



AAC Publications

Stranded – Failure to Follow Descent Route

Oregon, Smith Rock, Smith Rock Group, Northwest Face

Late on March 27, three male climbers (ages 24, 24, and 34) completed the popular five-pitch sport climb *Wherever I May Roam* (5.9). With darkness approaching and being unfamiliar with the established rappel route, the party mistakenly rappelled from the anchors at the top of the fifth pitch rather than the fixed anchor on the backside of the northwest wall. After reaching the anchors below, the party was not able to pull their rope, due to the friction of their rope traveling over the face above. They did not know how to ascend the rope and were stranded. The climbers contacted Deschutes County SAR, and a rescue team hiked up the backside of the northwest face, accessed the top of the climb, and assisted the subjects down the route. (Source: Deschutes County SAR.)

ANALYSIS

The guidebook for the area (*Rock Climbing: Smith Rock State Park*; Falcon Books) explicitly describes the descent route for this climb, and there are numerous descriptions of rappel and walk-off options listed on Mountain Project and other sites. (Photographing a guidebook description or saving webpages on a phone is a good way to carry essential descriptions without lugging a guidebook.) Climbers transitioning to multi-pitch routes need to be familiar with self-rescue skills and techniques not normally needed in single-pitch terrain, including the ability to ascend a stuck rope. Additionally, time management on long climbs is essential; approaching darkness can lead climbers to make hasty decisions. (Sources: Deschutes County SAR and the Editors.)

Images

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