



## AAC Publications

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### **Deep Lake Cirque Enchainment**

Wyoming, Wind River Range

**Fifty-eight years after the first ascent by Art Gran and Yvon Chouinard (AAJ 1962), two parties met below the ominous northwest face of East Temple Peak to vie for its first free ascent, resulting in a pair of routes on the cusp of 5.12.** Their proud efforts were unnecessary, however, because only a week prior Grant Kleeves and I had discovered an alternative passage up this imposing wall. And at a meager 5.7!

Our discovery arose out of a goal to enchain the seven named peaks of the Deep Lake Cirque. All had existing routes suitable to our plan, except for East Temple Peak. Its two published routes from the north were grade V and VI and out of sync with our “light and fast” aspirations. We ignored this minor detail and set out from the Big Sandy Trailhead on August 3 with a single rope and a double dose of positivity.

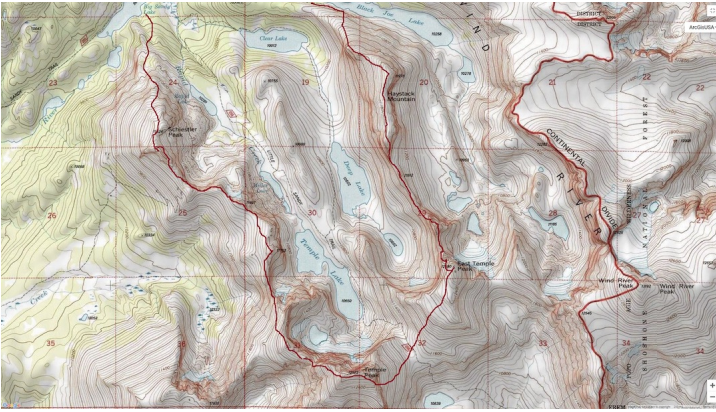
The north face of Haystack Mountain (II 5.6) and north ridge of Steeple Peak (III 5.8) went smoothly, along with the descents down their respective south ridges, before we settled in for the night below Lost Temple Spire. At dawn we cast off up the Southwest Arête (IV 5.10b). Throughout our ascent, our eyes wandered south toward East Temple and its northwest face, which appeared to overhang for nearly its entirety. But one possibility filled our fearful hearts with hope: a long, grassy ledge that traversed the upper half of the face.

After topping out Lost Temple Spire, we did two 30m rappels into the notch that separates it from East Temple. From there it was an easy scramble onto the grassy ledge we had spied. Worry grew as we searched for an upward path through several daunting overhangs. As we butt-scoted further out the narrow ledge, however, the wall relented, and we spotted a right-arching crack system that seemed to connect to the summit plateau. Although it was slimy and wet, the climbing proved moderate and protectable (5.7). After 250', we shook our heads in gleeful surprise and put the rope away.

The 4.5 miles that followed included ample fourth-class climbing, a few rappels, and a second bivy before we had tagged the remaining summits on the western half of the cirque (Temple Peak, À Cheval Peak, and Schiestler Peak). We encountered a few tattered rappel anchors, but nothing to indicate whether they'd been placed by previous cirque-enchainment climbers or merely lost scramblers. Within the tight-lipped Wyoming climbing community it is possible, and perhaps even likely, that someone has enchainment these peaks before. The purpose of this report is not to take anything away from these soft-spoken hardmen, but rather to encourage more folks to take up the challenge and revel in its beauty.

– Jack Cramer

## Images



A map of the Deep Lake Cirque in Wyoming's Wind River Range, showing the 8.5-mile clockwise traverse completed in August 2019.



Grant Kleeves strolls along a mellow ridge south of Steeple Peak during the first day of his and Jack Cramer's Deep Lake Cirque enchainment. The rounded south ridge of Haystack Mountain extends toward the left horizon.



The big question mark on the 8.5-mile Deep Lake Cirque enchainment proved to be mercifully moderate. Here, Jack Cramer endures slimy holds at the start of the 250' section (5.7) that led to the summit plateau of East Temple Peak.



The northwest face of East Temple Peak (with Lost Temple Spire on the left), showing the line taken by Jack Cramer and Grant Kleeves during a traverse of the Deep Lake Cirque in August 2019. The original northwest face, climbed by Yvon Chouinard and Art Gran in 1961, connects two obvious dihedral systems in the center of the face.

## Article Details

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