

OCTOBER 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: Fresh new snow on the ragged Bitterroot crest heralds winter's approach, from Peak 8,261 on the MT/ID state line south of Rocky Point. Photo by Dan Saxton.

TRIP REPORTS

Sunday, September 28, 2014 - Charity Peak

It was a perfect day for a hike, in the 60's and cloudy, though it never rained, when Maria C. and Steve S. joined David and Julie K for this trip which was saved on the GPS. A reconnaissance trip earlier in the year prepared us for closed roads and roads not on the map or GPS; however, a new Lolo FS map isn't quite out yet. Steve drove us up to the closed road to the northwest of the peak; this time, we took the correct fork at the 1st road fork just up the road from the gate, and set out for the 3- 3 1/2 mile route that would take us up to a "hook" road that would take us up below the summit. About 2 1/2 miles up was a road junction that was both on the map and the GPS; we wanted the left fork to our hook road, but the right fork took a little more mileage to end in roughly the same spot as the hook road. There were no contours on my old map and it wasn't clear on the GPS that the right fork actually ended about 200 ft above the hook road. Our road ended in a massive fresh clear cut with like 10 big piles of slash, but just below the high part of the summit ridge. Our hook road was suppose to come off to the left, near the end of the road. We took a break where a road came off to the left, and though the main road went on we couldn't see any other roads coming off it. It was during this break that I found that my camera, that I thought was clipped on my pack, was actually upside down under my pack in dry powdery dirt. I dusted it off and held it upside down as I tried to start it, but the lens was jammed.



The Jocko Valley from Charity Peak. Photo by Steve Schombel.

The road that came off to left, we had stopped, by was like a road/skidder trail that went pretty much straight up through the cut to a saddle, where it continued down on to the Reservation. Every 50 feet or so it had deep water diversion channels cut into the dirt, with some slash in between. We were about 1/2 way up when it was obvious on the GPS that this wasn't our hook road. We finished the climb anyway and we could see the high point of the ridge above us. We decided to climb the ridge and the best route seemed to be up a fresh skidder trail. It was steep, and got steeper as we went up, but it was mostly fresh dirt so we had good footing, until we got to the top of the skidder trail and had to use veggie aid to scramble up to a light we could see through the trees above. The light turned out to be the end of a road that was on neither the map nor the GPS. It was logical to presume it was an extension of our elusive hook road. From there it was just a walk up clearcut slopes to a rocky point where the Charity Peak benchmark was; however, a higher knob to the south was the actual summit with like an 8 ft tower-like cairn. We did the obligatory summit photos - we could see a long way to the south and west, but went back to the benchmark knob to have lunch as it had the better view to the east and north. We could see a large body of water beyond the Bison Range, we debated over which it was. Further off we could see Polson Bay and the peaks of Glacier. [Editor's Note: If true, this was probably Kintla Peak, which was 129 miles away; see www.peakfinder.org for details]



The Kahls atop Charity Peak. Photo by Steve Schombel.

Convinced the road below was the hook road that would be an easier way out, we just dropped down the slope to it and started to follow it "out." It hadn't been used in while, there was chest high larch trees growing in the road. About where the GPS showed we should meet the end of the hook road on the GPS map we encountered a much better used road and continued on it, where now the GPS was showing us paralleling the hook road, but above it. We started dropping down cut slopes to try and find the hook road, and just by chance David saw it below. We found the hook road long unused and over grown with tall

trees and alder brush, but it hadn't washed out in any places as we followed it back down. We speculated on what we would have done if we had found this road on the way up - would we have taken it? Where it met the main road the junction had been obscured with a bulldozer and a slash pile. We took a break where we had been earlier - putting things together, we realized that the road we had come up on was actually an extension of the road from the right hand fork at the 2 1/2 mile road junction. The one we hadn't taken was a little longer, but it would have taken us up to just below the summit. We slogged the 3 1/3 miles back out, back to the van by 5pm and on our way home. Now we're very interested to see what the new Lolo FS map has for roads in this area. The camera went to the Dark Room for repairs - I hope. *Julia Kahl*



View N from Charity Peak towards Flathead Lake. Photo by Steve Schombel.

Saturday, October 4, 2014 - McLeod Peak

Dave Patterson and I met up in Missoula at 7:30am and took the (appreciatively) short drive up to Finley Creek to start the cross-country ascent to McLeod Peak from the west. The road to the TH starts off McClure Road on Finley Lakes Road - stay on that road until over a canal, then turn right. Drive a little further and turn left. You'll know you're on the right track when the road takes two sharp turns up a steeper hill and then straightens out. It's a bit rocky in spots, but I think a sturdy 2wd with a bit of clearance can do fine.



The nice corridor. Photo by Dan Saxton.

We enjoyed the nice beginning along a very good path up Finley Creek (it leads to the lakes at the creek's head), almost like a regular maintained path. After the trail climbed up a steep scree slope and began a small descent just short of a fork left in the canyon, we left it and continued up the slope. After we entered the woods, staying left of the valley bottom, the travel was very pleasant - hardly any "bushwhacking" in that sense. Higher up, there was a wonderful corridor between scree and trees along the valley's N side.

There is a small pond at the valley's head; it was completely dry. From there it opened up into nice meadows and then we sought to gain the main ridge line by attaining the secondary ridge at left first. A couple hundred feet of loose scree brought us to the top, with the first views of McLeod and the Missions, sprinkled with a light coating of snow. From that point, we climbed another couple hundred feet along the ridge line, which involved some Class 3 scrambling and was a bit narrow. On top, the 2 crags to the south looked daunting and we were glad we didn't have to navigate them!



The crags. Photo by Dan Saxton.



From there, it was just a matter of traversing along the ridge to the last slope of McLeod, and we got to the top at 12:45 after about 4 1/2 hrs of hiking. It was much colder and windy right on top, so we ate lunch in a small copse of trees just N of the summit. The lake right below in the cirque looked like a very inviting place! Out of the wind, the sun was quite pleasant and we enjoyed the great views of the Missions, the Swans, and south over the Rattlesnake all below.

On the traverse to McLeod. Photo by Dan Saxton.



The view south over the Rattlesnake from the summit of McLeod Peak. Photo by Dan Saxton.



The view N to the Missions from McLeod. Photo by Dan Saxton.

Going back was a simple matter of retracing our steps, though we chose a more direct route down into the basin to avoid the Class 3 - loose scree made it the only tedious part of the trip. The rest of the way down was very pleasant in beautiful temps. We marveled at the fact that even with 75,000 people living just over the ridge, we saw nobody all day up here. Dave and I returned to the truck about 5:15, making for an approx. 9 hr, 10 mi. hike.

I think this route should be more considered as a standard way up McLeod for the reasonably fit climber experienced in cross-country travel than going all the way up the Rattlesnake road (I think another Rocky Mountaineers McLeod trip report a few years ago said pretty much the same thing?). As mentioned, it only took us 4 1/2 hours to summit and if the right way is taken the woods are delightfully open the whole time - plus, the valley and ridges are quite scenic. A bike trip/climb would probably take more time even though it might be a bit "easier" in terms of climbing difficulty. Cedron Jones's "Peakbagging Montana" guidebook is good and accurate for this route. *Dan Saxton*



Looking into the Tribal members-only Primitive Area and the Swans beyond, from McLeod Peak. Photo by Dan Saxton.

Saturday, October 4, 2014 - Cabin Work Trip

There was a great turnout at the cabin work party, and we got a lot of firewood cut. Thanks to all. However, we did not start any of the inside work. The broom was gone so we couldn't even sweep. Other things needed are trash bags (hopefully people will pack stuff out), candles, donation envelopes and big heavy pots and pans. The outside ladder has rotted away, so a crew should bring up a claw hammer, handsaw, and other tools. The chimney still should be scrubbed out. *Steve Schombel*

Sunday, October 12, 2014 - Spotted Dog WMA

This hike was canceled due to inclement weather. The new maps shows this area as no longer having any seasonal closures, making it a good early season hiking area. Look for this to be rescheduled for early next season, or a ski trip over the winter. *Julia Kahl*

Sunday, October 19, 2014 - Beacon Hill



Trailhead sign. Photo by Steve Schombel.

This hill was like a hill in eastern Montana, except it was surrounded by larger mountains instead of being out on its own. It is on private ranch land, but the Five Valleys Land Trust got a conservation easement, so the trail, mostly an old ranch road, is open to the public for hiking. To get there you take highway 10A south from Drummond a little over 2.5 miles, go right on Mullan Road 4-4.5 miles and it is easy to see a small parking area with a sign fenced off from both the road and

the pasture land. Near the gate is a tight adit which only people with the proper body mass index can squeeze through. There is also an arrow sign, and several more arrows along the way, both wooden and large, presumably cattle proof, concrete blocks along the way with arrows sunken in and painted white. There were also a couple of more tight adits. Several people obviously put a lot of work into marking this route. It took us a while to find the trailhead, since I was told it was closer to highway 10A. It was also longer, 2.5 miles with 700' elevation gain, according to the sign.



Photo by Steve Schombel.

Eight of us started hiking down this old road on a perfect blue sky fall day. The country was wide open and we could see the destination except when we were in small draws. Each kept their own pace, so we got spread out, hiking past the ruins of an old cabin and a spring. We topped a ridge and saw a jeep up the road, then dipped down into a second spring where there were some cattle. The jeep came down to us, and it turned out to be Sue Peterson, one of the landowners. She was very friendly, and we talked quite a while. She said there was once an airport beacon on the hill, and we'd see the concrete foundation, which we did. And, she said, we know each other, so we could walk straight toward the top after we passed the electric fence instead of following the road. We parted company and hiked on. Again we spread out. The road veered off but we followed the arrows and stayed near the fence and got around the electric fence before heading to the top. The going was a little more difficult with grass and burrows and occasional rocks, but it never was too steep, except for one hillside near the top. There were occasional cattle tracks, and here it looked like someone may have improved the track for a short distance. It was hard to tell. Some of us saw a coyote in the area, and some saw many dens. Six of us reached the top, while two had planned to do a shorter hike on a trail and turned around after reaching the saddle. There were actually two hilltops, and, according to the USGS topo map, the north one, which Jeff and I wandered over to, at 5293', is one foot higher than the other one. So, nah nah sorry to the rest of you, you have to go back. Actually, several of us thought it would be nice to go back in the spring and see what flowers bloom up there. Along with the great views of the Flint Creek Range, the Pintlers, the John Long Mtns, the MacDonald Pass area, and the

Dolomite Slabs in the Garnet Range, we saw a whole bunch of green Prairie Smoke on the north slope, and several of them had secondary blooms. This is a good indication of just how hot and dry this October has been.



Typical terrain on Beacon Hill. Photo by Steve Schombel.

On the way down, again we got spread out. Two people took a wrong turn. We got back to an empty car. After several worrisome minutes, including talk about hiking back or violating the no trespassing and driving up, I discovered they had left a message, and we were able to reach them on the cell phone. Yes, they said they were lost, but they could see a ranch

house which they would head for it. By lucky coincidence it turned out to be the Petersons' place, and Sue saw them coming and gave them a ride back to their car. We can laugh about it now, but in most instances the trip leader should be more aware of everyone in the group.

After reuniting, two people needed to get back home and the other six of us headed to Drummond for dinner. Another thing we learned is that Parkers, the place with over a hundred varieties of burgers, is not open on Sunday, but the Wagon Wheel also has great burgers and beer. And, finally, another thing Sue said was, they are very happy to see occasional hikers, but they hope there isn't a constant stream of people. She also said the Five Valleys people were great to work with. It was a nice hike, for a change of pace. Attendees were: Cathy, Eileen, Fred, Jeff, Julie, Lois, me, and Zona. *Steve Schombel*

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.

Saturday, November 8, 2014 - FIRE ECOLOGY TRAIL, BASS CREEK

Description: This loops around from the picnic area up several hundred feet and back down to the horse trailer lot and back, a total of 2 1/2 miles. It is in a no shooting zone and is maintained with a bridge at one creek crossing. The fall colors should be great. There is a longer loop, the Larry Creek Trail #129. It is cleared off (thanks for the news, Alden!), and the whole loop is in the no shooting zone. There are two options: one, which is mostly a closed road, would make the hike about 4 1/2 miles. The other would be @ 5 1/2 to 6 miles (Alden recently biked this route and confirmed it is good for both biking and hiking). Both go by the Larry Creek Group Site, which is a short walk from the Horse Trailer parking lot. This loop tops off @ 350' above the lot.

Leader: Steve Schombel: stephenschombel@yahoo.com

Looking ahead.....

The Rocky Mountaineers will be meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 11th, 2014, at 7pm at the Trail Head, 221 E. Front St, Missoula, to host the following presentation:



Hiking Off the Beaten Path: Celebrating the Wilderness's Act's 50th birthday with a visual tour of majestic and lesser-known wildlands of the West.

Join Zack Porter, Western Montana Field Director and NexGen Wilderness Leaders Program Director for the Montana Wilderness Association, as he presents a visual tour of spectacular (and often overlooked) backpacking and day hiking opportunities in the Rockies and surrounding regions.

Rocky Mountaineers' Meeting Minutes 10/14/2014

I. Call To Order: 6:08, Met at Union Club

II. Attendees: Paul Jensen, Alden Wright, Julie Kahl, Dan Saxton

III. Treasurer's Report:

A. \$932.01

B. Alden hasn't gotten reimbursed for web hosting yet, or Paul for \$16 for the plywood for the cabin

IV. Discussions:

A. Speakers

1. Zack Porter in Nov. - Wilderness off the beaten track

2. Suggestions:

a. Mike Hoyt -Paul sent inquiry

b. Paul will contact Steven Gnam & Steven Sherriff

c. Steve Karkanen Avalanche presentation, Dec. or Jan. - Steve S. will contact

3. Forest a maybe for Feb.

4. Alden set up a bicycle show? He'll try to get Aaron Teasdale

5. Out of town speakers

a. Compensation like accommodations, gas money? \$50 for gas?

b. Consider on a case-by-case basis

B. Promo

1. Alden got more info from Nadia and posted it on face book

2. Always ask for a picture

C. Club notifications

1. Some posts on Facebook lately

2. It's been up to Steve Niday or Forest Dean to get out notices to general memberships, not sure they are doing it.

3. Alden will look into Google Doc. maybe try that

D. GMAR

1. Paul talked to Josh, he was still vague

2. Still issue of who owns the race

3. Money in account

a. In limbo in the bank, Steve Niday handled finances

b. Not sure who should get the money

1) Additional expenses to volunteers - for time spent

2) Alden on board, he wants it to go to TRM

c. If Josh were to sign off - could we do it alone?

1) 1st reaction - NO

2) Need core of people who have skills

3) Maybe a scaled-down version

4) Decision needs to be made soon as planning needs to start in Jan.

E. Trips

1. Paul & Josh went back up to the cabin to replace the cooking table surface with a new piece of plywood on top

a. Had to cut it into 2 pieces to get it inside the door

b. Needs to be sealed. Plastic product not good because of temperature changes, use spare varnish?

2. Steve S. - Beacon Hill by Drummond, Oct. 19th

3. Paul back up to the cabin to do more work

4. Julie - Ski at Lolo Pass Sunday after Thanksgiving

5. Alden - Ski Club Trail work at Lolo Pass

V. Adjourn 6:50 PM

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.

