



Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

March, 1994 1992

MEETING

Time and Place: Meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month in the Montana Power Building at 1903 Russell Street in Missoula. The March meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 12.

Program: Roy Andes, a Missoula lawyer and alternative dispute resolution specialist, will give a slide show on a two week long sea kayak trip to Glacier Bay National Monument in Alaska. Those of you who are not whitewater kayakers will be interested to know that Ray, like you, is not a whitewater kayaker, and that people with minimal boating experience can go on some pretty fun sea kayaking trips. After seeing this presentation you may decide to head off to Baha or the San Juan Islands for your next vacation.

Notice: Nominations for officers will be accepted at the March meeting, and new officers will be elected at the April meeting. If you want to be elected as an officer, all you have to do is miss one or both of these meetings.

TRIP CALENDAR

Saturday, March 14, Trapper Peak. By popular request, we have rescheduled the ski trip up Trapper Peak, which is the tallest peak in the Bitterroots, and is located southwest of Darby. The climb will follow the standard approach from the south, which offers great telemarking on open, moderate-angle slopes, and outstanding scenery from the top. Suitable for beginning and intermediate backcountry skiers. Call Dave Pengelly for details at 728-6512.

Saturday-Sunday, March 21-22, McDonald Peak. Overnight climb of McDonald Peak in the Mission Mountains via its northwest couloir. A 6,000 vertical foot bushwack/scramble/ski/climb trip suitable for beginning or intermediate mountaineers. Ice axe and crampons required for some snow pitches below the summit. We'll schedule the trip when the snow sets up enough to walk on. If conditions are optimal we may attempt a one-day climb. Bring your bear repellent. Call Peter Dayton at 728-8101 for details.

Floating: The rivers are rising, the weather is getting warmer, and the floating season is here for sure. Call Peter Dayton, 728-8101, or Art Gidel, 543-6352, if you want to get out kayaking, canoing, or rafting during the weekends or on weekday evenings.

TRIP REPORTS

Southern Bitterroots, February 9: Steve Niday and Bill Cunningham climbed an unnamed 8740' peak in the southern Bitterroots. Noticeably absent was Peter Dayton who failed to show after a 15-minute wait that morning [Peter went kayaking - Editor]. The original plan was to climb 9355' Mt. Jerusalem but the sad tale of an unplowed road prevented that from happening. The road is plowed only as far as the last parcel of private land on the Nez Perce Fork road up the West Fork. After driving several miles on a snowmobile track Cunningham wimped out (thinking about soft, impassable snow later in the day) and drove back to the end of the plowed section near the mouth of Soda Springs Creek. The fearless duo then skied up about 5 miles of icy snowmobile track on the Soda Springs Road (#5635) to an old clearcut on the toe of the ridge between the Little West Fork and Soda Springs Creek. After side-hilling and climbing about 1000 feet vertical through fairly open-grown Douglas fir the pair hit the main summit ridge in a lodgepole pine forest at about 7200'. From that point on the ridge widened and opened up and was a delight to climb. A number of high overlooks into the Soda Springs drainage and Bare Peak provided scenic variety. After several steep pitches along the heavily corniced ridge we topped out on the abrupt 8740 high point. The wild snowscape in every direction was mind boggling. The descent was also mind boggling in that we had 4000' vertical feet of ice and crust to "ski" down. The adventure finally ended about 7 p.m. when we finally reached the car. This 15-mile out and back trip turned out to be a good second choice to Mount Jerusalem which still awaits a future attempt. - Bill Cunningham

Lolo Peak, February 15: In past years, the conventional winter route up Lolo Peak began by driving as far as possible up the McClain Creek Road, which switchbacks up the east end of Carlton Ridge. After bogging down the car, you would ski up Carlton Ridge to the saddle above Carlton Lake. From there you could drop down to Carlton Lake, ski up the bowl to the ridge, and then head for the summit. Alternatively, you could stay on the ridge and follow it around the bowl until you hit Lolo Peak. However, due to problems with off-road vehicles and snowmobiles, the Forest Service has gated the McClain Creek Road only half a mile from Highway 93, several miles east of where we used to start skiing. This has kind of killed the Carlton Ridge approach. However, for a couple of years I have been eyeing the ridge to the south of Carlton Ridge, which runs directly into Lolo Peak. There is a logging road up the nose of this ridge, but it is gated at valley level, 5,300 vertical feet (not counting two saddles) and about 7.5 horizontal miles from the summit of Lolo Peak. There never used to be much reason to mess with this route, but with the McClain Creek road closed it has started to look more attractive. I got permission from a landowner to use this approach, and Eric Jones, Bret Doucett, and I arrived at the gate on a clear warm morning. Due to little precipitation and warm weather, the snowline was a couple thousand feet up the nose. The first couple hundred feet above the valley floor is quite steep, but the ridgeline quickly becomes more gradual. Logging operations have opened up the trees, so skiing might be pretty good in a year with good snow down low. After a couple thousand feet you climb above the logging and into some dense lodgepole. Up higher the trees open up, and about 4,800 feet above the car the ridge levels off before dropping down to the first of two saddles. I was utterly devoid of ambition and sacked out on a warm rock while Eric and Bret headed further up the ridge. Eric avoided some altitude gain and some rocks by sidehilling along the north side of the ridge between the two saddles. But the day was running out, so we headed back down. The tree skiing up high was great; a solid base, a couple inches of new snow, and just little enough space between the trees to be real exciting. Down in the lodgepoles it got kind of crazy, what with slithering through the shoulder-width gaps between trees until you found a wide spot where you could pop a turn. Lower yet the snow got soft and sporadic, and we started hiking. We made it back to the car just as it was getting really dark. This route has possibilities, although due to its length you might save it for the longer days later in the spring. You should ask the landowner for permission before using the route; call me for access information. - Peter Dayton

OFFICERS

Dave Pengelly, President - 728-6512
Arnold Finklin, Treasurer - 543-8705

Peter Dayton, V.P. and Newsletter 728-8101
Your Name Here - Trip Leader (hint, hint)

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Check one: Individual (\$6.00/year) _____ Family (\$8.00/year) _____

Mail a check payable to
"Rocky Mountaineers" to
Arnold Finklin
P.O. Box 4262
Missoula, Montana 59807

THE MOUNTAIN EAR
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MISSOULA, MT 59806

(STAMP)

FIRST CLASS MAIL