

The Arizona Mountaineer



The Arizona Mountaineering Club

Spring 2019

Our Quarterly Newsletter

Well the weather over the last couple of weeks has been moody, to say the least, from all the rain in February, to now 90+ degree temps in early April. I hope everyone is getting out and enjoying nature before the real heat comes out to play! Please enjoy this edition which announces a new school for our club starting in May! As always, you articles are needed in order to make this newsletter possible, please submit your trip reports and any mountaineering related articles to

newsletter@arizonamountaineeringclub.net for publication.

*"Our **Mission** is to provide educational opportunities, climbing experiences, advocacy to protect our climbing resources, and stewardship of the Arizona Outdoors by promoting volunteerism and community engagement."*



Anna Dircks, Newsletter Editor

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AMC Canyoneering School

By Tom Seeley, Arizona Rock & Canyon Adventures

The AMC will be adding Canyoneering to the list of schools offered. After much work, the AMC held a dry run with some select members to fine tune the content and agenda in December 2018. The first official class will be held in late May 2019. The format will be similar to both Anchors and Lead School schedules with two evening sessions on Tuesday and Thursday night followed by an overnight weekend in Sedona. The course is being taught by AMC member Tom Seeley who is a certified ACA Professional Canyon Guide and an AMGA SP Rock Instructor.

This course is perfect for those who have never been canyoneering, along with those wanting to refresh their understanding of the many core concepts. The basics are a critical starting point for every responsible individual entering the canyons. Throughout the course you will learn to identify and understand core concepts of trip planning, equipment, rappelling, rigging, canyon movement, overall general safety and much more. The goal of this course is to have you leave understanding the core concepts of canyoneering, so you can become a contributing team member while in a canyon with competent leaders and mentors.

AMC Outdoor Rock Climbing School and AMC Anchors School or equivalent experience required to attend. This includes solid basic rock climbing, belaying, and rappelling skills, all basic climbing knots and the ability to build solid anchors. You must be a current Arizona Mountaineering Club member in good standing. Please see more information on the AMC's website.



Seven ways to improve as a new lead climber

By: Chris Adams

So, you've finished lead class. You've cobbled together your rack with that shiny set of nuts, the cams you borrowed from your buddy, and the three re-slung (You're pretty sure they'll hold) hexes you just scored off craigslist. You've got a brand new rope and a partner who's crazy enough to follow you.

Together you and your partner stand at the base of that three pitch, "old school" 5.7 traditional climb. The slab looms above you with the first bolt maybe 20 feet off the deck. Oh man! That bolt looks way higher than when you first climbed this route on top rope. The butterflies in your stomach, which at first were fluttering with the excitement of a new adventure, are now turning to angry hornets that fervently buzz with anticipation.

You turn to your partner to go over your safety systems.

Harness buckles doubled? Check!

Figure eight follow through? Good to go!

Got enough gear? Yup! (And in the beginning it's always either not enough... or way too much. But that's a different article)

On Belay? Belay on!

You place your foot on that first hold, take a breath, and go.

Progressing into the world of lead climbing is both exhilarating and terrifying at the same time. Without further ado I present seven ideas, in no particular order, to help the new leader settle in and become a confident beginning lead rock climber.

Volume, volume, volume!

I can't stress this principle enough. Focus on gaining mileage before intensity. Choose a number (whether pitches, linear feet, or days out) and commit to climbing that number as your primary goal. And for this goal think long term. I'm talking at least six months but more realistically a year or more. Vary the

rock type and climbing movement as much as possible to challenge your ability to adapt to situations. Try to lead as much as possible.

Leading is a conglomeration of many related skills. Skills take repetition and time to develop and can only be developed through hands on practice. By committing to developing your art of leading you're putting the time in to build your skill. You'll be exposed to new and novel situations and through that exposure see what works and what doesn't. I guarantee that after, say 200 leads, you'll be a much more confident leader.



Photo Credit: Chris Adams

While you should always critically assess the situation, you want your skills to be as automatic as possible. The more automatic a skill, the less you have to devote attention to performing that skill. A good example is the common practice of hanging a carabiner from your rear-view mirror and practicing clipping a while you're stopped at a stoplight. you're practice the skill of clipping. When it comes time to actually clip a draw on lead you don't have to devote as much brain space to how you hold the rope or which way you clip the rope through the gate. You've put in the reps and developed the skill to the point of automaticity. This is what you need to do with leading.

2. Take a step back in difficulty and focus on developing your leading skills

I think we'd all agree that moving over rock is a skill unto itself. Climbing is mentally, emotionally, and physically challenging. Leading encompasses a whole new world of skills, and decisions to add to your already taxed attention.



Photo Credit:: Aaron Vix

In the beginning don't be afraid to back off the grade. In fact, dedicate time to practicing the art of leading in a lower stress environment on terrain that is easy to moderate for you. Choose climbs that allow you to focus more on the art of leading and less on climbing. Near limit climbing, while also developing a lead practice, is like try-

ing to learn to play chess while you're also riding a bike on a crowded street. You're probably not going to do your best work.

How will you know when you're ready for tougher leads? I'm not really sure. But I think that decision comes somewhat intuitively. Perhaps, when lead skills begin to become automatic you'll be ready to test your limits. Here's a few questions that might help you determine your readiness.

Can you size up a crack and place gear on the first shot without having to try several cams or nuts in several placements? Note: everyone misses the first placement sometimes. The question is can you get it right on the first try MOST of the time?

Do you feel confident with your gear placements? Would you climb above that last piece of gear?

Do you have a system for organizing your gear, on your harness, that allows you to focus on the climb without having to think about where everything is at?

Can you clip a quick draw and place your rope without having to think about how to do it?

Can you quickly build a traditional anchor without having to hunt for placements or change your anchor several times?

Can you quickly spot your next rest and gear placement?

Can you look at a route and get an idea of what kind of protection you'll need before climbing?

Can you clip a bolt or place gear at head to chest level, with a good stance instead of just going for the clip as soon as you are within reach of the bolt?



Photo Credit:: Aaron Vix

3. Repeat climbs often

I think that climbing novelty often takes precedence over the known. With good reason. New terrain and new experiences are part of the thrill of climbing. We want to try that route that everyone is talking about. We want to tick off the classics. Repeat the same old route? No way. That's boring. But I think there's great value in repeating the old standbys.

As you become familiar with a route, your mind is further freed up to focus on other aspects of climbing. Repeating climbs is a great way to turn climb-

ing into practice. Even into a meditation. Don't be afraid to apply different lead techniques to a practiced route. Protect it in different ways and locations. Try using all passive protection. Try using only cams. Try using different rope management strategies. Of course, keep safety as the first priority, but don't be afraid to turn your climbing into play. I've found that there's always something to learn on every climb regardless of the difficulty. I challenge you to tease out the lesson in the moment. Use mindfulness to look for the new experience on the old path.

4. Be patient

I would wager that everyone reading this is a recreational climber. If you're more than recreational you're probably way beyond the scope of this article to begin with. I'd define "recreational" as climbing for the enjoyment of the sport and fitting it into your life when you have time to do so. Careers, family obligations, other commitments, and other hobbies will interfere with your climbing practice. That's understandably okay.

Remember to go easy on yourself. Building a skill takes repetition and repetition, by nature, takes time. The more time you have to dedicate to your skill, the quicker you'll improve. If you have obligations which compete with your climbing be okay with being where you are currently. Practice being content with your personal pace and enjoy the experience. Again, that's why we're doing what we do. Because we enjoy it.

5. Practice a small set of skills then add complexity after you master them.



Photo Credit: Chris Adams

This concept parallels climbing at an easier grade to build skill practice. Focusing on one set of interconnected skills at a time is much easier than trying to juggle several. Choose a few usefully broad skills and work those until you know them in and out. Of course, in climbing, adaptability is a virtue. Having a larger skill set will help you adapt to evolving situations. But a large breadth of poorly learned skills is more dangerous than a smaller set of well-practiced techniques. Start with the basics and become intimate with those first.

For example, there are many ways to set up an anchor when bringing a follow up behind you. Which technique works best for any given situation is dependent on the conditions of that situation. Instead of trying to learn as many techniques as possible focus on two to three that can cover many scenarios. The pre-equalized anchor is going to work in most scenarios you encounter. Practice that pre-equalized anchor till you know its strengths and limitations and can set it up without having to think it out. Once you're comfortable with that one, change it up and learn something new. By learning one method well you'll have built experience. You can then apply, compare, and contrast new methods which will give you a larger skill vocabulary and improve your ability to be creative and adapt to the situation at hand.

6. Climb and practice mindfully. Journal your experience.

After each route, pitch, or climbing day take a moment to ask yourself some questions. Such as

What went well? What didn't?
 What did you feel confident with?
 How was your gear placement? What did you use?
 How were your stances? Restful? Strenuous?
 Did the rope run well or was there rope drag?
 How long did it take you to set up the belay or transfer your partner from follow to lead?



Photo Credit: Chris Adams

Reflecting on the route will help you to determine what you need to practice to improve. I'd suggest keeping a climbing journal. Develop a journaling format that asks and answers key questions that you identify as important to improve your climbing. I personally keep a digital journal using the journaling app "day one". I like it because it allows me to add pictures, weather, date, location and time (geotagged through the pics) and specific searchable tags to each journal entry. I often use it later to look up notes on specific climbs and can do so on the fly because the app backs up to the cloud.

Once you identify a specific skill that you can improve on, go out for a day and dedicate that day to practicing that specific skill. Make it your focus then repeat the process of post-session assessment.

7. Hang on your gear

Whaaaaat? Yes! Let me say that again.

Hang... on... your... gear!

Hanging on your gear is an extremely useful tool. First, let's all agree that the sharp end, especially in the beginning, is stressful. Putting in a piece or two and taking a load off, literally, can be a welcome respite when your mind has you gripped. If you're feeling too stressed to make a confident move then hang on your gear, take a few deep breaths, shake out those fore-arms, and develop a plan for the next section ahead of you.



Hanging on gear also helps you to learn to trust your placements. You put a piece in, call “take” to your belayer, and you can watch tentatively as you settle your weight onto your gear. With more time and more hangs comes better confidence in your ability to assess the rock face and place good protection.

Photo Credit: Tina Leaman

What if hanging on a piece blows the onsight? Climbing is a journey about progress not perfection. Lead your pitch and hang. Next time come back and go for a clean send. If you do so, you can confidently say you've taken a step forward. That's progress and progress is satisfying!

Finally, remember that this is your journey. Set goals that are important to you and then follow those goals remaining mindful of the process. There's no right or wrong way to get to the top as long as you're honest about what you're doing and your making progress along the way. Now grab that hold above you and take that first step!

HAMMER HOODOO CANYON, AZ

By Tom Seeley, Arizona Rock & Canyon Adventures

Location: Sedona, Arizona

Rating: 3B-II

Longest Rappel: 150'

Hammer Hoodoo Canyon is a great trip through the Secret Mountain Wilderness area down to the west fork of Oak Creek offering spectacular views along the way. With the canyon being dry and no noticeable large pools, Hammer Hoodoo can most likely be ran throughout the year as long as the road in is not closed off due to snow. The canyon in general makes for a nice short day that is well suited to canyoneers of most levels who have a good understanding of evaluating and rigging natural anchors. Our group ran the canyon by setting up a shuttle, leaving one vehicle at the call of the canyon parking area and using a second to haul the group up top. The dirt road to the top of the canyon is variable in condition throughout the year and in my experience high clearance vehicles are most likely your best bet to ensuring a good day.

Rain and traffic can quickly turn the area into a rutted, sticky mess. From the upper vehicle parking spot, entry is straight forward as you work your way downhill towards the first rappel. As the brush and trees give way, you are offered an amazing view of the surrounding area and canyon walls that you are able to enjoy throughout the entire trip. Arriving at the first rappel, you will see on canyon left the large Hammer Hoodoo in which the canyon was named towering into the sky. From the Hammer Hoodoo rappel down to the creek you will encounter roughly 9-11 rappels depending on group preference, all off natural anchors. It is advisable to ensure you see the large Hammer Hoodoo prior to descending as the surrounding canyons have much larger mandatory drops up to 300' that could leave you stranded if accidentally entered by mistake. Our group completed this as an exploratory and quickly got short on webbing so you may find two or three drops without anchors, please rig them (if memory serves, these anchors will be around trees).

The first rappel was completed as a multi-tier drop of about 80' in total to a nice noticeable landing area below. Rigging the first drop with the rappel ring extended over the edge made our start somewhat challenging, but we did not want to risk a stuck rope. The second drop is just after the first and was rigged around a tree and extended out over the face of a large boulder that made for a good place to start as you work a 120' drop down a crack section of rock. Only a few steps away, you will come across a quick and easy drop that lands you in a very short hallway and keeps you moving down canyon.

The next few rappels were completed from small trees on the edge of the drops, one of which had a rather loose approach and could knock rocks/dirt forward on anyone on rope or in the landing zone. Soon you will find yourself on top of a 150' rappel that is nice and easy offering some shelves in a few sections along the way down that make for a good place to stop and snap a few pics or manage any rope that didn't quite make it to the base. Another down-climb/rappel later and you will start to run into the red layer of the canyon and soon find yourself at the top of the last 135' rappel. This drop had a nice sized tree located on the edge to rig up and is a low key sloped rappel that provides one more great place to take in an elevated view of the canyon below.

Shortly after getting off rope you scramble down a somewhat loose section and head towards oak creek where you will notice a large downed tree trunk to walk across that helps to keep out of the brush. Very quickly you will find yourself standing creek side on the popular west fork trail. From here, its a nice stroll down oak creek back to the call of the canyon to retrieve some vehicles and call it a day.

President's Corner: Annual Elections

By John Furniss

Taking a lesson from last year, I thought it best to get the results of our annual election in print sooner rather than later. The annual AMC election for officers and directors was held at the January 23rd Member's Meeting. But first, some background.

The Arizona Mountaineering Club was founded as a non-profit corporation under the laws of Arizona in 1964. The AMC is considered a 501(c)(7) tax exempt entity under the category described as "social clubs organized for pleasure, recreation, and other non-profitable purposes." The club's mission statement appears frequently on the front page of this newsletter. The by-laws lay the foundation for the club's governance and operations and defines a Board of Directors made up of officers and directors to lead the club. The officers are the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer, each elected annually, and four directors elected for one- or two-year terms. The immediate past-President may also serve a director for one year and, if not available, one additional board member shall be elected for a period of one year.

The results of this year's election and those returning appear below:
President—John Furniss

Vice President—Andrea Galyean

Secretary — Jerry Smit

Treasurer— Kristin Russel

Director - Jen Boekenooogen

Director – Paul Fasshauer

Director – Stephanie Furniss

Director – Hélène Piet

Director – Bill Fallon (continuing)

You can put a face with each of the names above as well as see photos of others in key roles across the club by checking out the pages under the Organization tab on the AMC website: <http://arizonamountaineeringclub.net/about/amc-leadership-organization/>

I want to thank Deborah Roether, David A Sampson, Stan Pak and John Hulson for their service to the AMC in various roles on the board the past several years or more. Deborah will continue as Programs Chair responsible for the outstanding member meeting speaker series and other events, David will continue as the instructor for the Lead Climbing School and as an Outing Leader and Stan Pak will continue as Technology Chair. There are plenty of opportunities to support the club, both short-term and long-term. Please contact any member of the board to discuss how best to get involved. Our general email address is: contact@arizonamountaineeringclub.net.

Warm Regards,

Furniss

AMC 2019 Upcoming Events

By Deborah Roether

*****IMPORTANT DATE CHANGE FOR AMC MEMBER MEETINGS:** Member meetings for the 2019 calendar are being moved from Mondays to the 4th WEDNESDAY, 7-9 p.m. of every month. Check out the AMC website or the AMC Meetup calendar for details. All AMC member meetings are open to the public. Bring your family, friends, neighbors, co-workers. Come on out!

Wednesday, February 28th -They're massive. Magical. Magnificent. AMC member, Aaron Vix, shared his experiences as he crosses a couple of Northwest mountains off his bucket list.

Wednesday, March 27th - It can be life-changing. It can be exhilarating. It can be tough. It can be dangerous. Whether or not you reach the summit- it's not guaranteed- the experience is unforgettable! Thank you Dana John Wentzel for his presentation on climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro

Wednesday, April 24th- Marcus Garcia might be the best climber you've never heard of." — Rock and Ice Magazine, issue 238. Marcus, 42 years old from Durango, Colorado, is an all-around climber, and has established over 200+ new routes, including everything from traditional, alpine, sport, and mixed climbing to big walls and desert towers. However, his biggest accomplishment and legacy is not how hard he can push himself, but what he passes on to the next generation of climbers as a coach and mentor. As lead coach for youth Team USA Ice Climbing, Marcus is helping develop the next generation of Olympic Caliber athletes.

Wednesday, May 22nd - Sirena Rana Dufault has logged thousands of miles hiking, backpacking, rafting and canyoneering in the Southwest. She is an expert on the Arizona National Scenic Trail and has been involved with the building, promotion and maintenance of the trail for over a decade. Trails Inspire, her consulting company, promotes the outdoors via photography, freelance writing, public speaking, and trail design. Her upcoming book, "Day Hikes on the Arizona National Scenic Trail" will be released in Spring 2020 by Wilderness Press. Sirena is based in Tucson, Arizona but considers the Grand Canyon her second home.

Wednesday, June 26th- AMC member Kate Radosevic- Kate and fellow PCT thru hiker Dallin will share about their adventure and journey on completing the PCT. Yep, the whole shabang!!! Life on the Pacific Crest Trail is unpredictable at its core. When you go every day unsure of where you'll sleep that night, you must assume a strong level of adaptability and flexibility for surprises, good and bad. So adaptability is key. Sometimes it's about physically and mentally adapting to walking almost a marathon every single day and learning to walk through the pain. It's not about being ready for everything, it's about being ready for anything.

For any questions or suggestions regarding the AMC programs please contact Deborah Roether, Program Chair - deborahroether@gmail.com.