

## **Ravens' Crag climbing area** (above Thunder Dome, just past CIC Slabs in NELSON)

### **General information:**

After initial work almost 20 years ago, some further development of the Ravens Crag area has been finished in a steep, scenic location in West Arm Provincial Park. Completion has been consistent with the Park Master Plan, which recognizes climbing as an activity to be supported in this area. The crag name originated because ravens are often heard in this area (they don't nest on the crag, but actually do high up in trees between the Ravens' Crag and Thunder Dome climbing areas, and do not seem to be bothered by climbing activity). Ravens' Crag was named 10 years before Raven Wall at Waterline and we are hopeful there will be no confusion.

Ravens' Crag is shaped like a smaller version of Kootenay Crag, sloping uphill to the right, with a generally steep face with various (impressive) overhanging features. Going up from bottom to top there are the "Lower Roofs", "Bear Wall" and "Upper Roofs" climbing areas. From the right viewing angle you can see a bear's face in the middle (bear) wall. Another interesting feature further up to the right in this area is a ledge with large blocks wedged on it - the largest of which we have named "Baby Beluga," which seems solid at this time. The fourth (easiest) climbing area involves the slabs and overlaps that run the entire length of the shoulder, from the far left bottom of the crag, to the far right top. Each area has at least one completed climb, which will be reported in separate emails to permit more photos. (One old climb exists in the "Coyote Crack" area of the Lower Roofs and that will be described further next spring after we check it for any loose rock, which from what we can see is likely not a concern.)

The steep south face of Ravens' Crag gets plenty of sunshine, but not until mid-day and even then there are some big trees that provide some shade in the Lower and Upper Roofs areas. Similar to Thunder Dome, there is often a nice cool breeze up from the Lake on hotter days. You can usually find warm sun on cooler days.

The access route up to Ravens' Crag, and along the gully that is at the base of the south face is steep and loose, and requires care. Similar care is needed at the base of some of the climbs due to the steepness.

Climbers at Ravens' Crag are rewarded with excellent views of Nelson and area. In addition, there is an alpine feel to this blocky granite cliff, which is enhanced by the fact that most climbs involve a standing or semi-hanging mid-station (to avoid rope drag/stretch caused by bulges and small roofs).

It is possible to rap from the top of all routes into the gully with a single rap of less than 30m.

**Access / Approach** (same as for Thunder Dome, just involves a few more minutes hiking)

Drive or ride up Elwyn St, turn left on to Svoboda Rd, park at 200 meters (same as for CIC climbing area, park just before the narrow, winding road caution sign). [The small pullouts further along are mainly intended for vehicle passage on Svoboda Road and locals do not like people parking there – So, please just take the four minutes walk from CIC parking, thanks.]

Hike approximately 4 minutes on Svoboda Rd to the top of the first hill. Look for a blue ribbon on the right 3m past the bottom of "Hippy Killer" mountain bike trail. Hike approx. 3 minutes up bike trail and turn left at a cedar tree with another blue ribbon and follow an access route linking old game and human paths. Hike approx. 5 minutes to Thunder Dome and then continue up a steeper route another 3 minutes to Ravens Crag. The access route up and down to the various climbs is loose and requires care. The start of climbs are currently marked with different coloured flagging tape that will be described in the photo emails for the various climbs.

**The climbing** is quite varied, with most climbs involving some steep face, crack, overhang/overlap, ledge and bulge sections, along with a few friction slab moves. Rock is generally very solid granite, but there is a sloping

dyke of rock (similar to rock at Hall Siding) that is quite fractured in some areas; it runs along the base of the main crag and into the Upper Roofs area. The dike and the various roofs/ledges on the crag may contain the odd, looser rock that we have not found yet (the few hollow sounding blocks we have found are marked with red "Xs"). Climbing up the shoulder of the crag involves mainly easy slab climbing with excellent views.



Lower Roofs, "Coyote Crack" is big corner



Bear Wall, "face" including "paw"



Bear Wall right to Upper Roofs in distance



Upper Roofs

## Ravens' Crag climb descriptions (more description and pictures were sent out in emails by Hamish Mutch)

### #1. "Heatwave" 5.8, 3 pitches. Sport.

Start: Begin at the lowest [left-hand] point of the crag, around the shoulder from the Lower Roofs area.

Climb the edge of the buttress for 3 moderate pitches.

Several slightly loose rocks on P2 were marked with red or black Xs. We were unable to remove them, so most likely they are good. Take at least 8 draws. Great views from the top.

**Descend** either by rappelling the route in 3 raps, or by 1 rap into the gully on the right side, where other footwear will be required.

L. Bickerton, M. Curran, H. Mutch 2015

The following climbs are in order starting from the furthest up the gully (right to left along the cliff face) [they are accessed by heading up the looser route that goes to the right from where the access route from Thunder Dome reaches Ravens' Crag]:

### #2 (red on topo). "Windstorm" 5.9 Sport.

Start: Hike up the gully to the yellow flagging tape that leads to the base of the Upper Roofs area, above a big fir tree.

Follow the right-leaning dyke. Initially somewhat broken and dirty, the rock quality and climbing improve rapidly with height. Pass a semi-hanging station mid-way, which is for the next route, "Tidal Wave". The route curves to the left above this point, going up cracks and ledges, and then around an overhang and up a slab.

Finish at the top anchor for "Heatwave". 10 draws, including 2 longer ones. **Descent:** rappel <30m

M. Curran, H. Mutch 2015.

### #3 (blue on topo). "Tidal Wave" 5.9 if climbed ground-up, 5.7 if reached by rappel; 2 pitches. Sport.

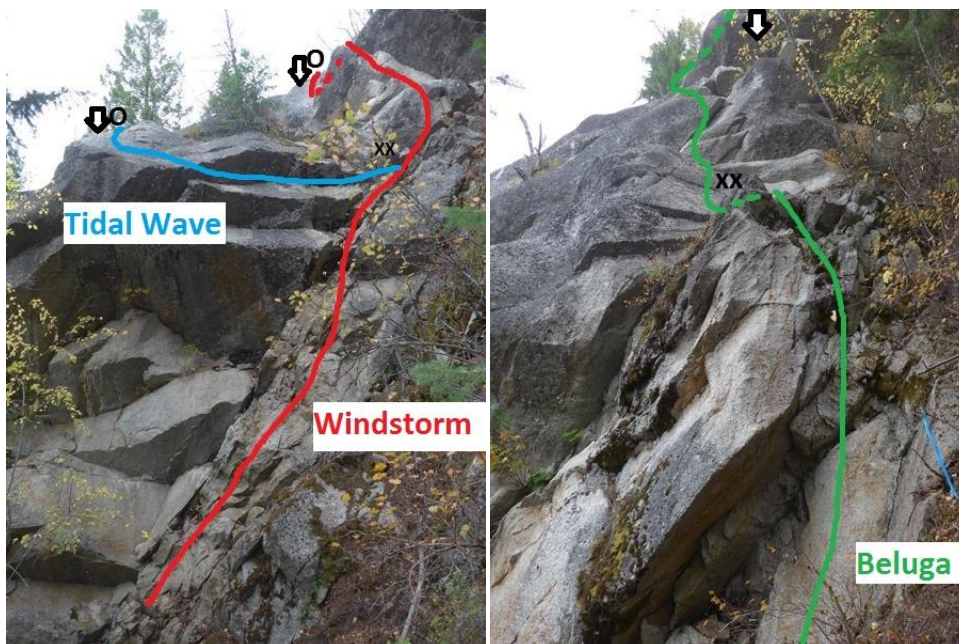
Start: As for "Windstorm" (Upper Roofs area).

P1. Either climb the lower part of "Windstorm" to the semi-hanging station, using 5 clips, or rappel to this point from the top anchor for "Heatwave".

P2. Tiptoe carefully left, above some impressive air. Then surf the wave! 5 clips.

Shares an anchor with "Beluga". **Descent:** rappel Beluga route <30m, or over the big overhang(!).

M. Curran, H. Mutch 2015.



#4 “**Beluga**” 10b, 2 pitches. Sport. (green on topo which is foreshortened, not showing much of top pitch).

Start: Hike up the gully to the blue flagging tape just before the Upper Roofs area.

P1. A short slab/corner and dyke with fractured/jointed (“wedged”) blocks lead to a semi-hanging station. 5.7 to 5.9, easier to the right. 2 clips.

P2. Three features of increasing difficulty, a short face, a weird layback/overhang and a steep slab require a variety of techniques. A large wedged-in, whale-shaped and precarious-looking boulder [Baby Beluga] is encountered at the base of the steep slab. While the FAists lay-backed, stemmed, stood on, sat on, and generally abused this boulder, they cannot guarantee its stability, and so suggest caution. 8 clips.

Shares an anchor with “Tidal Wave”. **Descent:** rappel Beluga route <30m, or over the big overhang(!).

M. Curran, H. Mutch 2015.

#5 (orange on topo). “**Cold Fingers**” 10b/c, 2 pitches. Sport.

Start: Hike up the gully to the orange flagging tape in the middle of the Bear Wall area.

P1. Overcome “cold feet” to face climb and surmount three overlapping slabs, a thin crack and a hand traverse to the semi-hanging station. 8 bolts.

P2. Overcome “cold fingers” to climb an overhanging finger crack and a rounded lay-back to an easier crack. 3 bolts. **Descent:** rappel the route <30m, or make a third pitch to top of Heatwave and rappel from that climb.

Take at least 8 draws.

M. Curran, H. Mutch 2015.

From near the start you can see the bear face with pupils and nostrils, in addition to the paw (picture below).

