



## AAC Publications

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### **The Serpent's Tooth, Wild West Crack**

California, Sierra Nevada, Sequoia National Park

**For a climber, finding a direct line from the bottom of the peak to a spire-like summit is equivalent to winning a lottery.** Emilio Comici's most famous quote is, "I wish some day to make a route, and from the summit let fall a drop of water, and this is where my route will have gone." While hiking toward Eagle Scout Creek from Hamilton Lake on a weeklong trip (see approach description here), Brian Prince and I daydreamed of finding awesome crack systems. We did not expect to find a 700' direct line to a spire-like pinnacle.

After fourth-classing for a bit, Brian and I roped up below a long crack system on the south side of the Serpent's Tooth. A long, somewhat run-out pitch with a wild 5.10 crux got us to an exposed stance below an intimidating flare. Brian solved a 5.11 boulder problem to get into it. The flare evolved into a squeeze, then a section of slabby face climbing. We continued swinging leads up the continuously challenging corner above, with Brian onsighting difficult 5.11 jamming. Higher up, a chimney reminiscent of the notorious Harding Slot guarded the path to the summit. After an overhanging offwidth, which evolved into a squeeze, I was spit out to the base of the final obstacle: 40' of unprotected face climbing to the smooth summit pinnacle.

In the notch, I saw an ancient rappel anchor that likely belonged to members of the Rock Climbing Section of the Sierra Club. They claimed an ascent of the Serpent's Tooth from the north in 1953. I expected the top to have an anchor as well. But when I climbed up the smooth, unprotected 5.8 face, the top was featureless. I drilled a single bolt and belayed Brian up. In Yosemite, crowds would line up for this climb. Knowing it is deep in the backcountry, I would be surprised to hear about the second ascent happening in the next few years. However, if someone is looking for a direttissima with Astroman-like climbing, on a needle-like spire, with High Sierra views, the Wild West Crack (800', IV 5.11+) is waiting—a five-star route!

– Vitaliy Musiyenko

## Images



Vitaliy Musiyenko follows the steep crack line of Wild West Crack (800', IV 5.11+).



Brian Prince heads up a steep, leaning crack.



A photo overview of the Rowell Tower, Serpent's Tooth and other nearby features.

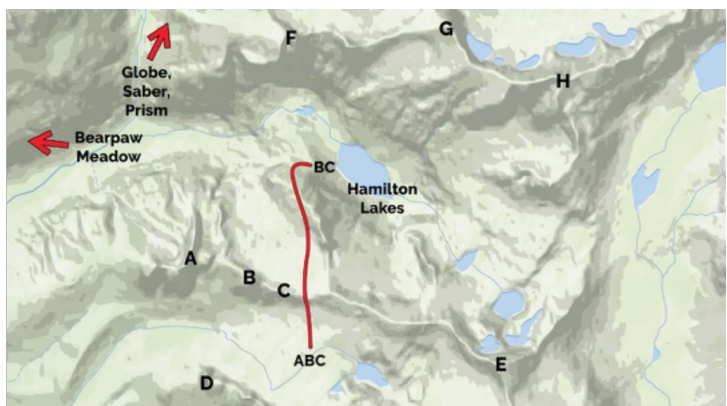




The Serpent's Tooth with the line of the Wild West Crack very obvious on the left side of the tower.



Vitaliy Musiyenko gets a no-hands rest on one of the offwidths of Wild West Crack (IV 5.11+).



An overview of the Hamilton Lakes area, where California-based Vitaliy Musiyenko and various partners established many new routes spread across multiple trips during the summer and fall of 2015. [See reports on pages 107–115.] Select formations are labeled: (A) Hamilton Dome. (B) Rowell Tower. (C) Serpent's Tooth. (D) Eagle Scout Creek Dome. (E) Eagle Scout Peak. (F) Angel Wings. (G)

Cherubim Dome. (H) Mt. Stewart. (BC) The standard base camp at Hamilton Lakes used for climbing Angel Wings, etc. (ABC) The approach and high camp used by Musiyenko and Brian Prince to climb Hamilton Dome, Rowell Tower, and the Serpent's Tooth.

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