



AAC Publications

Klattasine Ridge, The Lonesome Crowded West

Canada, British Columbia, Coast Mountains

Mt. Klattasine (2,561m), left of center, is the high point of the Klattasine Ridge and was first climbed, solo, by John Clarke in 1974, following the prominent southeast gully (1). The next formation to the right now has two routes: (2) Warbird (Beckey-Diedrich-Nelson, 1987) and (3) The Lonesome Crowded West (Pelletti-Stanhope, 2023). Photo by Kieran Brownie.

Inspired by a 1988 Canadian Alpine Journal that I'd found lying around during a piss-wet Squamish spring day, Kieran Brownie, Seb Pelletti, and I ventured onto the Klattasine Ridge in August. Given all of my trips to other parts of British Columbia (mostly the Bugaboos), I had spent an embarrassingly small amount of time in the Coast Mountains in my own backyard.

Located at the northwestern corner of the Homathko Icefield, the Klattasine Ridge is named after a chief of the Chilcotin (Tsilhqot'in) people. Klattasine was a major figure in the 1864 Chilcotin War, a gruesome conflict in B.C.'s history. The highest point of the ridge, Mt. Klattasine (2,561m), was climbed solo by John Clarke in 1974, following a gully up the southeast face. A trip in August 1987 by Carl Diedrich, Jim Nelson, and Fred Beckey yielded two fine new routes in the big south cirque of the Klattasine Ridge on what they deemed excellent granite. In 1998, Bill Durtler, Bruce Fairley, and Kirt Sellers climbed a 12-pitch 5.8 up the southwest buttress of the southernmost tower in the cirque, which they called Tootsie Roll Tower. To our knowledge, no climbers have ventured back there since.

Flying out of Bluff Lake on August 14 in Mike King's helicopter, we set up camp south of the towers in a little snow basin about ten minutes' walk from the peaks. We immediately set our sights on repeating Golden Klattasine, the Diedrich-Nelson route up a west-facing formation on the right side of the cirque; they reported about 450m of climbing at 5.10 A2. We encountered a very loose flake feature on the lower half of the climb that I climbed gingerly; it flexed every time I exerted hand-jam force on it. Other than this, the stone was excellent. Our ascent cleaned up the lichen on the route considerably; we freed it on top-rope, and it is ripe for a future redpoint.

After topping out, we descended the north side of the formation and then back through a notch to the south. This was in many ways the crux of the day: dusty, steep tiptoeing down a long slab rife with loose blocks. In the future I would recommend a careful rappel descent of the Golden Klattasine route, as there are many bolted belays from the first ascent.

Next, we set our sights on the southeast face of another formation climbed by the 1987 team; their route Warbird climbed the prow of the first prominent formation east of Mt. Klattasine. A perfect, left-facing open book at around half height, to the right of the 1987 route, struck us as the king line of the wall. We spent an afternoon questing around to see if it was feasible. The dots looked like they connected, so we fixed around 100m of static line to the ground, fired up for a bid the next day.

After an early start with some coffee and maté, Seb and I Micro Traxioned our fixed line while Kieran flew his drone to gather footage. A crisp finger and hand crack gained the corner. It felt similar to the Split Pillar on the Stawamus Chief, and we were overjoyed at our good fortune. By midafternoon we were on top, where we found an enormous cairn standing vigil. With epic views of Mt. Bute (2,810m) to the south and the Waddington Range to the north, we felt elated to be in such a remote, special place. We rappelled the route, adding bolted anchors with a power drill. [The 1987 party rappelled and downclimbed to climber's left of the formation to reach the Clarke route on Klattasine and continued down from there.]

Our pickup was delayed for a day while Mr. King was busy fighting forest fires. We spent the day reading and relaxing, spitballing names for our new route, and enjoying this beautiful little cirque deep in the Coast Range. I'd been listening to my favorite Modest Mouse album on repeat throughout the summer, and eventually suggested the name The Lonesome Crowded West (400m, 5.11). The Klattasine, while lonely, is certainly not crowded, and it's a far cry from the sad, monochromatic mallscapes of the Pacific Northwest, as described in the lyrics by the guys from Issaquah, Washington. Not so far as the eagle flies, but a different Cascadia entirely.

— Will Stanhope, Canada

Images



Will Stanhope and Seb Pelletti on a 5.11 pitch on The Lonesome Crowded West, a 400-meter route up the Warbird formation.



About to start up a fixed line at the base of The Lonesome Crowded West in the Klattasine group.



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Jim Nelson (left) and Fred Beckey during the first ascent of Golden Klattasine (1987) on the Klattasine Ridge.



Jim Nelson and Carl Diedrich rappelling from the Klattasine Ridge in 1987.



Carl Diedrich during the first ascent of Warbird on the Klattasine Ridge in 1987.

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