



## AAC Publications

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### **Nevado Panta, South Ridge; Pumasillo, West Ridge, Rare Ascent**

Peru, Cordillera Vilcabamba

**The Pumasillo group has the most extensive collection of glaciated peaks in the Cordillera Vilcabamba, yet only a handful of ascents have occurred here.** The west ridge of Pumasillo (5,991m) was climbed by five expeditions between 1957 and 1974, and Carlos Buhler and Paul Harris climbed its east face in 1988, making the most recent known ascent of the peak.

In 2014, Waldemar Niclevicz and I tried to repeat the west ridge but turned around at 5,700m. From trip reports, I could see that the west ridge had been snowier in the past, and therefore broader and easier to navigate. In late July, Waldemar and I returned to Pumasillo, this time accompanied by Florian Peter (Switzerland) and Duncan McDaniel (USA). On August 1, we climbed the west ridge to a point 50m below the summit cornice, where a large crevasse blocked our way. I felt the difficulties of this 1,000m climb were around TD+ WI4.

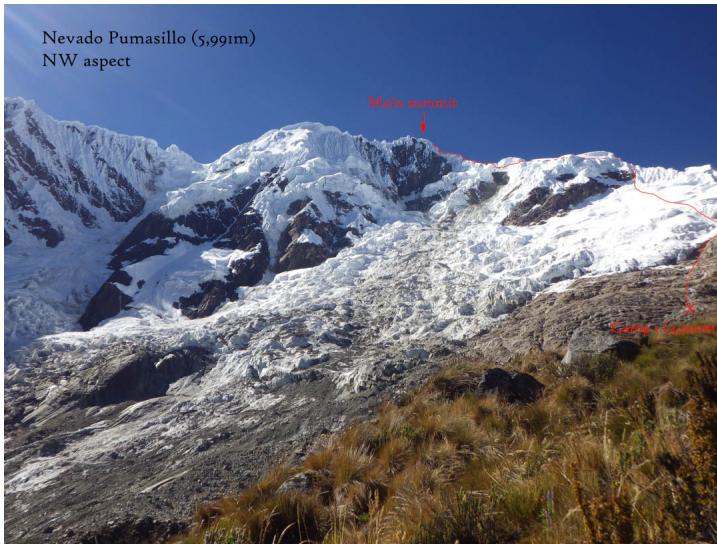
After a couple of days' rest in the jungle town of Santa Teresa, Duncan, Waldemar, and I set off for the remote, westernmost glaciated group of the Vilcabamba and our primary objective, Nevado Panta (5,840m, a.k.a. Otaña). The mountain has had one known ascent, up the north face, by a Swiss team in 1959, one of their many first ascents in the Vilcabamba (AAJ 1960).

On August 15, from Huancacalle, we traveled on 4WD roads for two hours toward the south side of Panta. At a large curve in the road, southeast of the peak, there is a forest of *Puya raimondii* cactus where we started the hike to base camp. We followed a good trail up the left-hand side of the valley and spent the night on ledges below the glacier at 4,800m. On August 16, we began at 1 a.m., climbing the glacier below the broad south ridge. On the ridge proper, we picked our way through a maze of towering seracs and crevasses, with some sections of WI4. Once on the summit plateau, we post-holed to the top, reaching it by 10 a.m. The descent went smoothly down our route, with several fun rappels down ice blocks, and we were back at camp by 5 p.m. (850m, D+ WI4).

The Vilcabamba remains one of the least climbed areas in Peru with great new-route potential, not just on glaciated peaks but also on large granite towers like those in Quelcamachay. Nowadays there are many roads offering easier access to these areas.

– Nathan Heald, Peru

## Images



The route up the west ridge of Pumasillo (5,991m), first climbed in 1957. The 2016 team got to within 50m of the summit, rating the ridge TD+ WI4.



Nathan Heald prepares to cross a crevasse on the west ridge of Pumasillo.



Nathan Heald leading steep ground on the west ridge of Pumasillo.



Duncan McDaniel leading steep ground on the west ridge of Pumasillo.



The summit area of Pumasillo. The team turned around at a large crevasse at the base of the steep wall.



Nathan Heald downclimbing the west ridge of Pumasillo, with Choquetecarpo (5,500m) in the background.



Duncan MacDaniel rappelling on the west ridge of Pumasillo.



Nevado Panta (Otaña) (5,680m)  
Cordillera Vilcabamba  
SW face (D, 800m) (2nd ascent in history, 8/16/16)  
Nate Heald, Duncan MacDaniel, Waldemar Niclevicz

High Camp 4800m

Photo: Nate Heald, taken from Abra Yanama

The 2016 route up the south ridge of Nevado Panta (5,680m), the first ascent from this side of the mountain and the peak's second known ascent.



Starting up the lower south slopes of Nevado Panta.



Duncan McDaniel climbing below a serac on Nevado Panta.



Nathan Heald leading steep ground below the summit plateau on Nevado Panta.



Nathan Heald arriving at the summit of Nevado Panta.



Looking down the northeast ridge of Nevado Panta toward Camballa (5,721m).



On the summit of Nevado Panta.



Waldemar Niclevicz rappelling on Nevado Panta.

## Article Details

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