

JUNE 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 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: Mount Oberlin, Glacier National Park.

Photo by Dan Saxton.

TRIP REPORTS

Saturday, June 6, 2015 - Mount Powell (10,168') and Deer Lodge Mountain (9,765')



Bryan Kercher on the summit of Mount Powell, high above the Dempsey Lakes. Photo by Dan Saxton.

Bryan Kercher, Mike Hanning, Alec Patterson, and Michael joined me at 5:30am in Missoula, and we caravanned to the Dempsey Lakes Road below Mount Powell - it was a bit soft from T-storms the day before but went OK. We left the vehicles at a bend where the road crossed the North Fork of Dempsey Creek, to facilitate the loop which we would close off at that point. So there were actually about 3 miles of road walking to begin the hike, which went quickly. We passed the 2wd TH and continued up the road - it's only passable for dedicated ATVers after that point, for sure!

At a nice meadow at approx. 6,700 feet where the creek made a little loopy bend, we left the "road" and climbed a few hundred feet up the steep slope to the north (a little rocky, but short), to reach Marble Park. A faint trail led along the top of the slope to the east - evidently leading back down to the road, but I'm not sure where.



Marble Park, looking south towards Mount Haggin. Photo by Dan Saxton.

Marble Park is just wonderfully gorgeous! It's about 500 feet of the easiest walking through the open grasses. We even saw a couple elk far away at the top of the meadow, and the snowcapped peaks of the Flint Creeks and Pintlers stole the show.

At the top of the park, we picked up yet another trail which led into the open pine forests, but it ended up contouring the slope instead of climbing, so we had to leave it. My guess is, it loops back around to the east towards Big Park - might be a neat snowmobile route?

The cross-country continued to be delightfully easy through open forest, with more whitebark pine beginning to predominate. Snowpatches became more plentiful at about 8,500 feet, and we walked on snow for much of the way around the NE side of Point 8,708'. As the day proceeded, the morning was a little cloudy, but the clouds began to slowly move away after noontime - leading to one of the most splendid afternoons I've had in the mountains in a while!

We climbed up the slopes SE of Point 9,063' to reach treeline, above which it was a straightforward ascent up Mount Powell's summit pyramid. The summit was reached at about 2pm, and it was just perfect up there!



The summit of Mount Powell, looking south to the Pintlers. Photo by Dan Saxton.

After an hour-long siesta, we continued east on the ridge towards Deer Lodge Mountain, gaining some spectacular perspectives of “The Crater” below along the way. The ridge was a little narrow in some spots, with some exposure to the north, yet generally easy to traverse - though it’s a ways to Deer Lodge along it!



Mount Powell from the ridge to Deer Lodge Mtn. Photo by Dan Saxton.



The rest of the ridge to Deer Lodge Mountain. Photo by Dan Saxton.

We reached the top of Deer Lodge Mountain at 4pm - to find some oddities as to where the true summit was, as compared to the topo map. There were three bumps, and Mike's GPS noted that the SW one (closest to Powell) was the highest, while the mapped point (with a 9,760' contour line) was lower by a few dozen feet. The topo map is clearly in error there.

Deer Lodge's east ridge turned out to be an endurance test, as it was long and rocky and we were all tired. Michael was thankful that we didn't go up that way! In the saddle between Points 8,590' and 8,266', we found one unexploded ordnance shell from WW 2.

Not wanting to endure more scree hopping over Point 8,266', I followed Cedron Jones's *Peakbagging Montana's* instructions for the Powell-Deer Lodge climb and picked up elk paths along the N side of the bump. There isn't really one single path but a few different ones, and we had to take care to contour along the slope without dropping down too much. Eventually, the paths curved around Point 8,266' and it was a straight SE shoot down from there to the meadows. But as soon as we entered the grasses, out came the mosquitoes!



The ordnance shell. Photo by Dan Saxton.

They were definitely the worst bugs I've had in a while, and we just kept moving right down there in a beeline to our waiting vehicles. It was just about 8pm when we arrived back - a 12-hour day on the mountain. Tired but elated after such a gorgeous day up high, we stopped in Deer Lodge for refreshments before continuing back to Missoula.

Mount Powell is a most worthy, and actually a very easy climb if you go up the way we took;

for some reason most ascents from the Dempsey Lakes side that I've read about (including Cedron Jones's route) go up the drainage beside the spur leading south from Point 9,063'. That is much steeper and rockier than our route; and in fact, I will recommend our route as the *standard way* up Mount Powell - it is relatively gentle, very scenic (meadows, open woods), and a joy to walk along.

Deer Lodge is a more tedious peak, especially along its SE ridge, but this loop combining the two peaks makes for a fine day. No better day in fact could be had on our trip, with just right temps, clear skies, and plenty of snow around to beautify things without creating additional challenges. Times like this are what I moved to Montana for! *Dan Saxton*

Mike and Alec trying to outwalk the mosquitoes on the last descent.... photo by Dan Saxton.



Thursday, June 11 - Waterfall Hike

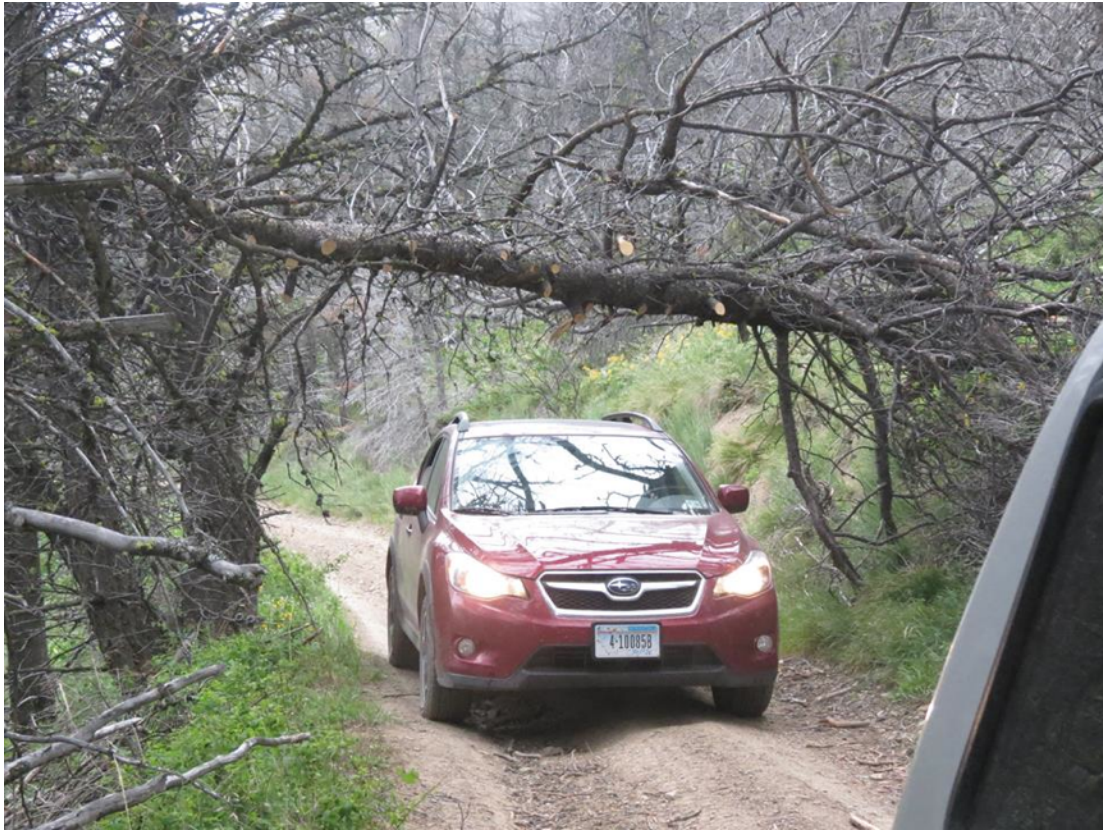


Photo by Steve Schombel

Only two close friends, Julia and Lois, joined me, but it was on Thursday so this was no surprise. The Lodgepole Creek Fall was very nice and easy to find. There was a cairn and a user-created trail from the closed road. Plus, you could hear the fall before seeing it. There were too many trees and brush for great photos, but it was a very scenic gorge visually. The Dunham Creek trail went steadily uphill and was usually not steep, but it was very hot and there were a lot of flies. We stopped often. Finally we reached a steep-sided gorge. There were a couple of side trails that led to viewpoints where we could see lots of cascades, but we did not find a place where we could see a fall. This one I would not recommend. We did not try to find the other falls, but are pretty sure where the Hiding Friend Fall is. The beer and burger at Trixies was great after such a hot and sweaty day. *Steve Schombel*

Sunday, June 14 - Rogers Pass Revised

Mountain Bikers may find this interesting



Can you get under these trees? Photo by Julia Kahl.

The weather report for Sunday June 14th was sunny and cool, in the 50's, with a possibility of thunderstorms in the afternoon. Sat. night David and I got a campsite at the Aspen Grove Campground and David spent the evening fly fishing on the Blackfoot River. Eileen M. who was going to join us, spent the night with friend Jane P., at a friends place in Lincoln. We awoke Sun. morning to find low gray clouds obscuring the highest peaks with an annoying light wind. We all met at Copper Creek Rd. just east of the Landers Fork Bridge around 9am. Jane and Eileen's dog Kali Ma were going to fly fish while we hiked. We drove up to the pass to find 40 degree rain. We weren't prepared for those conditions and it didn't appear it would clear off if we just started up. If we did summit we wouldn't be able to see anything. So David and I took an item from our bucket list and proposed that we drive the road that goes east from Rogers Pass to come out around Denton Mt. into the headwaters of Wolf Creek. Jane and Eileen were game and we started out in our Tacoma and their Subaru Crosstrek.

The road, which the GPS labeled as Little Wolf Creek Rd., was well-maintained until it turned off to the electronic site on Sunset Mt. We stopped at the junction and found a stand of spotted coral root and a trail that seemed to go up to the CD ridge above, that on the GPS seemed only 1/2 mi to the top. (A future trip possibility.) LWC Rd. continued from there as a glorified two track, glorified because once it was an engineered road which had significantly deteriorated over the years. For the most part the outside edge of the road was intact,

except in one spot where if it washed out much more it would be impassable. There was no place to turn around or even pull out. High profile vehicles are ruled out almost immediately as there are several blown down trees resting on the crotch of another tree, with branches sawn off the bottom that just had passage for the Tacoma by inches. A ways down the road we stopped so I could move some rocks I thought the Subaru would have problems with, and David looked up the bank on our left and saw giant white lady's slippers. The stems were like 12-18 inches high, with blossoms close to 2 inches long.



A section of the road. Photo by Julia Kahl.

A little further down there was a mostly washed out switchback in the road and more giant lady's slippers. This section ended in another switchback at valley level of the West Prong Creek of the South Fork of the Dearborn River, where we were presented with a short "V" shaped creek crossing that was like dropping down 3 feet, then having to gun it up 3 feet on the other side; the Tacoma had a harder time with it than the Subaru. Here we crossed a section boundary from Forest Service land into private land, and there was some evidence of camping sites and actual places to turn around. From there the road was better except for more unbridged creek crossings. Just before getting to the next we saw a stand of the biggest aspens we'd ever seen. The next creek crossing was a "walk through" as part of the road remained on the left edge with large rocks exposed. The Tacoma made it through OK mostly on the dirt, but the Subaru was iffy. Turning around and going back up was not an option so Eileen used a stick to probe the creek bottom to find it rocky and the water level low enough to make it through all in the water.

Shortly after that the fence of a cattle operation was along the left edge of the road and by another drive-through creek crossing we encountered six cows, 3 cows and 3 calves on our side of the fence. One cow ducked off the road, but the others ended up being herded in front of the Tacoma while the third cow followed the Subaru, upsetting the dog. With a fence on the left and a steep bank on the right we could only move on with the cows ahead, passing other cows on the other side of the fence. We came to what on the map was a junction with a short road to the right and a road that ran up the South Fork of the Deerborn to Hwy 434 (comes into Hwy 200 at the Bean Lake Rd.) But both roads were closed off with locked gates. It was wide enough here for the cows to have gotten off the road to let us pass but they had gone on ahead. The lone cow caught up with us - we put the dog in the car and got between the vehicles so she could pass. We took a break there, then moved on to the last creek crossing before starting up Denton Mt., the main stem of the South Fork of the Deerborn. The road was entirely washed out but we crossed OK on the gravelly bottom and headed up the road around Denton Mt. There were now six cows ahead of us. It was obvious they were getting tired, and we hoped as we came out towards the top the land would level out enough to have them get off the road. The fence had remained below the road here and eventually one cow and calf bailed off the road; the others did the same shortly on, about 100 feet from a fence and cattle guard.



Cattle have the right of way.....photo by Julia Kahl.

Crossing the cattle guard, we were on a small section of BLM land that included the saddle between the South Fork and the headwaters of Wolf Creek, where we stopped to have lunch. This was the best view we had all day, and we tried to figure out what mountains we were seeing. Bitterroots were all over and just starting to bloom; there was even a white one that I had never seen in the wild. Starting down Wolf Creek Rd. we shortly were in an off-the-grid

subdivision. Then we went through about two miles of BLM land with Tom's Peak to the south and Lanigan and Butcher Peaks on the north, all on private land. Then there were on-the-grid homes and an old mine. Right by the mine was a guest ranch that had strange, very long blank-sided single story buildings (old mine buildings?). Just beyond that we were at the junction with Hwy 434 and we stopped to discuss plans. Eileen and Jane would drive into Wolf Creek then take Hwy 434 home. David and I would go to the cafe in Wolf Creek to get something to eat then take 434 home. We were glad that we had made the drive. Jane commented she was glad they weren't alone, and I commented I was glad that when we had finally drove it we had had company. It was one of our finer back road trips.

I do not suggest that anyone drive this road, presuming that it will just deteriorate more and adventurers will find themselves having to back up a long ways. It should probably be closed off at the top. Biking it would be a blast, and anyone wishing to see the giant lady's slippers could hike either up or down to the area of the higher switchback. *Julia Kahl*



Saint Mary Peak was open to normal hikers, with a maximum snowy view in mid-June - west to the Heavenly Twins and Ranger Peak. 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.

Saturday, July 11, 2015 - MCDONALD PEAK (9,820')

Distance: 11-12 miles RT

Class: 2-3 (LOTS of rugged terrain, it's more endurance than sheer technical difficulty.....)

Vertical: 5,500+'

Equipment needed: Ice Axe (as added security)

Description: I've been looking forward to this one for a while - highest in the Missions and one of the most logistically demanding major peaks near Missoula! The low snowpack is looking bad for us on so many levels, but for McDonald Peak, it creates optimal conditions pre-July 15 grizzly closure for getting up the peak with a minimum of technical skills (i.e., without an absolute need for ice axe and crampons). Nevertheless, I'd recommend all partners bring the ice axe for stability on the final snowfields leading to the top.

There are many potential routes up McDonald, but I am currently thinking of the "High Traverse" above the Ashley Lakes from about 7,500' on the ridge which leads to the Sheep's Head (i.e., Peak 9,417'). We would contour along that slope (long, tedious, but not technically difficult), pass by Duncan Lake, and then slog up the upper 2,000 feet of McDonald's south slope, which should have some snow but also a great deal of scree, which may be preferred by those not adept in ice axe skills. I will be reviewing the beta in more detail and consult with those who have been up the peak before; these plans may be modified.

McDonald Peak is an endurance fest, so all comers must be prepared for a 12-hour day and long stretches without easy footing - but the reward is one of Montana's most satisfying summits!

NOTE: Tribal permit needed, Missoulians can obtain one from Bob Ward's and other locations.

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



Flush with the green of spring, the Mission Mountains are now ready for the summer climbers! Photo by Dan Saxton.

Sunday, July 26, 2015 - CONTINENTAL DIVIDE TRAIL AT GIBBONS PASS

Description: We will get to Gibbons Pass via Hwy. 43 (Chief Joseph Pass). Then we have two options, we can do a “go as far as you want” hike to the north, or do about a 6 mi point to point hike to the Chief Joseph ski area south on the trail.

Leader: Julia Kahl, jawkal@rockymountaineers.com



Photo by Julia Kahl.

Looking ahead.....

**The 11th Annual Glacier Classic - Friday, August 28-
Sunday, August 30**



Hidden Lake, the Dragon's Trail, and Gunsight Mountain in the distance. The route to Floral Park is almost ready for summer climbers as of June 26. Photo by Dan Saxton.

This year will mark the 11th installment of The Rocky Mountaineers' signature event - The Glacier Classic. This year we will be basing our activities out of Apgar Campground near the west entrance to Glacier National Park. We have a number of good hikes and climbs planned (see below) but as always, we encourage any of you to lead a trip if you have something else you'd like to do. Or, do nothing at all- just come to hang out with old friends or friends you haven't yet met!

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:

Thursday evening/Friday - For those interested in a “pre-Classic” climb, head up to Bowman Lake for an ascent of Numa Peak.

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:

Friday

NUMA PEAK

Rating: Class 3-4;

Distance: 5 miles round trip;

Elevation Gain: 5000'

Description: For those wanting to extend their Glacier Classic weekend! Will plan to meet at the Northern Lights Saloon in Polebridge on Thursday evening for a pizza and beer. Then will head over to Bowman Lake Campground and spend the night. Friday morning we will boat about 6 miles up the lake to an obvious drainage on the south side of Numa Peak. The route follows this drainage (bushwhacking) up the south flank of Numa for a long way and eventually requires some solid third class or fourth class moves to get to the summit ridge. Numa Peak (9003') is the lowest of the 9000'+ Peaks in the Park. Return the same way, boat back to the campground, and head for Apgar.

Leader: Forest Dean, mtnear1@gmail.com

Saturday

MOUNT BROWN LOOKOUT (and beyond)

Class: 1

Round trip: 10 miles (all trail).

Elevation gain: 4300'.

Description: We will car pool to the Sperry Trailhead, hike up the Sperry trail approximately 1.6 miles to the Mount Brown trail junction and from there hike 3.7 miles to the Mount Brown Lookout. A steep hike with an average grade of 18 percent, it is described as one of Glacier's more strenuous hikes. There is no water along this trail so carry plenty. Hiking through nearly all of the forest tree species growing in the park finds old cedar and hemlock on the early trail to subalpine fir and whitebark pine at the lookout. We should find some fine huckleberries provided the bears haven't eaten them all. This is bear country and bear spray should be carried. Rascal ground squirrels, golden mantle squirrels, marmots, and an occasional grey jay will be seen and likely wishing to gain access to our pack snacks. A few goats frequent the lookout area. The ascent reward described by previous visitors is spectacular views of several Glacier peaks, Sperry Glacier, and the McDonald Lake valley.

Leader: Vick Applegate: 549-0027 k7vk@arri.net

HEAVENS PEAK

Rating: Class 3

Distance: 6 miles round trip

Elevation Gain: 4500'

Description: This will be an ascent of the East Face Route of 8987' Heavens Peak. Trip will begin about 6 miles up the GTTS road from head of Lake McDonald. We will ford McDonald Creek then bushwhack and hike up a major drainage on southeast side of Heavens Peak. Mostly class 2 ascent with a little class 3 scrambling higher up.

Equipment: Ice Axe.

Leader: Forest Dean, mtnear1@gmail.com

AUTUMN CREEK

Description: Autumn Creek makes a hook on the west side of Marias Pass, and has a nice hiking trail along its 2 1/2 - 3 mi length, that starts at Marias Pass (around 4500 ft). The ridge to the north has two summits on either end, Little Dog Mt. (8601') and Elk Mt (7838'). The low saddle of the ridge is at 6400 ft. The idea here is to explore the ridge, and anyone interested in climbing either summit is welcome. Figure about 8 mi round trip for the saddle.

Leader: Julia Kahl - jawkal@rockymountaineers.com

MOUNT GOULD

Rating: Class 3

Distance: 8-10 miles RT (depending on exact route)

Elevation Gain: 3,000'

Description: We'll be climbing Mount Gould from the Highline Trail, starting from Logan Pass (a good way to see the trail for the first time!). I am contemplating a loop by first going up to Gem Glacier, climbing the NW ridge of Gould, and then coming back down the SW slopes. It should be nothing worse than Class 3 as long as the proper way is followed, but be comfortable with steep scrambling. This trip should present some astounding scenery!

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

Sunday

SUNDAY SURPRISE!

Description: Glacier Classic Sunday trips usually change to the mood of the attendees on Saturday night. Thus, I won't put anything definite here at this time but I would like to throw out the following options: CLEMENTS MOUNTAIN, PIEGAN-POLLOCK-BISHOPS CAP TRAVERSE, or REYNOLDS MOUNTAIN. All would start from the Logan Pass area and all are half day type trips. Cast your vote!

Leader: Forest Dean, mtnear1@gmail.com

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



The view SW from Mount Siyeh, last year's Glacier Classic. 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.