

he was forced to traverse left across a wide snow bowl at the head of the main gully system. Apparently, to avoid the need to stop and get the crampons and ice ax out of his pack, he tried to follow a narrow, down-sloping ledge of dry rock. When he slipped and fell off, he landed on the hard snow below. Without his ice ax he was unable to self-arrest. He fell about 300 meters down the main gully, then slipped into a small moat and was covered by snow that had dislodged during his fall. He died of multiple trauma.

P.O. came to western Canada to climb. He had trained in the east and had obtained the proper equipment. The late spring conditions were likely frustrating to him, as they were to many. The south face of Cascade Mountain is one of the closest mountain climbs to downtown Banff. It is not the usual route to the top, but the angle is mostly moderate, so when P.O. found the step-kicking straightforward, his reconnaissance must have turned into an irresistible urge to bag his first Rockies summit. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service)

FALL ON ROCK, CARABINER FAILURE—PROBABLY CROSS-LOADED Alberta, Banff National Park, Back of the Lake

On July 29, A.L. was attempting to redpoint “Howard the Duck”, a 5.11a sport rock climb at the Lake Louise crags. He had clipped the first two bolts and placed a quick-draw on the third just below the crux. He felt unable to clip his rope into the third quick-draw and began to down-climb to minimize the distance he might fall. When his weight came onto the second quick-draw following his fall, the carabiner clipped into the bolt hanger failed. A.L. fell to the ground. Unfortunately, there was a log where he landed and he was impaled in the back by a branch of about ten centimeters thick and 15 centimeters long. The accident was reported almost immediately to Warden Service dispatch by cell phone. A.L. was evacuated by helicopter to the Banff Hospital by Warden Service rescue crews.

Analysis

It is speculated that the carabiner clipped to the bolt hanger flipped and became cross-loaded while A.L. was working on the difficult, overhanging moves. The carabiner was still in one piece with the gate attached at the hinge but the other end was blown open and had come off the hanger.

The victim was extremely lucky that the branch did not penetrate any vital organs. It entered his back behind his heart and became lodged between his shoulder blade and ribcage. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service)

HANDHOLD CAME OFF—FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION (BOLT) PULLED OUT Alberta, Lady MacDonald, Stoneworks Crag

On August 4, S. (20) was climbing a 5.12a sport route at a crag near Canmore. He clipped three bolts and moved some distance above the third bolt when a hold pulled off the rock and he fell. The top bolt ripped out, causing him to fall six meters to the ground. He shattered the bones in one foot and fractured the other, requiring eight hours of surgery. He was heli-slung to the Canmore Hospital. (Source: Natural Resources Service, Kananaskis Country)

Analysis

S. said that the bolt looked good when he clipped it, and suspects that the rock surrounding the bolt may have failed. Climbers should be cognizant of the fact that poor rock or poorly placed or old bolts can be prone to pulling out or breaking. However, considering the number of bolts that are clipped every year by sport climbers in North America, this type of incident is relatively rare. (Source: Nancy Hansen)

FALLING ROCK-DISLODGED, FALL ON SNOW, NO BELAY OR PROTECTION Alberta, Banff National Park, Mount Lefroy

On August 18, four climbers were ascending the 45-degree snow-and-ice route on Mount Lefroy. They were traveling as two independent rope teams, moving together with short lengths of rope between the climbers. At 3400 meters, the route narrows into a gully bordered by rock. One of the lead climbers dislodged a rock which struck the lower climber, causing both members of the team to lose their balance and fall about 300 meters down the route. The other two climbers climbed down to assess and stabilize them. One climber descended to the Abbot Pass Hut to use the emergency phone. Upon discovering that the phone was not working, he began heading further down the mountain for help when he ran into another climber with a cell phone. Both climbers were evacuated via heli-sling by Warden Service rescue crews. They had sustained multiple fractures, bruising, and puncture wounds from crampons.

Analysis

It is common practice for climbers to travel together with a short length of rope between them on straightforward terrain. Part of the challenge and risk in mountaineering includes assessing when the terrain and conditions dictate setting up anchors and pitching out the route. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service)

FALLING ROCK

Alberta, Banff National Park, Mount Little

On August 29, a party of four was ascending the normal route on Mount Little during an Association of Canadian Mountain Guides Assistant Alpine Guide exam. Two candidates were roped together and a third was roped to the examiner. As they were walking along the base of the ridge a large rock fell from the ridge crest about ten meters above them and struck the examiner on the head. The other climbers attempted resuscitation, but it appeared that the victim had died instantly. They attempted to call Park Dispatch by radio, but the radio was not functioning. Two of the climbers descended to Moraine Lake to report the accident. One stayed with the victim and continued resuscitation attempts. He had a cell phone with which he was eventually able to get a connection through to Warden Service dispatch. At this point, it was snowing heavily and the rescue helicopter was only able to land on the toe of the upper glacier. Warden Service rescue crews climbed to the scene and confirmed the fatality. The weather deteriorated further and the helicopter was unable to fly