



Pablo Lukach crossing the glacier near camp II on Volcán Tres Picos (6037m).
(Esteban Pacheco)

Aconcagua

In 2013, Portuguese Carlos Gomes Dasa made a new speed record on Aconcagua, summiting from and returning to Horcones in 15hrs 42mins. He departed at 5am, summiting at 5pm and returning at 8.34pm, with times certified by the park rangers. The previous record was that of Peruvian Holmes Pantoja in 20hrs 34mins.

In all during the 2011-12 season, 6,989 people went to Aconcagua, 3,688 to ascend it and 3,301 for trekking (the preceding season the figures were 3,497 and 2,630). The climbers were 18% Argentinian and 82% from abroad; the trekkers were 57% Argentinian and 43% from abroad. One climber died and 203 were evacuated due to illness and accidents; 114 were evacuated from Plaza de Mulas. There was a major helicopter rescue from the south face. The park now has 50 rangers and supporters, an 18-strong rescue team and 22 doctors specialised in high mountain medicine. Fifty tons of garbage was removed from the park.

DAMIEN GILDEA

Antarctica 2011-12

Ellsworth Mountains: Sentinel Range, Vinson Massif

A total of 147 individual climbers reached the summit of Mount Vinson (4892m) in the 2011-12 season, with repeat summits by guides bringing the total to 158. Fourteen climbers also ascended nearby Mount Shinn (4660m), the continent's third-highest mountain. Guides from *Antarctic Logistics & Expeditions* (ALE) made several ascents of Knutzen Peak, a rocky summit that lies above the Vinson normal route, and did some reconnaissance on the eastern side of the massif. American climber Jordan Romero, guided by ALE's Scott Woolums, became the youngest to reach the summit – aged 15yrs 5mths 12 days – and thus the youngest to complete the Seven Summits.

Mount Tyree

The major ascent of the season was undoubtedly the long-awaited fifth ascent of Mount Tyree (4852m), the second highest mountain in Antarctica. Austrian climbers Hans Kammerlander, Robert Miller and Christian Stangl reached the summit via the 1997 French route up the eastern side, the 'Grand Couloir'. Stangl attempted the route in December 2010 but had to retreat from very high when his partner was injured by rockfall. This year the trio found very snowy and stable conditions in the couloir and accordingly their ascent was relatively straightforward. This year ALE installed the team at a base camp on the Cervellati Glacier, rather than the Patton Glacier, as used for previous climbs here. From the Cervellati the three spent the first day of 2012 climbing onto the rocky north-east ridge of Tyree, where they placed a camp in an obvious notch at 3247m. The next day they went a little higher up the ridge before traversing left into the couloir, which they followed all the way up to the broad saddle between the north and south summits of Tyree. Here easy ground led to the higher northern top, where clouds immediately obscured any views. Though the snow and ice in the couloir was in very good condition, the three still used a 200m length of 6mm cord to move together on the steeper sections and likewise used this to make eight 100m rappels on descent. They were back at their tent 13 hours after starting, having achieved the first ascent of Tyree since Conrad Anker and Alex Lowe in December 1997. Stangl joins Anker, Barry Corbet and John Evans as the only people to have climbed Antarctica's three highest mountains.

With this ascent Hans Kammerlander claimed to be the first person to have climbed the Second Seven Summits, a challenge long thought to be



The north-eastern aspect of Mount Tyree (4852m) from the Patton Glacier. The 2012 Austrian ascent was via the obvious large couloir rising from left to right. The right-hand skyline is the north-west ridge, the route of the 1967 first ascent. (Damien Gildea)

considerably more difficult and worthwhile than the popular Seven Summits list. Kammerlander's claim considers Puncak Trikora to be the second highest in Oceania, however recent developments show either Puncak Mandala, a separate massif much further away, or Sumantri, a previously ignored summit near Ngga Pulu, to be the second highest mountain on the island of New Guinea. Both are approximately 25m or more higher than Puncak Trikora, which is now the third or fourth highest. Christian Stangl has climbed all three of Sumantri, Mandala and Trikora, in addition to Carstenz. In April 2012 Kammerlander also announced that he would be returning to Mount Logan, as it became apparent that he had not reached the Main Summit, as he had claimed, on his prior expedition there. There is an additional issue of whether Mawenzi should be considered Africa's second highest, rather than Margherita in the Ruwenzori massif, given that it has sufficient prominence from Kilimanjaro. Clearly there needs to be some analysis and solidification of the geographical status of these various peaks before any claims can be truly valid. Given the nature of the claim it is also clear that any aspirant to this title must provide irrefutable photographic and GPS evidence that they have actually stood on the highest point of the relevant mountain.

Heritage Range: Mount Spörli – First Ascent

Climbers were once again active amongst the small peaks around Union Glacier, due to ALE's new base near Mount Rossman. Probably the most notable climb in the area was the first ascent of Mount Spörli (2253m), one of the highest peaks visible from the camp and the highest unclimbed peak

in the Heritage Range. ALE guides Simon Abrahams and Todd Passey spent a few weeks touring the range in December with client Ralf Laier and made several first ascents. The three decided to attempt Mount Spörli from the east, but had to endure some severe weather, during which they made three minor first ascents on nearby tops and one abortive try on Spörli itself. Eventually they skied to a col and climbed a rising traverse up the north-east face to the summit, topping out on 17 December. Bruno Spörli was a geologist who worked in the range in the early 1960s, exploring and studying the peaks, often in the company of John Evans, first ascensionist of Vinson and Tyree. Though they did no significant climbing in the area, the pair did go to a number of minor summits in the course of their surveying work.

Back closer to the Union Glacier camp, Abrahams, Laier and Passey made the first ascent of Guarcello Peak (2050m), which was the highest unclimbed peak in the knot of mountains between the Union Glacier and the head of the Horseshoe Valley. The trio approached via the Henderson Glacier, climbing the south face and south-east ridge to reach the summit on 23 December. Before returning they also made the first ascent of Chappell Peak (1860m) along the east ridge and the second ascent of nearby Schoeck Peak (1810m), via the north face to the west ridge. A final jaunt back north to the Soholt Peaks produced the second ascent of Mount Bursik (2500m), the highest mountain in the Heritage Range. The three approached from the west and climbed the north face, after which they returned to Union Glacier, where they rounded off their trip by collecting the summit of Sutton Peak (1410m) and one of the Gateway peaks.

Antarctic Peninsula

In December the *Spirit of Sydney* transported the 'Spirit of Amundsen' international team, mostly Norwegian, intending to make a first ascent on 14 December to commemorate Roald Amundsen's team reaching the South Pole 100 years earlier, to the day. This they did, climbing an unnamed peak on the southern side of the Sikorsky Glacier, which drains into Escondida Cove at the northern extremity of Gerlache Strait. The peak was around 1200m in altitude and unofficially named by them 'Amundsen Peak'. Amundsen already has one mountain named after him, in the Transantarctic Mountains, and some years ago another team, also unofficially, named one of the summits of Humpback Island that they climbed 'Mount Roald'.

French guide Ludo Challeat returned for his second expedition to the Peninsula, sailing again aboard *Podorange*. On 5 January his team made the fourth ascent of Mount Friesland (1700m) on Livingston Island, during a crossing of the main, eastern, part of the island from South Bay to Moon Bay, through Aurora Gap. They continued sailing south to the western side of Anvers Island and made another ski traverse from Bonnier Point to near Palmer Station (US), stopping on the way for an unsuccessful attempt at Mount Français, but reaching 1400m on Mount Agamemnon on 12

January. Moving further south again, to the Lemaire Channel, the team went ashore at Deloncle Bay and on 16 January climbed a northern sub-peak of Mount Matin (2415m), climbed for the first time in 2010. *Podorange* then took the French across to the western side of Brabant Island for another quick raid, landing near the Rush Glacier on 19 January. In great weather the next day they reached the summits of both Cook Summit (1590m) and Galen Peak (1535m), as well as a lower top to the west of Cook. These peaks form the eastern end of the Solvay Mountains and were first climbed in December 1984 by a British Joint Services Expedition. Challeat's group continued in their interesting style of island traverses, finishing the trip by skiing down to be picked up at Terrada Point on the east coast.

In January a British Services expedition travelled aboard *Australis*, skippered by owner Roger Wallis, far south down the Peninsula to the southern coast of the Arrowsmith Peninsula. The expedition, in commemoration of Scott's 1910-13 expedition, had a significant scientific component, carrying out GPS surveying, ice coring and marine sampling, in conjunction with the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) and other institutions. The expedition members made a number of ski-mountaineering journeys around their base camp and attempted several peaks. One of the highlights of their travels was the first known crossing of the Avery Plateau, around 60 km long and up to 2000m in altitude, that sits atop the Peninsula mainland, opposite Adelaide Island. The plateau team crossed from west to east, aiming for the Larsen Ice Shelf and upon reaching the other side placed a GPS receiver and ascended a couple of peaks over 1500m. This is the first non-government crossing of the Antarctic Peninsula (in its main section, not counting the far northern tip) and probably one of the few ever.

The climbing highlight was an ascent of Mount Rendu, a bulky massif in the middle of the southern section of the Arrowsmith Peninsula. The team ascended the Lliboutry Glacier to the junction of the Reid and Brückner glaciers and made an initial attempt on the north ridge, turning back in poor weather at a height of over 2000m. On 18 February the team of five tried again, regaining their high point near the 2275m north peak and continuing across the summit plateau to the summit, measured by them to be only three metres higher, at 2278m. In keeping with other recent GPS measurements of Peninsula peaks, this is somewhat higher than previous estimates. They descended on ski over 2200m to their camp on the Heim Glacier. Survey teams had climbed lower points on Mount Rendu in earlier years, but it is not known if they went to the highest point, meaning this ascent may well be the first. In addition two peaks, of 1175m and 1032m, south of Dog's Leg Fjord, on the coast of the mainland due east of Pourquoi Pas Island, and a 954m peak above the Antevs Glacier were also climbed.

Queen Maud Land

Queen Maud Land specialist, Ivar Tollefsen, returned again to Ulvetanna, the iconic spire of the area. His Norwegian team planned for just three weeks on the ice and when their flight in was delayed a week, the remaining two

weeks of unstable weather brought no success on the east face – the steepest and coldest side of the mountain. Unsurprisingly, he plans to return. The experienced Antarctic climber Patrick Degerman made his second visit to the area, climbing several minor peaks in the Wohlthat Massif with a fellow Finnish partner.

Marie Byrd Land: Executive Committee Range, Mount Sidley – Fifth Ascent

Veteran Antarctic guide Mike Roberts and four others made the fifth known ascent of Mount Sidley (4285m), the highest peak in the Executive Committee Range. It now seems that in addition to the 1990 first ascent by Bill Atkinson and the 2011 ascent by an ALE-guided international team, there were two more ascents in the early 1990s. Both involved Bill McIntosh, climbing first with Kurt Panter and then again with Nelia Dunbar, as part of their scientific research in the region. As with the 2011 ALE ascent, snow machines were used to 2800m on the eastern side.

Sub-Antarctic Islands: Bouvetøya, Olavtoppen (774 m) - First Ascent

The island of Bouvetøya is the most isolated piece of land on the planet, 1740km from the coast of Antarctica and 2600km from the coast of South Africa. Battered by rough seas and severe weather, the island is 92% glaciated and rises to a highpoint of 774m named Olavtoppen. First sighted in 1739, first set foot upon in 1822 and annexed by Norway in 1928, the island was visited on numerous occasions during the 20th century but rarely landed upon. A meteorological station was installed in the 1970s and visited during the 1980s and 1990s by South African and Norwegian scientists, who also mapped the island, with landings often using helicopters, sometimes to the high point.

An international team visited the island in February 2012 aboard the *Hanse Explorer*, chartered by Canadian Bruno Rodi and carrying 11 passengers. They approached from the west and used an inflatable boat to land at a small beach that gave access to the plateau, otherwise guarded by steep ice cliffs. On 20 February William Allen, Bruno Rodi and Jason Rodi, led by New Zealand guide Aaron Halstead, negotiated extensively crevassed, but technically straightforward, ground to make the first ascent of Olavtoppen, reaching the summit at noon and returning to the ship after a round trip of nine hours. The next day Halstead led a second team of Sarto Blouin, Chakib Bouayed, Akos Hivekovics, Cindy Sampson, and Seth Sherman to the top. There is no previous record or evidence of a climb of Olavtoppen from the coast.

With thanks to Simon Abrahams, Ludovic Challeat, Patrick Degerman, Bob Headland, Crag Jones, Robert Miller, Todd Passey, Mike Roberts, Christian Stangl and Phil Wickens.