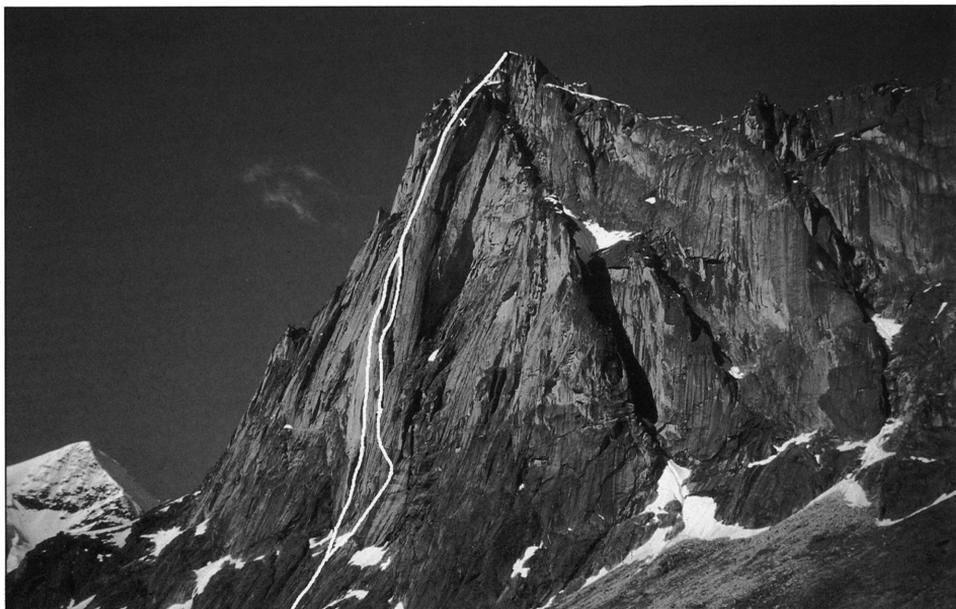


just north of glacial pass #8 (1,275m), placed us in a great position to make numerous ascents as side trips. The next morning we woke to the sound of snow falling on our tents. For the following eight days we slowly advanced north in a whiteout, as 40cm of fresh, wet snow fell during the storm. The foul weather continued long enough that any thoughts of peakbagging vaporized, and reaching the ocean took priority. As we reached our last pass, glacier Pass #9, north-northeast of Peak 5,930', the clouds lifted long enough to see the ground horizon and pick a reasonable descent line.

The snout of the retreating glacier was a debris-piled, hummocky obstacle course in flat light, making for tiring, slow traveling. This valley and the south end of Kaniqturusiq Fiord are sheltered from significant winds. Through the night of May 6-7 we returned to Qikiqtarjuaq by snowmobile in about seven hours.

GREG HORNE, *Alpine Club of Canada*

## VAMPIRE SPIRES



The Phoenix in the Vampire Spires, showing Freebird on the right (Childers-Shull-Young, 1998) and Wallflowers on the left (Caton-Patterson, 2003). X marks Caton and Patterson's highpoint. *Jasmin Caton*

*Phoenix, Wallflowers to near summit.* On June 30 a tiny Hughes 500 helicopter dropped Amelia Patterson and me at the base of a stunning 2,500' granite face known as the Phoenix. It is the largest feature in the Vampire Spires group of the Ragged Range in Canada's Northwest Territories, 15 miles north of the famed Cirque of the Unclimbables. Thanks to our adventurous spirits and the generous support of the Alpine Club of Canada, we hoped to complete the first female ascent of the Phoenix, either by establishing a new route or completing a second ascent

of one of the several previously climbed routes on the granite face.

After fixing and hauling three pitches, we committed ourselves to our route and spent five nights on the face. We climbed 13 long pitches, mainly aiding the dirt-and-vegetation-choked coarse cracks characteristic of the region. There were no nights, due to the midnight sun, but we were frequently forced to take cover in our cramped portaledge by daily rain showers and our fatigue. Less than 200' from the summit an ice-filled chimney halted our progress. With nowhere to place pro and no ice gear, we retreated.

Our route, which we named Wallflowers (VI 5.8 C2+) to commemorate the colorful flora destroyed by our efforts, linked the unfinished After School Special with the upper four pitches of Freebird (Childers-Shull-Young, 1998) in 13 pitches, one of which was previously unclimbed. We placed no protection bolts, five belay bolts, and used only clean aid. The route could go free with enormous amounts of cleaning and a willingness to climb sharp offwidths.

Thanks to The Alpine Club of Canada's Jen Higgins Memorial Fund, other sponsors, and many fellow dirtbags who lent us gear.

JASMIN CATON, *Canada*

*Fortress, You Enjoy Myself.* On a rainy July 20 Pat Goodman and I, with financial support from a Balance Bar Grant, were helicoptered into the Vampire Spires, getting dropped off 30m from what would be our home for the next 24 days. We immediately set up camp, where we were imprisoned for the next 36 hours by rain. This set the tone for our stay.

The weather finally broke, and we were able to scope the route we intended to climb: Cornerstone (V 5.10 A2), climbed by Matt Childers and Cogie Reed in 1998. Theirs was the first ascent of the 1,500' wall called the Fortress. While scoping the line, we noticed anchors leading up the headwall via an impressive crack system. Two pitches led to a chimney, which topped out at a ledge on the third pitch of the Cornerstone. We decided to climb these pitches, so that we could further investigate the route. Although we were unable to find literary documentation, we had heard rumors about a German team floating the Nahani River, hiking in, and climbing. Climbing these two wet, loose pitches, we found anchors every 25 meters, with 1/4" Petzl self-drive bolts and aluminum hangers, as well as bolts at hard free moves, for a total of over 27 bolts. Whoever established these pitches used exceptionally light hardware, set anchors up for single rappels, and was obviously very conscious of weight, thus reinforcing the belief that it was a team that had floated the river and hiked in. We then climbed the chimney and, upon reaching the ledge, got our first look at what would be the crux of the route: a clean left-facing dihedral that eventually thinned to tips and continued through a roof-like chimney feature. However, the weather deteriorated, forcing us to retreat.

After several rainy days the skies cleared and we attempted the route via the original start of the Cornerstone. We reached the same ledge as on our previous attempt and again retreated due to weather. We made several attempts, invariably being defeated by storms, never making it more than five pitches up the wall.

Eventually the rain turned to snow, and we tried a new route on the neighboring Vampire Spire, waiting for the weather to come around. Being an aid invalid, I belayed Pat for two days on an aid route, which, at about the midway point, shallowed out into a water-groove bashy-flare. We would have none of this, considering we were on a free-climbing trip. Defeated again.

Finally, at 11 o'clock on a mid-August day (we had lost track of time), on a surge of