

Gooseberry Area

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Banff Rock

Gooseberry 250 m, 5.8

Ken Baker and Lloyd MacKay, May 1967

Joe Mackay, alt. pitch 5.

This classic route is superbly situated on the east side of Tunnel Mountain with excellent views of Mount Rundle and the Bow River Valley. The climbing is enjoyable and varied and the rock is mainly good (after so many years of traffic). The route remains unpolished perhaps because of the coarse grained texture of the rock. The climb is basically a gear route but there is a lot of fixed protection and only modest gear-placing skills are required. The unique band of chert-edged limestone on pitch 5 gives one of the best face climbing sections for its grade anywhere.

A small selection of gear is required (up to 2 in) and a single rope will suffice if the walk-off descent down the back is used. Although the pitches are solid there is a lot of loose rock on the ledges and extreme caution is required when parties are below. The climb is named for a “huge gooseberry bush halfway up final chimney” which has now gone although one of its descendants still resides in the original pitch 5 chimney.

Start below a short groove capped by a yellow roof.

- 1. 30 m, 5.4.** Climb the easy right wall of the groove past an old ring piton and a bolt to a station at a ledge on the right.
- 2. 40 m, 5.6.** Move up and left to gain a ramp that leads to a long, right-facing corner. Climb the corner to a large ledge on the left and a bolted station behind trees.
- 3. 45 m, 5.8.** Starting a few metres left of the station, climb easily left and up to gain a large, left-facing corner system. Climb this, easily at first, and then make some awkward layback moves past two bolts on the left to pass a bulge (avoid the short corner and pitons on the right). Do not follow additional bolts on the left wall (part of *Tonka*) but continue up for a short distance and then move right and up past the base of the upper, left-facing corner to a small ledge on the right wall. Climb the wall past two bolts to reach a station on the right.

4. 25 m, 5.6. Move up left over a small bulge and climb a shallow groove past two pitons. Go diagonally up left into a left-facing corner and follow it to a ledge and bolt belay. Stop here to climb the recommended pitch 5 or alternatively, continue up and make a long traverse right on easy ledges past some loose blocks (pitons) to a bolt belay at the base of a steep, left-facing corner/chimney. The corner is the route originally climbed on the first ascent and is described as pitch 5 (alt.) below.

5. 50 m, 5.8. The recommended route is to climb the sport pitch on *Tonka*. After moving up and beginning the traverse right on the original route, follow the line of bolts up and right at first on excellent rock with incut chert edges. At the top of the wall, move up sloping ledges to two large ½ inch studs, the right-hand of which has a hanger. Traverse right and up to the bolt belay at the top of the big corner.

5 alt. 40 m, 5.8. Climb the corner, easily at first, past a gooseberry bush to a large ledge below the more difficult upper section. Climb this on unnervingly slick rock past a bolt higher up to a major ledge system and a bolted station on the right.

6. 30 m, 5.7. Move up diagonally left on broken ground to a groove capped by a roof. A few metres below the roof, ignore a line of bolts going left and move right and up past a fixed piton into a steep, right-facing corner. Sustained climbing up the corner leads to a step left at the top and a bolt belay on a good ledge below an obvious exit chimney.

7. 30 m, 5.7. Move left and make an awkward move up past a bolt into the base of the chimney. Climb partway up the chimney and then step out left onto an easy ramp with excellent chert edges that leads up past a piton to a chained station near the top.

Alternatively, continue up the chimney to a large tree at the start of easy ground (original finish to the route).

Descent: It is possible to rappel the route (see topo) although currently double ropes are required between stations 5 and 4. However, it is quicker to walk down the hiking trail on the Banff side of the mountain and walk back along the road. The road distance is 1.25 km from the trail head to the car and takes about 15 minutes, or about 30 minutes overall.

Tonka (The Gift) 215 m, 5.10c

Joe Mackay, a work in progress.

This unfinished sport route attempts to find an independent line left of *Gooseberry* but currently is forced onto it for two critical pitches – pitch 4 and part of pitch 5. The present version of pitch 3 also comes so close to *Gooseberry* that it seriously interferes with it. The completed sections, however, give some excellent climbing – pitches 1 and 2 make a good variation start to *Gooseberry* and the superb pitch 5 is now the recommended way of climbing that route. There is a new left-hand variation to pitch 5 which is well worth doing and pitch 7 gives excellent finish. The main difficulty hindering the completion of the climb is the removal of loose rock without bombarding parties climbing *Gooseberry*. This basically limits operations to very early in the morning or during periods of heavy rain!

Start: At an obvious cave about 50 m up and left from *Gooseberry*.

- 1. 30 m, 5.9.** From the right-hand side of the cave, climb an overhanging, loose wall (5.8) to ledges on the right. Move up right to a left-slanting corner and climb its slabby left wall to reach a large ledge system that angles up to the right and connects with *Gooseberry*.
- 2. 20 m, 5.10a.** Move up to a high bolt on the right and climb a short corner with a tricky at the top onto the wall above. Continue past bolts to a ledge and then move up past 2 more bolts to a station on a higher ledge.
- 3. 25 m.** Move over to the bolt at the base of the left-facing corner on pitch 3 of *Gooseberry*, climb up to the second bolt at the crux, and then step left onto the face. Make a wild move up past a bolt to another bolt and then go across to the base of the continuation corner, left of the upper wall on *Gooseberry*. Climb the corner and move across right to the 3rd *Gooseberry* station. The pitch has good climbing but is very contrived and seriously interferes with *Gooseberry*. Most local climbers think it should be removed.
- 3 alt. 25 m. (Currently decommissioned).** Move across left and up to a bolt by a small, right-facing corner/flake. Go up the corner to a second bolt and then traverse right to gain a line of bolts going straight up to a chained station level with the third belay on *Gooseberry*.
- 4. 30 m, 5.6.** At present it is necessary to move across onto *Gooseberry* and continue up the fourth pitch of that route.
- 5. 50 m, 5.8.** After moving up and beginning the traverse right on the original line of *Gooseberry*, follow the line of bolts up and right at first on excellent rock with in-cut chert edges. At the top of the wall, move up sloping ledges to two large ½ inch studs, the right-hand of which has a hanger, and then traverse easily right and up to the bolt belay at the top of the big corner of *Gooseberry*. This is the same pitch as the new, recommended pitch 5 of *Gooseberry*.

5 alt. 40 m, 5.9. Move the belay left along the ledge from the top of the 4th pitch of *Gooseberry* to a chained rappel station. From here, traverse left and up slightly past two bolts and move up to small ledges below a big, left-facing corner that arches over to the left. Climb up to a prominent overhang and make a difficult move up over it to reach good chert edges. Continue more easily up the corner above on great rock past a few bolts to a two-bolt station at the band of slabs. Belay here and then traverse horizontally right across the slabs for about 30 m to the 5th station on *Gooseberry*.

6. 30 m, 5.7. Move up diagonally left on broken ground to a groove capped by a roof. A few metres below the roof, follow a line of bolts left past the overhang and up to a chained station of the ledge system about 5 m left of the exit chimney of *Gooseberry*.

7. 30 m, 5.10c. Make a steep, rising traverse left past 3 bolts and then swing left and up (strenuous) to a fourth bolt. Continue more easily to steep slab of prickly rock on the right side of a small corner (2 bolts). At the top of the corner, move left past a bolt below an overhang and make a tricky move up into an easy corner. Climb the corner to a chained station on the left. The top is a short distance above.