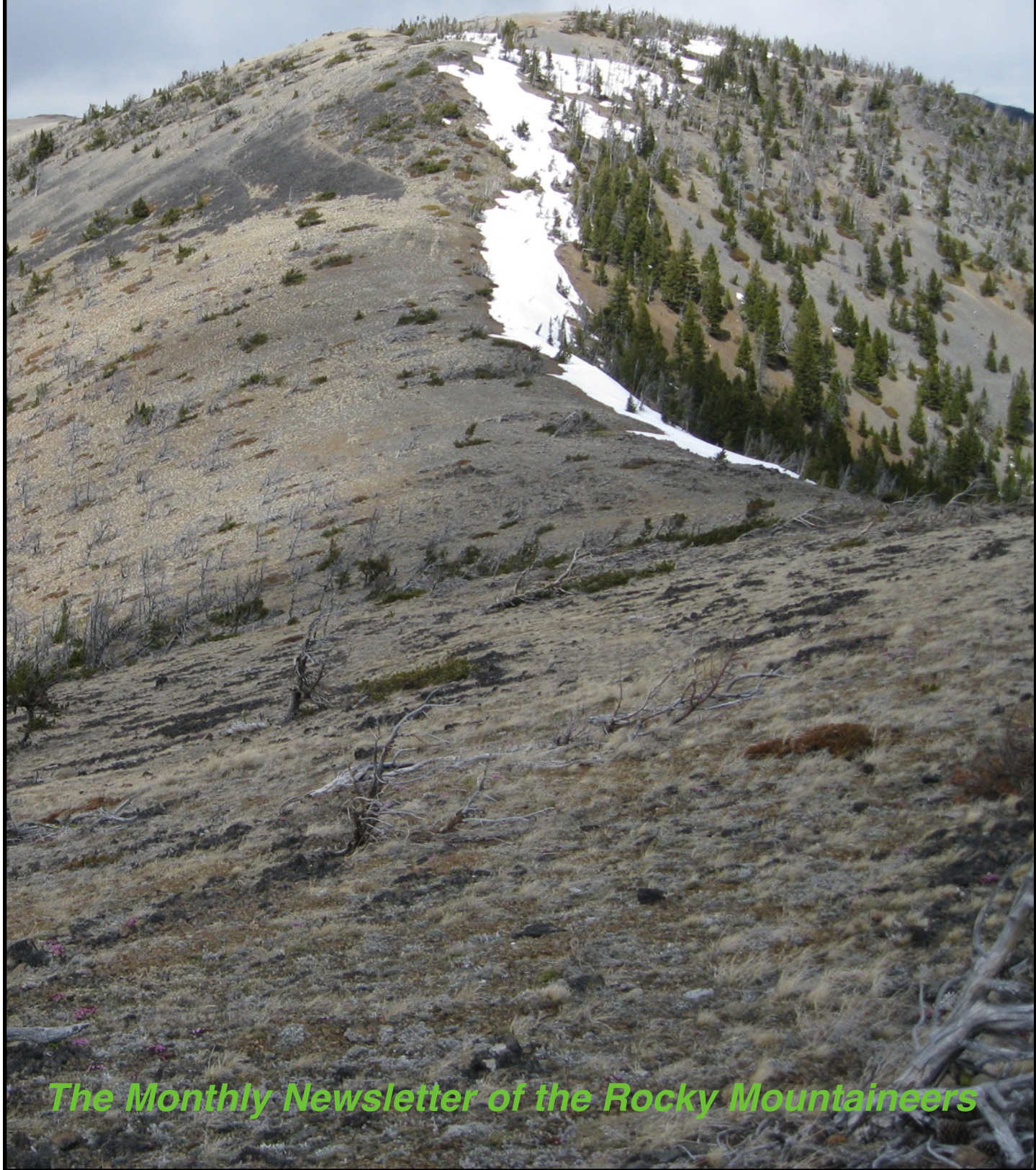


APRIL 2015

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: Rolling ridgeline in the magnificent hill country of the Continental Divide between Flesher and Rogers Passes, April 25, 2015. Photo by Dan Saxton.

***Attention: Annual Club dues need to be paid ASAP
to continue membership***

See last page of newsletter for details on how to pay.

TRIP REPORTS

Saturday-Sunday, March 28-29 - Freezeout Lake



Birds on Freezeout Lake. Photo by Julia Kahl.

Going to Freezeout Lake, by Choteau, to see the snow goose migration is always a “you get what you get” proposition when you have to make hotel reservations in Jan. The unprecedented warm weather had the peak of the migration in the weeks before our visit. To make matters worse, it was a weekend of record breaking wind gusts all over the state, in the 50-60mph range. All the lakes were open, but

stirred up with white caps. Most of the snow geese and swans were gone, but some coots, ducks and Canada geese braved the waves. When David and Julie K. got there around noon, we drove the lake area then went to Priest Butte Lake to eat lunch overlooking the lake. Two sandhill cranes were working the lake margin. Coots and mostly pintail and mallard ducks were on the water, mud colored from the waves churning up the lake bottom. We went into the Gunter Hotel in Choteau and got our room. Lois C. and Zona L. caught up with us there; they had come through Augusta. We settled in and visited with the strategy of having an early dinner at the Elk Country Grill and go back to the lake in the early evening. We were hoping the winds may have died down some. Which they had, but the water was still choppy. We drove around and saw some shoveler ducks and hawks. Then Zona headed back to Missoula. Back in Choteau, Lois, David and Julie played poker, using Easter candy as “chips.”



Sandhill cranes. Photo by Julia Kahl.

Sunday we drove the south and west sides of the big lake hoping to find birds in lee of the grass. There were a few swans off a point, but a guy was walking out there to take pictures and they flew away. There were scattered snow geese, but not much action. We decided to go back to Hwy 200 on the Augusta Sterns Rd. (Bean Lake); there were some ponds up that way, one with some swans. We got ice cream in Augusta and stopped at the ruins of the old dance hall at Sterns to take pictures. On Sunday the weather was strange, there was a low hanging dark cloud, kind of like a wall cloud, almost the entire length of the Front Range, with clearing behind it, but it wouldn't move. We were in the area like 4 hours and it moved maybe 1/4 of a mile in that time. When we got on Hwy 200 to go back home we were shortly in the clear area for the rest of the trip home. It was a nice weekend anyway. *Julia Kahl*

Saturday, April 18, 2015 - Piquett Mountain (8,831')

The right factors came together to make this a gorgeous spring trip - excellent weather, firm snow conditions, and (to my surprise) plenty of fellow Mountaineers joining along! Todd Kaye, Alden Wright, Johnathan Bardsley, Bryan Kercher, Jim Greenfield, Michael Hoyt, and one of Michael's friends, plus John's dog Pudge and Michael's dog, joined me for this climb.



On the trail. Photo by Dan Saxton.

It was the largest group I've ever led to date. In spite of forecasts of a small disturbance passing through, it was a magnificent bluebird day.



The Bitterroots from Piquett's north ridge; Boulder Peaks left, Trapper Peak right. Photo by Dan Saxton.

The short spur road from Painted Rocks Lake to the Little Boulder Creek trailhead was snow-free, and after we started at around 8:45am the trail was mostly clear of snow until about 6,000 feet. There was some blowdown to climb over, but nothing requiring major trail repair. The forest on most of Piquett's western slopes was largely burned in the 2007 fire, making for open views most of the way up. We were able to follow the general route of the trail all of the way to the saddle between Piquett and Rombo Mountains. From there, the north ridge was interesting, very snow-loaded on the east side. We carefully zigzagged up some of the steeper sections on the ridgecrest, using helpful windblown snow banks. Overall, the snow was very firm and pleasant; I did not put on my snowshoes but several others in the group did. Michael Hoyt and his friend called it a day in this section (due to leg issues) and returned to the trailhead.



Still snow-covered Piquett Lake below and Pintlers in the far distance.
Photo by Dan Saxton.

The rest of us made it to the top at around 12:30pm and marveled at the excellent views of the Bitterroots, Blue Joint area, and Idaho country to the south. The Bighorn Crags, Lemhi Range, Pioneer Mountains, Pintlers, and up the Bitterroot Valley to the Rattlesnake were all visible. Lots of large dangerous cornices overhung the east edge of the summit so we gave these a wide berth.

Piquett Lake below was frozen but had a small bit of water on the edges.

The way down was fast and pleasant, helped by softer snow. We returned to our vehicles at 4pm, making for a most excellent adventure in the Montana backcountry. I'm especially grateful to see more people coming out on these club trips! *Dan Saxton*

Painted Rocks Lake basks in spring below winter. Photo by Dan Saxton.



Saturday, April 18, 2015 - Beacon Hill



Beacon Hill crew. Photo by Steve Schombel.

Like Dan in a previous report, I was very happy that so many joined me on the hike to Beacon Hill, 12 in all. Besides me there were Fred, Eileene, Lois, Roy, Dave, Julie, Barbara, Nicole, Ernst and two girls, Julia and Brianna. Fred and Eileene wanted to look for some trekking poles they lost last year, but they did hike with us to the last gate. The rest of us reached the top, some a lot faster than the others. We saw lots of wildflowers, greater numbers and

varieties than expected. We also saw several Iris, Bitterroot and Camas plants, so there will still be lots of blooms in a month or so. It was fun to see how the girls reacted to the flowers, some elk bones, and other things we found along the way. We had great views surrounded by other ranges. Most impressive in the distance were the Anaconda-Pintlers, which still have lots of snow.

At dinner some of the new people enjoyed themselves so much that they gave Julie their dues money. They are looking forward to going on more hikes and to the picnic too. I'm also looking forward thinking about more trips. *Steve Schombel*

Pintlers in the distance.
Photo by Steve Schombel.



Saturday, April 25, 2015 - Annual Trapper Peak Climb (10,157')



2015 Trapper Peak group. Photo by Bryan Kercher.

We had some reports that we could drive to the trailhead and other reports that we couldn't. The Missoula car pool group of Craig Daue, Todd Kaye, Eileen McGurty, Suzanne P., Julia Smith, Megan VanDenHuevel, Neil Simpson, Chris Wiggins, Julie Huck, Ron Uchityl, and Finn met at Walmart at 6:45. Another group of Bryan Kercher, Mark Wetherington, and Edna Blanchfield drove from Hamilton, and Norman Singley and Lauren de Paepe drove separately.



Heading up Trapper. Photo by Bryan Kercher.

Eileen and Alden were first up the road, and we saw two herds of elk on the way up. We were fortunate that someone had sawed out major blowdowns across the road, and we could drive much farther up the road than in any previous trip at this time in April. When Alden and Eileen got close to the penultimate switchback, Alden powered through several drifts which made him overconfident. Then he made it 2/3 through another drift and was stuck. It turned out that the Jeep Grand Cherokee was high-centered on a drift with a hard icy crust. The others turned up and after a lot of shoveling we got the car through the drift. Alden drove another ¼ mile. Only Norman and Lauren decided to drive further.



Almost to the top. Photo by Bryan Kercher.

We left the trailhead at about 9:45 in two groups. The second group was Mark, Chris, Edna, Craig, Eileen, Alden, Norman and Lauren. Lauren was the only person on the trip who skied. The trail was mostly bare until the trail leveled out, and then we had consistent snow for the rest of the way up. We did not need snowshoes. The first party reached the peak from about 1:05 to 1:25 pm, and all started down at about 1:35 pm. The second party started arriving at the top at about 2 pm. Eileen started feeling dizzy and sick near tree line (8700'), and Alden sent the rest of the second party ahead. Eileen and Alden continued uphill slowly to keep warm until the first party came down. Eileen went down with them, and Alden went on to the top arriving at about 2:45. The second party all left the top at about 3 pm, and we were all at the cars by about 6 pm.

There was a couple inches of fresh snow up higher, and by the time we came the snow had softened up----ski conditions were reasonably good.

The view from the top was excellent for the first group and then mostly good with intermittent clouds blocking the view for the second group. Quote of the day: when Alden pushed to the top after leaving Eileen, Craig said to him "Alden, when are you going to grow up?" (His 73rd birthday was 2 days before the trip.)

We saw fresh elk tracks on the way down.

The approximate round trip distance from where we parked the cars was 9 miles with 4000' elevation gain. *Alden Wright*



At the saddle between Trapper and East Trapper. Photo by Bryan Kercher.

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, May 2 - QUIGG PEAK (8,419') & BUTTE CABIN RIDGE (8,468')

Rating: Class 2

Distance: 12-13mi loop

Elevation Gain: 5200ft

Description: These are the highest peaks adjoining the east end of Rock Creek, part of the "John Long Mountains" section of the Sapphires. Butte Cabin Ridge is also a 2,000-foot prominence peak, but Quigg Peak is particularly distinctive, so I'm including it too in this venture. We will start at the Butte Cabin TH and take a cross-country route up Quigg first - the forest should be relatively open, but it'll be a long nearly 4,500' slog. Snowline should be approx. 6,500ft. Then after summiting Quigg we will continue over to Butte Cabin Ridge and return down via the Butte Cabin Creek Trail - a (hopefully) easy finish to this long loop. But it won't be an easy hike overall, and will probably take all day - good thing the days are long now! I'll propose meeting up at 6:30am at the park & ride east of Hellgate Plaza; we can start hiking around 7:30. Snow will be soft up high, so snowshoes are a good bet. This should be a good opportunity to see what the high country around Rock Creek is all about.

http://www.hillmap.com/m/ag1zfmhpbGxtYXAtaGRychULEghTYXZIZE1hcBiAgICg1_LcCAw

Equipment: Snowshoes, good boots

Leader: Dan Saxton - apologist497-at-yahoo.com

Saturday, May 9 – THE SHARD (Bitterroots)

NOTE: This was postponed from April 25.

Rating: Class 3;

Distance: 14 miles round trip;

Elevation Gain: 5200'

Description: The third highest peak in the Bitterroot Mountains (9883') sits on the ridge separating Chaffin Creek and Little Tin Cup drainages. Will start at the Chaffin Creek trailhead and hike up towards Hart Lake. From there the route will go to the north and up the south face of The Shard (intend to follow the route detailed by Mike Hoyt in his book). Expect a fairly long day, so will plan on an early start.

Equipment: Skis or snowshoes. Ice Ax, Crampons.

Leader: Forest Dean, mtnear1@gmail.com

Saturday, May 16, 2015 - OVANDO AREA WATERFALL HIKE

Description: I'm planning a waterfall hike on Saturday, May 16th in the Ovando area. The first is a fall in Falls Creek. It is 1 ½ to 2 miles hike up from the Monture Creek Campground, then a short distance up a switchbacking side trail. It is not in the guidebook "Montana Waterfalls" by Larry and Nathan Johnson, but it looks like it is a small creek that gushes out of a steep canyon. The next one, Lodgepole Creek Falls, is in the guidebook; in fact, it is the one on the cover. We'll drive over to the Dunham Creek drainage and up to a bridge. Then it is about a ½ mile walk down a closed road, and the book says, "it's a steep bushwhack to the falls but worth it." This may be enough for most people, but there is a nearby Dunham Falls, about a 2 mile hike up Dunham Creek. There is only a photo in the guidebook, and it looks like a small fall. Finally, there is one waterfall called Hiding Friend Falls, about half way between the Dunham Creek turnoff and the Lodgepole Creek bridge. We might be able to see this one from the road. It is marked on the map but there is no other info in the book.

Leader: Steve Schombel - ssbell@rockymountaineers.com

Sat-Mon, May 23-25 – BLACKFOOT MTN. & MT. LOGAN (Glacier NP)

Rating: Class 4 or 5; *Distance:* 20-25 miles round trip; *Elevation Gain:* 5000-6000'

Description: If the Memorial Weekend weather cooperates (and that is a big IF), I would like to give this long planned trip another try (this is probably my fourth time listing this trip in this publication over the last 10 years). Would likely drive up to the east side of Glacier on Friday, camp, then get permits and start trip on Saturday morning. Hike up to Gunsight Lake then up onto the Blackfoot Glacier. Climb Blackfoot on Sunday and traverse to Logan, then

return to camp. Hike out on Monday. This climb will require some steep snow climbing (possibly even call it ice climbing), roped travel, and “winter camping.” Should be a good time!

Equipment: Ice axes, possibly ice tools, crampons, harness, snowshoes, winter camp gear.

Leader: Forest Dean, mtnear1@gmail.com

Sunday, May 31, 2015 - SPOTTED DOG AREA

Description: This is part of the new Spotted Dog Wildlife Management Area outside of Deer Lodge. We will explore more of this area to access its hiking potential.

Leader: Julia Kahl, jawkal@rockymountaineers.com

Sunday, June 14, 2015 - ROGERS PASS SOUTH

Description: We would hike the Continental Divide Trail going south from Rogers Pass. A possible destination would be Anaconda Peak about 3 miles out. It would be about 1,500 of elevation gain. Unless there are snow banks up there, there will be no water. *(Note from Editor: I was just south of the area near Flesher Pass on Saturday, 4/25 and there was not much snow on the ridges in the open areas. Plan on there being no water by June 14)*

Leader: Julia Kahl, jawkal@rockymountaineers.com

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

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

Kleinschmidt Flat near Ovando, looking to the peaks above the North Fork of the Blackfoot River. Photo by Dan Saxton.



Looking ahead.....

We will have a potluck picnic at the Pattee Canyon Picnic Area starting at 6 pm on Tuesday, May 12. The picnic area won't be officially open, so we won't be able to drive to where we will hold the picnic. You can park at the loop in the main road (near the outhouse) and walk down. Follow the paved road counter-clockwise until you see us. Or you can drive another 200 yards on the Deer Creek road, park beside the road, and walk downhill.

This will be the meeting where we hold elections. The board proposes the following candidates for the officers: Steve Schombel, President. Paul Jensen, Vice President. Lois Crepeau, Secretary. Steve Niday, Treasurer. The unofficial but time consuming positions of Newsletter Editor and Webmaster would continue to be filled by Dan Saxton and Alden Wright, respectively. Volunteers to lead trips and cajole others to lead trips, and to arrange programs, are really needed.

Rocky Mountaineers' Meeting Minutes 4/14/2015

I. Call To Order: 6:08, MacKenzie River Pizza

II. Attendees: Paul Jensen, Alden Wright, Julie Kahl, Dan Saxton, Steve Schombel, Lois Crepeau, David Kahl

III. Treasurer's Report: \$597.01

IV. Discussions:

A. Social Media

1. Facebook doesn't seem to be working

2. Alden experimented with Mail Chimp

a. Works well for text message, but not so well for photos and such

b. Alden has e-mail list from Dan -will use that

c. Julie was getting double postings

d. We don't want to put phone numbers in Facebook, but Alden can put them in the e-mail posts

B. Speakers - Bike Packing Ladies had to cancel, Julie will do Smith River, Paul and Steve S. also have material

C. Club dues due in April

D. Officers: Steve S. for president, Paul Jensen for VP, Lois Crepeau Sec. (Julie will continue to do the minutes, Lois will continue to do treats) and Steve Niday as Treas.

E. Trips

1. Alden - Trapper Peak, already has 14 people.
2. Steve - Beacon Hill 4/19
3. Julie - Williams Peak Area 4/26, Spotted Dog 5/31, Rogers Pass 6/14

V. Adjourn 6:43 PM



The Continental Divide Trail between Flesher and Rogers Passes. Not much tread there - a perfect symbol of the trail's often ephemeral nature..... In the distance is Red Mountain, highest peak of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. Photo by Dan Saxton.

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.