



AAC Publications

Leg Stuck in Crack

California, Joshua Tree National Park, Left Horse Area

On a spring day in Joshua Tree, a climber returned to practice roped soloing after many years away from the sport. He started up Granny Goose (5.7), a 50-foot traditional route in a well-traveled area. After passing the initial flake on the route, he placed his leg into an offwidth crack, about 30 feet above the ground.

Fairly quickly, the climber realized his left leg was stuck. He was well positioned with a cam overhead and an edge for his right foot, and a rock inside the crack allowed him to push off with the left foot, but he still had no luck in releasing the leg. Swelling developed, making the situation more concerning.

Since bathroom facilities were nearby, the climber was able to call down to other visitors. He stayed as calm as possible and asked for rangers to be contacted. He then lowered a bight of rope for those below to attach a bottle of water and then a pocket knife that he had at the base in his pack. He considered their suggestion of lubricating his leg with sunscreen but was concerned the slippery sunscreen would endanger future climbers on the route. Ultimately, the climber was able to extricate his limb after cutting the leg off his pants and was able to descend safely.

ANALYSIS

Many climbers have experienced the panicked feeling of having a limb become stuck on a climb. These usually can be freed by shuffling the foot or removing the shoe. This climber managed to stay calm while troubleshooting. He was also well positioned, with people available nearby to assist him. Other techniques previously used to free stuck limbs include creating anchor systems to lift the weight off the affected limb and using lubricants such as dish soap. (Sources: Mountain Project and the Editors.)

Images

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