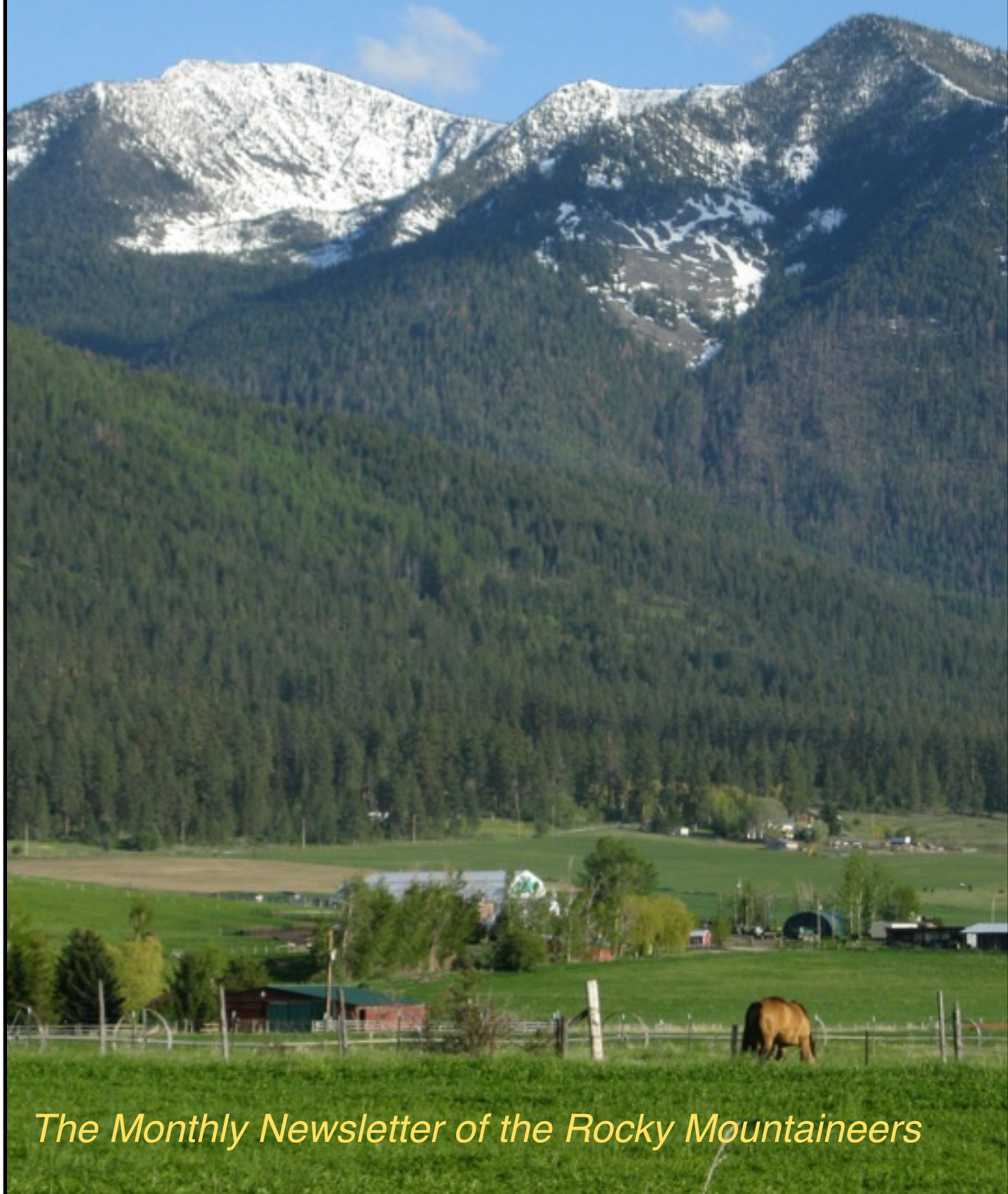


MAY 2014

THE MOUNTAIN EAR



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 at the end 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 Tuesday, September through May, at 6:00 PM at the Trail Head. Each meeting is followed by a featured presentation or speaker at 7:00 PM.

Please be sure to check out our **Facebook group** to receive the latest up-to-date news and post short-notice trip proposals:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/rockymountaineers/>

Cover Photo: The western ridges of McLeod Peak rise gracefully over farms in the Jocko River Valley. Photo by Dan Saxton.

TRIP REPORTS

Saturday, May 3, 2014 - Trapper Peak

Trapper Peak at 10,157' is the highest mountain in the Bitterroots. It is a wonderful spring ski or snowshoe trip. I was introduced to this trip by Jim Ullrich, one of the early Rocky Mountaineers, starting in 1990. On Saturday, May 3, 16 of us did this hike. The core group was from the Thursday Night Mountain bike group with other friends participating. Many pictures are posted at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/trapperpeak>



Boulder Peak Ridge from the way up Trapper. Photo by Dan Saxton.

I anticipated that I would be in a slow group bringing up the rear, and that Norman Singley and Michael Moser would be leading a faster group up in front. But it ended up being the reverse. The plan was to meet at the turn off from the West Fork road at 8 am. Those of us who drove from Missoula, namely Julie Huck, Ron Uchtyl, Kathy York, Jim York, Laurie Stalling, Ed Stalling, Dan Saxton, Neil Simpson, and Alden Wright were on time at 8 am and got started hiking by about 9:15. Another group including Norman Singley, Michael Moser, Melissa Thompson, Sue Miks, Suzanne Panzica, Julia Smith, and Lauren de Paepe camped at the Billings campground and got started up the mountain somewhat later. All of the lead group snowshoed except for Neil ---- the skiing was actually quite good since the snow was never really soft.



On the way up Trapper Peak, just above treeline.
Photo by Dan Saxton.

Suzanne and Julia and Julia's Labrador caught up to the lead group at about tree line. This group made it to the top by about 2 pm and left to go down by about 2:30. We got back to the car about 5:30 and had appetizers and beer. Suzanne waited for the other group to return.

Despite forecasts of possible rain, the weather was partly cloudy and a perfect temperature for hiking. It was very windy on top, but otherwise we couldn't have asked for better weather.



Julia Smith's Labrador atop Trapper Peak. Photo by Dan Saxton.

A highlight for the lead group was seeing a male dusky grouse displaying its red neck sack surrounded by white feathers. Another highlight was Dan demonstrating how good he is at reading lips. *Alden Wright*

Here is Norman Singley's account of the second group: "A second group left the cars shortly after the first group at approximately 8:45. We climbed the road a bit farther than the lead group and went up the ridge to the trailhead, intersecting the road several times. This group was mostly skiers, with heavy AT gear, and I used XC skis with skins. Two snowshoers took off up the trail and eventually caught up with the main group. With our heavier gear we were slower climbing and got to the top around 3:30. By this time the weather had cleared significantly and we were treated with warm sun to go with the never-ending mountain views. Trapper offers a fantastic view of El Capitan, and a good view of Canyon Creek, which leads down to White Cap Creek and eventually the Selway. You can see the Beaverheads, the Pioneers, the Anaconda-Pintlers and of course the incredible jumble of peaks that make up the southern Bitterroots. Skiing down on XC skis was challenging, but much easier after I put the climbing skins back on. The AT skiers fared very well, and enjoyed the consolidated snowpack. Once back at the road, I took advantage of the good snowpack to ski down the road through the first several switchbacks, and the AT skiers descended a gully down to the end of the snow. I also saw a dusky grouse in full display. We made it back to the vehicles, parked at approx 5000' ft. around 8 pm. My gps showed over 7500' of climbing for the day, and almost 16 miles. We went back to the Sam Billings campground for a feast, and on Sunday three of us did 50 miles of road biking on the very empty West Fork road (to the end of the pavement on the south side of Painted Rocks and back)." *Norman Singley*



El Capitan and the Shard from Trapper Peak. Photo by Dan Saxton.

Saturday-Sunday, May 10-11, 2014 - Little St. Joe Cabin and Peak



Photo by Susanna Girolamo, courtesy of Lauren de Paepe

Undaunted by the locked gate and the threat of rain, Lauren de Paepe, Joshua Phillips, Susanna Girolamo, and I started the trip out by carrying our skis until almost at the summer trailhead. After that, the skiing was good on a thin layer of powder. We dropped our packs at the cabin before continuing on to the top.



Looking down on the Bass Creek Crag. Photo by Lauren de Paepe.



It was beautiful up there and soon we were skiing down on some amazing snow. We decided the name for the snow condition was "powdered corn." We were all whooping so it must have been good! After a couple runs we went back to the cabin which looked to be in good shape (lots of wood left). Sunday was socked in and snowing so we went back up and had a very fun powder run down towards Sweeney Creek (lots more whoops). Powder days in May are hard to beat!! We made it back to the cabin by mid-afternoon, packed up and then made the trip out. Great company and great times! *Paul Jensen*

Powder in May! Photo by Lauren de Paepe.

Sunday, May 18, 2014 - Spotted Dog WMA Scoping Trip

Despite the rain, Steve S. joined David and I, Julie K., in our pick-up, and we drove down to this new Wildlife Management Area just east of Deer Lodge. This is a beautiful area, well deserving of the praise I've heard of it. It was rolling hills and ridges, of short grass prairie, with deep wooded draws. Most roads were two-tracks, but even in the rain were negotiable with 4-wheel drive useful in a few places. Private land runs through most of the middle of the area, dividing it into east and west areas, only accessible to each other from two points in the south.

First we tried to get into the southwest corner via Jake Creek Rd. This brought us to a gate and a two track road. Here access is to park on Jake Creek Rd. and hike 1 mile into the southern end of the WMA. Here we also found new signs with some-like road or trail numbers and distances, but there were no numbers on the FWP map we had, or in the Gazetteer map. So we didn't know what they referenced.

We didn't hike up this road in the rain. Instead, we drove up to the next entrance to the north, O'Neill Creek. Here there is a road easement-wide corridor back to the gate into the WMA, and about 1/2 mile in the road "y's". The north leg goes into the northwest corner to an electronics site. We took the south leg which after 2 1/2 miles ended in a parking area; the map shows a gate but there isn't one, just a "no motorized vehicles" sign. The Gazetteer map shows a road going all the way through in this area. And the WMA map shows a short gap in the private land about 1/2 mile away, that connects the east and west sections of the WMA, maybe where an old road went though? The same numbers we saw on the Jake Creek Rd. were also on signs here.

It was seriously raining now, so instead of hiking up the road to see if that was the case, we ate lunch in the pickup and went back out to roads that took us to Beck Hill Rd., also gravel, and took that to Hwy 12, then Hwy 12 east to the junction where Hwy 141 comes in from the north. There we turned south onto Trout Creek Rd. which took us into the WMA from the north on roads running high on hills and ridges. We went about 6 miles to the junction with FS road 314 that comes in, about 16 miles, from Elliston. It had quit raining and the sun was trying to come out so we walked around up there in the short grass prairie for about 1/2 hr. then came back out the way we went in, had pie at the cafe in Avon famous for its pie and headed back to Missoula.

From up there we could see the Continental Divide mts to the east, the peaks of the Pintlers and Flint Creek ranges to the west, and to the north we could see up the Hwy 141/Nevada Creek corridor into the Big Blackfoot Valley, and the peaks of the Scapegoat and Bob Marshall Wilderness. We didn't see any large mammals including deer, though we did see elk and bear or sheep signs. We saw harrier hawks and a plover-like bird. Because we were going up through several climate zones, we saw glacier lilies and butter cups above. Shooting stars, yellow bells, and phlox, both white and pink, were blossoming everywhere.

Though this is a beautiful area to just hike in, I saw at least two possible point to point hikes. From the O'Neill Creek parking area to Jake Creek would be around 5-6 miles. Coming in from the east at the southernmost parking area on FS 314, crossing over to either Jake Creek or O'Neill Creek would be in the 8 mile range, but could include the highest point

which is around 6200 ft. The low vegetation on the ridges makes for nice conditions in "tick time," but the area doesn't open until May 15th. The area is checkerboarded with some DNRC School trust land on which camping is not allowed, but camping - with no fires - is allowed on the WMA grounds. *Julia Kahl*

Wednesday, May 21, 2014 - Deer Peak (6,680')

Off of Petty Creek Road, at Ed's Creek, take Ed's Road to Ed's Ridge Road; from there it is about 7 miles and 3,000 feet up to Deer Peak. Route is pretty easy, just choose the steeper option at any road intersections, EXCEPT after the first gate (hang a left here and soon come to another gate). Mile 1 is the steepest; mile six goes through a high, old-burn ridge with an insane amount of blowdown which is very time-consuming (see picture).



Photo by Jason Walz

Past that the last mile descends on a connecting ridge, aiming right for Deer Peak. Last bit is a scramble to the still-heavily drifted top (some postholing, recommend staying south of the snow until very near the top). Views to the west of Straight Peak and the stateline mountains; north to Stark Mountain and the Ninemile ridge; south/southeast toward the backside of the Bitterroots (visible for most of the hike); and east to the huge mass of Petty Mountain (which blocks out all of Missoula) and some of the Rattlesnake.



Photo by Jason Walz

Bear sign very present, with two fresh scat on the way up and five fresh scat on the way down, so keep your eyes/ears open. *Jason Walz*

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.

Sunday, June 1, 2014 - CYR PEAK (5,520')

Description: I was looking at this peak when I was last down there, and, now that the snow is melting it is very doable. The difficulty will depend on how far we can drive up Forest Road 4230. If we can get to the west ridge it would be a little over a mile and less than 1600' up a gentle ridge to the top. If we can drive several more miles and get south of the summit it would be @ 1/2 mile and 1000'. But it would be steeper and forested.

Leader: Steve Schombel: stephenschombel@yahoo.com

Sunday, June 8, 2014 - CHARITY PEAK

Description: This 6560 ft. peak was just added to the Rocky Mountaineers Missoula Horizon Peaks Award list. It's the high point of the ridge on the west edge of the Evaro Hill corridor. We will access it from Mill Creek north of Frenchtown, logging roads seem to go with about 1/2 mile of the summit which we will hike to.

Leader: Julia Kahl: jawkal@hotmail.com

Saturday, June 29, 2014 - RED MOUNTAIN (SCAPEGOAT)

Rating: Class 2, 9-10 miles RT, about 3,500' vertical gain.

Description: This is the highest peak in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex near Lincoln, MT, a reddish 9,411' giant rising heads and shoulders above everything else. It has far-ranging views over much wild country - and we need to watch for the bears! My hopes are that since this peak is in a more easterly and dry area, snow on the south facing slopes above Copper Creek will be mostly melted out, allowing for a nice climb up the south ridge to the summit.

Leader: Dan Saxton: apologist497@yahoo.com

* Stay tuned for the June newsletter; I hope to have a slate of my July/August trips laid up for that time, some good peaks should be on it like Ptarmigan Point in the Swans and Castle Crag in the Bitterroots..... ~ Dan Saxton



Red Mountain is at far back left, as seen from Omar Mountain to the west. Photo by Dan Saxton.

Showcasing Snapshot.....

The Hidden Secrets of the North Fork Clearwater River Canyon



The Mallard-Larkins peaks from the northwest - East Sister (left) and Black Mountain (right) are the most prominent summits.

The vast rugged country of north central Idaho bedevils easy categorization. No especially high mountain peaks grace this contorted landscape, which is gashed deeply by spectacular river canyons. Fishermen undoubtedly are more familiar with this country than the explorer and climber - and yet, that is too bad.

The grandest torrent of all draining the “Northern Bitterroots” north of Highway 12 is the North Fork of the Clearwater River. It twists its way among peaks reaching to above 7,000 feet - “What?! Only 7,000 feet!” gasps the climber used to the soaring heights of Glacier Park or the Beartooths. But wait - the Clearwater carves an astonishingly deep and narrow canyon 5,000 feet below these modest heights, which are cloaked with an amazing biodiversity of trees and lush vegetation. Truly, this is a plant-lover’s paradise. These mountains are the first to get hit with the renewed moisture from the Pacific Ocean rising off the arid plains of eastern Washington and Oregon, and thus they host this immense variety of greenery. Massive amounts of snow pile up in this area during the winter, pushing down

the subalpine zones to lower elevations - even now at this late date in 2014, 20 to 30 inches of snow-water equivalent cover the tops of these peaks.



Pot Mountain in June, still plenty of the white stuff up there!

The main section of the canyon begins at the confluence of the North Fork Clearwater River and Kelly Creek, above which the Moose Creek Buttes (6,937') rear their nearly impassable brushy walls to the northeast; some beautiful cirques have been carved out of their north faces. The canyon makes a perfect horseshoe U-turn around the massive bulk of 7,139' Pot Mountain, the highest summit above the North Fork, which harbors numerous granite ledges along its eastern side. Just a short distance further down the Clearwater to the north is the crown jewel of the area: the Mallard-Larkins Pioneer Area, a de-facto wilderness covering a spread of peaks towering nearly 5,500 feet above the river, reaching their apex at 7,077' Black Mountain. The long and sinewy arms of Dworshak Reservoir a little ways down to the west mark the end of the North Fork's deep canyon. This is truly one of northern Idaho's great valleys.



The western slopes of Pot Mountain, dropping 5,000 feet to the Clearwater below.

As you can expect, cross-country travel in this area is heinously difficult due to the brush and lush vegetation, and many of the trails are poorly maintained and overgrown. Yet the highest parts of the peaks present some quite attractive subalpine scenes (and small lakes) for those willing to endure punishment for a reward. A couple trails attack the 5,000-foot climb to either Black Mountain or the Nub, and from there you can tramp along the crest to summits such as Crag, Mallard, and Larkins Peaks. Undoubtedly there will

be very few other people up there. Once you return from a rewarding adventure in this underrated area, join the growing cause to make the Mallard-Larkins (at least) an officially-designated wilderness area!

The best way to approach this area from Missoula is by going over Hoodoo Pass from Superior and down the other side on Idaho Hwy 250. It's a long, slow drive on a lot of gravel road but there isn't really a better way to do it. If you're coming from the SW, you can take Hwy 250 over French Saddle (which leads more towards Pot Mountain) or Hwy 247 over Beaver Creek Summit (which is paved and dumps you at the feet of the Mallard-Larkins Area). Plan for at least a few days to explore this remarkable canyon!



Crag Lake in the Mallard-Larkins Pioneer Area.

This is one of these areas that isn't really "on the map," and deserves to be a prize "getting away" spot - so plan your trip to the North Fork of the Clearwater soon! By far the best resource for this area is the SummitPost page for the Mallard-Larkins Area: <http://www.summitpost.org/mallard-larkins-pioneer-area/288752>. Pot Mountain is here: <http://www.summitpost.org/pot-mountain/830397>. The Moose Creek Buttes don't have any Internet info (and they have over 2,000' feet of prominence, as does Black Mountain), so there's plenty of exploring to do.....get out there! :-)



Waterfalls roaring off Black Mountain, fed by melting snow - in July.

****All photos are by SummitPost member "mrh," the indisputable Internet authority for North Central Idaho's wild areas.***

For your interest..... Wednesday, June 11th, 2014: “Life on the Rocks: A Portrait of the American Mountain Goat”

A book presentation by retired USFWS Biologist, Bruce Smith on Mountain Goats is on Wed., June 11th, 7:00 PM at the Crystal Theater, 515 S. Higgins Ave., Missoula. The purpose of the book is two-fold: to acquaint a broader public with this unique animal which few Americans have seen and fewer know much about; and to inform them of the conservation challenges that the mountain goat and a community of alpine species face. Not the least of these challenges is climate change. High latitudes and high altitudes are warming at 2-3 times the rate of the mean global temperature rise. Come on out this evening and learn more about our nimble and intrepid white friends!

Rocky Mountaineers Picnic, Tuesday, May 13, 2014

The Rocky Mountaineers had their picnic at Pattee Canyon on the 13th of May. The picnic began at about 6pm and concluded at dusk around 9pm. It was a nice sunny evening, and we thoroughly enjoyed the food everyone brought. Club officer nominations were brought up, and as there were no opposing nominations the current slate of officers agreed to serve for another year. Now it's summertime when we need to get outside, and we'll be taking a break from regular club meetings until the fall! (*But see “Looking Ahead” below!)

Looking ahead.....

Glacier Classic - Many Glacier, August 22-24, 2014. From Friday, August 22, to Sunday, August 24, the Rocky Mountaineers will be holding base camp at Many Glacier (depending on campsite availability; stay tuned). Many trips of different types and difficulties will be offered, from easy trail hikes to challenging climbs that may require special equipment. Put this on your summer calendar!

THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Annual Membership Fee: \$10.00

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.

