



Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

APRIL, 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, April 12. Enter the building through the north door.

Program. Skip Horner, a local climber from Victor with a national reputation, will present a slideshow entitled: "Climbing the Seven Summits." Skip has climbed the highest peaks on all seven continents.

Special meeting. There will be a special meeting at 6:30, immediately before the regularly scheduled meeting. Charles Asp, a research associate with the Forest Service Aldo Leopold Wilderness Institute, will survey members about their views of different recreation management techniques on the national forests. This is part of the Recreational Area Management Survey which will have national significance.

CALENDAR

Thursday Evenings and Saturdays, Rock Climbing. Come and join the rock climbing group on most Thursday evenings and Saturdays. The group will climb a variety of climbs. These trips are especially well suited for beginners who want some rock climbing experience to prepare for some of the Club's mountaineering trips. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

April 9, Sunday, St Mary's Peak. Ski to St. Mary's Peak which is one of the taller peaks in the Bitterroot Range west of Stevensville. The trip will involve some road skiing until the trailhead is reached. From there, the route follows a gentle ridge with thinly-spaced trees to the top of the 9400-foot peak. This will be a moderately strenuous trip. Call Art Gidel at 543-6352 for details.

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.

April 16, Sunday, Bear Creek. Hike up Bear Creek, which is located about 15 miles west of Lolo and north of Highway 12. The route mostly follows an old logging road so the brush and ticks should be minimal. As the road traverses up the side of a ridge, one will have views of open meadows and the valley below. This will be a relatively easy hike depending on the participants' interest. Call Julie Warner at 543-6508 for more information.

April 22-23, 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 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 some exposure, requiring an ice ax. There are three Como Peaks. The west peak is the most aesthetically pleasing with a series of three snow ramps leading to the summit. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for details.

May 7, Sunday, Heavenly Twins. Climb the Heavenly Twins which are located in the Bitterroot Mountains west of Stevensville. The route begins by going toward St. Mary's Peak and then turns off just before the peak and goes cross country through some beautiful high alpine country above treeline. The climb of the peak is a short fourth-class climb with some exposure. This will be a long and strenuous trip. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

May 13, Saturday, Limestone Palisades of the Clarkfork. Hike up and over the limestone cliffs just east of Bearmouth. This is a joint trip with the Montana Native Plant Society. Peter Lesica, a botanist, will be joining us. There are some rare plant species in the area which we will be exploring. Come and see what else we find. Call Ed Monnig at 721-2707 for further details.

Summer Mountaineering Trips. Plans are being made to climb a few regional mountains in July, August, and September. Possibilities include: Mount Rainier, North Cascades, Canadian Rockies, Grand Teton, Granite Peak, and Glacier Park. If interested, make early arrangements with Gerald Olbu, 549-4769.

Kayaking. Rivers are full of germs, dirt, and sewage. As spring runoff approaches, outdoor persons are advised not to come in contact with any of these sources of contagion unless they are protected by a tightly sealed and sanitary kayak. Health-conscious individuals may call Peter Dayton, 728-8101, or Art Gidel, 543-6352, if they wish to go kayaking.

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

TRIP REPORTS

Alberton Gorge, nighttime winter kayaking, March 10 and 16. As our kayaking careers progress, we keep pushing into new areas. When we first started running the Lochsa, it was kind of scary. Now the Lochsa is a familiar old friend, and we routinely run bigger water. When we first started doing multi-day self-contained kayak trips, it was sort of a big deal. Now we normally take several such trips each year. When we first started kayaking in the winter, nobody was doing it. Now all that keeps us off the rivers in the winter is bank to bank ice. So, it was fun, but not at all unusual, for us to be surfing the big main wave at Fang in the Alberton Gorge on March 5 in a blinding snowstorm. The Gorge was at a terrific level for surfing, and everybody was complaining that we couldn't go kayaking in the evenings after work because it wasn't staying light late enough, and I said, so why don't we go kayaking after dark? This seemed perfectly sensible to a couple of us, so Mike Worrall and I left town at 5:30 on Friday, March 10, to give it a try. I carried a Coleman lantern down to Triple Bridges Rapid while Mike set off to leave the car at the takeout and bicycle back to the put-in. It was getting quite dark by the time I carried my kayak down to the beach across from the Purple Cliffs. Our headlamps worked fine for kayaking. Flat green water soaks up light like a rain-wet highway, but foam, breaking waves, and holes shine brightly in a headlamp. The spray which flies up from the nose of your kayak flares up like fireworks because it is so close to your headlamp. Steam from your breathing and spray from the rapids also floats around in the beam of light from your lamp. Surfing is pretty neat, with foam pouring out of the darkness and zooming past you as you carve back and forth on the face of the wave. When a kayaker is surfing out of sight in the trough of a big wave, all you see is the glow of the headlamp moving back and forth across the wave. The kayaker periodically surges to the crest of the wave, illuminating the spray shooting out from the boat in a burst of light before diving back into the trough. We set up the Coleman lantern on a rock beside Triple Bridges Rapid and found that we could surf without our headlamps. However, we started leaving our headlamps on so we could see rocks underwater as we worked our way back up the eddy. The lantern was fun to try, but we probably won't bother using one in the future; headlamps work fine by themselves. Although it was overcast, we ran all of the smaller rapids, such as Split Rock and Boateater, with our headlamps turned off. This worked fine for us because we know the river very well. However, I would be reluctant to bring an inexperienced kayaker or a kayaker who wasn't familiar with the river on a nighttime trip. Some features are hard to see, like horizon lines and pourovers, and it would be hard to find a kayak or a paddle if somebody took a swim. We ended the evening with more terrific surfing at Fang. It was fun, and already it didn't feel unusual. Jeremy Keane, Dave Harodson, and I did another nighttime trip on Thursday, March 16, under clear skies and a brilliant full moon. - Peter Dayton

Gray Wolf area, March 18-19. Three mountaineers, Andy Cable, Gerald Olbu and Jon Nelson set out for a winter climb of Gray Wolf Peak. We made fast time up the ridge. Just as we got to treeline it began snowing. We weren't concerned; we expected a light snowfall. The snow on the ground was in excellent condition; it was firm, well set up, and great for kicking steps. We made camp at the far end of Upper Riddle Lake in an attempt to be sheltered from the very strong wind. The next morning, we dug ourselves out of our tents and found a foot of snow had fallen in the last 17 hours. That was quite a surprise since the forecast called for "occasional, scattered snow showers over the mountains." What was great climbing conditions was now treacherous conditions with a foot of fresh powdery snow with no stability. However, the white scenery was beautiful. - Gerald Olbu.

Babcock Mountain, March 25. A week before, this trail in the Sapphires near Rock Creek was clear of snow. However, a last minute storm dumped up to 6" of new snow above 5,000 feet. Nevertheless, Alyssa, Christy, Dan and I all reached the southern summit of Babcock Mountain (6361 feet). This mountain is unusual in that it has two summits, about a half mile apart, which are the same elevation. The trail does not appear on the Iris Point topo, but starts at the Kitchen Gulch trailhead, 2.2 miles south of the interstate. It heads south almost immediately, and switches back and forth to create a very gentle grade. Unfortunately, after climbing 2000 feet, one reaches a logged area which has wiped out the trail. For the last 800-foot climb to the top, we used a mix of logging roads and bulldozer trails. On a good day, one can see the Bitterroots rising beyond the Sapphires. Although the logging was a disappointment, this is one of the earliest trails to open in the spring, and can be reached by driving entirely on paved roads. The trail is open, with good mountain views for nearly the whole distance. - Richard White.

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: _____

Mail a check payable to

"Rocky Mountaineers" to

Dave Pengelly

P.O. Box 4262

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

Missoula, Montana 59806

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

(STAMP)

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