



## AAC Publications

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### **Augustin Peak, North Buttress**

Alaska, Alaska Range, Kichatna Mountains

**On April 19, Kurt Ross, Nelson Neirinck, and I landed on the Trident Glacier with three weeks of food and one guaranteed day of good weather.** We left our base camp the next morning at the comfortable time of 6 a.m., planning for two days on the north buttress of Augustin Peak (ca 8,600'), an attractive unclimbed feature I'd noticed while reading the AAJ report on the first ascent of the Erdmann-Roskelley Northeast Face (4,000', IV M3 70°) in 2014. Snow conditions were ideal after a month-long high-pressure system that had just ended, allowing for rather easy and safe snow travel on all aspects of the mountain.

Our route began on the northeast face of the north buttress. The lower third of the buttress provided a long pitch of water ice followed by easy snow up to a rock band. Two long pitches of thin névé took us up a narrow groove in the rock, and thus through the route's biggest unknown, with little difficulty. After a short cornice crux, we unroped and climbed the remaining snow slopes to the top of the buttress, where we hydrated and soaked up the sun while we still could.

Instead of tackling the knife-edge ridge directly above, we chose the slightly less aesthetic option of traversing hard left across the northeast face, aiming for a col below the summit. (On top of the time constraints, we skipped the ridge because of deteriorating snow quality and a lack of obvious protection.) When we arrived at the summit, 14 hours after crossing the bergschrund, the surrounding peaks glowed pink in the setting sunlight.

Though we had packed a bivy kit, we decided to push through the night to get down. We descended the east ridge to where we could downclimb the northeast face—no rappels needed. Our descent path roughly followed the same route that Ben Erdmann and Jess Roskelley climbed up in 2014, and that Michael Graber, Alan Long, and George Schunk descended in 1977 after their first ascent of the peak via its west face.

We arrived back at our skis well past midnight and made it back to camp shortly before sunrise. Hammering winds and subzero temps arrived later that day. We flew out after eight more days and several feet of fresh snow without having gotten the chance to climb anything else.

The North Buttress (4,600', Alaska Grade 5 AI4) is one of the longest routes in the Kichatna Mountains, starting lower than either of the prior routes up Augustin. Thanks to the AAC's Mountaineering Fellowship Fund for a grant that helped make this trip possible.

— **Michael Telstad**

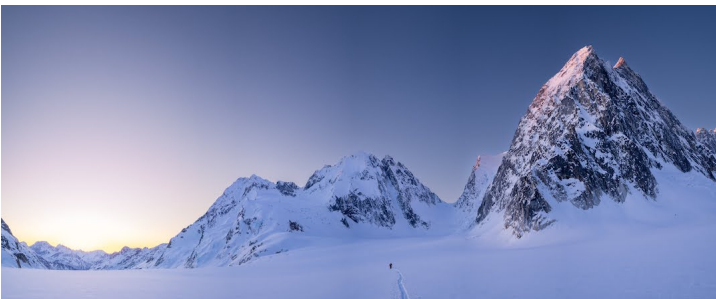
## Images



The North Buttress (4,600', Alaska Grade 5, AI4) of Augustin Peak (ca 8,600') in the Kichatna Mountains. The 2023 team's descent was by the prominent snow and ice face that tops out just left of the summit pyramid. This was roughly the line of the second ascent of the peak, the Erdmann-Roskelley Northeast Face, climbed in 2014.



Augustin Peak (ca 8,600'), at right, from the landing site on the Trident Glacier in the Kichatna Mountains.



Kurt Ross and Michael Telstad crossing the Trident Glacier toward the north buttress of Augustin Peak (prominent at right). The 4,600-foot climb, with Nelson Neirinck, ran up the left (northeast) side of the central buttress facing the camera and continued to the summit, which is beyond the rock tower at far right. The two other routes on Augustin—the West Face (Graber-Long-Schunk, 1977) and the Erdmann-Roskelley Northeast Face (4,000', IV M3 70°, 2014)—are hidden from view to the right and left, respectively.



Michael Telstad setting the boot pack up the snow cone to the base of the first pitch on the northeast side of the North Buttress of Augustin Peak.



Nelson Neirinck leading the first pitch of ice on the North Buttress of Augustin Peak, belayed by Michael Telstad.



Kurt Ross and Michael Telstad navigate a minor mixed step low on the North Buttress of Augustin Peak, as morning sunlight scrapes across the face.



Kurt Ross tiptoes up thin névé through the crux rock band of Augustin Peak's North Buttress (4,600', Alaska Grade 5, AI4).





Michael Telstad navigates the north ridge of Augustin. The prominent gendarme directly above him, projecting out of frame up and right, was bypassed by traversing left across the northeast face.



Michael Telstad begins a long unprotected traverse across the upper northeast face while Kurt Ross pays out rope.



Nelson Neirinck (right) and Kurt Ross climb steep snow on the final summit pyramid of Augustin

Peak.

## Article Details

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