



AAC Publications

Lowell Peak, South Face; Alverstone NE5, North Ridge

Canada, St. Elias Range

In early April, Jonathan Crabtree, Charles Parr, Eli Sturm, and I explored a portion of Canada's St. Elias Range, located within Kluane National Park. Our primary objective was the south face of Lowell Peak (11,910', known as Pinnacle W4 on some maps). This mountain had been climbed twice before, by the east face to north ridge (Stainier-Rodden, AAJ 1994) and by the west ridge (Hesleden-Richardson, AAJ 2008)—when an attempt was also made on the unclimbed south face.

Landing on the Upper Dusty Glacier we established base camp hastily to take advantage of good weather. [This east-west glacier is called Lowell Glacier on some maps and is bordered by prominent peaks on all sides. The team established their base camp on this glacier approximately four miles north of Mt. Kennedy (13,905). Of the two peaks climbed, Lowell Peak is located along the northern side of this glacier and Alverstone NE5 is located along the southern side.] **The plan was for Eli and Charles to climb Lowell's west ridge while Jonathan and I climbed the south face; they would leave wands in place to help aid our descent.**

Northern Exposure from Joseph Schorr on Vimeo.

Jonathan and I left camp the next morning with two days of food and fuel and light bivy gear. Eli and Charles left shortly after. We navigated an icefall, climbing serac walls along the way, before arriving at a small plateau beneath the face. The bergschrund crossing was straightforward, and from here we climbed a short gully to the top of a rock outcropping where we cached most of our protection and one of the ropes. The rock quality was terrible and there was no ice to be found; we realized that the climb would be entirely on steep snow and névé. We crested the summit ridge a few hundred yards from the top, which we reached by early evening; however, there was no sign of Eli and Charles. We decided to downclimb our ascent route unroped that same day, despite being somewhat knackered, and arrived at base camp 14 hours after leaving. Minutes later Parr and Sturm returned from their attempt, reporting a high point about halfway up the mountain.

Two days later, Jonathan and I attempted a subsidiary peak east of Mt. Lowell, but we were defeated a couple of hundred meters short of the summit due to high winds, tedious and loose rock, and not having a rope.

A few days later Jon and I made an ascent of a peak approximately three miles northeast of Mt. Alverstone (14,565') called Alverstone NE5. We climbed the peak's stunning north ridge, encountering steep snow fluting, a short ice pitch, and an exposed ridge traverse that made the route more technical—but probably less dangerous—than Lowell. We downclimbed the route, placing protection, and arrived at base camp 12 hours after leaving. From our research, this is likely the first ascent of the peak. Our team thanks the American Alpine Club and the Alaska Alpine Club for grant funding which made this expedition possible.

Pete Dronkers, USA

Images



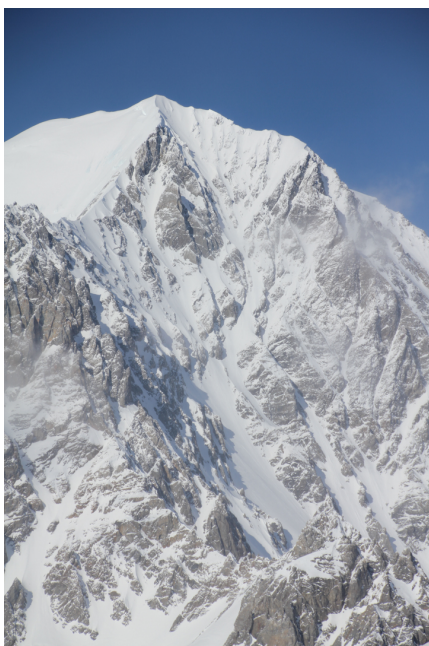
Map of the area.



The north ridge of Alverstone NE5.



The south face of Lowell Peak showing the line of ascent.



Another view of the south face of Lowell Peak.



The attempted peak east of Mt. Lowell.

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