



AAC Publications

The Shark's Tooth, First Winter Ascent

Alaska, Coast Mountains, Boundary Ranges

The Shark's Tooth (ca 5,700', 58°43'4.45"N, 134°45'32.11"W) is a mountain that continues to lure me. Matt Callahan and I made its first ascent via the southeast ridge in 2018, and Evan Hartung, Mike Miller, Ben Still, and I opened the south rib in 2020, but the peak still hadn't been climbed in winter.

On March 12, with a casual 5 a.m. start, Seth Classen and I warmed up for the Shark's Tooth by skinning in from Glacier Highway to climb The Terminator, a four-pitch WI5 on the Main Wall in the Davies Creek valley. Then, starting around 6:30 p.m., we skinned farther up-valley, then clicked on our headlamps, stowed our skis on our packs, and pulled out ice tools and crampons for a 3,500' climb up a wind-packed couloir to a saddle. The night was moonless, eerily silent.

From the top of the saddle, we somehow nailed the roughly 2,000' descent into the opposite valley in total darkness, missing the myriad cliffbands and yawning crevasses. We arrived at the base of the Shark's Tooth around 12:30 a.m. and started up. A WI2 ramp took us to the southeast ridge, which goes at 5.7 in the summer. By this point we were out of water, so we stopped to brew up. The cold bit at our fingers and toes—subzero, for sure.

Most of the ridge went easily. Seth led us up snow and rime ramps, bypassing steeper rocky bits. Eventually we came to a 60' rock wall with no easy way around. We examined our options: the summer line, which is a steep 5.7, or a ledgy, snow-covered way to the left. We went left.

Instantly, the climbing proved harder than it had looked. I moved upward with frontpoints perched on granite nubs, my tools scraping desperately for anything to hook. I even threw a few gloveless finger jams. Protection was tricky; I used up our rack of three cams and three nuts too soon and ended up leaving both tools as pro, pounding the last one in with a snow picket. I punched handholds in the rime to climb the final 20' ramp and, using a rock, pounded the picket into a crack for a belay. The sun finally began to rise—and with it my fear and anxiety melted away.

We ate our last bar on the summit. By the time we reached our cars after a ten-hour return trip, we'd been on the move for 36 hours.

—Dylan Miller

Images



The Shark's Tooth (ca 5,700') in the Coast Mountains, Boundary Ranges, Alaska. Seth Classen and Dylan Miller made the first winter ascent of the peak via the southeast ridge (the right skyline) in March 2023. This was also the route of the first ascent (2018).



Seth Classen with the Shark's Tooth behind him. The southeast ridge is the right skyline.



Seth Classen coming up the southeast ridge of the Shark's Tooth during his and Dylan Miller's first winter ascent of the peak. The pair of prominent summits at the center of the horizon are (in back) Mt. Adolph Knopf (6,200') and Peak ca 6,150' in front. Mike Callahan, Dylan Miller, Mike Miller, and Ben Still climbed Adolph Knopf via its South Ridge (6 pitches, 5.7) in 2021. John Kelley reportedly climbed the peak solo in 2013, but previous climbing history is unclear. Peak ca 6,150' has no known ascents.

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