



## AAC Publications

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### **Peak 9,630', DeWilde Style; Mt. Moffit, Longing for Light**

Alaska, Hayes Range

**On a reconnaissance flight into Alaska's Hayes Range in early September, Ben Lieber and I previewed a handful of promising objectives.** Less than 48 hours later, we were making the seven-mile approach from a dry landing strip near the tongue of the Gillam Glacier up to a dry lake near the southeast face of Peak 9,630' (63°41'42.54576"N, - 147°18'13.73904"W). [Editor's Note: This peak lies approximately 6.75km north-northwest of Mt. Deborah (12,339')]. During the autumn season, a heavily cracked glacier and highly featured moraine system make landing in this area extremely difficult. Instead of carrying heavy rucksacks for the entire approach, we opted to push three bags out the side of the plane near where we intended to place our advanced camp.

On September 14, the morning after arriving at our camp, we set off toward the 700m southeast face. A beautiful, snaking couloir split the middle of the face and was seemingly choked with alpine ice. Moderate terrain led to two distinct crux sections up to AI4+. The ice conditions were sufficient for climbing, but left something to be desired for placing protection. Each section of ice was broken up by long snow ramps that we encountered in good condition. We simul-climbed the entire route, but if pitched out we estimate that it would take 12 pitches.

Our route ended at the summit ridge, forgoing the avalanche-prone traverse leading west to the true summit (9,630'). With safe, stable snow it would be possible to make this traverse, but long stretches of corniced ridge climbing will be encountered. The snowpack also thwarted our original plan of descending the northeast ridge. Instead, we opted to descend our route via a combination of rappelling and downclimbing. We named our route DeWilde Style (700m, AI4+) after our good friend and life-mentor, Ray DeWilde.

A few weeks later, Ben and I flew back into the Hayes Range, along with Austin Schmitz, this time to the north side of Mt. Moffit (13,020'). The landing strip to access this part of the mountain sits 10 miles to the north at the toe of the Trident Glacier. Again, we opted to drop bags out of the plane in order to conserve energy on the approach.

On October 13, we climbed a new route on Moffit's northeast shoulder, after a first attempt two days prior. The climb consisted of moderate snow gullies interlaced with engaging alpine ice and steeper snow climbing near the ridge crest, with a handful of five-star pitches. We simul-climbed a good portion of the route, belaying the crux sections. The route climbs roughly 800m from the valley floor and ends at approximately 8,400' on the northeast ridge, leaving the complete ascent to the summit still to be realized. [Editor's Note: This route lies to the left of the Entropy Wall (Brown-Haley, 2006) and the Miller-Teale (1989), see AAJ 2007.] **Seventeen rappels back to the base lasted deep into the cold autumn night.**

The late-season temperatures and the strenuous approach from the landing strip created a bit of difficulty, but overall the autumn presents an incredible time to be in these mountains. We named our route Longing for Light (800m, AI5 R) after not seeing the sun or feeling its warmth for nearly a week.

An extended thank you is in order to our talented pilot and fourth team member, Jesse Cummings.

Without his knowledge of the terrain and ability to confidently fly into the mouths of these giants, we'd have limited chance of success.

– Alex Hansen

## Images



Alex Hansen low on Peak 9,630' during the first ascent of DeWilde Style (700m, AI4+), in the Hayes Range of Alaska.



Ben Lieber on the approach to the southeast face of Peak 9,630' in Alaska's Hayes Range, in nearly snowless autumn condition.



The southeast face of Peak 9,630' showing the line of DeWilde Style (700m, AI4+). The first ascensionists descended from the junction with the summit ridge due to unstable snow conditions.



Ben Lieber leading through a long choke of steep ice during the first ascent of DeWilde Style (700m, AI4+) on the southeast face of Peak 9,630' in Alaska's Hayes Range.



Austin Schmitz climbs through one of the routes ice cruxes during the first ascent of Longing for Light (800m, AI5 R) on the northeast shoulder of Mt. Moffit (13,020') in Alaska's Hayes Range. The team descended from the junction with the northeast ridge.



The line of Longing for Light (800m, AI5 R) on the northeast shoulder of Mt. Moffit (13,020') in Alaska's Hayes Range, climbed by Alex Hansen, Ben Lieber and Austin Schmitz in October 2020.



Alex Hansen leading a steep section of ice low on the face during the first ascent of DeWilde Style (700m, AI4+), on the southeast face of Peak 9,630' in Alaska's Hayes Range.



Ben Lieber and Alex Hansen atop their route DeWilde Style (700m, AI4+), on the southeast face of Peak 9,630' in Alaska's Hayes Range. The two descended from the summit ridge due to unstable snow conditions.



Alex Hansen leading ice low on Longing for Light (800m, AI5 R) on the northeast shoulder of Mt. Moffit (13,020'). The 2,300-meter north face of Moffit and the upper part of the Entropy Wall (Brown-

Haley, 2006) are in the background.

## Article Details

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