2022 John Cappis Course Description

Legend

Blue text for fairly normal trails and roads
Purple text for paths that aren't normal (overgrown abandoned roads, game trails, and so on)
Red text off-trail

Start to Sultan Mountain

South on **US 550** about 140 meters and turn right. Take a series of **abandoned roads** and the **Belcher Mine trail** to elevation 10880. **Bushwhack SSE** around a major spur to treeline, wrap W all the way around the spur, climb onto it at elevation 12660, and ascend to the summit.

Sultan Mountain to Bear Creek Trail

Drop NW to a saddle, then SW down a drainage and gully system, mostly staying on the left side. When the drainage bends left at elevation 11840, cross it and maintain a line SW. At elevation 11640, drop NW into a bowl, drop W to a watercourse, then drop NW through woods along the right-hand side of the watercourse to Bear Creek. Cross the creek near a confluence and climb NW to the Bear Creek Trail.

Bear Creek Trail to Bear Mountain

Left on **Bear Creek Trail** about 70 m to a small watercourse, then make a hard right NNW up a **series of bushy ramps** (if you don't go left far enough on the trail, you will hit rock ledges and overly steep scrabbly slopes with traction issues, so please don't try to improvise here just because the slope more to the right looks open. The bushes really aren't that bad and give you something decent to grab on to).

Ascend a hanging valley to the ridgeline, then ascend right to the summit.

Bear Mountain to Mineral Creek

The initial part of the descent off this mountain is probably the most serious section of the course. It's very steep with a lot of perched rocks. The line described is the safest route for anticipated conditions and you should take extra care to remain on it.

From the summit, **drop** NW about 20 m to a little notch (perhaps you came up that way). Descend the **rocky trough** NE for about 75 m (this year, the trough barely has any snow and you readily can avoid it. In snowier years, the trough isn't always the safest route, since it is very steep with questionable runout).

At the bottom of the first trough and a little to the right is the considerably more heinous snowy gully of death. Stay out of that one. Instead, descend its **left rim**, which is sort of an erratic rock face or brow. The direction is NE at first, then curves more to the N. Then aim ENE for a precise spot marked with a small cairn at elevation 12640 ft, cross a **weak spot** (rated at the upper end of class 2) in the rock band and drop E, crossing underneath the gully of death and getting on the main ridge.

Descend NE to treeline, following an **abandoned mine trail** wherever it is evident. Bend right a bit where the ridge splits. Continue your descent mostly hanging off the right-hand side of the ridge (where the woods are usually more open), following intermittent and braided **elk trails** wherever they seem helpful, and avoiding numerous downed trees as best as you can.

At the bottom of the ridge, head E across a clearing and locate an **abandoned vehicle track** that leads to a large cairn at the **Bear Creek Trail**. Cross Mineral Creek and reach Checkpoint 1 on the side of US 550.

Mineral Creek to Anvil Mountain

On the other side of the highway, climb a **small trail** to a junction. Left on the **Rainbow Trail** to just past Zuni Gulch. Right on the **Zuni Gulch Trail** until it ends at a junction of avalanche paths at elevation 11000.

Ascend NE up the right-hand **avalanche path**, then NW up the left-hand branch when it splits again. This one tops directly onto the summit.

Anvil Mountain to Cement Creek

Descend E on intermittent **climber's trail** along the main ridgeline to the second saddle. Find a fallen red post at the start of an **abandoned miner's trail** that makes an angled descent off the north side of the ridge. The trail ends at elevation 12040.

Drop NE on a **nebulous spur** to a flatter semi-forested area. Drop ENE on (or alongside) a smaller, **wooded spur**. The ridge is pretty clean to about 11000 feet. At elevation 10480, trend right until you are on the north rim of the drainage. Drop SE on dirt then ENE dodging small conifers while descending a ramp then a tiny spur. Cross Niagara Creek and then a clearing to Checkpoint 2 (small Starcraft trailer).

Cement Creek to the Storm/Hancock Notch

Cross Road 110, climb a **dirt and grass bank**, then ascend ENE through **woods**. At elevation 10720, straight onto the **Hancock Gulch Jeep Road**, climbing to a road bend at elevation 11280.

Leave the road and ascend the **edge of a clearing** ENE to the lip of the Hancock Gulch watercourse. Ascend the Gulch NE to near its head, then veer E and climb to a notch on the main ridgeline.

Storm/Hancock Notch to Boulder Gulch

If there is any snow in the gap, stay right of it. Then drop NNE on **steep slopes** to gentler ground on the lip of several tarns tucked against Storm Peak. Contour along the **lip** NNE to a bowl allowing a safe descent.

Drop SE then S then SE down the stepped basin to a larger tarn. Cross the outflow and then descend the eastern rim of the watercourse to a bend on the poorly-defined **Boulder Gulch Trail** at elevation 11720.

Boulder Gulch to Tower Mountain

Contour left on the **Boulder Gulch Trail**, eventually climbing to the head of the Gulch. At elevation 12800, leave the trail, climbing **slopes** NE to the ridge, then SE to the summit.

Tower Mountain to Macomber Peak

Descend SSW then S then SSE along the **ridge**, then climb to the summit.

Macomber Peak to Checkpoint 3

Descend S along the **curving ridgeline**, then steep **open slopes**, then steep **wooded slopes** to County Road 2 (aka Road 110).

Cross the road and drop down a **junky draw** to the Checkpoint (exact spot might vary depending on what sites are available—could be downstream of the mapped location).

Checkpoint 3 to Kendall Mountain

Take **roads** to the base of Banana Ridge at elevation 11520. Climb the **ridge** SSE to point 13338. The actual summit is another 100 m SE and is optional.

Kendall Mountain to Kendall No 2 Benchmark

Descend **rocky slopes** WSW then W to the saddle. Climb over point 12860 then drop down to the **Kendall Mountain Road**. After only 50 m or so on the road, break right and ascend the **climber's route** to the summit.

Kendall No 2 Benchmark to Finish

(Between the peak and the boxcar, you may take any route you desire. Only the main line is described. A couple other viable ideas are drawn in blue).

Descend the **summit pile** NW, soon picking up an **abandoned road trace** that eventually becomes a rough **jeep road**.

Leave the road at elevation 12680 and drop SW on **slopes** (mostly open tundra) then down a **drainage** to the **Kendall Mountain Road**. Descend the road to the old boxcar at elevation 10220.

(Below here everyone should use the described route).

Left onto an **abandoned road trace**, dropping to a clearing at elevation 9400. Drop W, then NW, then N across **open ground** and then through bushes to the Animas River near some islands.

Cross **three separate flows** at the indicated waypoints (if for some reason the crossing is too dangerous, you can instead consider sneaking across the rail bridge located about 0.3 mi S).

Head N along the **railroad tracks** about 50 m to a weak spot in the vegetation and marsh (do not follow the railroad tracks any further than necessary). **Whack** W to about 30 m to **County Road 31**. Right about 0.9 miles to **US 550**. Left about 230 m to just past the town limit sign. Left up a **steep bank**, then W into meadow and woods to the finish.