

Mount Athabasca, when they encountered technical, exposed terrain. One was hesitant about climbing through this section, so the other climber offered to unrope, solo the difficult section, and drop a top rope down from above. While soloing out onto the south slopes, the climber encountered a thin veneer of ice on the rock. With both crampons and an ice ax in the thin ice, the sheet of ice gave way, and the climber fell approximately 100 meters. He sustained serious injuries to his head and both legs. Both spent the night on the mountain. The uninjured climber anchored himself to the mountain with a snow picket, but was afraid to move from his location. The next morning, with two broken legs, the injured climber crawled over the Boundary–North Glacier Col and made his way down the mountain to a telephone to call for help.

A helicopter was brought over from Golden, and two wardens were slung in to the stranded climber. It was dicey terrain, but the rescuers were able to remain on the heli-sling rope, hike up to the stranded climber and hook him on. All three slung off to the staging area.

Analysis

The route was in poor condition, being plastered in snow and verglas. The rock quality on the lower section of this ridge is extremely poor and is generally avoided by most climbers, who prefer to access the ridge higher up. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service)

FALL ON ROCK, WRONG ROUTE, INAPPROPRIATE EQUIPMENT

Alberta, Banff National Park, Castle Mountain

On July 27 a party of two began climbing what they thought was the popular Brewers Buttress route, II, 5.6. Unfortunately, they were one buttress too far to the north. On the first pitch, the leader fell about 20 meters with his belayer stopping him one meter above the ground. His highest piece of protection failed but the next one held him and prevented a ground fall. He sustained hand and arm fractures as well as head trauma. His partner was able to call for help with a cell phone. He was evacuated by heli-sling shortly afterwards.

Analysis

The injured climber was planning on using this multi-pitch rock route as “training ground” for alpine routes. He was wearing plastic boots. Most climbers use rock shoes in this terrain. It is fortunate that the one piece of protection held and that his belayer was able to stop him before he hit the ground. One can only speculate what kind of difficulties they may have encountered higher up in this uncharted terrain. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service)

FALL IN CREVASSE

Alberta, Jasper National Park, Columbia Icefield

At 1840 on August 5, two climbers came off the Columbia Icefield to report that two members of their party of ten were injured and needed helicopter evacuation. All members were Russian Canadian and were planning to travel down the Columbia Glacier icefall from the trench. T.S. (37) was the middle member of a three-person rope team. She lost her balance while crossing a

crevasse and fell in seven meters, injuring her head in the fall. M.S. (34), the last person on the rope, attempted to arrest T.S.'s fall, and was pulled into another crevasse. In the process, M.S. caught his crampon and injured his ankle. The remaining members of the group evacuated the fallen climbers from their respective crevasses and assisted them to a location where a helicopter could land.

Wardens flew to the accident site at the trench with a Bell 407 from Golden. The helicopter was able to land at the site, and the victims were loaded into the helicopter and were transported directly to Emergency Medical Services.

Analysis

The Columbia Glacier is an extremely broken icefall, which is difficult to navigate even under ideal circumstances. Falling into a crevasse is almost inevitable when attempting to travel through an icefall of this nature. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service)

ROCKFALL, POOR POSITION, POOR JUDGMENT

Alberta, Jasper National Park, Mount Edith Cavell

On August 20, two climbers (F 43, M 54) began ascending the North Face route on Mount Edith Cavell. They began at 1500 on a hot day, when rock fall is at its worst. One of the climbers was hit directly on the head by a large rock, knocking her unconscious and causing her to fall approximately 100 meters to the glacier below. The climbers were not roped at the time, but both had helmets on. She was unconscious for about ten minutes. She suffered from amnesia and headaches the rest of the day. The pair bivouacked on the Angel Glacier for the night. The second climber subsequently suffered severe back spasms (a recurring problem) as a result of bivouacking on the cold hard surface, and could not go for help. They spent a second night on the glacier waiting for help to arrive.

The search for the climbers began when their registered check-in time came and went without their reporting in. The decision was made to bring in a helicopter after no evidence of the climbers could be found on the trail or with binoculars. A Bell 407 was brought over from Golden, and the mountain was searched by air. A warden was also dropped at the Verdant Creek/Astoria River trail junction to hike up the West Ridge of Cavell on foot. After an extensive search by air, the overdue climbers were found at their bivouac site low on the Angel Glacier. The helicopter was able to land at their location, and the climbers were evacuated to the staging area.

Analysis

The climbers did not depart the Cavell parking lot until 1000. They found the rock climbing up to the Angel Glacier to be quite tricky and therefore went slowly. They arrived at the base of the North Face route at 1500, and planned to climb the lower part of the route in the late afternoon and to bivouac on the large ledge halfway up the face. The weather was warm, and rock fall at that time of day was extensive. The lower part of this route is subject to a considerable amount of falling rock and ice. The climbers were well prepared and had