



## AAC Publications

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### **Mt. Evans Massif, Black Wall, Silhouette Buttress, New Routes**

Colorado, Front Range

**In October, Ben Collett and I added two new routes to the Silhouette Buttress (ca 13,000') on the Mt. Evans massif, both located left of last year's route Silhouette (AAJ 2014).**

After trying many different options to approach this buttress once the road up Mt. Evans is closed, we discovered the best option this fall: a meandering bushwhack through a willow-filled bog, heading eastward from Guanella Pass. Passing through the swale between Gray Wolf Mountain and Mt. Spalding deposits one at the lip of the Black Wall, where many options are possible to descend to the starts of the routes. The approach takes between two and three hours by foot.

On October 2, Ben and I climbed the prominent right-facing corner and chimney system up the center of the buttress, which forms the upper left side of the Black Wall cirque. A huge roof above the belay was festooned with icicles and verglas. This involved strenuous dry tooling on good hooks in cracks and blocks, with excellent protection from hand-sized Camalots. The crux was rounding the roof and delicately powering up on lock-offs in one- to two-inch verglas. This section was very similar to the crux on the Vail climb Flying Fortress. Above the crux roof, the protection got much worse. I got two pieces in about 60' of climbing—it was some of the most challenging thin-ice climbing I have ever done. The 140' second pitch began with a weird and difficult series of chimney moves followed by easier climbing to the top: Shooting Star (2 pitches, 250', WI7 M9). It's possible that future ascents may find either better rock protection without the verglas, or better ice protection with more ice.

On October 11 we returned to climb a ghostly icicle dangling from the roof left of Shooting Star. From the belay I climbed up a thin smear of ice to a preplaced bong, then stepped carefully right into a groove below the overhang, where a suitcase-size block offered protection. Big, awkward, and committing moves brought me up the overhang and ice dagger, all while dealing with small protection. After summoning some courage, I turned the icicle and committed to an off-finger-size crack above the ceiling. There are some hooks in constrictions at the start, but mainly the crack requires torquing the head of the tool in the crack. Above the crux, the remainder of the pitch climbs thin ice smears, with quartz-riddled horizontal cracks that offer solid but sparse rock protection. This route may have ice pouring out of the crack above the initial icicle, as it did on my subsequent ascents; this makes the route less technically demanding but also considerably more run-out. Either way, the route is a rare and precious traditional mixed testpiece: The Ghost (165', WI6 M10 R).

The routes Silhouette (2013) and Shooting Star were both done ground-up, onsight. However, the Ghost was cleaned on rappel to dislodge loose blocks, and some pitons were preplaced. The entire buttress has no protection bolts—please, let's keep it that way!

– Will Mayo

## Images



The routes on the Silhouette Buttress (ca 13,000'), from right to left: Silhouette (3 pitches, 480', WI6+ M9 R), Shooting Star (2 pitches, 250', WI7 M9), The Ghost (1 pitch, 165', WI6 M10 R). The top of Monochrome (III WI4 M5) ascends the ice in lower left, and the gully out of view right of the buttress contains the route Black and White (WI4 M5). See Ben Collett's article in AAJ 2014 for more information and photos.



Will Mayo works through the steep crux of Shooting Star.



The view eastward from the parking lot of the Guanella Pass (Mt. Bierstadt) trailhead, with the approach to the Black Wall demarcated.



The belay below the Ghost, with the main portion of the Black Wall in the background.

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