



AAC Publications

Bearpaw Dome, West Face, Two Routes

California, Sierra Nevada, Sequoia National Park

As a climber just beginning to explore the Sierra, the possibility of finding unclimbed terrain seemed unlikely. But when I started working as a fire and fuels assessment tech for the U.S. Geological Survey in Sequoia and Kings National Parks (SEKI), it seemed like every backcountry work trip revealed more unclimbed granite. After work one day in summer 2022, I attempted to scramble the south ridge of a wall—which I later learned is known as Bearpaw Dome to local climbers and rangers—just north of Bearpaw Meadow Ranger Station, but was turned back by a 5.9 slab move that you wouldn't want to blow.

Bearpaw Dome is immense: a half-mile-long system of walls and buttresses facing due west, with a singular and long north-south summit ridgeline. After a few short phone calls gushing about it, I was able to recruit fellow UMass Outing Club alum Chris Hebert to join me there in the fall.

Bearpaw Dome is immense: a half-mile-long system of walls and buttresses facing due west, with a long north-south ridgeline on top. Based on the AAJ archives and conversations with knowledgeable locals, we believe the wall to have only one prior route: In July 2017, Chad Namolik and Matt Zussman put up Brownies and Lemonade, a five-pitch 5.8 that winds up the far right shield of the dome.

Chris and I did the 12-mile approach from Wolverton trailhead in mid-October 2023. On the way in, he almost collided with a bear—quite literally: The bear was hanging out and munching acorns on an oak branch overhanging the trail and Chris nearly walked right into it—but we eventually made to a campsite by Buck Creek.

We attacked the obvious weakness next morning: a single left-leaning crack system that splits the center of the main face until it disappears around a corner. After romping up two pitches of corners and straight-in cracks, Chris led an excellent pitch of 5.8+ cracks. Another pitch took us around the corner, and we ended up on a slab near the top of the wall. Two long Toulumne-esque traversing pitches took us through hollow flakes and awesome knobby overlaps, eventually spitting us out on the south ridge. After a few hundred feet of class 2, we arrived at a short and sporty pitch that led through a final headwall to the summit. We topped out the UMOC Connection (1,400' of climbing, 8 pitches, III 5.9) to one of the best sunsets I've ever seen in the High Sierra. We descended straight south off the summit, with one rap and then a casual walk-off.

The next day we blasted up the left buttress of the wall. After 1,000' or so of simul-climbing loosely connected crack systems, we regrouped at seemingly the only tree on the whole wall, a cute Jeffery pine that offered us a little shade. Four more blocky pitches brought us to the base of a short headwall guarding the north ridge, where Chris found a wild, hidden ramp that climbed at juggy 5.7. Walking off after Long Distance Runner (2,800' of climbing, III 5.8+), we had a great view of the Redwood Meadow fires, which were providing much-needed fuel reduction to an underburned backcountry Sequoia grove.

Both routes were done without any bolts, and we left no gear behind. Either one would be a solid weekend objective for someone cutting their teeth in the High Sierra or in-a-day for the super-fit.

— Peter Murphy

Images



Bearpaw Dome with the UMOG Connection (1,500', 5.9), in yellow, and Long Distance Runner (2,800', 5.8+), in red. Chris Hebert and Peter Murphy climbed both routes in October 2023. They could find no information on prior ascents.



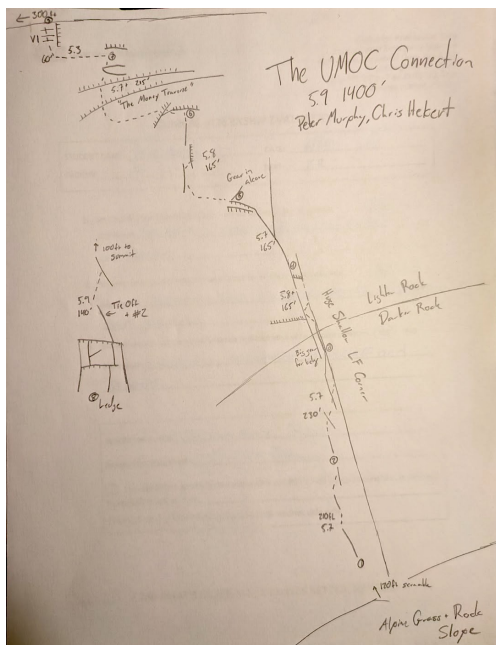
The beginning of the UMOG Connection (1,500', 5.9) on Bearpaw Dome, Sequoia National Park, Sierra Nevada, California.



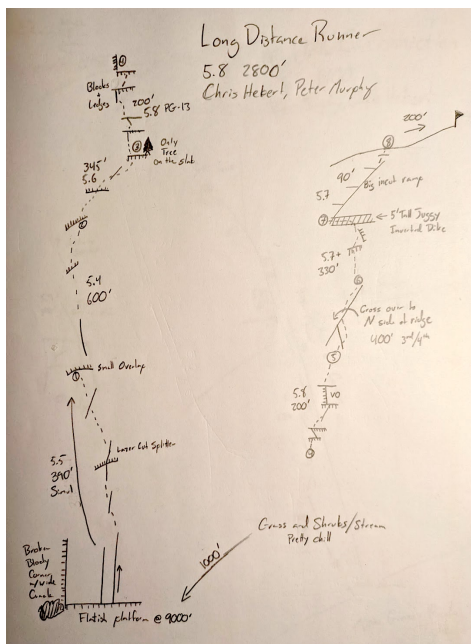
Looking north at Bearpaw Dome from the south shoulder of the wall.



Long Distance Runner (2,800', 5.8+) on Bearpaw Dome, Sequoia National Park, Sierra Nevada, California.



Topo for the UMOC Connection (1,500', 5.9) on Bearpaw Dome.





Chris Hebert starting pitch three of the UMO Connection.



Looking south at Chris Hebert on the summit of Bearpaw Dome. Vandever Peak is above and slightly left of Hebert's head. On the left skyline (left to right) are Eagle Scout Peak, Lippincott Mountain, Mt. Eisen, and Vandever Peak. Also visible are Hamilton Dome, the Serpent's Tooth, and Granite Creek Dome.



Peter Murphy casts out on the second traverse pitch of the UMOC Connection. The pitch goes left for 70' before heading up through the overlaps above his head. Chris Hebert

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