

This was a very unfortunate discovery for all of those involved. We are pleased to have left Mr. Cole's body in a location of his choosing, and that in the end one of his last requests, to remain on the slopes of Mount McKinley, was granted.)

FALL ON ROCK—ATTACKED BY BEES

Arizona, Camelback Mountain, Hart Route

Dear Climbing Community: My name is Jeff, and I am the climber who survived this incident. I want to try to clear up what happened to let all the climbers in the area know what to be wary of and where. I have been climbing for over ten years, but I live in Michigan, which is devoid of outdoor areas, and only get outdoors about once a year. This was Keith's first time climbing outside. That is why we were doing an easy route, listed at 5.2 in the Phoenix area *Climbers Guide*.

We had reached the belay at the top of the third pitch and were having a great time when the bees hit, just a few at first, and then suddenly they swarmed us. As we were trying to decide to go up or down, I looked up and saw what I believe to be the nest about ten feet above us and to the left. Seeing them above us, I decided we were best to go down. By this time they were hitting us very hard and it became difficult to see or even breathe, as they would fly into my mouth every time I opened it to take a breath. All this was compounded by the fact that I AM allergic to bees; however, as stated in other entries some people are only allergic to certain varieties of bees, and I am one of those people. Being from Michigan and having no prior exposure to the bees of the area, let alone the Africanized bees, I feared for my life and knew we had to get down as fast as possible.

At the time we were in the middle of changing over gear to do the last pitch and had the anchor in and were clipped to it but the rope was in a pile to be back-fed for the next pitch. I sent Keith down to the last ledge as I lowered him hand over hand to it. When he has safely reached it I slapped the rope into the anchor, thinking it would at least be a failsafe as we descended, as I did not feel I had time or the ability to set up a rappel with the bees now stinging my eyes. We down-climbed to about halfway between the first and second pitch when we ran out of rope, either from being at the end or from the rope tangling as we descended. I do not know. At this point we were only twenty feet above the belay ledge and up only seventy feet or so. Feeling we were in serious danger from the bees and on easy climbing, I told Keith that we would have to untie and down-climb the rest of the way and he agreed. We untied and I told Keith to go and I would be right behind him. He only made it about ten feet before he fell. He hit the belay ledge and rolled/bounced off and disappeared out of my sight.

I down-climbed the rest of the way and began blindly running around trying to get the bees off and find Keith at the same time. I never found

him because shortly after I hit the ground, witnesses grabbed me and drug me up the hill toward the monk to escape the bees. I pointed as best I could in the direction I thought Keith lay. Half the group ran that way, the other half got me out of the area.

Analysis

No prior incident of swarm attack has been reported previously on this route, but there have been reports of bees attacking climbers on Camelback Mountain, one of which, in 2001, resulted in a fall causing broken vertebrae. That hive has since been destroyed.

Note that a prescription epi-pen is also a good item to put in one's first aid kit, whether you are allergic to bees or not. (Some people don't know if they are or not because they have never been stung.) These are available from most pharmacies and a family doctor can prescribe them.

Experts have suggested assuming that all bees in Arizona are "Africanized"—aggressive and will attack in a swarm and potentially pursue. Bees' life-cycle makes them particularly aggressive during early spring when the air temperature increases and desert flowers begin to bloom. In particular, this is when the queen may be found outside of the hive. If this is the case the workers will be particularly aggressive in their defense of the queen. All stinging insects should be ignored and not swatted because in some species, injury to one insect causes a pheromone to be released that attracts the others and causes them to attack. Common advice is to let the insects land on you, and even sting you, rather than swat or kill them and provoke a swarm attack. This of course is easier said than done, and particularly so for someone with allergies.

Regarding the team's escape once the bee attack had begun, the rope set up to rappel was doubled over, in a classic setup to pull down. Had the rope been tied only at one end, it should have reached all the way to the ground if not tangled. In addition, unbeknownst to the climbers, there is a lesser known gully directly below the route they were climbing which would have allowed them a more direct escape than trying to rappel/climb back down the original route itself. Both these facts would have been difficult to assimilate during the attack.

Finally, the fall victim was *not* wearing a helmet and suffered head injuries that may have been reduced if he had been. Given the height of the fall, however, the effect this had on the final result is unclear. (Source: From a letter from Jeff, with some edits, and from a report compiled by Bob Zimmering, Rescue Technician I, Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, part of Central Arizona Mountain Rescue Association)

RAPPEL FAILURE—ACCIDENTAL MANUAL DISENGAGEMENT OF ASCENT DEVICE, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT, CLIMBING ALONE, NO HARD HAT

Arizona, Phoenix, Saguaro

On April 29, I (Jeff Gertsch, 26) was out in the middle of the desert at my climbing spot alone, ascending a fixed rope for the purpose of bolting a sport climbing route