



AAC Publications

Barronette Peak, Southeast Face, Sick Bird

Montana, Yellowstone National Park

The year 1998 marked my first trip to Cooke City, Montana. I had been living in Bozeman for about a year, as a student at Montana State University, and had just discovered the mind-blowing sport of ice climbing. Hyalite Canyon had impassable roads, and the closest climbing destination was Cooke City. That's where I first laid eyes on the approximately 3,000' southeast face of Barronette Peak (10,354'), located in north Yellowstone—all covered with snow, ice pillars, rock gullies, and cliff bands.

In November 2002, Jim Earl and Jeff Hollenbaugh made the first ascent of this huge face, calling their route Jim and Jeff's Excellent Adventure (1,500', 5.8 WI5). However, there was one plumb line that still remained unclimbed, to the left of Jim and Jeff's. The route starts on an established pitch of ice at the foot of the face, called South of Summit. From there it follows the major weakness up and right, with pitches of ice and mixed climbing in the upper gully.

Justin Griffin and I made the first ascent up this line of ancient volcanic rock, ice, and snow, from base to summit, on February 20, 2015. Over its nearly 3,000' of gain I would estimate a total of about 600' of "real" climbing—the rest was pure snow wallowing. We encountered a lot of unprotectable ice and rock in the crux sections, with difficulties up to M7. It snowed lightly during the morning hours of our ascent, and even with light snow we got blasted from spindrift and small natural avalanches. This route is a giant avalanche path, and unless the conditions are perfect it's not worth the risk—hence my excitement after 17 years of waiting to finally climb this thing!

Out car-to-car time was 11 hours. It was a beautiful day of stomping in the mountains. We named the route Sick Bird (2,800', WI5 M7) after our good friend Ross "Sick Bird" Lynn. Ross was an avid admirer of this beautiful corner of Yellowstone and all the adventure it holds.

– Whit Magro

Images



The southeast face of Barronette Peak (10,354'). The new route Sick Bird (2,800', WI5 M7) starts on the ice pillar at the very bottom of the face, called South of Summit, and then connects to the right-trending gully system in the upper wall. Jim and Jeff's Excellent Adventure (1,500', 5.8 WI5) lies to the right, out of the picture.



Justin Griffin leads the final pitch of Sick Bird (2,800', WI5 M7) on the southeast face of Barronette Peak, located in north Yellowstone.



Justin Griffin heads up a section of snow in the middle of Sick Bird (2,800', W15 M7).

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