



AAC Publications

Mt. Heyburn, West Summit, North Face, Woodland Nymph

Idaho, Sawtooth Mountains

On May 4, Brad Ward and I climbed a new route on the north face of the west summit of Mt. Heyburn (10,229'). From the upper Bench Lake, our route ascended a large snowfield before entering the broad couloir directly below the summit. We soloed snow in the couloir for 500' before roping up for a pitch of steep snow and easy mixed to reach beautiful rock at the base of the upper face. An exciting M5 pitch through snow mushrooms and great stone got us to dry rock, where we switched to rock shoes and enjoyed four more pitches of excellent climbing up an obvious corner that splits the face.

Brad led the crux fifth pitch of the route in fine style and called it 5.10+. It seemed harder to me, but somehow, by the time I followed that pitch, both of our pairs of boots, crampons, and ice tools, along with the pin rack and water, had found their way into my pack—so who knows the actual grade? We experienced some loose rock on the sixth and final pitch, but nothing like the rotten rock on the west side of the mountain. We descended the Stur Chimney and were back in town before dark.

We climbed the route in May for a couple of reasons. First, I had previously looked at the route in the summer, and it seemed unlikely we could get up the very loose, steep rock in the couloir without snow cover (see photo at right). The spring snowpack made that part easy. Second, we were unsure what we would find above, as Heyburn has a reputation for heinous rock (apart from the classic Stur Chimney); we thought we might need tools and crampons even if the rock was dry.

Ultimately, we were pleasantly surprised by the rock quality. If someone took the initiative to clean the last pitch, perhaps on rappel, Woodland Nymph (1,100', 6 pitches, III 5.10+ M5) could be a classic early season Sawtooth route.

— Matt Ward

Images



Brad Ward following pitch two of Woodland Nymph (1,100', 6 pitches, III 5.10+ M5) on the north face of Mt. Heyburn's western summit.



Woodland Nymph (1,100', 6 pitches, III 5.10+ M5) follows the big couloir in the center of the picture and then takes the big left-facing corner on the middle formation. This photo was taken in summer, but the route was climbed in May, when the entire couloir was still filled with snow.

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