



## AAC Publications

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### **Shawangunks Annual Summary**

New York, Mohonk Preserve

**In 2017 there were 16 reported climbing-related accidents at the Mohonk Preserve. These resulted in four head injuries, one spinal fracture, four long-bone fractures, three shoulder dislocations, and minor ankle, wrist, and hand injuries. Ten accidents required technical rescues.**

Five of the injuries were sustained due to one or more pieces of protection failing to hold during a lead fall. Three climbers suffered injuries while soloing or prior to placing protection.

One climber was injured twice, in two separate falls, while attempting Westward Ha!, a popular 5.7 in the Millbrook area. The climber was about 40 feet up when a large hold pulled out, striking him in the foot. After his fall, the climber downclimbed to the Grand Traverse Ledge (the start of the climb, accessed by rappel) and assessed the injury with his partner. Concluding the injury was minor, the climber decided to make another attempt. After clearing the first roof in the corner, he fell again—this time an inverted fall of approximately 60 feet, during which the climber made contact with the cliff face, causing serious injury to the right hand.

The climber was stabilized and secured on Grand Traverse Ledge by his partner, who then ascended to the high point and continued to the cliff top on a self-belay. During this process, while attempting to call rangers for assistance, the partner dropped his cell phone, but hikers passing by were able to contact the rangers. Meanwhile, the injured climber began slowly ascending the fixed line. Once on scene, rangers hauled the climber up the remaining distance, treated his injury, and transported the party back to their vehicles.

There was a reported incident of a climber in the Near Trapps who was climbing alone and ran into trouble while self-lowering. [After finishing a route, instead of rappelling, the climber threaded his rope through a fixed anchor, tied back in, and then used an ATC-style device on the other strand to lower himself from the anchor.] When still far above the ground, he noticed there was not enough rope to reach the bottom of the climb and immediately stopped; it was reported the climber did not have a stopper knot in the system and had less than a foot of rope remaining below his belay device. A local climber heard a call for help and found the climber hanging in space. The local soloed up above the stuck climber, set up an anchor, rappelled to the climber, and helped him to the ground.

Two climbers at the Trapps were stranded when they failed to untie a stopper knot before attempting to pull their rappel rope down to an intermediate rappel station. The rope end became stuck above. The two climbers had no headlamps or warm clothing, and were unable to ascend the rope to fix the problem. A Mohonk Preserve ranger scrambled to the top of the Trapps, lowered headlamps to the climbers, and removed the stopper knot. The climbers then safely rappelled to the ground.

As mentioned above, several accidents occurred at the Mohonk Preserve when protection failed to hold during a fall. Typically, these accidents occur due to placements being set at an inappropriate angle for the direction of pull during a fall. We must always consider how forces change throughout a pitch and how each piece of gear will respond when loaded.

In 2017, several climbers were able to self-rescue, having the skills and equipment to adjust and adapt when things went wrong. Some were not prepared and required rescue. A skilled climber builds

**self-rescue into his or her portfolio of technical skills; the ability to escape a loaded belay or ascend a tensioned rope can be invaluable.** (Source: Andrew Bajardi, Chief Ranger, Mohonk Preserve.)

## Images

## Article Details

Author	Andrew Bajardi, Chief Ranger Mohonk Preserve
Publication	ANAM
Volume	11
Issue	71
Page	77
Copyright Date	2018
Article Type	Accident reports