



AAC Publications

STRANDED – Unfamiliar with Terrain, Darkness

North Carolina, Pisgah National Forest, Linville Gorge Wilderness, Table Rock

At approximately 10:45 p.m. on June 23, Burke County 911 received a call from a climber stating that there were three uninjured male climbers stranded on a ledge on the east face of Table Rock.

The trio had climbed several pitches up Jim Dandy (3 pitches, 5.4) and encountered wasps. They felt unable to complete the climb because one of the climbers was severely allergic to bee stings. One of the climbers attempted to rappel but could not find a place to set a new rappel station. He ascended the rope back to the ledge and anchored in. All three had the proper equipment, including headlamps, water, and snacks. They were not familiar with the terrain, nor were they familiar with any self-rescue techniques.

Unknown to the climbers, they were on Lunch Ledge, a large, vegetated shelf midway up the east face. A number of routes finish here. The ledge is large enough for climbers to unrope and walk around. A 4th-class gully with a hand line is located at the north end of the ledge, providing a way to escape the east face if they decide to do other routes or bail due to weather.

A pair of rescuers arrived via the Lunch Ledge descent gully and found the climbers anchored to a large pine tree. The stranded climbers were surprised to see the rescuers approach them unroped. Rescuers confirmed the three were okay, helped them gather their equipment, and assisted them down the gully. The group then hiked back to the Table Rock parking lot. (Source: James Robinson, Burke County Search and Rescue.)

ANALYSIS

Before attempting any rock climb in a new area, climbers should educate themselves about access, route information, descent routes, and anything unique about the area. With a bit of research, the climbers would have known about the Lunch Ledge descent gully or would have been able to descend from Lunch Ledge via three rappels from anchors on the left side of the ledge. To their credit, the stranded climbers had adequate equipment to sustain and support themselves while waiting for assistance. (Source: The Editors.)

Images

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