



AAC Publications

2019 New Zealand Alpine Highlights

New Zealand

Ben Sanford climbing onto the summit ridge of Mt. Haast after the first ascent of Hotline on the east face. Photo by Gavin Lang

The 2018–2019 summer climbing season in New Zealand was highlighted by several significant repeat ascents in Aoraki/Mt. Cook National Park. During a settled period of weather in mid-December, 2018, Sooji Clarkson and James Warren ventured onto the upper Balfour Glacier to try the high alpine rock faces of Mt. Drake (2,960m) and Mt. Magellan (3,049m). Here they managed ascents of Astrolabe (Defourneaux-Dickson-McDermott, 1988) and Shogun (Aubrey-Pears, 1981) on the northwest face of Drake and Anyone Can Play Guitar (Flyvbjerg-Palman, 1995) on the west face of Magellan.

Warren then teamed up with Evan Davies in January to climb the Hillary (South) Ridge on Aoraki/Mt. Cook (3,724m). This was the first ascent of the ridge following a 2014 rockfall event that affected parts of the south face and the lower section of the ridge. Despite it being early season, the pair found the lower ridge to be largely devoid of snow and ice, making for tricky climbing conditions on less than favorable rock.

In March, Richie Jacomb and Asher March ventured to the upper Bonney Glacier, where they climbed a new alpine rock route on the north face of Malte Brun (3,198m), east of Aoraki/Mt. Cook. Called Multi-Sport (700m, V, 5, 18/5.10a, the route follows a prominent rib up the center of the face to top out high on the northeast ridge (Ayres-Gillies, 1951).

Down in the Darran Mountains, further development occurred on the Sinbad Gully Wall (see AAJ 2019). Jimmy Finlayson and Helen Sinclair climbed four new pitches from the end of Welcome to Sinbad (Jefferies-Rogers, 2003) to establish Drop Zone (grade 24/5.11c, A1), while Camille Berthoux, Tom Hoyle, Paul Rogers, and Karl “Merry” Schimanski combined to put up Rainmaker (300m, 23/5.11b).

Despite some early season promise, the winter of 2019 will be remembered as being unsettled and uncharacteristically warm. After a cold snap in late May, Ben Dare soloed a new line on the west face of the Dasler Pinnacles (2,315m) in June, following a prominent gully on the right side of the face, parallel to and just right of White Strike, with difficulties of WI3 and M4. Dare followed this up in early July by climbing several new water-ice lines at the head of Kay Creek in the Humboldt Mountains, the highlight of which was the 100m ice and mixed route Presence (WI4 M4). In the Remarkables, Craig Jefferies, Stephen Skelton, and Kyle Walter established a new multi-pitch mixed climb on the southwest face of Single Cone (2,319m): Gone Rogue (M5).

Milo Gilmour leading great alpine ice on first ascent of Make My Day on the south face of Mt. Barnicoat. Photo by Llewellyn Murdoch

The arrival of spring saw a flurry of activity on peaks above the West Coast Neves, the huge snowfields feeding the Fox and Franz Josef glaciers. Gavin Lang and Ben Sanford took advantage of good rime conditions on the east face of Mt. Haast (3,114m) to claim the first ascent of Hotline (IV, 5+, M5), which ascends for 450m up the third spur between the High and Middle Peaks. Not to be outdone, Milo Gilmour and Llewellyn Murdoch teamed up to climb Bottlenosed Dolphin (IV, 5+) on the west face of Lendenfeld Peak (3,194m). This ice and mixed route follows the second gully to left of the Mutant (McCartney-McFarlane, 1995) for 400m before following the upper Northwest Rib

(Bamford-Nankervis, 1977) to the summit. The pair quickly followed this up on the south face of Mt. Barnicoat (2,800m), where they climbed six pitches of steep ice in the vicinity of the 2010 rockfall scar to make the first ascent of Make My Day (III, 6).

In September, Reg Measures and Rose Pearson made the long trek up the Hooker Valley to the Sheila Face of Aoraki/Mt. Cook, where great ice conditions helped them make the second ascent of Pilgrim (VI, 7, M6, WI5, Jennings-Ladiges, 2018). In early January 2020, Pearson returned to the Hooker Valley with Alastair McDowell, starting at midnight to make a rare sub-24-hour, car-to-car Grand Traverse of Aoraki/Mt. Cook.

– Ben Dare, New Zealand

Images



Ben Sanford climbing onto the summit ridge of Mt. Haast after the first ascent of Hotline on the east face.



The prominent ice line soloed by Ben Dare soloed on the west face of the Dasler Pinnacles (2,315m) in June.



Milo Gilmour leading great alpine ice on first ascent of Make My Day on the south face of Mt. Barnicoat.



Milo Gilmour skiing away from the south face of Mt. Barnicoat. The new route Make My Day is visible on the left.



The east face of Mt. Haast showing the route of Hotline.



Ben Sanford soloing easy alpine ice during the first ascent of Hotline on the east face of Mt. Haast.



Ben Sanford on the summit ridge of Mt. Haast after climbing the east face.



Bottle Nosed Dolphin follows the prominent gully line on the left on the west face of Lendenfeld Peak.



Milo Gilmour enjoying classic gully climbing on the first ascent of Bottle Nosed Dolphin on the west face of Lendenfeld Peak.

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