



AAC Publications

The Citadel, North Ridge and Attempt on Northwest Ridge

Alaska, Neacola Mountains

On May 2, Jon Bracey and I set off to attempt the unclimbed northwest ridge of the Citadel (8,305') in the Neacola Mountains. Unfortunately, a few days before our arrival, a heavy snowfall buried the ridge under powder, making for slow going. On the first day of climbing there was hard mixed, free, and aid on very good rock. We bivied after 2,300' of climbing and a huge day.

We woke the following morning to snow showers but continued up to the base of a large tower with a snow crest above. The cracks had been good to this point, but the rock now blanked out—smooth, steep granite without a crack or seam in sight, for aid climbing or otherwise. We spent much time looking for an alternative route, off the ridgeline to the left or right, but found only featureless granite in these snowy conditions. We descended from there. It was clear that we could have drilled, bolted, and bat-hooked our way up the tower. But that's not our style. Maybe we missed something, or maybe in drier summer conditions, with rock shoes, it would be possible.

Following a day of recovery in base camp, Jon and I set off again, but this time to attempt the unclimbed north ridge. After a steep glacial approach, we reached the base of the ridge and quickly climbed up snowy ramps, open faces, and a few mixed steps to reach a large tower, which we aided in cold and windy conditions. This led us to a typical Alaskan corniced ridge, which eventually led us to snow slopes and to the summit, completing what is likely the second ascent of the peak. We descended our line on the north ridge. – Matt Helliker, United Kingdom

Summary: New route on the Citadel (8,305') via its north ridge (3,700'), by Jon Bracey and Matt Helliker (both U.K.), May 5, 2015.

Images



Citadel's north ridge (left) and northwest ridge (right).



Matt Helliker day one on the northwest ridge attempt.



Matt Helliker climbing mixed ground, day one, on the northwest ridge of the Citadel.

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