



AAC Publications

Flatiron Butte, Two New Routes

California, Sierra Nevada

Henry Feder on the fourth pitch of Endemic Species (1,200', 5.11+) on Flatiron Butte. Photo by Mike Pond

In July 2024, Henry Feder and I spent a week at Flatiron Butte in the Northern Sierra and established two new routes on the east face: Phase Change (1,200', 7 pitches, 5.11) and Endemic Species (1,200', 9 pitches, 5.11+).

We climbed Phase Change—located between Throat Yogurt (5.11-, Fasoldt-Schaffer, 2016) and Parasitic Nematode (IV 5.10+, Musiyenko-Taylor, 2014)—ground-up in a day. It is a fun, aesthetic adventure climb, hosting a variety of climbing techniques and generally good rock and protection. The corner on the third pitch has five-star climbing. After six pitches of new climbing, we reached the north ridge and followed the Beckey Route (Beckey-Nolting, 1981) to the summit.

We spent our remaining five days on Endemic Species. This nine-pitch route follows a beautiful crack and corner system left of the main cleft of Brutus of Wyde (5.9+ A2, Binder-Harris-Holland-Hove, 2001; 5.11a, Musiyenko-Taylor, 2014). The route-finding is straightforward and the climbing burly, sustained, and fun. We cleaned the bottom pitches extensively and the upper pitches as much as we could while staring down an incoming thunderstorm. The second pitch is a true gem: 40 meters in a tight corner, requiring the full trad-climbing tool kit. There are three bolted anchors and six protection bolts. The top pitch or two are probably shared with Triple Beam Dream (6 pitches, 5.11+, Fasoldt-Schaffer, 2016).

You can rappel off bolted anchors from the top of pitch five of Endemic Species with two ropes or continue to the summit and walk off clockwise around the mountain.

—Mike Pond

PHASE CHANGE

Pitch 1. 5.9. Start on easy terrain, working your way up and left. Belay in a corner.

Pitch 2. 5.10. Climb up the corner, then traverse on the face to the right to gain a crack. Go up the crack to a roof, exiting left below the roof.

Pitch 3. 5.11. Climb the beautiful, clean, right-facing corner. The first ascent was a 5.12 effort, but this will probably clean up to be in the 5.11 range. Belay in the corner, after the hard climbing.

Pitch 4. 5.9. Finish the corner, then exit right across a slab to belay on the right on a small arête.

Pitch 5. 5.10. Climb up steep, more broken rock. Belay at the base of a right-facing corner.

Pitch 6. 5.9. Climb up the corner and follow cracks all the way up to belay on the ridge crest.

At this point the route joins the Beckey North Arête to the summit. Scramble to base of pitch 7.

Pitch 7. Climb the fun flakes to the right of two major corners. (This pitch is shared with the Beckey North Arête route.)

4th class to summit

ENDEMIC

The top pitch or two are probably shared with Triple Beam Dream (6 pitches, 5.11+, Fasoldt-Schaffer, 2016).

Pitch 1. 30m. 5.9. Access the big ledge with the tree. Start below the far right side, from the highest point. A nice crack leads to the ledge.

Pitch 2. 40m. 5.11+. Climbs the rightmost of three major corners. Two bolts protect the starting boulder problem. Climb up this beautiful, tight corner using a variety of crack techniques (technical crux). Exit on the right side, finishing on a really neat belay ledge on the left (bolts). This would make a great cragging pitch on its own!

Pitch 3. 5.11. Ascend the right-facing corner. Belay in the alcove.

Pitch 4. 5.11+. Climb up the right crack, then make your way right, traversing the wide crack under the roof (burly crux). Then climb the chimney, work up through the red rock, and traverse left to the bolted anchor (choss crux).

Pitch 5. 5.11. Delicately make your way up the dihedral, passing a bolt on the right. Climb up the steep, blocky, double cracks. Belay at a bolted anchor. This section was way more "interesting" before we cleaned a few very large rocks.

Pitch 6. 5.11. Climb past two protection bolts and toward the giant chockstone. Exit right by traversing the roof crack (amazing) and climb up another 20 feet to make an anchor in the corner.

Pitch 7. 5.11. Climb the corner and enjoy the hero exit on the right (notice a theme on this climb?). Belay about 10 feet below the slab.

Pitch 8. 68m. 5.8. Wander up the slab, aiming for the major weakness on the left. Belay at the base of the final wide splitter crack.

Pitch 9. 5.10. Enjoy the last crack of the climb, which goes to the ridge crest and easier terrain.

4th class to the summit

Images



Mike Pond on the fourth pitch of Phase Change (1,200', 5.11) on Flatiron Butte.



Pink line: Phase Change (1,200', 7 pitches, 5.11, 2024) on Flatiron Butte. Blue line: Parasitic Nematode (IV 5.10+, 2014).



Henry Feder on the first pitch of Phase Change (1,200', 5.11) on Flatiron Butte, Sierra Nevada, California.



Henry Feder on the seventh pitch of Phase Change (1,200', 5.11) on Flatiron Butte.



Henry Feder on the first pitch of Endemic Species (1,200', 5.11+) on Flatiron Butte.



Henry Feder on the third pitch of Endemic Species (1,200', 5.11+) on Flatiron Butte.



Henry Feder on the fourth pitch of Endemic Species (1,200', 5.11+) on Flatiron Butte.



Henry Feder on the ninth pitch of Endemic Species (1,200', 5.11+), Flatiron Butte.



The east face of Flatiron Butte, showing (1) Endemic Species (9 pitches, 5.11+) and (2) Phase Change (7 pitches, 5.11). Many previous routes on the face are not shown.

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