



AAC Publications

Goat Wall, Fluffy Goat Butt-Face

Canada, Alberta, Canadian Rockies, Bow Valley

ABOUT 20KM EAST of Canmore is one of the most impressive rock features in the Bow Valley: the Goat Buttress sector of the Goat Wall. In morning light the buttress appears almost like a spire, towering 1,800' above the trees and scree below. Although the buttress and the Goat Wall share a col with the famous Yamnuska, they lack the popularity of that wall.

The eponymous Goat Buttress route was first climbed in 1977 by Chris Perry and Trevor Jones. Their climb is bold and old-school, marred by loose rock and featuring tricky or poor protection, with a run-out 5.10d crux. I consulted Peter Gatzsch about other routes on the Goat Wall, since he helped put up the majority of them. Gatzsch's lines tend to be rated 5.9, hard 5.9, and f'n hard 5.9—with obligatory runouts of up to 120' on "easy" terrain. According to Peter, many await second ascents.

It became clear that if I wanted to climb a safer-feeling route in this area, I would have to establish it myself, using a lot of bolts. After chatting with Peter, Andy Genereux, and other new-route activists in this area, it was apparent that nobody would mind if I did precisely that.

My longtime friend and climbing partner Mark Carlson and I had been discussing these features for years. I spent many hours gazing at the walls with binoculars and always found myself fixed on one sector: the stark and beautiful face immediately right of the Goat Buttress route. The position alongside the sharp buttress popping out at the left edge of the steep Goat Wall is so undeniably aesthetic that it seemed like the best place to start exploring.

Mark and I began our project early March 2016 (which was unusually dry and warm). There is no easy, non-technical way to the top of the buttress, so we were forced to establish our line ground up. We began the route leading with a rack of nuts, cams, a hammer, drill, bolts, and hangers—free climbing while drilling protection bolts from natural stances. We eventually stopped bringing the nuts and cams, since each pitch yielded only steep, compact rock with little in the way of trustworthy natural protection.

As the wall steepened we quickly learned that A0 moves off ¼-inch bolts made for more efficient progress once the difficulties surpassed 5.10. We also learned to fix lines for a quick return to our high point, jugging up for further progress rather than free climbing with heavy loads of bolts and hangers. After 25 days of effort and 500-plus bolts, on July 1, we topped out our route. We celebrated having reached the summit, but much work still remained.

That summer in Alberta was rainy, keeping us away from the face until fall. In mid-September we were back to work, crowbarring off death blocks and replacing aid bolts with permanent 3/8-inch stainless steel; we added enough protection bolts to bring it into proper "sport" condition. The route was ready for a full redpoint attempt just as winter arrived.

After a winter of fantasizing and two months of climbing in the U.S. in the spring, we returned to our route in June, rope-soloing our fixed lines and jugging up to the crux pitches to give redpoint burns on the most difficult climbing, which was at my limit.

On June 20 we started up the route at first light for a full free push of the entire climb. We finessed our way up the cryptic dance of sidepulls, underclings, and laybacks with big smiles on our faces, redpointing pitch after pitch while savoring the results of nearly 40 days of effort. We stood atop the buttress nine hours and 45 minutes later, cheering and yodeling.

Fluffy Goat Butt-face (1,800', 5.11b) was a dream come true. At 21 pitches, it is one of the longest sport climbs in Canada. We hope such accessible pleasure will draw some attention to this beautiful wall.

– Tyler Kirkland, Canada

Editor's note: Fluffy Goat Butt-face shares the first, second, and part of the seventh pitch with Peter Gatzsch and Andy Genereux's possibly unrepeated route Gatzsch Your Goat (2001, 550m, 5.12a or 5.11a/A0).

Images



Mark Carlson and Tyler Kirkland looking chuffed at the pitch 19 belay on Fluffy Goat Butt-face, with Yamnuska in the background.



Mark Carlson enjoying pitch 16 of his new route Fluffy Goat Butt-face.



Mark Carlson nearing the summit on the 20th pitch of Fluffy Goat Butt-face.



Tyler Kirkland on pitch 11 of Fluffy Goat Butt-face.



The Goat Butte and the line of Mark Carlson and Tyler Kirkland's new route Fluffy Goat Butt-face (21 pitches, 5.11).



The Goat Wall with the Goat Buttness prominent at left. The new route Fluffy Goat Butt-face ascends the face just right of the sun-shadow line.

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