



AAC Publications

Stikine Icefield, Peak 7,031', Deepwater Horizon.

Alaska, Coast Mountains

During the summer of 2011, Mike Miller, Ben Still, and I set our sights on a remote mountain at the end of Endicott Arm, roughly 80 miles south of Juneau. Simply getting to many of the climbs in Southeast Alaska is an adventure, and this trip would be no exception. Steep walls of polished granite and massive icebergs guard the unexplored peaks rising at the end of the 35-mile long, glaciated fjord of Endicott Arm (also called Granite Fjord). Having seen the area several years prior, I knew it would be a challenge to find a place to land a boat. With this in mind we loaded Mike's 19' fiberglass boat, the *Nunatak*, to the gills with climbing gear, drysuits, packrafts, winches, static line, sheet metal (for docking), and 100 gallons of fuel for the 160-mile round trip.

As we approached the back end of the fjord, we spotted a break in the walls below the Dawes Glacier. We first tied the boat off to pitons but had to winch it higher to avoid the pummeling debris from the active icefall above. After a full day of effort we established our base camp 25' above sea level. The following morning we awoke to dense clouds and light drizzle, and began traversing through the lower part of the 4,000' granite slabs until reaching a hanging valley separating the Dawes Glacier from the peak we hoped to climb.

Over the next several hours we climbed through old-growth forests and into a maze of rock, ice, and snow. Finally, at the toe of the upper glacier, we slogged through 40° snow and ice for about 2,000' and onto a snowfield below the summit. At ca. 5,700', we approached the base of the summit pyramid by climbing a 300' couloir of steep snow. This gained the summit ridge, where I climbed two pitches of straightforward 5.7. At 9 p.m., after 11 hours of climbing, we reached the summit in full alpenglow, with a sea of rosy clouds below. We rappelled to the snowfield and then committed to downclimbing the snow slope below. After reversing the involved lower approach, we arrived back at sea level, happy to find the *Nunatak* still intact on the slabs below camp. Once again Ben and Mike proved to be the best partners for a sea-to-summit suffer fest in Southeast Alaska.

We spent the following two days climbing a moderate route on the south side of Mt. Sumdum (6,666'), which separates Tracy Arm and Endicott Arm. With prop strikes and hull damage following the two climbs, we were just barely able to limp the *Nunatak* back into Juneau. She has not been in the water since.

William Wacker

Images



Topping out the ridge on Peak 7,031'.

Article Details

Author	William Wacker
Publication	AAJ
Volume	55
Issue	87
Page	164
Copyright Date	2013
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions