



AAC Publications

Cracked Ice Arena: New Rock Routes

Alaska, Chugach Mountains

Over the course of multiple weekends throughout July and August, a group of friends and I completed nine long new rock routes in the Cracked Ice Arena, a popular backcountry skiing zone near Thompson Pass, in the Chugach Mountains, north of Valdez. These peaks are better known for their remarkable steep powder skiing than for technical climbing, and it is one of the few ranges where it is easier to obtain summits in the spring and winter months, due to the cohesive nature of the coastal snowpack. As such, it is entirely possible some of these routes, or parts of them, may have been ascended or descended in winter conditions by heli-skiers or ski mountaineers.

Cracked Ice Spire and Graywacke Tower, which we named after finding no previous record of technical climbing, are both subsidiary features of the larger Cracked Ice massif. All of the climbs were approached from the Richardson Highway, and each offers a pleasurable day of alpine climbing that includes glacier travel, high-quality rock (for the Chugach), river crossings, and of course bushwhacking. The routes are summarized below. Unless otherwise noted, all the climbs have about 1,000' of roped climbing, and all involve passages of AI2 ice or glacier travel.

Cracked Ice Spire (5,600')

Canadian Kitten (III 5.6, Taylor Brown and Jessica Young)

Center Line (III 5.5, Taylor Brown and Ryan Sims)

Northwest Ridge (III 5.5, Taylor Brown and Ian Overton)

Cracked Ice (6,513')

Northwest Arête (1,500', III 5.7 AI3, Taylor Brown, Ryan Sims, and Sam Volk)

Graywacke Tower (5,500')

Chugachian (III 5.8, Taylor Brown and Nick Weicht)

Jujimufu (III 5.9, Taylor Brown and Daniel Linnel)

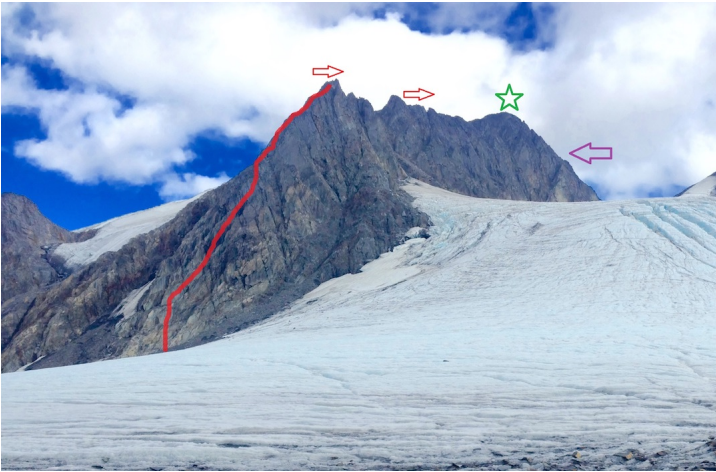
Wacke Weicht (III 5.7, Nicole Aikins and Nick Weicht)

Summer Camp (III 5.8, Taylor Brown and Ian Overton)

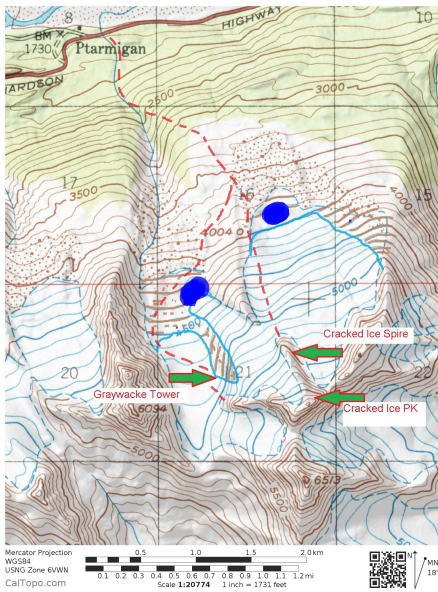
Splitter Choss (III 5.7, Taylor Brown and Nick Weicht)

– Taylor Brown

Images



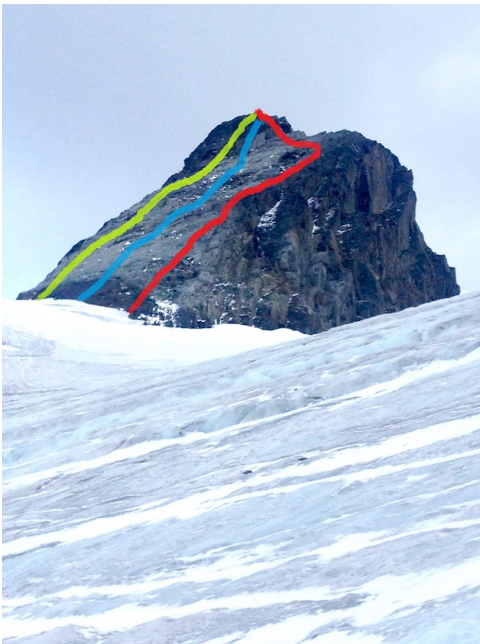
Cracked Ice, showing the Northwest Arête (1,500', III 5.7 AI3), climbed by Taylor Brown, Ryan Sims and Sam Volk.



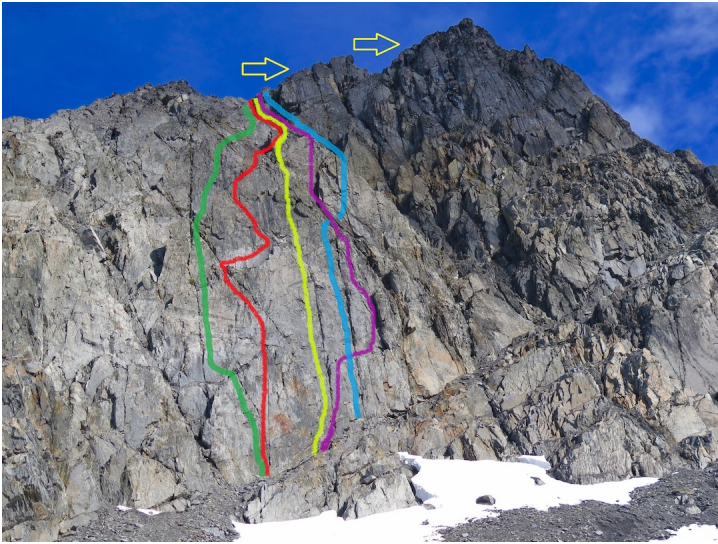
Map showing the areas where Taylor Brown and partners climbed nine rock routes in 2016, along with the approach from the Richardson Highway. The glaciers have receded significantly since this map was produced.



Ryan Sims climbing Center Line (1,000' of climbing, III 5.5 AI2) on the Cracked Ice Spire.



Cracked Ice Spire, showing the three routes completed by Taylor Brown and partners in 2016. Yellow: Canadian Kitten (5.6). Blue: Center Line (5.5). Red: Northwest Ridge (5.5).



Graywacke Tower (5,500'), showing the routes completed by Taylor Brown and partners in 2016. Green: Chugachian (5.8). Red: Jujimufu (5.9). Yellow: Wacke Weicht (5.7). Purple: Summer Camp (5.8). Blue: Splitter Choss (5.7).



Daniel Linnel enjoying the sunshine and long-undies temps on the first ascent of Jujimufu (1,000' of climbing, III 5.9 AI2) on Graywacke Tower.



Nick Weicht on the first ascent of the Chugachian (1,000' of climbing, III 5.8 AI2), on Graywacke Tower.



Taylor Brown and Ryan Sims approaching the Northwest Arête of Cracked Ice.



Cracked Ice Arena Rock Climbs

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