

Climbers Guide to South Tasso Lake



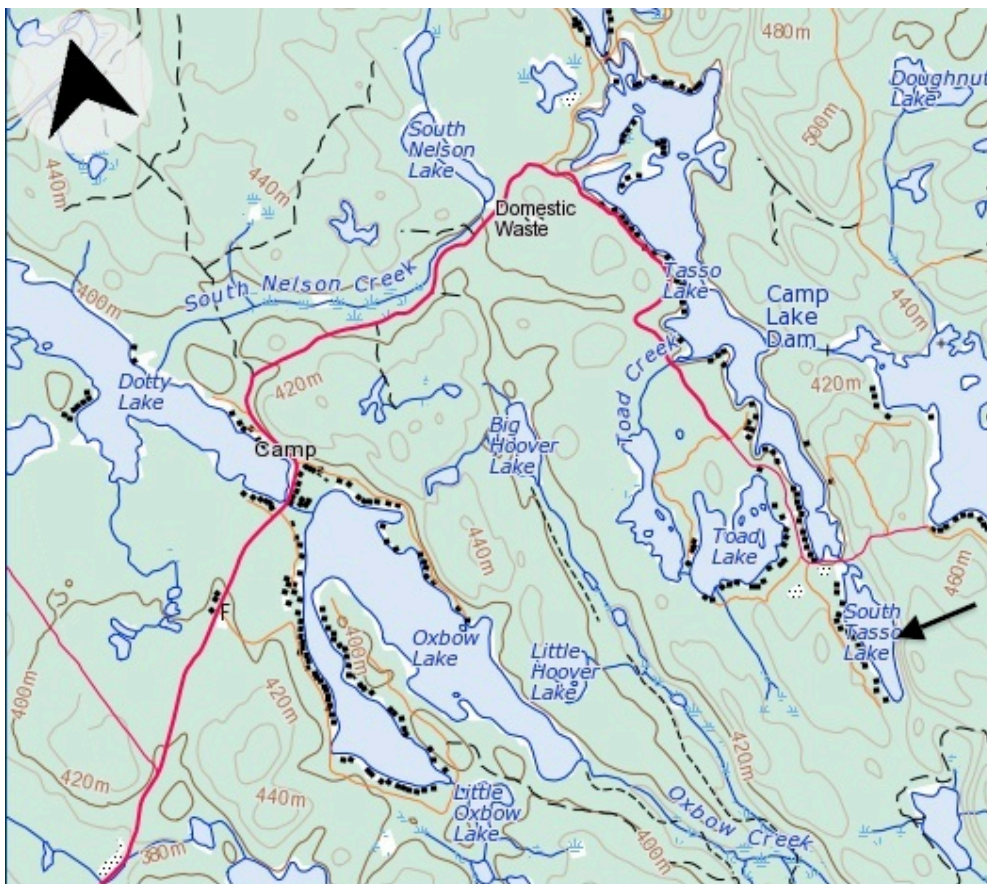
by Don Collier

South Tasso Lake Climbing Guide

South Tasso Lake, located NE of Huntsville ON, is a back-water ice climbing site that will appeal to climbers that want something-less than a pure ice climbing experience. Most climbs involve groveling through thick forest or grinding up talus. This is too bad because the cliff itself is quite impressive.

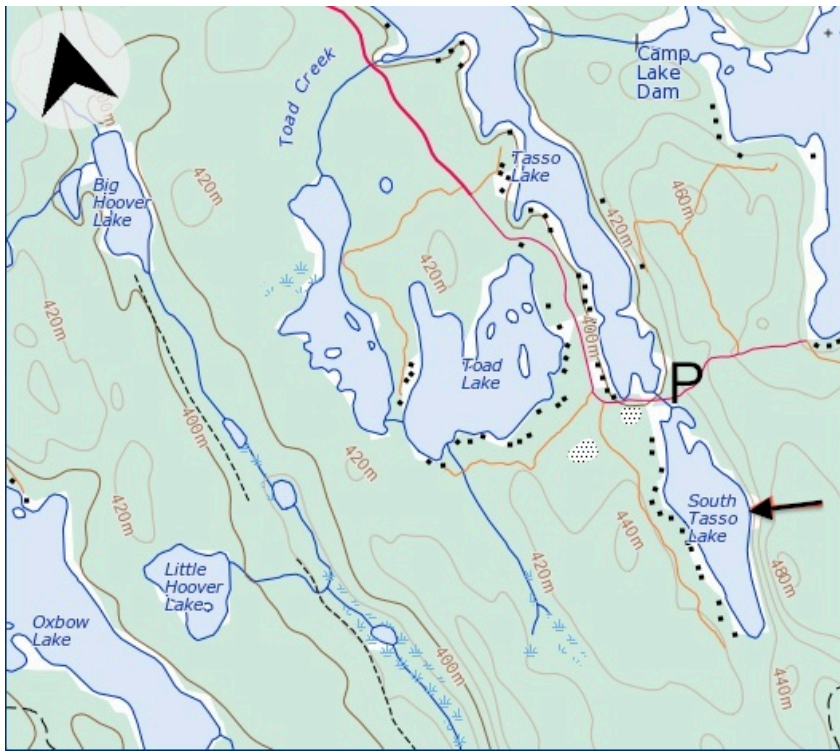
Despite possessing generally lackluster climbs, it was, for a very brief period of time, one of the centers of mixed climbing in Ontario. The climb, *Saving Ryan's Privates* earned special mention in *Gripped* magazine. This is a **bolt-free cliff**, let's try to keep it this way.

It was discovered for climbing by Don Collier after pouring over topo maps in the early 1990s. He visited the area with Tony Marshall in the winter of 1993 after they had done the forgettable first ascent of the Blue Booger at nearby Kleenex Crag. Since that time Don has visited the crag nine times (once in the summer) and has never met anyone else who has ever been there without him; go figure. Some very limited rock climbing has occurred at the cliff as well (canoe access).



Map of the general South Tasso lake area. Arrow indicates the cliff.

Directions: Drive east of Huntsville on Highway 60 for about 10 km. Turn left (north) onto County Rd 8 (to Interlaken) and drive the road for approximately 22km (past the sports camp at Oxbow Lake) and take the right fork when the opportunity presents itself. The road ends at a large plow-out and the north end of South Tasso lake (Map 31 E/7 623326). Walk down to the lake and go south about 600m and the cliff will be obvious on the right. The north end of the crag is separated from the larger south end by large treed gulley, which is suitable for descent.



A more detailed map. P indicates parking.

Route Descriptions: Since one walks south from the parking lot to the cliff all routes will be described from north to south. The first ice climbs at the north-end are centered around the Pillars area.

Illegal Alien, WI 2-3, 15m (Antonio Murillo Segura, Danylo Darewych, Don Collier, Jon Newman and Dave Britnell, January 29, 2011). This route climbs the gully to the left of the Pillars. About 7m of easy angled ice, followed by a steeper exit up the right wall of the gully. The earlier the exit, the steeper the ice. The beautiful golden ice is quite aesthetic.

The Pillars, WI 3, 20m (Donald Chaisson and Don Collier, January 29, 1995). Climb straight up to a very awkward exit through the cedars.

Circus, WI2+, 15m (Danylo Darewych, Don Collier, Antonio Murillo Segura, Jon Newman and Dave Britnell, January 29, 2011). The gully to the right of the Pillars. Head up 10m of easy angled ice and exit left up steeper ice the left wall of the narrow gully. Slightly bushy topout.

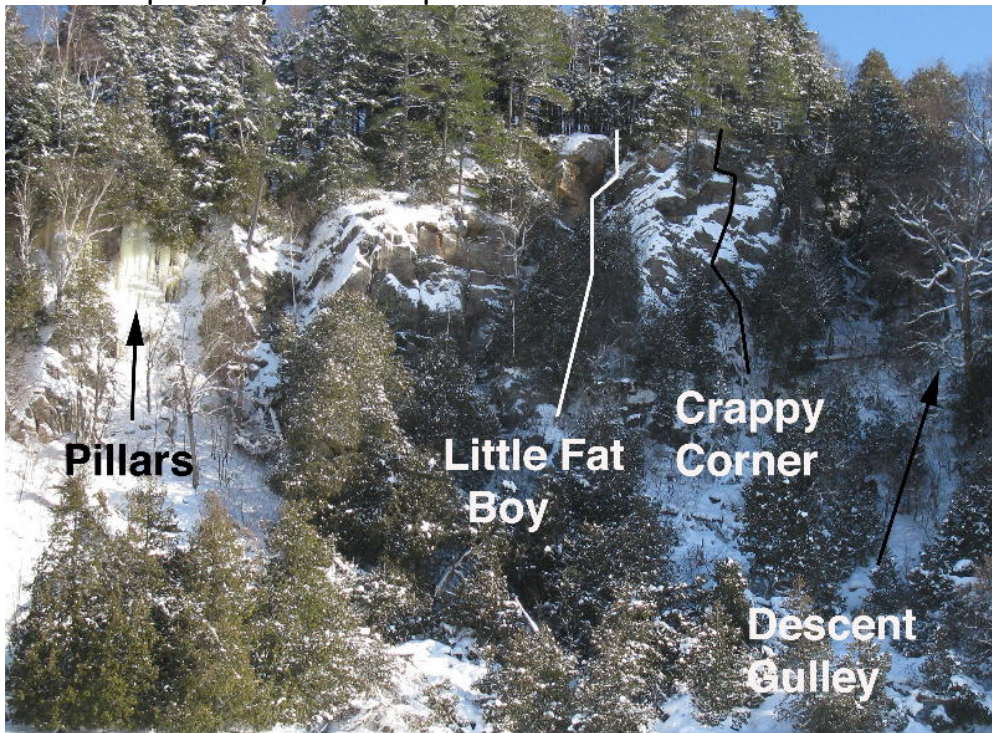


Danylo Darewych beside Illegal Alien



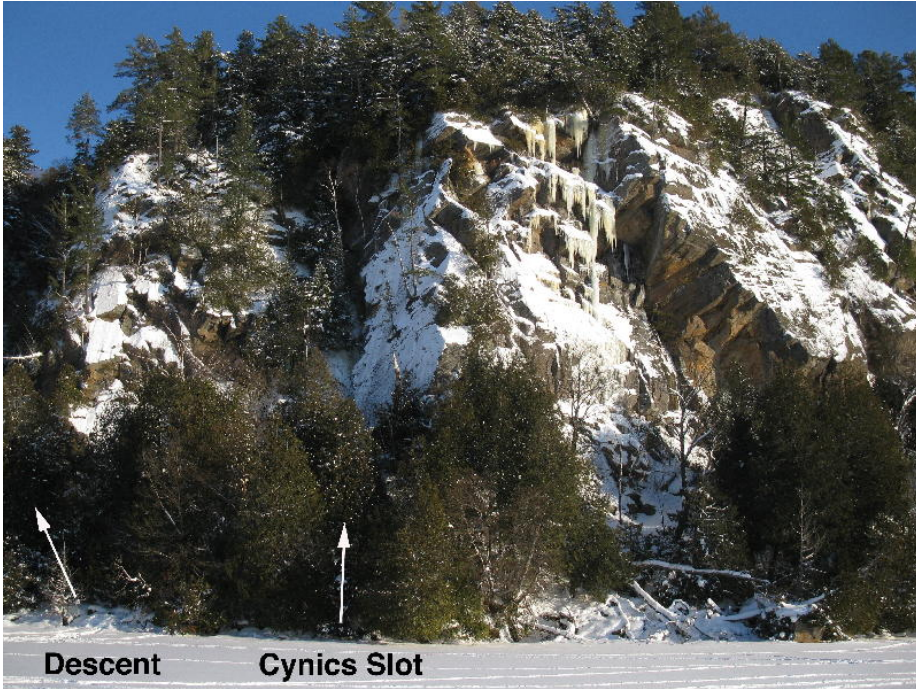
The Pillars area at the north end of the crag. 1: Illegal Alien, 2: The Pillars and 3: Circus.

Little Fat Boy, WI 3, 25m (Don Collier and Ian Frensch, January 21, 1996). This mostly-hidden climb lies in the first major corner south of the Pillars. Awkward to get to and rarely forms, but when it does it is probably the best pure ice climb at South Tasso Lake. The top is visible from the lake.



Ice and rock climbs north of the descent gulley.

Crappy Corner, 5.3, 20m (Don Collier and Tony Marshall, July 21, 1993). Rock route. Between Little Fat Boy and the descent gulley is a buttress. Starting on the descent gulley side wander up loose rock to the top. The name says it all.



Area of the cliff that is south of the descent gulley.

Cynics Slot, WI 2, 80m (Tony Marshall and Don Collier, February 9, 1993). The first obvious corner/slot south (right) of the descent gulley. Grovel to the start and climb the corner to the top. Not particularly inspiring but perhaps I'm being too cynical.

Saving Ryan's Privates, WI 2+, 5.4, 100m (Dave Britnell, Don Collier and Don Pearson, January 15, 2000). A brilliant route on a big section of the cliff. Climb Cynics Slot up to a belay at two prominent birch trees. To the right is a break in the cliff and an upward sloping ramp; climb and traverse this ramp (crux) and belay at a large pine tree. Take thin ice and wander to the top. This was climbed in frigid conditions with very sparse protection on the traverse.



Left: A: Cynics Slot, B: Saving Ryan's Privates, Right: Close-up of the traverse ramp on Ryan's Privates.

To the right of Cynics Slot is an area of thin ice daggers and columns which form from large overhangs. This would be a fantastic climb if they ever came in all the way (which I have never seen). Further south (right) is the highest section of the cliff, characterized by steep slabs guarded by a large overhang. Currently, only two climbs exist in this area.

Barracuda, WI 1, 5.3, 80m (Summer: Don Collier and Tony Marshall, July 21, 1993. Winter: Don Collier and Dave Britnell, January 24, 1998). This route ascends the obvious tree-filled line on the left hand side of the big slab. Originally climbed in the summer as a rock route, it provides an interesting winter route as well. The crux is getting past the overhang at the beginning. At the top, traverse right into an aesthetic corner.

Thunderstorm, 5.6, 100m (Tony Marshall and Don Collier, July 21, 1993). Climb Barracuda about two-thirds of the way. Traverse right, across the lichenous slab to a tree, which grows below the prominent corner. Climb the corner with good protection to the top. We were racing a powerful thunderstorm that was quickly moving in on us. Best route on the cliff.



Section of the cliff showing Barracuda and Thunderstorm

Roundabout, WI 2, 80m (Don Collier, Dave Britnell and Dave Jennice, February 14, 1999). To the right of the huge slabs is a broken area that contains an ice bulge. Climb heinous talus to the ice and then continue right under an arching overhang along ice, snow, dirt and rock to an exit grovel. Let's all do it!