

known, though he had apparently demonstrated some risky behaviour on previous outings as well. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service; Nelson B.C. RCMP Detachment personnel)

AVALANCHE, FALL INTO CREVASSE, POOR POSITION, WEATHER, INADEQUATE PREPARATION

British Columbia, Mount Robson

A party of three (Party One) and a party of two (Party Two) were climbing Mount Robson via the Kain route on July 9. They set up camp in whiteout conditions, knowingly in an icefall area, but uncertain as to their exact location. The campsite was in a heavily crevassed area below seracs. Three climbers over-nighted in a tent while two members of Party One bivied nearby.

At 0610, a falling serac caused a class 3.5 avalanche, which swept the tent and occupants down the slope approximately 100 meters. One of the climbers bivouacking was swept down 40 meters, and the second bivouacker was swept into a crevasse just below the bivi site. He landed on a snow bridge 12 meters down in the crevasse. The remainder of the party conducted a search for the missing climber for 1.5 hours without success, then walked to Berg Lake Ranger Station to report the incident.

Park wardens responded from Jasper to Mount Robson, while Robson park rangers conducted a reconnaissance flight over the area. First party responders landed at the bottom of the avalanche path and began to search the debris; the second party, consisting of wardens and two avalanche search dogs, flew to the top of the path and searched in the vicinity of the campsite. The missing climber was located near the campsite in a crevasse, and a warden was lowered in to recover the body.

Analysis

The party set up camp in white-out conditions and were not aware of their exact location. The camp was established in an area of very high objective hazard. Icefall caused a class 3.5 avalanche which swept over the campsite area. The experience level of the combined groups was intermediate, with poor map reading skills. They did not have transceivers. Consultations before departure with readily available local resources about the placement of camps and their relative dangers would have been helpful. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service)

FALL INTO RIVER

British Columbia, Jasper National Park, North Boundary Trail Hike

D.H. and S.K. (from Germany) were hiking the north boundary trail of Jasper National Park. The summer had been extremely rainy and the rivers were all in flood. On July 12, they had crossed over Snake Indian Pass and were heading down valley to a campsite on the shores of Twintree Creek. The campsite was flooded due to high water levels in the creek. Normally this creek can be crossed with high gumboots, but at this time, the water was very high and fast. A foot bridge, consisting of two stringers, was in place to cross the creek, but water was overlapping the bridge. Deciding to push on to the next campsite, S.K. started to cross the bridge by straddling it, and shuffling across it. Once across, D.H. started across using the same technique. Both women were carrying heavy packs with waist straps done up.

Midway across, D.H. got stuck on a knot on one of the logs, and could not proceed.

With cold water lapping up to her waist, she soon lost strength and let go, falling into the creek. She floated down a short way, and was able to grab onto a sweeper, but again lost her grip, and was carried down stream. Meanwhile, S.K. attempted to help her, but eventually lost sight of her. She combed the shore for two hours, then proceeded to hike out for help. It took her two days to reach Mount Robson Park ranger station, (very good time) where she reported the incident. Park wardens from Jasper were notified at 1700 on July 14, and flew in to search the area for D.H. They were unable to find the body that night, but the following day, the body was located in a log jam about 70 meters downstream of the footbridge.

Analysis

Although not a climbing incident per se, this episode is included here because climbers often have to approach their objectives by crossing streams, and can treat these crossings as minor, rather than serious, obstacles. Although this creek in this incident is usually very benign, flooding from a month of heavy rain caused it to become a wild torrent. Even though it was late in the afternoon, D.H. and S.K. felt obliged to push on to the next campsite, as the upper campsite was flooded. Had they either made do in the wet campsite and tried crossing the bridge in the morning when the water level was lower, or at least undone the waist bands on their packs, this incident may have been avoided. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service)

FALL INTO MOAT, FALLING ROCK, WEATHER

British Columbia, Bugaboo Glacier Provincial Park, Bugaboo Spire

In August, S.A. and B.C. approached the east face of Bugaboo Spire, intending to climb the Left-Hand Herr route. They ascended a snow apron below the face, crossed a bergschrund, and reached a moat, which was the final obstacle before the actual rock climbing. They proceeded to cross the moat to a small ledge on the rock. B.C. stepped across and was moving up to the ledge when S.A. attempted to cross the moat. She stepped on a small snow bridge that was supporting a boulder, and the bridge collapsed, releasing the boulder. It slowly rolled onto her and pushed her some three meters down into the moat. S.A. managed to wriggle out from under the boulder and climb to the surface, but soon collapsed from massive internal injuries, and eventually required CPR. Other climbers in the area quickly responded to assist. The accident was reported to the Park Rangers, and S.A. was transported to Invermere Hospital via helicopter, but was pronounced dead upon arrival.

Analysis

This accident may have been avoided if the snow bridge had not been used; the day was extremely warm and all snow bridges should have been suspect. Warm weather throughout the previous week likely made snow support of all boulders suspect as well. (Source: Bugaboo Glacier Provincial Park Ranger)

FALLING ROCK, WEATHER

British Columbia, Bugaboo Glacier Provincial Park, Bugaboo—Snowpatch Col

A party of three, N.G., J.G., and G.W., was ascending to the Bugaboo-Snowpatch Col using a rope at 0800 on August 4. A boulder slid down the slope above them with almost no warning, glanced off G.W. and struck N.J. squarely.