



Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

MARCH, 1995

MEETING

Time and place. Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:30 in the County Commissioner's conference room on the second floor of the Annex (new portion) of the Missoula County Courthouse. This month's meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 8. Enter the building through the north door.

Program. Peter Dayton will present a slide show on multi-day wilderness whitewater kayak and raft river trips in Idaho. The presentation will give you a look at some of the most spectacular and best-known wilderness river trips in the country, and will feature (a) slides taken on trips down the Middle Fork of the Salmon, the Main Salmon ("River of No Return"), the Lower Salmon Gorge, the South Fork of the Salmon, the Selway, Hells Canyon, the Owyhee, the Bruneau, and the Jarbidge, (b) explanations of how to work with and around the USFS river permit system, and (c) a lot more information about how to carry poop on a raft down a river than you care to receive. The good news: no pictures of Peter Dayton (he's always behind the camera). The bad news: lots of pictures of Art Gidel. This slide show will get you all jacked up for the 1995 whitewater season.

TRIP CALENDAR

March 11, Saturday, Petty Mountain. Easy to moderate hike to 7200-foot Petty Mountain which is off Petty Creek south of Alberton. The route follows a nice trail through some interesting forest and grassland areas. There is a good chance of viewing a herd of bighorn sheep as well as other wildlife. With the early spring, some wildflowers may be out. It is 10 miles, round trip, with nearly 4000 feet of elevation gain to the peak, but we may not go all of the way to the peak, depending on the desires of the participants. Call Ed Monnig at 721-2707 for more information.

March 11-12, Saturday and Sunday, Gray Wolf Peak. If spring-like conditions continue, this may be a good opportunity to do a classic snow climb of Gray Wolf Peak, which is the southern-most peak in the Mission Mountains. The climb of the peak is normally a fourth-class climb, however, with snow it may be more challenging. It will probably be a semi-technical climb. Hopefully, the snow in the south couloir and the backside of the mountain will be well set up and firm. If there's lots of fresh snow, then we will make alternate plans to do some tele skiing at some other location. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

March 19, Sunday, Lolo Pass. Ski touring trip to the Lolo Pass area suitable for beginning and intermediate-level skiers. Even though there might not be any snow in Missoula, there is still a lot at Lolo Pass. This is a great opportunity for a casual ski trip in manageable terrain. There are many roads and trails in the Lolo Pass area which are ideal for ski touring. The exact route the group will follow will depend on participants' interest. Call Julie Warner at 543-6508 for more information.

March 25, Saturday, Babcock Mountain. Hike to 6361-foot Babcock Mountain which is southeast of Missoula in the Sapphire Mountains about 5 miles up Rock Creek. This is an easy to moderate hike on a trail which is about 10 miles, round trip, with 3600 feet of elevation gain. There may be some snow on the trail but it should be in good shape unless there is new snow. Call Richard White at 251-6430 for more information.

April 1-2, Saturday and Sunday, Como Peak. Overnight snow climb of the north face of Como Peak which is southwest of Hamilton. The initial part of the trip follows a trail for about five miles. Then, the route goes through the brush, rocks and snow. There are a couple of nice places to camp in this area. The climb of the peak is a fourth-class climb, with exposure, requiring an ice ax. There are three Como Peaks. The west peak is the most aesthetically pleasing with a series of three snow slope ramps leading to the summit. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for details.

April 9, Sunday, Rock Climbing. Enjoy a day of rock climbing. This session will be especially suitable for beginners wishing to gain rock climbing experience in order to feel more comfortable on some of the Club's mountaineering trips. A variety of climbs will be offered: some easy, some difficult. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

April 15-16, Saturday and Sunday, McDonald Peak. Overnight climbing trip to McDonald Peak, the highest peak in the Missions. The route follows a trail for about 2 miles, then crosses a creek and goes up the side of a ridge through the brush. The route alternates between brush, cliffy areas, and snowslopes and culminates on the large snowslope of West McDonald Glacier, which leads to the peak. Although this trip involves some rock climbing and snowslope travel with an ice ax, it is not as demanding as a typical fourth-class climb, and individuals with minimal climbing experience would enjoy this trip. The main requirements are endurance and good winter camping skills. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for details.

Telemark Skiing. Anyone interested in skiing on a weekend day is encouraged to contact Dave Pengelly at 728-6512. The location and date are dependant on the conditions; he'll go where there is good snow.

Kayaking. Put down this newsletter, go over to your sink, put your head under the faucet, and shoot a blast of cold water into your ear. Now wasn't that fun? It's only a taste of what you can experience as you kayak down the whitewater rivers of our fair region in the spring. Call Peter Dayton at 728-8101 or Art Gidel at 543-6352 if you want to participate in the very trendy sport of kayaking.

Wanna lead a trip? If you are interested in leading a trip, contact Gerald Olbu at 549-4769.

TRIP REPORTS

Burnt Mountain, January 29. Apparently, there was more interest in the Superbowl than hiking since no one signed up to do the mountain. In retrospect, the game on the mountain was a lot more interesting than the football game. More than two dozen Rams and Ewes (bighorn sheep) faced off and calmly drove to the east. The trail shown on the topo map can be tough to find -- from the Solomon Ridge trailhead (beside Rock Creek), follow the trail to Spring Creek, where a hiking sign invites you to go north. Ignore it. Instead, stay on the road to the right for 75 yards, then head off to the left at a 45 degree angle. The trail switches back and forth beneath and between some interesting cliffs, with some easy scrambling, until it reaches the ridge. Follow the ridge to the mountain top. The ridge is open with wide-ranging views, and has a southern exposure so there is minimal snow (and is probably clear now.) - Richard White.

Blodgett Canyon ice climbing, February 4. The warm mid-winter weather limited our choices of destinations for ice climbing, but the north facing gullies were still holding their own in the midst of 50 degree temperatures. Brenden Beatty and Dave Pengelly set up two double rope top ropes on Swan Slabs, a Grade 2 ice formation in Blodgett Canyon. Jeff Halliday, Eric Moles, Jon Bonnicksen (his first time on crampons, much less ice climbing!), Brian Aergerter, Rick (one-tool) Reister, Greg Zlock, Paul Wilson, and new club member Len Broberg all took turns with both lines to practice their techniques, including front pointing, pulling a bulge, and trying to remove a tool without breaking the pick after they had buried it in the ice, which was very plastic. The greatest excitement was trying to negotiate the trail into the climb. There was a layer of smooth water ice on the trail for most of the approach to the climb. Several of us opted to wear our crampons on the trail rather than risk a fall. Full rollerblade protective gear would have been helpful. Thanks to Rick and Jenny Murney, Steve Niday, and Ralph and Mary Ann Flockerzi for loaning us extra helmets, ropes, plastic boots, and ice tools for the outing. - Dave Pengelly.

East St. Mary's Peak, February 12. Despite a windchill advisory in Missoula, four climbers, Dave Bickell, John Nelson, Gerald Olbu, and Greg Zlock, set out for East St. Mary's Peak. It was a beautiful day with a clear blue sky. We made great time hiking up the ridge. We reached treeline and had spectacular views of our destination. We continued along the long ridge leading to the summit. The wind was biting cold. The temperature was -10°F and the wind was at least 40 miles per hour, which made the windchill -70°F. We assessed the conditions periodically. Everyone's feet were cold, but not too bad. Then, we noticed that the lower half of one member's nose was white, indicating the initial stages of frostbite. We immediately wrapped the area and headed down. On this trip, we gained some cold weather experience. It turned out to be only minor frostnip and not too serious. - Gerald Olbu.

Kayaking, February. On Thursday, February 2, warm weather and rain pushed the Lochsa river up to 4 feet. By Saturday, February 4, levels had subsided to 2.25 feet, but the kayaking was great, with uncharacteristically blue skies and a lot of snow on the ground. Normally we don't start kayaking on the Lochsa until the middle or end of March. Then a week and a half of frigid weather froze up the rivers again. On Saturday, February 18, the sky was once again blue, the temperature was in the fifties, and there wasn't any ice floating through downtown Missoula, so we headed for the Alberton Gorge. Much to our disappointment there was a steady stream of large blocks of ice floating down the river, so we headed back to Missoula to look for some safer entertainment, like maybe running under moving railroad cars in the rail yard. On February 19 I floated the Buffalo Rapids section of the Flathead, which was free of ice, and by February 20 the Clark Fork was free of ice and at a terrific surfing level. I boated the Lochsa on both February 25 and 26, encountering pretty good crowds of boaters from Montana and Idaho. Everybody seems to think it is going to be an early and short boating season, and they are trying to take advantage of the water while it is around. - Peter Dayton

Glacier Park, February 18-19. A group of three backcountry skiers, John Nelson, Gerald Olbu, and Greg Zlock, ventured into Glacier Park over the President's Day weekend. There were only two other groups in the park this weekend. We skied up the Sprague Creek trail and broke trail all the way. There were lots of fresh heavy snow and we were sinking in about a foot and half when we reached our campsite near a waterfall below Sperry Chalet. During the night, it began raining quite steadily. The rain made the snow heavy and brought down the avalanches. We lay in our sleeping bags and listened to the roar of numerous nearby avalanches. The next morning, we assessed the conditions. It was no fun skiing in the rain and the avalanches were continuing all around us, sometimes 5-10 minutes apart. We decided to leave. It was still a challenge to get out because the avalanches obliterated our ski trail and more were still coming. We couldn't ski above the avalanche zones because of cliffs, so we skied below the runout zones. With a little effort, we were back at the trailhead by afternoon. - Gerald Olbu.

OFFICERS

Gerald Olbu, President - 549-4769
Dave Pengelly, Secretary-Treasurer - 728-6512

Peter Dayton, Newsletter Editor 728-8101
Dave Siemens, Vice President - 549-0102

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Check one: Individual (\$6.00/year) _____ Family (\$8.00/year) _____ (9398)

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