

# **Elk on a shelf: Colorado wildlife officials rescue elk tangled in rope on ice climbing route**

January 8 2025

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Wildlife officials and climbers rescue a bull elk after the animal became entangled in a rope at an ice climbing area in Lake City, southwestern Colorado, Friday, Jan. 3, 2025. Credit: Colorado Parks and Wildlife via AP

Wildlife officials and several climbers rescued a bull elk by lowering it down a cliff after the animal became entangled in a rope at a popular ice climbing area in southwestern Colorado.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife officials said a group of ice climbers in Lake City encountered the [distressed elk](#) Friday morning, and a CPW biologist darted the ungulate with a tranquilizer and covered part of its head with a ski mask to protect its eyes during the [rescue](#).

The team cut the rope away from the elk's antlers but needed a way to get the 700-pound (318-kilogram) animal down from the climbing wall.

That's when the ice climbers who reported the stranded elk came to the rescue by helping state wildlife officers rig a system that used two ropes—one under its chest and another along its antlers—to lower it to the base of the route. Once the elk was on more level ground, the CPW team reversed the effects of the tranquilizer, and about 12 minutes later the elk awoke and ran off down the snowy canyon.

"When we reverse that tranquilizer drug, it can take several minutes for the animal to regain full use of its body. Sometimes they will stand quickly but still be woozy on their feet, or sometimes it will take them a few attempts to get fully standing," said John Livingston, a spokesman for Colorado Parks and Wildlife.





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He said the 2 1/2-year-old elk became stuck the previous night and was discovered at dawn, fatigued and with a few minor scrapes from trying to break free. It took more than two hours to free the hapless animal.



Elk sometimes get their unwieldy antlers entangled in man-made hazards such as clothes lines, fencing and hammocks.

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Citation: Elk on a shelf: Colorado wildlife officials rescue elk tangled in rope on ice climbing route (2025, January 8) retrieved 24 January 2025 from <https://phys.org/news/2025-01-elk-shelf-colorado-wildlife-tangled.html>

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