

Wildhorse Classics

Pat McGrane

November 20, 2014

This document describes some of the classic technical rock climbs in the eastern Pioneer Range of Idaho. It includes routes in Wildhorse Basin as well as those near Kane Lake. The routes are a one hour drive east of Sun Valley over Trail Creek Pass. The climbs usually require hiking an hour or two from the nearest road. The granite rock is sometimes excellent, and sometimes not. It is always an adventure. These long technical routes have no bolts, no fixed pitons, no slings, no trash, and no other signs of humans. Let's keep it that way.

Included is a statement about the first known ascent for each route. Take this with a grain of salt. Idaho climbers have historically been tight lipped about their accomplishments. The finest lines may have been climbed without fanfare long ago.

I have also attempted to rate the routes, but there are usually many possible options for a leader, so the ratings are very subjective. The routes listed could likely be done at an easier grade if a climber was willing to look around a bit. For instance, if a route is rated 5.9, it is quite possible that moving right or left 30 feet might yield a 5.6 or 5.7 alternative. I have simply rated the pitches as I (or others) found them. Often my partners and I were looking for interesting and exciting lines, and not simply the easiest way.

Anyone leading these routes should be experienced in climbing moderate rock quickly. You don't want to be high up on these climbs when a thunderstorm moves in. Retreat could be difficult.

The suggested equipment rack for all routes is a set of stoppers, a set of cams to two or three inches, six alpine draws, and two double slings. I have always used a single 50-60 meter rope, but have never needed to retreat from high up. Twin ropes might be better.

Devils Bedstead West (DBW) (11,051 ft)

The technical routes on Devils Bedstead West (DBW) are approached from the Kane Lake Trailhead, east of Trail Creek Pass. There are two ridge (arête) routes on DBW as shown in the photo below.



Devils Bedstead West (DBW) above Kane Lake. The Irish Arête is the shorter one on the left. The North East Ridge is the long one on the right.

North East Ridge of DBW, Grade III, 5.7



This is an excellent route with great views. The earliest known ascent of the NE Ridge was by Eric Leidecker and Robb Hamblen on August 7, 2009. Nick Brown and I did this route on September 26, 2010. We got a late start (11:30 AM) and hiked out in the dark. It consists of 12 roped pitches up three steep steps at the ridge crest between the sun and shade in the above picture. This was Nick's first multi-pitch trad climb. It was quite an adventure.

It's a 2.5 hour approach to the base of NE Ridge via Kane Creek. Start the climb at the highest tree at the base of the ridge. Follow the arête to the top. When in doubt, move right.

It took us 6.5 hours from the rope-up point to the summit: The first five pitches featured nice solid granite and were mid 5th class. The hardest moves were about 5.7. There is one 3rd class pitch at mid-height. The final six pitches were not of the same quality, but still fun. There was some 4th class. Stay on the arête crest for the best time.

It takes about 2.0 hours to descent the right fork of Kane Creek to the trail parking lot.

The rock is good and protection is decent on the Class 5 pitches, but many holds are loose on the Class 4 sections. Good anchors are few and far between above mid height.

Twelve pitches: Grade III, 5.7



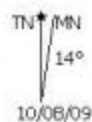
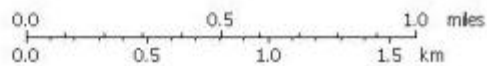
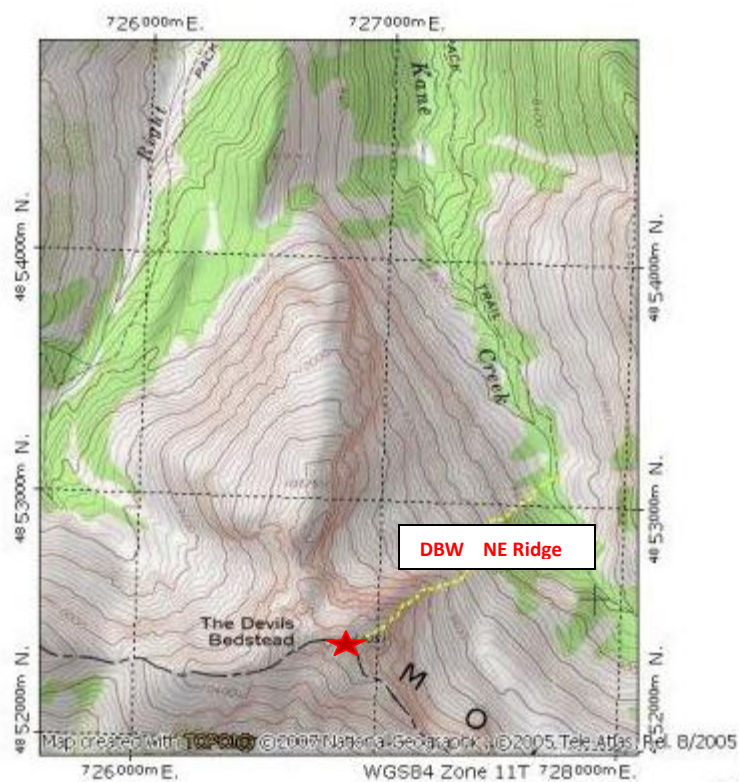
Nick about midway on the ridge.



Nick Brown on Pitch 5.



Nick near the top of the NE Ridge.



The Irish Arête, Grade II, 5.7

This is the “little brother” to the North East Ridge of DBW. It gains the ridge Southeast of the DBW summit. At six pitches in length, it is less committing than the NE Ridge, but challenging in its own right.

The earliest known ascent of the Irish Arête was by Drew Daly and Matt Scrivner on August 5, 2010 . Others may have climbed it previously.

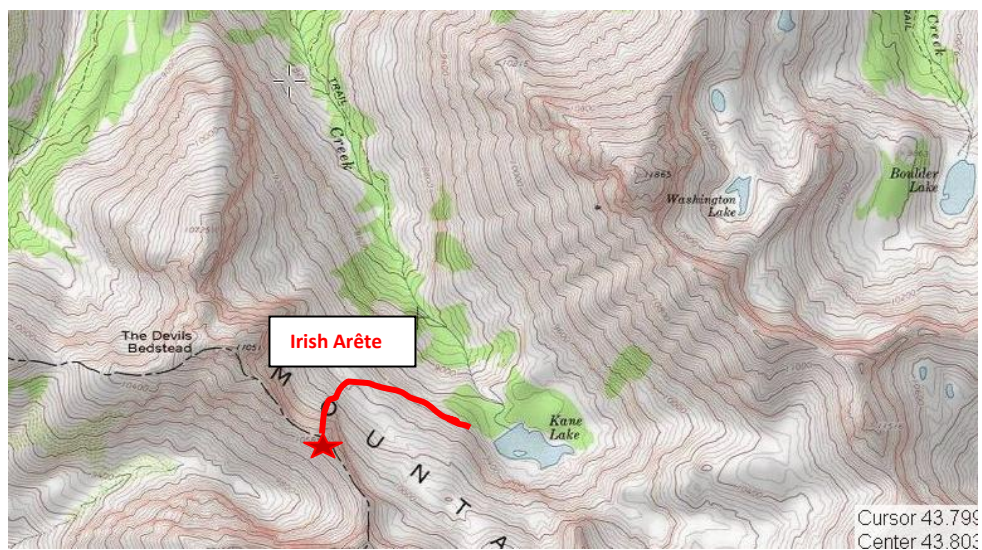
Jim Pace and I climbed it on October 7, 2014. We scrambled to the start of the climb from Kane Lake and started up the arête from the highest possible ledge. The first two pitches were 5.7 (or 5.8) and harder than expected . We were likely off route. Protection was slim in the first 30 feet directly above the first belay . On the first pitch we worked our way up and right (north) to a dihedral filled with frozen moss. A better route may have been to traverse left from the first belay into a sunny dihedral on the east side of the arête for the first two pitches. In any case, after two cold leads on the North side, we reached a small tree on the arête proper. The ridge crest is steep and the route wandered in and out of the sunshine. It topped out at a scenic airy ridgeline. A short downclimb and easy traverse south towards Salzburger Spitzl allowed for a third class scramble back into the Kane Lake basin. We walked through a huge natural arch on the way down. It was a great adventure and would be a good introduction to longer routes at Wildhorse.



The Irish Arête is the right skyline.



Jim Pace on Pitch 3.



Six pitches: Grade II, 5.7

Devils Bedstead East (DBE) (12,865 ft)

Devils Bedstead East (DBE) is an impressive peak from all angles. It is approached from the Boulder Lake Trail in Wildhorse Canyon. The East Face as viewed from Washington Lake trail is quite imposing. As is common with technical routes in the Pioneers, the underlying granite rock is generally sound, but there are lots of baseball sized rocks precariously balanced on top of it. The leader must be careful not to knock something off on his partner. Bomber gear placements are few and far between.

The Mega Dihedral, Grade III, 5.8

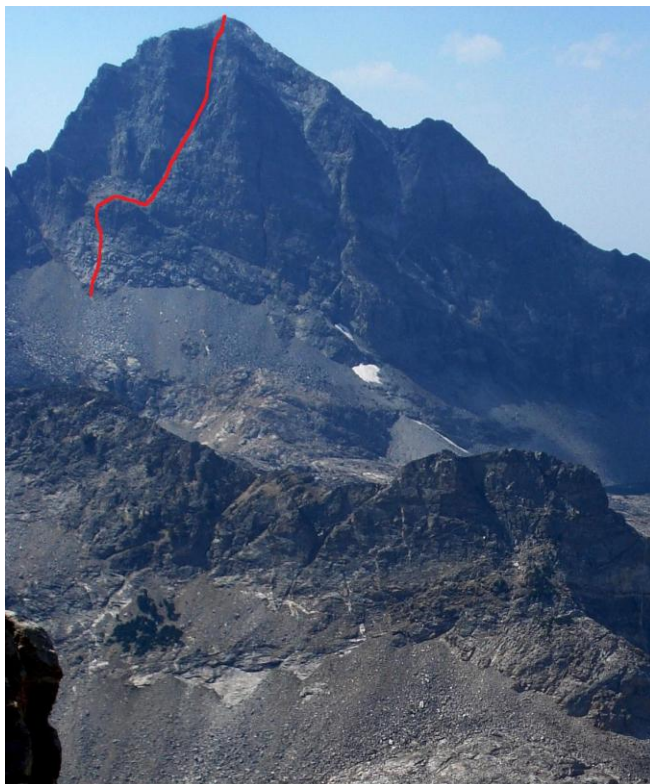
Nick Brown and I ventured onto the East Face of DBE on October 7, 2012 with a single 8 mm rope and small rack. It was 19 degrees Fahrenheit when we left our tent and waded Wildhorse Creek for the hike in. We began the climb on the lowest white granite slab on the east face above Washington Lake. The rock was very clean granite at the start. The initial slab quickly became vertical. Two excellent 5.8 pitches in vertical corners led to a large talus covered ledge with goat tracks. We walked a couple hundred feet to the right and 3rd classed up a couloir until it became a huge dihedral, the Mega Dihedral. At that point we belayed again. Protection was sparse. As the rope ran out on the first dihedral pitch (the third pitch overall), there is an alcove on the face to the right that took four bomber nuts. What a relief! The fourth pitch goes straight up to a large ledge with no anchors. Two easier pitches lead to the NE Ridge where we unroped and scrambled to the top. The route has 6 roped pitches and the 200 foot scree traverse. The first two pitches are 5.8. The next two in the Mega dihedral are 5.6 or 5.7 (and awesome!), and the final two leads are about 5.4.

This was the first known ascent of this route.

Six pitches: Grade III, 5.8



Profile of the East Face above Washington Lake.



The Mega Dihedral route begins at the lowest part of the face.



Nick Brown on Pitch 2.



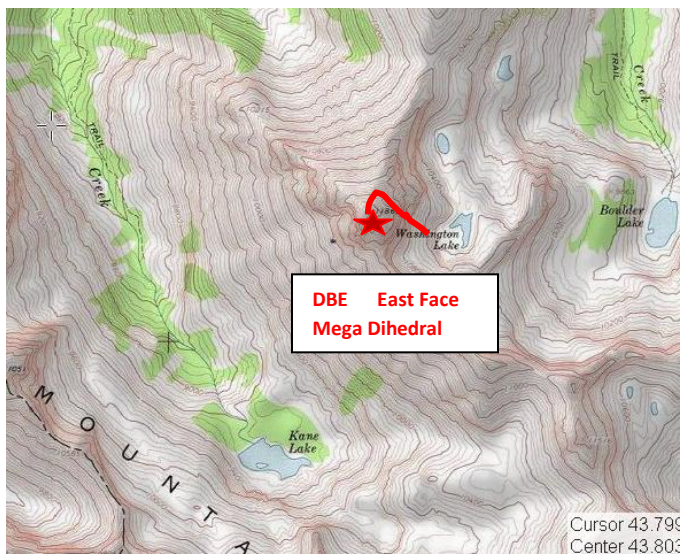
The actual Mega-Dihedral begins above a talus traverse. It's easier than it looks.



Nick Brown cleaning Pitch 3.

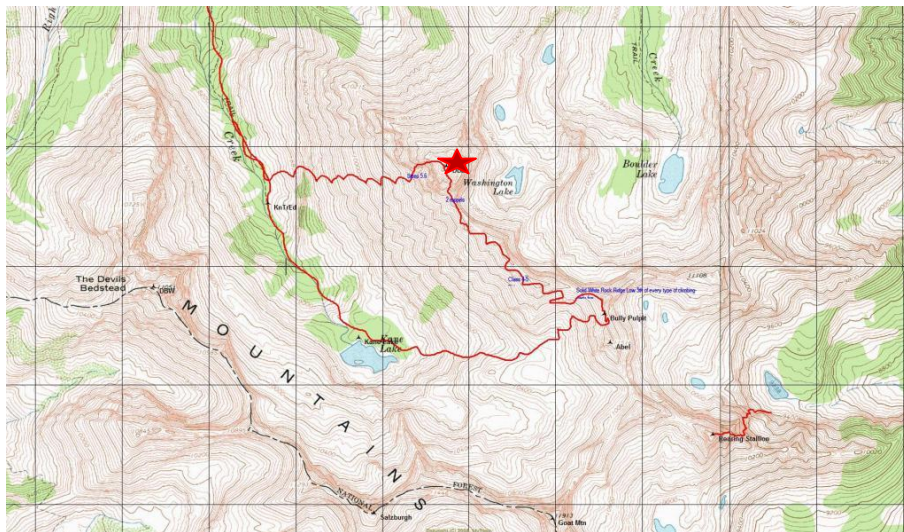


Pat McGrane below Pitch 5.



The West Ridge Direct of DBE, 5.6

Sean Duffy and John Odle climbed directly the West Face of DBE from Kane Creek on Sept 9, 2012. They reached the West Ridge and scrambled to the summit. Sean claimed it was mostly Class 3 & 4 with one stellar, very steep and exposed 5.6 pitch. His account can be found on <http://www.network54.com/Forum/105717/thread/1346977048>.



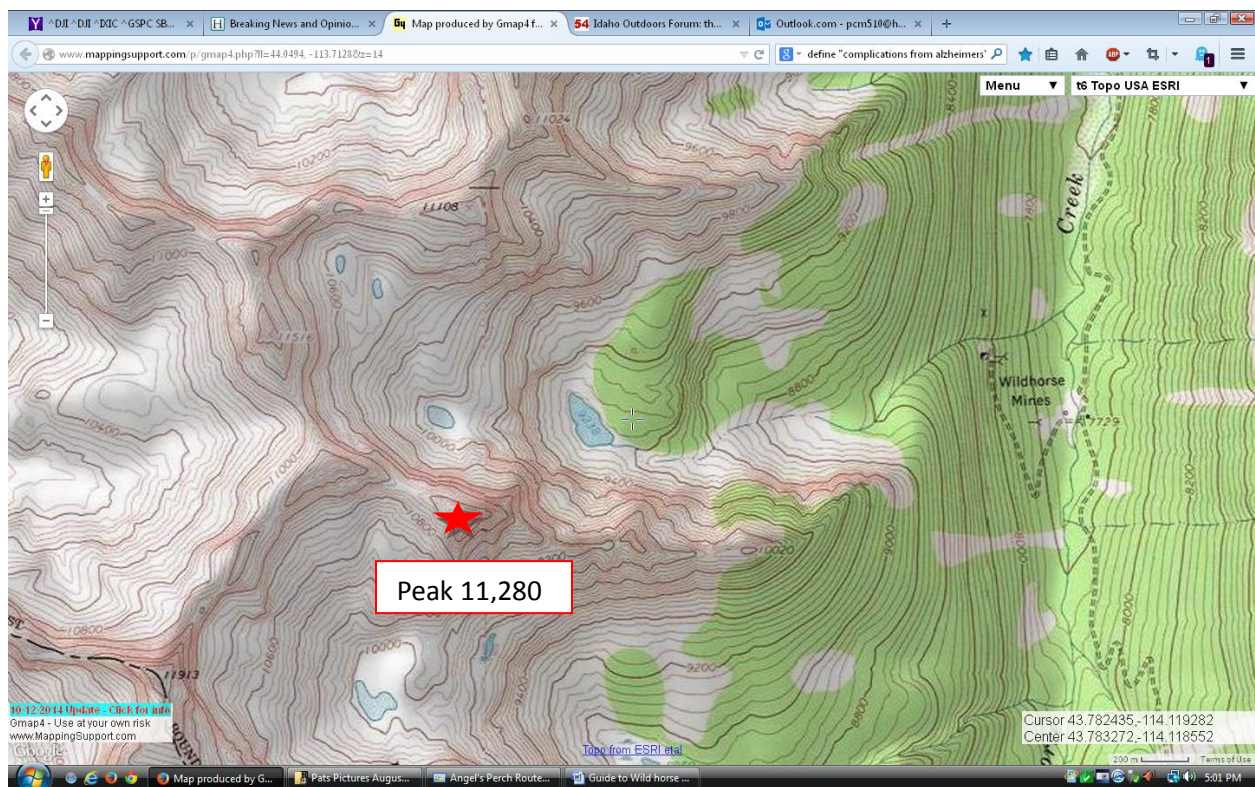
The map shows Sean and John's loop route.



The 5.6 pitch of West Ridge Direct.

Peak 11,280

Peak 11,280 is arguably the finest peak in the Pioneers. From the valley floor, it is hidden behind the Wildhorse Mine, but it is visible from surrounding peaks. The climbs listed below are long (10 to 13 pitches) and very enjoyable. They require a tricky two hour approach from the mine. Drive or bike to the mine, wade Wildhorse Creek, and hike past the mine structures, tunnels and debris piles on a zigzagging mining road. Your goal is to reach the bottom of a noisy waterfall which cascades from the basin above. There are climber/game trails on both sides of the waterfall. I prefer the path south of the falls. After about a 1000 foot bushwack uphill, you break out into the open and see the enormous East Face of 11,280. Cross to the north side of the creek and hike for about an hour to a Lake 9238. It features nice camp sites (but no fish). All climbs begin a short scramble above the lake. The preferred descent is to loop south into the Goat Peak basin and ultimately down to the Wildhorse Road. It is also possible to descend an improbable, scary ramp on the north side of Peak 11,280. This northern ramp will get you back to the base of the climb in short order (if you survive).



Peak 11,280 is due west of the Wildhorse Mine.

Sky Pilot, Grade III/IV, 5.7

The first known ascent of Sky Pilot was by Marc Hanselman and Drew Daly on July 6, 2010. This classic 13 pitch climb starts on easy rock at the base of the NE arête, traverses a couloir on Pitch 2, gains the arête proper on Pitch 3, and follows the arête for 10 more pitches to the top. The crux involves climbing a dark band of rock on the third pitch to gain the ridge. Most of the route is 5.4-5.6. It seems to go forever with nice exposure and great views.



Sky Pilot is the arête partially in shadow on the right side of Peak 11280. This photo shows the first nine pitches. The final four pitches to the actual summit are not visible.



Nick Brown on the fifth pitch of Sky Pilot.



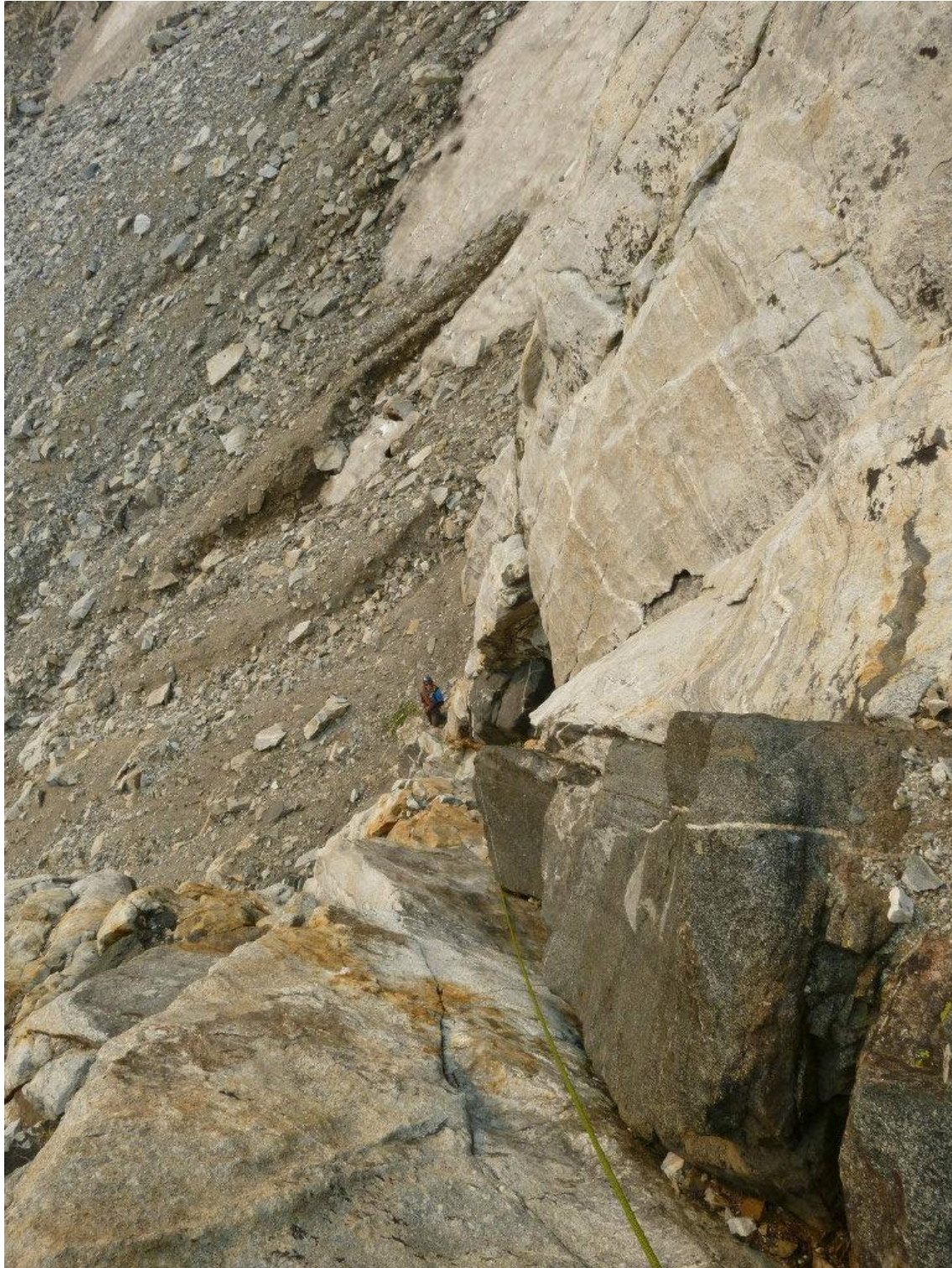
Nick at about mid-height of Sky Pilot.

Flight 818, Grade III/IV, 5.9

The first known ascent was by Pat McGrane and Nick Brown on August 18, 2012. This route goes up the middle of the East Face beginning in an obvious black dihedral. Follow the dihedral for one 5.6 pitch and then parallel a 4th class ramp system which rises up. The granite slabs above the ramp are 5.6-5.7 and a lot more challenging than the ramp itself. Your goal is to bypass a series of overhangs and reach a “diving board” on the horizon, 1000 feet from the base. The first four pitches will put you to the left of the overhangs. The fifth pitch is sketchy 5.9 and traverses above the overhangs to a crack that goes directly to the diving board. The sixth pitch ends on top of the diving board where the route merges with Sky Pilot. Follow Sky Pilot for the remaining six pitches. The route is 12 pitches long with one 5.9 pitch (P5), one 5.8 pitch (P6), and 10 others pitches in the 5.4-5.7 range. Great climb!



Flight 818 to Sky Pilot.



Nick Brown at the base of the black dihedral.



Pitch 3 and the Lake 9238 below.



Pitch 4 ends above Nick and left of the overhangs. The “diving board” is marked by the arrow.



Nick approaching the diving board. This is where Flight 818 merges with Sky Pilot.



Sky Pilot takes the arête on the left. Flight 818 takes the face on the right.

The High and the Mighty, Grade III/IV, 5.9

The first known ascent was by Pat McGrane and Chris Manning on July 9, 2013. This route starts on the left side of the East Face on clean white rock. It eventually reaches the SE arête of Peak 11280 after five pitches and Sky Pilot in eight pitches. The first two pitches go up the steepest line on the left side of the East Face. Start on white granite slabs at the left edge of the semi-permanent snowfield. The slabs quickly morph into a steep crack which leads to a small tree about 300 feet off the snow. Pitches 3-5

are easy and go to a notch below the SE arête. It is possible to walk off the route at this point and enter the Goat Peak basin.

The SE arête above the notch features a vertical crack and a right facing dihedral. Take the crack for the 6th pitch to a small belay ledge on a relatively blank face (5.8). Pitch 7 goes up the face and eventually follows an exposed ramp. Pitch 8 continues up to Sky Pilot. Follow Sky Pilot for four more leads to the top. This route is 12 pitches long with one 5.9 pitch (P2), three 5.8 pitches (P1, P6, P7), and eight easy 5th class leads. Another great route!



“The High and the Mighty” takes the left side of the East Face and then the SE Arête to “Sky Pilot” after 8 pitches.



Chris Manning cleaning Pitch 1.



Chris on Pitch 2 with the SE arête high over his right shoulder.



Pitch 6 is the first pitch of the arête proper and ends on a small ledge to the left.



Chris on the steep ramp of Pitch 7.

Jacob's Ladder, Grade III, 5.8

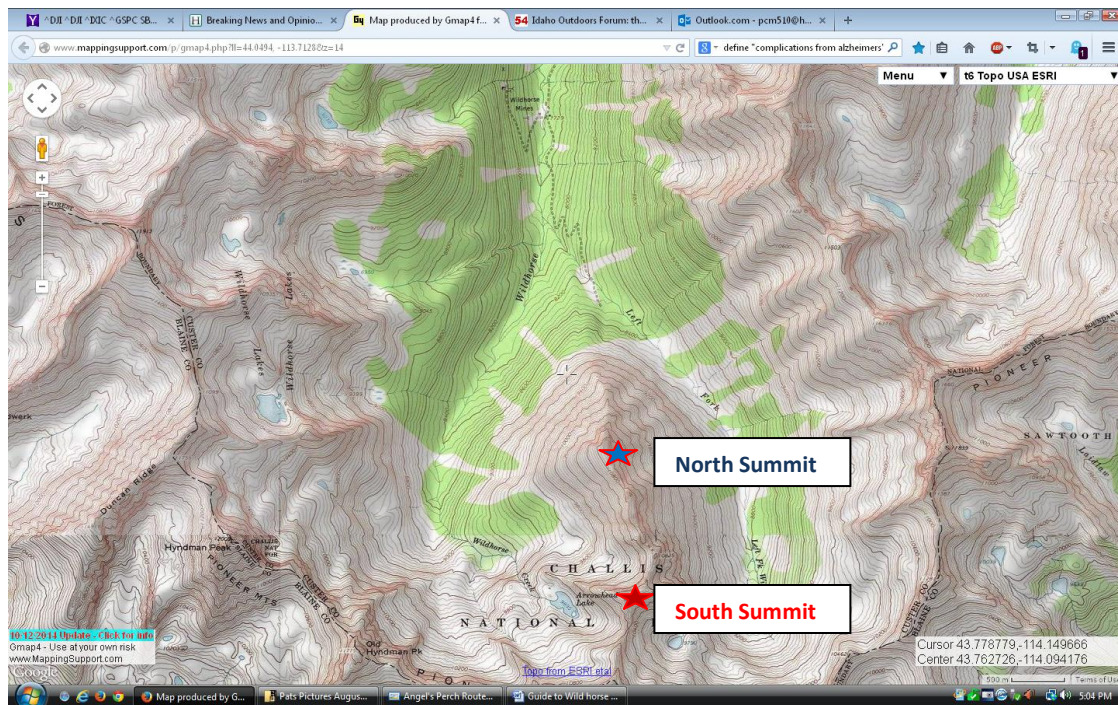
The first known ascent was by Sean Duffy and John Odle on July 15, 2012. This “wrap around” route starts on Sky Pilot to the NE arête, apparently traverses the East Face on the ledge system mentioned under Flight 818, , and merges with The High and the Mighty somewhere near pitch 6 of that route. The two vertical 5.7 crack pitches described in Sean’s Summit Post entry (<http://www.summitpost.org/sky-pilot-jacob-s-ladder-rock-route/800700>) may be the two 5.8 crack pitches in the High and the Mighty (P6 and P7). Sean describes Jacob’s Ladder as being 10 pitches with some simul-climbing.

Mustang Peak (11,020 ft)

Mustang Peak is sometimes called Howard Peak and sits at the south end of the Wildhorse Road. It's North Ridge (Broken Arrow Arête points directly at the Wildhorse Campground. The road is rough and requires about a half hour to drive from the Campground. It can be bicycled in about 45 minutes. Mustang Peak has two summits: the North Summit is a few feet shorter than the South Summit. Two routes (Broken Arrow Arête and the Dawn Arête) lead to the North Summit. The East Arête route ends at the South (true) summit.



The South (true) Summit of Mustang Peak is on the left. The East Arête forms the left skyline ridge of the South Summit. The North Summit is on the right. The Dawn Arête is the left skyline of the North Summit. Broken Arrow Arête in the middle ridge between sun and shade of the North Summit.



Broken Arrow Arête (North Summit) is between sun and shade.



The last three pitches of Broken Arrow Arête are directly above the photographer. The final pitch of the Dawn Arête is visible on the left skyline.

Nick Brown and I third classed up a “scoop” on the NW side of the lower Broken Arrow Arête. This is the upper Arête where we roped up for three nice pitches.

Most people scramble up easier ground on the NW side to the ridge proper and then climb unroped along the arête until it gets too hairy. The top three pitches max out at about 5.7 if you stay on the arête. As you move right, the climbing gets easier (5.4)

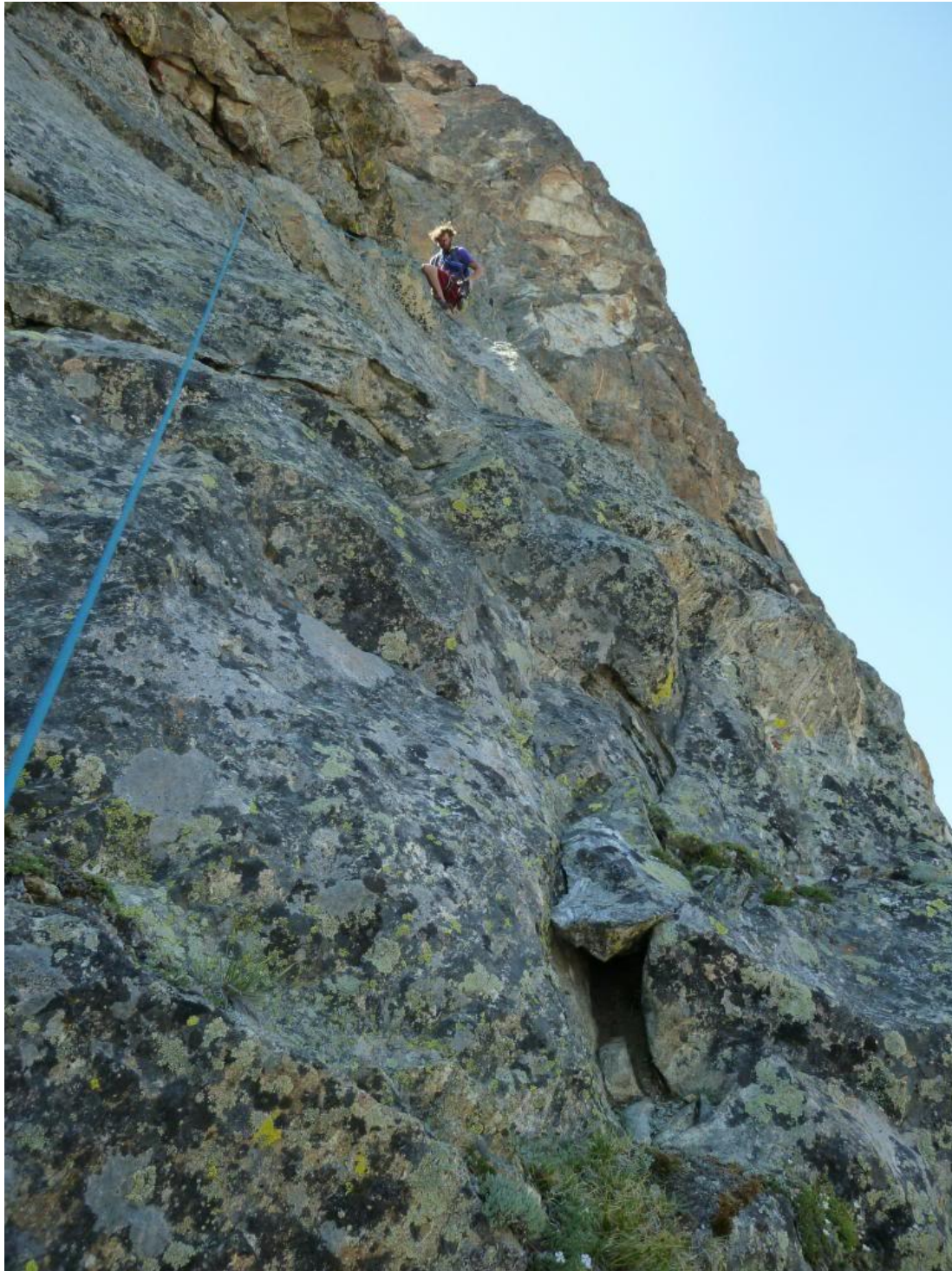
The Dawn Arête (North Summit), Grade III, 5.9

The first known ascent was by Pat McGrane and Chris Manning on July 8, 2013. This route begins in the canyon east of Mustang Peak. Find the arête that leads from the East Fork of Wildhorse Creek to the summit. Scramble up 3rd and 4th class rock until you feel nervous, then rope up for 5 low fifth class pitches until the rock abruptly steepens. Three final pitches move to the steepest part of the arête and

get progressively more difficult: 5.7, 5.8, and 5.9. The last pitch follows a crack around a stack of loose rocks to the ridge crest for a wild finish on the North Summit. The route is 8 pitches: one 5.9 (P8), one 5.8(P7), one 5.7 (P6), and five 5.0-5.5 (P1-P5)



The Dawn Arête of Mustang Peak forms the right skyline.



Chris Manning on a runout Pitch 7. The final pitch goes to the ridge crest above him.



Chris pulling the final corner around loose blocks.

The East Arête (South Summit) Grade III, 5.8

The first known ascent was by Pat McGrane and Chris Manning on August 3, 2013. This is another great ridge route. Like the Dawn Arête, this route begins in the East Fork of Wildhorse Creek. Scramble up 3rd and 4th class rock on the arête that goes directly to the top of the South Summit. We then roped up for 5 easy pitches 5.0-5.5 before running into a band of vertical white, chossy rock. Blocked by the choss, we moved left around an improbable corner and stepped across a void to reach a perfect 5.6 hand crack. Great exposure! Pitches 7 and 8 go straight up the final arête to end about 10 feet from the summit cairn. The route starts slow but the final three pitches are awesome!



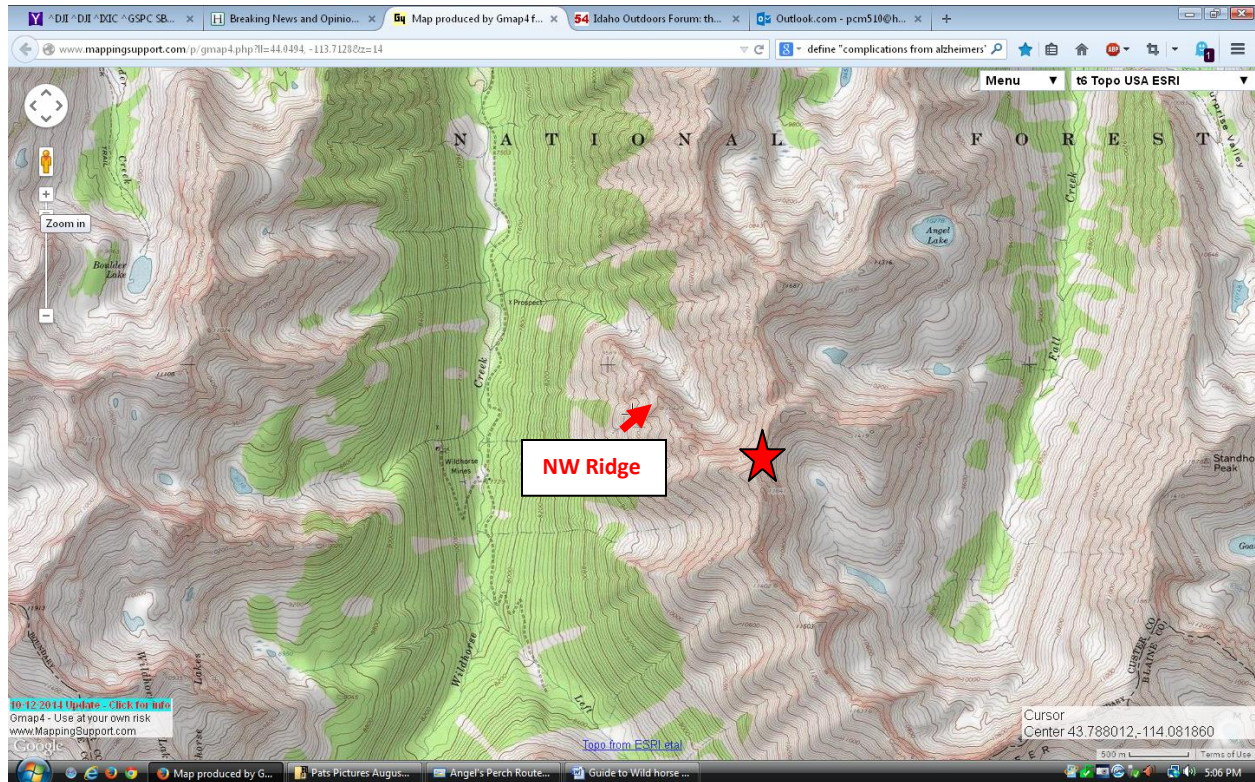
Chris at the band of white choss at the end of pitch 5.



The final pitch features big air and ends at the summit cairn.

Gabriel's Horn (11,641 ft)

Gabriel's Horn is a rarely climbed Peak to the east of the Wildhorse Road. It doesn't look like much from surrounding peaks, but an ascent of the Northwest Ridge is really a challenge. The ridge is about a mile long! There is the possibility for a serious technical climb. However, it is possible to bypass much of the steepest rock and only rope up when you see fit. If you get cliffed out, you can always retreat down one of the many gullies back to the Wildhorse Road.



Northwest Ridge Grade II, 5.2

The first known ascent was by Pat McGrane, George Reinier, and John Roache on August 23, 2008. The Northwest Ridge is a mile long ridge that gains 2000 vertical feet. There is potential for a really long technical route along the ridge crest. We, however, were not true to the ridge crest and scrambled back and forth seeking easier passage. We ultimately roped up for two 5.2 pitches mid-ridge.

Leave Wildhorse Road where a small creek crosses the road. Climb up the creek past a waterfall to an impressive rock face, aka Gabriel's Horn. Go around the right side on forth class rock with some trees. Follow the ridge (to the summit.



Gabriele's Horn from the north. Start on the right side.



The NW Ridge of Gabrielle's Horn is a series of granite spires.



The NE Ridge of Gabrielle's Horn. If one stayed true to the ridge crest there could easily be 10 pitches of technical climbing. We strayed and only roped up for about 200 feet.



John Roache on the NE Ridge.

Brocky Peak (11,839 ft)

Brocky is a clifty peak with many rock towers along a high ridge. It is south of Gabrielle's Horn above the east of the East Fork of Wildhorse Creek.

West Face, Grade II, 5.4

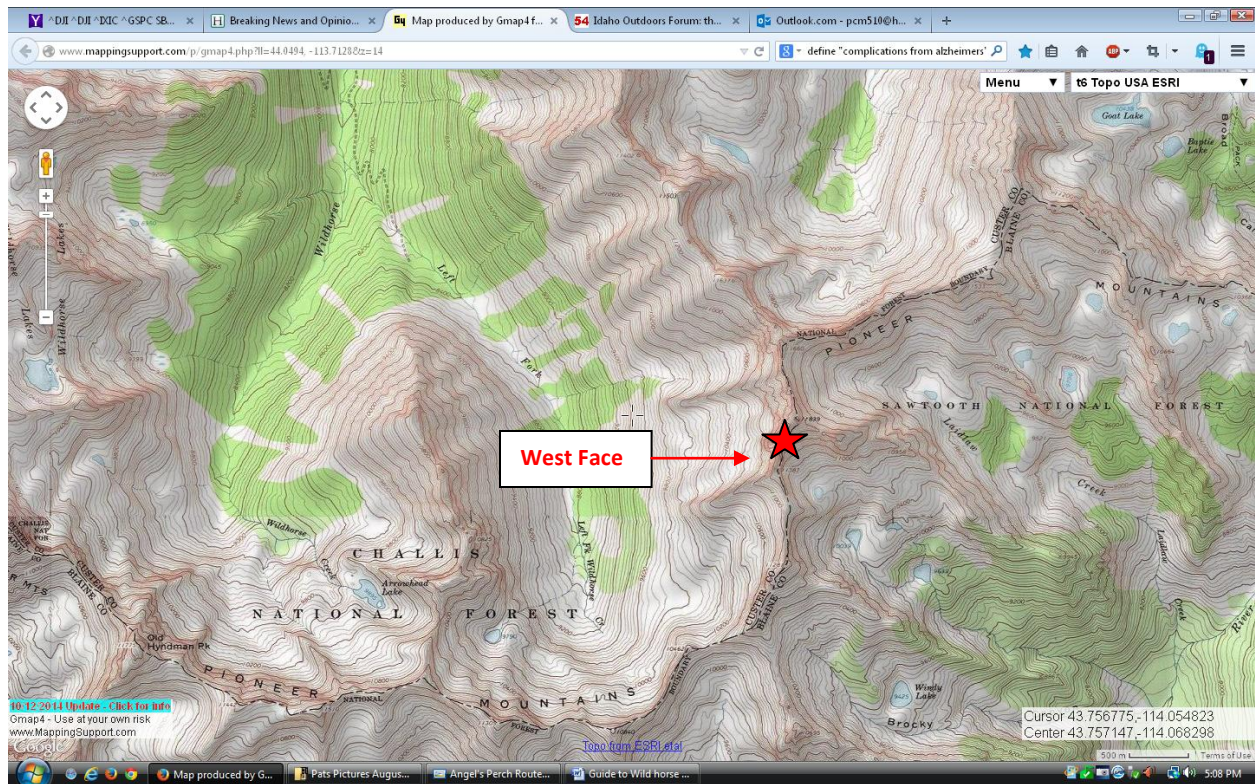
The first known ascent was by Pat McGrane, George Reinier, and John Roache on September 13, 2009. There is a lot of potential for good technical routes on Brocky Peak. This represents one of the easiest possible routes. Park at the end of the Wildhorse Road below Mustang Peak and approach from the East Fork of Wildhorse Creek. Scramble to a large chimney/gully on the left side of the West Face and rope up for a single 5.4 pitch. After reaching easier ground turn right and work your way up talus, slabs and cracks towards the summit. There is one additional roped pitch about 200 vertical feet from the top. Bring a 30 meter rope, five stoppers, and five slings.



The red line shows our route up the West Face of Brocky. We initially got lost and went straight to the ridgeline. It was a series of difficult rock towers. We backed off and found an easier route to the summit.



John Roache and George Reinier about 300 feet below the summit of Brocky.



The red star marks Brocky Peak .

Other Routes

The following are additional routes in the Wildhorse Area. I have not climbed them, but they do look fun.

Peak 11,108 "Step n' Wolf" Grade III, 5.8 R

This tower is above Lake 9238 and below Peak 11280 across from Sky Pilot. The first known ascent was by Marc Hanselman and Wolf Riehle in July 2010. The route features about 1500 feet of climbing. A trip report can be viewed at :

<http://scidaho.blogspot.com/2010/07/wildhorse-revisited.html>

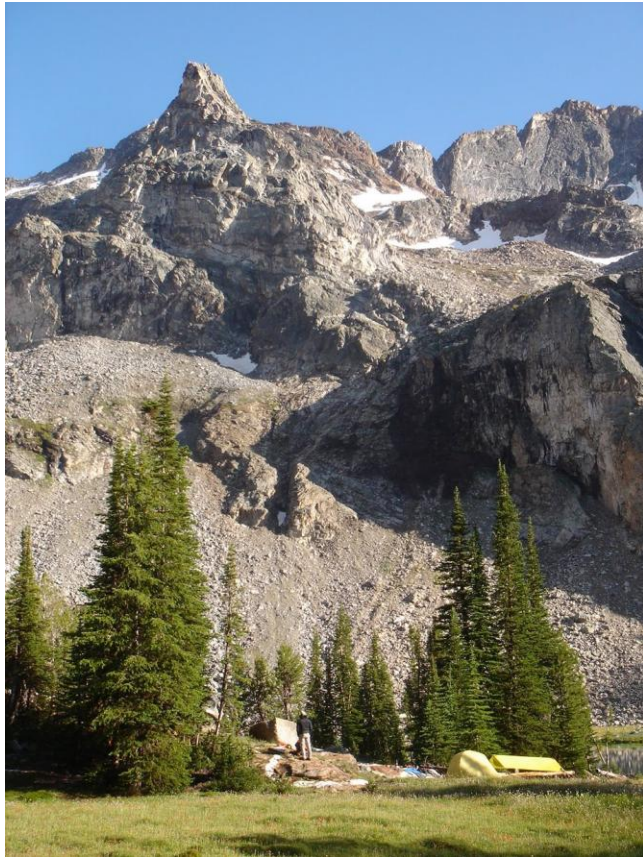


The red line shows Step n' Wolf.

Kane Creek Spire Grade III, 5.8

This tower is directly above Kane Lake. The first known ascent was by Marc Hanselman and Wolf Riehle in August 2010. The spire is very impressive as viewed from Kane Lake. The route climbs the spire and then just keeps going up the ridge until easier ground. A trip report can be found at:

<http://scidaho.blogspot.com/2010/08/three-routes-in-three-days-alpine.html> a



Kane Creek Spire above Kane Lake



The route on Kane Creek Spire.

Goat Mountain (11,913 ft)

East Face and NE Ridge

The East Face of Goat Mountain is huge from Wildhorse Canyon. Tom Lopez's book. Idaho, A Climbing Guide, states that R.Brooks, B. Troutner, and H.Bowron climbed the East Face in 1991. K. Swigert and B.Rosso climbed the Northeast Ridge and rated it 5.8. Details of these ascents are not known.



The East Face (center) and the Northeast Ridge (left) of Goat Mountain.