



# Mountain Ear

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE  
ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

SEPTEMBER 1999

*The Rocky Mountaineers are dedicated to the exploration of Western Montana's mountains and other high peaks throughout the world.*

## MEETING

**Club Meetings:** The Rocky Mountaineers normally meet the second Wednesday of each month at the Missoula Public Library (lower level meeting room). The club does not meet during the summer months so that we can enjoy the long summer days and explore our beloved mountains.

Our next meeting will be held on September 22 at 7 p.m. **Please note that this is the fourth Wednesday in September.** At the request of several members, the meeting was moved back to accommodate extended climbing trips over the Labor Day holiday. This meeting will be our annual "potluck" slide show, where we all show each other slides of our mountaineering exploits in the past year.

**A SPECIAL NOTE TO ALL MEMBERS:** We are looking for new faces and energetic people to lead trips of all skill levels! Please contact Matt Grandy if you are interested in being a trip leader.

## TRIP CALENDER

**September 24-26, Fri-Sun, Three 12,000 footers and One 11,000+:** Come climb with us in the Beartooth Mountains near Red Lodge. We'll ascend to Sundance Pass and set up a base camp. From here, we will scramble to Silver Run Peak (12,542 feet) and Point 12,500 (12,500 feet). The next day, we will do Mount Lockhart (11,647 feet) and Whitetail Peak (12,548 feet). When the Beartooth Mountains are viewed from the east, Whitetail Peak appears to be the highest peak in the range, and is often mistaken for Granite Peak - the highest peak in Montana. These climbs are an easy introduction to Montana's highest alpine country. Winter clothing, gear, and tent are strongly recommended, as the Beartooths are renowned for snowfall in the middle of summer, and weather could be a factor during our trip. Contact Tony or Tami Sabol at 273-2566 for questions.

**September 26, Sun, St. Joseph Peak:** Penny Palm will lead a trip to St. Joseph Peak (9,587 feet) in the Bitterroot Range. Mountaineers will follow the Bass Creek Trail for about 3 miles and then go off trail to gain the ridge. The ridge to the summit is approximately 4 miles. Contact Penny at 258-2000 if you are interested.

**October 2-3, Sat-Sun, Rocky Mountain:** Steve Schombel will lead a climb of Rocky Mountain, the highest point of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area (9,392 feet). Park your trailer or pitch a tent near the end of the South Fork of the Teton River road on Saturday. On Sunday, it is a 4 1/2 mile hike up a trail with approximately 2000' elevation gain to Headquarters Pass. From the pass, it is a steep 2000' in a mile and one-half to the summit. If we hit the trail early and keep a steady pace, we'll be back home early Sunday evening. There should be great fall colors in October. Call Steve at 721-4686 for more information.

**October 2-3, Sat-Sun, McDonald Peak:** At 9,820 feet, this is the highest peak in the Mission Mountains. The peak lies within the annual Grizzly Bear Protection Zone and is closed from July 15 through October 1. This will be our first chance this fall to climb the peak. We'll pack in from the Swan Valley to our base camp at Cliff Lake. Participants not wanting to climb can explore some nearby lakes and waterfalls. An ice axe will be required. Most participants will be packing out to the trailhead Sunday night, but some may wish to camp Sunday and hike out on Monday. Call Tony Sabol at 273-2566 for questions.

**October 3, Sun, Rattlesnake Beginners Hike:** Julie Warner will lead a hike up Spring Gulch and Curry Gulch in the Rattlesnake. The hike is about 8 miles with 2 miles of moderately steep terrain uphill. Please contact Julie at 543-6508 for more information.

**October 9, Sat, Boulder Peak:** Climb Boulder Peak (9804 feet) in the Bitterroot Range. This peak should provide us with spectacular views of Trapper and other Bitterroot Peaks. We will scramble up the east ridge to the summit. Please call Tami Sabol at 273-2566 for more information.

**October 16-17, Sat-Sun, Borah Peak *or* Mt. Harding:** Depending on weather conditions and interest, we are planning on climbing either Borah Peak (12,655 feet) or Mt. Harding (9,061 feet). Borah Peak is Idaho's highest peak, located approximately 4 1/2 miles south of Missoula. We will ascend the southwest ridge (mostly scrambling) and gain 5,200 feet in less than 3.5 miles. An ice axe is suggested for a knife-edge ridge crossing near the summit. Mt. Harding is located in the Mission Mountains near Ronan. The ascent will involve some route finding, brushwacking, scrambling, and Class 4 moves. Please contact Tony or Tami Sabol at 273-2566 for more information.

**Want to Lead A Trip ?** If you are interested in being a Trip Leader for the Rocky Mountaineers, contact Club President Matt Grandy at 728-0647 or e-mail him at [matthewg@montana.com](mailto:matthewg@montana.com).

## TRIP REPORTS

**Eighteen Mile Peak:** Matt Grandy and Tami Sabol drove past Dillon and to the base of the highest peak in the Beaverhead Mountains. The trip began with a very creative and adventurous version of 4-WD trails. We did a little muddin' just to get within 1 1/2 miles of the base of the peak. We finally came to a wetland that looked as though it would engulf the entire truck if we dared to attempt a crossing. We strapped on our packs and started cross-country through a beautiful sloping prairie. Upon reaching the base of the peak, we started our ascent up the steep ridge on scree slopes. Close to the top, it was apparent that bad weather was moving in quickly. We scurried to the top across large talus blocks and reached the summit just in time to see a fascinating lightening bolt hit Borah Peak. We suddenly noticed that the hair atop both of our heads was standing straight up. Suddenly, the sense of urgency to descend quickly set in. We scrambled down the peak as fast as we could. Near the bottom, rain and high winds pummeled us. Upon reaching the truck, we both let out a sigh of relief and a trip to McDonald's was in order - Tami Sabol

**Scapegoat Wilderness:** There were no calls about Rocky Mountain, so Steve Schombel opted to backpack into the Scapegoat Wilderness - ten miles up Straight Creek from Benchmark. Then, up the Green Fork, where an unmaintained trail led through a break in the cliffs. And back across the plateau to the top of the Scapegoat. At 9204 feet, it is the high point of the Scapegoat Wilderness Area. The route took a little longer, but was the gentle way to the summit. The Rocky Mountain Front has unique topography, and is only 3-4 hours away. You should visit it sometime - Steve Schombel

**Mount Athabasca:** The Labor Day trip to Mount Athabasca in the Canadian Rockies has become an annual event, labeled by some club members as the "Athabasca Extravaganza". This year we got more than we bargained for. A total of four Rocky Mountaineers made the trip this year: Penny Palm, Karen Aplan, James Banister, and Matt Grandy. James and Matt headed north on Friday morning, hoping to enjoy the evening nightlife of Banff. Penny and Karen joined up the following day. Base camp was established in the Icefields Campground in Jasper National Park (car camping). The morning of the climb started out uneventful. Up at 4 a.m., breakfast, and the short 10 minute drive to the base of the climb. We toiled up the moraine with our packs and climbing gear, mindful of the weather. It was snowing high on the mountain. As we roped up, we could hear the wind roaring above, but we could not see the summit due to the whiteout conditions above. We were not alone on the mountain - this is one of Canada's most popular climbs. But Canadian climbers tend to be a friendly bunch, so we did not mind the company. Conditions deteriorated rapidly as we ascended up the glacier. As we approached the headwall at the base of the Silverhorn (where you turn right to go to the col, or turn left to ascend Silverhorn itself), a party higher than us turned around and reported extreme avalanche conditions on the traverse to the col. As their observations matched ours, we made the painful decision to turn around. Some members of another party above us were having trouble, so we decided to ascend the 100 yards between us and tell them of our decision to descend, and offer to take their struggling members down with us. When we got to them, they reported that they too were going to get off the mountain. As they descended past us, we became the highest party on the mountain. Suddenly, we were slammed by an avalanche!!! We only were carried a short way, but a few seconds later we were hit by a second, larger avalanche. How far we were carried down the mountain is not known, each of us had our own recollection of events. What is known is that all four of us were able to dig ourselves out on our own, and there were no injuries. We hurried off the mountain, chased down the glacier by yet a third avalanche. The bad news was that a large amount of our gear was lost or destroyed. Penny's brand new rope suffered a severe cut, ending its brief, but heroic career. All in all, close to \$500 in gear was lost or destroyed. But that is just money, the important thing was that we survived. This trip is an important lesson to our club. This is a serious business that we engage in. The four of us came very close to losing our lives that day, and a bond was forged between us. We need to be constantly vigilant that safety remains the hallmark of the Rocky Mountaineers - Matt Grandy

**Alaska, Yukon & Northwest Territories, British Columbia, Alberta (Aug.-Sept.):** Tami and Tony Sabol set off in post-marriage bliss to explore the upper half of North America, scout some peaks to climb in the future and to do some climbing en-route. Our drive took us by the Stikine Icefield (seen from the Cassiar Highway) and home to the Devil's Thumb - a coveted climb. The mountains there are very spectacular and offer countless mountaineering challenges. We moved on and passed numerous peaks in the Alaska Range - Mt. Deborah, Mt. Hayes, and Mount Kimball, which though they range from 10,000-13,832 feet, offer difficult snow and ice-covered routes. We motored through the rest of interior and south-central Alaska, seeing Mt. McKinley - North America's highest at 20,320 feet, as well as countless challenging peaks in the Alaska, Kenai, Chugach, and Wrangell Mountains. Back in the Yukon, we set out to climb a peak with historical significance to Montanans. In 1905, Colonel Joseph Conrad - associated with Conrad, Montana - being a wealthy easterner, bought up an entire area of mining claims. The mountain at center was named **Montana Mountain (7,280 ft.)**. The mountain is about 60 miles from Skagway, Alaska and lies along the Klondike-Goldrush route. An access road from Carcross, Yukon winds up to the mountain before becoming totally photos before the clouds washed out. We hiked up the remaining road in intermittent blowing rain and snow and gained the north ridge to the mountain. Much of the route is trail, developed by gold and mineral seekers, until just about 500 feet below the summit. From there, an easy snow scramble brought us to the top of Montana Mountain in the Yukon Territory. We snapped quick summit and snow began to thicken. We made a side trip to Skagway, Alaska, and then began our trip southward on the Alaska Highway. We stopped at

Muncho Lake Provincial Park in northern British Columbia. This area offers some of the highest peaks at the northern terminus of the Rocky Mountain Range, which ends 30 some miles to the north at Liard River, B.C. The Muncho Lake area has countless peaks of a very aesthetic nature to climb. We continued on to Stone Mountain Provincial Park and selected **Mt. St. George (7,419 ft.)** to climb. We hiked about 2 miles on a road and trail before crossing onto and over alpine tundra. We popped up on a small plateau and saw 14 caribou grazing all around us. Autumn was in full swing here and everywhere else northward. The diversity of plants yielded countless shades of red, yellow, and orange hues. We continued up over broken ground and gained the southeast ridge. The ridge was mainly small limestone talus and the scrambling was moderate. The wind, however, was not. Gusts of 30-50 mph pummeled us at irregular intervals, occasionally knocking us over. We struggled to the summit, snapped quick photos, then began the long descent. The next day we continued towards home and were rewarded with crystal clear skies as we drove through the Canadian Rockies in Jasper, Banff, and Kootenay National Parks. All totaled, we journeyed 7300 miles, climbed 2 peaks, saw 24 bears (7 of them grizzly/brown bears), Dall sheep, caribou, Alaskan moose, fox, 1 wolf, and countless peaks, mountains, and mountain ranges---offering a lifetime of climbing opportunities. As the Alaska state motto says, "North to the Future" - Tony and Tami Sabol



### CLUB OFFICERS

President	Matt Grandy	728-0647	Treasurer	Julie Warner	543-6508
Vice President	Tony Sabol	273-2566	Secretary	Penny Palm	258-2000
Vice President	Steve Schombel	721-4686	Newsletter Editor	Tami Sabol	273-2566

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Check One: Individual (\$9 per year) \_\_\_\_\_ Family (\$12 per year) \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to "Rocky Mountaineers"      Rocky Mountaineers  
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