



## AAC Publications

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### **Stauning Alps, Bjørnsskulderfjell and Sugarlump**

Greenland, East Greenland

Looking northeast across the entrances of the three upper branches of the Gurreholm Dal. The 2014 first ascent of Peak 1,630m (labeled Mt. Doom by the 2018 expedition) followed the curving ridge in front of it, over the lower northern (left) top, to the main summit. The right skyline is the ridge almost climbed to the summit by the 2018 team. Photo by Matthew Hay

**Our two-person expedition to the Stauning Alps in 2018 had two objectives of equal priority: to conduct climate change–related scientific research and continue glaciological study of the Roslin Glacier, and to summit at least two unclimbed peaks.** Leo Carew and I (U.K.) were successful with the second but not the first. A combination of frequent bad weather and two unsuccessful mountaineering efforts cost us almost 10 days. This, combined with the insistence of our logistics provider, Tangent Expeditions Ltd., that we be pulled out early ahead of a forecast storm, meant we were unable to make it to the Roslin Glacier.

Our ascents took place from the Gurreholm Dal, a valley in the southern Stauning that sits just within the Northeast Greenland National Park. We were taken by snowmobile to a hut—the Red House (a former space observatory)—about 50km north of Constable Pynt, and from there skied unsupported northwest for 150km to reach the Gurreholm Dal. Starting on April 19, this journey took nearly 10 days with pulks, each of which initially weighed 100kg.

Our first attempt on a peak took place on the night of May 2, when we tried the south ridge of Peak 1,161m (ca 71°34'3.41"N, 24°47'46.22"W). We reached 1,062m, at which point we deemed the final steep section to have unacceptable avalanche risk.

It snowed the next two days, but on the 5th clearer weather encouraged us to attempt a beautiful twin-summited mountain (1,630m, 71°36'3.98"N, 24°53'36.89"W). At the time we believed this to be unclimbed, but later discovered that the southerly and higher summit had been climbed twice before, in 2014 and 2016, by Tangent-supported expeditions, via the lower summit and the ridge that curves up from the south. (The 2016 team also mistakenly believed they were making a first ascent.) We left our camp at 1 a.m. on the 6th, headed for the southeast ridge. Unfortunately, toward the top, the crest became narrow and corniced. Above this, and at a point around 85m below the summit, the snow became so atrocious that an avalanche seemed likely. Building dependable anchors also seemed impossible, so we retreated. On the return journey, we decided to make a slight detour from our route back to Gurreholm Dal and take in a summit that we called Sugarlump (1,167m, 71°34'34.7"N, 24°50'09.6"W). We ascended via the northwest flank. Our round trip from camp was 31km.

On the evening of the 9th, having moved our camp to a different location on the west side of the Gurreholm Dal, we set off to attempt the first ascent of Peak 1,620m at 71°30'23.6"N, 25°01'42.1"W. We skinned up a broad ridge, and then, after crossing a col, a steeper and more challenging ridge led to the summit plateau, where we turned southwest and skied for 5km to the highest point. We named the mountain Bjørnsskulderfjell. [This peak is around 8km south-southeast of Snow Dome and Panorama Peak; see AAJ 2018.] We descended by continuing south around the head of a large cwm, then east to the main valley. The round trip from our tent took 13 hours, during which we covered 24km.

We felt this to be our best ascent, but triumph was short lived. We made a satellite call to our agent

the following day, only to be told there was concern an incoming storm would scour the snowmobile route of snow and we should evacuate now. We felt compelled to break camp, tow sleds through the night, and meet the snowmobiles early on May 12. The return to Constable Pynt took the rest of that day—through fantastic weather!

– Matthew Hay, U.K.

## Images



Looking northeast across the entrances of the three upper branches of the Gurreholm Dal. The 2014 first ascent of Peak 1,630m (labeled Mt. Doom by the 2018 expedition) followed the curving ridge in front of it, over the lower northern (left) top, to the main summit. The right skyline is the ridge almost climbed to the summit by the 2018 team.



Leo Carew photographing fresh polar bear tracks in East Greenland.



Leo Carew making tracks on the summit of Bjørnsskulderfjell

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