

FALL ON SCREE SLOPE, INEXPERIENCE**Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Tower of Babel**

On June 8, 1985, three scramblers had ascended the Tower of Babel at Moraine Lake by the trail up the back side. They decided to return by the normal descent route, the scree gully down the front. The least experienced member of the group got carried away with enthusiasm and started running down the slope. This resulted in a nasty tumbling fall which caused a depressed skull fracture, a broken jaw, and a punctured liver. He was evacuated by helicopter. (Source: Warden Service, Banff National Park)

Analysis

Scree slopes are inviting, and often a quick way down, but one should be aware of the hazards. Thinly covered hard spots and boulders often lie just under the scree surface. (Source: Warden Service, Banff National Park)

STRANDED, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT**Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Mount Louis**

On July 11, 1985, two climbers departed early on the normal route. Usual ascent speed was maintained until the climbers moved onto the steeper south face where difficulties increase. From here they moved very slowly, reaching the "panic plateau" at 2230. They bivouacked here and began rappelling down on July 12, since they did not feel they could complete the climb and access the normal descent route on the west side. One pitch above the traverse to easier terrain, they ran out of rappel equipment. They were eventually brought off the mountain by heli-sling and returned to Banff. (Source: Banff Park Warden Service)

Analysis

In this case a more experience climber was guiding a novice, and it turned out that he did not have the resources to get him up or down the mountain properly. They should have tried an easier climb. (Source: Banff Park Warden Service)

FALL ON ROCK, DESCENDING UNROPED**Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Mount Ishbel**

On July 13, 1985, two climbers were descending moderate slopes on the northeast face of Mt. Ishbel. The terrain consists of scree slopes broken by short cliffs and slabs. The climbers were unroped, and the more experienced climber led the way. On a short steep section, the other man lost his balance and pitched over backwards. The leader was unable to grab him, and he continued to tumble a further 100 meters before stopping on a scree ledge. He suffered severe injuries, including a broken pelvis and extensive loss of blood. The other man went for help, reaching the highway in one and a half hours.

Because of the serious injuries, the Warden Service asked a doctor to meet them en route to the rescue. The victim, conscious throughout, was slung out by helicopter and scoop stretcher. (Source: T. Auger, Banff Park Warden Service)

Analysis

The leader decided against the use of rope despite the fact that the victim was apprehensive. The terrain was suited for short-rope travel, a technique that can prevent this type of accident. The party had adequate gear, including helmets. (Source: T. Auger, Banff Park Warden Service)