

the victim. He was evacuated by helicopter at the lake in failing light. (Source: Banff National Park Warden Service)

Analysis

This route is not difficult in good conditions, but involves significant exposure in several places. Use of a rope is recommended, so soloists should be extra careful. (Source: Orvel Miskiw)

FALL ON ROCK, UNROPE

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Grotto Canyon

On the evening of August 8, 1993, Bow Valley Ambulance in Canmore was called about a climbing accident in Grotto Canyon. They notified Kananaskis Central District, who dispatched rangers to the scene, and asked other rangers and Canmore Helicopters to stand by for further notice. Ranger G.H. arrived at the trailhead about 2020, met with Bow Valley Ambulance personnel and members of Exshaw Fire Department, and then proceeded up the trail toward the accident scene. He reached the site about 2040, as Alpine Specialist G.F. was arriving at the trailhead from his home.

The victim, Mike S., was found on a ledge about five meters above ground, conscious and sitting upright, but suffering pain in left wrist, lower left leg, and lower back, after falling some eight meters while climbing alone and unroped. He had been with a group of climbers but wandered off to explore on his own, and was first located by members of that group.

Other rangers and the Alpine Specialist reached the accident scene about 2100, assessed the victim, and then notified Canmore Helicopters that they would not be needed. Mike was lowered to the bottom of Grotto Falls, where he was checked by Canmore Ambulance staff, and then taken down the trail with the help of Exshaw Fire Department and other climbers. At the trailhead, he was loaded into an ambulance for transport to hospital. His injuries were found to be a fractured left wrist and multiple bruises, with unspecified minor trauma of his back and left leg.

Analysis

The subject was in a situation with the potential for serious injury or death, as he fell in a treacherous running waterfall and creek area. (Source: George Field, Kananaskis Country Alpine Specialist)

AVALANCHE

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Mount Temple

On August 9, 1993, two experienced climbers, Matt and Julie Culberson (both 35), started up the Aemmer Couloir on Mount Temple (3545 meters) at 0700, planning to do the East Ridge route in one day. Climbing very quickly, they were three quarters of the way up the couloir, at an elevation of about 2900 meters, when they were hit by a wet snow slide and carried back to the base of the route. Both were seriously injured and unconscious for some time.

Julie Culberson had multiple injuries, including a broken femur, and would be unable to move. Matt had broken ribs and chest injuries. Later that morning, he started down a scree basin toward treeline and a trail leading out to the road. He passed out a number of

times and was able to travel only a short distance. Rain and then snow began. Two days later he was discovered by a party of hikers, still mobile and staggering toward the trees. When Warden Service rescuers reached his wife a short time later, she had already died.

Analysis

1993 had a cold summer, and an unusual amount of snow remained on the peaks in this region. As a result, the couloir the victims had been climbing had a deep narrow trough in it, caused by avalanches running down its length. Temperatures had remained well above freezing during the previous night, and the first rays of morning sun likely started debris falling off the walls of the gully. The survivor recalled that they had felt fairly safe cramponing up the trough because of the early hour. They were in it when the avalanche occurred. When they heard the slide approach, they had confidently expected to stand up to it by setting their tools in the sides of the trough. As it turned out, however, the force of the wet debris stripped them off their stance. Using the runnel to travel in saved time but was risky as its sides are usually steep, making escape difficult.

The climbers had been confident in their ability to complete the route in a day, and as a result they had light packs and no extra survival gear. They had not left word of their plans with anyone or used the registration system offered by Parks Canada. This is a case where it might have made a difference. (Source: Banff National Park Warden Service)

SLIP ON ICE, UNROPE

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Scott Icefield

On August 18, 1993, J.B. and A.G. were out for a day trip on the Scott Glacier. J.B. was walking above A.G. and about 60 meters above the toe of the glacier, when J.B. slipped and fell. The ice was too steep and hard for him to self-arrest, and he slid out of sight below A.G. A.G. descended to look for him, but fell near the base and also slid off the toe, injuring his shoulder in doing so. He located J.B. nearby about five minutes later. J.B. was conscious and walking, but very disoriented, with lacerations and contusions to his face and back, as well as broken teeth.

A third member of the party, J.C., who had stayed in camp at the toe of the glacier, arrived and began first aid on J.B. J.B. was given a thermarest and sleeping bag, and then A.G. walked out to Moab Lake to report the accident to Jasper Warden Service. Wardens evacuated the injured party with a helicopter as darkness approached.

Analysis

The two climbers had adequate experience and equipment, but self-arresting on bare ice is usually impossible. Most climbers do not take into account how difficult it is, and how quickly one accelerates on sloping ice, even at a low angle. Being roped and placing protection along the way is recommended under these conditions. (Source: Jasper National Park Warden Service)

SLIP ON SNOW, UNROPE

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Mount Deltaform

On August 21, 1993, K.V. and R.P. were doing the traverse of the Ten Peaks from west to east. While descending the east ridge of Mount Deltaform (3425 meters) unroped, K.V. slipped on a patch of snow and fell 150 meters down the south face to his death. R.P.