



AAC Publications

Fall From Tyrolean Traverse

Colorado, Clear Creek Canyon, East Colfax

In early summer, during the annual runoff from mountain snowmelt, a climber crossed swollen Clear Creek on a semi-permanent Tyrolean traverse; he was returning to the roadside East Colfax area after climbing on the opposite side of the river. The traverse ropes were anchored about eight feet up in a tree, and a short home-made ladder descended to the rocks below. As the climber was attempting to escape the traverse ropes, he fell into the river and was swept downstream. Other climbers ran down the bank to assist but were unable to reach him. Fortunately, after carrying the climber about 150 yards, the current pushed him into some rocks by the shore and he was rescued (unharmd but badly shaken) before entering bigger rapids.

ANALYSIS

Several crags in this canyon are accessed by established Tyrolean traverses. Climbers attach themselves to these ropes in various ways, but no matter which method is used, three principles will assure greater safety: 1) Your connection to the rope should be backed up and should not rely on a single quickdraw or sling; 2) Your pack should be attached separately, giving you greater maneuverability; and 3) You should remain clipped into the ropes or an anchor until you are on firm ground—a long sling or personal anchor system (PAS) is useful for this purpose. This particular traverse has an unusually difficult access/exit on its east side; a climber fell here in 2014 while struggling to attach a pulley to the ropes and shattered his femur. (Sources: Eyewitness and the Editors.)

Images

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