



AAC Publications

Ice and Mixed Roundup

Canada, Canadian Rockies

In 2017 the focus for activists in the Canadian Rockies seemed to shift away from alpine routes toward ice and mixed cragging in the winter and new bolted rock routes in the summer. A striking exception—and by far the biggest news in alpine climbing this year (and perhaps for many years to come)—was the first solo ascent of Mt. Geikie's north face in August, which shocked the few who had previously made ascents of this face, one of the biggest in the range. Another impressive solo by a visiting coastie was Mt. Deltaform's Flying Buttress (800m, 5.7) by Marc-André Leclerc on June 11.

In a more traditional alpine vein were new routes by Bow Valley climbers such as Hiding in Plain Sight (600m, M5 AI5), climbed by Alik Berg and Quentin Lindfield Roberts in May. The route follows moderate ground and steep ice pillars on the east face of Mt. Tuzo to the south ridge and on to the summit, all visible from Moraine Lake. Kris Irwin and John Price climbed Remembering Fred (330m, M6 WI5) on October 30, the day Fred Beckey died, above O'Bin rien Lake. It climbs the north aspect of an unnamed peak south of Mt. Bell, featuring quartzite dry tooling, no major avalanche hazard, and a walk-off descent.

On one fruitful day in November, two previously undocumented routes were climbed on the same wall on the north side of Storm Mountain. Noboru Kikuchi and Toshiyuki Yamada climbed Full Moon Corner (400m, WI4 R M6), while, 200m to the left, Simon Richardson and I climbed an unnamed and previously unreported 400m gully with ice up to WI3. On both routes, fixed gear was discovered during the climb, reinforcing the importance of using judgment and doing one's homework before claiming firsts.

Multipitch ice routes were established in bunches where new low-hanging danglers formed. In Field, right of the ice route Twisted, Michelle Kadatz, Sebastian Taborsky, and Jon Walsh opened Nasty Habit (four pitches, M6 WI5—not to be confused with Nasty Habits on the Upper Weeping Wall) at the end of January. The line climbs a previously unformed pillar to a bench and then bolt-protected dry tooling to a thin drip. Soon afterward, Sarah Hueniken and Raphael Slawinski found a yet more improbable line just to the left: Blob Blob Blob (two pitches, M6+). The first pitch followed a line of surprisingly solid blue blobs pasted to an arête, while the second pitch was more conventional edgy dry tooling with bolt protection to a dagger top-out. Between the two is Fat Tug (2 pitches, Quentin Lindfield-Roberts). When the avalanche hazard spiked elsewhere in midwinter, there were numerous parties wisely vying for these relatively safe lines.

Protection Valley, north of Castle Mountain, came into form early in November. Though visible from the TransCanada highway, it was seldom visited before. New routes starting right of the existing Superlight (230m, 5.10 WI5+, potential second ascent this season by Walsh and Kadatz) include: Mix Fix (150m, M7, Walsh and Jeff Mercier) in a deep cleft; Paradise City (110m, M6 WI4, Walsh and Jon Sims), near the unformed Paradis Perdu; Grab the Cupcakes (310m, M6 WI4+, Kris Irwin and Jay Mills), engaging a gully/chimney with thin ice; Dirtbag Dreams (210m, WI4+, Walsh, Landon Thompson, and Paul Taylor); and Safe Space (7 pitches, M7 R WI4, Berg, Steven Kovalenko, and Slawinski), which ended prematurely, with ice and cracks above, because the seconds did not want to follow with a poor anchor. With the power of the Internet, this previously quiet hanging valley became a regular cragging venue for numerous parties.

Tom Ballard paid a visit to the area from the U.K. and surprised many with his onsight of the dry-tooling testpiece Nophobia (5 pitches, M10), which was lacking the key exit ice. He also made the second ascent of Tainted Love (320m, M9 WI3, Slawinski, et al) with Berg. With Slawinski, he completed the FFA of Tupperware Tea Party (2 pitches, M8+), an old Dave Thomson project next to Stairway to Heaven on Mt. Wilson. The most hard-fought new drytooling route this year was Gord McArthur's completion of Storm Giant (80m, rated D16), which took him three years to send. Established in a style similar to Nophobia (drilled pockets, holds ticked with paint and tape), the grade unfortunately will be difficult to corroborate as the climb is closed due to access issues.

High-profile crags are a rare place to find a first ascent, but Walsh did just that, nabbing a thin smear 400m right of the Upper Weeping Wall: The Lynx (130m, WI5, Walsh, Ixchel Foord, Cecilia Buil). Also at the Upper Weeping Wall, Slawinski and Juan Henriquez added Dance Dictator (one pitch, M7+ WI5+) as a bolted dry-tooling variation to the start of the very rarely formed Master of Puppets.

In February 2018, at the Storm Creek Headwall, Niall Hamill, Jeremy Regato, and Paul Taylor chose to eschew the fruity naming convention of the Peach and the Plum by establishing Ikiru (160m, M7+ WI5+) to the right of those two routes. In March, Hamill and Walsh completed a more direct line, Scar Tissue, on the same wall. Meanwhile, Kikuchi and Yamada accidentally established Overslept (70m, WI5), thinking they were on Dr. Evil.

In the Ghost, Berg established Ophidiophobia (140m, M7 WI4+) with Maarten Van Haeren. In Kananaskis Country, Berg also climbed the Man Hole (300m, M5) with Slawinski. This is the obvious gash on the north face of the Fist; the first pitch had seen previous attempts—and a ground fall—but was tamed in the end with the ubiquitous bolt.

Finally, 200m down and right of Saddam's Insane on Mt. Kidd, Ryan Patterson and Paul Taylor claimed Insane Alligators (150m, M6), rap-bolting the route in six pitches, and adding a bolt to the previously climbed first pitch (Axes of Evil) in the process. Much to Slawinski's chagrin, he found their bolts while leading what he thought was a ground-up first ascent with Henriquez. The two continued onto Alligators, calling their variation Tasty Texting (40m, M6+ WI5).

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Images



A smiling Ixchel Foord arrives at the first belay during the first ascent of the Lynx (130m, WI5, Walsh, Ixchel Foord, Cecilia Buil), high above the Icefields Parkway, with the Upper Weeping Wall in the background behind her.



The route lines for Full Moon Corner (400m, M6 WI4 R, Noboru Rob Kikuchi and Toshiyuki Yamada) in red and Unnamed Direct (Welsted, Richardson, WI3, likely a second ascent, first ascent unrecorded) in yellow on Storm Mountain.



The route line for Hiding in Plain Sight (600m, M5 AI5, 600m, Alik Berg and Quentin Lindfield-Roberts) on the east face of Mt. Tuzo.



The Storm Creek Headwall, showing (1) Scar Tissue and (2) Ikiru. Both routes are about 160 meters.



Niall Hamill on the WI5+ fifth pitch of his new route Ikiru (160m, M7+ WI5+) on the Storm Creek Headwall.



Kris Irwin starting up the crux pillar of Remembering Fred (330m, M6 WI5) on the north aspect of an unnamed peak south of Mt. Bell, above O'Brien Lake.x



The line of Remembering Fred (330m, M6 WI5) on the north aspect of an unnamed peak south of Mt.

Bell, above O'Brien Lake.

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