



AAC Publications

Pine Creek Pass and Granite Park Areas, Three New Routes

California, Sierra Nevada, Eastern Sierra

How does one determine whether it's a climbing trip with some fishing, or a fishing trip with some climbing? From August 9 to 16, Mike Hathorn, Dan Wolfskill, and I enjoyed a multisport week, catching several dozen trout and three new climbs in the Pine Creek Pass and Granite Park areas. By the numbers, one might conclude we're becoming better fishermen than climbers, but at least we eat well in the mountains.

On August 9, we hiked in to Honeymoon Lake from the Pine Creek Pass trailhead. The next day, on the northeast face of an unnamed formation (ca 12,050') southeast of Bear Claw Spire (also known as Treasure Peak), we chased crack systems from the toe of the face that led to a crux headwall with a gently overhanging and left-leaning splitter. We continued up the same left-leaning crack on more moderate terrain to the formation's east ridge, which ultimately led us to the summit via a memorable arête pitch. Unable to find any record of a previous ascent, we named the formation Moonrise Spire—after the crescent moon rising in the sky during our descent (made via a plateau to the south and a gully to the east)—and our route Disco Scouts (625', 6 pitches, 5.11 a).

On August 12, we focused on a south-southeast-facing wall in French Canyon, on the flanks of Merriam Peak. From camp, we walked over Pine Creek Pass and descended to the first waterfall splitting the wall. We climbed around eight pitches with grades from low fifth class to 5.10, generally sticking to the left side of the waterfall on an arête feature. Meet Your Shower (1,000', 8 pitches, 5.10a) is named for the frequent misting we received from the waterfall and the Perseid meteor shower we watched from camp the previous night.

We reeled in one more climb on August 14, this time in the Granite Park area, on an unnamed spire (ca 12,550') southeast of Granite Park Spire. We hiked up the Italy Pass Trail and followed an easy rib to the spire's east face. We found some of the cleanest granite of the entire week, with three pitches of hand cracks guiding us through the main shield of rock. The remainder of the climb rambled up an aesthetic ridge directly to the summit, with optional gendarme boulder problems that could be bypassed to the right. We dubbed our route Dry Flyin' (700', 5.10b) and named the formation Golden Trout Spire. We descended easily via scrambling and scree skiing on the west and south sides.

—Zach Lovell

Images



Disco Scouts (625', 6 pitches, 5.11a), the first known route on Moonrise Spire, Granite Park area, Sierra Nevada, California.



Zach Lovell on the crux third pitch (5.11a) of Disco Scouts on Moonrise Spire.



Dan Wolfskill following the final arête pitch to the summit of Moonrise Spire during the first ascent of Disco Scouts (625', 6 pitches, 5.11a).



Mike Hathorn on Meet Your Shower (1,000', 8 pitches, 5.10a), the first route up a south-southeast facing wall on the flanks of Merriam Peak in French Canyon.



Dry Flyin' (700', 5.10b) on the east face of the previously unclimbed Golden Trout Spire, named by first ascensionists Mike Hathorn, Zach Lovell, and Dan Wolfskill.



Mike Hathorn on one of the final ridge pitches on Golden Trout Spire.



Dan Wolfskill (left) and Mike Hathorn descending off the summit blocks of Golden Trout Spire after the first ascent of the formation, via a route called Dry Flyin' (700', 5.10b). The mountains in the background (south) are Royce Peak (left) and Feather Peak.

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