

# Minimize Your Climbing Impacts



ABANDONED ROPES, WEBBING, AND CORD FROM EL CAPITAN

• **CLEAN CLIMBING.** Most of Yosemite's climbing areas are in designated Wilderness and accordingly must remain "with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable." Please respect "clean climbing" ethics throughout Yosemite. Avoid nailing whenever possible and don't drill new holes or chisel gear placements. Never fabricate holds or change the nature of established climbs.

• **ABANDONED PROPERTY.** Property left unattended for longer than 24 hours can be impounded. If it is impractical to return to fixed ropes within 24 hours, leave ropes and equipment in place only as long as you are actively using them. Label equipment, ropes, and water bottles with your contact information to avoid removal.



PERMANENT SCARS CREATED FROM HAMMERING PITONS



RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO REMOVE PLANT LIFE FROM CRACKS

• **Fixed Ropes.** The National Park Service (NPS) discourages the use of fixed ropes. If you fix ropes, only do so immediately before beginning your ascent, and remove once committed to the route. If you plan to return to a project regularly, leave your ropes in place only when you are actively working the route. Do not leave ropes or gear on popular routes—this takes away from the experience of other climbers.

• **"Established" Fixed Ropes & Routes.** Ropes found below Heart Ledges, East Ledges, and the Slabs approach to Half Dome are not maintained or condoned by the NPS. Do not expect these ropes to be in place, and be prepared to climb or descend without them.



AN EXAMPLE OF SYSTEMATIC LICHEN REMOVAL



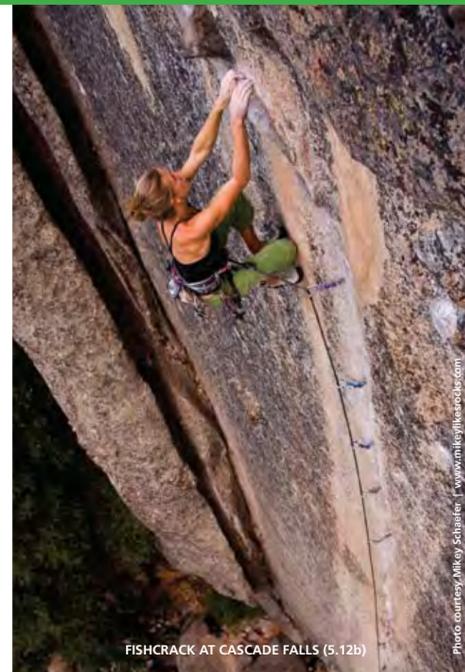
USE OF MOTORIZED POWER DRILLS IS PROHIBITED

• **BOLTING POLICY.** Currently climbers may hand drill protection or anchor bolts. The use of motorized power drills are prohibited. When you place a new bolt, keep in mind that you are permanently altering the rock. If proper discretion is not used, this policy may change.

• **NEW ROUTES.** If planning a new route, take the time to talk to the local Yosemite's climbing community and become familiar with the history of the area. New routes have a profound impact on the environment around the route through vegetation loss, erosion at the base of climbs, disturbing animal habitat, and permanent bolts left behind. There are thousands of established routes in Yosemite—consider climbing these instead of creating new ones!



HAND DRILLING PROTECTION BOLTS IS PERMITTED. PLEASE USE DISCRETION!



FISHCRACK AT CASCADE FALLS (5.12b)



AVOID CREATING UNINTENDED TRAILS LIKE THIS ONE

• **GARDENING.** Intentionally removing plant life is not permitted in Yosemite. Serious resource damage can be caused by "gardening" to establish new routes or boulder problems.

• **PROTECT LICHEN.** Yosemite's granite walls and boulders are covered in a lifeform called lichens. Lichens give the rock its streaked and blackened colors. They tend to grow at a slow rate, may be thousands of years old, and are an important part of the ecosystem. Protect lichens by climbing on established routes, faces, and boulders where lichens have not established themselves.

• **USE EXISTING APPROACH TRAILS.** Stick to signed or obvious approach trails in order to avoid creating new, unintended trails that may confuse others, cause soil erosion, and vegetation loss.



DON'T LEAVE TRASH FOR OTHERS TO CLEAN UP



PROPERLY STORE YOUR FOOD BOTH DAY AND NIGHT—BEARS ACTIVELY SEEK FOOD LEFT BY CLIMBERS

• **FOOD STORAGE.** Do not leave any food, drinks, toiletries, or trash at the base of the wall—bears seek food left by climbers. For multi-day climbs, food and scented items must be stored in a bear-resistant canister or hung at least 50 feet off the ground on 5.9 or harder climbing. If you can reach your food without climbing gear, it is not stored correctly. Remember to remove all scented items from your car. Food lockers are available at the El Capitan bridge, at the Zodiac approach, The Ahwahnee, and Bridalveil Fall (see map). Please do not place a lock on these shared lockers.

• **TRASH.** All trash must be carried down from the cliff and disposed off appropriately. It is illegal to throw anything off Yosemite's cliffs. Even small things thrown from the wall can potentially injure people below. If you pack it in, pack it out.

## Welcome!

Rock climbing in the United States has its roots in Yosemite, and it remains one of the world's greatest climbing areas. Camp 4 in Yosemite Valley is even listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its significant association with the growth and development of rock climbing. The park is not just a climber's playground—it's walls and crags are an integral part of a larger ecosystem, most of which are protected as Congressionally-designated Wilderness for people to enjoy in a natural state for generations to come. As the number of climbers visiting the park has increased throughout the years, the impacts of climbing have become more obvious. Many of these impacts can be eliminated or greatly reduced by following the practices outlined in this brochure—ensuring that Yosemite's high-quality climbing will remain intact and accessible for years to come. For more information, call 209/372-0360 or visit [www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/climbing.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/climbing.htm).



CHUCK PRATT RAPELLING SALATHE WALL, 1961

## Multi-Day Climbing

• **WILDERNESS PERMITS.** Although most of Yosemite's walls are within designated Wilderness, permits are not required for nights spent on multi-day, big wall routes. A permit for overnight use is required in all other Wilderness zones. Visit [www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/wildpermits.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/wildpermits.htm) or call 209/372-0740 for more information and reservations. Forty percent of available permits are held on a first-come, first-served basis. These permits become available at Wilderness Centers in the park one day before you plan to leave for your trip. When camping in the wilderness, all applicable rules must be followed—carry out all trash, store food in bear canisters, build campfires only in established fire rings, bury human waste 6-8 inches underground or pack it out, camp and wash at least 100 feet from trails and water sources, and leave no trace.

• **CAMPING.** Camping at the base of any wall in Yosemite Valley—including El Capitan—is prohibited. Camping at the base of Half Dome and other backcountry walls is allowed with a valid permit. Additionally, climbers often stay in Camp 4, open all year on a first-come, first-served basis. Visit [www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/campground.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/campground.htm) for more information on campgrounds in the park.



THE BATHROOM "FACILITIES"

• **"VERTICAL RELIEF" (HUMAN WASTE)** When attempting a multi-day climb, you are required to pack out your human waste and dispose of it properly. Use a "poop tube" or container for transporting your waste. When climbers leave unsanitary waste behind on ledges or toss it off the wall, it's an eyesore, a health and safety concern, and downright gross. Here are a few tips for vertical relief:

- Go to the bathroom in a paper bag or in a prefabricated human waste disposal bag like Wagbags or Restops and then put that bag in a container to carry off the cliff.
- Carry your container down with you and empty it into a pit toilet like those at the base of the East Ledges descent from El Capitan. Do not attempt to drop plastic bags into pit toilets because they clog the pumps used to empty the toilets.

## Safety



OVERNIGHT ON EL CAPITAN

• **SAFETY.** Rock climbing has inherent risks and climbers assume complete responsibility for their own safety. The National Park Service does not maintain routes. Rockfall zones occur throughout the park near any cliff faces—rockfall, loose rock, and other hazards can exist on any route. Rescue is not a certainty. If you get into difficulties, be prepared to self-rescue. Know what to do in emergency situations—including injury treatment, evacuations, unplanned bivouacs, or responding to rapid changes in weather. Be aware that courtesy is an element of safety. Do not create a dangerous situation by passing another party without their consent. Falling rock or gear is a serious hazard—be careful when climbing above others, and wear a helmet. For more information on accidents, rescues and general safety information, visit [www.friendsofyoosar.org](http://www.friendsofyoosar.org)

• **EMERGENCIES.** If you are injured or stranded while on a climb and cannot self-rescue, cell phones, personal locator beacons, spot and family-band radios, and whistles may be useful in obtaining emergency assistance. Dial 911 to report emergencies, whistle, or yell for help. If you require a helicopter evacuation, do exactly what you are told by rescue personnel. If you self-rescue, there is a medical clinic in Yosemite Valley (see map).

• **PARKING FOR MULTI-DAY CLIMBS.** Parking overnight for multi-day routes is permitted at the El Capitan crossover or El Capitan meadow (see map). For Half Dome overnights, park in the trailhead parking past Curry Village.

• **CLIMBING INSTRUCTION, GUIDE SERVICE & GEAR PURCHASE.** Visit the Yosemite Mountaineering School and Mountain Shop in Yosemite Valley or Tuolumne (see map). Call 209/372-8344 or visit [www.yosemitemountaineering.com](http://www.yosemitemountaineering.com) for information on rates and schedules.

## Partners

This publication and most of Yosemite's bear-resistant food storage lockers for climbers were made possible through generous support from:



The Access Fund is the national advocacy organization that keeps U.S. climbing areas open and conserves the climbing environment. [www.accessfund.org](http://www.accessfund.org)

Special thanks also to:



Yosemite Climbing Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and protecting Yosemite's rich climbing heritage and making it available for public viewing and interpretation. [www.yosemitclimbing.org](http://www.yosemitclimbing.org)

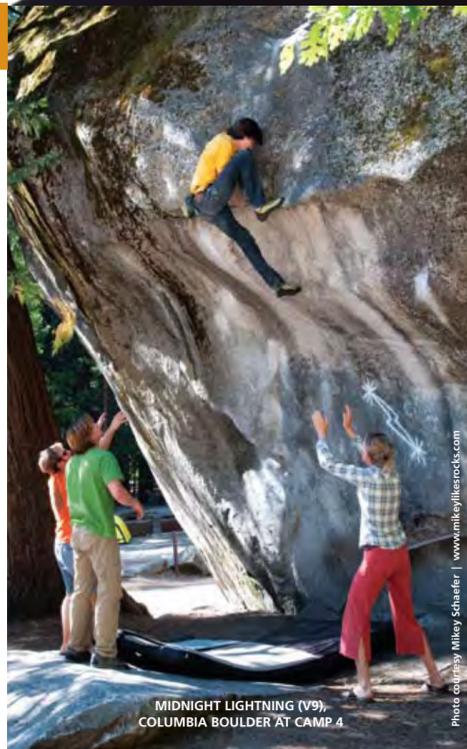
Yosemite Association is a membership-based nonprofit organization that initiates and supports interpretive, educational, research, scientific, and environmental programs in Yosemite National Park. [www.yosemite.org](http://www.yosemite.org)



The American Alpine Club unites climbers to advance the climbing way of life. We provide knowledge and inspiration, conservation and advocacy, and logistical support for the climbing community. [www.americanalpineclub.org](http://www.americanalpineclub.org)



Friends of YOSAR is a non-profit organization that supports Yosemite Search & Rescue, and provides public outreach and education materials regarding safety in Yosemite National Park. [www.friendsofyosar.org](http://www.friendsofyosar.org)



MIDNIGHT LIGHTNING (V9), COLUMBIA BOULDER AT CAMP 4

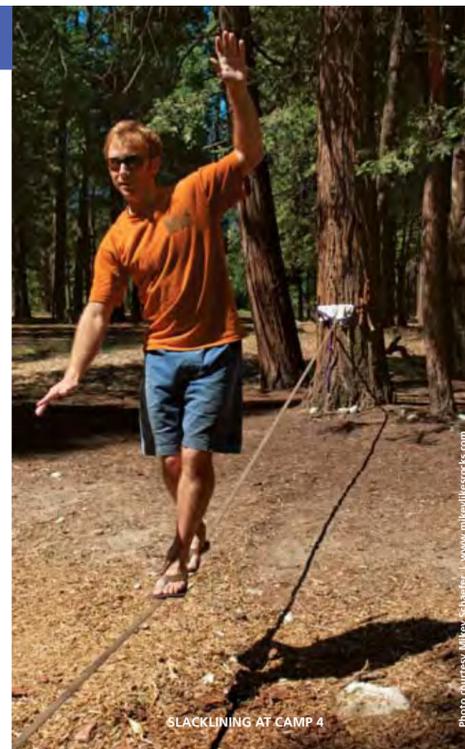
## Bouldering

There are thousands of boulder problems throughout the park. As bouldering grows in popularity, more boulders are being developed. Help reduce bouldering impacts by doing the following:

- Follow established approach trails when hiking to bouldering areas.
- Never cut or break tree limbs, remove lichen, or damage vegetation to establish a bouldering route.
- Keep bouldering areas clean. Pick up and pack out trash—including cigarette butts.
- Bouldering pads may kill fragile plant life. Try to find a different boulder problem if the landing isn't on durable ground free of vegetation.
- Minimize chalk use and clean off chalked holds when possible, especially on overhanging routes that rain won't clean. If you must tick holds, clean the marks when you're done.



CHALK LEAVES UNNATURAL MARKINGS



SLACKLINING AT CAMP 4

## Slacklining

The National Park Service worked with local "slackers" to create a slackline policy:

- Black oak populations in Yosemite Valley appear to be declining. Slacklines must not be constructed on oak trees.
- All lines must be properly padded to protect trees. There are many ways to pad and protect the anchor trees: carpet, sticks, sleeping pads, haul bags, and clothing. Check periodically to be sure that your tree protection is working.
- Lines may remain in place within 200 feet of the Camp 4 boundary for the duration of the owner's stay and must be tagged with the owner's name and contact information.
- All lines constructed outside Camp 4 must be removed when not in use.
- Lines must not be attached to man-made structures such as bridges.



Protect trees from slacklines by placing padding between the tree and the rope



Slacklines must not be constructed on oak trees

## Yosemite National Park Rock Climbing



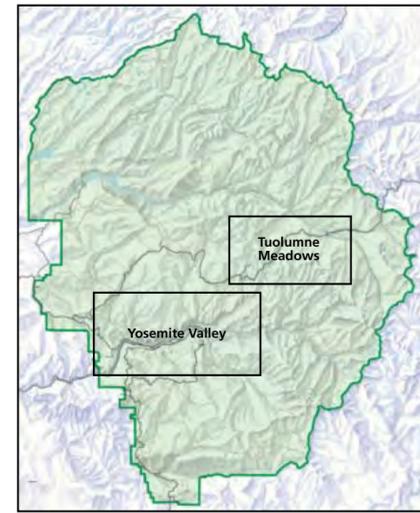
Tom Frost, Royal Robbins, and Yvon Chouinard on the first ascent of the North American Wall in 1964

# YOSEMITE CLIMBING AREAS

## TUOLUMNE MEADOWS AREA



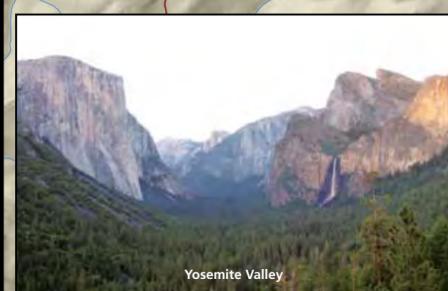
Photo courtesy: Mikey Schuster | www.mikeyschuster.com



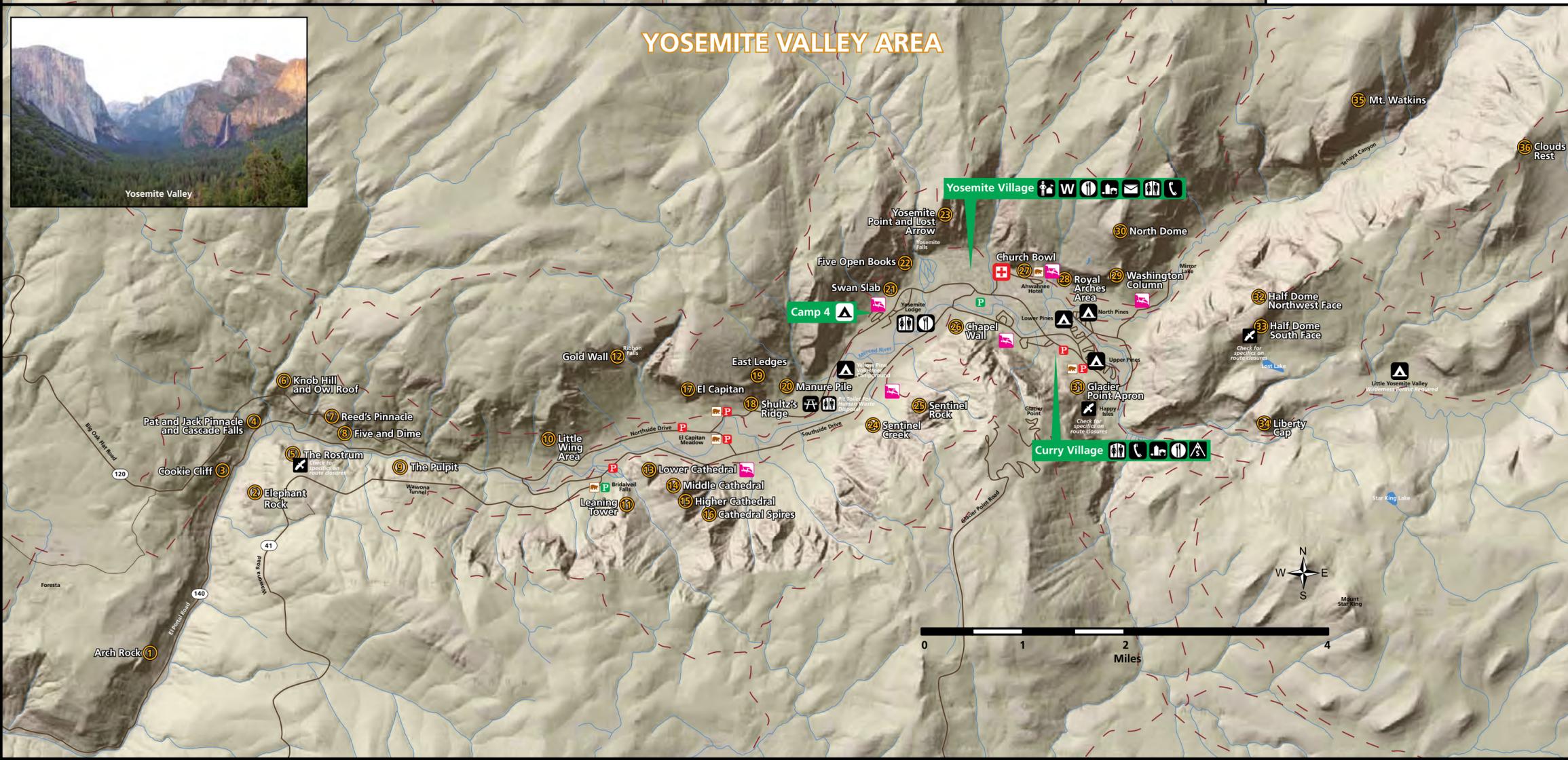
While climbing areas can be found throughout the park, Yosemite's most popular climbing areas are concentrated in Yosemite Valley and Tuolumne Meadows.

### LEGEND

- Climbing Area
  - Bouldering Area
  - Climber/Trailhead Overnight Parking\*
  - Day Use Parking
  - Medical Clinic
  - Campground
  - Walk-in Campground
  - Restroom
  - Payphone
  - Waterway/Drainage
  - Road
  - Trail
  - Bear-resistant Food Locker
  - Mountain Shop
  - Wilderness Center
  - Visitor Center
  - Grocery Store
  - Restaurant
  - Picnic Area
  - Gas
  - Typical Peregrine Nesting Area (This area is likely to be closed to climbers from March 1-Aug 1)
- \*Note: Camping in your vehicle is prohibited in parking areas



## YOSEMITE VALLEY AREA



Courtesy of the Yosemite National Park Archives

**CLIMBING CLOSURES.** Peregrine falcon nest sites are protected annually to minimize disturbance to this rare and beautiful bird species. The peregrine is in the process of recovering from decades of pesticide poisoning and is currently listed as a California State endangered species. Yosemite currently protects peregrines by seasonally closing the nesting area to climbing and other activities during the breeding period from March 1 until August 1 of each year or until the young peregrine falcons of the current year have fledged and dispersed from the area. Yosemite monitors these sites annually to detect changes in its population. Typical peregrine closures are noted on the map, but keep in mind that the closed areas can change depending on the peregrine's choice of nesting area.

Virtually every cliff face in Yosemite is subject to rockfall—closures may occur at any time due to rockfall and other hazardous conditions.

*Be aware that climbing regulations are subject to change. Check for updates and climbing closures on the park website, climbing information boards in the park, and online climbing forums.*

### USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS AND WEBSITES.

- To report emergencies call 911**
- Yosemite rock climbing information and regulations:**  
Visit [www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/climbing.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/climbing.htm) or call 209/372-0360
- Up-to-date rock climbing route information:**  
[www.supertopo.com/climbingareas.html](http://www.supertopo.com/climbingareas.html)
- Supertopo climbers forum:**  
[www.supertopo.com/climbing/forum.html](http://www.supertopo.com/climbing/forum.html)
- Yosemite weather, webcam and current conditions:**  
[www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/conditions.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/conditions.htm)
- Yosemite road conditions:** Call 209/372-0200 (press 1, then 1) for the most up-to-date Yosemite road conditions
- Wilderness conditions and trail updates:**  
[www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/wildcond.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/wildcond.htm)
- Wilderness permits:**  
[www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/wildpermits.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/wildpermits.htm), call 209/372-0740, or visit a Wilderness Center in the park
- Camping:**  
Visit [www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/camping.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/camping.htm) for information and [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) to make a reservation
- DNC accommodations, dining, and activities:**  
[www.yosemitepark.com](http://www.yosemitepark.com)
- Sierra Nevada Wilderness areas:**  
[www.sierranewadawild.gov](http://www.sierranewadawild.gov)

