



AAC Publications

Southern Alps: Annual Highlights

New Zealand, Southern Alps

The summer of early 2021 was highlighted by a series of adventurous trips into remote areas of the southern ranges.

In January, Leonard Brockerhoff, Ed Cromwell, Nick Kowalski, and Ben Mangan made the long trek into the Garden of Allah, via the Lyell Glacier, where they climbed two moderate routes on Newton Peak (2,543m). Fruit Salad (15/5.7) ascended seven pitches up a previously unclimbed eastern buttress. Apple Crumble, climbed the next day, follows a grade 18/5.10a crack line up a neighboring western buttress.

The following month, down in the Darran Mountains, Jimmy Finlayson, Olivia Truax, and Sam Waetford climbed Mist Crystals (400m, 17/5.9) on the Kaipo Kid buttress, the northwest flank of Peak 2,072m, adjacent to the main Kaipo Wall. The ascent was made during a multi-day circumnavigation of Mt. Tutoko (2,723m).

Asher March and Rose Pearson made a three-day traverse of the central Darrans, from Cleft Creek to the Donne Valley, and in the process completed a new route (250m, 17/5.9) up the northwest face of Karetai Peak (2,206m). Conor Vaessen and Maddy Whittaker headed up Mistake Creek to climb a 19-pitch new route on the southwest face of Pyramid Peak (2,295m)—New Zealand Alpine Kids Go Climbing (1,100m, 19/5.10b)—which tops out on the ridge between Pyramid and Ngatimamoe (2,164m).

Further north in the Canterbury area, Bernie Frankpitt, Greg Low, and Grant Piper headed to Cloudy Peak (2,403m) to climb The Whole Nine Yards (16 pitches, 21/5.10d). This route goes from the bottom of the west-facing Hourglass Wall to the top of the Great Prow.

To close out the “summer” rock climbing season, in May, Daniel Joll and Ben Mangan paired up for the first ascent of Dream Liner (700m, 29/5.13) on the Airport Wall, above Milford Sound. Joll, who led the effort to climb Airport Wall’s first full route, The Mile High Club (700m, 22 pitches, 5.12d) in 2020, returned with James Hobson for the free ascent of Dream Liner.

Attending the annual Darrans Winter Climbing meet in July, Steven Fortune, Ruari Macfarlane, and Alastair McDowell climbed nearly 1,000 vertical meters up through the Crosscut Bluffs to gain access to the southwest face of the West Peak of Mt. Crosscut (2,203m) and there climbed The Itch (300m, IV, 6 (M5+). [See the video below.]

Moving north and into early October, McDowell and Pat Gray made the third ascent of the northeast face of Torres Peak (3,160m) via a difficult and aesthetic variation. Starting up the first five pitches of God’s Zone (Jefferies-Uren, 2004), they first broke right and then left up a rock buttress, climbing seven new pitches: Southern Traverse (500m, V,6).

Rounding out the month, Joe Collinson, Will Rowntree, and Sam Smoothy hiked in to climb the East Ridge of Aoraki/Mt. Cook (3,724m) en route to making the second ski descent of the imposing 2,000m Caroline Face; the first descent was in 2017 (see AAJ 2020).

– Ben Dare, New Zealand

Images



Daniel Joll climbing on pitch seven of Dreamliner (700m, 29/5.13) on the Airport Wall above Milford Sound.



Ben Mangan arriving at camp during the first ascent of Dreamliner (700m, 29/5.13) on the Airport Wall above Milford Sound.



The northeast face of Torres Peak, showing God's Zone (yellow, 2004) and Southern Traverse (red, 2021). Arrow marks start of Land Bridge (Denz-Gabites-Perry, 1977), zigzagging up ramps.



The Itch on Mt. Crosscut's West Peak.



Pat Gray reaching the summit ridge on Torres Peak after climbing Southern Traverse on the northeast face.



The West Peak of Mt. Crosscut from the southwest. The Itch, climbed in July 2021, takes the obvious cleft in the center of the upper rock face.

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