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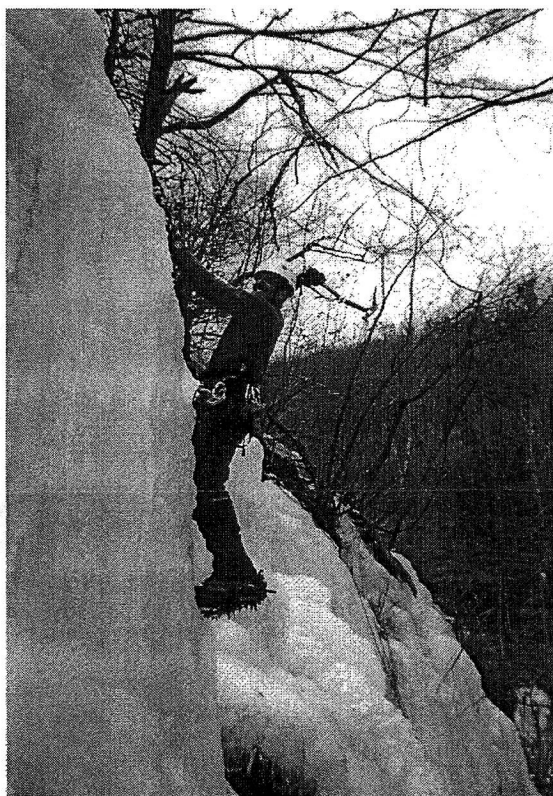
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ROCKFALL

- Renewals are due
- Trip leaders needed
- Review climbing skills for the season
- Submit trip reports



The Ice Bear of SNP

By
Lee Jenkins
January 2004

Last January Andy Britton and I hiked into Shenandoah National Parks White Oak Canyon for a day of waterfall ice climbing. We met at the trailhead around 8 a.m. on a beautiful Sunday morning and hiked about an hour to the base of the first falls, which were in excellent condition! This was a good sign since the other areas that we planned to climb would be higher up the Canyon and so should also be in very good condition.

(continued on p. 2)

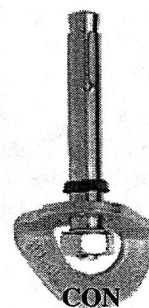
Bolting at Great Falls – One bold step backwards

A negative view

By

A.Briton

The NPS is currently carrying out a review of the leisure use and associated environmental impacts within the Great Falls Park. Among the topics being considered include closing of "social trails", specific concessions for climbing schools and methods to reduce the erosion along the edge of the gorge.



All of these issues have some impact on our leisure use of the park as climbers. The most contentious one of these issues within the climbing community concerns a specific element of the erosion protection scheme namely bolt anchors. The bolt anchors are being promoted as a method of protecting the trees along the edge of the gorge that are commonly used for this purpose at present. This debate has already been played out, generally with some degree of acrimony on both sides, in many different climbing venues both nationally and beyond. A somewhat unique element of the Great Falls situation is that the bolting being considered only relates to top rope anchors and not for leader protection. At this stage it appears that the details regarding the implementation of this policy have not yet been fully considered.

As a general observation there are currently well over 100 named climbs at Great Falls plus numerous variations so the number of anchors required would easily be in excess of 200. Additionally the bolts required for anchors are significantly more substantial than the expansion bolts that are typically found mid route.

ICE BEAR (continued from front page)

I had brought along one of my 60 meter, 7.7mm twin ropes (Sterling Ice Thongs!) since we could double it up since none of the pitches would be longer than 100'. We proceeded to rope up and Andy took the first lead up the left hand side of the first falls which is rated WI3. Why we roped up I don't know since he ran it out to the top at approximately 70' without putting in a single screw! It was pretty solid ice so he just sort of went for it.

Well after that we decided to stow the rope in my pack and solo up the stream to the next low angle falls (WI2). We bounced and rock hopped between rock, ice and downed trees until we saw a section of ice cliffs up and to our left about 400' above the stream. We had both seen this section forming in the past but never where it was in climbing condition. At this time of year you can see this section clearly from the trail high above on the opposite (north) side of the stream at a sharp left to right turning switchback with a small overlook. We bushwhacked up to the base of this section, which I would guess was maybe 125' wide and at most 40' high with about a half a dozen different lines all in the range of WI3-3+. We dropped our packs and spent about an hour or so soloing up and down until we got "bored" with it. During this time we had always topped out then moved to the left (cliff facing) where we would down climb back to the base over easier ice.

However, after my last run up I decided to traverse right and down climb via a gully I had seen earlier. It was during this down climb that I experienced something not often encountered while climbing ice (or anywhere for that matter!).

I began the decent of the gully in a section with little to no ice where I was able to hook small trees and a few rock bands on the adjoining cliff face. The footing was not very secure so I was carefully watching each foot placement when I heard a strange low humming sound. I immediately looked up and realized I was facing the back end of a black Bear that was sleeping on a small ledge underneath an overhang! My face was less than two feet away from its backside! Yikes! My heart started pumping and my mind was racing! I certainly hoped that the bear was hibernating as I did not want to startle he or she!

The Bear looked to be at least 300 lbs and would certainly wake in a foul mood! So, to play it safe I quietly hooked my tools to a nearby tree and slowly down climbed a thin runnel of ice for about 30' or so to the bottom of the gully. Once there I regained composure and looked back up at what was now a "cute little" sleeping Bear. I wish I had a camera!

Once back to the cliff base I told Andy what had happened and he gave me a strange look like maybe I had seen a ghost or something. Anyway, we quietly scrambled back down, always looking over our shoulders for the Bear. Once back at the stream we continued our way up to the main amphitheatre where we soloed everything in sight including a few WI4's up to 40'. We continued to climb a few hours in wonderful temperatures in the low 40's until we were "dog" (bear?) tired and hiked back down to the cars.

I hike in White Oak Canyon often and at all times of the year. But this one visit will always cause me to stop at the overlook in search of the "Ice Bear of SNP".

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BOLTING (continued from front page)

If insufficient funds exist to provide all of these anchors the NPS could determine that routes not so equipped should not be climbed hence we, the climbing community, could lose several routes or even entire areas. Additionally what criteria would be used to determine the selection of the routes that would be equipped?

Having got passed the numbers game the next aspect that would need to be addressed for each climb would be the location of each bolt. Clearly the optimum location for pure top roping would be for the bolts to be over the edge, however, for safety consideration the anchors would probably have to be situated at least 3-6ft from the edge. In some cases there may not actually be any solid rock in the desired vicinity leading to a requirement for large stakes set into the ground. As a final point not all climbs are plumb vertical, hence wherever the anchors are placed on these routes there is always a quantifiable pendulum risk. Due to liability concerns it is again possible that the NPS would not equip these climbs and also deem them unsafe and not to be climbed.

One of the principal reasons that bolting is being advocated is that the use of trees for anchors results in a cobweb of multi-colored tape along the gorge edge that detracts from the area for non-climbing users of the park. I have difficulty understanding how installing numerous permanent eyebolts along the crag edge could not be more deleterious to the environment, besides providing an obvious trip hazard close to the edge.

Another reasons put forward for bolting is the damage done to the trees by their continual use as belay trees. I have not seen any direct scientific evidence supporting that this use does indeed damage the trees. A far more likely cause of the ongoing damage to trees along the cliff edge is the suffocation of the tree roots by soil compaction along the cliff top paths; there is scientific evidence to support this. As an aside if a small rack is carried there are many routes at Great Falls that do not require trees to protect them with many threads, cracks and well situated boulders that permit safe treeless anchors to be built in quick order.

Finally the installation of bolts at Great Falls, or indeed any other similar crag, would have the effect of turning the Park into an extension of Sportrock or Earthtreks. It may even result in all climbers paying a fee to one of these companies to use the park for climbing. Is that what we really want?

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Bolting Saves Lives

By Vintroch Dadiovinovnovitch



Whether the life we save is that of our own or the life of a tree on federal lands the fact remains bolting makes sense. Blah! Blah! Blah! Bolts and hangers are unnatural. Blah! Blah! Bolts and Hangers are ugly. Blah-Blah! Bolting routes will confuse park personnel causing them to walk off the cliffs in the chaos. Blah! Blah! Bolting the top anchors is rocket science and we can't do it right whine-whine Blah! Blah! Bolts are expensive! Blah! Blah! Who's is gonna maintain the bolts and assume responsibility? Blah! Blah! Blah! Bolting will turn the great outdoors into an outdoor climbing gym without walls, roofs and plenty of fresh air.

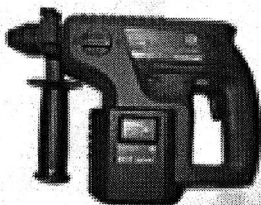
You never hear about climbers complaining when they travel to phat climbing destinations around the country and climb sport or trad routes that have guess what waiting for them at the top of the route or at a belay stance- BOLTS AND HANGERS.

So what in the poison ivy is the big deal? Yosemite, Lumpy Ridge-Rocky Mountain National Park, Needles, The wedge, Stone Hill, Eleven Mile Canyon, North Table Mountain, 3rd Flat Iron and on and on, have bolted routes and more. NPS etc, has figured it out on a much grander scale than Great Falls, Virginia long ago.

We have a Pro-zillion dollars in our club's treasury that could easily afford to bolt every one of the routes on both sides of the river as well as hire a qualified consultant/rockhound to do the work.

We are in a climbing club with experienced climbers who have seen climbing anchors all over the planet and have drilled a pin or two in their time. The bolts will go where they go and of course you back up your anchor anyway. NPS isn't going to bolt every route to make them safer and the ones you or they can't bolt you'll do it the old fashioned way.

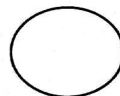
Whether it is a tangle of webbing or bolts, hangers or chains, anywhere near the cliffs is inherently a relatively a dangerous area in which to recreate. Something even more deleterious to this environment than a bolt or hanger, which could save someone's butt, is the road into the park itself. Chomp! Chomp!



The evidence that supports (I am just going down the line with this) the fact that continued friction from webbing over time will destroy the tree bark and eventually damage the tree, is found on the trees used as anchors. See for your self next! "You Go Now!"

No matter what gloom and doom the nay-sayers chatter on about, the fact remains that rock climbing management includes the NPS at many many areas in the country and successfully for many years. The climbing club and NPS will work together as stewards to the rock climbing community to promote a safer sport for years to come. (yawn. yawn)

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Climbers Calendar



July 3rd - 5th (July 4th Weekend)

Seneca Rocks, West Virginia (Multi-pitch climbing)

The annual July 4th trip to Seneca Rocks. This trip is for multi-pitch climbers only. Participants are expected to find their own partners (leaders/followers). Individuals may contact the trip leader to help locate partners. For more information on Seneca Rocks, check out the website <<http://www.seneca-rocks.com/index.html>> HOW MANY WOULD COME AND USE A GROUP CAMPSITE AT SENECA SHADOWS IF I BOOK ONE?? Meeting place: Seneca Shadows

Trip coordinator: Mack Muir at mackmuir@edisaurus.com or 703-501-6723.

July 18th (Sunday) Sugarloaf Summit Rocks; TBD

July 25th (Sunday) Shafer Rocks, PA; TBD

August 15 (Sunday) Little Stoney Man, SNP, VA; TBD

August 21 (Saturday)

Buzzard Rocks, VA

(I ain't been there in a while) contact - me (Mack) at mackmuir@edisaurus.com

September 4-6 (Labor Day Weekend)

Gunks; TBD

Back Wall at Lake Louise , Alberta, CA

By Vincent Penoso

On a recent trip to our Canadian friends to the north we were surprised when we visited Monod's climbing store in beautiful downtown Banff to find the great amount of climbing in the area. The Bow River cuts a rocky path in what is known as the Bow valley Canmore to Lake Louise and far north as Hudson Bay. There are at least a half a dozen climbing guides describing thousands of alpine and trad routes in the Canadian Rocky Mountain National Parks of Banff, Yoho, Kootenai, and Jasper.

The majority of rock worth climbing in this wonderland of the north is crappy limestone, in all its towering crumbly splendor, in small isolated pockets here and there, are treasures. Interdispersed through the mountainscape, veins of quartzite paint rocky faces to the delight of area rock climbers. Millions of years ago sandstone became deeply buried and fused forming this relatively hard rock.

From Banff we drove up the Bow Parkway headed to Lake Louise, a 2-laned highway that shadows the Bow valley's towering peaks all the way to the pass. There is ample opportunity to view mountain wildlife from the convenience of an automobile and we saw grizzly bear, Black bear, big horn sheep, elk, white tail deer, pika and bald eagles.

At the newly renovated Chateau Lake Louise, we jumped on the trail that winds around the lake to the far side and the Victoria Glacier. A grizzly and her cub were spotted earlier that morning so the trail had been closed to the tea house above the lake. The hike to the far side of the lake took about 25 minutes and the crag is aptly named *Back Wall*. This crag is visible from the Chateau and it is Quartzite.

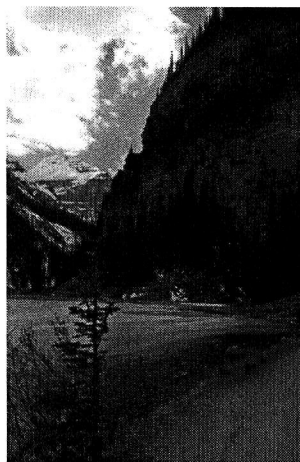
This day in May saw many climbing parties on mixed routes. Multi pitch routes ranged in difficulty from 5.7-5-12c, but we wouldn't

be climbing today with my 1 year old daughter in our baby backpack. So we sat there craning our necks and looking longingly at the tight lines angling upwards. We'll be back someday.



See the climber!

®



A view from the trail of the *Back Wall* crag at Lake Louise.



Unknown climber on *Penobscot 5.11c*



May 18th and there was still a good chunk of ice left of this trail hazard. From 50m to the trail, failing ice has taken out hikers on this trail.



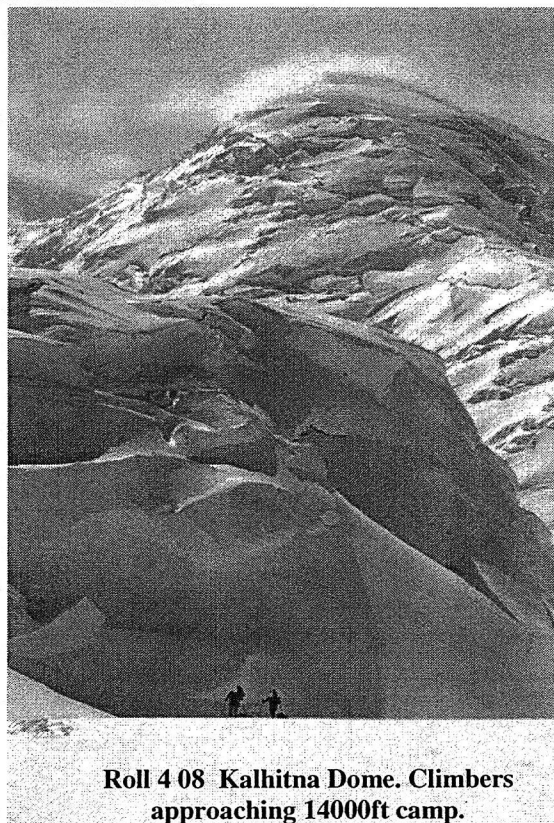
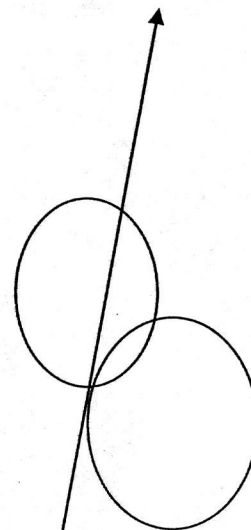
Ranier 2003 Eric crossing crevasse

This is an email from Jason Sandridge, who I have been unable to contact for the rest of the story. Jason, if you see this, email me
FOR THE REST OF THE STORY.

The reason I am writing to you is that I have been on two pretty exciting trips this year. I spent the month of May in Alaska trying to climb Denali. I spent a week in a mountaineering course followed by a 20 day expedition. I say "trying", because we only made it just above Denali pass (18,300') before we had to turn around due to high winds and despite 5 days at high camp, no other window's opened up. We were blessed by the fact that one of the other clients on the climb was an amateur photographer and brought along a very good camera. The first picture is of climbers in our team approaching the 11,200' camp with Kahiltna dome in the background.

Frustrated by the fact that I didn't quite make it, I decided to go on my first non-guided climb on a big mountain and summited Mt. Rainier on 8/29. I dragged two friends of mine up and had a great trip. The second picture is of a friend of mine unclipping from a fixed line at about 13,000' on the dc route up Rainier; almost all of these pictures were taken with a digital camera.

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Roll 4 08 Kalhitna Dome. Climbers approaching 14000ft camp.

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