

FEBRUARY 2015

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 icy fingers of winter burden hardy trees on Baldy Mountain, near Plains, Montana. Photo by Dan Saxton.

TRIP REPORTS

Saturday, February 14, 2015 - Black Mountain (8,330')

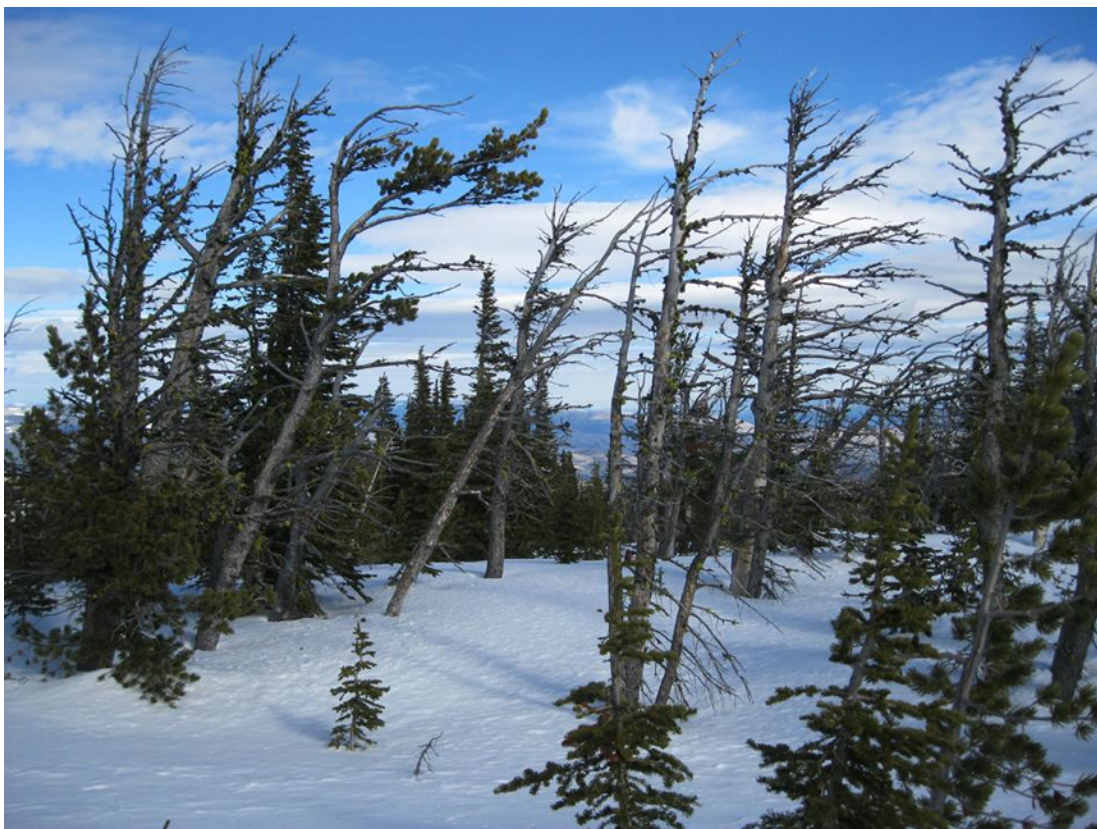
On Valentine's Day, Fred McDonald, Dell & Gail Meuchel, and I climbed Black Mountain, which is SE of Lincoln and NW of Helena. It is the highest mountain for 25 miles around and has over 2,500 feet of prominence, so is a good goal for peakbaggers despite its unimpressive appearance from a distance.



Black Mountain from the road in. Photo by Dan Saxton.

After coming up from I-90, Hwy 12 to Avon, Hwy 141, and Three Mile Road, we parked on Ophir Creek Road on BLM land about 3/4mi beyond "Blackfoot City," an old mining site. The road was largely clear in the open rangeland, then was a bit dicey on the last part in the narrower Ophir Creek valley due to snow and ice, but we made it ok.

The first part of the hike was a straightforward climb through clear woods and open slopes with beautiful views of the Pintler and Flint Creek Ranges to the south. Snow was patchy up to about 6,400 feet where we entered the trees, and then was not very well consolidated so we put on our snowshoes there. After going through thicker (but easy to navigate) forest for a while, it became more open and we began crossing some snowmobile tracks. We followed a very nice meadowy ridge for about a mile before entering the woods again for the final stretch (after Pt. 7,562'). There were some blazed trails with more snowmobile tracks in this



Windblasted trees on the summit. Photo by Dan Saxton.

area. The last part was a bit steep again, but not too long of a stretch. It was very neat to see all the windblasted trees on the summit, which we reached at 12:30pm. The top is a long wooded gentle ridge, with views possible by peering through openings in the trees, especially to the south and also north towards the Bob. There was about 3 feet of snowpack up there.

Fred McDonald looking east from the dropoff on the east side of Black Mountain. Photo by Dan Saxton.





We went about 1/3 of a mile east to a big dropoff on the Continental Divide (the actual summit of Black is fully in the Pacific watershed), with the best views of the day, a 180-degree span from N-E-S. There was quite little snow on east-facing slopes of mountains to the north, with some of these slopes bare up to 7,000 feet. We could see all around the Helena area, and 115 miles to the Crazy Mountains. Temperatures were pleasant as long as the sun was out and the breeze not too persistent.

Nice country on the south ridge of Black Mountain. Photo by Dan Saxton.

On the way back, we looped around to where we had come up and retraced our steps. The snow was a lot softer coming down! We got back to Dell's vehicle just before 4pm, for a hike of 8 miles, just over 7 hrs, and 3,000 feet of vertical - a nice moderate trip in a somewhat overlooked but pleasant area! For those who like nice rolling country with plenty of woods and open space, this is the place to go. *Dan Saxton*

Interesting atmospheric effects upon the Pintlers and Flint Creeks on the way down. Photo by Dan Saxton.



Sunday, February 15, 2015 - Pack Creek Road Ski

Finally and barely, we got the Pack Creek Road skied. On Thursday, some of us snowshoed up the lower end to access the road conditions and found around a foot of packed snow on the road that has a lot of shade in the lower reaches. We got an early start on Sunday, with Roy R., Jeff S., and David & Julie K. beginning at 10am on icy crunchy conditions with clouds.

The first 1 1/2 mile down to the Pack Creek Bridge let us test out our snow plowing to see how it was going to work on the snowmobile track rutted road - all was well. At about the halfway point, at a spot where there is the only noticeable rise in the road, we had a lunch break. It was mostly sunny now and the snow was getting soft in sunny areas but was still hard and icy in shaded areas, we had to be constantly aware of the light pattern to adjust to the changing conditions for our skis.

After the lunch break spot the serious downhill starts, but the soft snow made it possible to pretty much go at whatever speed you wanted, making the first two of three of the outside turns with "a cliff on one side and hundreds of feet drop off in the other side" manageable. The third turned out challenging as the cliff side was melted off with a "ditch" at the base where most of the snow was melted off the road. Also, the snowbank along the outside edge of the road had fallen off, leaving about a three foot wide strip of snow down the center of the road maybe 3 inches thick. As we were reaching the lower end of the road, some snowmobiles went up - if they went through this section, they probably broke that strip up. Further down there was a curve where on Thursday there had been some dirt in the snow by a bank - now the snowmobiles had dragged the dirt several hundred feet in both directions, so we had to pick our way through both that and also a second spot further down in the trees where needles and small branches had showered down on the snow.

About 1/2 mile from the Brushy Fork Bridge (Beaver Ridge Rd.), there was a spot where on Thursday a puddle at the base of a melted off bank was cutting a channel through the snow to the edge, with a small snow bridge. As we came out on Thursday, the snow bridge had collapsed and now there was just a bit of the bridge left - we had to take our skis off to step over the channel. The road goes up about 1/4 mile from the Brushy Fork bridge, and it almost felt good on our weary snowplow muscles. It was about 2:30pm when we got out and completed our journey with meals at the Lochsa Lodge. *Julia Kahl*

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.

There are no trips set in stone; however, several club members have ideas planned and will be revealing exact dates in due time - among these are:

Little St. Joe Cabin (Paul Jensen) - hopefully!

Freezeout Lake - Julia Kahl

Chief Joseph Ski

April ?? - Trapper Peak 10,157'. Trapper Peak is the highest peak in the Bitterroots. Depending on how far up the road we can drive, it is 3500' to 5000' vertical and 9 to 12 miles round trip. There will be deep snow most of the way----it might or might not be consolidated enough to hike up without skis or snowshoes.

Leader: Alden Wright - trapper@rockymountaineers.com. If you are interested, contact me and let me know when you would prefer to go.

Looking ahead.....

The Rocky Mountaineers will be meeting on Tuesday, March 10th, 2015, at 7pm at the Trail Head, 221 E. Front St, Missoula, to host the following presentation:

"The Deepest Caves in America - Wilderness Expedition Caving in Montana,"
presented by Alpine Karst Foundation President Daryl Greaser.

Daryl will discuss last summer's survey of "Tears of The Turtle Cave" in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, currently the nation's deepest limestone cave at 1629-feet below the surface. Three caves in Montana are deeper than 1000 feet. Hear what is in store for 2015 and learn what it takes to participate in a wilderness caving expedition!

Photo: River caving in the Scapegoat Wilderness, by Brian Gindling (used with permission of course!)



Mark on your Calendar: Glacier Classic August 28-30, 2015!

***Trip Proposals needed - inform Forest Dean (mtnear1@gmail.com)**

Rocky Mountaineers' Meeting Minutes 2/10/2015

I. Call To Order: 6:11, MacKenzie River Pizza

II. Attendees: Paul Jensen, Alden Wright, Steve Niday, Julie Kahl, Dan Saxton, Steve Schombel, Lois Crepeau, Forest Dean, Tom Hanou, David Kahl, Kathy Burleson

III. Treasurer's Report: \$849.01

IV. Discussions:

A. Glacier Classic

1. Apgar
2. Last weekend in Aug. 28-30th
3. Tom Hanou will do burritos
4. Need Trips

B. Speakers

1. March - Alden still working on a bike show
2. April - Forest and Wyoming

C. Forest how is the club doing?

1. Who is the newsletter going to? About 35 people
2. Newsletter on web site indexed by internet? If we looked up like Charity Peak would our newsletters show up?
3. Forest tried on his smart phone and no

D. Trips

1. Paul still trying to get up to Little St. Joe
2. Julie, Lee Creek/Pack Creek, Chief Joseph and Freezeout Lake
3. Dan, Black Mt. on Sat.

V. Adjourn 6:40 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.