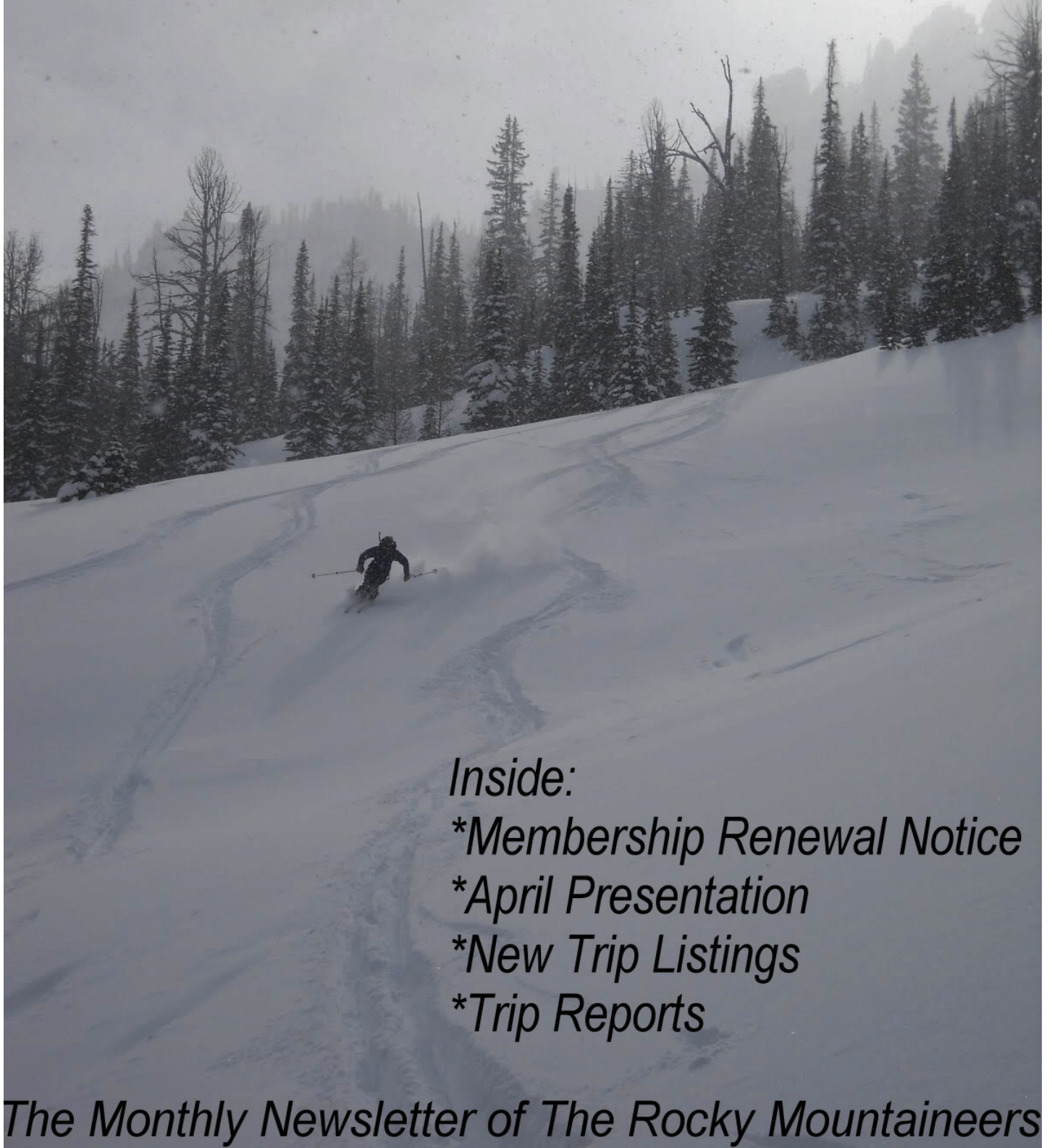


MARCH 2011

# THE MOUNTAIN EAR



*Inside:*

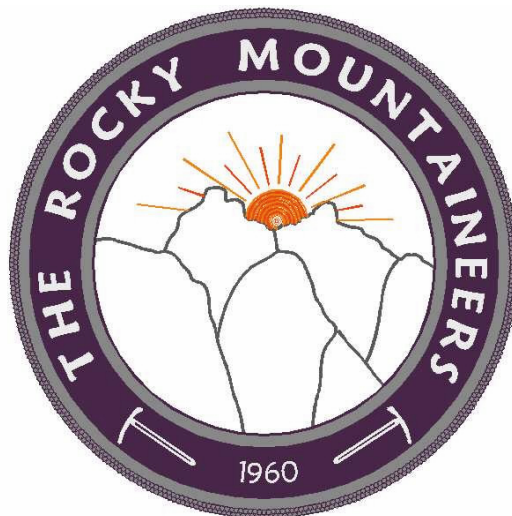
*\*Membership Renewal Notice*

*\*April Presentation*

*\*New Trip Listings*

*\*Trip Reports*

*The Monthly Newsletter of The Rocky Mountaineers*



**Climb. Hike. Ski. Bike. Paddle.**  
**Dedicated to the Enjoyment and Promotion of**  
**Responsible Outdoor Adventure.**

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The Mountain Ear is the club newsletter of The Rocky Mountaineers and is published near the beginning of every month. Anyone wishing to contribute articles of interest are welcomed and encouraged to do so- contact the editor.

Membership application can be found at the end of the newsletter.

**ABOUT THE CLUB:**

*Mission Statement:*

The Rocky Mountaineers is a non-profit club dedicated to the enjoyment and promotion of responsible outdoor adventures.

*Meetings and Presentations:*

Meetings are held the second Wednesday, September through May, at 6:00 PM. Each meeting is followed by a featured presentation or speaker at 7:00 PM.

*Activities:*

- ☐ Hiking
- ☐ Backpacking
- ☐ Alpine Climbing & Scrambling
- ☐ Backcountry Skiing
- ☐ Winter Mountaineering
- ☐ Track Skiing
- ☐ Snowshoeing
- ☐ Mountain Biking
- ☐ Rock Climbing
- ☐ Canoeing & Kayaking
- ☐ Rafting
- ☐ Kids Trips

## **President's Message**

Rocky Mountaineers,

Wow! The calendar says we are getting closer to spring, but Mother Nature is having her way this year with the abundant snows we have been getting. From what I understand it is not ending anytime soon. Get out skiing as much as you can with a snow year like we are having.

Clocks are changing on March 13, giving us more time to get outdoors after work. That and longer days beckons one outdoors. See that you do and if you want company and camaraderie, please invite others by contacting our club newsletter editor; [mtnear1@gmail.com](mailto:mtnear1@gmail.com) with a trip invite.

In April we will be having a presentation by the recently hired director of the new Milltown State Park, Michael Kustudia. Come hear about the status and the plans for the area after a lot of remedial clean up that has been occurring the past years.

Tom Hanou  
406-360-3564  
[tlhanou@aol.com](mailto:tlhanou@aol.com)

## ***Membership Renewal Notice***

All TRM memberships will expire at midnight on April 30. All renewals must be received by that time if you don't want your membership to lapse. Annual dues cover the period from May 1 through April 30. Those dates were chosen because of our by-laws, which state "A member's dues must be current the last day of the month before the annual meeting to be eligible to vote." We vote for officers during our May meeting. Of course we welcome dues payment at any time. Dues can be paid to me at our monthly meetings, sent to PO Box 4262, Missoula, MT, 59806, or paid via credit card or PayPal via our website: [www.rockymountaineers.com](http://www.rockymountaineers.com)

Whatever method of payment you choose, make sure to provide your email address to receive your newsletter and announcements.

Oh, and the annual dues are still just \$10.00

*Steve Niday, Treasurer.*

## ***April Presentation***

On April 13th we will have a presentation by Michael Kustudia, newly hired director for the new Milltown State Park in the area of the former dam and reservoir. We are right now in the phase in between design and development, and there are many exciting trails and river access areas proposed, but which ones will continue to be considered? Michael Kustudia has had a long involvement with the cleanup as a coordinator with the Clark Fork River Technical Assistance Committee, and will give a great overview in his new position with FW&P. Presentation will start at 7:00 PM at The Trailhead.

*Cover Photo: James Pyke making tracks on Spurgeon Point in the Bitterroots. J. Phillips photo.*

## **UPCOMING TRIPS AND ADVENTURES**

### **Trip Notes:**

Please contact the trip leader for more information regarding any listed trips.

Mileage listed is round trip mileage. Elevation listed is gain only. For information on Class Rating see below:

[Class Rating System](#)

**CLASS 1 – HIKING** Mostly on trails, but may also include some easy cross country travel.

**CLASS 2 – EASY SCRAMBLING** Rugged off trail hiking, no hands required.

**CLASS 3 – SCRAMBLING** Use of hand to ascend some sections of rock. Little to no exposure; a fall would not likely cause serious injury.

**CLASS 4 – CLIMBING** Easy climbing, great exposure; a fall would quite possibly cause serious injury. Use of a rope and protection at times possible.

**CLASS 5 – TECHNICAL CLIMBING** Use of rope, protection and belay are a must.

**CLASS 6 – AID CLIMBING** Use of equipment to support your weight as you climb.

### **Fri-Sun, March 25-27-FREEZEOUT LAKE WATERFOWL VIEWING**

*Description:* The last weekend in March seems like the best "plan ahead" for this adventure, as when the ponds thaw out, or the greatest number of birds (mostly snow geese) are there varies greatly. But as many people come to the area from elsewhere, we need to reserve rooms ahead of time. I have reserved a room at the Gunther Hotel in Choteau for Fri. March 25 th & 26th. Others need to make their own arrangements. Anyone can come for the three days, or just one afternoon or what ever. We usually have a communal meal at a local resturant on Sat. night, but could make other arrangements.

*Leader:* Julie Kahl 543-6508, [jawkal@hotmail.com](mailto:jawkal@hotmail.com)

### **Sunday, April 3 –SAWMILL GULCH (Lolo Creek Canyon)**

*Rating:* Easy hike -mostly logging road walking, several miles

*Description:* This is the area of the ridge on the north side of Lolo Canyon across from the Fort Fizzel site. We will walk several miles of logging roads to the highest point, which is also on the Ne-Mee-Poo Trail. There are great views of Lolo Peak to the south, spring flowers should be abundant, and the last time we were up in here, several years ago, we saw a bear.

*Leader:* Julie Kahl 543-6508, [jawkal@hotmail.com](mailto:jawkal@hotmail.com)

### **Saturday, April 9 or 16 – MCLEOD PEAK (Rattlesnake)**

*Rating:* Class 3; *Distance:* 10 miles, *Elevation Gain:* 4400 ft

*Description:* Not yet sure which weekend this will be. Plan is to go in the Finley Creek drainage on west side of Rattlesnake, take the north fork of Finley Creek to approach the south ridge leading to McLeod Peak (8620' – high point in the Rattlesnake). Skis or snowshoes welcome. Tribal recreation permit is necessary for this area. This trip could possibly morph into an overnighiter as well if there is interest.

*Special Equipment:* Ski's or snowshoes

*Leader:* Forest Dean - 240-7612 or [mtnear1@gmail.com](mailto:mtnear1@gmail.com)

## **Fri-Sun, April 29-May 1- GUNSIGHT and EDWARDS MTN. (Glacier National Park)**

*Rating: Class 3, Distance: 18 miles, Elevation Gain: 7700 ft*

*Description:* This will be a 3 day trip to attempt a two-fer of Gunsight Mountain and Edwards Mountain in Glacier National Park. Trip would involve hiking and skiing up the Gunsight Pass Trail to the Sperry Glacier area on Friday, then attempting these two peaks on Saturday/Sunday and then heading out. Both are 9000'+ peaks. Conditions and temperatures will dictate some of the gear needed, but we would likely be treating this as a winter camping and climbing trip. Will not be departing Missoula until Friday afternoon- probably around 1:00 PM.

*Special Equipment:* Ski's or snowshoes; ice axe; crampons (possibly); winter camp gear.

*Leader:* Forest Dean - 240-7612 or [mtnear1@gmail.com](mailto:mtnear1@gmail.com)

## **TRIP FORUM**

### **Smith River update:**

I got a permit for the Smith. The launch date is Sunday, May 15th. Plan on 3 or 4 nights on the river, and a long drive each way, so this float will take most of the week. Not many people I know are able to go on this date, so if anyone else is interested call and we can talk about it. Steve Schombel, 721-4686.

## **Rocky Mountaineers Meeting Minutes March 9th, 2011**

I Caller to Order: 6:19 PM

II Attendance: Tom Hanou, Joshua Phillips, Steve Niday, Julie Kahl, Dean Stensland, David Kahl, Richard Smith  
Steve Schombel

III Treasurer's Report: \$1142.17, in the checking account,  
Tom Hanou didn't get paid for the food at the Glacier Classic yet

IV Correspondence: None

V Newsletter

A. Forest wants to quit -too busy

B. Paradigm Shift

1. Newsletter not working like it did in the past

2. Regardless of format -still need one person or group in charge, observed by Steve Niday

C. Use Website

1. All members don't have computer access

2. Joshua has been getting posts on the forum, use that for upcoming trips?

3. Some thought "realtime conditions reports" would be more useful than just trip reports

D. Facebook

1. Use it more?

2. Security issues

E. Steve Schombel wanted to know who we are sending trip reports etc. to right now. Not answered

F. Joshua Phillips brought up the issue of clarifying what's a Mountaineers' trip

G. Julie Kahl brought up how the paper newsletter is the primary archive document right now,

1. What materials will there be to archive if everything is electronic?

2. Some proposed all electronic archives -not the best option for long term preservation

VI Adjourned: 6:58 PM

## TRIP REPORTS

### February 20 – Lee Creek (Bitterroots)

This was the perfect time of year for this approximately 8 mile trip, from Lolo Pass, to the Lee Creek Divide, then down to the Lee Creek Campground. The snow was deep and fluffy and from a recent fall, clung on branches. After leaving the Pack



Creek Loop trail at 1 mile, Jeff Shryer, Becky Richards, Roy Regal, Lois Crepeau David & Julie Kahl followed a "yesterday's trail" with a few inches of snow in it, for about another mile. When those tracks ended, we took turns breaking trail, even through the down hill, until we reached some older tracks coming up from the Lee Creek side about 2 miles from the end. We still had to break trail but the last in the line members

got to do some good down hill. The weather was perfect, alternating between snowing lightly to almost sunny, with no wind. It took about 4 hours, and after collecting vehicles we left at the pass most of us retired to The Lumber Jack for after trip beers and dinner. *Julie Kahl (photos by Jeff Shryer)*

### March 5-6- Chief Joseph Pass (Bitterroots)

Six of us had a near-perfect weekend down at Chief Joseph, except for one nagging, improper group decision concerning soaking in the hot tub that evening. It was a decision that could impact the reputation of the club if word gets out. More on this later.

We rendezvoused at the fantastic Gordon Reese Warming Hut at noon Saturday. Participants were: Steve Schombel, Lois Crepeau, Dave and Julie Kahl and Fred and Eilene Schwanemann. Most of us arrived early enough to do a little skiing before lunch. Lois and I went down the Timber Trail and climbed Herringbone Hill. We had a long, enjoyable lunch and then went out as a group and did parts of the Gold Medal Loop and Vista View. It was snowing most of the day on Saturday, but warm enough to be comfortable. The snow on the ground was the best we had ever seen at Chief Joseph, we all agreed. There was lots of it, and lots of new powder. Even though the report was that the area had been groomed and tracks set Thursday, it snowed so much that we were following other's trails and even making new tracks on certain routes.

When we finished the north part of Vista View we split up. Fred and Eilene headed for their cabin at the Broad Axe, Dave and Julie did some more skiing and Lois and I spent more time in the warming hut, making new friends, before heading to our cabin at Sula. We unpacked, cleaned up, and got together for dinner at the fancy restaurant at the Broad Axe. After dinner the four of us exchanged stories and played cards well into the night before retiring.

On Sunday we had a leisurely breakfast, and then headed back to the pass. Fred and Eilene wanted to ski some of the easier and intermediate trails. Dave, Julie and Lois headed down Banshee, the most difficult one. I was nursing a blister and a sore wrist, so I snow shod through the woods to the warming hut. We met once again for lunch. The three reported that Banshee was the best they had ever seen. The weather was really good Sunday-partially cloudy with only occasional snow showers. The sun came out often enough for some fantastic views of all the snow on the ground and on the branches. Truly unforgettable. Then we returned to the parking lot and headed home without incident.

But, there is still one problem. When we went over to soak Saturday night we decided to not shower before entering the pool.

*Steve Schombel*

### **Backcountry Skiing in the Bitterroots**

The following three trip reports were partially a product of the Forums from the Rocky Mountaineers website. Through the Forums, I have gained several incredible partners. Here are a few of our exploits.

#### **February 19th – Mill Point, Bitterroot Mountains**

I teamed up with Matt Henderson and Nick Fry via the TRM Forum for this tour up Mill Point. We boot packed up to the road from the Mill Creek parking lot, traversed the road and then skinned up the east ridge. We stopped briefly to take some pictures of a snowshoe hare on our way up. Trail breaking became more of an effort above 7000', but we kept our rotation regular and made good time. We skied a run down to Tag Alder Lake in enjoyable powder. After a quick break on the lake, we skinned back to the summit via the east ridge and decided to drop into the southeast gully. Knowing we didn't have a car at the Blodgett trail head didn't even slow us down. We enjoyed an incredible run down the SE gully and apron below. The powder kept us smiling all the way down to the zipper crust. After some survival skiing, we boot packed/bush whacked down to Blodgett Creek where an ice bridge allowed for an easy crossing. We boot packed to the trail head and waited for a while for a hiker to return to his car. We waited for quite a while when I decided to call a friend that lives on the outskirts of Hamilton. Fellow mountaineer David Vietz was kind enough to pick us up and shuttle us back to the Mill Creek trail head. Thanks David! I owe you one! *Joshua Phillips*

#### **February 21st – Spurgeon Point (Mill 2), Bitterroot Mountains**

From the summit of Mill Point you can't miss the striking east face of Spurgeon Point (recently given the name in honor of the late Chris Spurgeon). Having summited Mill Point for the first time only 2 days previous, Matt couldn't go any longer without giving Spurgeon's east face a shot. So, joined by James Pyke, the four of us got an early start from the Mill Creek trail head. We headed up the northeast ridge of Mill Point and traversed across the north side until we reached the drainage between Mill and Spurgeon. Once on the north ridge of Spurgeon, we found a skin track from the previous day and followed it up to where the many gendarmes outcrop. Staying just to the west side of the ridge, we skinned, boot packed, and wallowed in steep powder, fighting for every vertical foot. The final half mile probably took us an hour but the summit was worth every bit of effort. We



found a small strand of Tibetan prayer flags on the summit, no doubt placed in memory of Chris. After digging a pit on the steep east face, we deemed it safe to ski. The tracks from the day before (later found to be Brian Story and Colin Chisolm's) gave us added confidence in snow stability. Near the top, the face is about 50 degrees and requires serious commitment from the skier. Two rock bands just below the summit offer added spice to this run. James and Matt chose to ski right from the summit block. We went one at a time (as always) and regrouped halfway down the face at an island of safety. The lower face had powder that seemed to vaporize as our skis cut through it. Grins plastered across our faces, we regrouped at the bottom and reflected on the incredible run. We skied out the gully and enjoyed more powder and fun pillow drops before reaching more dicey coverage below. We boot packed down to the trail and slapped the skis back on for a fast trip back to the car...the occasional rock making itself know by sending sparks off the ski edges. *Joshua Phillips*

### **February 27th – Chaffin Creek, Bitterroot Mountains**

After two nights of wine tasting and eating fine foods at the East Fork Guard Station with our Missoula Winos friends, Lewis Kogan and I were ready to burn some calories. Nick Fry met us in Darby and we drove up to the Chaffin Creek trail head with our sights set on the north couloir of Sugarloaf. We skinned up the trail and immediately found wind loaded slopes that required our attention. Our hopes for the north couloir quickly morphed into hopes of finding a stable slope to ski. We kept heading west up the drainage and found ourselves in some thicker timber. Once we broke out of the timber, we realized we had inadvertently crossed Chaffin Creek and were aggressively heading up the north side of the canyon. Laughing at ourselves, we decided to go with it and skinned up the slope opposite Sugarloaf nearly to the ridgeline that separates Chaffin from Tin Cup. The higher we got, the higher the wind speed and the lower the visibility. We found a narrow glade with several terrain features that provided safe and engaging skiing all the way back down to the creek. Protected by the trees and terrain features, the snow in the glade was not as wind affected as the surrounding areas and we were able to enjoy the powder. The trip out Chaffin Creek was a bit of a slog as the trail does not consistently lose elevation. We decided to go without skins and found ourselves doing LOTS of side stepping up short portions of trail. Touring out this drainage would probably have gone smoother. *Joshua Phillips*



### **March 6th – Roaring Lion – Ward 3, Bitterroot Mountains**

After a successful tour on Spurgeon Point, James Pyke was eager to get back into the Bitterroots for another tour. Going through photos he took from the summit of Ward Mountain, he spotted a face that he had to go check out. James sent me the photo via email and I was sold on the idea. With friends Ted and Moe (and their dog Zorra) we got an early start for the drive down to the Roaring Lion trail head. We were able to begin skinning right from the car as the coverage on the trail was great thanks to all the recent snow. We found the creek a bit tricky to cross and once we gained the south side difficult skinning in sugary snow was there to greet us. After a long and very steep climb, we gained the drainage between the 2nd and 3rd points (Ward Mountain being the 1st point) on the south ridge of Roaring Lion. The touring became a bit easier and our attention began to focus on the great lines on the east faces of the north and south summits of Ward 3. We were greeted by the sounds of snowmobiles in Camas Creek once we reached the saddle between Ward 2 and 3. Ted, James and I skinned and boot packed up the southeast ridge to the south summit and enjoyed great

visibility of the surrounding mountains. After digging a pit that revealed a respectable sluff layer, we headed down the steep east face to the point it rolls over into a steep chute. James skied first and released the initial sluff which gained significant energy and ran to the bottom. I skied out right and took a couple of turns on a snow spine that formed between chutes before skiing the chute. Ted took a more direct line into the chute and produced a sluff that ran over the cliff bands as he skied out the bottom toward James and I. We met up with Moe and Zorra back at the saddle and boot packed up the southwest ridge of Ward 2 in order to access the northeast flowing drainage west of Ward Mountain. We found excellent powder conditions for much of the drainage with good tree skiing and the occasional pillow filled glade on the westerly edge of the drainage. As the terrain steepened and the snow coverage thinned, we fought our way down avoiding areas that cliffed out. The final boulder field had just enough snow to keep the skis on and we made it back to the trail without having to boot pack. The ski out Roaring Lion was accomplished with headlamps and we made a bee line for the nearest food in Hamilton once we reached the truck. A big day, but I want to know how many vertical feet Zorra did! *Joshua Phillips*



*East Face of South Ward 3*

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## THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Annual Membership Fee: \$10.00 for electronic newsletter

*Note: Membership includes all members of a family or household.*

Make checks payable to 'The Rocky Mountaineers' and send to:

The Rocky Mountaineers, PO Box 4262, Missoula, MT 59806

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

Additional Family Members Names: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Email (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

*Joining or maintaining your Rocky Mountaineers membership has never been easier!*

**PayPal is now available on the Rocky Mountaineers website. Click on the membership link on the main page.**