



AAC Publications

Off Route – Weather, Darkness, Party Separated

California, Mt. Conness, North Ridge

On July 17, brothers Bruce Porter (58) and Bob Porter (61) attempted the north ridge (III 5.7) of Mt. Conness (12,600'). After a thunderstorm forced a retreat, they chose a longer, more difficult route back to the trailhead, resulting in a bivy at 11,000 feet without gear. The next morning they separated, attempting different routes back to Conness Lakes. They were reported missing that morning and found by NPS rescuers that afternoon. (Source: Jesse McGahey, Yosemite National Park Ranger.)

ANALYSIS

I am 61 years old and lack the fitness, stamina and strength I once possessed. Good judgment is everything in the mountains. Sadly, good judgment is often gained by using poor judgment and learning from it. We should have retreated down the route instead of an unknown descent. Our worst decision was separating without a clear plan. (Source: Bob Porter.)

Bruce and Bob knew the predicted weather and had experienced thunderstorms for two days before their climb. Like many climbers facing inclement weather, they decided the summit attempt was worth the risk. Although the storm spared Conness, they made the correct decision to retreat, given the threat. To their credit, Bob and Bruce had a map, layers, a fire kit, and headlamps, all of which came in handy. (Source: Jesse McGahey, Yosemite National Park Ranger.)

Images

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