



AAC Publications

Mt. Emmerich Cirque, Point 4,700', Dysentery Chute; Upper Dewey Lake, "Ships Prow," northwest ridge

Alaska, Coast Mountains

In May of 2013, David "Whiskers" Hertel and I launched our plan to explore and attempt new routes in the Mt. Emmerich Cirque, just outside of Haines. Our pilot Drake Olson, wasn't even sure if landing in the Emmerich Cirque was possible at that point; eventually he landed on a strip of snow below Telemark Ridge. From there Dave and I hiked to a bench on the northeast side of Mt. Emmerich, where we set up base camp.

We first did some recon climbs: Dave cruised up the Crypt (4,850'), north of our camp, and I went up a couloir on the northeast side of Mt. Emmerich (6,405'), which put me right next to the original ridge route [Beckey-Tackle-Zaspel, AAJ 1977]—a scramble or easy roped climb in the summer, but too snow-packed in May to allow for a reasonable ascent by our standards. It's possible this south side of Emmerich could make for good mixed routes when conditions are right, probably early fall.

In the following days the temperature rose substantially and the cirque began to fall apart. Once things cooled off, we decided to check out a route that we had spotted earlier—a cool-looking runnel of ice on a spire-shaped summit.

We left the tent at 3 a.m., snowshoeing northward across the cirque until reaching steep snow leading to the base of a rocky spire. After 45 minutes of precarious snow climbing, we reached the base of a rock band. There was ice on the technical pitch above, but none solid or thick enough for protection (M5 R). A couple more pitches of loose rock climbing took us to the tiny 4,700' summit, where only one person could fit at a time. After two rappels and some reverse slogging, we were able to find a reasonable descent in the obvious couloir left of the spire. We called our route the Dysentery Chute.

After this worthwhile climb, temperatures continued to increase, ending our climbing plans. Our planned walk out became threatened by cornices as well, but fortunatley Drake stuck his neck out and flew in to keep us out of hazardous terrain.

From Haines, we headed to Skagway to attempt another formation Drew had called the "Ships Prow," above and due east of Upper Dewey Lake, a few miles above town. From town, we hiked up to an awesome and free hiker-maintained cabin by the lake to stage our attempt. We left before dawn, punched up a steep couloir as the sun hit, and began climbing the prominent northwest ridge of the formation, the highest point overlooking Upper Dewey Lake. As predicted, the climbing was very loose but fun and in an awesome position, with the Sawteeth in one direction and the sea in the other. Five or six short pitches with a lot of traversing back and forth between the north and west faces took us to the summit, with difficulties up to 5.9 and some thin WI3 for a couple of pitches in the middle. To descend, we made two 60m rappels back into the couloir we started in and downclimbed to the base. The next day we returned to town.

Kurt Ross

Images



The line climbed on Point 4,700'.



A short rock section on Dysentery Chute.



The line climbed on "Ship's Prow."

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