



AAC Publications

Angel, east face; Dike Peak, west face; Hydra Peak, northeast face

Alaska, Revelation Mountains

After seeing Clint Helander's incredible article in the AAJ 2013, unselfishly revealing the secrets of the Revelations, Kris Irwin, Darren Vonk, and I flew into the range on April 2. We didn't have to look far upon arriving to find good objectives.

On April 4 we climbed the Angel (9,265') by a new route: the John Lauchlan Memorial Award Route (1,200m, AI4+ M5). Our line followed two ice streaks up a weakness on the east face before joining a long ridge to the summit. Most of the route consisted of moderate climbing, with a short vertical ice crux. We continued along the upper ridge and arrived at the summit that same day. Our choice of descent left something to be desired as we rapped through a hanging glacier that we later witnessed collapsing.

In subarctic temperatures, we got a late start on our next objective, a fine-looking line up the west face of the farthest right pinnacle of the Four Horsemen (ca 8,400'). We climbed six technical pitches and found amazing thin, sticky coastal ice. We could not believe the tiny blobs of ice that would stick to rock here in the far western reaches of the Alaska Range, unlike our drier home range of the Canadian Rockies. However, steep snow climbing and our late start eventually stopped us. We have left this beautiful line for those who will visit later.

On the flight in we had spotted a spectacular thin-ice line on the west face of unclimbed Dike Peak (7,800'). This route went without a hitch as we had the Rockies ice specialist Kris Irwin along to lead two thin pitches (WI5) that opened passage to the moderate upper mountain. A dreamy line of single-swing névé led us to a huge gully that followed the black dike the peak is named for. After passing an impressive chockstone, we reached the summit. It was the first ascent of the mountain as far as we know: Powered by Beans (1,000m, AI5 M5).

With two routes down we figured we were ready for our main objective, the unclimbed central gully on the west face of Pyramid Peak (8,572'). This 1,500m wall had drawn us to the range. A team of four European climbers visiting two weeks earlier—Lise Billon, Pedro Angel Galan Diaz, Jeremy Stagnetto, and Jérôme Sullivan—did the first ascent of Pyramid via a highly technical mixed line: the Odyssey. [See Jérôme Sullivan's report.] The obvious central plum line remained unclimbed. On our first attempt we climbed 10 pitches. The most difficult leads involved vertical snow steps, while the thin ice climbing was, again, very enjoyable. We hadn't truly expected to make the summit in a day, so when it began snowing ever so lightly and the gully began to unload spindrift, we were happy to bail from our go-look-see.

Looking to tack on a "casual" day, we headed to the northeast face of Hydra Peak (7,800'). The route to the summit consisted of only five pitches of technical climbing. Mind-blowing thin ice climbing was interspersed with a drytooling roof or two. This was all topped off by a spectacular ridge walk where we could look out over the flatlands on the western side of the range. We'd been hoping to see folks frolicking on the distant Pacific coast, but had to settle for the Casual Route (600m, AI4 M6).

We jokingly decided the criteria for our final climb must include a less-than-one-hour-uphill ski approach from base camp, a walking descent down a safe snow gully, and a start no earlier than 10 a.m. On our second attempt on Pyramid Peak, we stood at the base and witnessed a full-height avalanche triggered by a cornice collapse—it obliterated the route. Anyone in the gully wouldn't have

lasted long. Perhaps it was late in the season with warming temps, or it could have been that we had a fixed idea of a route that had to be done without adequately assessing its hazards. We should have stuck to our casual rules.

As it is, we completed three new routes, climbed about 65 technical pitches in three weeks, and visited a range that is sure to draw more interest from climbers and skiers in the future.

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Images



The attempted route on the west face of the Four Horseman.



The ascent (left) and descent (right) lines on the Angel. Kris Irwin in the foreground.



The John Lauchlan Memorial Award Route on the eastern aspect of the Angel. The climbers descended a hanging glacier out of view to the right of the east buttress.



Darren Vonk leading around the large chockstone on Dike Peak.



Darren Vonk following the first thin ice crux on Dike Peak.



Darren Vonk leading up the black dike to the large chockstone on Dike Peak.



Dike Peak, showing the route Powered by Beans, which climbed thin ice runnels and névé up the center of the west face. The climbers descended the right skyline to the lower-angled slabs on the lower right-hand side of the photo.



"The Casual Route" on 7800-foot Hydra Peak. Photo by Kris Irwin.

The Casual route on Hydra Peak.



Kris Irwin leading the first of two thin ice cruxes on Dike Peak.



Kris Irwin reaches the belay after climbing spectacular thin névé on Dike Peak.



Kris Irwin leads the second of two ice cruxes on Dike Peak.



Line of the Canadian attempt (10 pitches) on the west face of Pyramid Peak. Clint Helander and Jason Stuckey also attempted this line in 2013, climbing six pitches. The Odyssey climbs the right side of the wall before gaining the summit ridge to the summit [see that report for the route line].



Darren Vonk leading the ice crux on the Angel.

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