



# MOUNTAIN EAR

Monthly Newsletter of the Rocky Mountaineers

HIKING-CLIMBING-MOUNTAINEERING-SKIING-  
EXOTIC TRAVEL-EXPLORATION OF PEAKS AND  
MOUNTAINS OF MONTANA AND OF THE WORLD

\*\*\*December 2001\*\*\*

## DECEMBER MEETING

*We have a very interesting program this month, by two modern day explorers of a remote part of the jungles of Southern Mexico. Like explorers of yore, they are searching for the unknown. Here is how they describe their talk:*

Joe and Tina Oliphant will be presenting a slide show summarizing 5 years of searching for caves deep in the high elevation rain forest of Oaxaca, Mexico. We have been organizing expeditions to this area of Northern Oaxaca since 1994, establishing relations with the local Mazatec Indians. Three of the five years were spent simply attempting to chop our way toward a very lucrative and enticing area via the topo maps. This enticing area is referred to as The Lost City and is as exotic as it is inhospitable. This area appears to be the logical insurgence for the Rio Orpan, a huge resurgence cave located in the Santo Domingo River valley. It is this insurgence area where we hope to find a deep, world class cave system feeding the Rio Orpan. We will also provide slides of other explored, deep cave systems in the general area.

*And their quest continues, they are returning to the area this winter:*

We and 5 others are heading toward Oaxaca, Mexico for a month beginning mid December to continue our 6th year of exploration for a deep cave system. We will drive about 4 days to our final parking spot, another 3 - 4 days of hiking and transporting gear to our final Base Camp and then a possible 21 days in the area referred to as Lost City. Our goals here are the re-establishment of base camp, map and photograph new caves, surface survey of trails and karst features, continue exploration of the Lost City with a focus on the checking of black holes from aerial maps. We will also reinforce the strong relationships and good will with the local Mazatec Indians

## A BRIGHT FUTURE

Correction from our last newsletter: our meeting place is the County Commissioners meeting room on the second floor of the court house annex, not the City Council Chambers. We are planning on meeting regularly on the second Wednesday each month through May at 7:00 P. M. In spite of this mistake between 40 and 50 people came last month to hear the wonderful stories and see great slides by Smoke Elser. We are very pleased with the turnout. We are trying to arrange more interesting programs; not just the same old people climbing the same old mountains. If this kind of interest continues then the future does, indeed, look bright for our club.

One thing we are going to try this month is to have a business meeting after the show. Come on time, and be entertained. Only those who are interested may stay later. What we want to do in the next couple of months is install a new set of bylaws. December is the time to have a discussion, with January being the meeting we hope to vote for adoption or rejection. We sent a copy of proposed bylaws to all members last month. If you need one call or e-mail a club contact listed on p. 3.

Suggestions we have received so far: People 18 and under should not be considered full members and be able to lead trips. The older bylaws stated that the membership dues were for a household. This should continue, and then persons under 18 would be part of this household and not the primary members. One person agrees on removing "primary emphasis on rock and snow climbing" from the mission statement. Also says that section 5.6 makes no sense. Another thinks that we should have definite officers and try to establish a board of directors; having all members also be board members will be too cumbersome and just won't work.

We will have some copies of the proposed bylaws at the next meeting and encourage feedback from the rest of you. We also would like to recruit leaders and talk about dues, the cabin, etc. at the business meetings.

## TRIP REPORTS

### Post Creek - cedar grove

Saturday, November 3<sup>rd</sup> was a beautiful fall day. The sun was out, there was fresh snow on the peaks and still a lot of gold colors in the tamaracks and cottonwoods. Steve Schombel, Bret Doucett and Tom and Ginny Andrus had an enjoyable hike in the Mission Mountains on this glorious day. We hiked around MacDonald Lake and on up Post Creek to a cedar grove at the bottom of the switchbacks. We paused often to soak up sun and enjoy views of MacDonald Peak and the Sheep's Head. Once in the shade it was chilly and damp. There are better cedar groves, but this one is kind of special since there never has been a road nearby. A nice, relaxing day.

- Steve Schombel

### Cabin Work Party

Almost at the last minute we did manage to get a key to the gate and permission from the Stevensville Ranger District to drive up and work on the cabin. We rounded up a crew and some tools and hoofed our way up there on November 10<sup>th</sup>. The cabin was quite dirty and the wood bin was almost bare. We did the best we could with some worn out old tools. The cabin is basically in very good shape, but does need some minor upgrades and a lot of firewood. While we were working our tails off the gossip was that a certain other group was off in Idaho soaking in hot springs. There are a lot of responsibilities to running this kind of club. It isn't just fun trips every weekend. Many thanks to Art Gidel, Lois Crepeau, Julie Warner, Bret Doucett, Fred Schwanemann and Nancy Fritz who sacrificed another glorious fall day to help us keep the cabin usable.

- Steve Schombel

### Cache Creek

I had hoped to snow shoe or ski on the 18th of November. Due to the lack of snow I chose to hike the Cache Creek trail. Steve Schombel, Karen Apland, Bret Doucett, and Charles Tree joined me for this adventure.

Cache creek trail leads through portions of the scenic "Great Burn" area. This area was touched by the famous "Fire of 1910" that engulfed millions of acres from Washington to Montana. Traces of the "Great Burn" are still evident and can be observed from points along the Cache creek trail. The lower 9

miles of trail have a gradual elevation gain and parallel Cache Creek. The upper 3.5 miles rapidly ascend a rocky dome to Cache Saddle. Near the 9-mile point, the trail becomes obsolete due to an avalanche which wiped out the existing trail tread. The trail from this point to Cache Saddle is not maintained and hikers must select their own route. There are several campsites along the trail which have been maintained by hunters during the fall hunting season. Trail 317 receives it's heaviest use during the hunting season.

We hiked about five miles to where Irish Creek dumps into Cache Creek. A beautiful, easy hike with a great bunch. Burger and beer at the Hot Springs. (take the swim suit and cap off the day with a dip at Lolo Hot Springs).

I access the trailhead by driving highway 12 to Fish Creek road number 343, (first right turn after Lolo Hot Springs). Follow the Fish Creek road over the Fish Creek saddle and turn left onto Montana Creek road number 4218 and travel 0.5 mile to the intersection with an old logging spur, road 4212. Proceed on road 4212 (lower road) to a road barrier. There is plenty of room for parking, but don't block the horse loading ramps. The trail starts out on an old road and crosses a creek on a big log (which can be very slick at times) Take the time to look at the big silver snags still standing from the "1910 Burn", fish the creek, and catch glimpses of White Mountain Look Out (which will be another trip)

- Lois Crepeau

### Spring Gulch

Fred and Eileen Schwanemann set off to hike up Spring Gulch to the three mile boundary fairly early Sunday morning, November 25<sup>th</sup>. The first snow and the last day of hunting season helped us decide to stay clear of areas that allowed hunting. On our way down the main trail, we saw a man, a bicycle, and a wagon with a large doe in it. As we proceeded up Spring Gulch, we saw lots of animal tracks including small bear, deer, and possibly coyote. The snow clad trail and trees were beautiful. We also saw a tent by Spring Creek not too far past the bridge. On our return trip, we heard an elk part way up the western ridge not far from the three mile boundary. As we started back up the main trail we saw a man on a bicycle, with deer antlers sticking put of his pack.

- Fred & Eileen Schwanemann

## UPCOMING TRIPS

**Please note:** The distances and elevations are estimates of a one way hike. Call the trip leader early in the week to get an idea of experience and gear required. And be prepared to give a definite yes or no if you will be going. It is generally assumed that participants have at least average outdoor skills and know what clothing is needed for different Montana seasons.

Most members also do a lot of outdoor activities that they do not put in the newsletter. Feel free to call other members you may know.

### December 9<sup>th</sup> Sally Ridge

We should be able to drive to the gate on the jeep road to Sally Basin, which is closed to motorized use. Carry skis or snowshoes, since most of the trail will be snowed in. In the basin there is a junction with newer logging roads. Then the road becomes steeper, then levels out, eventually reaching an electronic site on top of Sally Ridge. About eight miles. Call Steve Schombel at 721-4686 for information.

### December 16<sup>th</sup> Pattee Canyon

Spend a few pleasant hours skiing the north loop in this popular recreation area near town. There are also trails on the south side and old closed roads all over for the more adventuresome. If there isn't enough snow here we will go somewhere else nearby. Call Charles Tree at 549-7547 for more information, or meet at Diamond Jim's at 9:00 A.M.

### December 23<sup>rd</sup> Babcock Creek

Hike, snowshoe and/or ski up this trail from the wildlife viewing area across the Rock Creek Road from the Solomon Fishing access. The trail winds up to a ridge with great views of the Rock Creek drainage and surrounding mountains. In spring and fall a herd of bighorns frequents this area. Perhaps we'll find out where they winter. Call Julie Warner at 543-6508 for information.

### December 30<sup>th</sup> Moonlight Ski

A full moon tonight, and there should be lots of snow and many places to go. The maintained trails near Lolo Pass are safe and easy to negotiate, but the exact destination will depend on snow and weather conditions. Call Lois Crepeau at 728-5321 for information.

## Jan 5 & 6<sup>th</sup> Glacier Park

Spend a night in the Hungry Horse area and try some ski touring in Glacier Park. A ski tour up the highway along MacDonald Creek is one possibility. The groomed trail system at Marias Pass is another. There are many other areas to visit, and, of course, football to watch. Call Steve Schombel at 721-4686 for information.

### CLUB CONTACTS

Rocky Mountaineers P.O. Box 4262  
Missoula, MT 59806  
rockymountaineers@hotmail.com

President- Julie Warner 543-6508  
Treasurer jawkal@hotmail.com

Secretary- Steve Schombel 721-4686  
Editor ssbell@montana.com

### One more trip report

On December 1<sup>st</sup> some of us heard that the snow in the higher mountains was great, and so Lois Crepeau, Karen Apland and Steve Schombel headed up to Lolo Pass to check it out. We did the "A" trail down to Lee Creek Campground. For a change no roads were plowed and it was beautiful skiing all the way. From a few hundred yards past the State Line to about the Four Mile marker we were breaking trail. Then we met a group coming uphill. For the rest of this season people going over the top of the "A" trail will follow tracks left by us.

On a sadder note; Lois has heard that Plum Creek has decided that they do not want marked trails on their land and has asked the Forest Service to remove all trail markers from the "B" trail and remove it from their maps and guides. We are very sorry to lose this challenging trail.

Plum Creek should realize that this trail has a long and colorful history, and many different usages that stretch back over a century before they bought the land. We can only hope that this doesn't become a precedent for all trails on Plum Creek property.



# MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND LIABILITY WAVIER

Household Yearly Membership: \$13.00  
Make checks payable to: "Rocky Mountaineers"  
and send to: Rocky Mountaineers  
P.O. Box 4262  
Missoula, MT. 59806

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

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

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

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

I have read this release and indemnity agreement and have fully informed myself of its contents before I have signed it. When I join or renew my membership I also sign on to this agreement.

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian if Participant is Under

18 Years of Age \_\_\_\_\_  
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I, (print name) \_\_\_\_\_ hereby state that I wish to participate in courses and/or activities offered by The Rocky Mountaineers, a non-profit organization. I recognize any outdoors activity may involve certain dangers, including but not limited to the hazards of traveling in mountainous terrain, accidents or illness in remote places, forces of nature, and the actions of participants and other persons. I further understand and agree that without some program providing protection of its assets and its leaders, the Rocky Mountaineers would not be able to offer it courses and activities.

In consideration of and as part payment for the right to participate in the activities offered by The Rocky Mountaineers, I agree to RELEASE, HOLD HARMLESS, AND INDEMNIFY The Rocky Mountaineers and its members from any and all liability, claims and causes of action arising out of or in any way connected with my participation, or the participation of any minor that I am signing on behalf of, in any activities offered by The Rocky Mountaineers. I personally assume all risks in connection with these activities. If I am signing on behalf of a minor, I further agree to RELEASE, HOLD HARMLESS, AND INDEMNIFY The Rocky Mountaineers and its members from any liability, claims and cause of action, which the minor may have arising from the minor's participation in activities. The terms of this agreement shall serve as a release and indemnity agreement for my heirs, personal representative, and for all members of my family, including any minors. (Parents or Legal Guardians must sign for all persons under eighteen (18) years of age).



**Rocky Mountaineers**  
**P. O. Box 4262**  
**Missoula, MT 59806**

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