



# Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

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SEPTEMBER, 1996

## MEETING

**Meeting:** Club meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month in the County Commissioner's conference room on the second floor of the new portion of the Missoula County Courthouse. Please enter through the north door. The September meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 11.

**Program:** In September the program will consist of our traditional potluck slide show of pictures which Club members took on trips during the prior year. Dig up a selection of your favorite slides from the past year and bring them to the meeting. If you're new to the Club, this slide show is a good way to learn something about the kinds of activities pursued by members of the Club, and to get some ideas for good trips.

## CALENDAR

**Thursday Evenings and Saturdays.** The rock climbing group will meet on most Thursday evenings and Saturdays. The group will climb a variety of climbs suitable for beginning- and intermediate-level climbers. This is an excellent way to prepare for some of the Club's mountaineering trips. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for details.

**August 31-September 2, Saturday-Monday, Warren Peak.** Three-day climbing trip to Warren Peak (10,463 feet), which is on the continental Divide and is the second highest peak in the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness. A short hike on the first day will take us to the campsite. The climb of the peak on the second day will involve some easy fourth-class climbing. This will be an excellent way to cap off the summer and reflect on previous trips. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for details.

**September 8, Sunday, Fifth Annual Eagle Pass Hike.** Day hike, entirely on a trail, through some very pleasant country in the Mission Mountains. This 15-mile loop trip begins at Lake McDonald, follows Post Creek, goes past five lakes, over Eagle Pass and out the Eagle Pass trail. Sights along the route include a cedar forest, a raging waterfall (which we cross at the base), alpine lakes, wildflowers, McDonald Peak, Mount Calawahcan, and much more. This will be a long, but fun hiking trip. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

**September 13-15, Friday-Sunday, Mt Jackson.** Mount Jackson is a 10,052 foot summit in the Logan Pass area of Glacier National Park. There are two backcountry campgrounds along the trail to Gunsight Pass, and both are short backpacks with little elevation gain. From Gunsight Lake it is about three miles to the summit with 4800 feet of elevation gain. From Reynolds Creek, it is about eight miles and 5500 feet of elevation gain. We will try to keep this moderate and follow one of the scramble routes in the Climber's Guide to G.N.P. by Gordon Edwards. If there is snow on the peaks or these campgrounds are full, there are many other destinations in the area for a trek, like Granite Park-Swiftcurrent Pass. Unfortunately, Glacier backcountry regulations limit each campsite to four people in two tents. Call Steve Schombel at 721-4686 or leave a message and phone number with Julie at 543-6508.

**September 14, Saturday, Gray Wolf Peak.** Climb Gray Wolf Peak (9001 feet), which is the impressive, double-humped peak on the south end of the Missions and can be seen from Highway 93 north of Evaro. The route to this mountain usually isn't very brushy and not too long, making it one of the more pleasant approaches in the Missions. The climb of the peak will require fourth-class climbing and perhaps an ice ax. Views from the summit should be great, especially looking down onto Gray Wolf Glacier. Call Dan Chisholm at 542-1266 for details.

**Summer and Fall Trips.** Plans are being made for some interesting trips this summer and fall. Mount Rainier, Grand Teton, and the Canadian Rockies are good candidates. If interested, make early arrangements with Gerald Olbu at 549-4769.

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

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## TRIP REPORTS

**Mission Trek, July 26 - August 5.** The Mission Mountains are perhaps the most scenic range in Montana with its rugged towering cliffs, glaciers, snowfields and deep blue alpine lakes. There are 18 peaks or points in the Missions above 9000 feet. Dan Chisholm, Brett Doucett and myself (Gerald Olbu) made a plan to hike along the Mission Divide and climb 11 of the most remote peaks on a nine-day trek. Also, part of our plan was to eat fine dinners and enjoy the scenery. We accomplished what we set out to do, although our exact schedule was largely dictated by the weather. With the conclusion of this trip, I have climbed all 18 of the peaks over 9000 feet, and Dan has climbed all but one, which he probably will climb this fall. Some of the highlights of the trip are as follows:

On the first and second day, we hiked in and camped near our first objective. On Day 3 we climbed Mount Shoemaker, Turquoise Peak and Peak 9328. It involved a bit of fourth-class climbing and was quite fun. Just as we returned to our camp, the first storm hit us with lots of rain and low foggy clouds. Brett didn't like the weather, so he headed back on the fourth day. Dan and I continued toward our next destination, but before we got there, a sudden vicious thunder storm hit us and we had about five minutes to set up our tents. On Day 5, we woke up to a blue sky, which also happened to be the last day that it did not rain. We continued our journey, and shortly after noon we reached the site where we had planned to camp the night before. That afternoon and evening, we climbed Mountaineer Peak and the adjacent unnamed peak. We attempted to traverse the top of the Garden Wall. We climbed across a couple of exposed notches and then around a rock column with loose rock footholds, dubious handholds and 500 feet of exposure. It was an extreme fourth-class move. We looked ahead and saw that to continue would require several more such moves, so we retreated. As we were descending the snowfield, we met a mountain goat that we named George, Curious George. He circled around us, usually at a distance of about 20 feet, but at one point came within five feet. He followed us back to our camp, sniffed at our tents and bedded down about 50 feet away for the night. He was still there the next morning.

When we got up on the morning of Day 7, the sky was filled with dark gray clouds. We waited around camp watching the sky, wondering if and when it was going to rain. Finally, we decided if we were going to climb Sonielem Ridge we had to go for it then. There are six peaks or points along Sonielem Ridge. We traversed along the top of the ridge and over every one of the six peaks. It was mostly fourth-class climbing with moderate exposure, and was made more tense since we were constantly watching the clouds in the Flathead Valley which still looked like they could rain at any moment, but strangely hadn't. We reached the end of the ridge, ate a quick snack, and headed back. And, as if right on schedule, just as we reached camp we were hit with severe rain. The storm continued, but little did we know that this was no ordinary storm. All night long, we listened to the wind howling and what sounded like rain hitting our tents. On the morning of Day 8, we looked outside and saw 1-2 inches of snow on the ground. A major storm had moved in. The wind was still howling and it was snowing intermittently all day long. We had planned to begin our two-day descent down to the trailhead on that day. But, with this weather, we decided that the only safe thing we could do was to stay right where we were. The route out involved traversing over some exposed rocky ledges. We were very much aware of the consequences of an injury in this remote, rugged area of the Missions in cold, wet, windy conditions with just two of us. We got up at the crack of dawn on Day 9. The route out took us up and over a pass and along the top of a ridge. We were in white-out conditions with only about 50 feet of visibility. We navigated using compass and altimeter, and then descended. And, naturally, it began raining and continued for the remainder of the day. The bushwhacking was miserable. In places, cliffs dropped into the lake, forcing us to climb wet rocky cliffs with our 50-pound packs. Then, there was more bushwhacking. We had been completely soaked all day long, but by this time, it seemed like it didn't matter anymore. We gave it all the energy we had. As darkness approached, we came to a major creek that we couldn't cross. We made camp. On the morning of Day 10, we explored and found a way to cross the creek. Now, we were on the trail leading back to our vehicles, which we reached at mid day.

Since we were a day late returning, some friends had contacted the search and rescue. They were making plans to come and look for us. They would have looked in the wrong place and would never have found us. I want to discourage anyone from trying to repeat this trip. Quite frankly, if you become injured and immobilized, you will eventually die and wild animals will eat your body and your remains will never be found. That's the way it is in the Missions. - Gerald Olbu.

**Kakashe Peak area, July 27.** The newsletter advertised a trip to Kakashe Peak, or an adjacent unnamed 8895 foot high axe-head like peak in the Mission Mountains to the north of Mission Falls. Ralph Flockerzi, Jon Bonnicksen, and I (Peter Dayton) elected to go for the axe-head. From the Mission Falls trailhead we bushwacked straight north up to the top of the west ridge of Kakashe. Having tried this hike several different ways, I suggest starting at the campground at the east end of Mission Reservoir, instead of at the trailhead. Starting at the campground involves a bit more horizontal distance to the peak, but requires less bushwhacking up the side of the ridge. Once on top of the west ridge, we located the trail and headed up towards Kakashe. The trail reduces the amount of bushwhacking, although it does fade out in a couple of places, and impatient hikers may get tired of the switchbacks and prefer to bushwack straight east up the ridge. After about 4,000 feet of climbing we dropped into the basin to the north of Kakashe, headed east across a large boulder field, and then climbed to the saddle between Kakashe and the axe-head. From the saddle we headed up the ridge to the summit of the axe-head. The total vertical climb, taking into account the descent into the basin, is about 5,800 feet. After basking in the sun and the scenery for a while and writing silly things in the register, we returned to the saddle. Always eager for new sensations, we then dropped into the basin to the east of Kakashe, and continued straight downhill towards Mission Creek, which we reached a short distance upstream from Mission Falls. The route is steep, but the bushwhacking isn't bad, and only minor route-finding is required to avoid cliff bands. It was a nice day hike, and none of us became injured, immobilized, or eaten by animals. - Peter Dayton.

**Kintla Peak, August 9-12.** On Friday morning, Aug. 9, Brett Doucett, Julie Warner and Steve Schombel met in Apgar Village for an attempt on Kintla Peak, a remote 10,000-footer in the northwest section of Glacier National Park. After getting backcountry permits and info, we drove to the Boulder Pass trailhead at Kintla Lake. Since Brett had climbed this peak before, we modified our itinerary to follow the route he was familiar with. The first afternoon, we backpacked 11 1/2 miles to the Upper Kintla campground on a good trail. The next morning we hiked another 4 1/2 miles and camped in a nice meadow west of and below Boulder Pass. At 7 a.m. Sunday, Brett and Steve left on the high route to Agassiz Basin. We had to cross a few steep snowbanks and hike the length of Agassiz Glacier to reach a saddle. From there, the easiest way up the east face was blocked by more treacherous snow, so we climbed some steeper rocks than anticipated to reach the summit ridge. After walking this ridge and some more gully climbing on the west face, the two of us stood on top of Kintla around 2 p.m. While on top, a grizzly strolled by on the scree only a few hundred feet from us. Because of this and because Brett had climbed down the shorter northeast ridge, we attempted to descend only to find this route blocked by more steep snow. So we returned to the summit and went down our way up. Luckily, the bear was gone by then. After a tiring downclimb and hike we managed to reach camp just before dark. On Monday the three of us backpacked 15 miles to the car, got a late dinner

and drove home. Truly, a long and strenuous trip. Estimated distance from the high camp to the summit is 4 1/2 miles with 3200 feet of elevation gained from the low point of the glacier. - Steve Schombel.

**Three Sisters, August 11.** The Three Sisters are the second highest peaks in the Bitterroots and attracted Andre Duran, Tom Goering, Paul Wilson and myself to venture to the top of them. The route we were planning to attempt still contained snow and wet rock, so we modified our plans. We headed for the east peak. We climbed up and traversed along some nice granite slabs, but came to a dead end. So, we dropped back down, traversed to the left and gave it another try, and were rewarded with a route to the summit. We watched the sky for thunderstorms. It looked very dark, but mostly from smoke from the nearby fires. - Gerald Olbu.

**West St. Marys Peak, August 17.** Art Gidel scheduled a hike up West St. Mary's Peak in the Mission Mountains, but some of his kayaking buddies lured him away on a three day kayaking trip in Canada, so I (Peter Dayton) agreed to lead the trip in his place. Greg Zlock, Bret Doucette, Catherine Shirley-Davidson and I parked at the campground at the east end of Mission Reservoir and bushwacked to the top of the ridge on the south side of the reservoir, where we were pleased to discover a pretty good usage trail. This trail lasted for several thousand feet before it piffled out. After about 5,000 feet of climbing we reached the prominent point to the south of Mission Falls, where the scenery, as advertised, was just dandy. Catherine, who had just moved to Missoula from Boston five days earlier, seemed satisfied. We continued towards the summit, a thousand feet higher and a mile and a half away. There was some smoke in the air and the weather looked a bit threatening, but the visibility was pretty good and it never rained on us. A few hundred feet below the summit I suddenly got real dizzy, apparently from an ear problem caused by a cold, so Catherine and I took a break on the ridge while Greg and Bret bagged the peak. The descent was a exciting experience for me, due to my malfunctioning system of balance. Still seeking new sensations (some people never learn), we decided to descend via the avalanche gulch which runs down the west side of West St. Marys, and then swing back north to the end of the reservoir. This route worked out real well for most of the way. After we descended through a large bowl, the drainage narrowed into an avalanche gulch. We had easy going down the dry stream bed, but this route wouldn't work as well if water was running down the stream bed. The easy going ended when the avalanche gulch leveled out. Suddenly the stream bed disappeared into chest-deep vegetation, and we found ourselves floundering around in nettles, unable to see our footing. Then we found the main stream bed again, but it was a tunnel of horrors, severely obstructed by overhanging branches and logs. We decided to climb out of the bottom of the drainage to the south facing slope above us, but had to flounder through several hundred feet of Class V bushwacking before the vegetation became less obstructive. Once out of the clutches of the avalanche gulch, we worked our way back to the trail on the ridge above the reservoir and returned to the car. I don't recommend the avalanche gulch directly to the west of West St. Marys, but one of the gulches further north might be better. Anybody want to check them out with me? As I said, some people never learn. - Peter Dayton.

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#### OFFICERS

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Julie Warner, Secretary-Treasurer - 543-6508

Peter Dayton, Newsletter Editor 728-8101

Len Broberg, Vice President - 549-6031

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#### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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

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

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

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

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