

# CDMC

## Trip Report

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### Changes

- today
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- < 7 days
- < 30 days

**Comox Glacier** (mountaineering) [return to Reports list](#)

Sat Aug 18 to Sun Aug 19, 2012

Leader: **Bob St.John**

Co-Leader:

The lead-up to this trip proved to be almost as exciting as the trip itself. First there was the lack of appropriate vehicles to get us up the decommissioned road, but thanks to new member Rick Tae that problem was solved at the last moment. Then there was the weather... why did the forecasts show lightning storms on our trip day amid an ocean of sunny days? Who knows, but after polling participants we moved the trip up one day, which worked out well.

We drove into the trailhead the evening before and camped beside the cars. Our 3 vehicles managed to negotiate the swales over the last 5 kms of road without problem... a special thanks to Ken and crew for the work they did on fixing the worst of them! A day trip up to the Comox Glacier is a long, strenuous trek, and an early start is necessary. Before we turned in around 9 pm we went over some knots to use when roping up.

We were up before the break of day and after filling 2 or more water bottles at the creek crossing, we were on the trail at 5:45. Most of us started out wearing long pants and perhaps a light jacket, but at our first break those all came off in favour of shorts and light clothing. A good thing about this trip is that about half the elevation is gained in the first 2 cool hours of morning to the top of the 'Frog Pond' ridge.

The hour long walk along the top of the ridge with numerous 'kodak' viewpoints was a pleasant reprieve after the previous climb. A few of our participants had gone on the Century Sam Lake trip the week before, and could now see the lake from a totally different perspective. After 'scooching' down a steep gully we were at the Frog Ponds, a popular site for backpackers. Sadly, fire pits scarred the area, some with garbage remains. An attempt was made to disperse this material, and the garbage packed and taken out... thanks LeRoy!

The section up to Black Cat Mountain involves scaling several rock bands. The rock offers good hand and foot holds, but some bands have considerable exposure. This, along with the heat of the day, and the prospect of much more climbing ahead, convinced a participant to choose to settle into a shaded, flat location with snow nearby for water, and enjoy the magnificent views.

We had one small difficulty on the slope of Black Cat Mtn just above Lone Tree Pass... a remnant of winter snow required crossing 10 feet or so with some exposure. Deep-cut steps made the crossing relatively easy.

The final climb up to the 'south' summit from Lone Tree Pass seemed to go easily compared to the grunt up to the ridge earlier in the morning. I think the prospect of nearing the glacier, the cooling breeze, and the magnificent views makes the brain ignore the pleading of the body to stop. We noted that a weather system consisting of both high clouds and ocean inlet fog was coming towards us, but the clouds seemed thin and non-threatening. At the glacier's edge we put on our harnesses

and roped for the final trek to the true summit to the north.

The glacier/snowfield crossing went quickly and was uneventful. No yawning crevasses were encountered. So why did I, as leader, require we rope up? Was it even a glacier we were on, or more of a snowfield? Downslope it definitely is a crevassed glacier, and on the flat western flank most likely a snowfield. Can holes develop in a snowfield due to water melt? Can these holes be hidden just underneath? I cannot answer these questions with certainty, and I would doubt others could either. As leader, I did not want to make my best guess about whether roping up was necessary, especially when others who may be new to snowfields/glaciers are relying on the leader to do the right thing as far as their safety is concerned. The only downside of roping up is carrying the rope and personal harnesses up the climb. We all shared in this, and I do not recall anyone on the trip complaining, other than they had not had a turn carrying the rope yet. I admit that if this were the Mountaineering Olympics, we would not get the gold medal for the crossing roped up. We did better on the return. Another important aspect of 'mountaineering' is that the group congeal as a team, and work together in a supportive manner for the good of the team. In future I would like to lead more trips of this nature, where ropes, harnesses, crampons, or ice axes may be required. We may be a hiking club in the main, but that does not mean we cannot go on mountaineering trips as well. To participate on these types of trips being prepared for the technical aspects of mountaineering would help a lot. Read up on the subject, takes courses, and go out and put to practice what you learn. This trip could probably be done with a reasonable safety margin without roping up, but why second guess... it doesn't always work well second guessing the weather, or other aspects of nature.

Sorry for the digression, on with the trip...

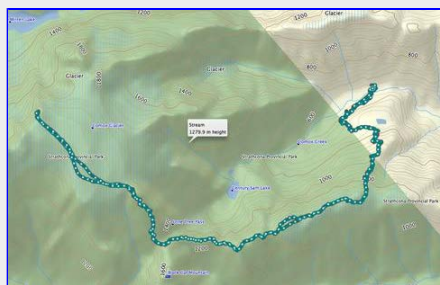
We reached the summit about 1pm, 7 hours after starting. The views as usual were spectacular, and the familiar landmarks identified and pointed out. Noting the rain showers developing further south near Port Alberni, we had a quick lunch and returned across the glacier. There was one incident on this crossing near the rock outcrop of the south summit... I somehow failed to return my camera to its home in my pants pocket after taking a photo, and it must have fell to the snow slope and slid down into the moat between snow and rock. As I was last on the rope, no one saw this happen. So, let alone losing the camera itself, with it went the only summit shot of the group!

The rest of the return trip had some fun parts (rock climbing), pleasant parts (ridge walking), and not so fun parts (the long trek down the ridge to the cars). The rain noted earlier caught up to us as light showers on this latter section, refreshing after a long day, but making the trail a little slippery. Near the end the group had spread out a bit, with the last few arriving back at 8 pm, making for a 14 hour trip! I am sure there are a few achy body parts today, especially knees.

We managed to make it through the iffy section of road in daylight, and made it back to Harmston about 10... too late for a group celebratory dinner. Should we start at 3am next time?

Thanks everyone for making this a trip to remember, and for helping others out from time to time when necessary. Photos to follow... everyone who took photos can add one or two to the report.

[More photos from this incredible trip](#) can be seen here.



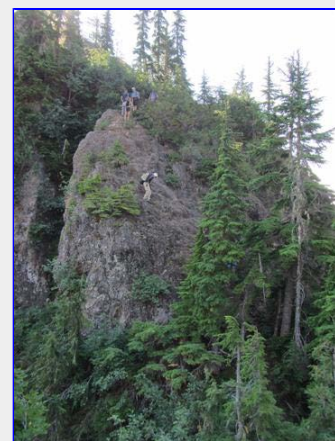
*GPS of our trip (13 hrs 53 min,  
18.4 km)  
[Linda Hamilton photo]*



*Water break on the early  
morning climb up Frog's Pond  
ridge  
[Glenn Ord photo]*



*Surveying Route around Black  
Cat & into Lone Tree Pass  
[William Wright photo]*



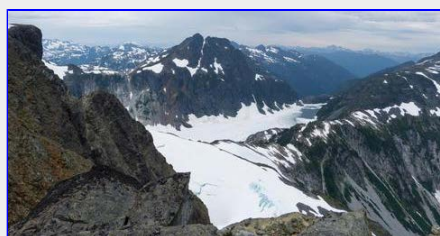
*One of the steep  
descents  
[Linda Hamilton photo]*



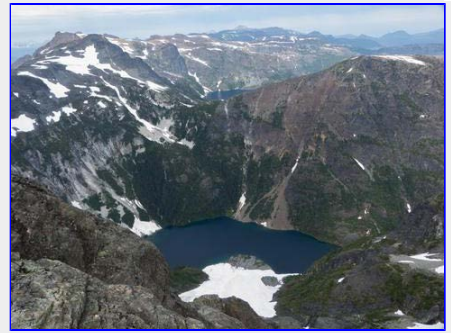
*The trip leader, Bob, on the  
ridge leading to the South  
Summit  
[Glenn Ord photo]*



*Roped-up Crossing of Glacier  
[William Wright photo]*



*Milla Lake as seen from the*



[Carol Hunter photo]

*North Summit*  
[Carol Hunter photo]



*Life on the edge....*  
[Richard Matthews photo]



*What to do with extra trail mix....*  
[Richard Matthews photo]

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**Report contributors:** Linda H, Carol H, Richard M, Glenn O, Bob S, William W,

**Participant list (9 of 9):** Linda H, Carol H, Richard M, LeRoy M, Glenn O, Khris S, Bob S, Rick T, William W,

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