



AAC Publications

Warbonnet Peak, Golden Eagle Feathers

United States, Wyoming, Wind River Range, Cirque of the Towers

Photo by Will Saunders

Golden eagle feathers are sacred to many and hold a place of prominence on a warbonnet. They carry strong medicine and guide the wearer toward courage, strength, and hope. In 2012, I witnessed two golden eagles dance together in the sky while I was climbing the “Eagle Feather,” a feather-shaped band of rock partway up the southeast face of Warbonnet Peak (12,369', 42°45'40"N, 109°12'56"W; “War Bonnet” is the official U.S. spelling). The resulting route (III 5.11b) ended at a large gully directly below the higher “Tail Feather,” and from there Nancy Bockino, Michael Kirby, and I descended.

It is said that the eagle flies highest of all birds, carrying our prayers up to the Creator. Hoping to witness the eagles again, I returned many times to attempt the Tail Feather formation. In August 2020, Gareth “Gaz” Leah and I finally climbed this 11-pitch route in its entirety: Golden Eagle Feathers (IV 5.12c). The route shares the first pitch of Brown Cow and follows my 2012 climb to gain the Tail Feather headwall, which comprises exciting 5.12 climbing with a mix of bolts and gear. If combined, pitches seven and eight would make for a stellar 5.13.

The gift of a golden eagle feather represents honor, wisdom, and utmost respect. If you go to this place, treat it the same. As Black Elk of the Oglala Lakota said, “All things are our relatives; what we do to everything, we do to ourselves. All is really One.”

— Michael Abbey

Images



Photo-topo of Golden Eagle Feathers, Warbonnet Peak.



Michael Abbey climbs while Gareth "Gaz" Leah belays on the Tail Feather headwall (5.12), during the complete ascent of Golden Eagle Feathers (IV 5.12c). In the left background is the Deep Lake cirque, with East Temple and Temple Peak dominating.

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