



## AAC Publications

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### **The Elkhorns, Eastern Rib of Van Patten Butte; The Wallowas, Traverse Lake cliff, attempt; new route potential**

Oregon

A review of the past 30 years of AAJs reveals only a smattering of new alpine routes in Oregon, all on Cascades volcanoes. Yet the largest walls of granite and limestone in Oregon lie to the east of the state's rain divide. Tucked away in the glacial cirques of the Wallowas and Elkhorns of eastern Oregon are large walls and entire alpine crags waiting to be climbed. Objectives such as the 1,200' limestone cliff above Eagle Creek, the 700' alpine granite Benthos Buttress above Birch Creek, and a 600' granite face above Traverse Lake, among others, beckon for new routes.

In a one-day trip from Walla Walla, Peter Mullins and I traveled to the Elkhorn Mountains, just west of the Wallowas, to glimpse a beautiful, clean 350' cliff on the eastern rib of Van Patten Butte, above Dutch Flat Creek. Unfortunately, the crack systems that seemed so obvious from a mile away turned out to be flaring water grooves up close. We found bolts on the second pitch of this three-pitch climb so hope to shed light on this previously undocumented route.

On another trip, Nathan Leichty and I traveled to Traverse Lake in the southwestern Wallowas, where there is a possibly unclimbed 600' granite face. We chose the face's central dihedral as our goal for a weekend. After five miles of hiking and 3,000' of elevation gain, we reached the crag above the lake. The granite looked similar to that found in the Enchantments or northern Cascades. The first pitch was meandering and a little sandy and, unfortunately, an injury on the harder second pitch forced us to bail.

With so much seemingly untapped climbing potential in northeastern Oregon, I hope others make the trek to these isolated and beautiful cliffs.

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## Images



Senior Moment route line. Likely climbed before but unreported.



Senior Moment, pitch 1.



Traverse Lake crag.

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