



AAC Publications

Valhalla Ranges Update

Canada, British Columbia, Southern Selkirk Mountains

OVER THE PAST few years, Valhalla Provincial Park—a once-sleepy alpine climbing destination about 100km southwest of the Bugaboos, near Nelson, B.C.—has seen an explosion in activity. Local guide David Lussier has authored about a dozen new routes during reconnaissance for a guidebook he is writing. Jasmin Caton, JT Croston, Steve Ogle, Cam Shute, and other climbers also have been active in the area.

On August 22, 2017, during their second attempt in two years, Lussier and Vince Hemsall linked the 13 peaks of the Valhallas surrounding Mulvey Basin, from Dag to Gladshiem, including an ascent of the south ridge of Gimli (III 5.10a). “The route involves about 12km of linear distance and 2,300m of elevation gain,” Lussier wrote. “There are numerous single-rope rappels required, endless 4th-class scrambling, and multiple pitches of simul-climbing up to 5.10a.” On July 27, 2014, Shute and Nelson Rocha completed a similar traverse, linking all but one summit of the Devil’s Range (north of the Mulvey Basin peaks) in one push. The effort took 20 hours, covered as many kilometres, and crossed 10 different summits, skipping only Devil’s Spire.

Also in August 2017, Caton and Shute achieved possibly the second ascent of the 2002 Lussier and Alan Jones masterpiece on the north face of Mt. Dag: Riding Skinfaxi (950m, VI 5.11d). While they did not free the entire route (they climbed it at 5.11c C1), Caton still considered their three-day effort “one of the most physically and mentally difficult climbs I have ever done.” She wrote, “The challenge was as much due to the logistics as the actual rock climbing. Access to its base is via steep, bushy and precipitous terrain; access to water is only possible very low on the route, making for painfully thirsty conditions; and the climbing is both difficult with a heavy pack on and difficult to haul.” [Editor’s note: The north side of Mt. Dag has several routes. The first ascent, via the north buttress, was in 1971 by Roy Kligfield and John Roskelley: Sweet Judy Blue Eyes (5.9 A2). A direct route up the north face and a line up the northeast face were climbed in 2000.]

The 1,100-meter south face of Wedge Peak, climbed in 2016.

The most notable climb of 2016 was Lussier and Jonas Furger’s first ascent of the South Face (1,100m, ED1 5.10) on Wedge Peak, from August 23 to 25. In all, Lussier and various partners climbed half a dozen new routes in the Valhallas in 2016; see the 2017 *Canadian Alpine Journal* for details. In 2015, Lussier and Stephen Senecal climbed 520m of new terrain en route to the first ascent of the complete north ridge of Little Dag via their route Huckleberry Start (950m, TD+ 5.9).

The accessible and relatively popular south side of Mt. Gimli has seen a handful of new five- or six-pitch routes in recent years, including Slave to Gravity (5.11+, Croston-Kristiansen, 2013; direct start added in 2017), Dark Side of the Moon (5.10b/c, Croston-Tasker, 2013), Sailor Jerry (5.10b/c, Croston-Shute, 2013), Valhalla Gold (5.12a, Lussier-Luthy, 2014), Space Jam (5.11d A1, Croston-Tasker, 2014), and Dark and Stormy (5.11a, Caton-Shute, 2016).

First ascensionists have reported variable rock quality throughout the range. Describing one of her new routes (which she preferred not to report for the AAJ), Caton said, “I wouldn’t necessarily recommend anyone repeat it, due to the loose rock.” Yet she also noted that Riding Skinfaxi had “sections of brilliant climbing,” and that her line on Gimli’s south face, Dark and Stormy, was quite good.

– **Chris Kalman**, with information from Jasmin Caton, David Lussier, Steve Ogle, and Cam Shute

Images



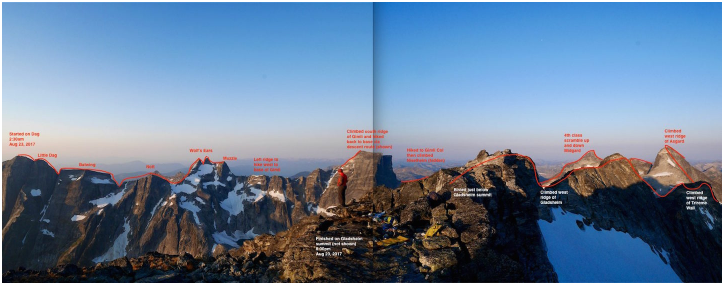
Mt. Dag from the northwest. The first ascent route, Sweet Judy Blue Eyes (Kligfield-Roskelley, 1971) was just left of the prow dividing the faces.



Mt. Gimli has seen at least half a dozen new five- to six-pitch routes in recent years.



Map of the 13-peak Mulvey Basin linkup by Vince Hemsall and David Lussier, August 2017. The climbers started on Mt. Dag (foreground) and ended on Gladshiem in the back.



Annotated photo of the August 2017 Mulvey Basin linkup by Vince Hemsall and David Lussier.



The first ascent of the south face (1,100m, ED1 5.10) on Wedge Peak.



Scrambling to the summit of Midgard Peak, with the peaks on the south side of the Mulvey Lakes Basin in the background. Vince Hemsall and David Lussier traversed all 13 peaks around the basin in August 2017.

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