



AAC Publications

Yosemite Valley Annual Summary

Yosemite National Park

El Capitan continued to produce firsts and speed records in 2018, and a handful of significant new aid and free lines went up throughout the Valley.

In addition to the sub-two-hour run up the Nose by Tommy Caldwell and Alex Honnold in June, several other notable speed records went down on the walls of the Captain in early summer. Brandon Adams and Roger Putnam climbed the Shield in 8 hours, 55 minutes on May 5; Josie McKee and Diana Wendt set an all-female Salathé record at 16:24 on June 1; Dave Allfrey soloed the Zodiac in 10:52:50 on June 2; and Alexa Flower, Jane Jackson, and Gena Wood set an all-female record for Zodiac, at 16:20, on June 15.

Two free climbing milestones occurred on the Nose (VI 5.14a) in November. From November 14–18, Keita Kurakami of Japan became the first person to rope-solo the route all free. Kurakami had redpointed all of the pitches on the route the previous year with a partner, but decided he was not satisfied with his style, as he didn't free the route in a continuous push from the ground. The free ascent in November was his first time rope-soloing a big wall. In nearly the same time period, from November 16–19, 15-year-old Connor Herson became the youngest person to free the route, leading every pitch with his father, Jim, belaying and cleaning. Just a few days before Connor was born, in 2003, Jim became the eighth person to free the Salathé Wall (VI 5.13b).

Brandon Adams and Kristoffer Wickstom spent 10 days in the spring putting up a new aid line that parallels the Nose, which they named Ephemeron (VI 5.10 A4). In May, Jim Beyer soloed a new route of the left side of El Cap he named Ready to Go (VI A6). The 16-pitch route begins right of Lurking Fear (5.7 C2), shares several pitches in the middle of the wall with Mirage (5.9 A4), and finishes on the West Buttress (5.9 A3). He placed around 35 Zamak rivets, but the new route features no bolts other than those already in place on Mirage and the West Buttress.

On November 19, Canadian Sonnie Trotter, belayed by Tommy Caldwell, did a one-day ascent of a new variation to the North America Wall and El Niño that he named Pineapple Express (5.13b). The variation climbs three new pitches to avoid the "human-powered" rappel on El Niño and makes the climb a pure free route. Trotter discovered this variation while exploring the possibility of freeing the North America Wall with Alex Honnold in 2017.

Elsewhere in the Valley, in October, Shaun Reed and Mark Westerberg completed the first free ascent of Jericho Wall (1,100', IV 5.12a), east of Glacier Point Apron. The free line adds multiple variations to the original 5.8 A2+, put up by Steve Bosque and Josh Mucci in October 2013. A month later, Kevin DeWeese and Tyler Poston began working on a new aid route that begins 10' to the right of Jericho Wall. They completed the line, called Epidemia de Opiaceos (1,200', V 5.7 A3-), just before the new year. Most pitches feature A2 nailing, with a crux pitch of hooking and thin beaks.

On Higher Cathedral Spire, Kevin Jorgeson completed the first free ascent of the Northwest Face route, calling it Blue Collar (12 pitches, IV 5.13+) with some variations to the original Frost-Robbins aid line (1961), including the crux seventh pitch, which was first bolted and attempted by Scott Cosgrove and Bob Gaines in the 1980s. Jorgeson spent two seasons working the route before completing a one-day send in October.

Two of the Valley's most difficult single pitches saw repeats in November. Carlo Traversi made the second ascent of Beth Rodden's Meltdown (5.14c) nearly 11 years after the first ascent, and Lonnie Kauk made the first redpoint of Magic Line (5.14c R) while placing all the gear on lead. His father, Ron Kauk, first climbed Magic Line in December 1996 on preplaced gear, and Lonnie had repeated the route in that style in 2016.

– **Andy Anderson**, with information from Eric Bissell, Mountain Project, and Alpinist

Images



Kevin Jorgeson leading the fourth pitch of Blue Collar (IV 5.13+), the free version of the original northwest face of Higher Cathedral Spire.

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