



AAC Publications

Supercave Wall, south face, The Tiger

Washington, North Cascades

In July, Colin Moorhead, Max Tepfer, and I completed a difficult new free climb on the Supercave Wall (a.k.a. M&M Wall) over the course of four days: the Tiger (1,000', IV 5.12b). This south-facing, semi-alpine wall is truly an amazing gem, located two miles north-northeast of Liberty Bell near Washington Pass, with only a 40-minute approach from Milepost 166 on Highway 20. The Supercave Wall has been mostly ignored since its first ascent in 1969 by Mead Hargis and Jim Langdon (5.8 A4). Only in 2009 did it receive its second route, the Ellen Pea (900', IV 5.11c), established by Erik Lawson and Arden Pete—one of the best routes in the Cascades. The face is remarkable for its huge caves and myriad pockets and quartz jugs.

This was the first time I brought a drill and placed bolts in the mountains—we did some drilling on lead, some on rappel—yet despite our mostly top-down approach it still felt like we were onsighting some of the pitches on the final ground-up ascent. In all, there are 11 pitches, and all but one is 5.10 or harder. The climbing involves everything from fingers to offwidth. There are 12 protection bolts, and all the belays are bolted or off trees. Three of the protection bolts were added after all the pitches had been redpointed on gear alone because the protection was so poor for a ground-up attempt. There is also a direct variation to pitches six and seven, climbing directly out of the cave atop pitch five; I redpointed this 40m variation at 5.12+. The descent can be made by walking off or rappelling the route with two ropes.

I also freed a variation up to the fourth pitch on the Hargis-Landon at 5.12b after starting on the Ellen Pea. The lower slabs and the cracks above the fourth pitch are inspiring and will also likely go free.

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Images



Colin Moorhead leading pitch 3 (5.11c) of the Tiger.



: Colin Moorhead leading the upper part of pitch 3 (5.11c) on the Tiger.

Article Details

Author	Blake Herrington
Publication	AAJ
Volume	58
Issue	89
Page	0
Copyright Date	2015
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions