



## AAC Publications

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### **Mt. Swineford, First Known Ascent**

Alaska, Coast Mountains, Boundary Ranges

**The Taku River flows from British Columbia and eventually empties into a glacial fjord east of Juneau.** Its environs are a landscape of 5,000' to 8,000' peaks that fall all the way to sea level. Mt. Swineford (58.43548, -133.72378) rises from the Taku's east side to a mighty 6,841'. Because it is much taller than the surrounding peaks, it's easily seen from the tops of mountains around Juneau, and it had been on my partners' and my radar for quite some time; in the summer of 2018, it was at the very top of our list.

The approach to Mt. Swineford would have made the trip a full-blown expedition, and we didn't have time for that. Instead, on July 20, 2018, Mike Miller, Makaila Olson, Ben Still, and I flew in with Ward Air, a local float-plane company, and landed on Swineford Lake, at an elevation of 1,000'. Though it was already 5:30 p.m., July's never-setting sun bathed the landscape in light; we wanted to make a high camp on the mountain, so we started climbing. The lower third of the mountain was, as with most mountains in southeast Alaska, a laborious jungle bushwack through alder and sharp-needled brush. Three hours later, we broke out into the alpine and made camp at just over 4,000', where we enjoyed evening colors on the Juneau Icefield. Directly across from us was Devils Paw (8,584'), the tallest mountain on the icefield.

The next morning, we climbed through stunning alpine meadows and rocky terrain to a point where we could mount the glacier. Mike led the team up the glacier on the west face, which brought us to the north ridge at around 6,700'. From here, Makaila led out on the ridge on ice and snow for about 100', bringing us to the summit.

We descended our route back to our high camp and stayed another night. The next morning we returned to the lake, and that evening we were back in Juneau, thanks to Ward Air. Though ours likely was the first climbing ascent (III 65°) of Mt. Swineford, it was probably not a virgin summit, as it had likely been "summitted" by heli-skiers on prior occasions.

— Dylan Miller

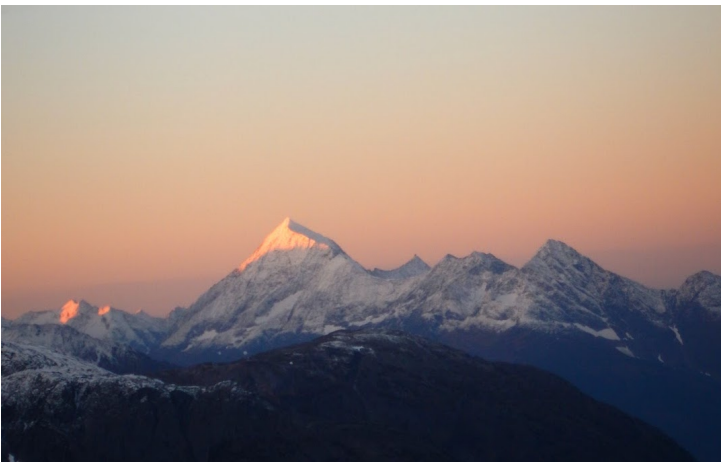
## Images



Mt. Swineford (6,841') seen from the Taku River. To make the first ascent of the mountain, in July 2018, Dylan Miller, Mike Miller, Makaila Olson, and Ben Still, climbed the west face to an elevation of 6,700' and then finished on the north ridge.



Mt. Swineford (6,841') from the northwest. The first ascent was by the west face, partially hidden in clouds.



Sunset on Mt. Swineford (6,841'), as seen from northwest.

## Article Details

Author	Dylan Miller
Publication	AAJ
Volume	65
Issue	98
Page	111
Copyright Date	2024
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions