



AAC Publications

Mosquito Pass Wall (Peak 2,911'), Unikkiga Aklunaaq

Alaska, Seward Peninsula, Kigluaik Mountains

Mosquito Pass Wall, with the arrow marking the start of Unikkiga Aklunaaq. Photo by Kara Beer

Unikkiga Aklunaaq (260m, 5.8) is the first known rock route to ascend the Mosquito Pass Wall (64.920139, -165.489944) in the Kigluaik Mountains, about 25 miles north of Nome on the remote Seward Peninsula. (See AAJ 2010 for the first ascent of the wall, via a snow and ice couloir.) The north-facing wall is named after the range's central pass, which has a nine-mile approach from the nearest gravel road, crossing seven rivers.

On June 19, Kara Beer and I hiked to the cirque, encountering moose and adorable rock ptarmigan nestlings. We parted ways near the base. She planned to hike to the top while I climbed the north face.

I took the obvious path of least resistance up the center of the apron wall, a right-leaning ramp emerging at the tarn's edge and terminating at the apron's shoulder. From the approach, I could see snow above the shoulder, fighting to remain through the blazing eve of summer solstice. Its futile efforts bled hissing waterfalls down most of the wall. As I kick-stepped across the snowfield at the base, I passed speckled granite missiles of large and small that had been dislodged in these ominous torrents.

While the climbing in the first 200 meters was technically no harder than 5.7, it was a minefield of wet, explosive rock. After I traversed right across a snowmelt waterfall, the rock became more consolidated and drier in a right-facing dihedral with a quality hand crack (5.8). Finally, I was rock climbing and not simply surviving. This lasted for about 30 meters before the wall lay back into a final chossy scramble.

Kara and I reunited at the top of the route and descended a large talus field together. We arrived back at the truck 15 hours after having parked it.

Unikkiga Aklunaaq, translated from the localized Iñupiaq dialect, means "I am leaving behind the rope." Thank you to Gail "Topkaruk" Smithhisler for her help with the translation.

—Dakota Walz

Images



The Mosquito Pass Wall with the line of Unikkiga Akłunaaq (260m, 5.8). The first ascent of the wall was via a snow and ice couloir about as far right of the prominent pinnacles as Unikkiga Akłunaaq is left.



Dakota Walz filling water at the tarn below the Mosquito Pass Wall. Unikkiga Akłunaaq takes the obvious weakness left of the rightmost yellow streak.



The Mosquito Pass Wall, as seen from across the tarn at its base. The arrow marks the start of Unikkiga Aklunaaq.

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