



## AAC Publications

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### **Holliday Mountain, North Face, Scary Bear Attacks**

Washington, North Cascades, Okanogan Range

**In this report, I bring you a cautionary tale about an attractive nuisance: the corrugated north face of Holliday Mountain (ca 8,000').** Holliday is less than 10 miles north of Washington Pass and the popular Liberty Bell group; it sees infrequent ascents via a scruffy, scrambly route on its south side, but no attempts from the north have been reported.

Rolf Larson and I identified two strong candidates for an ascent of the north face, both long granitic ribs: one that led up to the main summit and, further right, one leading to the western subsummit. The one on the left sports a series of towers that lead to a brilliant white—and largely blank-looking—spike at the true summit, while the one on the right appeared more straightforward.

We set off in mid-August. Before laying hands on rock, we first hiked 10 miles on dusty trails, camped next to the Methow River, and then climbed 2,500 vertical feet through brush, steep moraine, and still-steeper snow. The late-season snow guarding the rock was firm, so we carefully kicked steps up to the base of our preferred rib—the one on the right leading to the subsummit.

From my belay on the snow (anchored by an axe and bollard), Rolf led a difficult pitch that required him to cross a moat by descending into it, squirming up between the snow and rock, and then finally climbing silt-covered stone to a stance. Here, he built a passable anchor below what appeared to be a very spicy second pitch. After a brief discussion, he wisely reversed the moves back to our snowy belay.

This cost us over three hours. We figured our venture was over, but still wandered left on the snow to scout possibilities for a later attempt. We soon spotted an easier access point to the face below the left-hand rib and just right of a garbage-chute gully. Standing on the hard snow, contemplating the idea of beginning a new route at the late hour of 11:30 a.m., we were struck with ambivalence. Launching now would almost surely bring future misery; not launching now would just as surely inspire future regret. Up we went.

I got the first pitch (5.9+), which was fantastic and would be popular at a crag—fun climbing with a little bit of everything on clean, solid granite. Rolf took the second pitch (5.8), which ascended a chimney that had some thoughtful moves, but also some loose killer blocks that he danced around. We climbed the next several pitches alongside the left rib, then a couple more pitches down into and across the main gully, trending right to gain the upper part of the rib we had initially attempted in the morning. The climbing was often run-out and loose, requiring careful rope management. Once on the right-hand rib, the rock improved.

A few pitches later, we stood on the 7,920' subsummit and took in the sunset. We were on the route for nine hours in all.

We descended to the south and began a long traverse around the east side of the mountain (by headlamp and moonlight) to return to the north side. There, we retrieved our packs, and thrashed down to our camp at the river, arriving at 2 a.m.

A note of caution: After the first pitch, due to the loose rock and dearth of available anchors, bailing

would be risky and costly. Our route, Scary Bear Attacks (2,000', 10 pitches, 5.9+), is presently the only one on the north face. Future parties might enjoy exploring the many other available features, but should bring a bolt kit and a sense of humor.

– **Eric Wehrly**

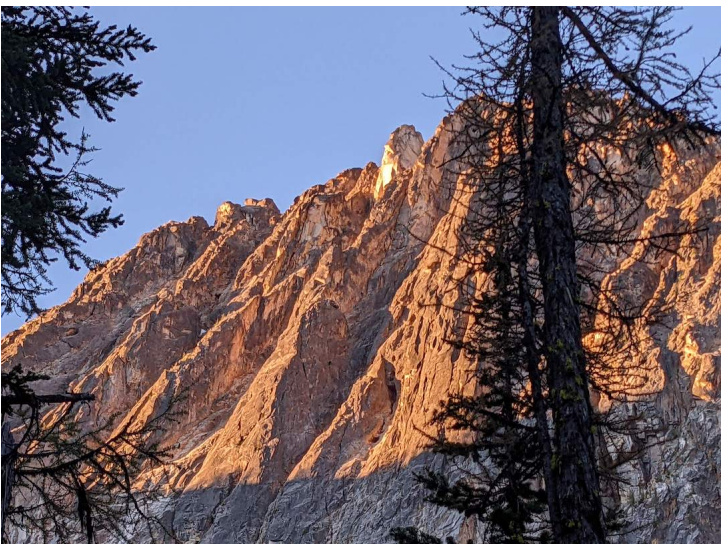
## Images



Scary Bear Attacks (2,000', 10 pitches, 5.9+) on the north face of Holliday Mountain. The route reaches the western subsummit. In back is Golden Horn.



Scary Bear Attacks (2,000', 10 pitches, 5.9+) on the north face of Holliday Mountain, North Cascades, Washington. The route ends at the western subsummit.



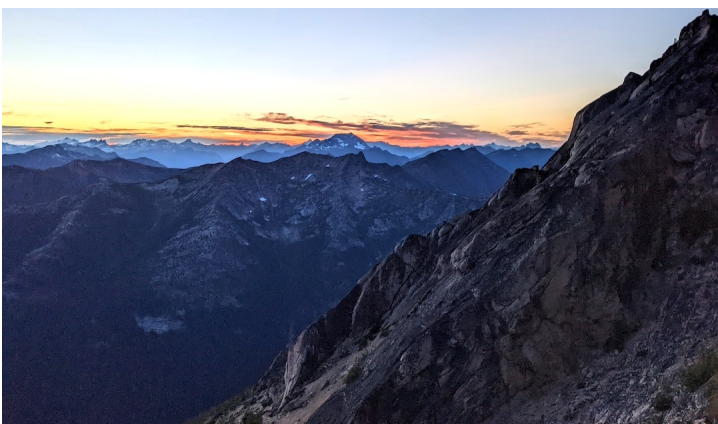
Scary Bear Attacks (2,000', 10 pitches, 5.9+) begins out of view in the lower left-hand corner of the photo, climbs the gully partially obscured by the tree branch, and eventually travels along the rib in the foreground of the white summit spike. It finishes at the subsummit obscured by the right-hand tree.



Scary Bear Attacks (2,000', 10 pitches, 5.9+) begins left of center near the highest point of the snow, moves up and right into the partially shaded gully, then ascends rightward on the sunlit rib to the subsummit (which is not visible). The distinct white spike at the center is the true summit.



Rolf Larson climbing in a gully four pitches up Holliday Mountain's north face on the route Scary Bear Attacks (2,000', 10 pitches, 5.9+). After this, the route trends up and then right onto the rib of rock that forms the gully's right wall.



The view to the northwest from Holliway Mountain, looking at Jack Mountain (9,070')—the snowy peak in the near background—and other North Cascades National Park summits.



The northern aspect of Golden Horn, one mile due south from Holliway Mountain. Behind and right of Golden Horn are (front to back) Mt. Hardy (8,080+'), Black Peak (8,970'), and, in the far distance, Glacier Peak (10,541').

## Article Details

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