



AAC Publications

Stranded – Off-Route

Canada, British Columbia, Yoho National Park, Chancellor Peak

Two climbers were attempting the west ridge of Chancellor Peak (3,266 meters) on July 24. They were expecting low fifth-class climbing and instead encountered what felt like 5.8 or 5.9, with little protection, on poor rock. The two simul-climbed an estimated 10 to 12 pitches along the ridge until they got to a steep section they could not safely climb. Their route description told them to look for a rightward traverse, but they could not find it. While looking for the correct path, they triggered a large rockfall, which unsettled them and made them feel they could not safely ascend or descend the route. They called Banff dispatch on their cell phone and requested a rescue. Both climbers were uninjured.

After some discussion with the Parks Canada rescue leader, it was determined the climbers could not be coached down safely. A helicopter and team were prepared for a technical sling rescue. The team had radio communication with the stranded party, and they were told to pack up all ropes, to minimize entanglement hazard. Two rescuers were flown in and picked off both climbers.

ANALYSIS

The Canadian Rockies are known for having some poor rock, which can make it difficult or impossible to find good protection or retreat anchors, especially on obscure or unpopular routes. It is important to keep descent options in mind and avoid climbing into a spot from which retreat or further ascent is impossible. The party had chosen this obscure route because it was described in a newly published guidebook. Climbers should use all available resources, including online trip reports, to be fully aware of what is involved in a planned route.

Although this climbing party climbed into a situation from which they could not move up or down, they were well equipped and prepared for the climb. They had two emergency communication devices, allowing them to speak to the rescue team on a radio as they flew overhead, which greatly facilitated the rescue and made it safer for everyone involved.

Images



Location of stranded climbers on Chancellor Peak.

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