughly 6 km beyond. There were absolutely no backpackers behind us and Tekarra was completely empty, except for us chewing on a mid-afternoon lunch. More civil disobedience or did we move on? Not knowing what traffic might be coming up from Jasper in the late afternoon was the problem. Reluctantly we decided to obey, but should have stayed there.

Almost 3 km of uphill hiking on a good trail was needed to vacate the basin. Then it leveled for a while in rolling alpine tundra, before descending gradually as a decidedly worse trail, in need of urgent maintenance, to reach the fire road. Joggers passed us despite our gait at full speed. Signal Campsite as soon as possible was the mantra of all and camp was set up just as the winds of the first thunderstorm passed by. Water supply at Signal was a problem – a dingy small creek with questionable quality had to be a caution flag. Other than us, the campsite was empty and there were no parties going up the trail to Tekarra! After dinner Fred sprinted to the top of Signal Mtn. (2311 m) to have a look at the correct Tekarra Lake (as on maps). Tekarra Campsite and basin with lake were actually in a yet unnamed basin surrounded by Excelsior, Centre, Amber and Tekarra Mtns. East of the latter lay SW-flowing Tekarra Creek.



Two views of Tekarra Mtn. Photos: G. Mumford (above) and A. Purdey (left).

Our final day, **number nine**, was windy with racing high clouds indicative of weather change. Packing up, we dropped out of the high

country on the fire road, grown in with alders in some sections, at a steady GPS rate of 4.9 km/hr. My car at the small parking lot/trailhead was still intact – no vandalism or flat tires. Fred and Bert were whisked into town to drink coffee for four hours and I then returned to pick up all six packs and the 3 owners of vehicles parked at Nigel Creek. On the way and alongside the Athabasca River, we marvelled at its bank's full discharge, in response to the unusually warm weather of the last few days. Slowly, the magnitude of our journey was revealed. The ridges on the east side of the road seemed to be endless, providing a sobering view of how far we had trekked over the last nine days. Passing the Athabasca Glacier and the myriad tourists, and then over Sunwapta Pass, the other three vehicles were found intact as well at Nigel Creek. Only Alice had to drive north to pick up the men; Norm, Geoff and I went southward to Saskatchewan Crossing. There at the pub we hoisted the beers: it was quite a journey, and for Norm, his trip of a lifetime, despite the loss of his camera!

Suggestions for future treks and climbing trips

The guidebook by Patton and Robinson, *The Canadian Rockies Trail Guide*, is an excellent navigation primer; however, our copy (1978 edition) was out of date on wilderness campground additions and on status of stream crossings. In order to read the details of the enclosed account, refer to maps within this book. We add the following additional comments.

1. Buy Gem Trek 1:100,000 scale maps for the trip. Although there are minor errors with distances, some metric conversions, and trail locations, the biggest drawback is the absence of map coverage for the north half of the Jonas Pass (south) Section. Hence, some federal 1:50,000 coverage will also have to be obtained.
2. There are several possible trips other than the lengthy three section trek, or a section only trek. They are as follows:
 - Nigel Pass – Brazeau River and Lake – John John Creek – Jonas Shoulder – Jonas Pass and back to Nigel Pass. It is a popular circuit. There are also 4 or 5 summits with climbing potential within the circuit to extend the trip to a full week if desired.
 - A climbing camp based at Jonas Cutoff campsite. This is also in the South Section, one and a half to two hiking days required to reach it, allowing four days of peak bagging in a week-long trip, and three days' driving time to and return from our corner of the Province. The tougher ascents appear on the west side of Jonas Pass, making for a very long day from camp unless an overnight bivy is used. The prime objective, however, is Pobotkan Mtn., north of the campsite, and several unnamed summits nearby.
 - A climbing camp can be based at Avalanche campsite, a half-day hike from the highway (at the Pobotkan Creek Warden Strn.), to tackle many summits of the Endless Chain Ridge at Maligne Pass. A fly camp at Mary Vaux campsite would be a 2-3 day trip to tackle Mt. Mary Vaux.
 - Use Tekarra, Curator or Watchtower Campsites on the Skyline Trail for several easy climbs and at least one difficult climb. All sites are reachable in one long day,

although the aesthetic approach to the last two is a two-day ramble from Maligne Lake.

3. Wilderness campsite bookings must be done in late spring, the names of all participants firmed up when doing it. Beginning the trip on a Friday or Saturday will be difficult. The prime campsites: Four point and Boulder (South Section), Avalanche (Middle Section), and Snowbowl-Tekarra-Signal (Skyline Section) are sought by everyone, with weekender Albertans having a distinct advantage. The prime season is mid-July to Labour Day weekend; the Skyline Trail is not easily used in early summer due to lingering winter/spring snow cover.
4. For the long trek, campsites not noted above are usually empty, despite what the booking desk may imply. Take what they assign but ignore it once on the trail. There are a lot of no-shows even at the prime sites. However, do not set up camp in an alpine area unless it is a designated site. There are unknown eyes watching, despite the lack of patrolling wardens.



Alice and Fred at the end (northern). Photo: A. Purdey collection.

Natural history notes

Casual observations were carried out daily on the flora and fauna by several participants, with the added bonus of a wise professional forester in our group. Geological observation was reduced to noting large and spectacular geomorphic features with only scant attention paid to rock types and structure of the strata. The pace of the trip did not provide the time required to study any natural feature definitively.

Geological Observations

The Jonas Pass (South) Section is underlain by a bold limestone and dolomite series of strata of early

Palaeozoic age. It is a continuation of the spectacular formation exposed along the highway between Sunwapta Pass and Saskatchewan Crossing on the east side of the Icefields Parkway. Strata are aligned SE-NW usually dipping steeply to the southwest, brought on by thrust faulting. Underlying the valley of Pobotkan Creek, and continuing throughout the Maligne Section of the trek, older Late Proterozoic (Hadryian) strata of the Miette Group are composed of conglomerate, colourful quartzites and shale, thrust up and upon another panel of the younger limestone-dolomites, glaringly exposed east of and above the Maligne River Valley (Elizabeth and Le Grand Brazeau Ranges). In the Skyline Section, thrust faulted panels of the Miette Group are exposed in spectacular escarpments up to summits. There, these strata are no longer hidden in recessive valley settings, as in the sections of the trek to the south.

Glaciers in this part of Jasper Park are small, and confined mainly to the northeast-oriented cirques, especially at Jonas Pass, and more reduced at Maligne Pass along the Endless Chain Ridge. In the place of glaciers (of ice and snow) there were increasing numbers and sizes of rock glaciers as we trekked northward. Spectacular and dominant, the Skyline Section exhibited these features of periglacial (permafrost) origin in a great display. Not only is this region higher, drier and colder, but the requisite blocky, non-friable, rocks were present everywhere making rock piles porous, facilitating easy moisture penetration and freezing at the permafrost plane, generating the requisite



**Karl and Fred inspecting rocks at Maligne Pass.
Photo: A. Purdey.**

conditions for rock glacier development. During the several ice ages of the last few hundred thousand years, colossal cirques were scoured out during the wax and wane of Cordilleran Ice Sheets. The movements of these ice sheets were directionally controlled by the orientation of the up thrust ridges, yielding smooth streamlined valley floor topography, so well displayed at Jonas and Maligne Passes. Disintegration of the last ice sheet about 12,000 years ago near Moose Lake (Trapper Camp to Maligne Lake) and Mona-Lorraine Lakes (Maligne Lake to Evelyn Creek Camp) was shown by numerous enclosed basins along the trails in these areas. The basins (kettles) are developed by the meltout of ice blocks buried in gravelly glacial debris. Smaller features noted were solifluction lobes on all sloping alplands, occurring as especially elongated steps to the southeast of the Signal campsite. Barren stony slopes showed some development of sorted stripes; there were frost mounds in some broad and shallow depressions. An old and very visible landslide (or slump) on the northeast facing slope of Pobotkan Pass had mature trees on its debris zone. The obviously old failure appears to be in shaley strata.

Botanical Notes

Prime, alpine floral season was with us, but our detailed flower guides were left at home. A plasticized "Flower Twitcher" guide (one sheet) was brought to save weight but it didn't display all species seen, so the ID's were reduced to generic level. About 50 genera of flowers were checked out plus a few shrubs and trees. Norm sliced a few cones to provide a positive ID on the spruce - Engelmann; the other conifers of note were subalpine fir and lodgepole pine. The prolific showy flowers were white camas (*Zigadenus elegans*), several species of *Arnica*, and larkspur (*Delphinium* spp.) in the lower Maligne Valley. On the barren upper slopes of Sunset Mtn. tiny forget-me-nots (*Myosotis* spp.) and tenacious *Crepis* were a very pleasant surprise. Both yellow and magenta paintbrush species were common; *Aster* and *Erigeron*, difficult genera to separate, were also abundant. Short and long-stemmed pussytoes, *Antennaria* spp., and *Dryas* were dominant throughout the drier alplands, countered by partridge foot (*Luetkea pectinata*) and grass-of-parnassus (*Parnassia fimbriata*) in the



Parnasia fimbriata in a moist area. Photo: A. Purdey.

wetter areas. In shallow marshy areas cottongrass (*Eriophorum*) was in full bloom and, of course, there was no shortage of fireweed; one is the low growing alpine species (*Epilobium latifolium*), often confused with the monkey flower (*Mimulus lewisii*) on wetter gravel habitats, and the other is chest-high *E. augustifolium* growing along valley bottom trails.

Animals

We were warned about grizzly bears and small herds of very wary and endangered caribou, but saw none, not even a deer, elk, moose or goat. The best to be mustered were their tracks, many in the Maligne Pass Section, except substitute numerous large wolf tracks in place of the bear. A lone black bear was seen near the highway. Smaller mammals seen: numerous pika in the alpine zones on rocks and turf terrain, several colonies of Hoary marmot (the largest at Curator Camp), Red squirrels in the forest, the odd unidentified chipmunk, many Columbian ground squirrels on turfy alpine terrain, and solitary marten and porcupine. Rocky Mountain Bighorn sheep in one herd of 40+ were seen in the upper Curator Basin and another group of seven on the desolate ridge crest of Amber Mtn. were the highlight of the trip, and the only ungulates actually seen.

A very large toad (*Bufo*) was on the trail in the lower Maligne Valley. There were no visible fish at the nearby bridge crossing.

The few bird sightings were far from inspirational, other than a tawny coloured hawk (*Buteo* sp.) at Curator Camp (Skyline Section) which escaped a positive ID. It was not a small falcon, accipiter, or eagle, but the colour confused the issue. The tawny brown was not typical of Buteo hawk species found in Canada. It was possibly an immature gyrfalcon which do wander south from the arctic into alpine areas. In the water were two each American dipper and Kingfisher sightings. Gray jays, though few throughout the trek, outnumbered the Clark's nutcracker seen only at the Maligne parking lot. Ravens seen at the latter were also at Signal Hill. Few mountain chickadees, red-breasted nuthatches, and juncos sporadically appeared. Solitary unidentified thrush, usually at tree line, were complemented by a few robins near trail end, along with our only flicker sighting (and no other woodpeckers anywhere). The only finch species seen were a pine grosbeak and a flock of unidentified crossbills in Curator Basin. A Franklin's grouse was blitzed with photos near the Moose Lake junction on the Trapper Campsite to Maligne Lake leg of the trip. The birding highlight had to be white-tailed ptarmigan just off the summit of Amber Mtn. and a pair of least sandpipers near the Tekarra campsite. It was generally the typical late summer lull for birds, but slow early morning bird walks could have produced a far better species list.

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GLACIER UPDATE – 2009 and 2010

By Karl Ricker

The summer of 2009 was a prolonged hot one. The toll on the health of the glaciers in Garibaldi Park was only too obvious – dusty dark glacier ice from terminus to headwall, gushing milky-coloured streams and rivers, and a sediment plume extending well seaward of Anvil Island in Howe Sound. In September the treks to Wedgemount and Overlord Glaciers were undertaken to measure up the demise.

The Wedgemount project was initiated by Bill Tupper and myself in 1973, with annual trips to Wedgemount Lake, with Bill's students and our friends to 1987, when ill health stopped Bill's annual pilgrimages. The writer and any interested friends continued the field work. Bill continued with the compilation and photo analysis to 2003, but died in 2005. In 2007 Bill's son, Robbie (a BCLS surveyor living at Vernon), decided to continue his father's project, and so the entourage to visit the lake and glacier again picked up much-needed field strength.

For 2009 there was a bonus. After a 22 year hiatus, the Survey Dept. of BCIT, upon Robbie's urging, decided to rejoin the fray with two instructors and two students appearing at the lake. Loaded with new high-tech, as well as glacier gear, they decided to do some on-ice measurements. While we made the routine measurements of the glacier's terminus, for what was obviously a lot of recession, the BCIT team traversed the mid-axis of the glacier from snout to the lower ice fall, recording a continuous surface elevation. Their full report on the work is still in preparation but they released a verbal summary to Robbie this spring.

As for the survey of Overlord Glacier, carried out alone by the writer, the usual measure from baseline cairns to glacier terminus was carried out, supplemented by photography from the two camera stations on the crest of the left lateral moraine (below the BCMC hut). Bill's interest in the Overlord project was office-bound from the outset – photogrammetric measurement to establish the exact position of its terminus in 1986 when field work began.

Glacier recession of the terminus of each glacier for the period of September, 2008 to September, 2009 and cumulative for ca. 1900 to September, 2009 respectively is as follows:

- Wedgemount Glacier: (–) 28.4 m, (–) 1454.6 m
- Overlord glacier: (–) 20.2 m, (–) 1128.8 m

Comparison of the surface profile of Wedgemount, as measured in September, 2009, to the surface in 1973 shows an average 40 m of surface downwasting (net ablation), between the base of the icefall and the 1973 terminus. Obviously it is much less than 40 m near the ice fall, and much more near the terminus. On the whole, this zone on the glacier was downwasting at about 1.1 m per year, although there is considerable variation from year-to-year, which will be spelled out in BCIT's final report. Historically, however, downwasting and terminus recession was higher in the 1930s and 1940s. So, this study does not reveal a steady rate of degradation due to global warming on our glaciers and, who knows, another slow-down could re-occur any time sooner or later. Alarmists... cool it please!

2010 update

- Wedgemount Glacier: (–) 6.2 m
- Overlord glacier: (–) 2.5 m

On Sept. 7 the snout of the Overlord Glacier closest to the cabin revealed a half-metre advance from last year's position. Eureka! "Global warming arrested!" we said in jest. The other snout, however, brought on reality - a 2.5 metre recession from last year's position. Yet the miniscule amount was encouraging, especially when the two results were combined to yield a scant 1.0 metres of recession.

So what brought on the 20-fold reduction from last year's result? Certainly the cold spring and cold early summer helped; the snowpack was very slow to melt away. And the distance between the moraines pushed up by the ice movement to the present ice tongues is short, corroborating the hypothesis.

However, there are a few other factors. Weighing most on our mind is the century-ending climax winter of 1998-99 - a record-buster for snowfall. Taking 11 years for that record pack to generate a surge of ice from accumulation zones to glacier terminus is about the right time interval for a glacier of Overlord's dimensions.

But why did one snout advance and the other not? The other factor is the blanket of rock debris on the ice surface, which acts as an insulator, blocking the penetration of atmospheric heat. The advancing snout is covered with rocky debris whereas the recessed snout is of clean ice and exposed to solar rays. Thus, a quirk of nature (rockfall onto the glacier) likely prevented a 2.5 metre retreat of that snout.

On the following wet and snowy weekend (Sept. 11-12), the annual Wedgemount Glacier Survey was carried out with the Geomatics Division of the B.C. Institute of Technology joining in. Recession of the glacier in the up-valley direction from the lakeshore continues, 6.2 metres since the 2009 survey, though significantly less than the 28.4 metre recession recorded between 2008 and 2009. The small reduction is encouraging, but other features on the ice surface near and at its margins indicate significant recession in

forthcoming years. A rock ridge is emerging through the ice on its left side, which is reducing the width of the glacier. On the right side a large ice cave has opened up on the ice margin, floored by a pond. Collapse of the ice roof of the cave will generate significant change in the outline of the terminus. How much will the cave continue to enlarge before this epic event takes place?

On the flipside there is a scheduled La Niña year in the Pacific oceanic circulation. A cold winter is on the books. Will it drag on into the spring to provide another assist to reduced glacier recession?

We will let you know a year from now.

Surveys this year were assisted by Doug Wylie (for Overlord), Rob Tupper (the son of the now deceased founder of the Wedgemount project, beginning in 1973), Dave and Graham Lyon (father and son of Don Lyon, who also assisted with the first few years of surveys at Wedgemount).



Wedge Mtn. with the Wedgemount Glacier in its 1932 splendour. Photo: P.L. Tait, BCMC archives.



