

Hermans Peak (5139', Prom 260'?)

Mt Loop Highway, Twenty Lakes basin, Lake Twenty-two cirque
Via Hemple Creek

Feb 9, 2011

Carla Schauble, Yana Radenska, Mike Helming and Franklin Bradshaw

Sunrise 7:31, Sunset 5:15

Research

Since Boy Scouts I'd hiked into Lake Twenty-two. Then in College we'd run to the lake, scream, listen to the avalanches then race back to the car. Several years ago I saw a few beautiful illustrations of Dave Fish's. Besides the topic of mountains and route, one of my studies was Technical Illustration and I admired the work put into the wonderful images. Of the many peaks labeled, the ones around Lake Twenty-two had me yearning for a visit to the ridge above the Lake Twenty-two Cirque. Beginning of the week Dicey sent an email questioning if they were of interest to me. Objective quickly defined we began research. Great beta from both Dave and John (who'd dragged his scouts into those upper basins) provided info for five potential routes. First choice would be driving to Bear Lake. Maybe possible with the current high snow level and recent washing of the rain. New cold snow (4-10"), clear Wednesday sky predictions and Avy forecasts moderate and settling to low all gave us a go.

Can we get up the road?

Early carpooling (5:30a) since we may have to try a few route starts and all had already decided this was not a going to be a Sunset Summit (due to route/bushwhacking...). Twilight just beginning as we headed up NFRD4020. Snow began in earnest around 1400'. Very slippery at 1800' where cable chains thrown on. A challenging up and we stopped at a slight washout at Schweitzer Creek (~2.5m, c2100). The uphill past it should much trouble by a previous vehicle sliding all over. It was another 3.5 or something of the sort miles and 600 vert to a trail at Bear Creek to Pinnacle Lake. Vote was to descend and approach from highway.

On route

After some lively debate, we parked at the gate on the Herman Creek road and started our days walk (7:50, c1100'). Twenty minutes easy clear road walking brought us to a fork in the road (8:10a, c1450'). Well the good road ended and each remaining road was heavily overgrown. We started the left one for 50' or so then a right turn south and uphill into the forest. Some windfall, moss, very open and a beautiful hike. Working a beeline toward Bear Lake passing Stumps of long ago cut giants and some with truncated tops still standing. Amazing... The fun disrupted with a crossing of the old logging road. Going from easy forest walk to tight windfall, mini tree bushwhack... Wheh! Back to the forest gentle pitch, the up a steeper section weaving some small rock outcrops and more live giant cedars and old cut stumps. Then awoken from the blissful forest by another overgrown road. The tight trees and snow held us back. A big push, snow down the neck, hop a creek and back to the easier walk in the woods. The flatter terrain pitched up again and to another road (9:45a, c2670). This one over a foot deep with new snow and open for walking. An eighth mile from the Bear Creek/Lake TH we headed straight up into the forest again to intersect the trail.

On Trail?

The brush took a little more creativity to work around and soon we intersected the trail to Bear Lake (9:53a, c2800). Nice wide trail covered in snow. At a left onto a smaller trail to head us to Pinnacle Lake. Yana took the first shot at the decapitated bridge over the creek. Safe across, we all followed. As the snow got deeper the trail at times was difficult to follow. Some evidence of older posthole tracks from before the recent snow. Some areas of trail washout and being a watercourse. Around 3000' the hard icy crust under the powder snow made for slippery travel. On with crampons and a beeline to the ridge. The steep up yielded to a counterclockwise circular ridge (flatter) and at c3400' (10:30a) the first view of peaks and ridges. After food and some shutter delay we followed the ridge due west with very little elevation gain. In 40 minutes or so a slight rise past snow covered tarns and down a slight bit to Pinnacle Lake (11:30a, c3780).

At the lake, now what?

We gathered and took visual and maps study of our options to get up into Twenty Lakes Basin. Iodine gully NW up the lake and a ridge option from the south end of the lake. Not knowing of the snow accumulation in the gully or conditions up higher the ridge was our pick. Iron took off leading up the snow. Kickstepping and up the ridge. Topping to a first flatter spot the defused sun lay mystic patterns on the curves of the snow. His trips would prove much shutter delay... Up, Iron lead right and up a steep pitch, while Yana opted for a shallower one to the left. We

all joined up above topping out the ridge. Views north above and below a cloud layer. To the south no views, just a cloud.

Upper Twenty Lakes Basin

A ridge walk, lowering to the saddle at the top of Iodine Gulley and a little view of part of the basin in fog of the Bathtub Lakes. The ridge brought us to a wall (1:00p, c4790'). Dave's illustration showed a good route we followed. West under the rock walls looking for a slope up toward the ridge (and Hermans Peak). The sun was baking the snow creating giant snow booties. Click off snow with a tap of the ax, three paces and feet very heavy again, click, three paces, click. Arrgghh, seemed a long way up and these snow booties were not as appreciated as when I was a little kid playing in the snow. The scenery and beauty overrode the 3 and click... Yesterdays icicles draped on the trees and sun and shadows on snow contours. An open slope we stayed on the right of in the trees heading up and NE. The last 80' to the summit the snow was blown off leaving a firm hard surface for front pointing. Dramatic small peaks along the ridge we hoped they were not the "true" summit. Stopping short of and back from the cornice it appeared Iron had lead direct to the high point (1:30p, 4.3m, 5h42min, 5139', c4200'ascent). I followed the ridge east about 90' to look back for pictures, checking if that was a cornice and to a non-corniced section to view down the cliffs to Lake Twenty-two's basin.

Views?

All up we ventured the ridge and settle with picture taking and lunch. Yes! Peak appears from the edge of the southern cloud. North Shuksan (?) popped above a cloud layer. Interesting seeing above and below the cloud. The forest below green, a different view south with just dense low fog. After a 40 minute break on the summit we began our descent.

Going down

Original thought was of some more adventuring along the ridge, but the time taken to get to this point left little daylight. None of us wished to find our way back along our route in the dark. As it was the guess is we'd get back to the van just before dark. I tried to glissade, but the snow would not cooperate in sliding. Plunge stepping down, left to the saddle then a little successful glissading the eastern part of Iodine Gulley. Still not good glissading so more walking. Far below we had an answer to the odd line on the lake. We saw a group of three hikers heading south on the lake. In a flatter area we gathered again and worked our way down the west side of the ravine. Wonder how far they made it up the road. If they waited could we get a ride down? We crossed the middle of the snow covered lake. Forgoing checking out the ridge to the NW (3:05p). We followed our route back the ridge toward Bear Lake.

At the Bear Lake road we walked a ways short ways to the left hoping to work our way leftish and avoid a steep section. Into the woods it proved our way up was better. We followed near it, but in more windfall than on the way up (easier to keep on the ridges) to c2160 and veered from north to west to go around the steep area.

Roads, roads?

We came to an overgrown road and followed it (bushwhacking) til it ended at a 60' vertical drop of a washout. Then another plunge into the forest, and onto the road lower down. Not easy going on the road, but seemed the better of the choices. After an open storage pile area back into the forest, down a ridge to connect the road again. Some more road bushwhacking then due north across the more open forest floor to the T intersection (5:25p, c1410). I think there may have been a group sigh of relief knowing the finally easy road walk back to the van (5:40, 8.6m, c1100', 8h55min elapsed, 4290'ascent).

A challenging route to a relatively unheard but often seen summit. Beautiful views and nice to learn more of an area I've visited so close to so many times before.

Happy trails! (trails?)
fwb

Stats: start at 7:50, finish at 5:40, 8h50min elapsed 8.6m RT, park at c1100', 4290'ascent to 5139

Gear: trekking poles, crampons, avy gear