



# Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

February, 1993

---

## 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 February meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 10.

February Program: Jim Wilson, the owner of Pipestone Mountaineering in Butte and an experienced climber and climbing instructor, will give a slide show and instructional talk on ice climbing and ice climbing techniques. Should be a real interesting presentation even if you dislike heights, cold weather, and danger.

---

## TRIP CALENDAR

Saturday, February 6, Blue Point. Ski trip up Blue Point, which is located above Marshall Ski Area in the Rattlesnake Mountains. Blue Point is connected to Wishard Ridge and Sheep Mountain by a horseshoe-shaped ridge. Call John Pierce for details at 542-2640.

Sunday, February 14, Daly Peak. Ski trip to the Daly Peak - Iron Mountain - Echo Mountain area, which lies east of Cooper Lake and the North Fork of the Blackfoot, out in the Ovando area. Although trips to this area in previous years were blighted by lack of snow and/or whiteout conditions, there are large open slopes on these mountains, and I hope to find good telemarking conditions this year. Call Peter Dayton at 728-8101 for details.

Sunday, February 21, Moderate ski-touring trip, destination dependent and snow and weather conditions. Call Julie Huck at 549-2226 for details.

Sunday, February 28, Gash Point. Ski trip to Gash Point, one of the most popular backcountry skiing areas in the Bitterroot Mountains, which is located west of Victor. Moderately strenuous, suitable for beginning and intermediate backcountry skiers. Call Dave Pengelly at 728-6512 for details.

Sunday, March 7 or 14, McDonald Peak. Climb of McDonald Peak, the tallest mountain in the Mission Range. A strenuous non-technical 6,000-foot climb; crampons and ice ax recommended. Trip could be converted to a two day trip on March 6-7 or 13-14. Call Art Gidel at 543-6352 for details.

April 3-10, Desert Float Trip. Ed Monnig is interested in going on an easy spring multi-day family-style wilderness desert canoe and/or raft trip, with the San Juan and Dolores Rivers being prime candidates. Both have outstanding scenery, do not have difficult white water, and should have decent stream flows at that time. Call Ed at 721-2707 with your questions and suggestions.

Wanna lead a trip? If you are interested in leading a trip, help is only a telephone call away; Art Gidel, 543-6352, will be delighted to sign you up.

---

## TRIP REPORTS

Sky Pilot Peak, January 16-17: A couple years ago, seven or eight club members did a one-day climb of Sky Pilot Peak, which is located west of Victor in the Bitterroot Mountains, behind Gash Point. This trip involves a 20-mile round trip, with 4,700 feet of elevation gain. This year, Rick Murney scheduled the climb as a two-day trip. Although we do seem to be getting slower as we get older, I suspect that Rick scheduled the outing as a overnight so he could catch up on his sleep; the 5:16 p.m. sunset and the 8:16 a.m. sunrise produced fourteen hours of darkness. On Saturday, Rick, Steve Niday, Peter Dayton, and Rick Reister headed up the Middle Fork of Bear Creek to Bryan Lake, which is located southwest of Sky Pilot. This involved an eight-mile trudge up the creek bottom, with only 2,650 feet of altitude gain. Other skiers had been in to the log bridge, about three miles, but we had to break trail after that. We camped in the trees below the lake. Steve dug out a huge kitchen area, and we also dug down

to running water in the creek so we didn't have to melt snow. Although I was worried about suffering from boredom and insomnia during the long night, I didn't have any trouble sleeping until it got light. After breakfast we headed up the moraine above Bryan Lake, and then up the relatively gradual southwest face of Sky Pilot, a two-mile trip with 2,050 feet of elevation gain. The scenery was really fine, and the clouds opened up to give us some longer views as we approached the top. Steve made it all of the way to the summit on his skis, but the rest of us postholed up the last hundred feet or so through intermittent wind-exposed rocks. The snow conditions were not bad, about eight inches of new snow on a slightly inconsistent and weird base, and we had a fun ride back to our camp. After packing up we mushed off down the trail for home. The angle of the trail is steady and gradual once you get a mile or so away from the lake, the undergrowth is cleared well back from the edge of the trail, and we had plenty of snow for rock coverage and speed reduction, so the trip out was not too crazy. We got back to the cars about dark. Rick Reister used randonee bindings and plastic climbing boots on the trip; I would not be surprised to see more people using this gear in the future. Incidentally, if the low-altitude snow coverage is good, the first four or five miles of this trail make an excellent and scenic beginning-to-intermediate ski tour. - Peter Dayton.

Koch Peak Area, January 24: John Pierce, Steve Niday, Peter Dayton, and Bret Doucette took a ski trip in the Koch Peak area, which is located northwest of Lake Como, which in turn is located northwest of Darby. From the dam, which is currently undergoing reconstruction, we started up a logging road, and when that pooped out we continued up a ridge along an old skid trail. A couple thousand feet up we entered an area which was partially burned by a large forest fire about three years ago, and followed a massive, forty-yard wide fire break further up the ridge. We then traversed off to the west towards Koch Peak until we reached a saddle. From this point, climbing Koch Peak involves two or three miles of rather intricate route-finding through various cirques and rock-bands. However, I was coming down with the flu and was holding back the group, so we instead opted to climb an unnamed 8,250 foot peak about a mile and a half east of Koch. This involved some amusing lurching up and down over drifts and cornices on a ridge. The ski out was excellent all the way down to the road, thanks to well-spaced trees, the fire break, the skid trails, and plenty of new snow. A crowd of snowmobilers followed us all the way up to the saddle. They may have held back so as not to disturb us, but we would have been delighted if they had blasted on by and broken our trail. - Peter Dayton.

Buffalo Rapids, January 31: The Missoula Chapter of Kayakers Anonymous held its first meeting in 1993 on Sunday, January 31, on the Buffalo Rapids section of the Flathead River, which begins several miles southwest of Polson, below Kerr Dam. This venue was selected because all other rivers in the area were still heavily encased in ice. The meeting began with the usual introductions: "My name is Red, and I'm kayak dependent." "My name is Slim, and I also have a kayaking problem." (The names of chapter members have been changed to protect their anonymity.) The day was overcast, hazy, and grey, the temperature was hovering around 35, and there was lots of snow on the ground, but due to the warmth of the water flowing out of Flathead Lake, there wasn't a speck of ice on the water. The road down to the put-in was gated and snowed in, so Red and Slim climbed into their kayaks and tobogganed down to the shore. The water level was moderate, perhaps 6,000-7,000 cfs, and the water was clear and bottle-green. Bald eagles, a number of deer, a mink, and numerous ducks of various species were seen on the trip. Red got some marathon surfs, which were terminated only by lactic acid buildup in his arms. Dry suits with lots of clothing underneath kept the duo dry and toasty, and both Red and Slim took a number of practice rolls. However, the coolness of the water made itself known after repeated immersions, and Red admitted that he was certainly relieved that they didn't encounter any good endo holes. Both participants found the trip most therapeutic, and a motion was made, seconded, and passed to do it again soon. - (Author's name withheld at his request).

Como Lake Ice Climbing, January 31: Dave Pengelly, Steve Niday, Shirley Zylstra, and Gerald Olbu decided to hone our ice climbing skills, so we headed for the ice falls at the end of Como Lake, which is located south of Hamilton in the Bitterroots. After a 3-mile ski across the lake, we found the ice had formed quite nicely. We chose a 70-foot ice falls to climb. The ice was quite featured and had many air pockets which caused a lot of large pieces to break loose as we climbed. We each got to climb two different routes. The first route had a long vertical stretch near the top. The second route had several cascades; it was deceptively difficult to climb up onto a ledge. All of us had a great time as we polished our skills and shared our mountaineer humor. - Gerald Olbu.

---

OFFICERS

Art Gidel, President - 543-6352  
Dave Pengelly, Secretary-Treasurer - 728-6512

Peter Dayton, Newsletter Editor 728-8101  
Rick Murney, Vice President - 543-7586

---

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Mail a check payable to  
"Rocky Mountaineers" to  
Dave Pengelly  
P.O. Box 4262  
Missoula, Montana 59806

THE MOUNTAIN EAR  
P.O. BOX 4262  
MISSOULA, MT 59806

(STAMP)

FIRST CLASS MAIL