



AAC Publications

Wheeler Crest, New Routes

California, Eastern Sierra

SCOTT SINNER AND I FOUND the formation we named the Black Obelisk by accident after following some bad guidebook beta while looking for an established route in the area. We returned a week later, on April 21, armed with more substantial equipment than the rack of quickdraws we had carried up the first time. The rough approach up the North Fork of Sixth Canyon took about two hours from Ainslee Meadow.

The East Arete (950', III/IV 5.10) is an airy eight-pitch climb that never leaves the exposed prow of the Black Obelisk for more than a few feet. Most of the climb checks in at 5.7, with a couple of 5.10 cruxes mixed in. We rappelled the line of ascent on piton and bolt anchors with a single 70m rope. This route is destined to become an area classic—meaning it might be climbed two or three more times.

Earlier, on February 8, I returned to Haystack Needle, where Vitaliy Musiyenko and I had climbed the first known route the previous November (AAJ 2018). Natalie Brechtel and I established another fine five-pitch climb up the leftmost crack system. She tends to think I get overly excited about the climbing here and dubbed our route Richard's Rose-Colored Glasses (750', III 5.10a). I left a cache of gear and came back with Tony Lewis the following day to investigate the next system to the right of the original route. The rock quality was not as good as the others, and a near-miss with a piano-size death block kept us on our toes until we joined the original route near the end of pitch three. Pins & Needles (700', III 5.10a R/X) is the least recommended route here. On June 17, one of the last cool days of spring, Jeremy Freeman and I climbed the rightmost system on the wall. You Shore it Goes Free, Man? (650', III 5.10c) features varied crack, slab, and chickenhead-studded face climbing for five pitches.

Joel Kauffman and I climbed an obvious crack system up the center of Sheepoopi Spire's western shoulder on a surprisingly hot February 17. Five long pitches led up through chimneys, a loose double-roof crux, brushy corners, and finally some clean and featured face climbing to a huge juniper tree on the prominent subsummit. We left no fixed gear on route, but some of the stubborn mountain mahogany bushes certainly left their mark on us. Combined with the sweltering heat, the frequent stabbings had us feeling like lambs roasting on the spit, and we called the route Cordero al Palo (800', III 5.10d R). From the top of the climb we scrambled back and left toward the descent gully coming off the main summit, making a single rappel followed by easy walking.

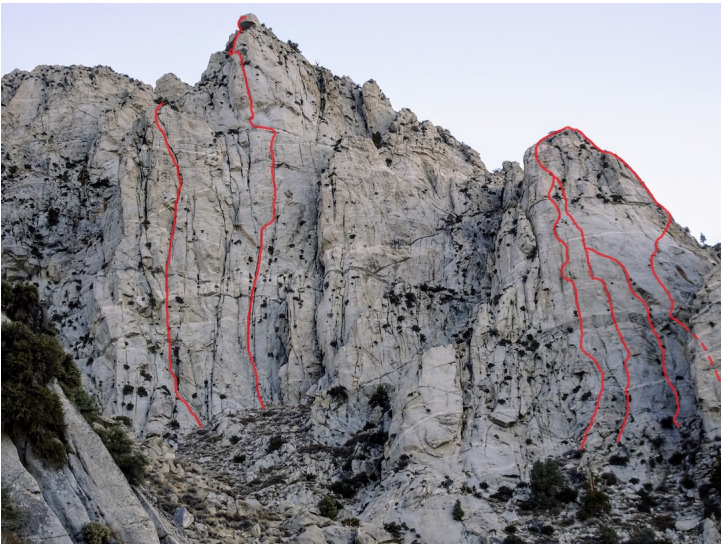
In the fall, Freeman and I made the rugged 3,000' uphill approach to the previously unclimbed Poseidon Pinnacle. This sunny pillar of clean orange rock is located approximately one-quarter mile north of Neptune Tower and is distinguished by two enormous, twisted Jeffrey pines on its right flank. On October 13 we followed an obvious system of straight-in cracks for three pitches to a large ledge at mid-height, where the climb transitioned to featured face and slab for another two pitches. The pillar terminated into the hillside behind via a flat knife-edge ridge, with an easy walk down to the base. Deep Sea Fishing (700', III 5.10) is a classic route that proves there are still trophy-size catches lurking among the vast oceans of vertical sand that form the Wheeler Crest.

– Richard Shore

Images



The Black Obelisk in the Wheeler Crest above Bishop, showing the line of the East Arete (950', III/IV 5.10). Richard Shore and Scott Sinner found this previously unclimbed formation by accident while looking for an established climb.



Sheepoopi Spire (left) and Haystack Needle (right) in the Wheeler Crest, showing the routes completed since 2017 by Richard Shore and partners. From left to right, Cordero Al Palo (800', III 5.10d R), Lamb of God (1,100', IV 5.10), Richard's Rose-Colored Glasses (750', III 5.10a), Needle in a Haystack (700', III 5.10a), Pins & Needles (700', III 5.10a R/X), and You Shore it Goes Free, Man? (650', III 5.10c).



Poseidon Pinnacle in the Wheeler Crest, showing the line of Deep Sea Fishing (700', III 5.10).



Jeremy Freeman on the first pitch of You Shore it Goes Free, Man? (650', III 5.10c) on Haystack Needle in the Wheeler Crest. This was the fourth new route on Haystack since its first ascent in 2017.



Tony Lewis on the third pitch of Pins & Needles (700', III 5.10a R/X) on Haystack Needle in the Wheeler Crest.



Joel Kauffman on pitch four of Cordero al Palo (800', III 5.10d R) on Sheepoopi Spire in the Wheeler Crest above Bishop.



Natalie Brechtel following the third pitch of Richard's Rose-Colored Glasses (750', III 5.10a) on Haystack Needle in the Wheeler Crest. Richard Shore and various partners have added more than 20 new routes to the area in the last several years.



Scott Sinner on pitch three of the East Arête (950', III/IV 5.10), an airy 8-pitch route up the previously unclimbed Black Obelisk.



Scott Sinner on the fifth pitch of the East Arête (950', III/IV 5.10) on the Black Obelisk, in the Wheeler Crest outside Bishop.

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