

## Vowell Mountaineering Camp



*Bugaboo Spire (left) and Snowpatch Spire from an unnamed peak southwest of Bill's Pass*

In mid-summer 2006, the Calgary Section of the Alpine Club of Canada held a mountaineering camp in the Vowell Glacier area of the Bugaboos, in the Selkirk Range west of Radium, B.C. The Bugaboos feature spectacular granite spires and towers, rising from glaciers, that attract rock climbers from around the world. While steep, immaculate lines are often crawling with climbers on peaks such as Bugaboo, Snowpatch and Pigeon Spires and the Howser Towers, the mountains surrounding the adjacent Vowell Glacier are generally ignored. So other than days when members of our nine-person party ventured over to the crowded standard route on Pigeon Spire, we pretty much had this beautiful place to ourselves.



Our camp was located below Bill's Pass (centre background), just outside the boundary of Bugaboo Provincial Park. The tents were scattered on leveled rocky areas, while the canvas gear tent on the snow kept our food and beer nicely chilled (the canvas cook tent is out of sight to the left). Of course, the views south across the Vowell Glacier to the main Bugaboo peaks were outstanding.



It's hard to beat a water supply fresh from near the toe of a glacier, especially with a backdrop as stunning as these peaks to the west. The week, though, was hot and the snowmelt rapid, and in a couple of days we could no longer reach the big boulder to dip our water buckets.



Orvel standing on the false summit of Mount Wallace, with Bugaboo Spire in the background and Brenta Spire to its left (below the horizon); we climbed the latter's right-hand ridge, which offered stellar views of the whole Bugaboos area. Wallace is at the south end of the Classic Traverse, which spans four peaks.



Traversing below Howser Towers, headed towards the standard route of Pigeon Spire (which starts up the right-hand skyline of the peak to the left).



Though technically easy, this route up Pigeon Spire is an outstanding, exposed sidewalk high in the sky. If you're ever unsure of the route, you just follow where the lichen has been worn off the rock by the boots and rock shoes of thousands of climbers.



A dramatic, sculpted scoop in the ice and snow has created this little pothole pond below the whimsically-named Robert the Bruce and Howard the Duck.



A jet passes high above Bugaboo Spire. The Northeast Ridge, featured in *Fifty Classic Climbs of North America*, follows the left-hand skyline.



Kelly kicks steps back to camp, with a spectacular backdrop of (from right to left) of Snowpatch Spire, Bugaboo Spire, Crescent Spire and Brenta Spire. Like many such places in the mountains, the lower glaciers here are receding rapidly, leaving behind meltwater lakes and exposed ice and moraines.