

MAY 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.**

#### Club Contacts

Website: <http://rockymountaineers.com>  
e-mail: [info@rockymountaineers.com](mailto:info@rockymountaineers.com)

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

President: Steve Schombel  
[stephenschombel@yahoo.com](mailto:stephenschombel@yahoo.com)

Vice-President: Paul Jensen  
[paulfjensen@yahoo.com](mailto:paulfjensen@yahoo.com)

Secretary: Lois Crepeau  
[lcrepeau@centric.net](mailto:lcrepeau@centric.net)

Treasurer: Steve Niday  
[seniday@yahoo.com](mailto:seniday@yahoo.com)

Newsletter Editor: Dan Saxton  
[apologist497@yahoo.com](mailto:apologist497@yahoo.com)

Webmaster: Alden Wright  
[rocky@wrightmontana.net](mailto:rocky@wrightmontana.net)

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 encouraged to do so - contact the editor. The 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: Memorial Day Weekend in the South Fork of the Teton valley below Rocky Mountain, Bob Marshall Wilderness. 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, May 2, 2015 - Quigg Peak (8,419') & Butte Cabin Ridge (8,468')**

This trip ended up being a solo venture into the high wildlands above the east side of Rock Creek where it makes a long horseshoe bend through the midst of the Sapphire Mountains. My main goal was "Butte Cabin Ridge," which has gone by several other unofficial semi-names such as "Peak 2 miles east of Quigg Peak," "East Quigg Peak," "Peak 8,468'," etc. I guess we need to tack down a name for real! (I'd put my vote for Butte Cabin Ridge since it's a more distinctive moniker) It is a quite significant peak with over 2,500 feet of prominence so a worthy destination.



Nice open forest on Quigg Peak's NW ridge. Photo by Dan Saxton.

Quigg Peak, however, also attracted my eye since it towers high above Rock Creek with very steep slopes in 3 directions. That's definitely a good reason it earned an official name rather than its slightly higher brother to the east. So I determined to do a long loop involving both summits, starting from the Butte Cabin Creek TH. To make the loop a reasonable day hike, I

would have to get up to Quigg cross-country, so I decided to tackle its NW ridge. My trip report is in some detail since this country is not well-described in the literature.

Leaving the truck at 8am, I walked a couple hundred yards east along the trail to the most obvious open slope that I could use to gain the ridge leading to Quigg. It took about an hour to pick my way up the talus and semi-open forest with a little brush to the first bump (5,474') 1,000' above Rock Creek. From there on, the going was very pleasant through attractive open forest. At times, I was following a distinct elk trail, though there were some small signs of human use, most notably a small clearcut without any apparent roads/paths leading to it.



Quigg Peak's N face. Photo by Dan Saxton.

The ridge was relatively gradual with a couple ups and downs until it started becoming steeper at about 6,000 feet - but nowhere was it particularly difficult. There was only one short denser section of forest at approx. 6,700', which was easy to get through. The snow line was roughly about 7,000 feet on the ridge (and lower in shaded basins), but most of the scree exposed to the sun was already snow-free. The snow was relatively firm up to the N subsummit of Quigg (8,146'), after which it became quite soft and difficult to walk on without sinking in. Nevertheless, I delayed putting on my snowshoes till I got to Quigg's summit, which I reached at 12:30pm after 4,500 feet of elevation gain. On top was the foundation of the old lookout and also a small solar-powered structure on the west end of the summit ridge. It was a bit hazy, but the Bitterroots presented a striking sight, and I had a good perspective of the ridge over to Butte Cabin Ridge. Some south-facing and sunny slopes were already bare up to 8,000 feet.



Butte Cabin Ridge from below on the west. Photo by Dan Saxton.

The snowshoes were an essential help in continuing onwards, as in the worst (sunniest) spots the snow had the consistency of mashed potatoes, and my feet were constantly sliding on the steeper slopes. However, progress was mainly straightforward to Butte Cabin

Ridge, which I reached just before 3pm. It felt like a nicer summit overall than Quigg (at least when snow-covered), fairly spacious and with a more central perspective of the surroundings. However, it was windy on top!



Quigg Peak and the Bitterroots from Butte Cabin Ridge. Photo by Dan Saxton.

I retraced my steps for 1/2 mile before dropping into the burnt bowl NW of Butte Cabin Ridge - that was interesting since I had to sit down and slide a few times, the snow being so wet and soft although the slope was not excessively steep. It was easy going further down to hit the Butte Cabin Creek Trail, which seemed in decent condition in the pine forest. I noted some bear tracks (probably Black?) going down the trail ahead of me - they kept going almost all the way back to the road.

The trail, however, was much worse lower down from about 6,000 feet (after the main snow ended for good). Plenty of deadfall, brush, and several crossings of the stream, high with snowmelt although not a wide creek (there was always a log close by), presented an interesting obstacle course for the last 4-5 miles of the hike. It definitely seemed like the trail had not been maintained for a few years or so, though myriads of old cut logs testified to a more popular era. It was more tedious than excruciating, however, and a patient 2 1/2 hours found me back at the TH around 7:45pm.

This is an interesting area, although my opinion of the Rock Creek side valleys is not especially bright (Welcome and Spring Creek trails were also in poor condition when I walked the first couple miles of each). The ridgelines are as a rule far easier to traverse than the valleys. With that in mind, I would suggest that until the Butte Cabin Creek Trail is maintained again, the best way to climb just Quigg is up that NW ridge I used, except that a better

starting place would be the junction of Rock and Howell Creeks, since the ridge is not as rocky and satellite even indicates a path of some kind leading up it to join the other ridge I used. Quigg would be a feasible winter ascent up that way as well.

For Butte Cabin Ridge only, the best way would probably be from Hogback Ridge Trail to the south - fellow Mountaineer Jonathan Bardsley who did it last fall testifies that it is in good shape and is a nice way to get there. It's a longer drive up Rock Creek, however.

Of course, if you want to do both peaks in one shot, the way I took is certainly the best route - it's a good workout but just be prepared to undergo some toil!

One of the famous Rock Creek area talus slopes. Photo by Dan Saxton.



## Saturday, May 9, 2015 – The Shard (Bitterroot Mountains)



The way up to the Shard. Photo by Forest Dean.

Fred McDonald and I teamed up on a beautiful spring Saturday for this snow climb attempt on the third highest peak in the range. The Shard is an unofficial name for the 9883' peak that sits on the divide between Tin Cup and Chaffin drainages in the southern Bitterroots. After an 1.5 hour drive to the Chaffin Creek trailhead we began the hike up a good, well maintained trail at 6:40am. It was a rather uneventful hike through mostly forested stream bottoms for the first 4.5 miles to a small waterfall. Here the trail crosses the stream, but we stayed to its north and continued through mostly open forest to a spot north and above Hart Lake. Snow was basically non-existent for the first 4.5 miles and spotty in the woods beyond. Above Hart Lake we hiked steeply uphill to a flatter area at about 7900'. Here we encountered consistent snow for the first time. The snow was totally firm, so we cached our snowshoes (which we never used) and poles, strapped on crampons, and started for the summit. The route got steeper as we proceeded and around 8700' we entered a steep ramp which angled up towards the summit area. Climbing was mostly up, but occasionally we had to traverse to the west across hard steep snow. Around 9400' Fred reached a point where the steepness of the terrain exceeded his comfort level (particularly being concerned



Fred on the  
Shard. Photo by  
Forest Dean.

about the descent) and he elected to throw in the towel. Fully enjoying the snow climb myself, I continued up a steep gully to the blocky ridgeline. A short traverse west alternated between the summit ridge rock outcrops and the snow and I soon arrived at the top (12:15pm). With perfect blue skies and little wind, it was hard not to want to spend the afternoon up on the small summit. I had a bite, took some pics and began the downclimb. I was able to plunge step in places, but had to turn and downclimb some of it due to the firmness and the angle. I made it back to Fred's hangout then we downclimbed and butt glissaded back to the 7900' point where we had left some of our gear. It was a long (boring) tiring hike out, arriving back at the trailhead at 5:30pm. It was a really fine spring day for a Bitterroot climb! Thanks to Fred for a great trip. *Forest Dean*

### **Monday, May 25 - Mount Jerusalem and North Jerusalem (Bitterroot Mountains)**

I headed to the southern Bitterroots once again for this Memorial Day outing. I picked up Dell Meuchel on the south side of Missoula at the way too early time of 4:15am and we were off. We arrived at the Watchtower Creek trailhead at 6:00am. The day started cool and mostly clear. This trail may be the easiest in the Bitterroots. Over six miles (to just before the point where you would cross the creek a second time (first time is on a bridge) the trail gains only about 1000'. It was very well-constructed as well. It took us a little under two hours to hike to this point. From there an unofficial, but pretty good trail heads north to Watchtower Lake, staying to the east of the creek. We followed this for about a mile to a large open area around 6300'. We then angled to the northeast and eventually straight east and up to the saddle to the south of 'North Jerusalem Peak' (Point 9169'). We strapped crampons on at

Mount Jerusalem from North Jerusalem. Photo by Forest Dean.

about 7800'. The snow was firm, the slope was not too steep (didn't need an ice axe). From the saddle a short 400' ascent got us to the summit at 10:00am, just as a graupel shower moved through. After a few minutes at the summit we descended back to the saddle, then began the traverse south along the



narrowing ridge to Mt. Jerusalem. Most of this was done on wet, lichen covered boulders, so going was a bit slow. As we got closer to the peak, the ridge narrows to a near knife edge which forced us on to the snow covered west slopes. We traversed across the slope, then a steep snow climb got us to the west ridge just a few hundred feet short of the top. Shedding our crampons, we were soon on the 9355' summit and enjoying the views (12:00pm). We discussed our descent options and settled upon just heading straight down off the west side of the mountain. This worked well, as we were able to plunge step and then glissade for a couple thousand feet down a snow filled stream bed. We soon found the user trail and then we were back on the main trail by 2:00. It rained for about an hour on the way out. We

arrived at the trailhead at 4:00pm. It was a 17.8 mile trip, around 5000' of elevation gain, and 10 hours of pretty steady movement. It was a nice trip to a seldom visited part of the Bitterroots. There was no technical difficulty with this route, but if you do it in spring, you will want to be comfortable on steep snow (if things were frozen, it would have been a whole different story). *Forest Dean*



Dell Meuchel on Jerusalem summit. Photo by Forest Dean.

# **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, June 4, 2015 - MOUNT POWELL (10,168') AND DEER LODGE MOUNTAIN (9,765')**

*Rating:* Class 2+

*Distance:* 12 1/2 miles

*Elevation Gain:* 5200 feet.

*Description:* We'll be climbing the highest point in the Flint Creek Range near Deer Lodge, Mount Powell. I am envisioning a loop including Deer Lodge Mountain, the 3rd highest peak in the range. The terrain is not super difficult but it should still be a long day hike. We would actually be walking some distance in on the Dempsey Lakes Road from where we park in order to facilitate the loop. I was thinking of starting the climb through Marble Park, the forests look open above there and the grade is not too steep. We then would loop from Powell back over Deer Lodge Mountain and down its SE ridge, a quick descent to the TH. There may be some small snowfields along the way, but no special equipment is anticipated, especially since it's all south-facing. Bring an ice axe if you want to be super prepared.

*Leader:* Dan Saxton - [apologist497-at-yahoo.com](mailto:apologist497-at-yahoo.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.

*Leader:* Julia Kahl, [jawkal@rockymountaineers.com](mailto:jawkal@rockymountaineers.com)



Mount Werner from the slopes of Mount Frazier, Rocky Mountain Front. Photo by Dan Saxton.

## Looking ahead.....

### **The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Glacier Classic - Friday, August 28-Sunday, August 30**

This year will mark the 11<sup>th</sup> installment of The Rocky Mountaineers' signature event - The Glacier Classic. This year we have elected to base our activities out of Apgar Campground near the west entrance to Glacier National Park. Thus far, we have a few climbs and hikes planned and are hoping to add a few more (see below for the preliminary list). As always, we encourage any of you to lead a trip if you have something you'd like to do.

We have two group sites reserved at Apgar for the event. Let us know if you would like a spot- we should have plenty of room. Feel free to bring anyone interested - just let us know so we can get a good head count. Alternatively, you are certainly free to get your own campsite (or stay elsewhere) but still join us for the activities and socializing.

#### *Itinerary:*

**Friday afternoon/evening** - arrive in Apgar. Eat, drink, be social. Bring your own food and drink.

**Saturday** - Hikes and climbs during the day. Tom Hanou and his Heavenly Burritos make their glorious return this year- not to be missed! Tom will provide dinner - bring your own drinks. Keep our fingers crossed - we'll be able to trade stories on the day's activities while gathered around a fire.

**Sunday** - More hikes and climbs for those interested, or head home whenever you desire.

#### ***Trips (more details next month):***

##### **Saturday**

MOUNT BROWN LOOKOUT - Hike to the lookout (and possibly beyond and towards the peak). *Leader:* Vic Applegate

CITADEL MOUNTAIN - Climb via the north bowl and east ridge. River ford and bushwhacking included! *Leader:* Forest Dean

AUTUMN CREEK - Trail hike near Marias Pass. *Leader:* Julie Kahl

MOUNT GOULD - Climb S slopes from Highline Trail, prob. start at Logan Pass. *Leader:* Dan Saxton

##### **Sunday**

HEAVENS PEAK - Climb from start at ford of McDonald Creek. *Leader:* Forest Dean

**\* Please feel free to propose more trips! \***

### **Rocky Mountaineers Picnic Report**

We had the picnic at Franklin Park this year, attended by about 15 people. It was windy and drizzled, so conditions were not that pleasant, but we had a nice time overall. Club elections were conducted, and the following people were elected:

Steve Schombel - President

Paul Jensen - Vice-President

Steve Niday - Treasurer

Lois Crepeau - Secretary.

Dan Saxton will continue to serve as Newsletter Editor and Alden Wright will continue his Webmaster duties.

Have a great summer, everybody!



Walling Reef, Rocky Mountain Front. 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.