



Bear Mountain Bouldering

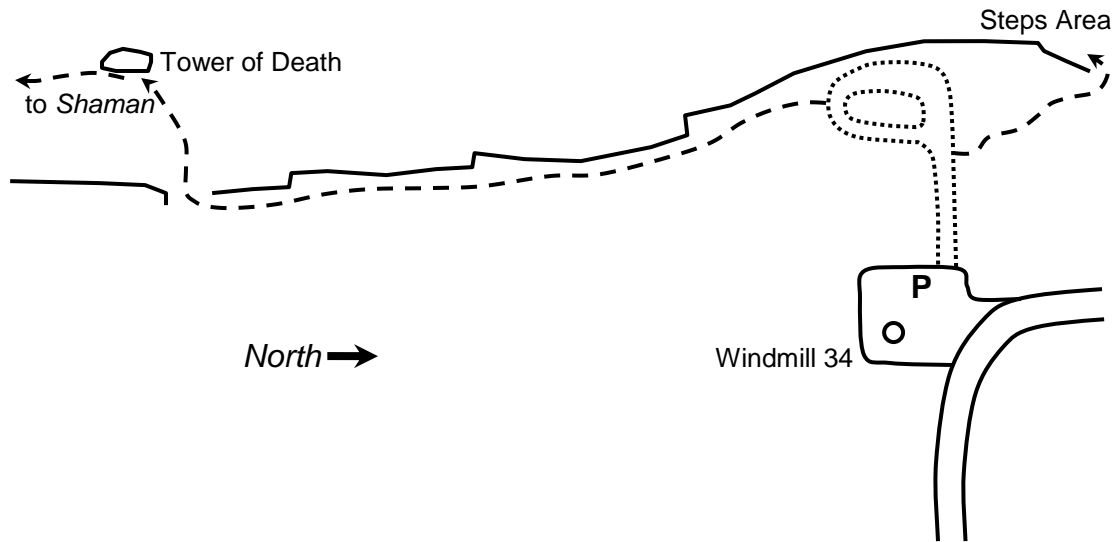
A guide by Trent Hoover

The windmills of the Bear Mountain Wind Farm are a distinctive feature of the Bear Mountain climbing area

Bear Mountain Bouldering (August 2012)

Bear Mountain represents the most accessible bouldering and rock climbing area of the Peace River region. The capstone rock of Bear Mountain is composed of poorly cemented sandstone and coarse conglomerate; thick layers of fine sandstone are interspersed with thick layers of concrete-like pebbly conglomerate. Boulder problems often climb through bands of both rock types. While many problems feature relatively solid rock, other boulders are composed of rock of such poor quality that they are not climbable. Even on relatively solid problems, pebbles may (and likely will) break off, so take care when pulling on small holds. As the problems see more traffic, this will undoubtedly improve.

To get to Bear Mountain, follow the signs for the Bear Mountain Recreation area (heading up 223 Road off Adams Road on the southeast side of Dawson Creek), and turn right at the '9 km' marker of the Bear Mountain Road. This new road leads to the towers of the Bear Mountain Wind Farm (a drive of approximately 2 km). Park at the first windmill (Windmill 34), and walk down the short dirt track towards the cliff top. To get to the Steps Area, look for a trail leading right into the forest about 30 m before the cliff edge. Follow this trail a short distance to where it leads to a stone step at the end of the cliff. Follow the trail back left along the cliff face to find the boulders.



To get to the other areas (Tower of Death and Shaman's Cave areas) follow the dirt track to the top of the cliff, then follow the cliff-top trail left for approximately 5 minutes. You'll first pass *Andrew's Penthouse* (look carefully to find this small cliff-top area on your right or you'll miss it). A short distance later, the trail will head down into a small treed gully. Follow this trail down to the bottom of the cliff. The trail will head a bit left, and you'll soon encounter an apartment building-sized block of chossy pocketed sandstone (the Tower of Death). There are a number of unclimbed boulders in this area. Following the trail another 200 m past the Tower of Death you will pass a number of boulders before you find an enormous sandstone block split into several pieces. Between two of these pieces is the Shaman's Cave (home to *Shaman* and *Trickster*); continue through the alley into the forest below to find the Rubble Boulder and several other large blocks of sandstone. There is much potential in this area, as well as further along the slope.

Due to the west-facing aspect of the boulders, climbers at Bear Mountain can enjoy a relatively long climbing seasons, especially at the Steps and Fortress areas. Boulderers can enjoy the sandstone of the area from April until the snow flies in October or November.

I have made an effort to record the names of the problems accurately. However, where the information is not available, I have included names for problems that are purely descriptive of either the problem or the first ascent of the problem. Likewise, I have attempted to grade all the problems in this guide accurately. However, many of the problems have only seen a few ascents, so no consensus has been reached for most lines. As such, take the grades with a grain of salt!

A note of caution, here. The sandstone of Bear Mountain is, in general, extremely soft. After a problem has been cleaned and established, DO NOT USE A WIRE BRUSH to clean it further, use only a stiff nylon or horsehair brush. Extensive use of wire brushes will erode the holds and damage the problems. It is, in most cases, acceptable to clean a problem with a wire brush to initially prepare it for climbing, but take care. Likewise, because the sandstone is so friable, DO NOT CLIMB on problems – especially those with crimps or exposed pebbles – after a heavy rainfall. Holds will break, and the problems will be damaged.

The Steps Area

The obvious unclimbed problems are listed here as 'projects'. Feel free to clean and climb these lines, they're waiting to be done!

1) Odin's Raven (V1+) ★ SD. Starting on the big flat hold, reach up into the short crack above.

2) The Real Chris (V3) ★★★ "Who is the real Chris?" Start with the right-hand sloper at the base of the crack, and a tiny left-hand crimp out on the face. Fun, big moves up and left to pebbly slopers (and a large protruding pebble).

3) Calvin Klein (V4) Start on the slopers at the bottom of the thin crack, then climb directly up and left via a sharp pebbly crimp.

4) No Exit (V1)★★★ The first ascent of this obvious problem was undoubtedly years ago. Climb the obvious arête. One of the best problems of the grade at Bear Mt, and features relatively solid rock as well! A slightly harder problem, **Full Exit (V1+)★★**, starts on the sloping hold at the bottom of the thin crack, then traverses directly right to the arete and finishes on *No Exit*.

5) On-Ramp (V0) ★ Climb the slab immediately right of the arête.

6) PROJECT (Vhard) The "Slot-Machine Project"; traverse the thin slot from left to right, finishing on – or just past – the right-hand arête. V8ish?

7) Early Days (V2+)★★ This is one of the earliest recorded problems at Bear Mountain. Start high on the two small pockets on the left side of the face, then traverse right and down to better holds; from here, head to the top of boulder via powerful moves and the blunt arête.

8) The Last Day (V4) ★★ Start as for *Early Days*, but reach left to the arête. Climb the face and arête above to the highest point of the boulder.

9) Nipple Eraser (V2) ★ Climb the tall arête. A hard first move leads to much easier climbing above. Watch the sharp arête on the first move!

10) The Doctor's Office (V6) ★★★ One of the highest (17 ft) hard problems at Bear Mountain! Moderate moves lead to a huge reach to a pocket just below the second horizontal break.

11) PROJECT (Vhard) The sitdown start to this steep arête looks like it will be both hard

and very fun. The top half of the problem still needs to be cleaned.

12) PROJECT (Vmoderate) Once cleaned, this arête will be classic, albeit with a tricky landing.

13) PROJECT (Vhard) The so-called "Clubhouse Project"; a stout pocket problem with a hard dyno. Will be a real prize!

14) PROJECT (Vmoderate) This potential problem will start wayyy back in the low cave, and climb out using slots and a big foothold rail. Although the end of the problem needs a good scrubbing, when cleaned it will be a lot of fun!

15) 12-Step Program (V4) ★★ SD. This fun roof problem starts on a positive slot under the roof, then reaches out to good holds at the lip. Use body tension and heel trickery to climb through the bulge and finish on *Dom's Face*.

16) Dom's Face (V2) ★★ Start standing on positive holds in the horizontal slot, climb funky bulge above to a pebbly topout. Very fun!

17) Dom's Traverse (V2+)★ Traverse the diagonal crack from left to right, finishing on *Dom's Face*.

18) Welshman Arête (V1+)★★ Start on the big flat hold on the left end of the horizontal break. Traverse right to the arête, topout above.

19) Aunt Sponge (V0) ★ Start as for *Dom's Arete*, but finish up easy slab just right of the arête.

20) Welshman Arete Low (V2+)★ SD. Start on the horizontal crimp directly below the arête.

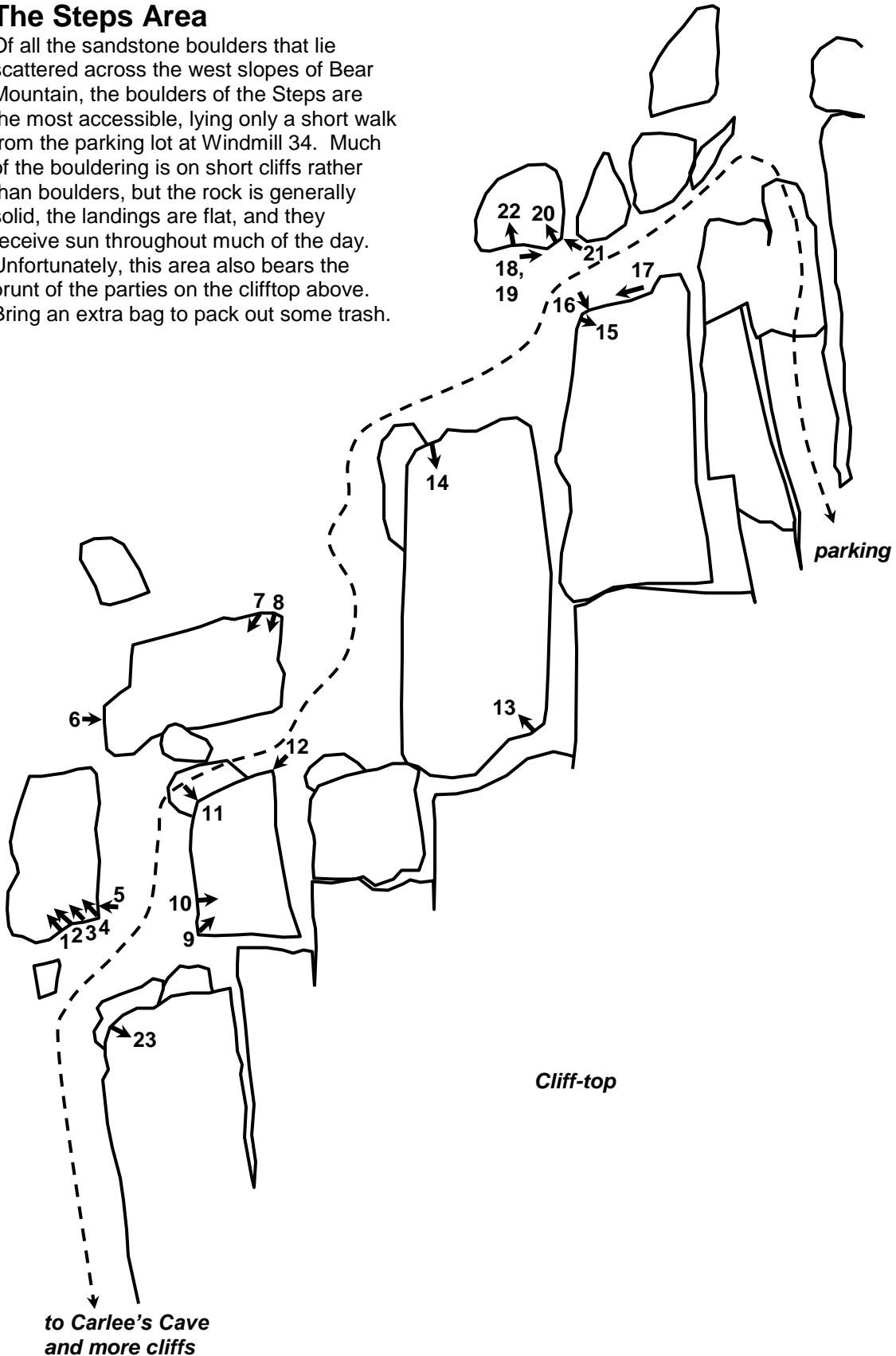
21) Aunt Spiker (V0-)★ Essentially the end of *Aunt Sponge*. Climbs the slab immediately right of the arête. Good for novices and kids!

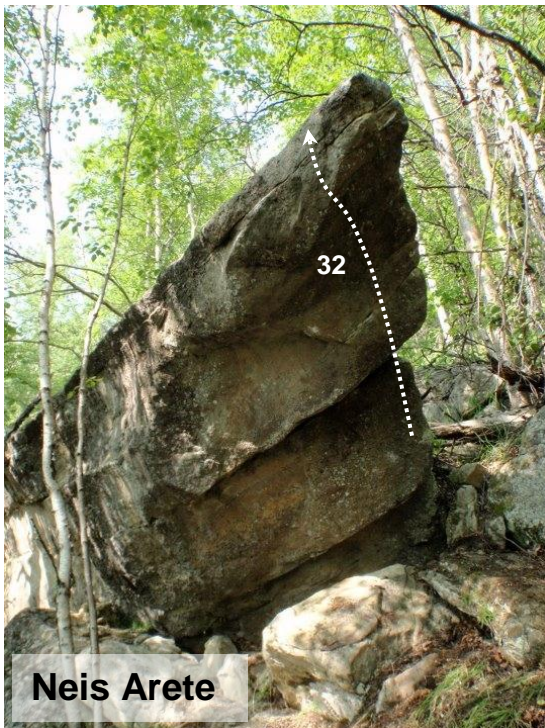
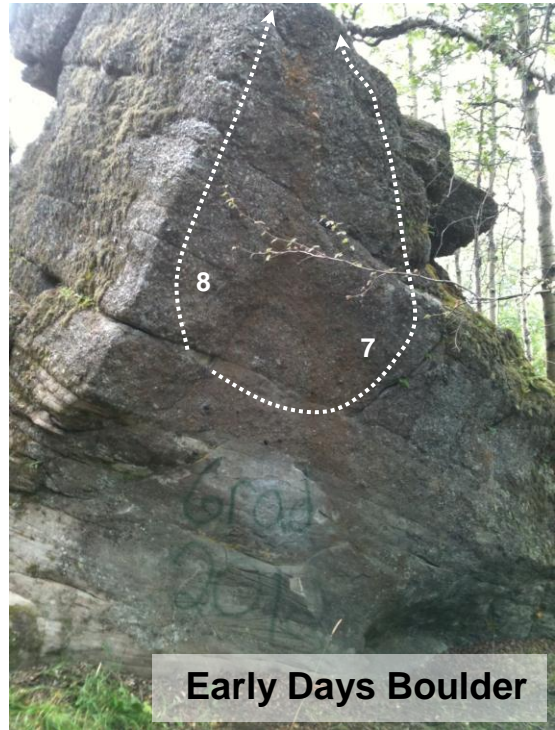
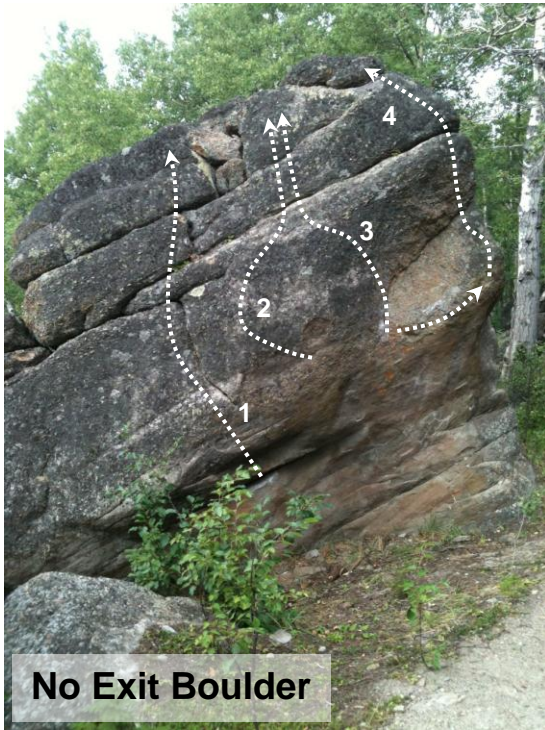
22) Julian and the Giant Reach (V0+) Easy if you've got the reach! Start as for *Welshman Arete*, but reach directly up to lip.

23) Unknown (V?) Apparently there once was a problem that climbed this tall face, but it looks dirty. Maybe a good scrubbing would reveal some holds?

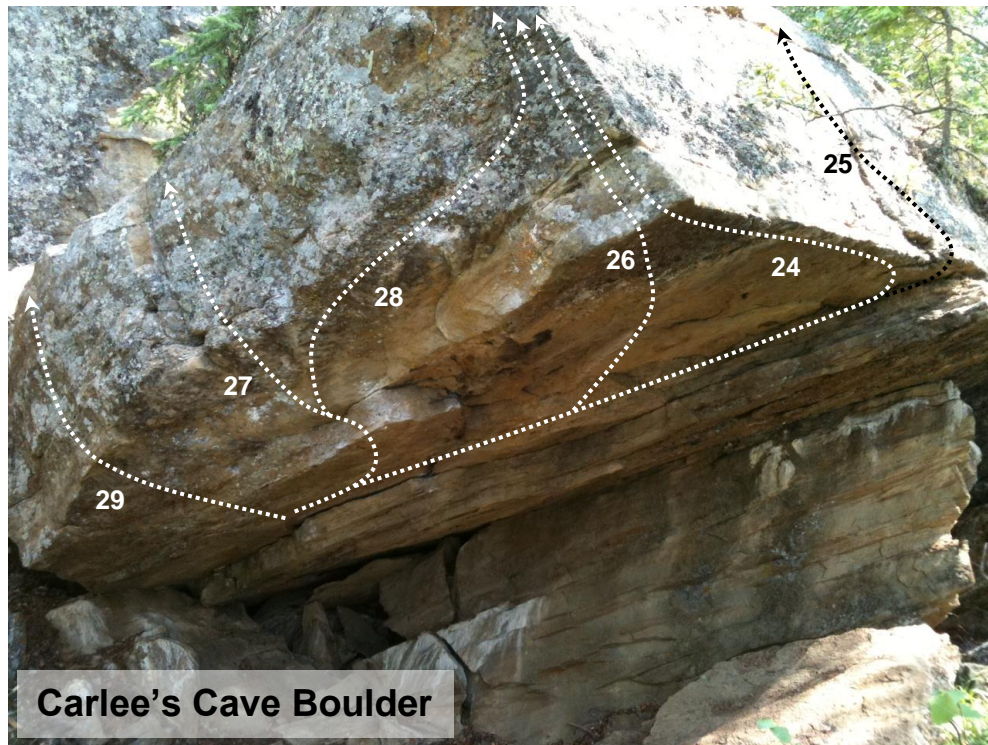
The Steps Area

Of all the sandstone boulders that lie scattered across the west slopes of Bear Mountain, the boulders of the Steps are the most accessible, lying only a short walk from the parking lot at Windmill 34. Much of the bouldering is on short cliffs rather than boulders, but the rock is generally solid, the landings are flat, and they receive sun throughout much of the day. Unfortunately, this area also bears the brunt of the parties on the clifftop above. Bring an extra bag to pack out some trash.





Following the main trail a short distance past the big overhanging cave, down the hill, and approximately 20m away from the cliff face, the distinctive overhanging boulder of **Carlee's Cave** can be found. This boulder is home to some of the steepest (and best) problems at Bear Mountain to date.



24) Carlee's Cave (V3) ★★★ SD. Start on the lowest juggy slot, then climb out the long rail to the lip of the boulder (the large block is in for your feet). Traverse the lip of the boulder back left to the arête, topout above. Very fun!

25) Original Cave (V2) ★★ SD. Start as for *Carlee's Cave*, but mantle at the lip and walk up the slab.

26) Julian's Crimp (V5) ★★★ SD. Start as for *Carlee's Cave*, but after the first few moves reach up to a thin incut crimp in the middle of the roof; use this to gain the arête above. A fun compression problem!

27) Carlee's Pinch (V3) ★★★ SD. Start on the low juggy slot, reach up left to a huge juggy pinch. From here climb out the left side of the cave using a positive pebbly pocket at the lip.

28) High Functioning Human (V5) ★★ SD. Start as for *Carlee's Pinch*, but from the huge pinch use small crimps to climb up and right along the lip of the boulder to the arête. Tricky!

29) Carlee's Great Escape (V4+) ★ SD.

Starting on the lowest juggy slot, reach directly up with your right hand to a sharp mono pocket. Use this pocket to escape directly left out of the cave. Tape will help protect your finger!

30) David Suzuki Killer (V0) ★★ This easy highball (aka Opp-Rock) is located just a few meters before Carlee's boulder. Look for the distinctive line of huecos up a steep slab.

Walking along the cliff top towards the descent trail to the Tower of Death, two fun easy problems can be found on a short cliff at the top of the main cliff.

31) Andrew's Penthouse (V1/V2) ★★

A fun warmup (V1) with an alternate harder finish (V2).

Tower of Death Area

The following two problems are on separate boulders in the forest just past the Tower of Death.

32) Neis Arete (V2) ★★★ SD. Steep arête! Climb the right-hand arête on great holds, top out on the left side.

33) Neis Traverse (V1) ★★ Traverse the prominent slot right to left, top out at arête.

Shaman Cave Area

The Shaman Cave is several minutes walk past the Tower of Death. Look for an enormous boulder split into three pieces. The Shaman Cave is in the narrow alley between two of these blocks. The two problems here (*Shaman* and *Trickster*) do not top out, but finish on big holds; these problems are among the very best at Bear Mountain.

34) Shaman (V3) ★★★ SD. Start low with one hand in the underclinging pocket. Traverse up and left along the incuts in the seam. Finish on the biggest, left-most hold at the end of the rail.

35) Trickster (V4) ★★★ SD. Start on the same holds as *Shaman*, but head straight up via the two huecos to a higher row of crimps. Traverse up and left along these to a large black incut jug.

The following five problems are on a large block about 100m below the Shaman Cave.

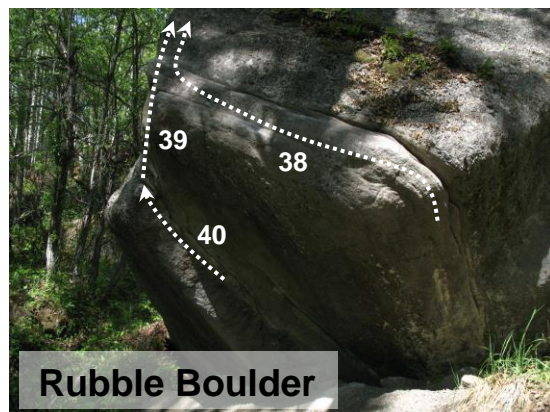
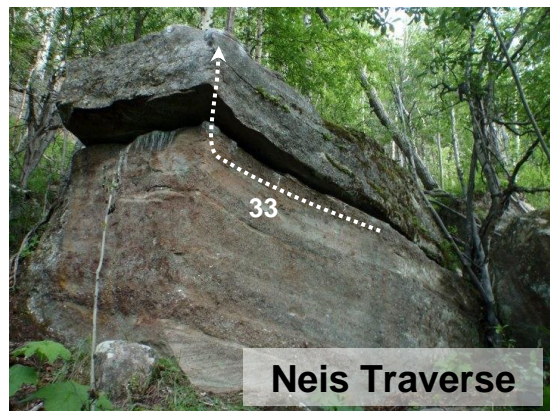
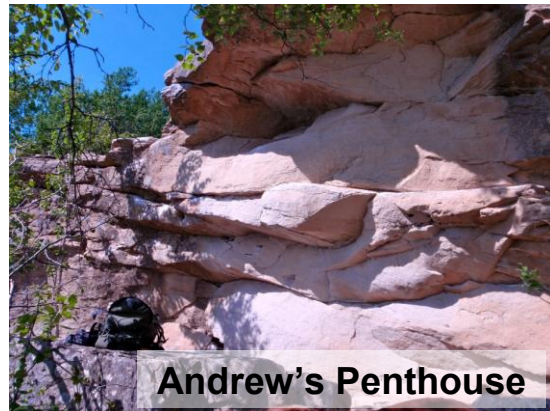
36) Betty Rubble (V1) ★ Start on the big pebbly ledge. Move left to the arête, then up this feature to the peak of the boulder. Fun, but loose.

37) Barney Rubble (V5) ★ Start as for *Betty Rubble*, but climb up and left using thin pebble-socket pockets. A big move to the lip leads to an easier topout. Hard and dynamic.

38) Modern Mercenary (V2) ★★★ On the blunt arête left of the *Rubble* problems, start low on the right end of the diagonal crack. Traverse left along the lip of the boulder to a large sloper; climb the blunt slabby arête above.

39) Deadpool (V1+) ★★★ Start on the large incut crimps at the lip of the overhanging. Big moves to big slopers, an awesome sloper problem! Finish as for *Modern Mercenary*.

40) Deadpool Low (V6+) ★★ Start low in the overhanging, in the two lowest positive crimps at about chest height. Powerful moves up the row of crimps lead to the finish of *Deadpool*. This is likely the hardest established problem at Bear Mountain to date.



Bear Mountain Checklist

V0

- ☐ On-Ramp (*T.Hoover 2012*)
- ☐ Aunt Sponge (*T.Hoover 2012*)
- ☐ Aunt Spiker (*T.Hoover 2012*)
- ☐ Julian and the Giant Reach (*J.Camsell 2012*)
- ☐ David Suzuki Killer (*T.Weber 2012*)

V1

- ☐ Odin's Raven (*T.Weber 2012*)
- ☐ Deadpool (*C.Dart 2012*)
- ☐ No Exit (*Unknown, early 2000s?*)
- ☐ Welshman Arete (*O'Dochartaigh 2012*)
- ☐ Andrew's Penthouse (*A.Neis 2012*)
- ☐ Neis Traverse (*A.Neis 2012*)
- ☐ Betty Rubble (*T.Hoover 2012*)

V2

- ☐ Early Days (*? 2010?*)
- ☐ Nipple Eraser (*T.Hoover 2012*)
- ☐ Dom's Face (*D.O'Dochartaigh 2012?*)
- ☐ Dom's Traverse (*D.O'Dochartaigh 2012*)
- ☐ Welshman Arete Low (*T.Hoover 2012*)
- ☐ Original Cave (*C.Olsthoorn 2012*)
- ☐ Neis Arete (*A.Neis 2012*)
- ☐ Modern Mercenary (*A.Dart 2012*)

V3

- ☐ The Real Chris (*T.Hoover 2012*)
- ☐ Carlee's Cave (*C.Olsthoorn 2012*)
- ☐ Carlee's Pinch (*C.Olsthoorn 2012*)
- ☐ Shaman (*T.Hoover 2012*)

V4

- ☐ Calvin Klein (*T.Hoover 2012*)
- ☐ The Last Day (*T.Hoover 2012?*)
- ☐ 12-Step Program (*T.Hoover 2012*)
- ☐ Carlee's Great Escape (*T.Hoover 2012*)
- ☐ Trickster (*T.Hoover 2012*)

V5

- ☐ Julian's Crimp (*T.Hoover 2012*)
- ☐ High Functioning Human (*T.Hoover 2012*)
- ☐ Barney Rubble (*T.Hoover 2012*)

V6

- ☐ Deadpool Low (*T.Hoover 2012*)
- ☐ The Doctor's Office (*T.Hoover 2012*)

Acknowledgements

Everyone who contributed to cleaning problems, building trails, spotting, and seeing the potential of Bear Mountain as a unique bouldering area deserve special recognition! These include all the boulderers from Grande Prairie (including Andrew, Carlee, the real Chris, Chris D., Domhnall, Julian, Phil, and several others), Dawson Creek (especially Andrew), and Fort St. John. I am sure there are many people who I have yet to meet who contributed significantly to bouldering at Bear Mountain. This is really just the beginning of a very productive era of bouldering at Bear Mountain; just grab a handful of wire and nylon brushes and start cleaning! It is a special place, so take care of it!

Trash is an ENORMOUS problem at Bear Mountain, due to the fact that the cliff-top clearing is used as a party ground and *de facto* garbage dump by a number of people who apparently have a complete disregard for the natural world. Beer cans, broken appliances, smashed bottles, and lawn ornaments are abundant at the bottom of the cliff. Try to take a minute to pick up trash and carry it out. In the future, something more dramatic will have to be done to prevent the terrible ongoing garbage problem (perhaps the Bear Mountain Windfarm could agree to block the dirt track leading to the top of the cliff); until then, do your best to be a steward of the area.