



AAC Publications

Dogtooth Pinnacle, Once Bitten

Wyoming, Wind River Range, Monolith Cirque

On the east-facing aspect of the Monolith Cirque, the towering sub-buttresses of Dog Tooth Peak are stacked up like a row of teeth, impossible to ignore when walking in either direction along the North Fork Trail. Even though climbing history here stretches back to the 1963 first ascent of the Monolith's north face, I could find no record of any activity on the cirque's next-most-impressive formation, the Dogtooth Pinnacle. Intrigued, my good friend Drew Smith and I loaded our packs at the end of July and made the 12-mile trek in from Big Sandy to have a look.

After establishing a cushy base camp in the talus near Papoose Lake, we spent a day glassing the wall and stashing gear at the base. The Dogtooth Pinnacle was as impressive in real life as it was in the pictures—a towering triangular face that appeared to be dead vertical for more than 1,500 feet. We awoke early on August 2 for an attempt up the center of the steep and imposing southeast aspect.

After a long, moderate approach pitch, the wall reared up and Drew led an overhanging 5.11 stem corner with wild movement but less than desirable rock. I then quested up low-5.11 finger cracks through more questionable stone to reach a dirty, arcing splitter that I aided at C1. This pitch ended at a sloping ledge below a steep wall devoid of cracks. Drew led a traversing pitch leftward up a large, low-angle ramp. Above this, a muddy corner abruptly pinched off, and more leftward traversing looked to end in a large, blank wall.

Deflated by the crummy rock, dead-end cracks, and wandering nature of our line, we decided to bag it and made two rappels south to a gully, which we glissaded back to the base of the wall. Though a team with more time, bolts, and an arsenal of wire brushes might be able to forge a line up this impressive face, we found this aspect of the peak to be an unfortunate case of "good from far, but far from good."

The next morning, August 3, we decided to explore the buttress' only other obvious weakness: a large chimney that looked to lead onto the less-steep north face. Once Bitten (1,500', III/IV 5.10) begins in this obvious cleft on the lower right-hand portion of the southeast face.

Our route climbs flakes and cracks in and outside of the large chimney for three pitches of 5.10 to reach a spacious ledge on the northeast arête. From here, the route transitions onto the north face, climbing a spectacular 70m pitch (5.10) through an hourglass feature, linking more cracks and flakes to a belay in a scoop. The route trends generally right for three more long pitches, connecting intermittent systems with comfy belay ledges and generally good rock. The top of our sixth pitch brought us to a grassy ledge at the base of a large, V-shaped gully. We put the rope away and scrambled 200m or so of low-fifth-class terrain to the summit of Dogtooth Pinnacle.

From the top of the formation, an easy horizontal scramble brought us to the large alpine plateau below the true summit of Dog Tooth Peak. Like other climbers making ascents on nearby buttresses, we descended west down to Lizard Head Meadows and contoured back to our camp in the cirque proper.

On our last day in the cirque, we repeated the northwest buttress of the Monolith (1,600', IV 5.9,

Beckey-Fuller, AAJ 1967), which we found to be a wild and engaging classic that in my opinion surpasses the nearby northeast buttress of Pingora in both quality and adventure.

–Andy Anderson

Images



Drew Smith sneaks in a sunset bouldering session in the talus beside Papoose Lake.



Andy Anderson engaging steep, featured rock on the high-quality “hourglass pitch” during the first ascent of Once Bitten (III/IV 5.10) on the Dogtooth Pinnacle.



Andy Anderson nearing the summit of the Dogtooth Pinnacle after the first ascent of Once Bitten (III/IV 5.10). Though only two miles from the popular Cirque of the Towers, Anderson and Smith saw no other climbers during a weeklong stay in the Monolith Cirque.



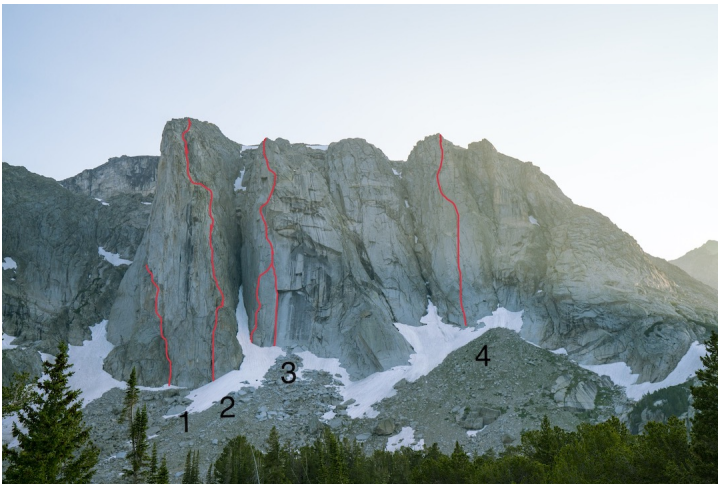
Andy Anderson jamming out the steep chimney system on pitch two of Once Bitten (III/IV 5.10) on the Dogtooth Pinnacle. He and Drew Smith completed this possible new route on August 3, during a weeklong stay in the Monolith Cirque.



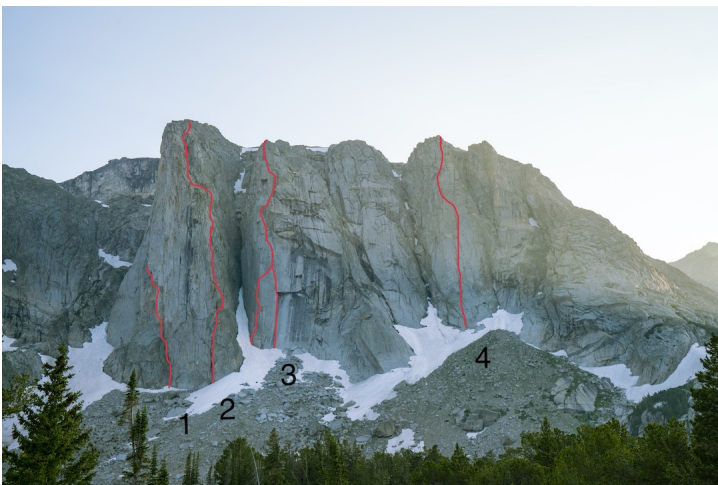
The Dogtooth Pinnacle, showing the line of Once Bitten (III/IV 5.10). The 1,500' route is the first reported ascent on the formation.



Andy Anderson aiding out an aesthetic arcing splitter during he and Drew Smith's attempt on the Dogtooth Pinnacle's southeast face. The two were shut down a few pitches above by crumbly rock and dead-end cracks.



The east face of the Dog Tooth Peak massif, showing all known routes. (1) Dogtooth attempt (Anderson-Smith, 2017). (2) Once Bitten (III/IV 5.10, Anderson-Smith, 2017). (3) Infinite Jest (IV 5.11 C2, Barker-Daverin-Warren, 2016). (4) A-Frame Buttress (IV 5.9, Metcalf-Thuermer, 1977). The second buttress from the left experienced a major rockfall sometime in the '80s or '90s that obliterated the start of the buttress' original route, Wisdom Tooth (see AAJ 1981). Infinite Jest climbs new terrain down low and up high along a similar line (see AAJ 2017). The second buttress from the right is possibly unclimbed.



First Ascent in Wind Rivers

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