



## AAC Publications

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### **Abiathar Peak, North Ridge**

United States, Wyoming, Absaroka Range

**On January 9, 2023, my dad, Rusty Willis, and I completed a potential first ascent of the north ridge (1,500', M6+ 80° snow) of Abiathar Peak (10,928') in northeastern Yellowstone National Park.** We parked at the cross-country skiing area near Warm Creek, just south of the northeast entrance of Yellowstone, and skied four miles to the base of the ridge. We were able to stay out of avalanche terrain for the entire approach.

The climb started on poor volcanic rock, with several fun but unprotected M4 chimney pitches separated by steep snowfields. The steep ridge then eased off, and just as it seemed we would climb easily to the summit, several cliff bands became visible through the clouds. Four excellent pitches on completely rimed-up rock led us to a final cliff guarding the summit ridge. The easiest weakness in the ridge turned out to be the most difficult pitch on the route, with a 20' overhanging M6+ chimney that was protected by a single tiny cam.

The ridge traverse to the summit was relatively calm, although socked in with clouds. The massive northeast face cut away beneath us—an 1,800' wall of vertical rock, caked in rime ice, that would be a proud objective for the boldest of alpinists. [The left side of the northeast face is bounded by the Abiathar Couloir, a well-known and difficult ski mountaineering descent.]

We summited Abiathar at 4 p.m., after six hours of climbing. We followed our ascent route on the descent and made eight rappels off slung gargoyles. We then skied back to the car and made it to Cooke City in time to order a pizza at the Miner Bar, where we discussed whether this might have been a first ascent or the first winter ascent. We agreed that in this area, it is difficult to claim a first ascent, as most climbs have been done without any sort of publication. However, considering the difficulty of the climbing and the nature of the rock, we believe it is likely this was at least a first winter ascent, and possibly a new route.

— Justin Willis

## Images



Rusty Willis climbing steep rime ice on the north ridge (1,500', M6+ 80° snow) of Abiathar Peak, Yellowstone National Park, Absaroka Range, Wyoming.



Rusty Willis approaching the final headwall pitches on the north ridge (1,500', M6+ 80° snow) of Abiathar Peak. The January 2023 climb was likely the first winter ascent of the north ridge and possibly the first overall ascent of the feature.



Rusty Willis nearing the summit of Abiathar Peak after he and his son, Justin Willis, climbed the north ridge (1,500', M6+ 80° snow).



Abiathar Peak in far northeastern Yellowstone National Park. The north ridge is along the right skyline. The Abiathar Couloir is in center left.

## Article Details

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