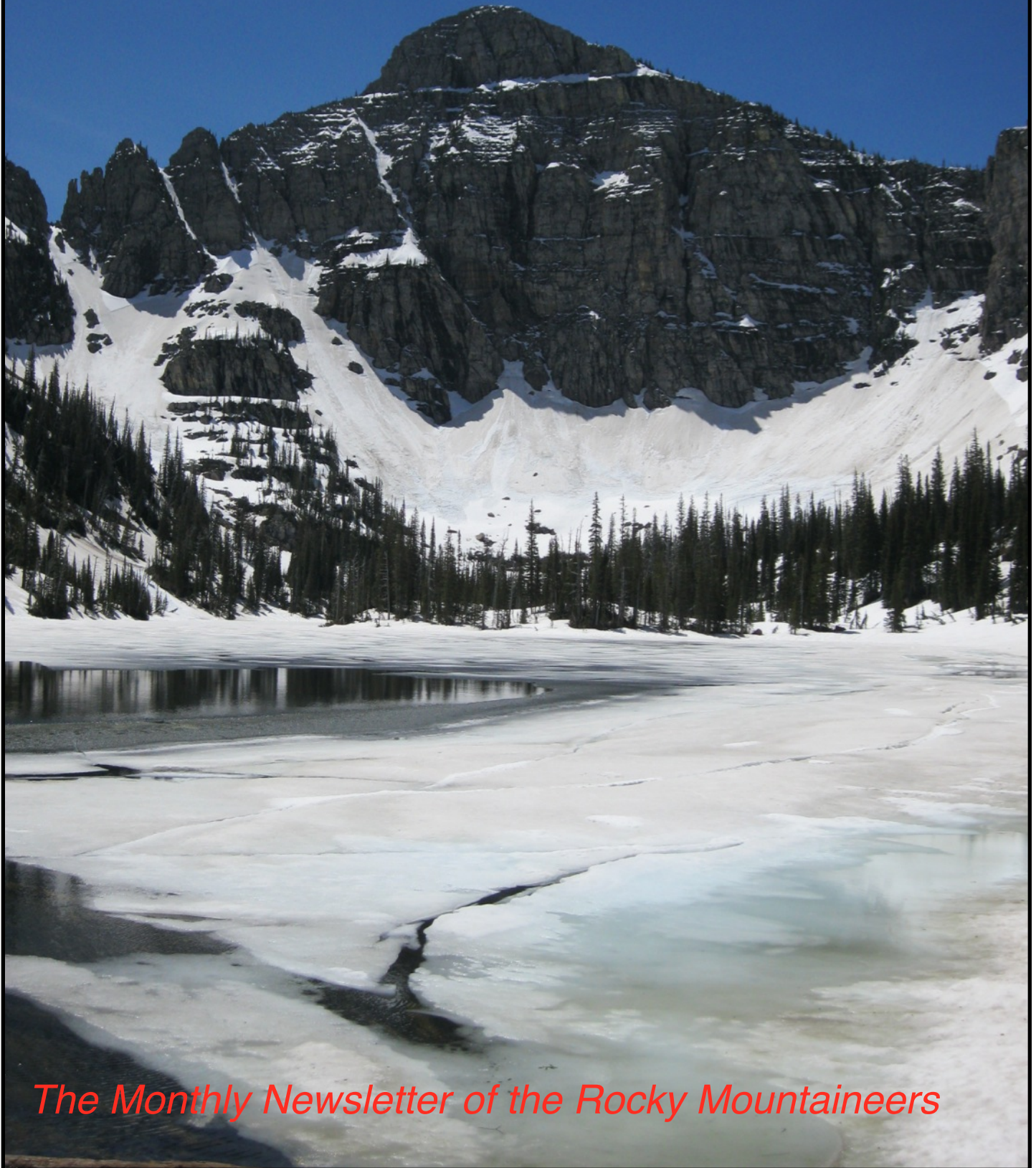


JUNE 2014

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.

Club Contacts

Website: <http://rockymountaineers.com>
e-mail: info@rockymountaineers.com

Mailing Address:
The Rocky Mountaineers
PO Box 4262
Missoula MT 59806

President: Paul Jensen
paulfjensen@yahoo.com

Vice-President (and Webmaster): Alden Wright
rocky@wrightmontana.net

Secretary: Julie Kahl
jawkal@hotmail.com

Treasurer: Steve Niday
seniday@yahoo.com

Newsletter Editor: Dan Saxton
apologist497@yahoo.com

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: First day of summer! Mollman Lakes in the Mission Mountains hasn't gotten the message yet..... Photo by Dan Saxton,

TRIP REPORTS

Photos along with trip reports are greatly appreciated!

Sunday, June 1, 2014 - Cyr Peak

We didn't have any trouble driving to the west ridge, and opted to hike up it instead of the steeper but shorter south side. This ridge is also relatively steep for those used to maintained trails, but nothing approaching a scramble. It is pretty open with little deadfall. We had great views into the Great Burn the first part of the hike. About halfway up we were above old logging areas. There were some magnificent large pines here, then, the last few hundred feet we entered a different vegetation zone. The trees were too dense to see much from the top. We found one lonely Mariposa Lily, but no Benchmark or register. Then clouds rolled in and there was distant thunder, so we descended. We only got a few drops of rain. All in all a decent half day hike. Participants were: Michael, Dave, Julia, Fred, Eileene, and me, Steve. *Steve Schombel*

Saturday, June 7, 2014 - Mount Haggin

It was finally time to explore the Pintlers after being here for a year, and I chose Mount Haggin as my introduction to the range, it being one of the closer peaks to reach from Missoula, a 2-hr drive.



Mount Haggin from a little distance above the trailhead. Photo by Dan Saxton.

I started at the Barker Lakes logging road at 8am about 2.5 miles up, where it crosses Barker Creek (warning: the topo map is NOT accurate at all in showing roads/paths; use the satellite imagery!). The road was a little rocky from spring melt, but nothing that a decent 4wd can't handle, and it actually was better higher up. The day started off beautifully crisp and clear.

When I saw Haggin and the lesser amounts of snow on it, I decided to do a full west ridge traverse by going over to Peak 9,893' first and then east to the main summit and back down the broad northern ridge. Thus, I went first up the Barker Lake road/trail, which took about 1 1/2 hrs to get to the western Barker Lake. Two fishermen were camped there, the only people I saw all day.



West Barker Lake. Photo by Dan Saxton.

The forest beyond the lake was still entirely snow-covered, and the firmness of the snow varied from place to place - sometimes I could walk on top, and sometimes I punched through. Some old snowmobile tracks were still followable. After attaining treeline, I ascended to the right to gain the NE ridge of Peak 9,893' and followed that to the summit, which I reached just past 11:15am. Views of Peak 10,282' (sometimes called "Great White Peak") were particularly spectacular, and the central Pintlers were a lot more snowy than Haggin was.



"Great White Peak."
Photo by Dan Saxton.



Looking southwest towards Mount Evans from Peak 9,893'. Photo by Dan Saxton.

From there, it was a gorgeous ramble 2 1/2 miles to the peak of Haggin, with only a few rockier spots keeping the difficulty at Class 2+. Beautiful pink, blue, and yellow tiny alpine flowers dotted the ridge.

I summited Haggin at 1:45pm, clouds were starting to fill up the sky but it was still pleasant in the 50's with a slight breeze. Views were phenomenal and far-reaching, all the way from McDonald Peak to Hilgard Peak, a 200-mile span. I took special notice of the huge cairn/shelter on top, and the two metal box registers went back 15 years, mostly signed by locals of the area.



On the summit of Mount Haggin, looking back west along the ridge I had just traversed. Photo by Dan Saxton.

After over an hour on top, I returned down the north ridge east of the Barker Lakes. There was no real defined path for most of the way, and the ridge is broad enough that I needed to use the distant mountains to keep my bearings. The trees occasionally grew close together (and there were interesting clearcut/burnt areas), but there were always narrow ways around them, so it was just a matter of being patient and making progress. Snow went down to approximately 8,000 feet, diminishing more in coverage near the bottom. When the ridge broadened out, I picked up some logging roads and followed them back down to the trailhead. It does seem that the "normal" Hearst Lake route, although longer and with more vertical, may be more straightforward than the Barker Creek route since it has a good track most of the way, but Barker Creek is a good way to go for those who enjoy some navigational challenges. I got back to the truck at 6:30pm, about a 13-mile hike and 4,500-5,000 feet of vertical. A most enjoyable introduction to the Pintlers, for sure!

Dan Saxton



Mount Haggin from its west ridge. Photo by Dan Saxton.

Sunday, June 8, 2014 - Charity Peak

As expected, when Todd K. & Rebecca H., and Dave R., and David and Julie K., got to the logging roads in the upper Mill Creek drainage, north of Frenchtown, they found a locked gate. From the gate Charity Peak was about 4 miles one way, on the roads. Todd and Dave had done a peak the day before and Rebecca was looking for a conditioning hike, so we decided to just do a "go as far as we want" walk on the logging roads, hiking on a different road from the one that goes to within 1/2 mile of Charity Peak. From further up it we got

good views of the Mill Creek drainage and the valley floor. There were still some patches of snow up high. We could see the Mission Mountains to the northeast. Dave and Todd did a short off road scramble up a hill and later found ticks. We had a nice visit as we walked. This was an open logged over area, that would be very miserable in hot sunny weather, I will reschedule this hike, but probably not until cooler weather in the fall. *Julia Kahl*

Saturday, June 21, 2014 - Mollman Lakes

Todd Kaye and Alex Eisenreich joined me to celebrate the Summer Solstice with a trip to Mollman Lakes and an attempt upon the unnamed Peak 8,650 to their north, the 3rd most prominent peak in the Missions (after McDonald and Calowahcan) and a relatively easy climb up its south slope.



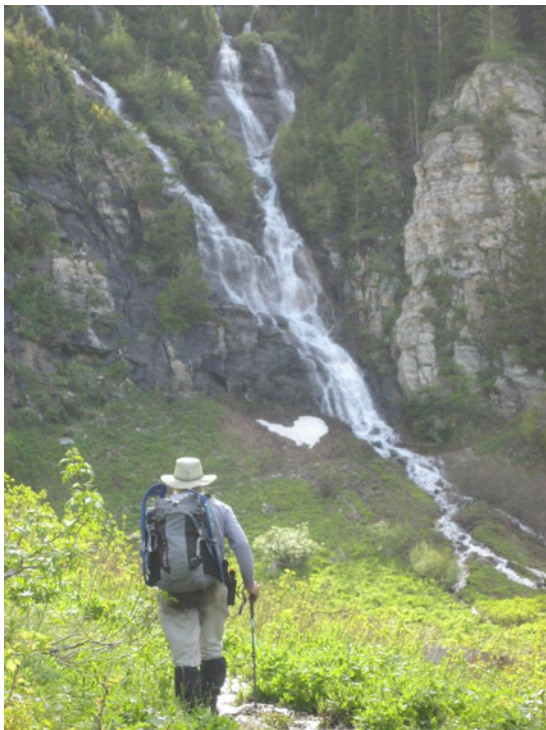
Mount Calowahcan from Mollman Pass Trail Road. Photo by Dan Saxton.

The road to the trailhead is passable with a decent 4wd, it is more rocky above the canal crossing with some puddles, and is smoother (but narrower) when you take the right turn away from the Terrace/Swartz Lake junction (which is currently missing a sign; there is a sign at the turnoff from Mollman Trail Road). It is probably best to park at the large meadow (the sign has fallen down) about a mile south of the ridge that the road wraps around and walk

the last 10-15 minutes, since the road turns left and gets pretty steep, with a couple rocky sections before it reaches the actual TH. Those wishing to punish their 4wd can make it up though. Consult the excellent map by Cairn Cartographics for more details on the exact way.



Beautiful grassy slopes leading up to Peak 8,632' from the trail below Mollman Pass. Photo by Dan Saxton.



Todd gazing at the spectacular upper Mollman falls, which the trail goes right below. Photo by Dan Saxton.

Mollman Creek is very high right now, and the first crossing was a bit difficult, but the logs at the bottom of the area the trail came into were the best way across. The second crossing is easy since the stream is much narrower there. A couple small avalanches have covered the trail where it comes up into the open around the lower waterfall. The upper waterfall that the trail comes under is sure impressive, and it's not that hard to cross the stream there! There is a good amount of new/old snow starting above there, and the trail disappears in the snow just below the pass. The pass is 90% snow covered, with a few bare spots in the sunniest sections, and the snow is otherwise still about 3 feet deep or so. There are about 3-4 inches of new snow left on the hard old snow. The pass was quite a contrast with the beautiful sunny Mission Valley in the full bloom of summer. Travel across the pass was not difficult since the old snow was still very firm.



Happy summer! Signs still half buried at Mollman Pass. Photo by Dan Saxton.

The three of us could not summit Peak 8,650 but got a good look at it. We were not experienced with steep snow, and the 400-foot slope going down from the E end of the pass to the bottom of the peak was pretty steep (not to mention we would've had to also come down the whole 2,000-foot snowy slope of the peak above after scaling it). I had my ice axe, but didn't have much experience with it, and one of my companions didn't have an axe, so we called it a day at that point. I suspect if I was by myself or with more experienced



Peak 8,650 (left) from just above where we turned around due to the steep snow below. Photo by Dan Saxton.

companions, I might have been a bit more determined to slide down on my butt using the axe as a brake, but that was just how it was today! I did practice a little bit on the short slope

right below the east end of the pass. In hindsight, it would have been better to postpone this trip until the 2nd half of July to maximize our chances of reaching the peak. But I'll be back sometime!

The hike took just under 9 hours, with about 11 miles traveled and close to 4,000 feet of vertical. The Mollman Lakes are a splendid place, and I definitely encourage people to go up there once the water goes down and the snow melts - probably after the 4th of July at least.

In spite of not summing, it was a very nice day, and Montana put its beauties on full glory! It is truly a privilege to live so close to some truly awesome peaks. *Dan Saxton*



West Mollman Lake still mostly frozen over on the first day of summer. Photo by Dan Saxton.

Saturday, June 28, 2014 - Red Mountain (Scapegoat)

We made an attempt on Red Mountain, at 9,411' the loftiest summit in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. Me, Dave, Gilia, Michael, and Dell drove in one vehicle up the Copper Creek Road around the big bend at its head to the sharp turn atop the lower ridge, where we parked at about 8am (it's 2wd passable the whole way). The upper sections of the peak were clouded in but it hadn't really rained that much up till then on the way in. Well, not too long after we started, the skies opened up! It rained at a decent pace for about 1/2 hour, and just as we were about to get discouraged, it did stop. The skies kept teasing us for a while, a tiny bit of sun breaking through the clouds.

During this whole while, we were ascending an old mining road past a couple tailings piles, one of which had an old iron furnace of some type. There was still plenty of snow in the basin to the south, but not that much on our side - I'd say Red is fine for just normal hiking now.



The old mine and furnace along the way.
Photo by Dan Saxton.

The wind picked up a bit as we climbed up to the ridgecrest - and once on top we found the rest of the way to the north completely socked in. The clouds wafted away a couple times to reveal a more craggy ridge line about a quarter mile long. It wouldn't have been a problem in good weather, but with the clouds, wind, and sleet/rain beginning to fall again - and the summit over 2 miles away over a long exposed ridge in 35-40 degree weather - we decided not to chance it. It was a good decision, for the rain and sleet picked up more noticeably on our return down.



NO FURTHER! Photo by Dan Saxton.

As we got closer to the trailhead, the sun did begin to come out, but the upper slopes of the mountain remained socked in. The whole way back to Missoula we kept passing through showers and the Bob was getting the worst of them, so we all were glad we called it! Red will be there again for some other time, and I'll offer another trip to it when I'm ready!

Thanks to my fellow participants for making a good time out of what we had and for exercising wisdom and prudence! *Dan Saxton*



Headwaters of Copper Creek, still lots of snow for the end of June. Photo by Dan Saxton.

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.

*I do not see a lot of other trips proposed besides mine - please feel free to submit your own to Facebook, or to me so I can place it in the next newsletter! Summer's here and it's time to be climbing! :-)

Thursday - Saturday, July 3-5, 2014 - WEST CABINET MOUNTAINS

Description: Join me on the 4th of July weekend and explore the West Cabinet Mountains. Thursday the 3rd backpack up Ross Creek to the end of the trail, about 3 miles. Friday ascend a ridge high enough to see the Compton Craggs and maybe Vertigo Ridge. And maybe we could reach the top of one of the craggs by this route, depending on cliffs, etc. Saturday we could hike out and car camp by a lake, or drive home.

Leader: Steve Schombel: ssbell@rockymountaineers.com

Saturday, July 12, 2014 - Not sure yet, but I will keep you updated on this one (see Facebook/the website for the posting). Dan Saxton

Saturday, July 26, 2014 - CASTLE CRAG (8,987')

Rating: Class 2+, 14.8 miles, 3,500' elevation gain

Description: This is the impressive rocky fortress tucked away beyond the ridges NW of Hamilton. I had offered this trip last September but the early season snowfall spooked my plans - now this should be for real! The approach is a bit long but relatively easy - after Knaack Lake there's some scrambling and routefinding but no exposure as long as we stay on the right route. This should be an outstanding hike up one of the premier Bitterroot peaks!

Leader: Dan Saxton: apologist496@yahoo.com



Castle Crag from Gash Point in April - the normal route goes up the backside. Photo by Dan Saxton.

Sunday, July 27, 2014 - SKOOKUM BUTTE

Description: Skookum Butte is on the MT-ID border south of Hwy 12, off of Elk Meadows Rd. This is a hike of about 2 - 2 1/2 miles one way, with about 1000 ft of elevation gain.

Leader: Julia Kahl: jawkal@rockymountaineers.com

Saturday, August 2, 2014 - PTARMIGAN POINT (9,083') AND PEAK 8,894'

Rating: Class 3 (?), 7-8 miles, 5,000' elevation gain

Description: Ptarmigan Point is the 3rd highest peak in the Swan Range and arguably one of Montana's most significant officially unnamed summits. There is very little information about

this peak anywhere, except that it's basically a direct assault up one of the several western ridgelines from the road east of Clearwater Lake. I am proposing going up one of the more southern westerly ridges and traversing over to the reddish-colored Peak 8,894', which is on the Swan Range list and is probably a very little-climbed summit but which should provide a great perspective of Ptarmigan. Then it should be a relatively easy traverse over to Ptarmigan itself, and a steep descent down one of its western ridgelines. Despite the short horizontal distance, this will be a tough grunt - all mostly steep cross-country and perhaps some bushwhacking down low! But the reward of climbing a truly lofty summit is second to none.

Leader: Dan Saxton: apologist496@yahoo.com

Saturday, August 9, 2014 - GRAY WOLF PEAK (9,002')

Rating: Class 3+/a bit class 4, 10-11 miles, 5,500' elevation gain

Description: This is the craggy Missions summit at the south end of the range, with a somewhat notorious reputation due to its sheer ruggedness as seen from a distance. But its easiest route up the east ridge is not technical and, in fact, according to Forest Dean who climbed it last year, only particularly difficult in one short section (low class 4 at worst?). Nevertheless, I'd only encourage good scramblers to join this trip. We will be taking the usual route up from the Twin Lakes along the herd/climber's path to Riddell Lakes, go over the pass and drop a bit to Scenic Lakes, and then access Gray Wolf's east ridge and take that to the summit. Remember to get the usual tribal permit - this should be an enjoyable climb!

Leader: Dan Saxton: apologist496@yahoo.com



Gray Wolf Peak from high up on East Saint Mary's Peak - the normal route goes up the backside too! Photo by Dan Saxton.

Saturday, August 16, 2014 - PEAK 9,075 - COONEY MOUNTAIN TRAVERSE

Rating: Class 3 (?), 14-15 miles, 7,000' elevation gain

Description: It looks like this will be this year's most challenging but definitely most intriguing hike that I will offer. Peak 9,075' is the fourth highest peak in the Swan Range a few miles north of Holland Peak, and there is not one shred of information I can find on it anywhere. It sits in a very beautiful location at the headwaters of Little Salmon Creek and Albino Creek. There is a most interesting connecting ridge which leads towards Peak 8,905' and Cooney Mountain (8,709'), both peaks on the Swan Range list. Thankfully, a trail leads us easily up to Smith Creek Pass but then we must drop 1,000' down its east side before taking leave of the trail to climb Peak 9,075', which should be a straightforward ascent up talus. Then we go south to intersect the main Swan Crest and follow it over Peak 8,905' - it looks like some class 3 sections possible but we'll have to see how it looks first from Peak 9,075. Then it's over to Cooney and down Cooney's west ridge back to the trail and return that way. Only very fit hikers should come on this trip, and a small group size is probably ideal. But as always, sometimes the hardest hikes are the most spectacular ones!

Leader: Dan Saxton: apologist496@yahoo.com

***There may be some flexibility in the trips I've proposed, I will put note of any changes on Facebook, or in this newsletter if possible. Dan Saxton**

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. I will have a slate of the trips and leaders in the July newsletter - in the meantime, 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.