



## AAC Publications

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### **Fall on Rock—Off Route, Inadequate Protection**

California, Yosemite National Park, Five Open Books

**On March 4, two climbers, “Jeff” and “Erin,” climbed Munginella (3 pitches, 5.6) to the base of Selaginella (4 pitches, 5.8) in the Five Open Books area near Yosemite Falls.** The pair were both experienced, and these routes were within their ability. Erin led all the pitches on Munginella, and Jeff, the more experienced traditional climber of the two, proceeded to lead all the pitches on Selaginella.

On the final pitch, Jeff was attempting to move quickly and place gear in such a manner to make it easier for Erin, as she was uncharacteristically struggling that day. Near the top of the pitch, Jeff became disoriented above a run-out slab. He ended upon a small ledge and placed a single 0.4 Black Diamond cam that he felt was questionable. Jeff thought the topo had shown the route continuing left. When he looked in that direction, he saw something that resembled a Mountain Project photo that said: “not the way to end the climb.” He also remembered verbiage about an alternate “flake” finish. Jeff and Erin could not see nor hear each other due to the meandering route and noise from the waterfall.

Jeff began climbing delicate right-angling flakes, unable to get protection but finding the climbing easy. Approximately 15 feet above the ledge, Jeff started searching for protection, as he only had the questionable 0.4 cam below. He remembered the route description saying that just below the anchor protection was sparse, so he believed he was on route.

Jeff became nervous and contemplated downclimbing but continued another 15 feet to a slab. The slab did not match any route description and so, with his last piece of protection 25 to 30 feet below him, Jeff decided to downclimb back to the ledge. During the downclimb, a flake pulled off as he tested it. Jeff lost his balance and fell. He believes he struck the ledge and continued falling for a total of 50 feet. The 0.4 cam caught him.

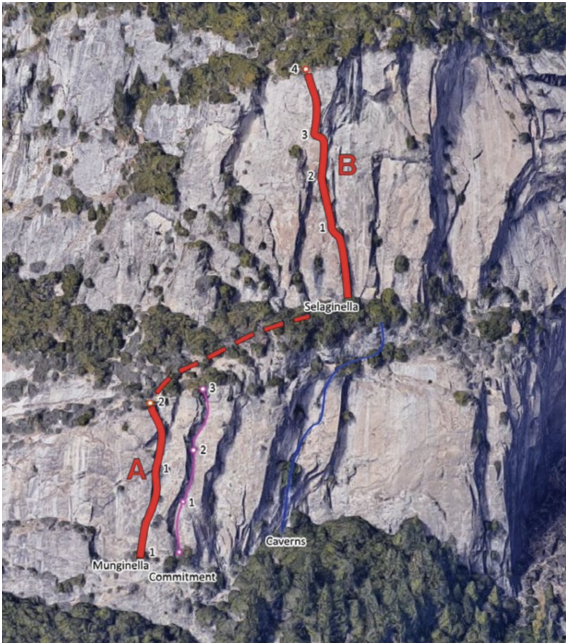
Remarkably, Jeff was able to finish the climb, despite a right ankle fracture and severe bone bruising in the left heel. After bringing up his partner, they contacted Yosemite Search and Rescue (YOSAR) to get help with the hike down the Yosemite Falls Trail. Their ability to make it to the top of the climb greatly expedited the rescue response time and limited the risk for the SAR team.

### **ANALYSIS**

Mountain Project is a useful tool, but it has plenty of information that can be misleading or incorrect. Published topos are often more reliable and objective. Jeff remarked that the overload of information on the site made it more difficult to remember accurate information during the climb.

Carrying beta with you on the route is ideal, so you can refer to it as needed and not rely on memory. Take photos of guidebooks/topos. If you can cut through the overload of information, download the Mountain Project app. (Source: Yosemite National Park Climbing Rangers.)

## Images



The Five Open Books link-up of (A) Munginella and (B) Selaginella. The walk-off is to the left.

Article Details

Author	Yosemite National Park Climbing Rangers
Publication	ANAM
Volume	12
Issue	75
Page	32
Copyright Date	2022
Article Type	Accident reports