



AAC Publications

Sandstone Canyon, New Routes

Nevada, Red Rock

When I arrived in Red Rock in early October, the temperatures were still quite warm and I had a difficult time locating consistent partners. So on off days I would venture out in the canyons with a pair of binoculars and a guidebook scouting new routing potential. It didn't take too long to make the trip out into Sandstone Canyon. The initial reconnaissance mission unveiled an entire canyon filled with virgin crack systems. I quickly made plans with my friend Zack Lovell to check out one of the north-facing walls near the mouth of the canyon that resembled a giant wave. I later dubbed this wall simply The Wave. We chose a continuous looking crack system in the center of the wall. After about 750' of climbing we met up with a large 4th class ramp system that we took back to the main drainage of the canyon. Zack came up with the name: Green Eggs and Sam (750', 6 pitches, 5.9). I was hooked! The climbing was fun, the rock was reasonably solid and the crack systems tended to be continuous. I quickly began spraying to friends and co-workers in an attempt to lure new partners.

Zack Krenzer was the first to join me and we set off for an appealing line on the far left side of the Gecko Wall. On the second pitch, we discovered a very recently placed bolt, which was a disappointment as it was next to good gear placements. Regardless we continued to the top of the wall on cool, varied terrain. We were unable to find any info on this line, which we ended up calling The Bolt (800', 6 pitches, 5.9).

My friend Royal and I then set off for a wall a bit deeper in the canyon. The goal was a rib of rock to the right of one of the few published routes in the canyon, the Golden Gecko (1,500' III 5.9) on the Gecko Wall. This route was a bit of a mixed bag with easy slabs, tree wrestling, hand cracks, and even a short bit of spicy face climbing. We called it Jolly Roger (1,200', 7 pitches, 5.9).

A couple days later, my friend Kyle Willis flew into town and we ended up climbing a series of crack systems on the left edge of the Gecko Wall, Cthulu Rises (800', 6 pitches, 5.9). We topped out on the Gecko Wall and decided to continue up the summit ridge despite 60 mph winds. The climbing high on this feature felt a bit like an alpine rock ridge. The final pitch went up the summit tower above The Wave, and we were a bit surprised and excited to find no evidence of previous traffic on the summit. We set up a rappel off the tower using nuts and met up with the descent for the Gecko Wall. Though not sustained, it was still incredibly fun route with a surprisingly small amount of choss. The name Siren's Arete (600', 5 pitches, 5.8) seemed fitting.

Fairly confident with the featured and easily protected nature of the rock, I set my eyes on the large intimidating upper wall on The Wave. I recruited my friend Andy Stephen and we began discussing options. We decided on a striking diagonal crack system that splits the face. To make better time we scrambled up the 4th class ramp we had used to descend from Green Eggs and Sam. From the top of that route, we traversed about 100' to the left to find the base of the diagonal cracks. The crack system we chose proved surprisingly moderate and continued all the way to the summit ridge. From here we gained Siren's Arete for the final pitch up the summit tower to complete The Wave (1,000', 7 pitches, 5.7). For future ascents, it would make logical sense to link Green Eggs and Sam into The Wave for a fun moderate romp of about 1,700' of technical climbing.

On the hike down, we scanned the walls all around, looking for good lines. As we passed the far right hand edge of the Gecko Wall, a chocolate, varnished splitter appeared—we came back in the same week to give it a go. The crux ended up being right off the ground and required a few knifeblades to

reasonably protect. The first pitch was probably the best pitch I have climbed in the canyon, but the rest of the route was relatively easy, making it fairly inconsistent: A Pirate's Life (500', 5 pitches, 5.11b).

Overall the climbing in Sandstone Canyon proved to be extremely traditional. Most routes are walk-offs, so fixed anchors are virtually non-existent. And unlike most of Red Rock, fixed pro is sparse to non-existent. To my knowledge there are only two bolts in the entire canyon, one possibly placed by Joanne Urioste long ago on a route by the mouth of the canyon, and the one random new bolt we discovered on the Gecko Wall.

– Sam Boyce

Images



The Wave Wall in Sandstone Canyon, showing two lines completed by Sam Boyce and partners in the fall of 2017. Green Eggs and Sam (750', 6 pitches, 5.9). is in yellow, and The Wave (1,000', 7 pitches, 5.7) is in green. Though they have not been linked, Boyce says the combination would easily make for a fun, moderate 1,700' of climbing.



The Gecko Wall in Red Rock's Sandston Canyon showing known routes. From left to right, The Bolt (800', 6 pitches, 5.9), Cthulu Rises (800', 6 pitches, 5.9), The Golden Gecko (1,500', 8 pitches, 5.9), Jolly Roger (1,200', 7 pitches, 5.9).



Andy Stephen climbing moderate terrain with big views during the first ascent of The Wave (1,000', 7 pitches, 5.7) in Red Rock's Sandstone Canyon.



Zack Lovell starting up the first pitch of Green Eggs and Sam (750', 6 pitches, 5.9), one of six new routes completed by Sam Boyce in Red Rock's Sandstone Canyon.

Article Details

Author	Sam Boyce
Publication	AAJ
Volume	60
Issue	92
Page	0
Copyright Date	2018
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions