



AAC Publications

Mt. Borah, east face, various routes; Sacajawea Peak, north face

Idaho, Lost River Range

Until 2011 very little development had occurred on the steeper rock faces in central Idaho's Lost River Range. But now that the door has been opened, several very fine routes have been established. These are big limestone and dolomite walls, 1,500' to 3,000' tall, where the anchors are few, rockfall is an ever-present danger, and in some places the rock is just crap. No bolts or fixed anchors have been placed on these routes, and all were climbed ground-up and onsight.

Idaho has nine summits that reach over 12,000' and all but two lie within the Lost River Range. The tallest is Borah Peak (12,667') which holds classic snow and ice climbing. Borah offers several hidden gems on its north face, including the recent and difficult route Psycho Therapy (Lords-Wood, AAJ 2004). In spite of all the traffic, the remote east face of Borah remained unclimbed until the summer of 2011.

I first visited the eastern side of the mountain from the Pahsimeroi Valley in 1972 and spotted a line that followed some water streaks in a nearly straight path to the summit. I described this face as "Idaho's Eiger" to potential partners, but at the time the range had no technical rock routes, and the state has so much fine granite it was hard to justify a trip to the Lost Rivers. In the fall of 1975, Mike Weber and I approached the face from the west fork of the Pahsimeroi River. On that trip, a brutal rockfall almost killed us below the face, and then rain caused flash flooding. In the following decades, my climbing partners and I continued to explore and put up routes in the range, but we never made it back to Borah's east face. I grew to think of it as a very dangerous place, and the risk no longer appealed to me.

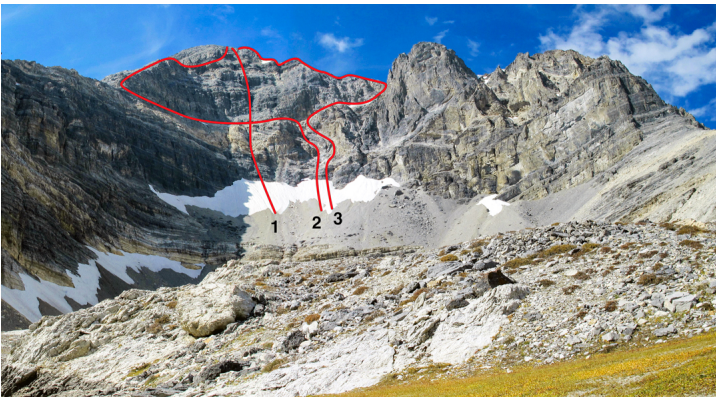
In the spring of 2011, however, Wes Collins, a local climber and native of the area, immediately became interested when I told him about it. Wes couldn't wait to see the face up close, so he took off on an exploratory trip with his wife and dog in July 2011. What started as a recon turned into a solo first ascent of the east face, via the Dirty Traverse (III 5.4). This somewhat contrived route climbs a few steeper sections and makes use of ledge systems to gain the summit of Borah. Wes returned with Kevin Hansen in September of the same year and climbed the East Face Direct (1,800', III 5.9). In July 2012, I finally made my way back to the face, and with Frank Florence climbed another route, which starts up the east face to the right of the Dirty Traverse, and then gains the north ridge (III 5.6 WI2).

On the same day, following our climb, Wes Collins and Kevin Hansen also climbed the north face of Sacajawea Peak by a new 13-pitch route (III 5.8). [Editor's note: The Collins-Hansen route on the north face of Sacajawea Peak climbs left of the ice/mixed route Broken Wings (not to summit, Dickerson-Mordicai-Lords, AAJ 2006), taking a direct line to the summit.]

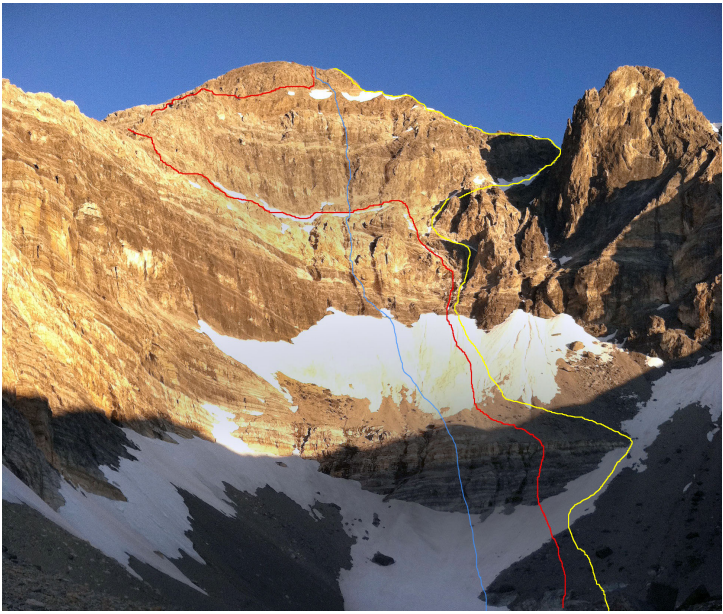
Images



The north face of Sacajawea Peak, showing the new 13-pitch route climbed by Wes Collins and Kevin Hansen on the left and Broken Wings (Dickerson-Mordicai-Lords, 2006) on the right.



A foreshortened view of the east face of Mt. Borah: (1) East Face Direct (Collins-Hansen, 2011). (2) Dirty Traverse (Collins, 2011). (3) East face/north ridge (Boyles-Florence, 2012).



A close up of the new routes on the east face of Mt. Borah.

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