



Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

March 1990

Time and Place: 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 14, 1990, in the Montana Power Building at 1903 Russell Street in Missoula.

Program: Jeff Skifton will present a video on mountain biking on the Slickrock Trail near Moab, Utah. If time permits Dave Pengelly will also show some slides of trips that he has taken in the Arches and Canyonlands area. Remember, March and April are ideal times to go to this area, so come get some ideas for a desert trip.

TRIP CALENDAR

Tuesday and Thursday, Mount Sentinel. Why pay health club dues when you can keep in shape by climbing Mount Sentinel each Tuesday and Thursday after work? Trips leave at 5:30 p.m. from the parking lot. Call Ralph Flockerzi at 549-9986 for details.

Sunday, March 18, Bear Peak: Hike and/or ski climb of Bear Peak, which is to the south of Trapper Peak and Boulder Peak up the West Fork of the Bitterroot, southwest of Darby. Call Steve Niday at 721-3790 for details.

Sunday, March 25, Gash Point: A loop trip along the length of Gash Point, which is in the Bitterroot Mountains west of Victor. Call Dave Pengelly at 728-6512 for details.

Sunday, April 1, Squaw Peak: Ski trip up Squaw Peak, which is northwest of Missoula. A moderately easy trip. Call Ralph Flockerzi at 549-9986 for details.

Saturday, April 7, Trapper Peak: Ski trip up Trapper Peak, which is in the Bitterroots southwest of Darby. Great scenery, and hopefully great spring skiing on the open slopes leading to the summit. Call Dave Pengelly at 728-6512 for details.

Kings Peak, Utah, early April. Earlier this winter Dave Pengelly and Steve Niday attempted to climb Kings Peak in the High Uintas, the tallest mountain in Utah, but were rebuffed by bottomless snow. However, they learned that the snow generally firms up in early April, making the trip feasible, and want to try it again. This would involve a three day (two night) non-technical ski ascent, probably leaving on a Thursday afternoon and returning the next Sunday night. Call Steve Niday at 721-3790 for details and dates.

Sun River Float Trip: The Sun River flows out of the Rocky Mountain Front from Gibson Reservoir, west of Augusta. It offers spectacular scenery and an outstanding moderately easy whitewater float, suitable for intermediate canoers, kayakers, and rafters. The overthrust strata create numerous wide surfing waves in every rapid, and make this a terrific play river. Unfortunately the floating season is short, due to massive irrigation diversions. If and when the water comes up, we will go out for a full weekend on the river. Keep in touch with Peter Dayton at 728-8101 for the date and details.

TRIP REPORTS

Eighteenmile Peak, February 17: The Italian Peaks area lies along the Montana-Idaho border and the Continental Divide, southwest of Lima, Montana. This is a dry, open, and sparsely forested region. Eighteenmile Peak (11,141 feet) is the highest peak in the area. Ignoring threatening weather predictions, Bill Cunningham, Peter Dayton, and Eric Jones drove down to Lima on Friday night and crashed in the Kalbas Korners Motel, a pretty nice place. We recommend it. The weather Saturday morning was bright, clear, cold, and windy. After breakfast we drove out to the valley to the east of the mountain and made it to Cottonwood Creek before we were stopped by drifted snow. We then headed out through the sagebrush across the open, gradually-sloping basin towards the base of the peak, about five miles away. There was only a few inches of hard, crusty snow, so we carried our skis. After passing the Harkness Lakes, a cluster of about fifteen small treeless lakes in a sort of moraine area, we reached the base of the the east ridge, which climbs steeply to the summit. This ridge is steep enough to present an avalanche hazard in unstable snow conditions, but on this trip we scrambled up it through intermittent exposed rocks. From the top there were great views in all directions. To the north was Cottonwood Peak (11,024 feet), which would also make a nice climb. Impressive mountains lay to the west in Idaho and to the south around Italian Peak. To the east were the Lima Peaks, our objective for the next day. Other ranges were visible in every direction all the way out to the horizon. We headed south down the Continental Divide for about a mile, and then dropped down a spur ridge to Bear Creek, getting in our only skiing for the day in the process. Night fell as we returned to the edge of the basin. We put our skis back on our packs and hiked off through the sagebrush towards the car, navigating by the constellations. Dense fields of stars lit the sky overhead, except for behind us, where a nebula of clouds hung over Eighteenmile. Our ski poles groaned as they twisted through the dense cold snow, making a sound like the bellowing of sea lions in the distance. We reached the car about 9:15, and made it to the Calf-A in Dell in time for a solid meal. We probably would have made it out by dark if we had gotten an earlier start, and if the snow conditions had permitted us to ski more of the way. The total round trip was about eleven miles, with 3,700 feet of elevation gain. -Peter Dayton

Lima Peaks, February 18. After another night at the Kalbas Korners Motel and a leisurely breakfast, Bill Cunningham, Peter Dayton, and Eric Jones headed for the Lima Peaks, which are a bare, rugged line of mountains to the southwest of Lima. The weather was even better than on the previous day, with completely clear skies. We headed for a campground on the East Fork of Sheep Creek, assuming that the road would be drifted in well before it, but there was so little snow that we were able to drive well past the campground. This was a pleasant surprise. The tallest mountain on the ridge is Garfield Mountain (10,961 feet), but after viewing the situation we decided to climb the next mountain to the east, which is about 250 feet lower and less steep. Seeing little chance of getting in any good skiing, we ditched our skis almost immediately. A hike and scramble up a ridge through attractive open country brought us to the top, where we again encountered outstanding scenery in all directions. A rabbit had preceded us to the top; its tracks ran straight up through the rocks and snowfields to the summit. Why did it climb the mountain? I don't know, but then I'm not sure why we climbed it either. This may actually be some kind of significant philosophical issue, I suppose. We got back to the car as the alpenglow lit the ridge, after a round trip of about seven miles, with 3,600 feet of elevation gain. This open, rugged and scenic little range might be a nice area for a summer backpack, although we did spot evidence that it is cow habitat in the summer. - Peter Dayton.

Sky Pilot, February 25: On February 25, the trip originally scheduled to Mount Powell near Deer Lodge was changed to Sky Pilot Peak west of Victor, due to the unavailability of John Janney of Deer Lodge on that date. Wayne Hecker, Eric Jones, Peter Dayton, Ralph Flockerzi, Steve Niday, Dan Weinstein, and Dave Pengelly made the trip together up Bear Creek and the Middle Fork of Bear Creek. Except for some bare spots on the trail in the first 1½ miles, there was adequate snow coverage. Along the way we saw mountain goats, a moose, and grouse. The trail is quite gradual and makes a very pleasant tour. When we neared the lake at the head of the Middle Fork, we were suprised to look back and see Bret Doucette. He had left Missoula 30-40 minutes behind us and joined us for the remainder of the trip. From below the lake we took a fairly direct climb up the ridge to the final summit ridge. Due to a large cornice on the ridge, we stayed well to the west of the ridge on the face. Although it was quite windy on top, we were treated to great views of the surrounding country. We headed off the peak and down to the southwest to the lake on the return trip. Although this route is not as direct, it is probably an easier approach. Overall, the trip is about twenty miles, and makes a great day trip under good conditions. - Dave Pengelly.

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OFFICERS

Dave Pengelly, President, Trip Coordinator and Grand Vizer - 728-6512
Steve Niday, Vice President, Program Czar and High Exalted Mountain Goat - 721-3790
Arnold Finklin, Treasurer - 543-8705
Colleen Hunter, Secretary and Newsletter Distribution - 728-8101
Peter Dayton, Newsletter Editor and V.P. for Comic Relief - 728-8101
Ralph Flockerzi, Refreshments and Mountain Biking Guru - 549-9986

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Mail a check payable to
"Rocky Mountaineers" to
Arnold Finklin, P.O. Box
4262, Missoula, Montana

Check one: Individual (\$6.00/year) _____ Family (\$8.00/year) _____

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