

2018 Annual Mountaineering Summary



NPS Photo (M. Coady)

2018 Statistical Year in Review

Each season's [mountaineering route statistics](#), including total attempts and total summits for Denali and Foraker, are now compiled into one spreadsheet spanning from 1979 to 2018. The [Denali Dispatches](#) blog can provide a more detailed perspective of the 2018 season, including daily statistics, weather, conditions reports, photos, and random climbing news. Thank you to the 31 [mountaineering Volunteers-in-Parks](#) (VIP's) who teamed up with Denali rangers to staff the mountain camps in 2018. Read about the efforts of the 2018 recipients of the [Mislow-Swanson Denali Pro Award](#).

Quick Facts - Denali

- **Climbers from the USA: 694 (63% of total)**

Climbers hailed from 42 of the 50 states in 2018. Colorado was the most heavily represented with 114 climbers. Alaska followed close behind with 111 climbers. There were 87 climbers from Washington and 72 from California.

- **International climbers: 420 (37% of total)**

51 foreign nations were represented on Denali in 2018. Of the international climbers, Poland generated the highest number of climbers with 47. Canada was next with 42. Australia was surprisingly well-represented on Denali this season, with 28 climbers. China and Japan each had 24 climbers on Denali. We had one climber each from Andorra, Kazakhstan, and Qatar.

- **Average trip length**

The average trip length on Denali was 17 days; independent teams averaged a day less (16 days), while guided teams averaged a day more (18 days). The average length of a Muldrow Glacier climb was 27 days.

- **Average age**

The average age of male climbers was 38 years old. Women were generally younger, with an average age of 35 years old. The youngest climber to attempt Denali this year was 17 years old, the oldest was 70.

- **Women climbers**

Women comprised 12% of total (136 women) on Denali, with 40% of women climbers reaching the summit this season. On Mount Foraker, two of the seven attempts were made by women in 2018.

- **Summits by month**

- April: 2
- May: 106
- June: 353
- July: 33

- **Busiest summit days**

- June 8: 67 summits
- May 28: 47 summits
- June 23: 40 summits
- June 4: 37 summits

Statistics compiled by Registration Supervisor Debbie Reiswig

2018 Search and Rescue Summary

Climbing Fall

West Face, West Kahiltna Peak

(April 14) NPS rangers were alerted to an injured climber by a local air taxi service after they had received a text from the team's Garmin inReach device. The team was located at approximately 9,600 feet on the west face of West Kahiltna Peak, where one of the three climbers had broken his leg in a ten to fifteen-meter leader fall on a pitch of ice. Once NPS personnel were able to communicate directly with the climbing party via satellite device, the team reported a "compound lower leg fracture". A pilot and two rangers responded via helicopter in favorable weather, locating the patient and teammates on an exposed snow and ice slope directly beneath a vertical rock face. The helicopter was re-configured for a short-haul extraction using a 200-foot line. Due to the steepness of the terrain and the potential for rockfall, the ranger remained on the short-haul line to expedite the extraction. The patient and his closed lower right leg injury were packaged for the short flight back to the staging area. The patient was then transported in a full body vacuum splint for comfort and to help stabilize the leg injury. Once in Talkeetna, the injured climber was transferred to ground ambulance for further treatment and care at the local hospital.

Avalanche

East Face, Reality Ridge, West Fork of Ruth Glacier

(May 3) On the first day of clearing following a storm that lasted more than a week and deposited six feet of new snow, three ski mountaineers left their basecamp with the intention to climb and then ski an east facing couloir on Denali's Reality Ridge. As the team neared the top of the couloir, they began to have concerns about the snow stability. The team decided to cross the couloir to a spot where they could put on their skis and begin their descent without going any higher. During this transition, one member of the group triggered an avalanche and was swept approximately 1,800 feet down the chute, coming to rest on the surface of the snow at the bottom of the couloir. Although he did not report losing consciousness, he did sustain significant injuries. His partners, who were above him at the time of the avalanche, witnessed the entire event and were able to safely descend to his location. The team contacted their air taxi service via satellite phone, who in turn notified NPS rangers. Rescue operations were streamlined due to the direct satellite communication with the team in the field who provided frequent updates on the patient's location and condition. A pilot and two rangers departed Talkeetna en route to the Ruth Glacier within 30 minutes of notification. Following an initial patient assessment, rangers loaded the patient in the helicopter then flew to Talkeetna, where the patient was transferred to an ambulance and taken to a local hospital for further care. The patient was treated at the hospital for a dislocated left shoulder, a fractured jaw, a large chin laceration and large contusions on the right thigh and right elbow.

Climbing Fall

16,500 feet, West Buttress, Denali

(May 20) Two climbers were ascending Denali's West Buttress at approximately 16,500 feet when they fell off the north side of the ridge. The climbers were roped together, but were not clipped into any fixed protection. Due to the hard surface conditions, they were unable to self-arrest. Ultimately the climbing team's fall stopped when they fell into a crevasse 1,000 feet below the ridge and just above the Peters Glacier. One of the fallen climbers was able to activate a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) which relayed their location at 15,800 feet to Alaska Rescue Coordination Center and NPS personnel.

An NPS ranger patrol descending from 17,200-foot camp was able to respond to location of the initial fall. Due to the convexity of that terrain and deteriorating weather, the climbing party could not be visualized from above. The NPS team returned to 14,200-foot camp to prepare for a larger scale rescue with a greater number of personnel. Multiple contingency plans were drafted to accommodate the forecasted weather conditions on the upper mountain.

Early morning on May 21, as ground rescue teams ascended toward the West Buttress, one of the two fallen climbers stumbled into 14,200-foot camp on an injured knee. He reported that his climbing partner was alert and stable, but injured and non-ambulatory in the crevasse that had stopped their fall. Rescue operations to reach the non-ambulatory climber continued, with the first ground rescue team and the NPS helicopter rescue crew arriving at the injured patient's location at nearly the same time. The patient was extracted via short-haul and flown to 14,200-foot camp. Following an additional medical assessment, the patient was packaged with further spinal precautions due to her suspected injuries, and loaded into the NPS helicopter. The patient was transferred to an Anchorage hospital via air ambulance for treatment of cervical spinal fractures. The patient's climbing partner was evacuated the following day for treatment of his unstable knee injury.

Rock/Ice Fall Mini Moonflower, North Ridge, Mount Hunter

(May 20) A climbing party of two was hit by falling rock and ice debris while rappelling the Mini-Moonflower climbing route on Mount Hunter. The team notified NPS rangers of the accident via Garmin inReach text, reporting that one of them was unable to use their upper left arm due to the blunt force trauma of the rockfall. Nevertheless, the pair was able to continue their descent while both NPS ground and helicopter teams responded to the location in the upper southeast fork of the Kahiltna Glacier. The ground rescue team was able to assess and splint the injury prior to helicopter transport back to Talkeetna. Subsequent reports from the local hospital revealed that the climber had a fractured left humerus that required surgical repair that evening.

High Altitude Pulmonary Edema and High Altitude Cerebral Edema 14,200 feet, West Buttress, Denali

(May 22) A climber began experiencing signs and symptoms of severe altitude illness during an ascent to the 14,200-foot camp. The patient, who was experiencing shortness of breath at rest, a productive cough and a severe headache, continued to deteriorate throughout the night and the following day. His climbing partners notified the NPS rangers of his worsening condition on May 23 and he was subsequently treated for both high altitude pulmonary edema (HAPE) and high altitude cerebral edema (HACE). The ranger and medical volunteers at the 14,200-foot camp treated the patient continuously for the next 24 hours, but his condition failed to improve. The sick climber was evacuated via NPS helicopter to Talkeetna on May 24, and then transferred to ground ambulance for further treatment and monitoring at a local hospital.

High Altitude Pulmonary Edema and High Altitude Cerebral Edema 17,200 feet, West Buttress, Denali

(May 31) An NPS ranger patrol at the 17,200-foot camp was contacted by a three-person expedition because one of the

climbers was presenting with signs and symptoms of both HAPE and HACE. The team reported that they had ascended to high camp at 17,200 feet from base camp at 7,200 feet in only four days. The NPS patrol completed a patient assessment and noted labored respirations, wet lung sounds and a confused and non-ambulatory patient. The climber was immediately treated for both forms of severe altitude illness (HAPE and HACE) and initiated a helicopter evacuation. Due to the patient's inability to walk, the NPS team utilized a rescue sled to transport the patient to the landing zone outside of camp. The NPS helicopter pilot and a ranger-paramedic flew to high camp where the patient was loaded internally. The ranger-paramedic continued treatment on board and monitored the patient until he was transferred to a ground ambulance in Talkeetna.

High Altitude Pulmonary Edema and High Altitude Cerebral Edema 19,500 feet, West Buttress, Denali

(June 1) Shortly after 10:00 pm, NPS rangers were notified via Garmin inReach text that a climber just below the summit ridge was suffering from what appeared to be severe altitude illness. Other climbers in the vicinity had administered two doses of dexamethasone, a steroid used to treat HACE, in hopes that the climber could continue his descent. The severity of the patient's condition made a time-consuming ground rescue from 17,200-foot camp impractical.

The NPS helicopter departed Talkeetna just after midnight on June 2. An NPS ranger was picked up at the 14,200-foot camp for a reconnaissance flight higher on the mountain. The climbing team of three, including the patient, was located at approximately 18,500 feet on the West Buttress route near Zebra Rocks.

The helicopter returned to 14,200-foot camp where rangers rigged a rescue basket to the short-haul line. The pilot performed an unattended basket rescue of the patient and returned to 14,200-foot camp. After being evaluated and loaded internally, the patient and an NPS volunteer doctor flew back to an awaiting ground ambulance in Talkeetna.

Skiing Fall 7,800 feet, West Buttress, Denali

(June 3) Two climbers were descending toward basecamp on skis. One of the climbers fell when his gear sled abruptly pulled him to one side. The climber reported feeling and hearing a popping sensation in his left knee during the fall. The injured skier and his partner were able to self-rescue to 7,800-foot camp before the swelling and pain became too great to continue. The following morning, the team of two notified NPS personnel that the patient was no longer able to walk. Once inclement weather cleared, the park helicopter pilot and a ranger evacuated the patient to Talkeetna.

Frostbite 17,200 feet, West Buttress, Denali

(June 5) In the early morning hours of June 5, NPS rangers at the 17,200-foot camp were notified that two climbers on a guided expedition had sustained frostbite injuries during that day's summit climb and needed medical assistance. The rangers assessed both patients and deemed one to need urgent evacuation due to deep frostbite injury to all ten fingers,

all ten toes and his nose. The patient believed that most of the frostbite occurred during the slow descent back to camp and specifically on his fingers when taking off mittens to manipulate carabiners on snow pickets.

The ranger team worked throughout the night to rewarm the affected extremities on both patients while awaiting flyable weather. The following morning, the NPS helicopter pilot flew to high camp and evacuated the patient to the 7,200-foot basecamp. The patient was transferred to an air ambulance at base camp and transferred directly to the frostbite specialists at the University of Utah Burn Center in Salt Lake City. Subsequent reports revealed that this climber had nearly all of the affected tissue amputated during the course of his care.

Following the evacuation of the first patient, the less severe patient was also flown from high camp to base camp due to deep frostbite injury to one of his feet. The ranger team was concerned that this climber could not descend safely on the frostbitten limb and opted to evacuate to prevent further injury. The helicopter transported this second climber to Talkeetna and a ground ambulance.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning 14,200 feet, West Buttress, Denali

(June 6) NPS rangers were alerted of an unresponsive and seizing patient in 14,200-foot camp. The climber had been pulled from his tent by fellow climbers in camp after his climbing partner had found him seizing while cooking in their tent during a storm. The ranger patrol at 14,200 feet responded shortly after the patient was pulled from his tent. The patient was initially responsive only to painful stimuli, but after approximately 30 minutes of supplemental oxygen therapy, the patient returned to a fully alert mental status.

The reporting climbing partner – the one who had exited their tent when “feeling off” and was thereby able to alert others when his partner became unresponsive -- was also found to be suffering from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. During their stay in the NPS medical tent, the patients received alternating treatments of supplemental oxygen and hyperbaric therapy in the Portable Altitude Chamber in hopes of expediting the removal of CO from the red blood cells.

Both of these patients required constant treatment and monitoring until the weather cleared two days later on the morning of June 8. At this time, both climbers were flown to Talkeetna and driven to the hospital by ground ambulance for further testing and treatment for both acute and chronic CO poisoning.

Frostbite, Hypothermia, Acute Mountain Sickness, and Urinary Tract Infection

14,200 feet, West Buttress, Denali

(June 7) NPS rangers at the 14,200-foot camp were contacted to assist a group of three climbers that reported being unable to continue their descent from high camp. The ranger patrol assisted the climbers to camp and assessed each for a variety of ailments. This team had been at the 17,200-foot camp for the duration of a multiple day storm. They began their descent when the weather cleared, but they were already depleted secondary to dehydration, acute mountain sickness and mild hypothermia. While down-climbing the fixed lines at 16,200 feet, one of the climbers also sustained frostbite injuries to both of his hands. Once in camp, the NPS patrol rewarmed patients, rehydrated others, and treated one for a

suspected urinary tract infection. A bulk of the assistance provided to this group involved setting up their camp so that they had a warm and dry place to sleep for the night and to prevent further hypothermia and frostbite in the group. This team was monitored and able to rest and recover in camp for a couple of days before descending on their own.

High Altitude Pulmonary Edema 14,200 feet, West Buttress, Denali

(June 25) A member of a guided expedition descended from 17,200-foot camp with high altitude pulmonary edema (HAPE) after spending two nights at high camp with shortness of breath and worsening lung sounds. Once the sick climber arrived at the 14,200-foot camp, the NPS ranger patrol treated and monitored the patient. Following a full night of medical care and the physiological benefits of descent from high camp, the patient was able to self-evacuate with his team the following day.

Airplane Crash 10,900 feet, Thunder Mountain, Mount Hunter

(August 4) A De Havilland Canada DHC-2 (Beaver) airplane crashed into a prominent ridge on the southwest flank of Mount Hunter, informally known as Thunder Mountain. This flightseeing tour had departed Talkeetna with a pilot and four passengers on board. The Alaska Rescue Coordination Center (RCC) was first notified of the crash by the plane's emergency locator transmitter (ELT). The RCC then notified NPS personnel in Talkeetna who assumed the incident command role. Multiple rescue flights involving civilian, NPS, and military aircraft circled in the vicinity of the ELT signal over the next two days but poor visibility prevented access to the site. Weather conditions continued to hamper rescue efforts until August 6 when a clearing trend made the first evaluation of the crash site possible. The plane was highly fragmented and in technical, glaciated and mountainous terrain. An NPS mountaineering ranger was short-hauled to the crash site and confirmed four of the five on board had sustained fatal injuries. Deteriorating weather halted the operation for the following four days. On August 10, two mountaineering rangers returned to the crash site and were able to conduct a thorough search and site hazard evaluation, and were able to confirm the fifth passenger to be deceased. The Unified Incident Command determined that recovery efforts would then be suspended due to numerous hazards at the crash site and the inability to mitigate the risk to NPS and military personnel.

Rafting Accident East Fork, Chulitna River

(August 17) RCC was notified that a 14-foot raft had flipped near mile 187 along the Parks Highway and that one person from the party was unaccounted for. The reporting party reported that he last saw his rafting partner floating down the river with a life jacket, but they ultimately floated out of view. The reporting party searched briefly before walking to the highway, flagging down a vehicle and calling for assistance. Alaska State Troopers established incident command on scene and requested NPS air and ground resources to search the river. While an NPS swiftwater team was mobilizing at park headquarters, a Talkeetna-based ranger responded with the NPS helicopter and pilot. An aerial search was already underway when the team was notified that the subject had made her way to the Parks Highway and flagged down a

vehicle without incident.



Rangers prepare to short-haul. NPS Photo

2018 Medical Summary

During the 2018 climbing season, Denali mountaineering rangers and patrol volunteers treated a total of 30 patients that met our life, limb or eyesight-threatened threshold. Patients not meeting this treatment guideline are advised to self-treat and evacuate. The following list provides a breakdown of the field diagnoses from this past rescue season:

- Traumatic Injury – 13 cases
- Frostbite – 5 cases

Medical – 4 cases

- High Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE) – 4 cases
- High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE) – 4 cases
- Carbon Monoxide Poisoning – 2 cases

NOTE: Some patients had multiple diagnoses resulting in a higher number of diagnoses than the total number of patients.

Of the patients treated, 24 were independent climbers or park visitors, 5 were guides or their clients, and one was an NPS volunteer. The patients treated by our teams exhibited a total of 18 traumatic injuries (including 5 cases of frostbite) and 14 medical complaints.

The location of the medical treatment was well-distributed:

- 14 of these patients were treated at 14,200-foot camp on the West Buttress route;
- 4 were treated at 17,200-foot high camp;
- 1 was treated at 7,200-foot base camp;
- 1 was treated at 7,800-foot camp; and
- 10 were treated in other areas of the Alaska Range.

In total, 16 of these patients required helicopter evacuation from Denali National Park and 9 patients were able to self-evacuate after initial assessment and stabilization by our medical providers.

Although there were no climbing-related fatalities this season (a first since 2003), a plane crash in early August claimed the lives of 5 people. This accident occurred on Thunder Mountain near Mount Hunter while a pilot was carrying 4 passengers on a scenic flight of the mountain range. An extensive, multi-agency search and rescue operation revealed that all five had perished in the accident.

The patient care reports from this past climbing season describe ailments commonly associated with mountaineering in the Alaska Range. Many of these medical illnesses and traumatic injuries are preventable with prudent decision-making and a reasonable ascent profile during climbing expeditions. Additional information regarding the prevention, recognition, and treatment of common mountain medicine maladies can be found online in the [Denali mountaineering handbook](#).

~Compiled by Ranger-Paramedic David Weber

New Routes and Significant Repeat Ascents of 2018

The 2018 climbing season in the Alaska Range was characterized by some of the most prolific snowfall events in recent memory. After a fairly dry winter and early spring - which yielded some decent early season climbing conditions - the period between April 20 and May 20 saw some areas of the Alaska Range receive in excess of twenty feet of new snow! The first storm of this period, in late April, was a continuous week-long event that resulted from a strong and continuous zonal jet stream flow from the west, out of the Bering Sea. Climbers from Little Switzerland to the Ruth Glacier reported new snow depths of up to twelve feet just from this single storm. During the full month long period, near constant storms almost completely curtailed climbing activity in the range, and there were even some climbing teams that came to Talkeetna and never made it into the mountains.

Late May and the first week of June provided a brief respite from the pattern and brought some good weather to the mountain, allowing for some significant ascents on Denali along with many West Buttress summits. But the weather largely closed in again for much of June and early July, and the final summit success percentage for Denali was only 45 percent. To many “old-timers”, it was reminiscent of ‘how Alaska weather used to be’. Indeed, the lower elevation glacier conditions on the Kahiltna, by season’s end, were some of the best seen in years, with virtually no open crevasses, and excellent snow conditions for travel. Some compared the glacier conditions in early July to what would ordinarily be seen in mid to late May.

Mount Hunter only saw a single team reach the summit this season, via the Ramen Route on the west ridge. Due to the constant storms during most of May, along with thin ice, the north buttress of Mount Hunter saw no teams get any higher than halfway up. Mount Foraker, meanwhile, saw zero successful ascents.

West Kahiltna Peak—Ride the Bullet

The season’s most difficult and significant first ascent is this new line taking a direct route up West Kahiltna Peak’s west face. The team of Kurt Ross, Nik Mirhashemi, and Steven Van Sickle began climbing the route on April 14, following a weakness on the left-center of the face, aiming for a principle chimney and ice runnel system. This system is the only one that is relatively protected from exposure to the seracs which hang across the majority of the west face. Nonetheless, some objective hazard certainly exists on the approach and initial pitches.

As the team began climbing the initial portion of the chimney system, Van Sickle took an estimated 10 to 15 meter fall, sustaining a lower leg injury, and was subsequently rescued by the NPS by way of helicopter shorthaul extraction later that morning. Ross and Mirhashemi descended back to their camp on the Kahiltna. On April 15, the pair returned to the route and completed it to the summit of West Kahiltna Peak in a 36 hour effort.

Ross wrote of the route: “Route climbs up center-left of center of the west/southwest face, via prominent chimney and ice runnel system. Lots of really classic alpine ice and mixed climbing including a 200+’ ice hose pitch that was at most shoulder width and fairly steep. One bivy about 2/3 of the way up and then we took it to the summit. Descended east and then south of the summit down to a pocket glacier above the east fork of the Kahiltna that ended up being fairly exposed to serac hazard. Better to rap the route, or traverse to East Kahiltna Peak and down its south ridge.”

They named the 4000 foot route “Ride the Bullet” and graded it V, AI5+R, M6+, C1

Serendipity Spire—South Ridge / "Charlie Zulu"

On June 12, Zach Lovell and Chris Robertson completed what they believed to be a possible new route on Serendipity Spire in the Kichatna Mountains. The route was completed in 13 hours camp to camp and was graded IV, 5.10, 55 degrees. The route was 1,100 feet and consisted of 13-15 pitches. They descended the north ridge and northwest couloir.

They described the route as follows: "From Tatina Glacier, approach Serendipity from snow slopes south of the spire, up roughly 500 feet of elevation gain until snow reaches rock (0-1 pitches, up to 55 degrees on firm snow/neve). 4 pitches of rock up to 5.9 before gaining south ridge, at its lowest point/lowest col. Another 2-4 pitches of aesthetic ridge climbing (5.7) reach the upper col. This col has appeared to have been used to cross to/from the Cul De Sac (aka Cool-Sac) glacier, accessed from a chossy ramp on the west side, or snow couloir on the east. 6 pitches from the upper col to the summit, with some great rock and splitter cracks up to 5.10. This was a guided trip with American Alpine Institute. Worthy of a lighter mission if only a small weather window were gifted to parties on the Tatina".

The team reported finding very old webbing and anchor slings lower on the south ridge, and believe that Andy Embick may have descended this route after making the first ascent of the spire in 1981. The team descended the route that Embick had climbed up, the north ridge, seeing no signs of existing anchors. Their route is only the second recorded ascent (the first being Embick's) of the spire.

Mount Dickey—Alpine Start

In May, Brian Lantz, Nikolai Windahl, Hans Windahl, and Jaap Pederson established a quality, four pitch rock route along the base of Mount Dickey's enormous southeast face.

The 120 meter route, named "Alpine Start", consists of four pitches up to 5.9, and was described as "Really nice cracks. Launched the bigger blocks off, steep and really great edges for everything! Big orange corner with lots of roofs. Good protection. Gear to 0.1 to #3, heavy on 0.3 to 0.75", single set of stoppers. Many options for variations, and further exploration".

The route is equipped with fixed rappel anchors. It appears to offer a great option for a low commitment crag outing in the Ruth Gorge, of which there are relatively few.

Denali—Light Traveler, Second Ascent

The first week of June provided a break from the otherwise stormy weather pattern that plagued the Alaska Range this season, and during this time several significant ascents occurred on Denali.

Most significant was the first repeat ascent of the route "Light Traveler" on Denali's southwest face, by guides Sam Hennessey and Michael Gardner. Light Traveler was first climbed in June of 2001 by renowned Slovenian alpinist Marko Prezelj and American alpinist Stephen Koch in a 51 hour continuous push that began from the 14,000 foot camp on the mountain's west buttress.

Gardner and Hennessey each had first guided the mountain's West Buttress on separate trips, summiting on the same day. They flew out to Talkeetna for two days, then returned to the Kahiltna Glacier. Early in the morning of June 3, they began their ascent from the 7,800-foot camp on the West Buttress, traveling up the northeast fork of the Kahiltna Glacier. They reached the summit an astonishingly fast 36 hours later. The total time on the route from the base to the summit was 31 hours. They brought minimal gear and apart from several brew stops, climbed continuously. They returned to their camp at 7,800 feet on the West Buttress less than 48 hours after leaving it, taking many stops on the descent of the West Buttress to visit and eat with friends in various camps.

Light Traveler is graded Alaska Grade 6, M7, W16. Having never been repeated until now, it was long rumored to be possibly the most difficult route on Denali, along with the longer Slovak Direct on the south face, and the nearby Denali Diamond and McCartney-Roberts routes on the southwest face. The speed of Hennessey and Gardner's ascent is quite notable. In the history of these four very difficult routes, theirs is by far the fastest ascent of any of them. The Slovak Direct (Alaska Grade 6, A16, M6+/A1), which involves over 5,000 vertical feet of technical difficulties, was climbed in a 60 hour continuous push in June of 2000 by Mark Twight, Steve House, and Scott Backes, during the route's third ascent, a feat that is considered one of the most significant benchmarks in the evolution of alpine style climbing. The Denali Diamond's (Alaska Grade 6, A15+, M7+ or M6/A1) fastest ascent to date was in 2007 when Americans Colin Haley and Mark Westman made the ascent in just over 45 hours, employing one bivouac. The McCartney-Roberts route (Alaska Grade 6, 5.9/A3) was the first route done on the southwest face. It is largely concurrent with the Denali Diamond route for the first 2/3 of the lower wall, but it circumvents the upper crux corner of what later became the Denali Diamond with a complex traverse and difficult exit on terrain several hundred feet to the left. The McCartney-Roberts route was essentially repeated in 2005 by Canadians Chris Brazeau and Ian Welsted. The pair followed the Denali Diamond, their intended route, but were forced to bypass the upper corner system due to severe spindrift. Taking a higher traverse variation, the pair moved to the left and finished the lower wall on very difficult terrain which was presumed to be on or very near to the original McCartney-Roberts finish. Brazeau and Welsted completed their ascent with no bivouacs in a 44 hour effort.

Hennessey and Gardner's ascent of Light Traveler was timed well for weather and conditions, flawlessly executed, and stands as one of the more impressive stylistic achievements on Denali in recent years. Of note, the pair also left no gear behind on the mountain.

Hennessey and Gardner described Light Traveler as sustained and difficult, but not desperate, and declared that the "quality of the climbing is up there with the best we have ever done", stating that "more people should certainly climb this route!" They believed that there was considerably less ice on their ascent than that found on the first ascent in 2001.

Denali—Slovak Direct

In early June, Chantel Astorga and Anne Gilbert Chase made the 9th ascent of Denali's renowned Slovak Direct (Alaska Grade 6, A16, M6+/A1) on the mountain's south face. They are the first women to climb this route and this is arguably the most difficult all-women's ascent yet accomplished in Alaska. The pair had attempted the route in 2017 but were stormed off. This season they returned and made the ascent in four days. The Slovak Direct, as noted above, is one of Denali's most difficult routes and at 2,700 meters is one of the longest and most serious routes in the Alaska Range. Astorga, along with Jewell Lund, had previously made the 7th and most recent ascent of the Denali Diamond on the mountain's

southwest face in 2015.

Denali—Cassin Ridge, Solo Speed Ascent

The good weather of early June allowed for four successful ascents of the Cassin Ridge in a single week. Of note, American Colin Haley accomplished an impressively fast solo ascent of the route. Beginning in the east fork of the Kahiltna Glacier, Haley crossed over Kahiltna Notch, descended to the bergschrund and traversed to the base of the Japanese Couloir. From here, he climbed to the summit of Denali in 8 hours and 7 minutes. Mugs Stump had made a 15 hour solo ascent of the route in 1991. In 2011, Will Sim and Jonathan Griffith had climbed the route from the base to Kahiltna Horn (20,120') in just over 14 ½ hours. Haley had climbed the Cassin in its entirety in 2010, and had made several other attempts at setting the speed record, each of which were thwarted by poor weather and/or deep snow conditions on the route.

~Compiled by Ranger Mark Westman