



AAC Publications

Rockies Annual Highlights

Canada, Canadian Rockies

Whether it was the late effects of the COVID-19 chill or a very smoky summer, 2021 was not the most active year in the Canadian Rockies. Nonetheless, there were some interesting climbs.

On March 5, Alik Berg and Ian Welsted climbed a foamy, sticky ice strip on the northwest face of Mt. Vaux (3,310m), east of the Trans-Canada Highway, about halfway between Lake Louise and Golden. After a bivy at treeline, the two climbed a few vertical ice pitches, which led to 300m of moderate mixed ground, followed by 250m of technical ice before the northwest ridge, with Berg strolling to the summit in a storm: Western N ev  (800m, WI5 R M5).

About a week later, Berg teamed with Uisdean Hawthorn to make the coveted second ascent of the Mt. Wilson (3,260m) testpiece Dirty Love (V 500m, M7). They first climbed Totem Pole (200m, WI5) and then linked into Dirty Love for a 26-hour 1,700m car-to-car outing. Three days later, the same team added Amnesiac (500m, WI5 M7) on the northeast face of the east subpeak of Mt. Whympers (2,844m), visible from the Radium Highway (Hwy. 93).

Also in March, Luka Bogdanovic and Shawn White cycled 11km along the north shore of Lake Minnewanka to a drainage holding the incredible find of The Odyssey (200m, 7 pitches, WI4). With its remote yet easy-to-reach location, requiring only a 15-minute hike up the drainage after the bike approach, this south-facing route is bound to become a popular adventurous moderate.

In mid-April, Merrick Montemuro, Sebastian Taborszky, and Paul Taylor headed to Moraine Lake and found a striking line of ice in the bowl left of the Perren approach to Mt. Fay (3,235m). On the right side of the spectacular wall below the Fay Glacier, they climbed Play with Fay (345m, WI6). The same team added Last Harvest (110m, WI3/4) across Hector Lake, near Orion Falls, on April 20, at the end of the ice season.

The summer alpine scene seemed particularly quiet. However, in July, Berg and Juan Henriquez added a major summer-season line to the huge east face of Mt. Chephren (3,266m). Smoke and a Pancake (1,100m, 5.11-) was climbed over two days, and takes the buttress between the winter routes The Wild Thing (1,300m, WI5 M7) and The Dogleg Couloir (1,300m, V+ M7 A1). They found good quartzite for the first 600m, and the upper 500m alternated between limestone and shale ledges.

At the end of the summer, Berg and Maarten van Haeren completed the first traverse of the Trident Range outside Jasper. They began with the northeast ridge of Perevil Peak, the technical crux. The next day they moved counter-clockwise and completed Vertex Peak, Majestic Mountain, and Mt. Estella. On the last day they went over Manx Peak and Terminal Mountain, down to Marmot Pass, and finally over Marmot Mountain, all on quality quartzite. The traverse is around 16km as the crow flies, highway to highway, and the suggested grade is III+ 5.6.

Dylan Cunningham had quite a summer, first climbing Smokeshow (IV 850m, 5.6 45 ) on the northeast buttress of the north summit of Mt. Mummery (3,328m) with Tanya Bok. The peak is on the far western side of the Rockies, north of Golden, and the route was climbed at the end of August as part of the Alpine Club of Canada General Mountaineering Camp, hearkening back to an adventurous

time in that venerable institution. Cunningham also snagged the third known ascent of the Cheesmond-Dick route on the east face of Mt. Assiniboine (1,200m, V 5.9 A2), climbing with Ryan Richardson. Cunningham and Richardson joined Craig McGee for the final push up a new line on Mt. Louis (2,682m), which McGee established with various partners: Diamonds Are Forever (10 new pitches, 5.12) takes the right side of the sheer Diamond formation on the east face.

On October 5, Patrick Jones and Ryan Leavitt climbed a rock route up a likely unclimbed peak, Elevator #2 (referenced in the David Jones Rockies South guidebook), east of Elkford in the southern Rockies. They climbed 12 short pitches up to 5.8 and placed bolts for anchors due to poor rock quality.

The first new route in winter conditions in October, was a moderate line on Mt. Whyte (2,983m), above the Lake Agnes teahouse. Whyte Noise (430m, AI3 M4) by Austin Goodine, Taylor, and Taborszky became an instant classic. A few thin ice pitches lead to a romp up a snow couloir to a moderate mixed exit onto the ridge and the summit block; the route was repeated quickly by a few parties looking for early winter climbing.

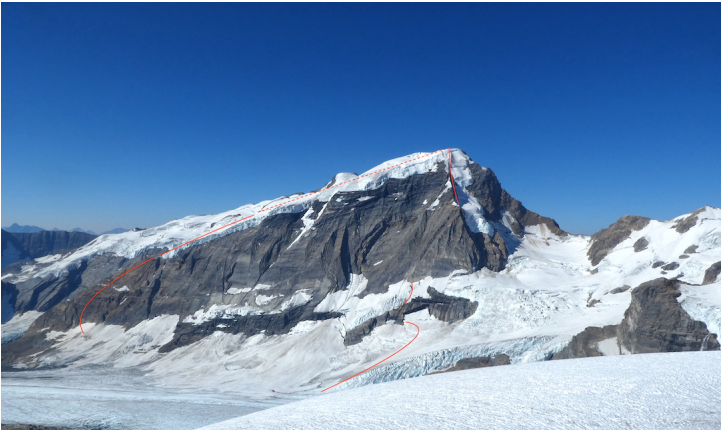
Also in October, van Haeren and Welsted headed up to the north face of Storm Mountain (3,095m) looking for the mythical Thomas-Wallator route, a 500m line on the left side of the face, first climbed in 1988 and still unrepeated. They veered off right into easier ground when confronted by vertical cracks, resulting in a variation with ledge and corner systems and a sustained M5 dry-tooling pitch.

In a more conventional vein, Taborszky and Bruno-Pierre Couture climbed a three-pitch mixed route in Field just to the left of the thin ice of Big Sexy Yodel. Aggravated Turtles (130m, WI5+ M6) is a useful option when the ice next door is unclimbable, which is often the case.

Finally, in late January, the author finished a moderate dry-tooling project that follows weaknesses to the left of the classic Mixed Master along the Icefields Parkway. Astringent Apprentice (300m, M5) was started with Sam Eastman, then climbed to the last pitch with Uisdean Hawthorn, and finally completed in good mixed conditions with Raphael Slawinski.

— Ian Welsted, Canada

Images



Mt. Mummery and the line of Smokeshow on the northeast buttress of the north summit.



Ryan Richardson seconding a pitch on the east face of Mt. Assiniboine during the third known ascent.



"Mt. Louis # 1" (2010), acrylic on canvas, by Glen Boles. The Diamond face is partially visible in profile

in upper right. A treasured figure in Canadian mountaineering, Glen Boles died in January 2022 at age 87. He began climbing in the 1950s, and his experience ran the gamut from exploratory mountaineering to rescue and ski patrol; he was an honorary member of the Canadian and American alpine clubs. Boles was well-known for his artwork, and many of his paintings and drawings can be seen at glenboles.ca.



Mt. Whyte: Whyte Noise (430m, AI3 M4) climbs the obvious cleft rising directly to the summit area.



The 2021 line up Elevator #2 in the southern Rockies, possibly the first ascent of the peak.



The line of Aggravated Turtles, a three-pitch mixed route near Field, British Columbia.



Climbing on Play with Fay, below the Fay Glacier.



Looking up the line of Whyte Noise on Mt. White.



Climbing on Play with Fay, below the Fay Glacier.



During the three-day traverse of the Trident Range outside Jasper.



Western Névé (800m, WI5 R M5) on the northwest face of Mt. Vaux.



Alik Berg leading on the upper tiers of Western Névé on Mt. Vaux.

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