

# Scab Creek Buttress Boulder, Wyoming

A FREE MINI-GUIDE FROM



by

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All Uncredited Photos by Wesley Gooch

Special Thanks To

Ben Franklin (photos, editing), Reid Morth (photos), & Josh Hattan (editing)

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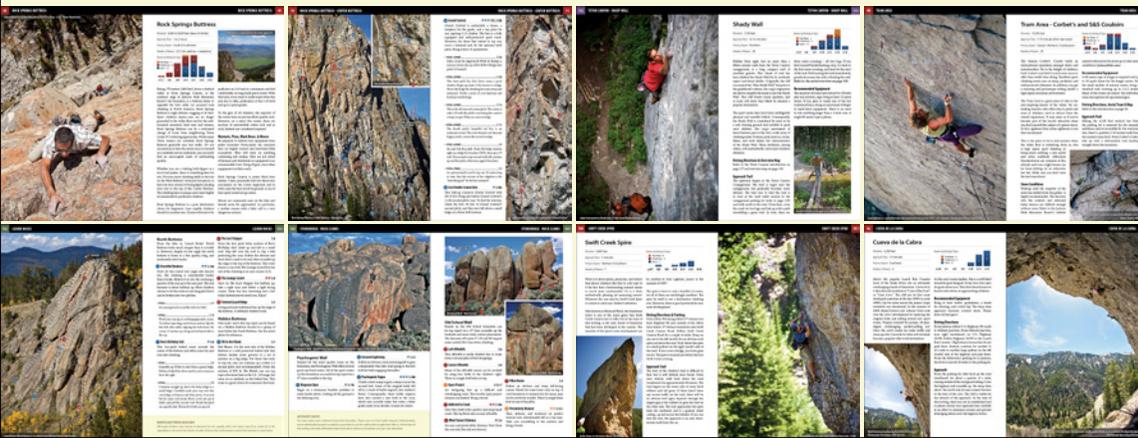
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Wesley Gooch pluggin' gear on the classic *El Dorado*—5.9 (p. 7). Photo: Reid Morth.

## Scab Creek Buttress

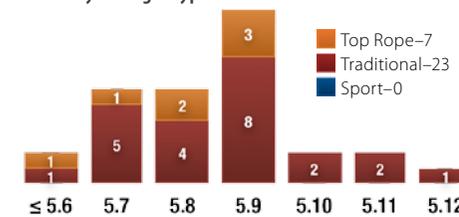
Elevation: 8,800 feet

Approach Time: 45 minutes to 1 hour

Primary Aspect: West & South West

Number of Routes: 30

Routes by Rating & Type:



Twenty-four miles southeast of Pinedale, Wyoming, tucked just inside of the Wilderness Boundary lies a 120-meter (400-foot) buttress of bombproof Wind River granite. Scab Creek Buttress offers climbers a day trip wilderness experience and on most summer days, you will have the entire buttress to yourself.

Scab Creek Buttress is home to an assortment of moderately-rated multi-pitch traditional routes. Most of these routes offer great protection and easy route-finding. The approximately 45-minute hike and concentration of traditional routes effectively fends off crowds, yet the beautiful rock, vistas, and multi-pitch routes are sure to inspire dedicated climbers to venture higher into the Wind River Mountains.

### Recommended Equipment

Don't expect to do any sport climbing at Scab Creek Buttress. The only fully-bolted route on the buttress is accessed by a mixed first pitch. Instead, climbers may choose from an assortment of moderate traditional routes. Expect to encounter dihedrals, flakes, and straight-in cracks ranging anywhere from one-half to six inches. A standard rack up to a #3 Camalot is recommended. A #4 Camalot is useful for a few of the routes but is optional. Bring a 60-meter rope and extra webbing for replacing old slings at rappel stations.



Scab Creek Buttress

### Scab Creek Trailhead & Campground

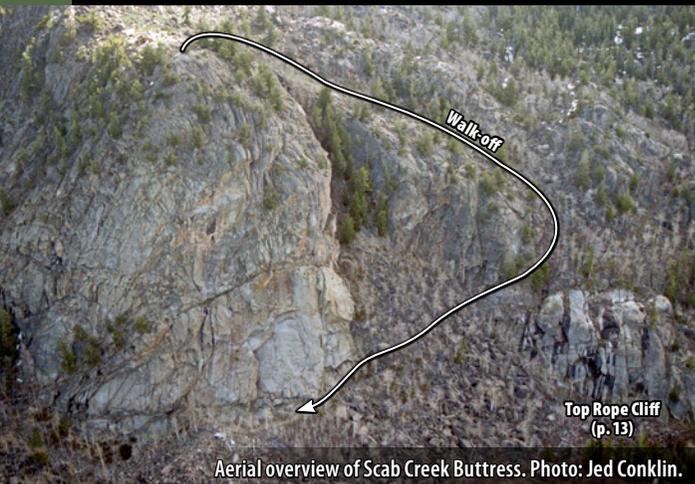
Scab Creek Buttress is accessed via the Scab Creek Trailhead. The trailhead and campground lies at an elevation of 8,200 feet and receives a medium amount of hiker and stock use. Bring your own water and/or a filtration system along with bear spray. The closest town is Boulder, which has limited services and supplies. However, Pinedale is only a 45-minute drive from the campground. Generally, the campground has vacant campsites even during the busy summer months.

### Area Restrictions

From November 16th through April 30th the Scab Creek Trailhead and Campground is closed to all human presence for wildlife protection. The area is critical winter range for a substantial elk population.

### Driving Directions

Follow U.S. Highway 189/191 south from Pinedale for 12 miles to Boulder. Turn east onto State Highway 353. Follow highway 353 for 5.5 miles. Turn left again on Scab Creek Road. Follow Scab Creek Road for another 9 miles to the Scab Creek Trailhead, but do not park at the main parking lot. Instead, continue down the road to the campground. Park just before the campground in a small grassy area and walk up a short two-track road north of the



Aerial overview of Scab Creek Buttress. Photo: Jed Conklin.

campground. The two-track road is the last left before the campground. The trail begins where the two-track ends.

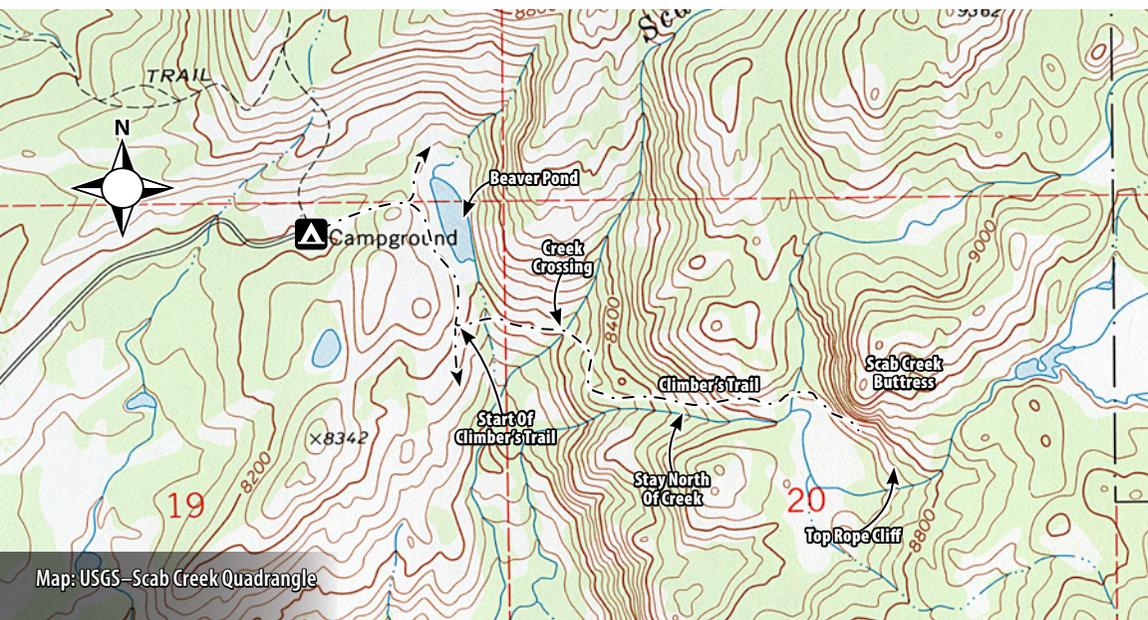
### Approach Trail

The trail to Scab Creek Buttress begins on a maintained Forest Service trail, but then turns off the main trail and becomes a climber's trail. The climber's trail is somewhat vague at the beginning where it branches off from the main trail but it becomes much more distinct. To find the climber's trail after leaving the two-track road, follow the main trail to a beaver pond, where the trail splits; here you will take the trail that leads to the right (south), and follow it for about a half-mile. The trail will begin to drop

down a hill, at which point you should soon see on your left a small trail connection, resembling a game trail, branching off into a forested area. This is the climber's trail and you should leave the main trail and begin to follow this one. The climber's trail immediately drops down into a marshy creek bottom which is dry for most of the year. Once the climber's trail begins to climb up out of the creek bottom the trail becomes much more

clear. Follow this trail to Scab Creek Buttress. The hike takes approximately 45 minutes to one hour at a moderate pace.

Originally, this area was developed by the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS). However, at the time of this writing, the approach trail has not been maintained for years. As a result, the trail has progressively become worse and is quite vague in places. Losing the trail can be easy. In these sections, follow the line of least resistance until the trail becomes clear again. Use the topographic map below for additional guidance.



Map: USGS—Scab Creek Quadrangle



Scab Creek Buttress: Left Wall

- 1 The Joker** ★★ 5.9 (R)
 

This is an excellent climb. *The Joker* is most often top roped because of a high ground fall potential. If you setup a top rope, use extreme caution scrambling to the anchors.
- 2 El Dorado** ★★★ 5.9
 

Area Classic! Follow a broken crack system to a beautiful lightning-bolt finger crack half way up. The crux is protected by a fixed piton. Immediately after the piton, head left to link up with another crack and easier going. Rappel (2 ropes) or top-out and walk-off (recommended). Link the first two pitches with a 60m rope.
- 3 Blind Faith** 5.9 (R)
 

Start on the left-hand side of a ledge below a large roof to belay. Climb through a notch in the roof and follow an obvious crack system to the 4th Class retreat ledge.
- 4 Wildcat** 5.11+ (R)
 

Scramble up to the right-hand side of a ledge below a roof to belay. Pull a strenuous roof immediately off the belay into a right-facing corner. The crux is just off the belay so set a bomber anchor for the belayer as well as the leader before starting.

### 4TH CLASS RETREAT LEDGE

The 4th Class retreat ledge can be used to retreat from or access routes on the buttress. Most climbers choose to rope up on the ledge traverse because of the exposure and often wet grass.

### TOP ROPE ROUTES

A few pitons for top roping a short, but steep wall can be found directly below the start for route #3.

**5 Tuna Toejam** 5.9

A small headwall finish makes for an enjoyable top out, but gaining the headwall is somewhat of a winding scramble. Sling protection long to reduce rope drag.

**6 Photo Finish** ★★ 5.7

Start in a right-facing corner and climb to the top of a small pillar. Climb off the pillar left to a ledge, scramble left on the ledge, and finally angle straight up to a stunning dihedral finish.

**7 Centerfold** ★★ 5.10a

*Centerfold's* winding start tends to leave climbers with loads of rope drag, just in time to tackle a strenuous layback through to the crux roof. Slings gear long down low will help tremendously with rope drag. Start just to the right of *Photo Finish* and enjoy!

**8 The Black Book** ★ 5.8

Although the crux of this route can be protected with a #.75 Camalot, the preceding small 5.7 runout section tends to deter some climbers. Start in the same corner as *Photo Finish* and *Centerfold*. Follow the right-facing corner until



Josh Hattan on *The Black Book*—5.8. Photo: Reid Morth.

an obvious crack breaks away; continue up this crack to a black-streaked face and roof. Finish on the 4th class retreat ledge.

**9 Wet Fly** 5.8

A seldom climbed variation to *Dry Fly*.

**10 Dry Fly** ★★ 5.7

*Dry Fly* ascends the buttress's most traveled line. Both pitches can be linked into one long pitch with a 60-meter rope.

» PITCH 1..... 5.7

Start in a great hand crack that ends too soon. Continue up a right-hand traverse past a bolt to link up with the main crack system. Follow this crack to a small belay ledge.

» PITCH 2..... 5.7

Continue up the same crack system for 27 meters to end on the 4th Class retreat ledge. From here, you can either traverse to another climb, or head left to return to the base of the buttress.

**11 Grassy Crack** ★ 5.7

The *Grassy Crack* fits its name well. Fortunately, the route's grass does not get in your way. Begin up an awkward flare and continue on a winding crack. There are two variations halfway up, both of which are 5.7. However, the right variation protects slightly better. Either rappel from the belay ledge or traverse (5.7) into *Dry Fly's* second pitch to finish.

**12 The Rhino** ★ 5.9

Bring a large cam (#4-4.5 Camalot) to protect the "Rhino's Horn" roof then continue up a large but easy crack to the same belay ledge as *Grassy Crack*. There is an optional 5.7 start variation 5 meters to the right of the roof.

**13 Dandruff Dihedral** ★ 5.7

Scramble up 5 meters to the start of a right-facing corner that eventually becomes a flaring notch. Follow the notch to the *Grassy Crack* belay ledge.



Scab Creek Buttress: Middle Wall

**14 Fantasy Land** ★ 5.8

The first pitch of *Fantasy Land* is a popular route but Pitches 2-3 are rarely attempted due to their unprotectable characteristic.

» PITCH 1..... 5.8

This pitch can be alternatively top roped via traversing right from the *Grassy Crack* belay ledge and rappelling down to the top of the pitch.

» PITCH 2..... 5.8 (R/X)

Continue past the belay anchors up an unprotectable seam to an easy roof.

» PITCH 3..... 5.9+ (R/X)

Bring your micro gear and make your best attempt at protecting this pitch or descend via two rappels.

**15 Jumbo Crack** ★ 5.7

Follows a large crack below a massive overhang. Great setting and fun climbing. The first pitch begins on the 4th Class retreat ledge, at the top of *Dry Fly*.

» PITCH 1..... 5.7

Climb to the base of a slanting roof and bypass it to the left. Finish at a bolted belay. The second half of this pitch is tricky to protect.

» PITCH 2..... 5.7

Ascend a beautiful fist crack slanting up and right. Continue to the top of the buttress and walk-off. A #3 and #4 Camalot is recommended.

**16 Mind Set** 5.9+

A thin finger crack variation to *Rock Solitude*.

**17 Rock Solitude** 5.6

Follow the base of a slanting right dihedral to the top of the buttress. Walk-off.

**18 Fish Hook** ★★★ 5.8

A classic two-pitch route on flawless granite. Bring a standard rack of gear up to a #3 Camalot and a set of stoppers.

» PITCH 1..... 5.8

Start up jugs on a vertical section for 5 meters, after which the rock angles into a slab. Traverse into an obvious crack system, making sure to sling any protection on the traverse long. Enjoy the climbing to a set of questionable quarter inch bolts. Instead of using these sketchy bolts, set up a bomber gear anchor 5 meters higher on a good ledge.

» PITCH 2..... 5.7 (R)

Follow the corner shaped like a fish hook but move onto the face straight above where the corner starts to hook left. Continue up an easy and short 5.7 runout to a good belay ledge.



Josh Hattan on the crux of *The Black Book*—5.8 (p. 8). Photo: Reid Morth.



Scab Creek Buttress: Right Wall

19 **Skid Row** ★ 5.12c

Sick-minded slab lovers will find this climb irresistible. *Skid Row* boasts hard climbing on gorgeous granite. The bold and intimidating second pitch is rarely climbed.

» **PITCH 1 (MIXED)**..... 5.10c  
Ascend a slab face on mixed protection of micro cams, stoppers and old quarter inch bolts. The quality of the bolts is dubious; they may not be capable of withstanding a hard fall. Either rappel from the belay anchor or muster up all the courage you have to tackle the slab testpiece above.

» **PITCH 2 (SPORT)**..... 5.12c (R)  
Known as *The Gold Face*, this pitch is a serious, full-value slab climb! Bust out the sticky shoes and screw your head on tight. Almost every bolt was set for the worst clipping stance within crux moves over the entirety of the pitch – which likely bumps the grade up a notch. Keep your cool and be prepared for a factor two fall. The climbing is hard 5.11 to get the first bolt, which is 5 meters above the belay. Some of the upper bolts are questionable and distantly spaced. If you send this pitch you can officially call yourself a bad-ass slab junky. For the two part rappel, tie knots in the ends of the rope (the rappel is a full 30 meters).

20 **Scrambled Huevos** ★★★ 5.9

A superb route that follows a well-protected line with exciting exposure. Circumvent the large roof near the top to the left (5.8) or right (5.7) and finish on a good ledge. *Scrambled Huevos* can be done in one long 59-meter pitch.

21 **Sunshine** ★ 5.10b

Unfortunately, the dirty but easy first half of this route does not speak well for the spectacular finish. After leaving the belay ledge, climb a dirty face to a huge right-facing corner above. Climb the easy face to the right of the corner to avoid a dirty chimney. Rejoin the corner when it tapers into a finger crack. Enjoy brilliant stems and a stunning roof-pull to finish the route.

22 **Cheater's Exit** 5.9

A boring variation to escape the crux of *Sunshine*. Don't bother with this variation, instead, go for the stunning finish of *Sunshine*.

23 **Alter-ego** ★★★ 5.11+

An engaging, steep, short, and sustained thin hand crack. The top rappel slings will likely need to be replaced.



Scab Creek Buttress: Top Rope Cliff

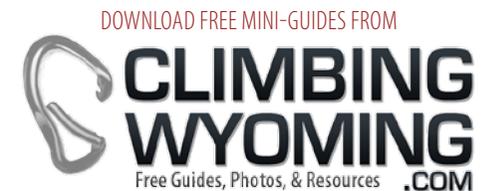
**Top Rope Cliff**

Routes #24-30 are normally top roped using the trees and boulders on top for anchors. A few of these routes may be led at your discretion. The National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) often utilize this cliff as a training cliff. For teaching beginners how to climb, this cliff is ideal but is overshadowed by the far better routes on the main buttress.

24 <b>T.R. One</b> 5.9	28 <b>T.R. Five</b> 5.9
No beta available.	Top rope or optional trad lead.
25 <b>T.R. Two</b> 5.7	29 <b>T.R. Six</b> 5.6
No beta available.	No beta available.
26 <b>T.R. Three</b> 5.8	30 <b>T.R. Seven</b> 5.9
Top rope or optional trad lead.	No beta available.
27 <b>T.R. Four</b> 5.8	
No beta available.	



Terry Ford on *Photo Finish*–5.7 (p. 8). Photo: Ben Franklin.



**TOP ROPE CLIFF APPROACH**

The Top Rope Cliff is best approached via bushwhacking from the edge of the clearing and scrambling across the scree field below the buttress.