



AAC Publications

Southwestern British Columbia, summary

British Columbia, Coast Mountains

After a couple of slow years, there seems to be an upswing of interest in new routes in southwestern B.C., including several new winter lines.

In late February 2013, Bruce Kay and Damien Kelly climbed Fire Ball (500m, WI5 M5) on the west face of Mt. Athelstan, north of the established summer climbs. The mountain is located 50km northwest of Pemberton and required an extensive approach as the roads were buried under deep snow, leading to a 45km snowmobile approach plus 1,000m of steep skinning through forest to reach the base of the climb.

A new gondola provided renewed interest in the Sky Pilot group near Squamish. New routes included Escape Velocity (7 pitches, 5.9) on Mt. Habrich by Jeremy Frimer and Matt Parker, and a new summer route (5 pitches, 5.10a) and winter route (300m, WI3) on the north face of Sky Pilot Mountain, both established solo by Marc-Andre Leclerc. The summer line was climbed as part of a massive solo-in-a-day enchainment that Leclerc began by onsighting the Wonderful Thing About Tiggers (7 pitches, 5.11a) on the Fluffy Kitten Wall below Mt. Habrich's north face.

Across the Squamish River, in the Tantalus Range, Marc-Andre Leclerc soloed a new route on the east face of Lydia Mountain under early-winter conditions in late October (300m, M4/5). Later in the winter, Carl Kohnstamm and Martin Schuster did the first winter ascent of the northeast ridge of Niobe Peak. Further up the Squamish River, in mid-winter, Conny Amelunxen and Tennessee Trent took advantage of a window of stable conditions and high snow levels to climb a long gully route on the southeast face of Icecap Peak (1,300m, WI4 M4).

In the Joffre Group near Pemberton, in mid-summer 2013, Alistair Davis and Jason Ammerlaan climbed the new route Native Copper (250m, D+ 5.10+) on the north face of Mt. Joffre. This route took on the previously unclimbed rock pillar between the Joffre Couloir and the Central Couloir. Joffre's north face has a reputation for loose blocks, but the climbers reported mostly solid rock.

In July, Marc-Andre Leclerc completed a solo, in-a-day linkup of the North Rib and Northeast Buttress on Mt. Slesse (a.k.a. Slesse Mountain), for a total of about 6,000' of climbing. Both routes have been soloed many times before, but this is the first time Slesse had been soloed by two routes in a day. Leclerc climbed both routes earlier to familiarize himself with the terrain. Guy Edwards and John Millar had previously completed a large linkup by simul-soloing the east ridge of Mt. Rexford (across the valley from Slesse), descending to Nesakwatch Creek, and then soloing the Northeast Buttress of Slesse. This involved significantly more total distance on the ground but much less technical climbing.

On Vancouver Island, two new winter routes were established: the northwest face of Rugged Mountain (700m, WI3), by Henrik Hinkkala and Hunter Lee, and Third Time's A Charm (1,000m, WI3) on the east face of Mt. Colonel Foster, by Patrick Parker and Ryan van Horne. Both climbs were multiday undertakings during a long cold, clear spell in January–February 2014. During the same cold snap, Lee and Mike Shives made what was probably only the third ascent of Directissima (1,000m, WI4 M4/5, Bajan-Nichol, 1978), also on Mt. Colonel Foster.

Finally, in mid-February Will Gadd and partners John Freeman, Sarah Huenkiken, and Katie Bono established the longest and most sustained route yet at Helmcken Falls, a large cave located in Wells Gray Provincial Park. Gadd called the route Overhead Hazard (200m, 7 pitches, M11/M13+)

Drew Brayshaw, Canada, with additional information from reports at Gripped.com

Images

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