



AAC Publications

Nugget Mesa, New Ewe

Utah, Zion National Park, Kolob Canyon

On the west end of Nagunt Mesa in Kolob Canyons is a prominent subpeak known as Nugget Mesa.

The origins of this name stem from a 2000 AAJ report by the late Scott Cosgrove, and it may or may not have been a simple misspelling. Regardless, the name fits well for this smaller formation. Although Nugget Mesa is dwarfed in comparison to Nagunt's much higher elevation, its cliff face starts hundreds of feet lower in the canyon, allowing for nearly as much technical rock climbing with a much shorter approach.

The huge, triangular west face of Nugget Mesa is easy to spot from the scenic drive by a beautiful hanging valley and a black waterfall streak on its southern shoulder. In the winter, a small ice flow is keen to form here, but unfortunately doesn't come close to the ground.

Lane Mathis, Sam Stuckey, Felipe Tapia, and I arrived in early November, planning to spend a full week establishing a route up this face. Climbing ground-up and on sight, we encountered strenuous offwidths and much unprotected face climbing (that we would later bolt). After two days of this, we were only 40m from the end of the technical climbing. Unfortunately, a rainstorm hit the canyons for the remainder of our trip.

We made three subsequent weekend warrior trips from the Colorado Front Range in order to finish the technical climbing, equip rappels, inspect a direct variation, and tag the summit of Nugget Mesa. On the last trip we were cut short once again, with only one day of climbing before an incoming snowstorm. Because of this, we opted to split the team after pitch four in order to climb both our original line and the direct variation in the same day. Sam and Felipe traversed the Forest Ledge to finish on the well-protected New Ewe (1,450', 11 pitches, 5.11+), while Lane and I cast off on the more severe New Ewe Direct (5.12- R). Both lines finish on the beautifully exposed broad arête of pitch eight, with a final face crux a mere body length from the last anchor. We finished the technical climbing as a team of four and continued for another 550' of scrambling to the summit.

According to Cosgrove's 2000 report, he and Kathy Dicker left a register marked by cairns after visiting the feature's summit in 1999 via their route, Sheehe Buttress (V 5.10 A3), which is to the right of our lines. Disappointingly, we were unable to locate any register, but were happy to enjoy the sunset together from the summit.

While Sheehe Buttress is the only known route to have been completed up this face, we did find evidence of other climbers as high as the ledge at the base of pitch seven on New Ewe. A Gatorade bottle so old it was beginning to degrade was found in the dirt, as well as a bleached sling around a pine tree with the initials "TB" written in Sharpie. These artifacts are likely remnants of an undocumented route or attempt up the less technical north side of the mountain. The first recorded attempt on Nugget Mesa was in April 1985 by Jim Detterline and Stuart Schneider. Their line, Much Ado About Nothing (2 pitches, 5.10 A2), begins up the left shoulder in a 5.9+ offwidth.

The Paiute word "nagunt" means "bighorn sheep." Given that Nugget Mesa is a smaller subpeak of Nagunt and female sheep are smaller than their male counterparts, the name New Ewe seemed like a great fit.

– Dakota Walz

Images



Sam Stuckey on the final face crux on the broad arête of pitch eight, during the first ascent of New Ewe (1,450', 11 pitches, 5.11+) on Nugget Mesa in Kolob Canyon.



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The west face of Nugget Mesa, a subpeak of Nagunt Mesa, in the Kolob Canyons region of Zion National Park, showing known routes: Much Ado About Nothing (attempt, 2 pitches, 5.10 A2) in blue, New Ewe (1,450', 11 pitches, 5.11+) in orange, New Ewe Direct (1,450', 11 pitches, 5.12-R) in red, and Sheehee Buttress (V 5.10 A3) in green. Cadillac Motel (30m, 5.11), in pink, is a single-pitch crack climbed by Sam Stuckey during the development of New Ewe. White marks non-technical scrambling to reach the summit. The formation may have been summited from the north (out of sight to the left) at an unknown date.

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