



AAC Publications

Lahille Island, Northeast Summit

Antarctica, Antarctic Peninsula

Jean Bouchet (expedition leader and Chamonix guide), Marlène Cugnet, Bernard Frésier, Emilie Guilleman, Alexis Maget, Arnaud Pasquer, and I left the Falkland Islands on December 21, 2013, aboard Jérôme Poncet's robust motor-sailor Golden Fleece. We had six weeks ahead of us, and planned to sail as far south as Marguerite Bay to investigate ski mountaineering in the area. As we sailed along the coast of Graham Land in late December we climbed several summits, including a nice snowy outcrop on the mainland opposite Appendice Island. A possible first ascent, this 800m summit (64.227°S, 60.902°W) is worth a visit. We also climbed more-traveled mountains such as Harris Peak, Billie Peak, Jabet Peak, Mt. Scott, and others.

On January 4 we made our first attempt on the northeast summit of Lahille Island. [Lahille has four tops. The "central," at 65°32.338'S, 64°23.562'W, was first climbed in January 2013 from the north and named Mt. Louis (545m GPS, AAJ 2014)]. A threatening serac stopped us, so the next day we landed on the mainland directly opposite the island, at 65.522°S, 64.182°W, and climbed a possible new route along a ridge oriented east-northeast to west-southwest on Takaki Promontory (slopes to 50°). We didn't reach a particular high point, as toward the end of the ascent dangerous cornices forced us down a steep, snowy couloir (45-50°). However, it proved to be an interesting route, with breathtaking views, even by local standards. On the 6th we climbed the highest point of Edwards Island (ca 400m) from the northwest, with a steep final slope. [This was probably the second ascent, the first having been made on February 14, 2006, by Guy Cotter's 12-member expedition. New Zealand guide Mark Sedon led the crux, a rock band shortly below the summit, which the team dubbed the Sedon Step.]

On January 7 we made a second, and this time successful, attempt on Lahille Island, despite cloudy weather. We climbed the crevassed northeast slopes, then crossed a large bergschrund, where two axes and ice screws were needed, then followed a steep face to the east ridge. From there we reached the summit easily (650m, 65.544°S, 64.343°W). There was no known prior ascent of this peak. An official request has been made to the Antarctic Place Names Committee to call it Golden Fleece Peak.

After that we sailed back north, climbing more standard peaks along the way. Mt. Balch proved a serious ascent, with a 50° ice slope leading to the summit ridge. On the descent we deviated to climb Mt. Mill. On the 19th we began the journey home across the Drake Passage.

Franck Mazas, France

Images



On the corniced ridge of the Takaki Promontory.



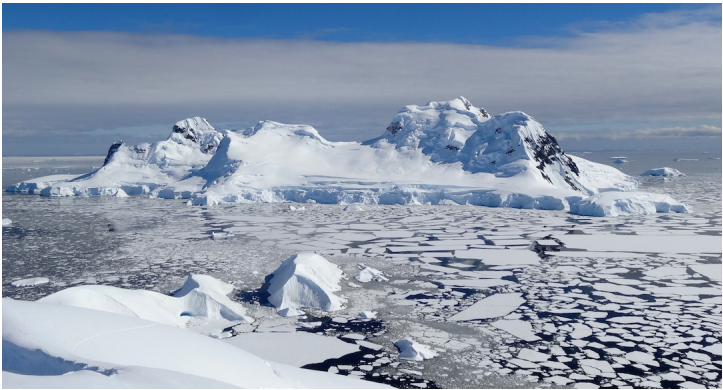
The summit of Edwards Island. The ascent route follows the prominent curving ridge facing the camera.



Starting down the escape couloir from the ridge on Takaki Promontory.



Lahille Island seen from the northeast, with the 2014 ascent marked.



Lahille from Edwards Island to the south. The highest summit (650m) was climbed in January 2014.



The ascent on the Takaki Promontory with Leroux Bay behind.



Starting the first ascent of Lahille Island's northeast peak (a.k.a. Golden Fleece Peak) with the Golden Fleece moored in brash ice below.

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