



AAC Publications

Mt. Evans massif, Black Wall ice climbs

Colorado, Rocky Mountains

Most people who climb on the Black Wall in summer can't help but notice the seeps that prevent good rock climbing between the route Roofer Madness and the standard rappel route. The problem with climbing these seeps when they are frozen is that the road up Mt. Evans, which provides quick access to the Black Wall, is closed from October into late May.

One option, exercised by the late, great Mike Bearzi in 1988, was to make the long hike in from the Chicago Lakes. Unfortunately, the details of his explorations were not recorded. Another option is to try dashing in immediately after the road opens around Memorial Day. This approach was used by Chris Sheridan and Dave Wolf in June 2013 to climb the main, obvious gully feature, but it is not conducive to climbing the smears that form on either side of the gully, most likely in the fall. In October 2013, I had the good fortune of being contacted by Taylor Brown, who had figured out that one could approach the top of the Black Wall from the Bierstadt Lake trailhead at the top of Guanella Pass. It took about two hours—much quicker than the Chicago Lakes approach.

After doing the committing rappels into the Black Wall, we climbed a line of iced-up grooves leading to an obvious smear on the right wall of the gully. We called this line Black and White (III WI4/5 M5/6). While on this route, we noticed two really enticing features on the left wall. The first was a series of thin smears heading up the steep wall immediately left of where the rappel line ends; the second, a series of hanging daggers and a steep crack on the left wall of the gully, starting about 200' above the bottom of the rappel line.

Scott Bennett and Doug Shepherd climbed the first of these two routes, calling it Monochrome (III WI4 M5). I told Will Mayo about the second line and suggested he give it a go. Somehow, I'm the one who found myself hiking in with him. A short, easy pitch gained the feature. Belaying the next lead, I stood witness to an impressive display of strength and tenacity as Will onsighted the crux second pitch (WI6+ M9). Thankfully, the third pitch was a good bit easier at WI5+. We called the route Silhouette (3 pitches, WI6+ M9) and climbed the route entirely on gear.

Images



Climbing pitch two of Black and White.



Final pitch of Black and White.



Scott Bennett leading while Doug Shepherd belays on the first ascent of Monochrome, adjacent to the Black Wall on the Mt. Evans massif.



Doug Shepherd leading while Scott Bennett belays on the first ascent of Monochrome.



Silhouette climbs the obvious line of hanging ice daggers.

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