



## AAC Publications

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### **Bearhat Mountain, Northwest Face, The Anderson-Carey**

Montana, Lewis Range, Glacier National Park

**In late November 2017, Brent Anderson and I made our first trip into Avalanche Basin in Glacier National Park to climb the ice routes formed by runoff below the Sperry Glacier.** We left completely enamored by the beauty and abundance of ice in the back of the basin.

Inspired, I combed through old AAJ reports from Glacier and perused Google Earth, and I noticed a cascade of water flowing down the northwest face of Bearhat Mountain (8,689'), which rises just east of the Avalanche Lake Trail. I followed the cascade up and up and up until it terminated in a perennial snowfield that sits in a large bowl between the main and false summits of Bearhat. A quick measurement showed the cascade to be approximately 3,100' high. From the snowfield, it was another 800' to Bearhat's summit. Stunned by the potential route's length, and its close proximity to a well-traveled trail, I sent a message to Brent. We made plans to attempt the route early the following winter.

Several days prior to Thanksgiving in 2018, Brent and I headed into the park. Heavy packs, slow climbing, and a small weather window forced us to retreat just a third of the way up Bearhat. We returned in November 2019, thinking we had learned from our previous mistakes: We launched with minimal food and fuel, planning on climbing the route in a single push. Some poor navigation during the night put us off route in an unclimbable corner. After many time-consuming rappels to correct our mistake, we realized we didn't have sufficient food or fuel to complete the climb. Terrible weather and park construction projects kept us away for the next three winters.

November 2023 proved unusually warm and dry, but on the 29th, Brent and I found ourselves standing below the face yet again. Around 11 a.m., the clouds dissipated enough for us to see that our cascade was frozen. By noon we were climbing.

We soloed several hundred feet of low- angle ice steps to a dubious pitch of poorly formed ice that poured through a narrow cleft. We belayed each other up this pitch, then happily simul-climbed ice that increased in quality as we got higher.

After 600', we arrived at the crux, a steep WI4+ curtain that ended with a beautiful pillar. Overjoyed by the sticky, one-swing ice, we belayed this pitch and then raced up a steep snow slope to the base of a two-tiered curtain of ice. We climbed aerated but still enjoyable ice here, then stomped out a platform to boil water as the sun dipped below the horizon.

After rehydrating and enjoying some snacks, we simul-climbed approximately 1,000' of steep snow with the occasional step of ice up to the base of what Brent and I had previously dubbed the "Black Face." On Google Earth, this appeared as a vertical face of black rock, about 150' high, with water streaming down it. We had fantasized about it for years but were dismayed to find it completely dry. Instead, 50' to the left, we headed up a V-slot of engaging mixed climbing over two-inch-thick névé.

Past the slot, we simul-climbed 600' of steep snow up the bowl between Bearhat's northeast ridge and north rib. We climbed out of the bowl via a steep snow ramp to just a few hundred feet below the

summit, where large, compact blocks halted our passage. Seeking a way past this obstacle, we traversed across the top of a hanging snowfield for two pitches to the north rib, where we found a slot through the blocks. Exciting mixed climbing for one and a half pitches—including an overhang that we each surmounted with a tenuous tool placement on the right and a hand jam on the left—deposited us on the west ridge, 50' from the top of Bearhat. We stood on the summit at around 1 p.m. on November 30, 26 hours after beginning.

With a storm incoming, we fired off a few messages to friends and family and began the descent. After 11 hours of downclimbing and rappelling, we were back at the base and soon hiking back to the car—just as the storm broke.

After we made the news of our ascent public, we were informed by Michael Robinson that his brother, Mason Robinson, had possibly soloed Bearhat's northwest face in 2002 and, in true Montana style, never told anyone except for his brother. Mason died on El Capitan in 2013. No more information about his ascent is known. So, while we believe our line, the Anderson-Carey (1,210m, V WI4 M5), to be a new route, it was probably not the first ascent of Bearhat's northwest face.

— **Dallin Carey**

## Images



Dallin Carey leads a step of good ice low on the northwest face of Bearhat Mountain. The full route took 26 hours to climb, with another 11 hours for the descent.



The wonderful double curtain pitch on The Anderson-Carey (1,210m, V WI4 M5) on the north face of Bearhat Mountain.



Near the top of the route, Dallin Carrey works his way across a hanging snowfield.



Brent Anderson (right) and Dallin Carey standing next to the cairn on the summit of Bearhat Mountain as storm clouds begin to roll in. The ascent of the north face took them 26 hours.



The northwest face of Bearhat Mountain and the Anderson-Carey Route (1,210m, V WI4 M5). This is possibly the second ascent of the face. The late Mason Robinson reportedly soloed a route up the northwest face in 2002, but the line is not known.

## Article Details

Author	Dallin Carey
Publication	AAJ
Volume	65
Issue	98
Page	145
Copyright Date	2024
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions