

East Kootenay Rock Update – March 2015



Peak 2665 – Boulder Creek

C. Ferguson photo, June 2014

Here are some new, old, sport, trad, short and long rock routes to supplement your copy of Gordon's excellent guidebook and to help get you stoked for the climbing season. Thanks to everyone who continues to build the climbing community in the south-east Kootenay, and especially to Bryce for passing on the Boulder creek info and letting us enjoy the results of his explorations and hard work. Hope to see you on the rock!
~ Andrew McLeod

Lakit Lake

For those you who don't warm up on 5.11, two short climbs went in on the small crags to the left of the approach trail. Left to Right:

Spy Catcher 10c, bolts

Tinker, Tailor 5.9, bolts

Perry Creek – Old Town Rock

Some nice additions to the crag; this popular destination keeps getting better.

Slabhedrals

The route that goes by no name 5.9, bolts. This route is to the right of "Left Hand Slab" and it ascends the arête to about half height. (B. Cox and Friends, 2014)

Lady Slipper 5.6, bolts. Climb a wide chimney feature between the above route and left of "Crab" to a station at half height. Easy and fun. Also provides a better start, or a first pitch, to "Crab." (B. Cox and friends, 2014)

Baby Bum Wall

A couple new routes are in-progress on the left hand side. Stay tuned.

Right Side

Ronald Dumsfeld and the Known Unknowns 5.8, bolts. Located on the slab to the right of "Dick Cheney." (A. McLeod and T. Szkorupa, 2013)

Statistics Wall

A new name for what was called the "Third Tier" in the guidebook? Left to right:

Curve Belle (12b, bolts) finally surrendered to the twisted efforts of Tay Hanson in 2014 – well done! A fine route with some steep, hard crimping up the centre of the crag.

Standard Deviation 11c, bolts. A steep, zig-zagging route up the waves of smooth stone. Recommended. (A. McLeod and T. Hanson, 2013)

Logistic Regression 10b, bolts. A steep start followed by some thin and thoughtful moves up the slab. (A. McLeod and T. Hanson, 2013)

Lastly, more boulders have been cleaned on the other side of the road and a number of quality problems have been uncovered up to V4.

Bootleg Mountain

A new crag is being developed high above the St. Mary River Valley. Stay tuned!

Boulder Creek – North Fork

This is an exciting high alpine venue in the Rockies east of Cranbrook. The huge slab and corner featured north facing wall on Peak 2665 is now home to four multi-pitch adventures. A great destination to beat the summer heat.

Approach: The same as for the “Fisher Spires” area described in Gordon’s guidebook located on the north side of Mt. Fisher, except continue about 2km further up the Boulder Creek FSR, go past a bridge and park at the next left hand switchback. A well marked trail heads up the valley for about 1km to near a small lake. From here, head up steep terrain to the left (north-east) and into a high alpine basin. Finally, climb some snow to the base of your chosen route; crampons might be required. About 2 hours.

Notes: Routes are listed Left to Right as shown on the cover photo. All grades, lengths and directions should be taken with some skepticism, as these are big climbs that have seen very few ascents. This is not a sport climbing destination - go prepared.

Tragically, Mitch Thornton died suddenly in 2014. He was partly responsible for opening this area up and was dedicated to exploring the East Kootenay backcountry and establishing new climbs. In addition to his contributions up Boulder Creek he was a resident of Canal Flats and established many new routes on Mt. Sabine, as well as some granite adventures in the Doctor Creek headwaters. For more on the climbing near Canal Flats go here: http://fivetelectric.com/fun/climbing/rock_climbing.html



Boulder Creek Trailheads and Crags

Peak 2665

1. Hummingbird Ridge 400m, 5.7, Trad

(B. Cox and M Trudeau, 2011; retrofitted by M. Thornton in 2012)

The pink line in the picture. This 15 ½ pitch route ascends the long buttress on the left hand side of the face below the summit. It has bolted stations situated every 30m that you can rap with a single 60m rope. It's an aesthetic line, but the upper pitches are a bit junky and there is lots of loose rock to watch out for. Named for some dive-bombing hummingbirds with an attraction to bright outdoor clothing. It tops out in a great position.

2. Stitch Ripper 375m, 5.9, Trad

(B. Cox and M. Trudeau with help from J. Kaulback and K. Popovich, 2012)

Approach: Continue up the snow cone in the middle of the face to the base of an obvious corner. The route gets harder as the depth of the snowpack decreases, but the start is well protected with bolts. The red line in the picture.

Pitch 1, 30m 5.7

Start immediately right of the corner at the top of the snow cone. Climb the featured face past several bolts and look for a small ledge with a two bolt anchor.

Pitch 2, 30m 5.8

Step left from the belay and climb the face and crack to the right of the main corner system past some bolts to a ledge and two bolt belay.

Pitch 3, 35m 5.8

Step left and climb the main corner system. Belay at a single bolt and gear belay tucked under a small roof.

Pitch 4, 45m 5.9

Climb up a corner and past some bolts. Pull past a small roof on the right and continue up for a few more meters. At a weakness, trend right out of main corner looking for a bolt which leads you to a small ledge and a two bolt belay.

Pitch 5, 55 m 5.9

Climb the crack right of the main corner system on gear and the odd bolt. When the crack joins the main corner you have two options. Straight up the corner is often wet and difficult but is fun and ends at a two bolt belay in the main corner. Another option is to step right a few meters before the crack joins the corner and belay on the arête at a two bolt anchor.

Pitch 6, 15m 5.8

The length of this pitch is dependent on where you belayed. Climb up the main corner looking for a bolt on the left that takes you out of the main corner system and past a short steep section. Belay at two bolts on a big ledge.

Pitch 7, 30m 5.8

Climb up the corner left of a large roof passing a bolt. Continue straight up to another bolt then trend slightly right past a couple more bolts to gain a small ledge with a two bolt belay.

Pitch 8, 30m 5.8

Climb straight up for a few moves keeping an eye out for a bolt to the left. From the bolt trend left and face climb past another bolt to join another crack. Climb the crack to a ledge and a two bolt belay.

Pitch 9, 30m 5.9

Climb up the obvious crack past several bolts to another ledge and a two bolt belay.

Pitch 10, 45m 5.7

Continue up a corner. The climbing gets easier as you ascend. The trick here is to keep the rope and your feet off of the loose ledges; climbing on the right hand side of the easy ledges does this and will help protect your belayer. Also, as you ascend look for a rap anchor on the right hand side on top of a pedestal; you will have difficulty finding it on the way down unless spotted on way up. Continue climbing past the pedestal to a single bolt belay on a large ledge system.

Pitch 11, 30m 5.7

Climb a corner and a face to the right of the bolt and gain the corner. Continue to the top of the ridge and a single bolt and rock horn belay.

Descent:

1. 30m Rap off the horn to the ledge with the single bolt.
2. 15m Rap off the single bolt; this can also be easily be downclimbed/belayed to the top of the pedestal.
3. 30m Rap to previously used belay anchor.
4. 30m Rap to previously used belay anchor.
5. 30m Rap to previously used belay anchor.
6. 30m Rap straight down over the big roof.
7. 30m Rap past a pair of bolts in the corner to the anchor on the arête.
8. 30m Rap down the slab.
9. 30m Rap down the slab.
10. 30m Rap down the slab.
11. 30m Rap to the top of pitch two.
12. 30m Rap to the top of pitch one.
13. 30m Rap to base; length dependent on the height of snow.
14. Rap from a single bolt down the snow cone.

Gear: Standard rack to 3 inches. Doubling up on some of the mid size cams might be helpful. Not all of the bolted stations are established for rappels so you must be prepared to leave some tat behind.

3. Arctic Air 270m, 5.10a, Trad

(B. Cox, M. Knudsgaard and R. Tarves, 2013)

The blue line

Pitch 1 5.8

Length is dependent on time of year and the height of snow at the base. Climb the corner past a bolt, after 10 meters look for a bolt and trend right onto a ledge with a two bolt belay.

Pitch 2 29m 5.10a

Step right and gain a thin hand crack and climb past some bolts and small gear until the crack starts to thin out. Trend left and look for a bolt to gain the arête. Climb a few moves up the arête before getting back into a thin finger crack. Climb a short ways up the crack and look for a two bolt belay.

Pitch 3 29m 5.10a

Continue straight up the crack. It takes good gear and there are a few bolts. Continue straight up this corner and eventually gain a pedestal on the left hand arête - amazing views down the big dihedral!

Pitch 4 60m 5.9

Climb up the corner past some bolts and gain a ledge. There is an anchor to your left. Due to potential rockfall from the pitch above, it may be best to continue past this station and belay higher.

Pitch 5 55m 5.7

From this point the climbing gets easy and there are several ways to go. The best climbing is straight up; try to stay on the right hand face. There are lots of gear placements on this feature, the climbing is easy, and most importantly it keeps your feet off the rubbly ledges and reduces the potential for rock fall. Look for a two bolt anchor on the right.

Pitch 6 55m 5.7

Continue to the top on similar ground and look for a two bolt anchor near the top. This anchor may be difficult to re-locate from above on the ridge.

Descent: Rappel the route. 30m raps.

Gear: Standard rack to 3 inches with doubles of the smaller cams for the 5.10 pitches. The rappel stations may require some tat.

4. Project

The green line. Climbable with fixed stations every 60m, but not finished to the top yet.

5. Rattlesnake Shake 250m, 5.8, Trad

(M. Thornton, B. Cox and J. Kaulback, 2013)

The yellow line. About eight pitches, requiring a healthy rack, 2 x 60m ropes, and some challenging rappels to get off. Bring lots of tat. Named after a Fleetwood Mac tune that was stuck in Mitch's head all day. Loose and not really recommended.

Maus Creek – Fisher Basin

1. **Black Ridge (aka Fisher Spire) 180m, 5.7+, Trad**

This climb is probably the route called Black Ridge in the old AAC/ACC guidebook *The Rocky Mountains of Canada South*, page 86.
(FA T. Mould and P. Morrow, 1973)

Approach: The Maus Creek – Fisher Basin routes are all situated on the right hand side of the cirque below the south-west face of Mt. Fisher. Approach via the well trodden Mount Fisher Trail to the bivi site and outhouse in the basin below Mt. Fisher, then pick your way up the scree on the opposite side of the valley to the base of the routes; 2 hours.

The Climb: This fun route ascends directly up the arête in about six 30m pitches. Regular ledges provide comfortable stances for belays. The rock is generally excellent quartzite. Although the right side of the arête tends to be easier climbing, it is mossy and loose. The left side is very clean and solid, so try and keep a direct line and avoid veering right. A standard rack to 4 inches is recommended. One or two old pitons may be encountered. Recommended.

Descent: One option is via a long traverse around the backside of all the spires, through a rubble col and down some steep snow (use caution). This will eventually bring you back to the bivi site. A safer and quicker option is to carry-over and descend to the right to eventually rejoin the Mt. Fisher Trail some distance below the cirque.



Fisher Basin and Black Ridge route in late summer

M. Thornton photo

The following two routes are both adventure climbs offering a fun outing for those comfortable on some loose stone. They are located to the left of Black Spire.

2. **Day Break Spire 140m, 5.10+R, Trad**

(FA B. Cox and J. Madden, 2009)

Red line. This climb goes up an attractive feature and has some good climbing on it; there is no fixed gear and some runout sections – a real adventure! The crux is a roof that offers some challenging climbing but on good gear. The last pitch is a stellar 40m 5.8 hand crack that takes you to the top.

3. Central Spire 140m, 5.8, Trad

(B. Cox and S. Falz, 2009)

Blue Line. This climb takes you to the top of an attractive spire but on mediocre stone. No fixed gear. Climb up the loose gully and look for a weakness heading left towards the ridge. Climb up the corner system, mostly to the right of the ridge crest, and gain a nice corner and hand crack to finish.



Fisher Basin Routes after an autumn snow

A. McLeod photo



Starting up the Black Ridge

T. Szkorupa photo

Bear Lake

Approach: What, you have never been there? Then its time to buy a copy of Janice Strong's hiking guidebook and go for a long overdue walk. These routes are on the limestone buttress encountered on the left, shortly before you arrive at the lake; 45 minutes.

Papa Poule 55m and some scrambling, 5.7, Trad

(M. Trudeau and H. Durand, 2014)

Access the climb by scrambling 4th class terrain to a small bench near the big corner system on the left hand side of the buttress. Pitch 1: 30m, 5.7. Climb the featured face just right of the corner up to a small blocky roof. Climb directly over the roof or take easier terrain around it; gear belay. Pitch 2: 25m, 5.7. Continue up the face, then trend right to better rock and gain the ridge. Continue scrambling or short roping up the ridge to the summit. At the top do a single rope rappel off a horn to a small col and then walk down to the lake for a cool dip. Bring a light rack.



Bear Lake Buttress

M. Trudeau photo

Mottrot 60m plus scrambling, 5.10a, Trad

(B. Cox and Friends, 2014)

This route is about 10m right of Papa Poule. Scramble 4th class terrain to a ledge. Pitch 1: 30m, 5.8. From the ledge climb the clean corner and then tuck under a small roof on the right to belay. Pitch 2: 30m, 10a. Head out left and continue up the corner, step around the crux roof on the right and then continue to the ridge. From here you join the other route and continue to the top. Standard rack.