



AAC Publications

Mt. Wake, south face, The Cook Inlet

Alaska, Central Alaska Range

Sometime during the spring of 2012, Jess Roskelley tracked me down through mutual friends and asked what resources I used for spotting weather windows for climbing in Alaska. Considering Jess had just spent weeks on the Kahiltna earlier that spring, mostly waiting for good weather to arrive, I didn't blame him. Unfortunately, the method isn't that simple, at least not yet, so I offered to call him to climb the next time I saw a weather window. He quickly agreed.

Months passed before a window finally opened in southeast Alaska in early October. Late-fall weather windows are extremely rare, so I was amazed when a second one appeared a few weeks later. I called Jess, and, fortunately, he was available. A day later, we were headed north for my second Alaska trip in two weeks.

Paul Roderick was waiting for us when we rolled into town on October 21. Paul has been instrumental in all of my "smash and grab" trips in the Central Alaska Range, with up-to-date conditions and a flexible schedule. We quickly packed up, and Paul dropped us on the Ruth Glacier below Mt. Dickey around 4 p.m. We did a quick tour in the remaining sunlight, scoping out some possible objectives before settling on the south face of Mt. Wake.

The following morning, October 22, we got a sport climber's alpine start due to what little sun Alaska gets this time of year. We crossed the 'schrund at 9 a.m. and made slow but steady progress up to the Johnson-Wake col. We bypassed the crux serac on the climbers' right with a few pitches of AI4 and 100 percent premium Ruth Gorge "cracker jack" granite mixed climbing. From the col we climbed through some mixed bands (M4) to reach the summit of Wake shortly before sunset, completing the Cook Inlet (4,500', IV AI4 M4). Nine hours of daylight is as short as it sounds.

We retraced our steps to the col in the dark and took a coffee/Perpetuem brew stop before continuing the descent into the night. Minus my near-miss crevasse fall, unroped, it was largely uneventful. We reached our skis around midnight, 15 hours round-trip, and opted for a nap before the ski back to base camp. [Friehe made the second ascent of the Cook Inlet in April 2013, with Daniel Harro, finding "a little more involved" ice and mixed climbing.]

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Images

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