



AAC Publications

El Capitan, Ephemeron

California, Yosemite National Park

In April, Kristoffer Wickstrom and I established Ephemeron (VI 5.10 A4), a 22-pitch line up the center of El Capitan, with roughly two-thirds independent terrain. Kristoffer and I spent one day fixing pitches and nine days committed to the wall to complete the project. The climb can be categorized as a modern hard-aid wall route. It mainly climbs thin seams, primarily through the use of beaks. There are seven pitches of A4 and seven others rated A3. We were pleasantly surprised with how well most of the features linked naturally.

Ephemeron tackles an independent start several hundred feet to the right of the Nose (VI 5.9 C2). After roughly 500' of climbing, it joins Central Scrutinizer (VI 5.11c A4+) for two pitches. It then climbs up the face of Dolt Tower, and tackles more new terrain until it intersects with the Nose at the Jardine Traverse. More new pitches were established leading to Camp IV and around the Great Roof to Camp V. A particularly good beak seam to the right of the Pancake Flake was climbed and christened "Beak'n and Eggs." Ephemeron leaves the Nose for good just above Camp V, following Mediterraneo (VI 5.11 A4) and more new terrain to the summit. We placed approximately 35 bolts on the route and used existing anchors when possible to keep the hole count down.

Scoping the line took several years. While climbing the Nose or surrounding routes, I would spy systems that I thought would make for good climbing. I spent many hours staring up at the wall through telescopes. Many systems were only visible in certain light. Eventually I realized there was a line hidden among the other routes, prime for an ascent. It was an amazing experience to establish a modern route on El Capitan, a cliff largely assumed to be tapped out. The adventurous components of stepping into the unknown are of course appealing, but what I have really come to appreciate about new routing in the last few years is the creative aspect. I aspire to leave beautiful and complete first ascents, and Ephemeron is no exception. Kristoffer and I worked hard to establish a route that following parties looking for a hard aid voyage can enjoy and appreciate. It was a defining trip that will surely remain with me.

An ephemeron is an insect with a lifespan of only a few days. All things we have done and will ever do are meaningless in the grand scheme, and yet are of immense meaning within our personal spheres. I like to imagine a small insect screaming up at a vastly infinite and timeless cosmic reality. I sometimes feel like that insect.

– Brandon Adams

Images



El Capitan and the line of Ephemeron (VI 5.10 A4), a modern hard aid route that climbs mostly new terrain in the center of the wall. Brandon Adams and Kristoffer Wickstrom completed this new line in April, after a day of fixing and nine days committed to the wall. Seven of the 22 pitches are rated A4.



Looking down one of Ephemeron's A4 beak pitches low on the wall. Seven of the 22 pitches on the route are rated A4, and three are rated A3.



Looking down the “Beak’n and Eggs” pitch on Ephemeron. The neighboring Pancake Flake on the Nose can be seen in the lower center of the photo. Ephemeron (VI 5.10 A4) shares a few sections of terrain with the Nose but generally parallels it on difficult aid seams.

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