

Keene

This region, centered around the town of Keene, includes the climbing areas close to town (Barkeater Cliff and Little Crow Mountain), on NY 73 between Keene and Lake Placid (such as Pitchoff Chimney Cliff, Cascade Cliff, and Owls Head Mountain), and on NY 9N between Keene and Elizabethtown (such as Hurricane Crag and Peregrine Pillar). This is a diverse collection of well-developed crags, which are close to the road and popular with local climbers. Whether it be from a ledge high on Hurricane Crag or a belay in the birch grove beneath Barkeater Cliff, the scenery in this region is simply tremendous. There are climbs for all abilities, from the top roping at Spruce Hill and Owls Head to the moderate cracks and demanding face climbs at Pitchoff Chimney Cliff.

SEASON

Facing south, Hurricane Crag is one of the first places to go in early spring (as shown by some early first-ascent dates) but can be unbearable on hot, sunny days. In the heat of summer, the breezy crags atop Cascade Pass and the shaded Barkeater Cliff are as cool as it gets in the Adirondacks. Despite late-season ice in the pass, Pitchoff Chimney Cliff can be climbed on mild winter days.

DIRECTIONS (MAPS PAGES 4 AND 318)

From outside the park, Keene is best approached from the Northway (I-87): from the south, take Exit 30, then go northwest on US 9 to NY 73; from the north, take Exit 34, then follow NY 9N southwest.

WHERE TO STAY

This is a busy travel corridor with congested trailheads and limited roadside camping.

CAMPING

Two options that are adjacent to this region are Chapel Pond Pass (page 177) and the free car camping along South Meadow Road (from NY 73 in Keene, drive 10.8 miles toward Lake Placid, turn left onto Adirondack Loj Road, drive 3.9 miles, then turn left onto South Meadow Road).

Campgrounds: Campgrounds popular with climbers include Whispering Pines Campground, in Wilmington (518.523.9322); Wilmington Notch State Campground (518.946.7172); Sharp Bridge Campground, near Exit 30 (518.532.7538); Lincoln Pond Campground, off Lincoln Pond Road (CR 7) south of Elizabethtown (518.942.5292); and the Adirondack Loj, outside of Lake Placid (518.523.3441).

Bunkhouses: The Hostel, in Keene Valley (518.576.2030); Jackrabbit Inn and Hostel, in Lake Placid (518.523.0123); and the ACC hut known as the Keene Farm, in Upper Jay (www.accmontreal.ca, then search for "Keene Farm").

Motels: The ADK Trail Inn (formerly The Ark), in Upper Jay (518.527.1155); and Brookside, in Upper Jay (518.946.8369).

B&Bs: Keene Valley Lodge, in Keene Valley (518.576.2003); Mountain Meadows Inn, in Keene Valley (518.576.4771); Trail's End, in Keene Valley (800.281.9860); and Adirondack Rock and River, in Keene (518.576.2041).

Cabins: Dartbrook Lodge, in Keene (518.576.9080); and Mountain Manor, in Keene (518.576.9798).

AMENITIES

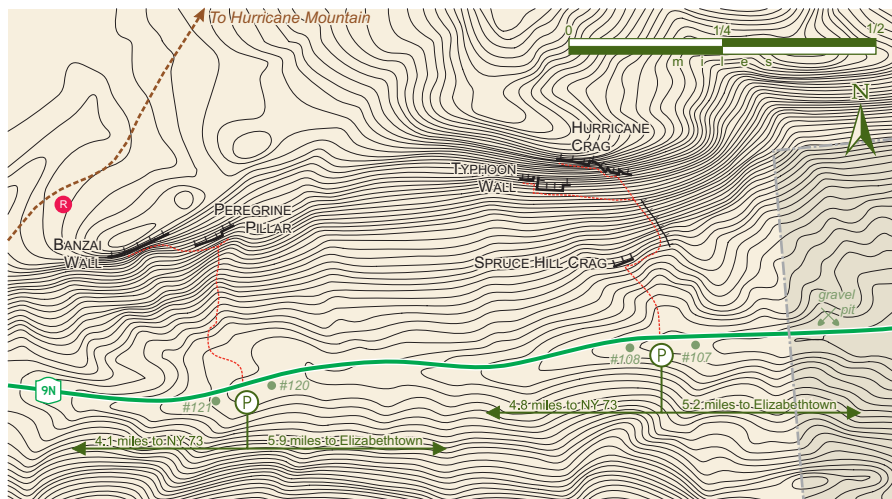
There are large grocery stores in Lake Placid and Elizabethtown, and a small one in Keene Valley. Gas is available in Keene, Elizabethtown, and Lake Placid. There are a few restaurants in Keene and Keene Valley; be aware of odd hours in the off seasons. Favorites with climbers include the Cedar Run Bakery (518.576.9929), in Keene; and the Baxter Mountain Tavern (519.576.9990), near Hurricane Crag. Lake Placid has many options for eating out and spending money (page 318).

DIVERSIONS

There's a great swimming spot at the picnic area between Upper and Lower Cascade Lakes (see map page 353) and another one outside of Keene, about 1.6 miles south on Halls Falls Road. There are many great hikes around Keene, including Pitchoff Ridge, Hurricane Mountain, Little Crow Mountain, and Nunda-gao Ridge.



Watercolor by Lucie Wellner.



DIRECTIONS (MAP PAGE 322)

Park on the north side of NY 9N, 5.2 miles west of the intersection with US 9 in Elizabethtown and 4.8 miles east of the intersection with NY 73 near Keene (and 1.3 miles east of the Hurricane Mountain Trailhead). The herd path begins on the north side of the road between power poles 107 and 108. There is a large gravel shoulder and room for many cars [604056.4896204](#).

The approach follows a well-beaten path, staying on the left (west) side of a drainage. Within 10 min of the road, the path reaches the right end of Spruce Hill Crag, a small crag with several short worthwhile routes [603976.4896367](#). From the base of Spruce Hill Crag, hike right through some talus boulders to a band of cliffs that rise up the hill to the left. Follow a good path steeply uphill along the base of this cliffband to its top. From the top, continue straight uphill to the base of Hurricane Crag, hitting the cliff at its lowest point that is on the right end, which is about 50' left of **New Route** [603927.4896620](#).

The cliff has several major features that are used to locate the routes. The first is a deep chimney at the right end of the cliff (just right of **New Route**) and 50' right of where the approach trail meets the cliff. Moving left from where the approach trail meets the cliff, there is a higher, deeper chimney on top of a dirt cone. This is Wiessner's **Old Route** and is the landmark for **Afraid of the Dark, My Generation, Schizophrenia, and Spring Equinox**. Walking uphill and left of the **Old Route** chimney, you'll find a broken and nondescript section of cliff bounded on its left side by a huge, 100'-high right-facing corner that marks the start of **PSOC** and **Forever Wild**. The cliff base to the right of the corner is steep, loose, and uncomfortable, and is where the routes **Quadrophonia, Look, Roll, and Fire, Xenolith, and Hooligans** start.

DESCENT OPTIONS

Don't walk off the top; it's long and involves lots of bushwhacking. The rappel is easy, however. From the summit, walk (climber's) right (east), staying near the cliff face, then back (climber's) left (west), descending a forested ledge system beneath some slabs to the top of P2 of **Old Route**. From here, an 80' rappel deposits you at the blocky terrain at the top of the huge chimney (P1 of **Old Route**). Walk left (3rd class) with some exposure to a tree with a fixed anchor at the top of P2 of **Hooligans**. A second rappel (100') angles left toward the start of **Look, Roll, and Fire**.

1 Why Did I Fall for That 5.8 G 170' ★★

The first pitch is recommended (and much better than it looks), and the second pitch is simply awful; it is possible to rappel after P1. Named for another song by The Who from the *It's Hard* album.

Start: 150' uphill and left from the large right-facing corner of **PSOC** is a large left-facing corner with orange rock on its outside face. The top of the corner (about 100' up) forms a free-standing tower. Begin 15' left of the corner below a prominent right-facing flake that begins above and right of a 20'-tall boulder stack.

P1 5.7 G ★★: Up some stacked blocks into the right-facing flake. Stem up the flake to a ledge with two large, very unstable perched blocks. Traverse right, and belay at a comfortable tree ledge. 90'

P2 5.8 G: Traverse left (staying well above the scary perched blocks) to a 4" crack, and follow this straight up to a large tree on a grassy ledge. 80'

Descent: Walk left and rappel into a gully with a single rope.

History: The first pitch was initially climbed in the winter of 2008. Recognizing the potential for a good summer route, the pair returned in the spring. An anchor on the trees of P1 indicated a possible earlier ascent.

ACB May 10, 2008, Michelle Burlitch, Jim Lawyer

2 Squeeze Box 5.8 G 90' ★★★

A high-quality pitch, but often wet. Named for yet another song by The Who, and for the sweet stem box.

Start: Below the large left-facing corner described in the start of **Why Did I Fall for That**.

P1 5.8 G: Bypass a brief chossy band on the left, then enter the corner and climb the beautiful stem box to a ledge. Up a short finger crack that widens to tight hands, to another ledge. 90'

History: The route, being often wet, first attracted climbers as a winter destination.

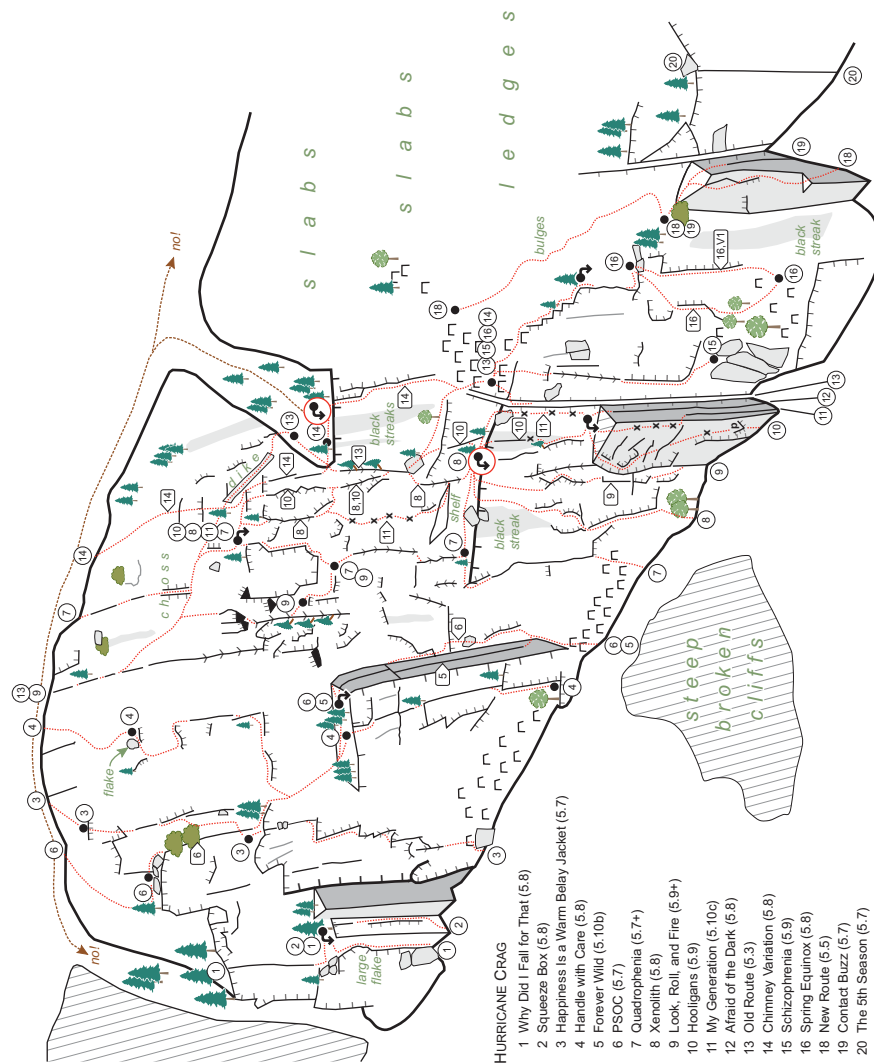
*FA (M5) Jan, 2008, Rayko Halitschke, Jim Lawyer
FA (as a summer route) May 10, 2008, Jim Lawyer,
Michelle Burlitch*

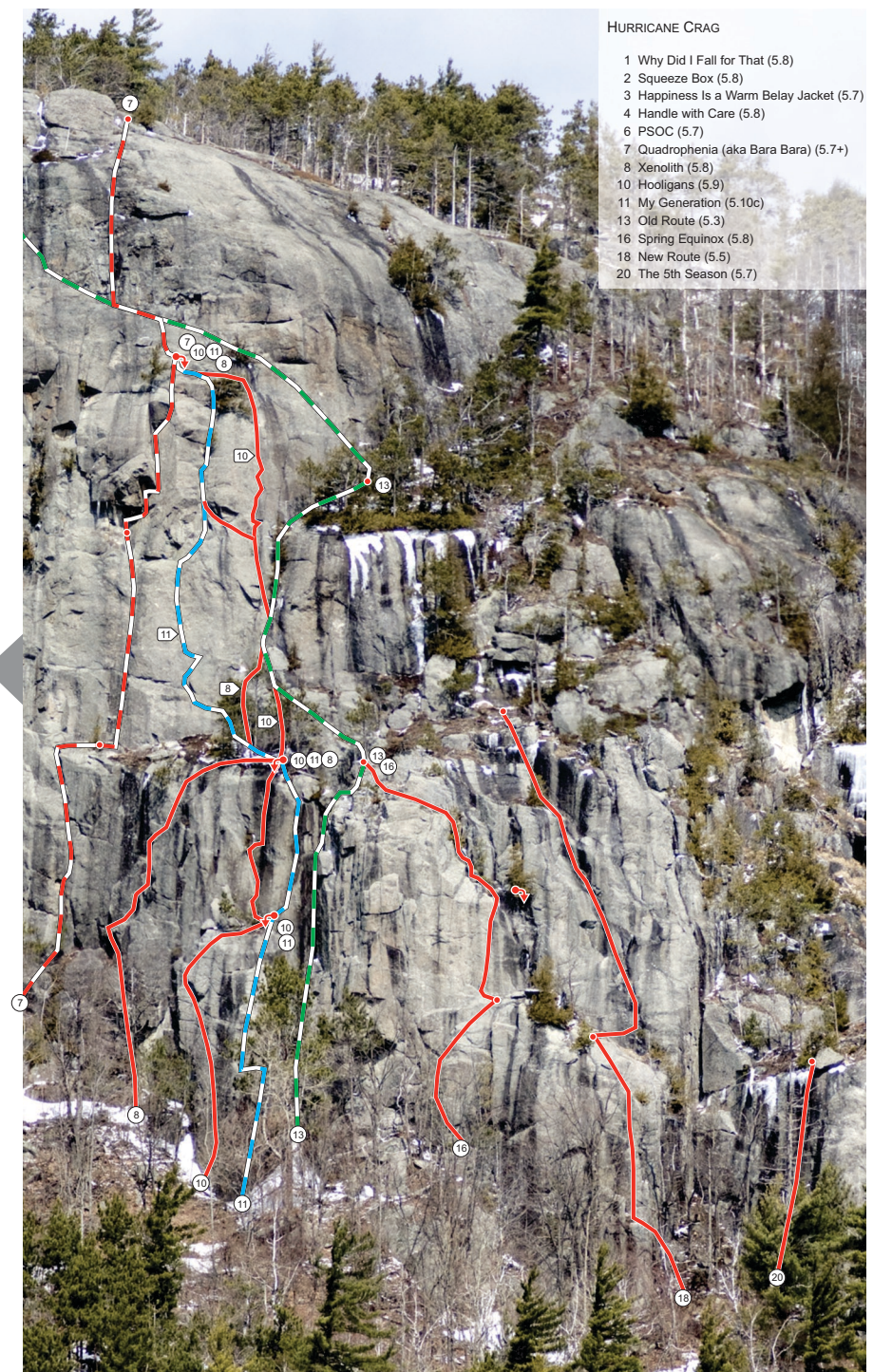
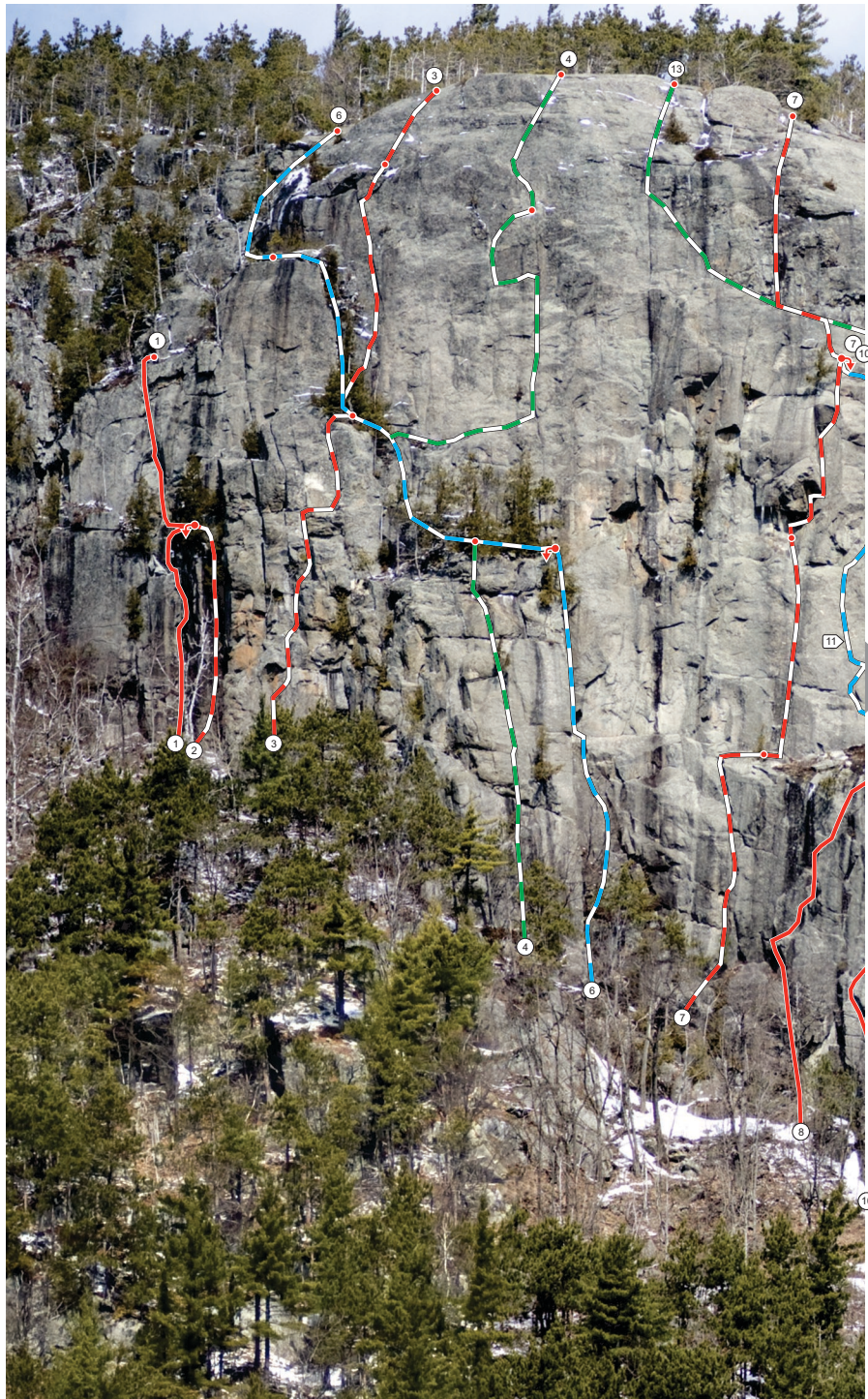
3 Happiness Is a Warm Belay Jacket 5.7 R 260'

Intricate climbing on the buttress left of **PSOC**. Watch for suspect rock at the start of P1 and the crux of P2.

Start: About 150' uphill and left of the large right-facing corner of **PSOC** is a large left-facing corner with orange rock on its outside face. Just downhill from this is a 15'-high, wide flake separated from the cliff by an 18" gap. Begin on the left side of this flake.

P1 5.7 PG: Climb to the top of the flake, up to the open book (with orange lichen on the right wall) to a ceiling. Below the ceiling, follow a crack out right, then up past the right side of the ceiling to a ledge with a block. Step right and climb a left-facing, broken open book to its top, then step right and climb a left-facing corner past





- HURRICANE CRAG**
- 1 Why Did I Fall for That (5.8)
 - 2 Squeeze Box (5.8)
 - 3 Happiness Is a Warm Belay Jacket (5.7)
 - 4 Handle with Care (5.8)
 - 6 PSOC (5.7)
 - 7 Quadrophenia (aka Bara Bara) (5.7+)
 - 8 Xenolith (5.8)
 - 10 Hooligans (5.9)
 - 11 My Generation (5.10c)
 - 13 Old Route (5.3)
 - 16 Spring Equinox (5.8)
 - 18 New Route (5.5)
 - 20 The 5th Season (5.7)

a bush to its top. Traverse right 10' and climb a thin crack up to some blocks with a tree, then up left to the rock ledge adjacent to trees (midpoint on P2 of **PSOC**). 100'

P2 5.7 R: From the right side of the tree ledge, climb up a thin crack to a flake, then onto a small ledge. Continue up the left-hand side of the face until you can cross right to a shallow left-facing, left-leaning corner. Above, follow a flared fingercrack to its end, then move upward on crumbly rock to a large boulder. Finish right and belay on a large ledge. 70'

P3 5.7 PG: Step right at the end of the ledge and climb a crack up the face. Scramble the low-angle slab up and right to the summit. 90'

FA Oct 30, 2005, Eric Gessner, John Best (aka "Johnny Appleseed")

FA (P2) May 4, 2007, Eric Gessner, John Best, Jacalyn Gniewek

4 Handle with Care 5.8 R 250'

Breaks the buttress above the **PSOC** corner and follows cracks and grooves. Much loose rock and poor protection.

Start: 15' uphill and left of the large right-facing corner of **PSOC**, at a left-facing open book 4' right of a large forked oak tree.

P1 5.8 G: Climb the crack in the open book past a

Jim Cunningham on **Quadrophenia** (5.7+) in 1985. For 30 years this was believed to be the first ascent. Photo Jim Cunningham Collection.



pine, through a bulge, and up to a cedar growing out of the crack. Continue up and slightly left to an overhang, break through on the left into a dirty left-facing corner, which is followed to the tree-covered ledge (common with **PSOC**). 90'

P2 5.8 R: From the left end of the tree ledge, climb up and left (same as P2 of **PSOC**) until you are level with a foot ledge on the face to the right. Traverse right across the face, up on some flakes, then continue rightward with increasing delicacy heading to a tiny shrub and crack just beyond. Climb straight up the crack, switch right to a second crack and up past a small overlap on the left to a ledge on the left. Traverse left, then head straight up to a right-facing flake with a stunted tree, then back right to a stance with a pasted-on flake. 110'

P3 5.4 R: Climb up and left, then wander easily to the top. 50'

FA 1975, Al Long, Al Rubin

5 Forever Wild 5.10b G 100' ★★★★★

Excellent crack climbing and deservedly popular.

Start: Beneath a large 100'-high right-facing corner (the most distinctive corner on the cliff) at the left end of a steep, blocky slope, at an oak 15' up the corner.

P1 5.10b G: Scramble up blocky terrain past an oak tree 15' up, then up a steep dirt cone to reach a horizontal on the left wall of the corner and the base of a fingercrack. Climb up the crack (finger and tight hands), through a flared section, up to a horizontal. Continue up to another horizontal, (V1) then hand-traverse right and climb up a fistcrack through a bulge (crux) to the tree-covered ledge and fixed anchor (common with **PSOC**). 100'

V1 5.9 G: A less committing finish steps left in the horizontal to blocky terrain near the arête and up to the top. Somewhat loose.

FA 1987, Don Mellor, Mark Meschinelli, Bill Simes

6 PSOC 5.7 G 310'

The Penn State Outing Club (**PSOC**) put up several new routes in the 1960s, around the same time as Trudy Healy's first guidebook was published in 1967. P1 is recommended, but the remaining pitches are a cedar-pulling nightmare.

Start: Same as **Forever Wild**.

P1 5.7 G: Scramble up blocky terrain to the oak tree 15' up, then move right to a left-facing corner. Up the corner and a ledge with a birch (optional belay). Step left into the main corner, over an overlap, and up the cedar-filled corner to the tree-covered ledge. 120'

P2 5.7 G: From the left end of the tree ledge, climb up a 10' crack and into a tree-filled weakness, which is followed to another tree ledge. Continue up and left following a weakness that becomes a horrible brush-filled right-facing corner, ending on a ledge covered with boulders. 110'

P3 4th class: From the left end of the ledge, climb up and left to the base of a tree-filled right-facing corner, which is followed to the summit. 80'

FA 1966, Craig Patterson, Fred Cady

7 Quadrophenia (aka Bara Bara)

5.7+ G (5.6 R) 350' ★★★★★

Spectacular climbing on P3 and one of the most popular moderate routes in the Adirondacks. Many parties link P2 and P3 together. The climbing at the start of P2 was once protected by a piton, which is now gone.

Start: 30' downhill and right of the large right-facing corner of **PSOC** below a crack that begins 25' up.

P1 5.7+ G: Scramble up blocky terrain, then step right to the base of the crack with a small pine. Up the crack to a crux that is just right of a small orange ceiling. Stay in the crack, then left across a small slab. Break right over a short wall to a sloping ledge, then right to a belay at a small pine below an open book. The gear for the P1 belay is not straightforward—but can be made bomber—and is located at your feet, adding to the inconvenience should one fall before the first piece on the next pitch. 80'

P2 5.6 R: Up the shallow groove and face with no protection to a horizontal break (5.6 R). Step right to another open book with a crack; up this to an uncomfortable stance below the roofs. 70'

P3 5.7 G: A fantastic pitch. Up to the roofs, then underclimbing right into a right-facing corner. Up the corner to the next roof, which is passed on the right, and up to a ledge. Step left to a pine and fixed anchor. 60'

P4 5.6 PG: Better than it looks. Climb up a couple of ledges to a short left-facing corner to the traverse dike. Traverse left 20' to a short chimney in the choss; up this chimney, then follow a slight weakness straight up through the choss to the top. 140'

History: This route was climbed by Jim Cunningham and Bob Hey on Mar 27, 1985 and named for a The Who album. However, the route had been ascended nine years earlier and named **Bara Bara** (a Swahili word for "road" or "route") by Radford and Parker, who reported that P1 had been climbed earlier (as evidenced by the fixed gear they found)—by whom isn't known, although it was generally known at the time that there was a "great 5.8 pitch" at Hurricane. Radford went on to become an accomplished mountaineer, climbing an early ascent of Fitzroy in the 1970s. He later died in an avalanche when skiing in Alaska. Also, the last pitch (through the choss) was first climbed by Wiessner as the original finish to **Old Route**.

Descent: Two ropes (or a single 70-m) are required to rappel from the end of P3 to the ledge of P1, then from there to the ground.

FA (P2, P3) May, 1976, Geoff Radford, Richard Parker

A climber negotiates the roofs on P3 of **Quadrophenia**. The crack in the background is **Forever Wild**.



8 Xenolith 5.8 PG (5.7 R) 240' ★

This worthwhile two-pitch route ends at the P3 belay of **Quadrophenia**. Either rappel from the fixed anchor (two ropes) or continue to the top following **Old Route** or **Quadrophenia** P4. P2 is recommended.

Start: 25' downhill and right of **Quadrophenia**, just left of a double-trunked oak tree, below the left end of a ceiling 10' up.

P1 5.8 G (5.7 R): Climb up to the left end of the ceiling, then up a shallow left-facing corner to its top (5.7 R). Over a bulge, then traverse 8' right to a thin crack in water streak, up this, then up the face to the large tree ledge. Belay at a tree with a fixed anchor. 90'

P2 5.8 PG: From the tree, step left and climb a slab to a broad left-facing open book, which leads past a horrible loose block to a sloping ledge, joining **Old Route** at the large flake with a pine tree on the right. Up the 10'-high crumbly section, then before the cedar, step left into a thin crack in a left-facing open book; elegant climbing up the open book leads to a point level with the large tree ledge on the right; traverse left 10' on sharp buckets (crux, watch rope drag) to another open book with a crack. Up the open book past a cedar; at the top is another very obtrusive cedar, which is bypassed on the left. Climb leftwards to the top of **Quadrophenia** and up to its fixed anchor. 150'

FA (P1) May 1, 1993, Don Mellor, John Connell, Jeff Erenston

FA (P2) Oct, 1993, Ed Palen, Bob Martin