



Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

JUNE, 1997

MEETING

The Club does not hold meetings in the summer. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, September 10, when we will have our traditional potluck slideshow of members' trips from the past year. We encourage everyone to go on some interesting trips and contribute to this slideshow.

CALENDAR

Wednesday evenings, 6:00 p.m., Mount Sentinel. Need a little bit of mid-week exercise? Meet at the trail head at 6 p.m. for a leaderless tour of Mount Sentinel, or call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for a forecast.

June 15, Sunday, Kakashe Mountain. Climb Kakashe Mountain (8575 feet), which is in the Mission Mountains near St. Ignatius. The first portion of the route will go up a moderately steep and forested slope. Some interesting snow gullies will need to be climbed near the summit. If conditions permit, a scenic descent route may be chosen. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

June 29, Sunday, 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 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 an ice ax. Views from the summit should be great, especially looking down onto Gray Wolf Glacier. One option is to come for the hike and then hang out at the lake. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for details.

July 4-6, Friday-Sunday, McDonald Peak. Spend the Fourth of July weekend on McDonald Peak. The route will begin on a trail, followed by lots of off-trail travel through brush, rocks and snow. We will try to camp on a flat spot below the peak. The second day can be spent lounging around on the peaks. Views of the Missions from the summit will be spectacular. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for details.

July 13, Sunday, Como Peak. Climb the north face of one of the Como Peaks, which are the three symmetrical peaks south of Hamilton in the Bitterroots. The route will follow a trail for six miles to a lake, then go off-trail through brush, rocks, and snow. The middle Como Peak has a series of three snow ramps leading to the summit. An ice ax, fourth-class climbing and lots of endurance are required for this trip. One option is to come for the hike to the lake. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for details.

July 19, Saturday, Mount Stanton. Climb Mt. Stanton (7750 feet), which is in Glacier National Park near the north end of Lake McDonald. This peak has a nice south ridge that melts off early, and is a good introduction to climbing in Glacier. The route begins at the head of Lake McDonald and follows a trail to the top of Howe Ridge, then involves about a 1/2 mile of Glacier-type bushwhacking with grassy slopes and a little krumholtz vegetation, followed by a moderate scramble up the slippery and fragmented rocks of Glacier to this little summit. From the top, one should have great views of Lake McDonald and the Logan Pass area. The overall distance is about 4 miles with 4500 feet of elevation gain. Call Steve Schombel at 721-4686 or leave a message with Julie Warner at 543-6508.

August 2-3, Saturday-Sunday, Mount Jackson. Climb Mt. Jackson (10,052 feet) which is on the Continental Divide in the center of Glacier National Park. It is an easy six-mile backpack to Gunsight Lake. From there, we will follow a scramble route as described in J. Gordon Edward's book *A Climber's Guide to Glacier National Park*, which is about 2-3 miles and almost 4800 feet of elevation gain to the summit. One option is for people to come for the backpack trip and hang around the lake, fish, or take a day hike up a trail. I have reserved two campsites for up to 8 people on August 2nd and 3rd. Even though I plan to return to Missoula on Sunday, participants with their own vehicle can stay the second night and hike out on Monday. Call Steve Schombel at 721-4686 or leave a message with Julie at 543-6508.

August or Labor Day, Mount Stimpson or Mount Merritt. Climb Mt. Stimpson or Mt. Merritt, two 10,000-foot peaks in Glacier National Park. The choice depends on the snowpack and stream flows. If you have experience and time for a 3 or 4-day backpack trip into Glacier, call Steve at 721-4686.

Summer Mountaineering. Plans are being made for a few multi-day mountaineering trips this summer. Trips being considered include: Mission Mountain trek, Mt Rainier, Mt Baker, Grand Teton and a Canadian Rockies trip. If interested, make early arrangements with Len Broberg at 549-6031, Gerald Olbu at 549-4769.

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

TRIP REPORTS

Dolores River, April 20-26. In April, Peter Dayton, Art Gidel, and Ann Gidel did a 97-mile seven-day kayak trip on the Dolores River, which is located in western Colorado between Grand Junction and Durango. This is a very scenic canyon which runs through a variety of climatic and ecological zones, from Ponderosa pines to scrub oak thickets to slickrock and Juniper. It was still early spring in the area, with snow on the north-facing canyon walls, and much of the vegetation had not greened up yet. There is moderate white water and one Class IV+ rapid (Snaggletooth) on the upper half of the canyon, and flat water and Class II rapids on the bottom half. White water junkies may consider this trip too tame, but the scenery and hiking are great. We did a lot of side hikes, some very nice, but in a few areas the vegetation, particularly scrub oak, restricted the hiking. There are dirt mining roads along some sections of the canyon, and a highway crosses the river halfway through the trip, but there is virtually no other development, and the canyon provides a pretty good wilderness experience. Art and I did the upper half, and were joined by Ann for the bottom half. The water is fine in the upper half of the river, but about half way through the trip two side creeks bring in huge amounts of silt and salty water from a salt dome area. We were prepared to carry a lot of water, but fortunately the side streams were clear. They say (I think) that you get more forgetful as you get older, and this trip provided a good example of the insidious effects of aging, as both Art and I forgot our tent poles. I left my tent poles in Missoula, but discovered they were missing en route to the launch site, and was able to get them sent to Ann in Moab by Fed Ex so she could bring them with her when she joined us in the middle of the trip. For the first half of the trip I had to tie my tent up to an overhead rope. When we were about a mile and a half down the river, Art suddenly realized that he couldn't remember packing his tent poles in his kayak. We stopped, he dragged everything out of his boat, and sure enough, no tent poles, so he hiked a mile and a half back up to the launch site, and there they were, lying on the ground. It's awful getting old. Peter Dayton.

Big Creek (Middle Fork of the Salmon), May 9-11. Big Creek is a wilderness river trip in the Frank Church Wilderness in Idaho. You fly into the headwaters of this creek, float down about 40 miles to the Middle Fork of the Salmon, and then float the last 25 miles of the Middle Fork to the take-out on the Main Salmon. We had tried to do this trip for several years, but kept getting thwarted by bad weather or high water. Last year, after canceling yet another planned Big Creek trip, we floated the Middle Fork at 8.5 feet, which at the time was the highest level in ten years. On the way we stopped at Big Creek and hiked up about half a mile to see what it looked like. It looked fun. This year everything finally cooperated, and Peter Dayton, Art Gidel, Dan Hoheim, Scott Lenaberg, and Mike Worrall flew into the Big Creek airstrip. The trip starts with a 3/8 mile haul from the airstrip to the creek. The upper sections of the creek were about the size of Rattlesnake Creek, small and rocky with periodic steep drops and a lot of log jams. Those log jams certainly keep you on your toes. You can get down most rapids somehow, but running is not an option with many log jams. After years of carrying spare paddles in our kayaks and complaining about it, we finally got a chance to use them when Scott's paddle broke, for no particularly good reason, on the first day. A few minutes later Mike almost broke his leg when a rock rolled when he was climbing up the river bank. Fortunately he was OK, because we didn't have a spare leg. Feeling that our karma was going bad, we camped early. The next day was scenic and uneventful. We saw a big herd of elk by the river, and got by Coxey Rapid, the biggest rapid on the trip. After Monumental Creek the creek got really big, much bigger than I remembered the creek all the way down where it joins the Middle Fork, and the creek continued to rise overnight. The last seven miles of the creek are pretty much continuous rapids. They were huge, and at these levels they tended to rachet up from Class IV to Class IV+ to Class V-. After some excitement we started doing a lot of scouting, which helped. We were relieved to finally make it to the confluence. The Middle Fork was at 6.5 feet, and after a 25-mile, three hour roller coaster ride we arrived at the takeout. - Peter Dayton.

West St. Mary Peak, May 11. It's interesting how the weather and snow conditions change as the season progresses. Two weeks ago, we had massive amounts of rain when we attempted West St. Mary Peak. On this day, Dan Chisholm and Gerald Olbu were greeted with a beautiful blue sky. Unfortunately, it was too nice. This was the first warm day of the season and the powder snow was now light mush, the kind you sink into up to your waist and makes travel real slow. After an effort, we arrived at the top of the ridge where we could see the rest of the route to the summit. It was not possible to go further because the soft, unconsolidated snow didn't provide any support on the steep slab rocks. We ate our lunch, took in the great views of the snow-capped Missions and then headed back. - Gerald Olbu.

East St. Mary Peak, May 18. Dan Chisholm led this trip, and Tony Sabol and I can attest to the fine job he did leading us to the top of East St. Mary Peak. One of the great things about the Missions is that they are very pristine and relatively undeveloped; we explored around and found another trail leading up through the brush. Snow conditions were perfect on this day. A week of near-record warm weather had softened the snow deep into the snow pack, then cool temperatures the previous night firmed up the snow. This made it easy to walk on top of the snow without postholing. We walked up the ridge to the summit. We came to an obstacle five feet below the summit: a snow cliff-type cornice. The top of our heads were above the peak, but we still had to climb up a five-foot snow cliff. It wasn't as hard as it looked and soon we were standing on top. Views of the Missions were great and West St. Mary Peak looked formidable. The trip down was quick and we got out almost by dinner time. - Gerald Olbu.

Jarbridge and Bruneau Rivers, May 23-26. Peter Dayton, Art Gidel, Seth Wilson, Dan Hoheim, and Tyler Etzel did a four-day, 69 mile trip on the Jarbridge and Bruneau Rivers, which are located in the high desert of south-central Idaho. These rivers run through a basalt canyon which contains an exquisite combination of great scenery and great White water. Wilderness river trips don't get any better. This is the fifth time I have done the trip, and I'll be back for more. - Peter Dayton.

St. Joseph Peak, June 1. Taking advantage of continued excellent snow conditions, Dan Chisholm, Brett Doucett, Gerald Olbu and Greg Zlock headed for St. Joseph Peak. We hiked up the trail for 5-6 miles then headed straight up the mountain. When we reached the snowline, we found the snow to be firm-packed, making it an easy walk to the summit. St. Joseph Peak is one of the highest peaks in the Bitterroots and we had spectacular views of the surrounding snow-capped mountains. All day long we expected thunder showers, but the weather turned out great - a tiny bit of rain in the morning, but no thunder, and mostly sunny. The trip down was quick and uneventful. - Gerald Olbu.

St. Mary Peak, June 8. Even though the weather forecast called for possible rain, Brett Doucett, Gerald Olbu, Sara Rider and Steve Schombel took a chance for an easy ski/hike trip to St. Mary Peak. This was the first weekend it was possible to drive all the way to the trailhead, so it was only 4-5 miles to the peak. We were pleasantly surprised to find that even though we could see clouds above the Bitterroot Valley, most of the time we had a clear blue sky above us. From the summit, we could see McDonald Peak in the Missions, the Pintlers and all of the Bitterroots. We had an interesting conversation with a wilderness ranger who told us there are plans to remove the lookout tower next year because it's in the wilderness. Overall, this was a great trip for socializing; we spent five hours hiking and six hours BS'ing. - Gerald Olbu.

So, there you have the story of the three nearby St. Mary Peaks. East and West St. Mary Peaks are in the Missions near St. Ignatius and St. Mary Peak is in the Bitterroots near Stevensville.

OFFICERS

Gerald Olbu, President - 549-4769
Julie Warner, Secretary-Treasurer - 543-6508

Peter Dayton, Newsletter Editor 728-8101
Len Broberg, Vice President - 549-6031

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

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"Rocky Mountaineers" to
Rocky Mountaineers Outdoor Club
P.O. Box 4262
Missoula, Montana 59806

Check one: Individual (\$9.00/year) _____ Family (\$12.00/year) _____ (9398)

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