



# Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS  
OF WESTERN MONTANA

DECEMBER 1987

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## MONTHLY MEETING

Time and Place: 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, December 9, at the Montana Power Building, 1903 Russell, Missoula.

Program: Donna Howell of the Water Quality Bureau of the Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences will give a talk on everything you always wanted to know about Giardia but were afraid to ask. Donna is one of the leading experts on Giardia in the state, and is coming from Helena to give the talk. This topic should be interesting to members of the club not only as outdoorspersons - probably each of us knows at least one person who has become infested by this pesky parasite - but as citizens, as indicated by the Rattlesnake Beaver controversy which is still in progress. Donna will emphasize topics of particular interest to backcountry travelers, such as methods of treating water to avoid getting sick.

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## TRIP CALENDAR

People have been reluctant to schedule trips for December because it hasn't been snowing very much, and they don't know what the snow conditions might be like later in the month. But if we get some snow, I am sure that there will be lots of trips every weekend, so just call around.

Little St. Joe Cabin: The annual ski trip and turkey feast at the Little St. Joe cabin in the Bitterroot Mountains west of Florence will take place from Friday morning, January 1, to Sunday evening, January 3. Those not up for such extended partying are invited to drop in for a day or overnight. Contact Ralph Flockerzi, 549-9986 or 728-5462, for details.

Mount Ranier: Anybody interested in climbing Mount Ranier by the Emmons Glacier route in the latter part of January or any time in February is invited to contact Steve Niday, 721-3790. The trip would probably take five days from start to finish, but might be extended or combined with other activities in the area.

Mount Saint Helens Trip: Anybody interested in climbing Mount St. Helens and touring the crater, probably sometime between late February (when the days get a bit longer) and early April, is invited to contact Peter Dayton, 728-8101. The Park Service finally began to allow people to climb the mountain last May, but the crater and the zone to the north of it will remain closed except when there is snow on the ground. This winter will be the first time that members of the public have been allowed in the crater. It should be quite a trip - the crater walls are cliffs about two thousand feet high, and the lava dome is presently about 900 feet high. The trip should take five (possibly four) days from start to finish, and would involve two nights of camping on the mountain. (Subject to cancellation in case of volcanic eruption).

Desert Hiking Trip in Utah or thereabouts, in March, April, or early May. Various locations are under consideration. Anybody interested in getting involved is invited to contact Peter Dayton, 728-8101.

OVER CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY SKI TRIP TO GRAN TARGHEE +  
JACKSON HOLE CALL ART GIDEL 543-6352

## TRIP REPORTS

Salmon and Snake Rivers, September 4-7: The last fifty miles of the Salmon River flow from Whitebird, Idaho, near Grangeville, west to its confluence with the Snake river. Our Labor Day adventure was to run this nearly undeveloped section of whitewater, followed by twenty miles on the Snake River. Our takeout point would be near the intersection of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. Our party consisted of two friends, Wayne and Beverly, in a fourteen foot raft, and myself in a kayak. All of our gear for the four days was secured in the raft. We planned on floating about twenty miles each of Friday through Sunday, and on completing the remaining ten miles on Labor Day.

The Salmon's water level was at an all-time recorded low, which meant that we could generally expect relatively easy rapids. The most popular rating system for whitewater consists of Classes I through VI. Classes I and II are usually easy, negotiable by an open canoe in most cases. Class III rapids are significantly more serious for any type of craft, and should be treated with respect. Class IV is potentially dangerous, and most boaters scout these from shore before attempting to run them. Class V water is beyond most kayaker's abilities, frequently flips the largest of rafts, and is always dangerous. Most have claimed several lives. Class VI rapids are, of course, only for the mentally unbalanced. Our trip would include many Class I and II rapids, about twenty-five Class III runs, and one Class IV stretch. So you see, we really could simply relax and take in the scenery, or could we?

We found that the Class II rapids tended to be harder than at normal flows, but that the Class III's seemed easier. As a result, it was easy to be a bit complacent and overconfident.

Wayne and Beverly were ahead of me about one hundred yards as we approached the fourth Class III rapid of the day. Now the name Bodacious Rapids doesn't sound all that intimidating, does it? As I plied the entrance whitewater, I saw Wayne and Beverly hit a large wave, certainly the largest of the trip thus far. At this point, I realized that my skills were to be tested. Then, the raft took a really BIG drop, and it looked like the raft might not push over the top of this truly enormous wave. There the raft sat, angled up at a forty degree angle, on a wave six feet higher than its fourteen-foot length. Wayne rowed furiously, Beverly leaned forward, but the raft was not to surmount that wave this day! Wayne missed a stroke with one oar. Slowly the boat turned to the left, sliding down into the hole at the trough of the wave - how slowly the raft seemed to tip over, that huge fourteen foot Avon raft.

Now it is my turn. Is it possible that I can really make it through this monster and help rescue Beverly and Wayne? Where the hell is Beverly? I see Wayne's red life vest. The upside down raft rotates full circle - still no Beverly. Cripes - here it is. I don't have nearly enough speed. I am sidewise in the hole, bracing with my paddle like no tomorrow: I think I still must be upright. Then, I am airborne, rear of the boat straight up, landing upside down. Am I still in that awful hole? Should I try to roll up? What if I try a roll and don't make it? Would I then have enough air to wet exit my boat, fight off the hydraulic currents, and get to the surface?

I release the spray skirt and push myself out of the kayak. Damn, I drop my paddle! No hydraulic. I can breathe! I see Beverly's little head bobbing next to the raft. Another raft of three persons is frantically paddling to help Beverly and Wayne push the inverted raft into an eddy. Who are these guys - we hadn't seen anybody for two days. And here they were, as if we had ordered them. Now all I have to do is find my paddle - there it is twenty-five feet downstream, moving fast. I have to let go of my boat and swim for the paddle - got it. Now float on my back, and paddle upstream

toward the kayak. I'm nearly exhausted, but I've got the boat. How far down was that next set of rapids - can't remember. I push and pull the water-filled boat towards the rock ledges on the north side of the river. Finally I'm there. Steady the nerves, take a deep breath.

Later that day, even the Class IV rapid, Snow Hole, was easy - I walked around it. We kept waiting for another crazy Class III, but Bodacious was unique. A great river trip; truly memorable. Art Gidel.

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