



## AAC Publications

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### **Peak 5,805' (Endicott Tower), First Ascent**

Alaska, Chilkat Range

**On June 10, 2016, my father Mike Miller and I set out into the Endicott River Wilderness, located about 50 miles northwest of Juneau in the Chilkat Range.** Our objective was to climb one or more unclimbed peaks in the preserve and then packraft the 20-mile Endicott River back to the west side of Lynn Canal and get picked up by a boat for the ride back to Juneau.

From Juneau we flew to Gustavus, jumped on a Glacier Bay tourist catamaran, cruised up the east arm of Glacier Bay, and got dropped off in a sandy cove at the base of Mt. Wright, near Adams Inlet. We inflated our rafts and waited for the incoming tide to suck us into the 14-mile Adams Inlet. We waded and crisscrossed the Goddess River delta, sometimes crossing swift, waist-deep rivers, and made camp for the night. We then hiked a full day through the Endicott Gap (a two-mile-wide flat valley floor) to Endicott Lake, the headwaters for the Endicott River. Here we stashed our water gear and tromped 2,000' up through the Tongass rainforest to a pristine hanging alpine valley, where we made our base camp.

We were now directly below our main objective, the southwest face of Peak 5,805', which we named Endicott Tower and which marks the highest point in the wilderness area. Only a few miles away were Peak 5,280' and Mt. Young (5,700'), both unclimbed.

After several days of rain the weather cleared, so the next day we established a high camp at around 4,000'. We had incredible views of the Fairweather Range—the sunset is still burned into my memory.

The next day we began climbing. Right off the bat we had to get around a 25' bergschrund by climbing a 40' pitch of mixed rock, snow, and ice to gain the main face. From here we swapped leads for 700' of steep snow runnels—60–75° perfect Styrofoam névé to the top of the snow, where the mountain became rockier. The next pitch was mixed: 60' of wet 5.7, which turned to 40' of WI3 and back onto steep snow. Another short pitch through deep and steep unconsolidated snow brought us to the ridge, which we traversed to a rock outcropping. We pounded in some pitons and made a 60' rappel down the other side of the ridge. The multitude of summit spires made it hard to determine which was the true top. We made for the most obvious and easiest looking summit spire, which featured loose, blocky 5.6 that we simul-climbed. To our delight, we found that we were on the true summit.

From the top we looked southeast to Juneau and pointed out our home, which put into perspective how far out there we really were. We retreated off the summit the way we came, reascending the rock wall that we had rappelled, which was awkward and so rotten that we were able to make hand and foot holds by scraping and kicking holds into the chalky limestone corner. From the ridge, a series of rappels from picket anchors led us back to our high camp. The next day we made our way back to the green valley base camp. We took a day to recoup, during which a friend with a Super Cub flew in and retrieved our mountaineering kit.

Picking up our water gear, we floated down the Endicott River, portaging a section where the river dives into a gnarly gorge. Along this portage we climbed another small peak (2,680') and encountered some of the hardest bushwhacking we'd ever experienced, moving at a quarter mile per hour through alder and steep river gorges, packs overflowing with rafts, dry suits, paddles, food, and sleeping gear. We were relieved to link back up with the river.

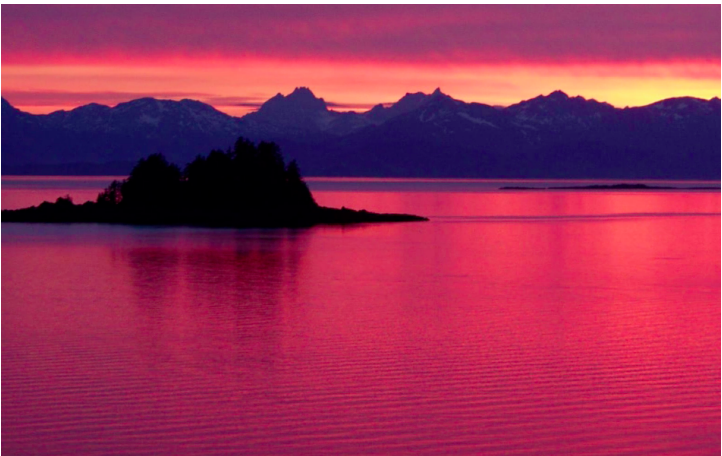
We enjoyed the last seven miles of braided glacial river flow, seeing signs of bear, wolves, and moose, and casually reached the west side of Lynn Canal.

– Dylan Miller

## Images



Endicott Tower from the air, showing the line of ascent taken by Dylan and Mike Miller in June 2016.



Sunset from Adams Inlet. Endicott Tower is the left-most of the three prominent summits. Unclimbed Mt. Young (5,700') is to the right.



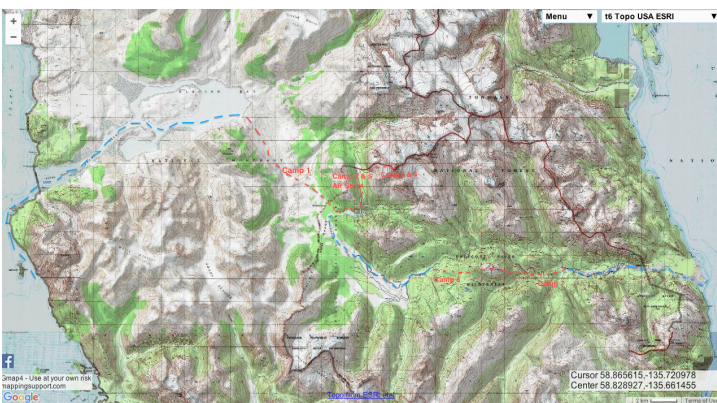
Mike Miller leading up a steep AI3 face during the first ascent of Endicott Tower, outside Juneau, Alaska.



Mike Miller following the 5.7 ridge to the summit of Endicott Tower during the first ascent of the peak. Adams Inlet and the Goddess River are in the background below.



Endicott Tower from the valley below, showing the line of ascent taken by Mike and Dylan Miller in June 2016 for the peak's first ascent. This mountain marks the highest point in the Endicott River Wilderness of southeast Alaska.



A map of the peninsula between Glacier Bay and Lynn Canal in southeast Alaska, home to the

Endicott River Wilderness and Endicott Tower. Dylan and Mike Miller made the first ascent of this peak (5,805'), the highest point in the wilderness area, in June 2016.

## Article Details

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