



AAC Publications

Mt. Ericcson Area, New Routes

California, Kings Canyon National Park

In mid-May, Chaz Langlier and I made a trip to East Lake, south of the Bubbs Creek drainage, a beautiful base camp for three days and three nights. During our trip we climbed three routes that were likely first ascents.

Climbing with Chaz is always a cardio workout, and instead of relaxing after the 16-mile approach, he was keen to go climbing. We chose an attractive dome that I had spotted a few years back. Even though it is a prominent above East Lake to the northwest, I could not find any information about it having been climbed or named, so we ventured up to the base in total mystery. The dome had amazing Tuolumne-like rock, and the path we found up its south face (700', III 5.10) would surely be one of the most popular climbs in the Meadows if it were there.

On the long first pitch, I started up a nice hand crack in a big flake and then face climbed over a 5.10a/b overhang and into a perfect hand crack in a left-facing corner. On the second pitch I climbed rightward to another hand crack and into a fun layback in a right-facing corner, then transitioned to face climbing with occasional cracks that took pro (5.10c). Two more long and easier pitches took us to the top of this attractive formation. The views from the summit were jaw-dropping. We called it Wild Iris Dome (ca 11,200').

The following day we approached the main objective of the trip: the impressive north face of Mt. Ericcson (13,589'), which to my knowledge was previously unclimbed. I saw it a few years back from Ericcson Crag 3 and during a winter flight over the Sierra. It stood out as one of the last large unclimbed faces in the range.

After four long pitches of decent climbing, we rappelled from a prominent tower into a loose gully separating us from the rest of the face that towered above us. Above here the climbing was run-out and loose. After Chaz took us over some huge loose flakes and blocks to a good ledge, I climbed a dangerous pitch that began with chimneying between an overhanging ice dagger and a steep rock pillar, onto which I was able to transition and do a few moves of 5.10, with potential for decking from 30'. Chaz led another 60m pitch up flakes and blocks that were total garbage, and before I began my lead he apologized for what I was about to encounter. It's hard to comprehend how chunks of rock bigger than me could balance on rocks the size of a Nalgene, yet they were, and I had to climb through about 30' of this in order to get into a better crack. It was no harder than 5.10, but with A5 consequences. We managed to climb another five 60m pitches of garbage rock without an accident and then descended the ridgeline going east to a loose gully that dropped us to a snow slope below the face. I would not recommend that anyone repeat our route (1,600', IV 5.10 R/X).

Although we returned to camp at midnight, we woke up early enough the next day to try something new on Ericcson Crag 3. [Editor's Note: Musiyenko and Maxim Belyakov climbed the prominent northwest arête on Ericcson Crag 3 in 2015, AAJ 2016.] We started with a nice 5.10c/d splitter a few hundred feet right of Vinland (IV 5.9, Bartlett-Beckey, AAJ 1988). This led to a huge roof (5.11a) to start the second pitch, with a perfect hand crack cutting the face toward two scary flakes, which were bypassed by wild face climbing out left. Two pitches up the major right-facing dihedral, with continuing difficulties of 5.10d or 5.11a, took us to easier ground right of the prow.

After six pitches we found the big ledge Beckey had described Vinland passing and the nice crack

Vinland must take from there. Instead of joining that route, we found steeper cracks (5.10) to the right of an obvious arête, and after a couple more pitches the route joined the ridge with an incredible hand crack over a huge roof, with perfect Red Rock-ish holds that allowed the 5.12-looking overhang to go at 5.10a and made the whole pitch a total joy. We scrambled up and downclimbed from the summit by dusk, completing King of the North (1,400', IV 5.11a). Ericsson Crag 3 continues to surprise me with its interesting rock features and the beauty of its setting.

– Vitaliy Musiyenko

Images



Chaz Langlier leading a brief section of quality golden rock during the first ascent of the north face of Mt. Ericsson (1,600', IV 5.10 R/X). The majority of the route featured loose, dangerous climbing, and the first ascensionists would not recommend it being repeated.



The previously unclimbed north face of Mt. Ericsson (13,589'). Vitaliy Musiyenko and Chaz Langlier's line of ascent (1,600', IV 5.10 R/X) is shown.



The north face of Ericcson Crag 3 in Kings Canyon National Park, showing the approximate line of King of the North (1,400', IV 5.11a).



Chaz Langlier on top of Wild Iris Dome after making the likely first ascent of the formation's south face (700', III 5.10). Mt. Ericcson and the Ericcson crags are visible along the central skyline.



The south face of Wild Iris Dome, above East Lake between Mt. Ericcson and the Bubbs Creek drainage in Kings Canyon National Park. Chaz Langlier and Vitaliy Musiyenko made the likely first ascent of this face during a three-day trip in May 2018. Their line of ascent (700', III 5.10) is shown.



Chaz Langlier climbing a nice hand crack on the first pitch of the south face of Wild Iris Dome (700', III 5.10), a Tuolumne-like formation above East Lake in Kings Canyon National Park.

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