



## AAC Publications

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### **Ground Fall – Protection Pulled Out**

West Virginia, New River Gorge, Endless Wall, Fantasy Area

**On June 25, at approximately 3:25 p.m., a male climber (age 27) fell while leading Black and Tan, a 5.10a trad line in the Fantasy area of Endless Wall.** He was approximately 40 feet up the route and took a short fall onto his fourth protection piece, a number 0.3 Camalot, which pulled out. The resulting tug on the rope apparently levered out his third protection piece, a number 2 Wild Country nut, before he weighted it, and the next pieces down were too low to keep him from hitting the ground. The climber's legs impacted a less than vertical area at the lower part of the climb, upending him and causing him to land on his back and his head to strike a rock on the ground. The belayer, who was using a tube-style device, said that the rope never came taut before impact due to the slack in the system created from the pulled pieces of gear.

NPS rangers and rescue personnel responded to the accident and stabilized the patient, who was eventually evacuated by helicopter. A follow-up interview with the belayer by NPS personnel revealed that the climber had suffered lacerations to his head, a mild traumatic brain injury (concussion), a collapsed lung, and a number of fractured ribs. He was not wearing a helmet. (Source: National Park Service IMARS incident report and eyewitness Pat Goodman.)

### **ANALYSIS**

The pulled cam and nut were inspected by NPS personnel and by a member of the ANAC editorial team and found to be in proper working order. Careful placement of gear, especially small cams, is a must to prevent dangerous falls; it's often wise to place multiple pieces close together if the individual placements aren't ideal. Care also must be taken to extend nut placements appropriately; a longer sling on this nut might have prevented it from levering out and allowed it to hold the fall. A helmet might have prevented or mitigated the mild brain injury. (Source: The Editors.)

## Images



The gear that pulled out of Black and Tan at the New River Gorge, leading to a ground fall, was in good working order and undamaged.

## Article Details

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