

## BIRDWATCHERS CRAG

Spring 2025



*View from the Farside down to highway 68. From here, you can see when your friends show up to the crag.*

## BIRDWATCHERS CRAG Spring 2025

This crag consists of 23 routes on high quality sandstone just a 40 minute drive from Calgary. Located on Highway 68, just inside of Kananaskis, a 20-25 minute approach (1 km, 230 m) leads to a variety of climbs between 5.7 and 5.12c on tricky slabs, burly roofs, and techy faces. All routes are single pitch between 12 and 25 meters, all fully equipped with dual ring anchors. A 60-meter rope and 12 quickdraws are sufficient for all routes. This crag is an absolute suntrap with the great climbing occurring even mid-winter, as clear days allow for comfortable climbing even around 0 degrees. This, along with the quick approach and travel time from Calgary makes it an ideal off-season crag! Furthermore, the crag and approach have minimal seeping from regular snow melt, so chinook climbing is a great – provided there was no major snow dump the day before!

While the routes have been cleaned, the area is new so please be careful and wear a helmet at all times. The routes are also often sandy (it is sandstone) when they have not been climbed for a while, so brushing may be necessary. Especially after rainfall, ledges get quite dirty. However, the drying time is short, and I have not yet seen any effect of moisture resulting in holds breaking more easily. Climbing after rainfall is currently fine, but this could change if more information comes to light. Closed projects are marked by flagging tape on the first bolt or a fixed rope hanging from the anchors. These often have loose rock/are missing bolts, so please do not climb.

**If new routes go up, bolts are added, or closed projects are opened, I will post the changes on Sendage ASAP! I will also have a living document in a google drive with route updates and a GPX track for the approach:**

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18rBMY4ut\\_3Yqk\\_mcmPQhHeCflfUQSYnV?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18rBMY4ut_3Yqk_mcmPQhHeCflfUQSYnV?usp=sharing)

The crag consists of a long cliff band broken into three main areas: the Sandcastle, Old Growth, and the Farside. The Sandcastle is the smallest sector, marked by near vertical face climbing on pale sandstone. Hard moves are found in short sections that are nearly blank! Old Growth is the largest area, found 5 minutes further. It is a long wall surrounded by large, beautiful trees, affording some shade to the belayer. The tallest climbs are found here, on some of the most textured and bullet-proof rock. The Farside is another 10 minutes past Old Growth, and is the sunniest area, making it the best for winter climbing. Even in January, this area sees direct sun between 11am and 3pm.

Happy climbing!

Dan Padeanu

**Any questions or concerns? Is there a spinning bolt, missing hanger, or a loose block?** Please email at [dapadeanu@gmail.com](mailto:dapadeanu@gmail.com)

*Note: Greg Cornell bolted a handful of mixed routes in and around this area. Some evidence of these routes and abandoned projects can be found from the presence of low bolts for rope soloing. Climbing these routes is inadvisable, as they are not well documented, and have a large amount of loose rock. For the sake of safety, stick to the routes in this topo unless **absolutely** sure of what you are getting into and have the trad gear necessary. Some of the routes have recently been climbed and I have been told are quite good, but have loose rock. I have chosen not to include them here, but information about these climbs can be found online.*



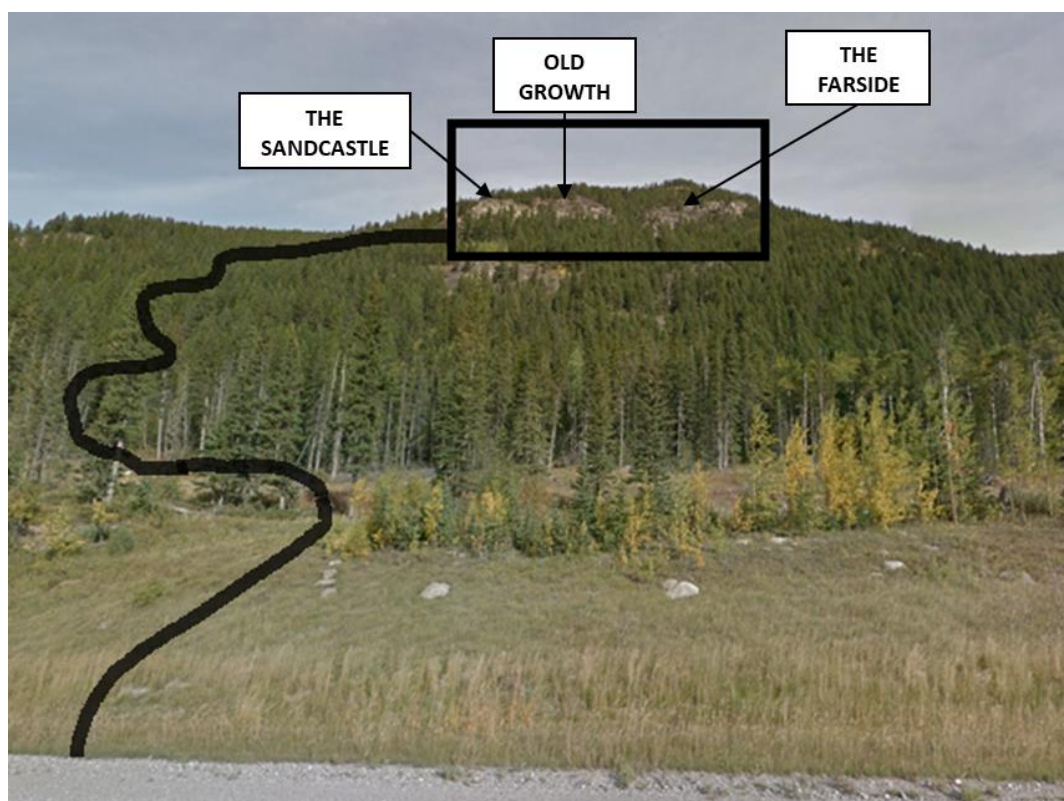
## Acknowledgement

This crag has been an undertaking of a handful of people, and I thank them all for their help cleaning, bolting and climbing routes. These people consist of the birdwatchers: April Woods, Braulio Lombardi-Puerta, Dave Cumming, Jessica Zawalykut, Nadja-Lina Eigler, Nick Randell, and Patrick Dwyer. Special thanks goes out to Martin Schön, for his initial stoke on getting this crag started. Special thanks also goes out to Evan Gabert, the only person willing to put in so many hours helping with trail development in +30 to -30, and who helped shoulder the brunt of the work.

If you like the climbing here, please support TABVAR. The bolt fund makes crags like this possible.

## Approach

From Calgary, drive west to Highway 40. Head south for 8 kilometers until you reach the sign for highway 68 (sign for Calgary). Drive 4 kilometers down highway 68 (gravel road) until you reach a small pullout on the right (south) side. Either park in the pullout (not recommended due to the muddy nature) or along the north side of the road. Alternatively, take highway 68 from the turn-off on highway 1 before Scott Lake hill. Approximate parking location: 51.041438, -114.984759



*The approach from the road up to the crag. It is close, but steep!*

Once parked near the pullout, walk west along the road about 200 meters to a sign on the north side of the road warning about an erosion area. After another 50 meters along the road head up towards a **single tall pine** in a gap in the trees. (flagged with pink tape) Choose the best-looking path through the meadow, aiming for the north-west corner where a series of wooden steps starts up an obvious trail next to a boulder. This heads up through the trees on switchbacks and reaches the left side of the crag within 25 minutes. Follow the cliff band to the first climbs. **Total distance: 1 km, total elevation: 230m**

Approximate crag location: 51.043827, -114.988473

## All routes, listed in order of grade:

#	Grade	Name	Area
1	5.7	Conversational Cows	The Farside
2	5.7*	Immortal Shrub	Old Growth
3	5.8	Braulio's unnamed climb	The Farside
4	5.9	Successful Monkey	Old Growth
5	5.9†	Purple Hippopotamus	Old Growth
6	5.9	Throwing in the Trowel	Old Growth
7	5.9	Krummholz	Old Growth
8	5.10a†	Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow	Old Growth
9	5.10a†	T.P.	Old Growth
10	5.10c	68 Special	Old Growth
11	5.10c	Full Fledged	Old Growth
12	5.10c	First Pants, then Shoes	The Farside
13	5.10c†	School for the Gifted	The Farside
14	5.10d	The Chickens are Restless	The Farside
15	5.10d	The Rock is On	The Sandcastle
16	5.10+	Indelible Mouse	The Sandcastle
17	5.11a	Bee in my Car	The Farside
18	5.11a	Der Falkner	Old Growth
19	5.11b	Eigler Nordwand	Old Growth
20	5.11b	Chickens in Hell	The Farside
21	5.11c	Reciprocal Space	Old Growth
22	5.12a	Scotty in Hell	The Farside
23	5.12c	Large Edible Mouse	The Sandcastle
24		Closed Project 1	The Sandcastle
25		Closed Project 2	Old Growth
26		Pat's Route (Closed Project 3)	Old Growth
27		Mitch's Route (Closed Project 4)	Old Growth
29		Closed Project 5	The Farside

\* - Trad route, read description!

† - Chain anchors equipped with a steel carabiner for easy cleaning

In the tops, approximate bolt locations and anchors are indicated. Routes are colour coded to show the grade: Blue routes are <5.9, green routes are 5.10, orange routes are 5.11, and red routes are 5.12. Closed projects are included in purple. When these are open, the fixed line will be removed from the top and their description updated on the google drive topo and posted on Sendage.



## The Sandcastle

This is the first area that is reached and is named for the sandy beige coloured rock. It is a small area, currently with only three climbs, including the hardest of the crag, *Large Edible Mouse*. It also currently has one closed project.



## **The Sandcastle**

***The Rock is On* (5.10d) 15m 6 bolts + anchor**

**Prep: M. Schön. FA: N-L. Eigler**

Easy climbing to the third bolt leads to some interesting moves to gain a tricky blank face. Follow the seam past this to pull funky pockets to get to a victory jug and clip the anchors right at the top of the block.

***Large Edible Mouse* (5.12c) 25m 7 bolts + anchor**

**Prep: M. Schön, D. Padeanu. F.A: D. Padeanu**

Easy at the top and bottom, but real hard where it looks hard. An excellent boulder problem on slopers and tiny feet. Scramble to the first bolt and then put on your shoes. A fixed draw protects the last move of the crux.

***Indelible Mouse* (5.10+?) 25m 8 bolts + anchor**

**Prep + FA: D. Padeanu**

Named for the persistence of the packrat that live near these routes. Head up *Large Edible Mouse* but break right after clipping the fourth bolt. Traverse carefully through some really sandy rock and watching out for packrat poop to get to interesting moves on side pulls and pinches to the anchors. The bottom isn't great, but the top is fun! *The grade has not been confirmed.*

### ***Closed Project 1***

**Prep: E. Gabert**

Leaving the main Sandcastle area, this route is found just slightly up the hill and around the corner, just before an impressive looking tree growing straight out of the cliff. Likely around 5.10+. If there is no longer a fixed rope on this route, it is open and can be climbed.



## **Old Growth**

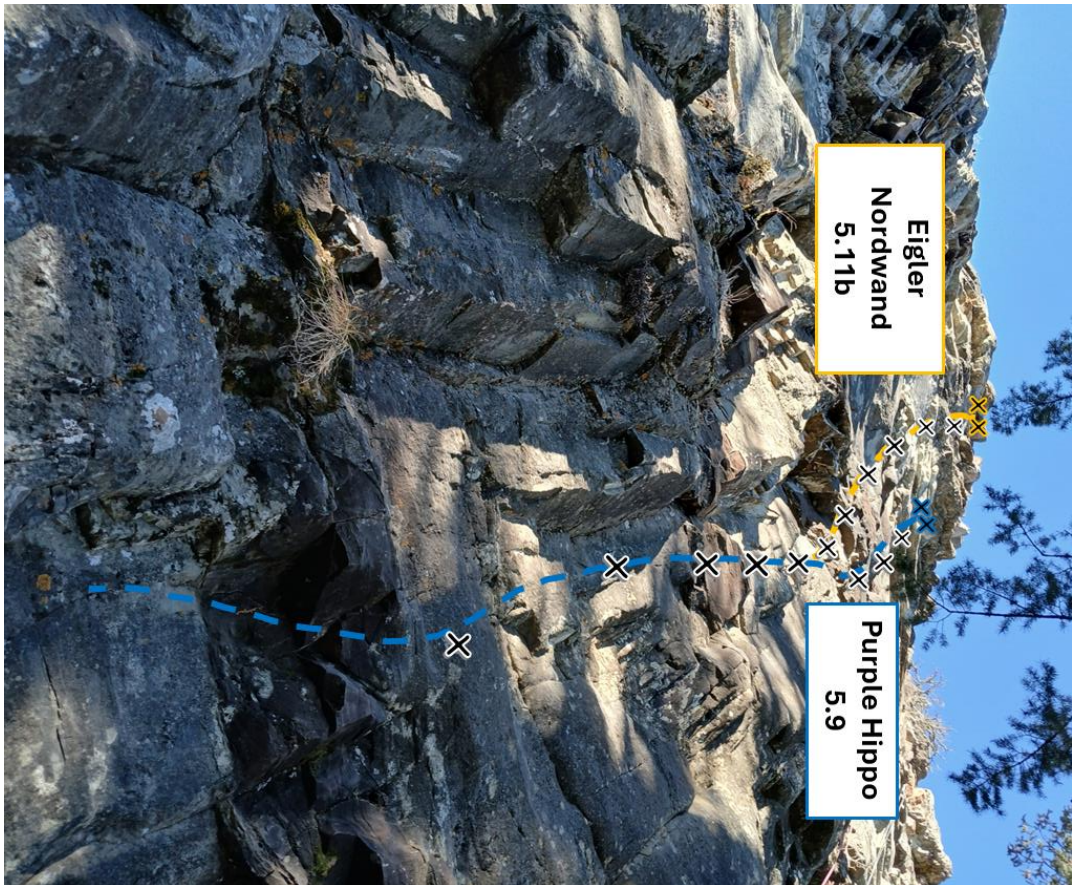
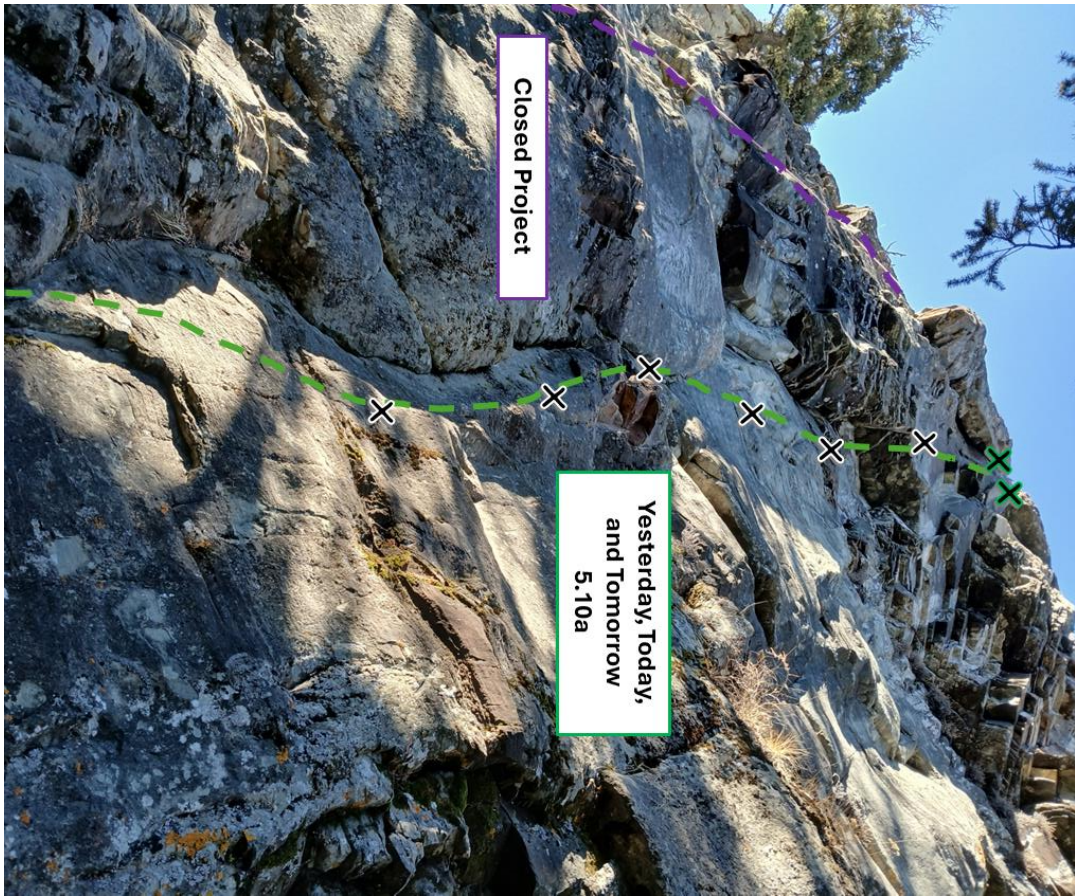
This area was named in reference to Greg Cornell's old mixed topo. There are numerous large trees in the area, which provide shade for the belayer on hot days. Many of the low bolts found here were set up for top-rope soloing of mixed routes. Please make sure you are starting up the correct routes! To get here, head East from the Sandcastle along the cliff band. The trail will climb sharply and then level out. Once you get amongst the large trees, look up towards the routes. This area stretches for the longest part of the cliff band, currently containing 11 sport routes and 4 closed projects. You will find the longest routes here, as well as some short ones that pack a punch! The routes here range from 5.9 to 5.11c and are listed as follows from left to right.



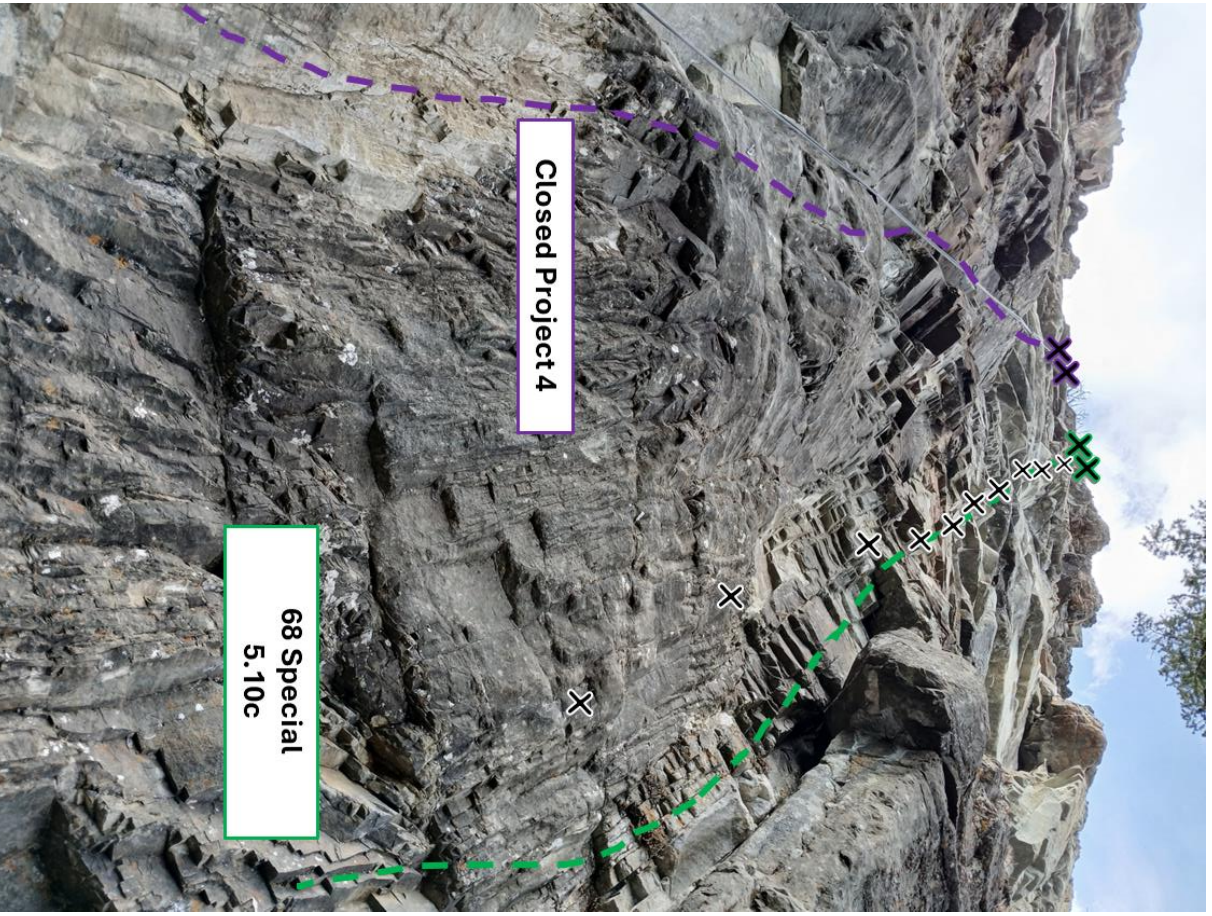
Braulio Puerta pulling into the crux on *Der Falkner*, 5.11a



Old Growth left side







## **Old Growth left side**

### ***Closed Project 2***

This route is to the left of *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* and heads up through some forced beta down low into slabby but easier climbing above. If there is no longer a fixed rope on this route, it is open and can be climbed.

#### ***Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow (5.10a) 16m 6 bolts + anchor***

**Prep + FA: E. Gabert**

This is the first climb past the Sandcastle. Head up a juggy crack to reach the vertical section. From here, move side to side and avoid ever having to pull a roof despite the angle getting steeper and steeper. Climb left at the last bolt to get to the giant crack at the top and clip the anchors.

#### ***Eigler Nordwand (5.11b) 25m 11 bolts + anchor***

**Prep + FA: N-L. Eigler**

Found just right of *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* on the tallest part of Old Growth. This shares a start with *Purple Hippopotamus* but continues left after the fourth bolt. Keep cruising to the sixth bolt, where you are suddenly met with a beautifully blank section. Once getting past this and taking a few deep breathes at a no-hands rest, use a flake to pull the overhang up top. The tallest route at the crag!

#### ***Purple Hippopotamus (5.9) 20m 9 bolts + anchor***

**Prep + FA: D. Cumming**

The same start as *Eigler Nordwand*, but head right at the fourth bolt. Nice climbing on high quality rock with good hands and feet gets you to the last draw at 5.7. Then, clip this and step out onto a blank face trusting a good side pull to get some good jugs and pull up to the anchors.

#### ***Throwing in the Trowel (5.9) 20m 10 bolts + anchor***

**Prep + FA: N. Randell**

A nice adventure climb that starts just right of *Purple Hippopotamus*. Climb through some chunky but solid blocks down low, and up through some harder, but well protected moves. Pull a roof, then rest on a ledge. Repeat until reaching the slab up top. Named for the shovel broken from the amount of excavation required to remove the dirt from the ledges. Good fun and long like its neighbours.

### ***Pat's Route (closed project 3)***

The centre line of the tall wall, this weaves up a weakness in the rock to find good hands and feet. Reach a no hands rest around the halfway point and then tackle a tough boulder problem through a V-shaped notch. A final slabby section near the top where a large boulder came out guards the anchors! If there is no longer a fixed rope on this route, it is open and can be climbed. Likely around 5.9

### ***Mitch's Route (closed project 4)***

Found just left of *68 Special*. A high first bolt is accessed by easy climbing on large ledges, or stick clipping. Find a specific beta on small hands to get through the low crux around mid 5.10 or pull



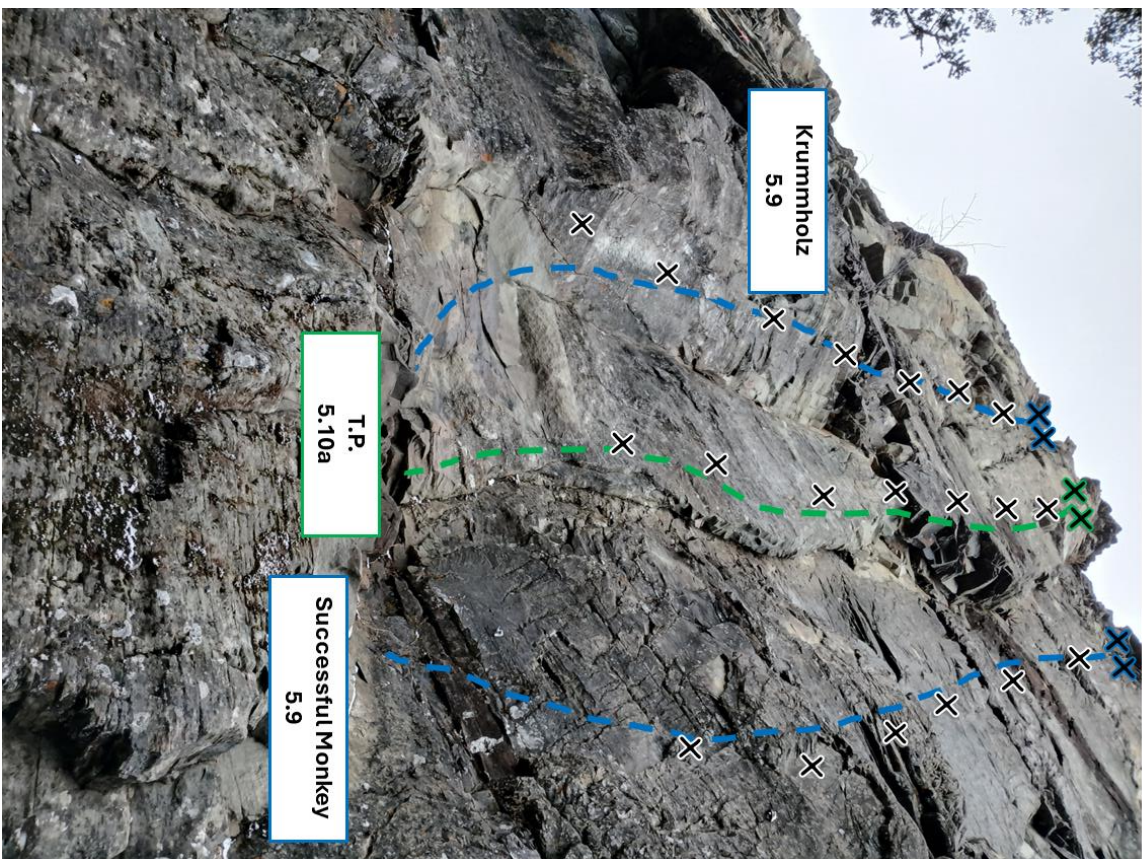
through the bottom 3 draws for ~5.9 A0. Either way, neat moves on good rock continue past this point. If there is no longer a fixed rope on this route, it is open and can be climbed.

**68 *Special* (5.10c) 22m 10 bolts + anchor**

**Prep + FA: D. Padeanu**

The furthest right line on the tall part of the wall. This heads up a pillar to the right of the bolt line using some unconventional corner climbing before reaching flowy face climbing past the fourth bolt. Push past a very specific crux sequence on the blank white rock up high to get to the anchor. Some people prefer to stick clip the first bolt, as the line is quite a bit right of it due to the rock quality.

## Old Growth Right







### ***Reciprocal Space* (5.11c) 12m 5 bolts + anchor**

**Prep:** D. Padeanu. **FA:** D. Padeanu

On the roof feature right of *68 Special* and left of *Krummholz*. Might be easiest to stick clip the second bolt but is safe without it. Short but neat. Tricky moves all the way until you get over the roof. Check out the weird pocket between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> bolt, and don't get *trust-it-us* on the slabby feet!

### ***Krummholz* (5.9) 16m 7 bolts + anchor**

**Prep:** D. Padeanu, E. Nicolau. **FA:** D. Padeanu

This route and the next three are found 15 meters right of *68 Special* in an obvious corner feature. This is the leftmost off the ledge, which climbs the corner. Stem up the corner to a no hands rest. Then, follow good side pulls up the right side of the arch to reach the anchor.

### ***T.P.* (5.10b) 16m 8 bolts + anchor**

**Prep:** D. Padeanu. **FA:** J. Zawalykut

This is the central climb off the ledge. Scramble up the ledge to get to the first bolt (put your shoes on here) and back clean it before continuing. It climbs the crack at the bottom and then follows the column all the way to the top. It starts to feel airy up high as the column gets thinner, but good jugs are abundant!

***Immortal Shrub (5.7) 16m trad, single rack up to 3"***

**FA: Ethan Heinrichs**

Found in the crack system between *T.P.* and *Successful Monkey*. Climb the right facing flake and use a mix of corner and face climbing to navigate around a "roof" with broken rock. A quality nut placement can protect these moves. Continue up the crack to the *T.P.* anchor. The first good placement may be high – use the first bolt of *T.P.* to protect it if nervous.

***Successful Monkey (5.9) 16m 7 bolts + anchor***

**Prep: D. Padeanu, E. Gabert. FA: E. Gabert**

This route goes up the slab just to the right of *T.P.* Once again, scramble up the ledge to get to the first bolt, and back clean if wanted. It climbs simple but quality rock, with an inviting crack to the left at the top, though it sometimes contains a seemingly immortal shrub.

***Full Fledged (5.10c) 18m 7 bolts + anchor***

**Prep + FA: E. Gabert**

This route is found another 20m right of *Successful Monkey*. It heads up an easy slab before a good rest. From this, trust the feet on the blank-looking white rock and fire up through a small roof on a critical hold and continue to the anchors above.

***Der Falkner (5.11a) 18m 7 bolts + anchor***

**Prep: D. Padeanu, N-L. Eigler. FA: N-L. Eigler**

This route starts off the ground on a surprisingly tricky slab which eases off before reaching the folding point, where the angle changes abruptly to an overhang. Climb through odd but surprisingly good hand and foot holds before pulling the final power move to get up to the anchors. An excellent climb! Stay right at the last roof for full value. This is the last route of the sector.



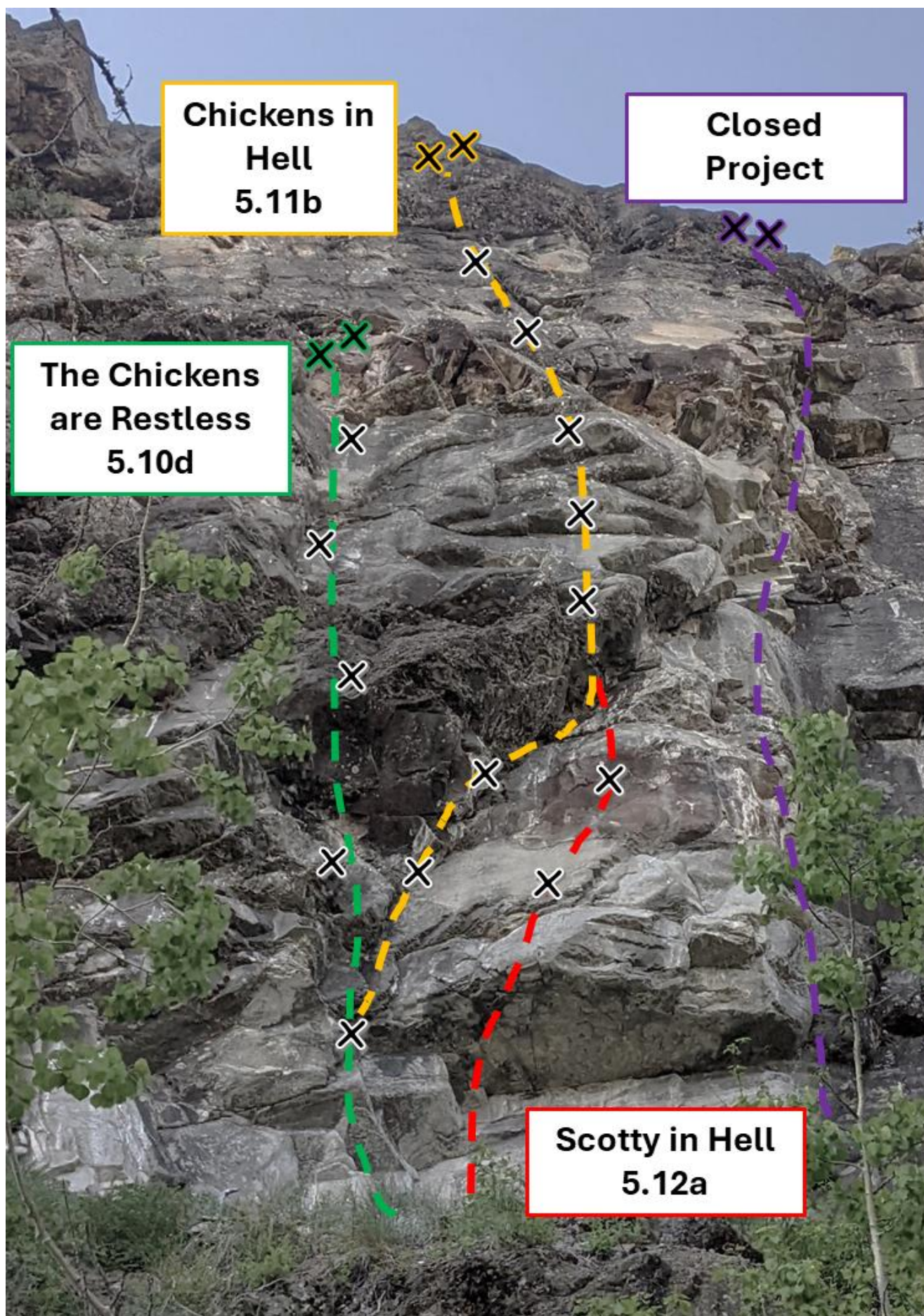
## The Farside

This part of the crag was the first to see major development, but the furthest from the trail. Names inspired by the work of Gary Larson. From the Old Growth Sector, continue east along the trail. You will cross past a gully with a rope to assist travel in the winter and follow switchbacks up to the wall. The routes here see the most sun and are the best to climb in the winter. On the left most part of the wall, a significant overhang contains three routes. In the middle, a vertical wall has another three routes. This wall has many different rock bands running through across it, giving a variety of holds. Further to the right, slightly up the hill are two routes on the slab. The routes range from 5.7 to 5.12a and are listed below from left to right.



Nadja-Lina Eigler tackling the flake on *Bee in my Car*, 5.11a





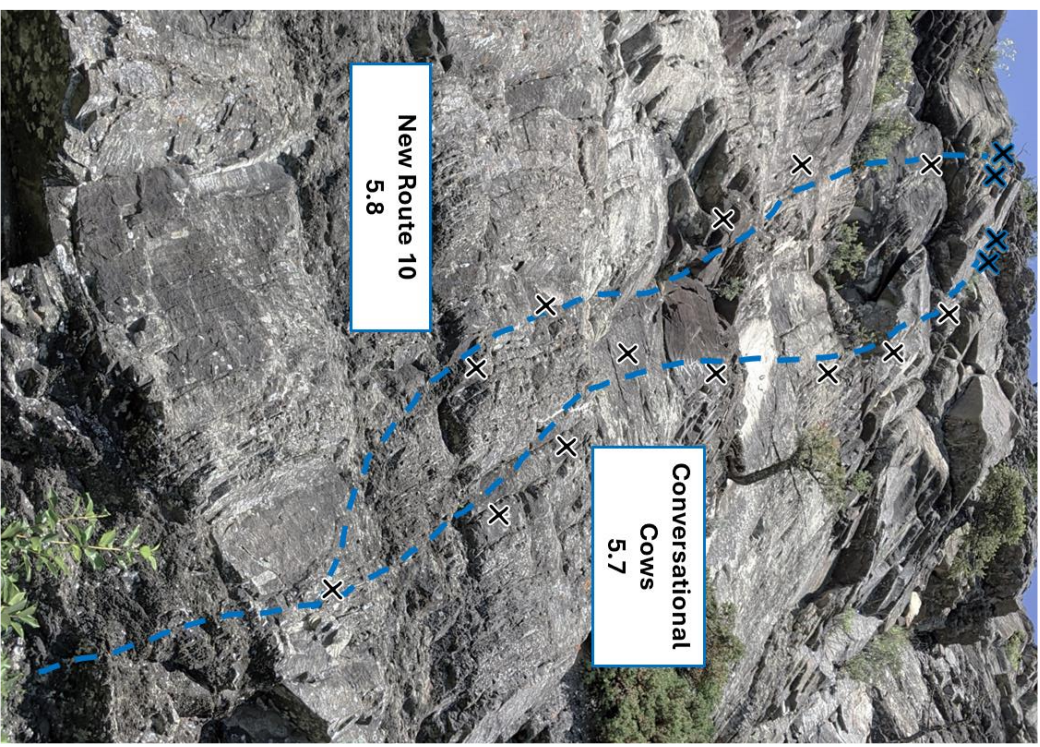
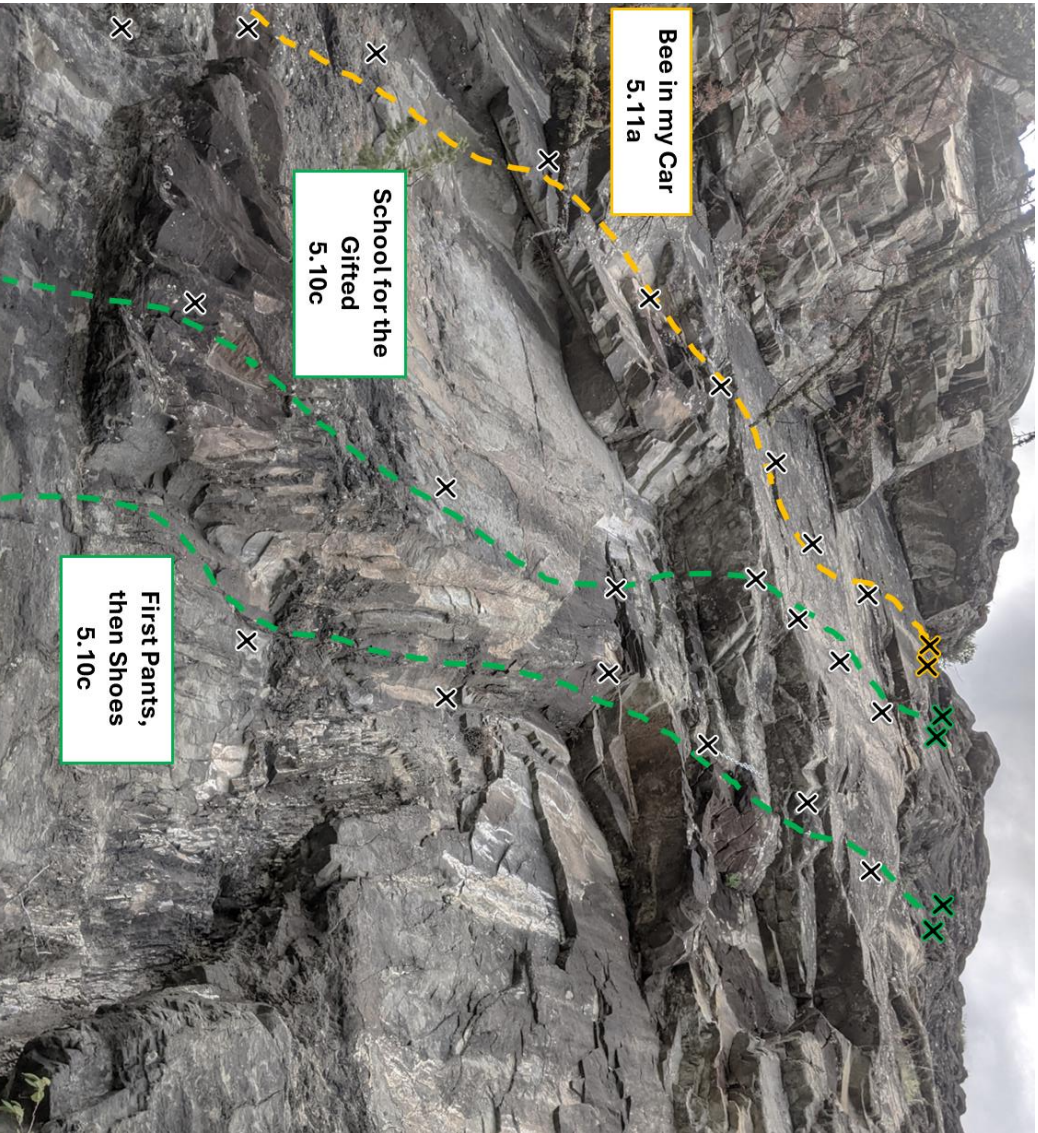
**Chickens in  
Hell  
5.11b**

**Closed  
Project**

**The Chickens  
are Restless  
5.10d**

**Scotty in Hell  
5.12a**





## The Far Side

### ***The Chickens are Restless* (5.10b) 10m 5 bolts + anchor**

**Prep + FA: D. Padeanu**

This climb is the furthest left, heading up the steep face left of the flat route. Good jugs and holds to the left will get you through the overhang. Try to find the secret pocket! Originally bolted to the top of the cliff, the rope drag was not worth another 8 meters of 5.4 climbing. Reachy - this will feel closer to 10+ if you're under 5'6"! The second bolt is hidden in the scoop.

### ***Chickens in Hell* (5.11b) 20m 9 bolts + anchor**

**Prep + FA: D. Padeanu**

Linkup. Start up *The Chickens are Restless*, clip the first bolt and head up the crack to the right. Climb cool lay-back moves through two draws before merging with *Scotty in Hell*. Climb this up to the top. Perhaps the more natural line? It is certainly more consistent!

### ***Scotty in Hell* (5.12a) 20m 8 bolts + anchor**

**Prep: D. Padeanu, N-L. Eigler. FA: M. Schön**

This bouldery climb tackles the large flat roof under the overhang. Stick clipping the first bolt is mandatory since you are right into the crux off the ground. The climbing eases off past the third bolt but stays balancy, continuing on to high quality climbing to the top.

### ***Boneless Chicken Ranch* (Closed Project 5)**

This line goes up the arête between *Scotty in Hell* and *Bee in my Car*. Probably in the mid 11s but is taking a long time to clean! If there is no fixed rope on the route, it is good to be climbed!

### ***Bee in my Car* (5.11a) 18m 9 bolts + anchor**

**Prep: D. Padeanu, D. Cumming. FA: D. Cumming**

Head up the first route on the vertical wall, starting with a small roof, into a massive flake. Squeeze your way up it until breaking right onto the face, then criss-cross the wall on small edges to reach the victory jugs at the top. A full value route.

### ***School for the Gifted* (5.10c) 17m 7 bolts + anchor**

**Prep: D. Padeanu, N Randell. FA: Patrick Dwyer**

Start in the middle of the vertical wall and head up an angular column. About halfway up the wall, pull through the roof and continue charging up the wall on edges until the climbing ease off near the top.

### ***First Pants, then Shoes* (5.10c) 16m 6 bolts + anchor**

**Prep + FA: D. Padeanu**

This route is obvious from the long chain permadraw at the fourth bolt. I shouldn't have to say this, but please don't take the carabiner off of this... Start on the right of the vertical wall, merging close to *School for the Gifted* about halfway up. A hard pull into an interesting body position will get you through the roof onto easy climbing above.



***Braulio's unnamed climb* (5.8) 14m 7 bolts + anchor**

**Prep + FA: B. Puerta**

Start on the same platform as *Conversational Cows*, get to the first bolt, and then traverse left, avoiding the big (and hard) roof off the ground. Continue heading leftwards and up through easy terrain on good side pulls and feet. Get to a big ledge, then pull a funky move to get through the final roof.

***Conversational Cows* (5.7) 14m 8 bolts + anchor**

**Prep: D. Padeanu. FA: N. Randell**

This route is found 10 metres uphill from *First Pants*, then *Shoes* above a belay platform. The rock quality quickly improves past the first bolt and follows good jugs up to an interesting finishing move.