



AAC Publications

The Elephant's Perch, Southeast Face, Takin' 'Er by the Tusks

Idaho, Sawtooth Mountains

From September 13 to 15, Greg Rickenbacker and I finished a new route up the southeast face of the Elephant's Perch. I grew up in the nearby town of Stanley, so establishing a route on the formation was a longtime dream come true.

I first attempted the line in early July, supported by my good friend Gracie Hornsby. The moderate first pitch began just left of the first pitch of Sunrise Book (5.12-). An exciting 5.11 second pitch ended at the anchor below Sunrise Book's second pitch. The third pitch of our line, the free climbing crux (5.12a R), went straight left—a thin traverse with beautiful, sculpted edges and a horizontal seam that accepted small cams and tied-off knifeblades. Unfortunately, I injured my shoulder when I fell off the crux sequence and swung hard into a corner below, forcing us to bail.

In September, I returned with Greg. Focused on pushing the route higher, we climbed the first pitch of Sunrise Book on September 13 to go straight to the crux traverse on the new line. We fixed ropes and returned the next day. I successfully climbed through the section where I had fallen to reach decent protection, then was faced with 25 more feet of insecure, unprotectable traversing. At the end of this, a tenuous stance allowed me to hammer in a beak at the base of an incipient crack, which widened to steep 5.11 fingers and hands, at the top of which I built a belay.

After this taxing two-hour lead, Greg took over for his own two-hour push up steep A3 on a thin seam. We again fixed ropes and returned to the ground. On the third day, Greg led another beautiful A3 across left-rising, parallel beak seams on orange rock. Two more pitches took us to the summit. Two days later, we added a higher-quality and more direct first pitch (5.11).

Takin' 'er by the Tusks (625', 7 pitches, 5.12a R A3) covers all new terrain. To our knowledge, this is the first route through the prominent, steep headwall between Elephant's Eye (5.8 A3) and Sunrise Book. A continuous ascent awaits. While the route might go free, the bolting ban in Sawtooth National Forest means it would involve a lot of scary climbing and almost certainly require headpointing tactics.

— Benj Wollant

Images



Takin' 'er by the Tusks (625', 7 pitches, 5.12a R A3), in blue, on the southeast face of the Elephant's Perch, Sawtooth Mountains, Idaho. The start of the classic Sunrise Book is in red.



Takin' 'er by the Tusks (625', 7 pitches, 5.12a R A3), in blue, on the southeast face of the Elephant's Perch, Sawtooth Mountains, Idaho.



Benj Wollant jugging free-hanging lines up the steep lower pitches of Takin' 'er by the Tusks to reach the top of pitch four.



Benj Wollant finishes the crux sequence of pitch three (5.12a R) on Takin' 'er by the Tusks.



Greg Rickenbacker leads pitch five (A3) on Takin' 'er by the Tusks.



Benj Wollant leading the final easy pitch on Takin' 'er by the Tusks to reach the summit the summit of the Elephant's Perch.

Article Details

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