



AAC Publications

Buck Mountain, North Face, Wild Game

Washington, North Cascades

Around midday on February 21, Braden Downey and I drove to Fish Lake and the start of Chiwawa River Road, only to find it closed more than 20 miles from the trailhead. In hindsight, we probably should've checked on this minor detail before loading up the truck and driving out there. After asking around, we discovered there were snowmobiles available for rent right where the road was closed. Problem solved. We strapped our climbing and bivy gear to the back of two rented sleds and rode them to the end of the road, where we spent the night.

The next day we started at 4 a.m. from our trailhead bivy (ca 2,800'), walking on three to five feet of well-consolidated snow beside the Chiwawa River and then along Buck Creek to access the north face of Buck Mountain. With hard snow the whole way, it took us about five hours to arrive at the small glacier at the base of the face. Before the trip, I had read in Fred Beckey's guidebook that the north face "...was climbed by Cal Folsom and Mark Moore in September 1976. The climb proved to be extremely loose and dangerous—the party warned others to avoid this climb."

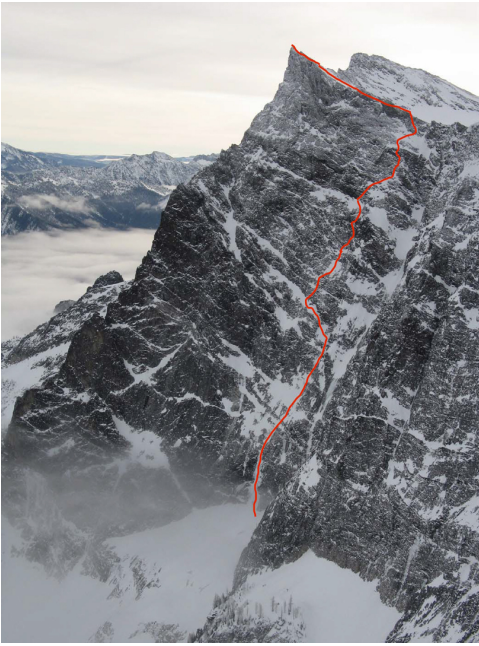
We started up steep ice to the left of the ice/mixed route Buckshot (Cappellini-Larson, AAJ 2009) and then continued by simul-climbing through less-sustained terrain. As the face got steeper, we pitched out two mixed sections. Braden took the crux lead, which involved wandering, tenuous dry-tooling to connect patchy snow and ice, with limited protection opportunities and some mandatory simul-climbing due to a lack of suitable anchors. After this we simul-climbed up snow and easy mixed terrain before leading two more mixed pitches. We gained the upper ridge around 6 p.m. In all, we climbed eight pitches with quite a bit of simul-climbing (about 1,800' of vertical gain) to the summit (8,528').

To descend, we traversed the summit plateau and went down the southeast face into the Alpine Creek drainage, ending up next to the Chiwawa River about a mile from our bivy. This descent was straightforward, with the only problem being we were now on the wrong side of the Chiwawa River. We searched for a place to cross but couldn't find one, so in the dark we waded the river, holding on to each other to stay upright. After more than 17 hours on the move, the cold water felt refreshing on our feet and legs.

My head hit the pillow at home the same time I had woken up that morning, the ending to a memorable Cascade adventure—Wild Game (IV WI5 M6 R/X).

– William Hinckley

Images



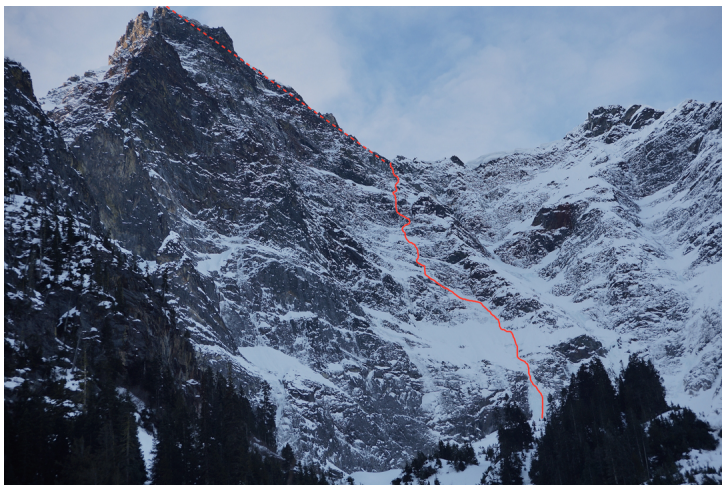
Wild Game (IV WI5 M6 R/X) on the north face of Buck Mountain. Buckshot (Cappellini-Larson, AAJ 2009) is located in the obvious groove to the right.



The initial ice pitch of Wild Game.



Broken mixed terrain on the upper part of Wild Game.



Wild Game (IV WI5 M6 R/X) on the north face of Buck Mountain. Buckshot (Cappellini-Larson, AAJ 2009) is located to the right.



Approaching the north face of Buck Mountain. Wild Game begins on the prominent right-hand ice flow.

Article Details

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