



AAC Publications

Peaks South of Mt. Upton

Canada, Yukon Territory, St. Elias Mountains

Jonathan Wakefield and Glenn Wilks (U.K.) flew onto the unnamed glacier that flows toward the Logan Glacier from Mt. Upton, directly north of Mt. Logan, with the aim of ascending unclimbed peaks around the inner glacier. We first tried to access this area in 2011, but high winds prevented two attempts to get there or to land.

We were flown from Silver City airstrip on the shore of Kluane Lake by Icefields Discovery, which is run by Sian Williams, daughter of legendary glacier pilot Andy Williams. During the flight we had uninterrupted views of the entire range, with the massive bulk of Mt. Logan always in our forward view as we headed along the Logan Glacier.

In our 12 days on the glacier arm to the south of Mt. Upton, from May 8–19, we reached four unclimbed tops surrounding our camp, at heights of 2,840m, 2,800m, 2,680m, and 2,845m respectively. The final tottering towers of shattered granite on the second and third peaks we climbed, east and southwest of camp, allowed only one person at a time onto the tops. One peak was elusive on two attempts, with unstable snow slopes high up. Although they never avalanched, our gut feeling, based on the lack of support at each footstep higher up, was we could have triggered one at any time.

Highlights of the trip included skiing the upper glacier bowl to the immediate south of Mt. Upton and the view from the summit of our final peak, which had an incredibly beautiful hanging glacier with views to the north face of Mt. Logan.

We had three bad weather days when we were confined to camp and grateful for the protective snow wall we had built all around the tents, easily six feet thick after various enhancements. It did the job when it was needed. At the end we elected to ski down to the Logan Glacier and pull sledges to the watershed of the Kaskawulsh and Walsh glaciers; however, after calling for a forecast when we had nearly reached the Logan Glacier, we were advised to return to our camp for a pick-up.

Mt. Upton stands at just over 3,500m and is believed to have been climbed only once, in 1992, by Barry Blanchard and four others (see note below map). It was named after one of the original glacier pilots to venture into the Yukon. Apart from this trip, the surrounding glaciers have never been touched. The area has many unclimbed peaks. Some of the rockier peaks are steep but look desperately loose, and with no obvious lines to the summits. The feeling of adventure in such a remote, uncharted place outweighed not being able to climb these.

An interesting aside is that the southern end of Kluane Lake, near Silver City and the Icefields Discovery airstrip, is now occasionally blighted by dust storms caused by wind-blown sediments from the delta of the river flowing north into the lake. The delta has progressively dried since the outflow from the Kaskawulsh Glacier dramatically changed direction in 2016, due to the shifting of ice at the snout of the glacier; the vast outflow now heads southeast into the Kaskawulsh River and only a little into Slims River and the Kluane delta. This event is likely to have long-term consequences on the state of Kluane Lake.

The climbers give thanks to the Mount Everest Foundation for gracious support of this expedition.

(The team's expedition report can be downloaded [here](#).)

Previous Climbs in this Area: In addition to making the first ascent of Mt. Upton, the 1992 team led by Barry Blanchard did two traverses along the eastern rim of this glacial basin, climbing Peak 3,068m and a number of other summits. It is believed they may have traversed over Peak 2,800m, the second summit reached by the 2018 expedition, but the rest of the 2018 climbs reported above were likely first ascents.

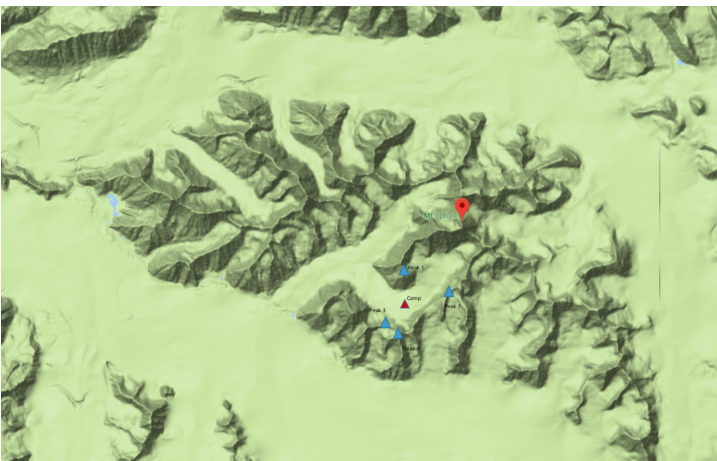
Images



Glenn Wilks climbing on Peak 2,845m with Mt. Logan behind.



Nearing the summit of Peak 2,845m, with the north side of Mt. Logan in the background, across the Logan Glacier.



Map showing the locations of the 2018 team's base camp and peaks climbed, south of Mt. Upton.

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