

## CANADIAN ROCKIES

*Canadian Rockies, summary.* After a promising spring that saw a trio of big new ice lines on Tangle Ridge (see *AAJ 2010*), followed by a new line on the Emperor Face of Mt. Robson (below), the summer was a bit of a disappointment. The lackluster season can be at least partly blamed on the weather. It rained and snowed off and on in the high peaks most of the summer, and as a result the big north faces never really dried off. Dana Ruddy and Eamonn Walsh pulled off one of the more interesting projects of the summer, traversing the southern Ramparts in the backcountry of Jasper National Park over two separate weekends in August. On their first trip, after enduring the 20km approach and a mosquito population of legendary proportions, they traversed the picturesque Amethyst Lake Rockwall. Joined by Raphael Slawinski, they took in the summits of Mt. Redoubt, Dungeon Peak, and Oubliette Mountain in a very long day from camp. The traverse entailed much exposed scrambling over blocky quartzite with the occasional mid-5th-class pitch. A couple of weeks later Ruddy and Walsh returned to traverse the continuation of the ridge over Paragon, Parapet, and Bennington peaks on similar terrain in another long day from their bivy. The next obvious project in a similar vein is the traverse of the northern Ramparts, a rather more serious proposition.

In a similar vein, at the beginning of September, Jay Mills and Walsh took in a horseshoe of rarely visited peaks near the Saskatchewan River Crossing. Over two days, they traversed Mt. Sarbach, both Kauffmann Peaks, and Mt. Epaulette, hiking out the wild Howse River valley on the third. They only belayed one short section, otherwise going ropeless over miles of snowy forth and fifth-class terrain. Interestingly, their traverse was only part of a much longer traverse completed by Don Gardner and Niel Liske back in 1979, again proving that the old guys certainly got after it.

Once it stopped raining and snowing sometime in late September, Indian summer saw fabulous snow and ice conditions on the high north faces. A couple of teams took advantage of this to make rare one-day ascents of the Elzinga-Miller and Robinson-Arbic routes on the north face of Mt. Cromwell in the Columbia Icefield area. It has been said that success in alpine climbing is a matter of timing and hormones. The wisdom of this dictum was nicely illustrated when a team attempting the Elzinga-Miller as the weather window was shutting down retreated just in time to see the whole face avalanche. Unfortunately, the Indian summer dried off much of the moisture from the “real” summer, and, as a



Tsunami, on the northeast face of Mt. Patterson. *Raphael Slawinski*

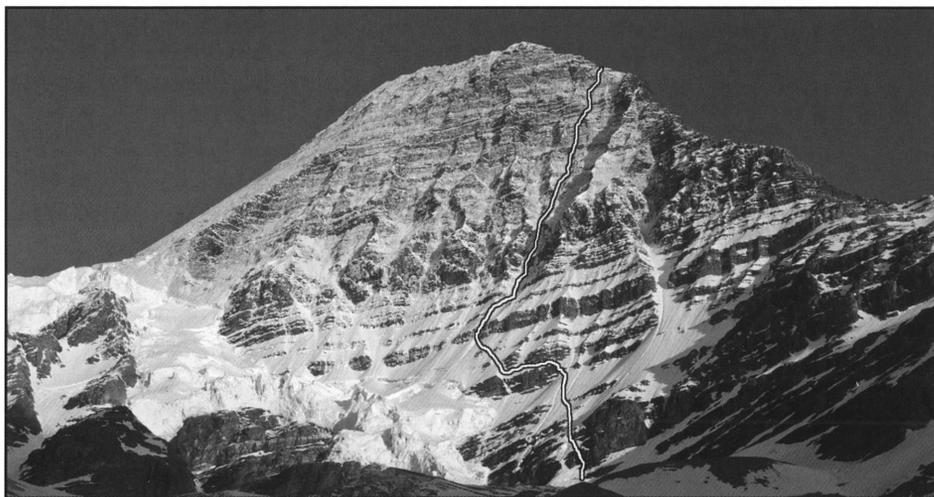
result, water-ice formation was spotty. Some areas, such as the classic Stanley Headwall, were unusually lean; however, other areas sported some fabulous ice lines. One of these was the intimidating east face of Howse Peak, which last winter made many people driving on the Icefields Parkway stop and stare. However, for whatever reason, it went unattempted. Perhaps the most significant new ice route of the season was completed, surprisingly, on May Day. Joshua Lavigne and Raphael Slawinski climbed Tsunami (300m, M5 WI5+) to the right of the classic (but unformed) Riptide on the northeast face of Mt. Patterson. The route started on scrappy alpine terrain, continued up steep ice, and finished through fortunately benign seracs to end on a glacial bench.

And there you have it, the past year in the grand Canadian Rockies in a nutshell. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the past winter was the snowpack, which started out horribly unstable, and ended up being the best one in years. The exceptional coverage and stability allowed for a flurry of remarkable ski descents. But that is a different story.

RAPHAEL SLAWINSKI, *Canada*, AAC

*Mt. Robson, Emperor Face, new climbing to Emperor Ridge.* On Friday June 18, after deejaying the Test of Metal blockparty in Squamish, I hopped in my truck and drove ten hours through the night to meet JR in the Robson parking lot.

Earlier in the year I'd pulled a tendon pulley in my middle finger, and so ice tools were the first things I could reasonably grab. And so if alpine climbing was the only thing in condition for me, there was one guy I knew I needed to contact: Jon Walsh, a.k.a. Jonny Red (JR). He is my total hero. He has climbed the kinds of routes around the globe that people dream of climbing, and usually in an uncompromising, bold style—single push, fast, and free. His response was immediate and positive. At the top of his hit list was a face I had dreamt about since I was a kid: the storied Emperor Face of Mt. Robson. We didn't have to talk tactics for very long to realize we were on the same page. If we climbed fast with small packs, we would only need a couple of good days of weather. JR was adamant that any face in the



The new Kruk-Walsh line on Mt. Robson's Emperor Face, to the junction with the Emperor Ridge. See *AAJ* 2008, p. 184, for other routes on the face. *Jon Walsh*