

in Tuolumne where you could find out where the best Deadmans climbing is, you were pretty much lost. If you mentioned casually that Cardinal Pinnacle had some of the best crack-and-steep-face climbing anywhere, climbers wouldn't know what you were talking about.

Now that Chockstone Press has published *Rock Climbs of the Sierra East Side*, these superb climbing areas are now accurately described with topos, photos and maps. With Bartlett's extensive knowledge of the Whitney to Rock Creek areas and Allen's familiarity with Deadmans, they have put together an excellent guide to an enormous region.

The guide covers the area from Lone Pine to Lee Vining with no true backcountry routes listed. Every form of climbing is represented from steep, knobby face-climbing at Whitney Portal on superb granite, flawless steep crack-and face-climbing on Cardinal Pinnacle (you must climb here!), steep, hard (5.11 and up) crack-climbing on the rough granite of Little Egypt, to pocket-pulling on the vertical and overhanging welded tuff in the many Deadmans areas. This is a great guide to many superb climbs. Make sure you sample what the East Side has to offer!

ALAN ROBERTS

Desert Rock: A Climber's Guide to the Canyon Country of the American Southwest Desert. Eric Bjørnstad. Chockstone Press, Denver, 1988. 453 pages, black-and-white photographs, topos, maps. \$25.00 (paper).

Those who have climbed in the American desert are not likely to have forgotten its inherent mystery and solitude. And those strange, strange landforms! Pinnacles lean crazily over grazing sheep. Outlandish jam-cracks shoot up through blank expanses of crimson rock. Jagged crack systems completely pierce spires, and a climber deep inside one of these labyrinths sees only austere red angles and a sky as blue as it ever gets.

Climbers have written poetically of the desert for a long time, but until now no one has taken on the enormous task of writing a comprehensive guide. Eric Bjørnstad's weighty book will be welcomed by thousands of climbers. The guide begins a little shakily: the author does not outline the boundaries of his book—and never clarifies the subtitle. Zion, to most people, is surely part of the "the canyon country of the American southwest desert," yet it is not included. Fortunately, a map (without a scale!) tells what the text does not: this is basically a climbing guide to the Four Corners region.

Offsetting this irresolute beginning is an excellent introduction that tells prospective climbers everything they need to know. The geology section is especially thorough, and never again will desert climbers wonder what kind of rock they're on. The overview of the area's climbing history is fascinating and includes lyrical recollections by noted desert climbers. A section entitled "Climbing in the Desert" constantly stresses the need to preserve the fragile environment.

The bulk of the book, naturally, covers the numerous developed climbing

districts. A great surge of desert rock climbing has taken place in the past fifteen years. Colorado National Monument, the northernmost area covered, now contains dozens of alluring routes on its spires and walls, and the same is true of the Fisher Towers. In Arches National Park, where climbing was slow to develop, more than a hundred routes have been established, including many on the arches themselves. Similarly, routes abound in Canyonlands National Park and at Ship Rock. It was clearly time for a guide.

Bjørnstad has done a remarkable job compiling this vast body of information and presenting it in a satisfactory fashion. How accurate are the route descriptions? My impression is that they are quite adequate. Bjørnstad describes in great detail how to find the formations—frequently not obvious—and points the way to the first pitch. You're often on your own after that, which is as it should be. The author describes the descents very thoroughly, and I, for one, applaud this and hope it encourages other guidebook writers to pay more attention to this important aspect of the route.

Desert Rock has many minor flaws. For example, Bjørnstad's descriptions sometimes fail to inform. The account of one route (a variation) reads, *in toto*, after the first ascenders are named: "They rappeled [sic] the route to the second belay station, then to the ground." Informative, isn't it? In the same vein, Bjørnstad's prose is often muddled. For instance, a non sequitur: "With no water anywhere near Ship Rock, the region acquires a Sahara-like aridness during the summer months." And a contradiction: ". . . the route was completely cleaned, leaving few anchors." And an absurdity: a climber is "seemingly ubiquitous."

One wonders when climbers—and publishers—will learn that routinely using "bivouaced," "prussik," and "gulley" displays a certain ignorance. I would estimate that close to a thousand mistakes—spelling, punctuation, and factual—mar *Desert Rock*. It perhaps doesn't matter that Belmore Browne's, David Muench's, and Eleanor Bartlett's names are misspelled, and when Albert Ellingwood visits "Whales" we have to smile. But are we to trust Bjørnstad when he says "go right 45 feet"?

It is clear that the author relishes the history of the area, and he devotes about half of his main text to this intriguing subject. Curiously, though, Bjørnstad the historian seems unable to transcribe quotes correctly: in checking about ten against the originals I found that only two had been copied correctly. A long quote on page 384, for instance, has six errors, making master wordsmith Chuck Pratt look less than literate.

Bjørnstad occasionally confuses trivia with history, as when he lists eleven people who once set off fireworks atop Castleton Tower. And he occasionally errs: Agathla was climbed free long before 1983, and only one bolt was used on its first ascent, not forty. The first woman to climb Ship Rock was Jean Aschbacher in 1955, not Gale Weeding (a man) in 1952. Landscape Arch was soloed several years earlier than the listed date of 1973. Mesa Verde was discovered many decades before 1932.

All this aside, the immortal desert adventures of Ormes, Powell, Kor, Pratt, Beckey, Carter, Forrest, and dozens of others are brought to life and put into one

place for the first time—and this is one of the joys of *Desert Rock*.

Anyone contemplating a trip to the Four Corners region should own this guidebook: there are routes for everyone. Now that some of the mystery has been taken out of desert climbing, the hordes will arrive from the hinterlands; let us pray they will treat the frail wilderness in a kind and gentle fashion.

STEVE ROPER

Himalayan Guides. Jan Kielkowski. (Potsdamer Strasse 45, D-4000, Düsseldorf, Federal Republic of Germany.) These volumes vary in length from 45 to 85 pages and are in paper. 15 German Marks each.

This remarkable set of studies of various Himalayan massifs is of the greatest value to the climber planning an expedition, to the mountain historian or to the armchair mountaineer. Jan Kielkowski, a Pole living in Germany, has done an amazing amount of research on many of the important and most-visited Himalayan groups. Although the volumes differ slightly from one another, they generally contain information not only on the main peak, but on every mountain in the massif. There are maps with routes indicated, detailed drawings of faces with indentifications of peaks, notable points and routes, route descriptions, suggestions of what remains yet to be climbed and much more. Most of the volumes are in German, but there are English translations in some of them. (Although three Kangchenjunga volumes are in Polish, even there the maps, drawings and lists are very helpful.)

This is an ongoing study. To date, the following have appeared: Mount Everest, Volumes 1, 2 and 3; Cho Oyu, Volumes 1 and 2; Pumori–Taboche, Volumes 1 and 2; Makalu, Volumes 1 and 2; Kangchenjunga, Volumes 1, 2 and 3 (in Polish).

This reviewer has found them to be extremely useful. They are of great accuracy. No one organizing an expedition to these massifs (or to regions where future volumes will appear) should fail to consult them.

ADAMS CARTER

Dolomites—Selected Climbs. Ron James. The Alpine Club, London, 1988. (Distributed by Cordee, 3 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7HD, England.) 60 pages, black-and-white photographs. \$22.50 (post paid).

Bravissimo to the Alpine Club for being midwife to this fine guide to the Dolomites. For many years, English, but not Italian- or German-speaking climbers, have had to make do with J. Brailsford's two-volume *Dolomites East and West*, also published by the Alpine Club, lately out of print. Many is the climber I've met who would like to meet Brailsford up a dark alley with an ice axe aimed at his heart. Sitting around huts wailing about the books' inaccuracies of line drawings and descriptions has been an inevitable part of the Dolomite experience, as have feelings of envy for those who can read the *refugio's* encyclopedic guides in Italian and German.