

# Mountain Ear

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS

AUGUST, 1998

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## MEETING

**Meeting:** The club does not hold meetings during the summer. The meetings are normally held on the second Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the downstairs conference room of the Missoula Public Library. The next scheduled meeting will be on September 9. The September meeting will be our annual "potluck" slide show, where members show slides of their adventures during the summer.

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## CALENDAR

**August 21-23, Friday-Sunday, Mount Joffre.** Climb Mount Joffre (3,449 meters). This prominent snow-covered peak in the Canadian Rockies requires an ice axe, crampons, and glacier travel skills. It will involve moderate snow and ice climbing, it is not suitable for beginners. A bonus is the bivy at scenic Aster Lake on the trudge in. Call Matt Grandy for details at 728-0647.

**August 22, Saturday, Canyon Peak. (\*\*\*\*)** Climb Canyon Peak (9153 feet) which is in the Bitterroots west of Hamilton. This is a technical fifth-class rock climb, so the number of participants may be limited. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

**August 23-26, Sunday-Wednesday, Mt. Olympus.** Penny Palm and some Seattle area friends invite you on a technical Glacier climb in Washington State. This is not an official Rocky Mountaineers trip; it is posted here for information. Call Penny Palm at 258-2000.

**August 29, Saturday, Bass Creek Crag. (\*\*\*\*)** Climb the Bass Creek Crag, which are in the Bitterroots and easily visible from the highway southwest of Florence. Hopefully we will climb the crag called the King's Crown (8400 feet), which is a semi-technical climb. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

**September 4-7, Friday-Monday, Granite Peak.** Climb Granite Peak (12,799 feet), which is Montana's highest peak, over the Labor Day weekend. Participants will shuttle to the West Rosebud trailhead Friday evening or very early on Saturday. We will pack in to Mt. Tempest and place base camp there. Sunday and Monday will be available to climb depending on weather. This can be a very serious peak in less than optimal conditions and therefore is not appropriate for beginners. Group size will be limited, so call early for this one. A harness and rock shoes may be beneficial. Contact or leave a message with Tony Sabol at 728-7221.

**September 5-7, Saturday-Monday, Mount Athabasca.** Spend Labor Day weekend in the Canadian Rockies and climb Mount Athabasca (3,491 meters)! This is one of the most popular snow/ice climbs in the region. This mountain makes for a good introduction to glacier travel. Ice axe and crampons required. Call Matt Grandy at 728-0647.

**September 5-7, Saturday-Monday, El Capitan. (\*\*\*\*)** Climb El Capitan (9983 feet), which is in the Bitterroots west of Darby on a one, two or three-day trip. This is over the Labor Day weekend so participants may camp in the area and climb other nearby peaks such as The Lonesome Bachelor or any of the three Como Peaks. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

**September 12, Saturday, Mount Harding. (\*\*\*\*)** Climb Mount Harding (Mount Calowahcan) (9061 feet), which is the northern most interesting mountain in the Missions. The route will follow the northwest ridge and is a fourth-class climb. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

**September 19, Saturday, Daughter of the Sun. (\*\*\*\*)** Climb Daughter of the Sun Mountain (8777 feet) which is located in the Missions near Turquoise Lake. This will be a fourth-class rock climb. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

**October 3, Saturday, McDonald Peak.** Climb McDonald Peak (9820 feet), which is the tallest peak in the Missions. We climbed this peak on July 12, but by popular demand, we'll do it again. This is the first weekend the area is open after the annual closure for grizzly bear conservation. Call Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 for more information.

**(\*\*\*\*) Note.** Dates for trips marked with (\*\*\*\*) are best guesses. The exact date will depend on the weather and participants' interests. Some trips will be changed to allow us to climb Blackfoot Dome and Shoshone Spire in Blodgett Canyon as well as a technical snow and ice climb in Canada and the Mission Trek. So, if interested, make early arrangements. Also, these trips are not for beginners. These trips are restricted to experienced people who have a sincere interest in mountaineering, a reasonable level of physical endurance and full mental faculties.

**May/June 1999, Mount McKinley.** A trip is being planned for Mount McKinley (20,320 feet) in Denali National Park, Alaska. If interested, contact Gerald Olbu at 549-4769 or Tony Sabol at 728-7221 to express an interest.

**Want to lead a trip?** If you are interested in leading a trip, contact Matt Grandy at 728-0647.

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### TRIP REPORTS

**Stuart Peak, June 28.** At the start of one of Missoula's first nice days this summer, Penny Palm, Steve Schombel and Julie Warner met at the Rattlesnake trailhead at 7 a.m. for the 18-mile hike to this peak just north of Missoula. They were doing trail maintenance in the lower three miles of the trail on the west side of Spring Creek, and it seemed every time we just got up a good hiking pace, we would have to step down into, then out of, one of the new drainage cuts in the trail. That was about the only hitch in the day. We found good water half way and were able to fill water bottles. Brett Doucett joined us as we had lunch on the ledges below the peak, as it was very windy on top. Our view was of the south end of the Mission Mountains with new snow, and no less than seven lakes below us. Two mountain bluebirds had a nest in a snag just below us and went about their business unconcerned. We returned down the east side of Spring Creek and avoided those drainage cuts. Couldn't have asked for a better day. - Julie Warner.

**Warren Peak, Northwest Couloir, June 28.** Hillary Wood, Mike Wood and Gerald Olbu decided to climb Warren Peak by a slightly more interesting route than our usual east face route, so we headed for the northwest snow couloir. We had excellent weather with a clear blue sky in the morning and mostly sunny to partly cloudy sky throughout the day. The northwest couloir is a very nice couloir and similar to the south couloir on Gray Wolf. Both have about the same slope and about 1000 feet of elevation gain. Most of couloir was about 45 degrees; the middle portion was the steepest at about 50 degrees. The top was corniced, so we went off to the right and climbed a slope which was about 55-60 degrees. The snow was soft. We wish it was firmer on the way up, but enjoyed the security it provided on the way down. From the top of the couloir, it was an easy scramble to the summit. We met Len Broberg and his wife, Lori, and seven-year old daughter, Kate, who had camped there the night before. We saw quite a bit of wildlife. On the drive in, we saw a brown-colored black bear on the road; on the hike out, we saw a porcupine on the trail; on the drive out, we saw a moose that jumped across the road in front of us; and we saw about 1000 head of cattle on the road. - Gerald Olbu.

**Selway Crag, July 11, 12.** Matt Grandy and Dave Gaeuman headed for Idaho to climb the Selway Crag. We could find no one who had climbed there, and an Idaho climbers' guidebook just said they were "very remote and seldom climbed". That sound like a trip for the Rocky Mountaineers. On the USGS maps they were labeled very prominently as "THE CRAGS," and even the Rand McNally Truckers' Atlas, which shows no mountains at all in the whole US, has the area labeled "THE CRAGS." We were ready. We drove over Lolo Pass, down Hwy 12 and the Lochsa River, turning left at the Selway River. We followed that road to a Forest Service road labeled "Big Fog Saddle." This road serviced a former lookout tower on Big Fog Mountain. The Selway River area is very different from the areas we normally climb in. They are mainly just long forested ridgelines going on as far as the eye can see. We found that The Crag is prominent in this area solely because they are the only area that extends above treeline. We started out on a trail that took us up and down several forested ridges, then headed off trail along a ridgeline. This took us above treeline and about 7 pm we reached our campsite at Jesse Pass, immediately beneath The Crag. Overall, The Crag themselves were somewhat of a letdown. If they had been located in the Bitterroots or the Missions, they would not even be marked on the map as being anything special. They were basically a walkup about 10 minutes from our camp at the pass. We had a fine view of the Bitterroot Mountains over 50 miles away. The only reason they are a big deal in that area is that they stand out from the surrounding forest. The hike out the next day, we followed a different ridge to the east, entirely off trail. While

the climbing was not up to the clubs normal standards, we did navigate off trail above treeline for two days and had a dry, no-impact camp at the base of a remote climb. This was a true Rocky Mountaineer trip. - Matt Grandy.

**McDonald Peak, West McDonald Peak and the Sheep's Head, July 12.** It may have been a lapse of sanity, but Len Broberg, Dan Chisholm, Brigitte and Marc Hendrix, Bob Koca, Gerald Olbu, Hillary Wood and Mike Wood headed for McDonald Peak. There are several routes to McDonald Peak; we chose to climb the Sheep's Head and then traverse over to McDonald. The route to the base of the Sheep's Head was straight forward with only moderate bushwhacking. We enjoyed easy fourth-class climbing on solid rock as we climbed the west ridge of the Sheep's Head to the summit. From the summit of the Sheep's Head, we descended down to the col between the Sheep's Head and West McDonald. From there we had two options to climb West McDonald: traverse West McDonald Glacier and climb up to West McDonald or traverse to the south and climb the rocky west face of West McDonald. We choose the latter. The rock climbing was mostly an easy fourth-class climb and soon we were on the summit of West McDonald. McDonald Peak, our ultimate goal, still loomed ahead, and an easy fourth-class climb took us to its summit. Soon, all eight of us were on top of McDonald Peak and we felt pretty good as we posed for a few photos. There were grizzly bear tracks in the snow near the top of the peak, but there were no lady bugs on the rocks, so it was not yet feasting time for the grizzlies. (The McDonald Peak area is closed each year from July 15 to October 1 because grizzly bears come up to the peak to feast on lady bugs.) After a while, we traversed back to West McDonald and then climbed down in a slightly different place. We had a little trouble near the bottom with 50 feet of steep, smooth slab rock, but with a bit of route finding, we found a way down. We climbed back up to the Sheep's Head and climbed down the west ridge. The hike back to the trailhead was uneventful, other than the fact that the sun went down and it got dark. This was a 16-hour and 15-minute trip with 7020 feet of elevation gain. A trip like this with eight people could easily become unwieldy, but fortunately we had eight of the best people. Everyone had good endurance, good climbing skills, a pleasant personality and an environmental interest (either occupation, vocation or both). It's great that these qualities are common with mountaineering people. Congratulations to all. This is a good route with minimal bushwhacking and lots of fourth-class climbing, which makes it interesting and fun. By popular demand, we will probably do it again this fall. - Gerald Olbu.

**Trapper Peak, North Trapper traverse (almost), July 19.** Ben Irey and Gerald Olbu hiked up to Trapper Peak and looked for interesting things to do. The northwest snow couloir looked sketchy and we didn't want to attempt it without a rope for protection. Instead, we decided to check out the traverse from Trapper to North Trapper. We looked across and made a plan based on what we could see from Trapper Peak. We began on the east side of the ridge, and then crossed over to the west side. The west side of the ridge was broken up, but had lots of exposure. We traversed over granite rocks covered with black lichen and along ledges and cliffs, staying close to the ridge top. Route finding was interesting and we could only plan for about 10-20 feet ahead at a time. It was mostly a moderate fourth-class climb and often we had 100 or more feet of exposure below us. We continued on, not knowing exactly what we would get into. After a while, we reached the saddle immediately below North Trapper. It was getting late and we had enough excitement for the day, so we looked for a way down. We thought it would be easy to drop down into the valley below, so we proceeded. Surprise! Soon we were on steep slab rock and were not completely confident of the vibram soles of our mountaineering boots. But after traversing back and forth, slowly working our way down, and taking a few chances here and there, we made our way to the base. We scrambled across boulders to the base of the Northeast snow couloir below Trapper Peak. It was a short grunt to climb this couloir, and soon we were back on top of Trapper Peak. The Trapper Peak trail took us quickly to the trailhead. We plan to try it again, knowing that we can retrace our steps fairly quickly and then proceed from there. - Gerald Olbu.

**Mount Jackson, Glacier National Park, July 25-27.** Late Saturday morning Brett Doucett, Penny Palm, Steve Schombel and Julie Warner did the short backpack to Gunsight Lake with intentions of scaling Mt. Jackson. Having the extra day gave us time to enjoy Glacier and be slow and careful on the peak. We got to see Glacier at its most benign, hot, sunny, no lightning and few bugs. Jackson is mostly a long, 4800'+ scree scramble on the nasty loose rocks of Glacier with a few cliffs and broken walls to negotiate. It was also very dry and hot on Sunday, but Brett and Steve made the summit about 2:30, and all four of us safely got back to camp well before dark. We were quite happy to spend another night instead of packing up and hiking out in the dark. - Steve Schombel.

**Middle Como Peak, North Face, July 27.** On a hot and humid day, Ben Irey and Gerald Olbu headed for the Como Peaks. After a couple of hours, we left the trail and began some bushwhacking, which fortunately didn't last long. Soon we were on the boulder field which led to the circ below the peaks. Most of the snow had just recently melted. The area was very wet with water running everywhere, and the mosquitoes were ferocious. After a short break, we headed up the first of three ramps leading to the summit. All the snow was gone from the first ramp and instead we had loose rock to scramble up. We came to the second slope, which was still mostly covered with snow and was fun to climb. The third ramp was free of snow, so we scrambled up to the summit. Views from the top were great. El Capitan looked very impressive. Tin Cup Lake looked low, but not as low as expected since they were draining it due to repairs of the dam. After a short nap in the warm sun, we headed down. It was

fun and fast to climb down the snow on the second slope. Then, we came to the boulders, and they seemed to go on forever. We were actually glad when we came to the end of the boulder field and could begin bushwhacking. We were even more glad when we came to the trail and could begin trucking on down to the trailhead. We saw a black bear near the trailhead. It was probably the same one we saw in the morning. Soon we were at the trailhead and completed the trip in less than 12 hours. It was a good trip. - Gerald Olbu.

**Beartooth Trek, July 30 - August 5.** Tami Reschke and Tony Sabol shuttled two vehicles to do a traverse of the Beartooth Mountains. It was pouring rain at the Island Lake trailhead on top of the Beartooth highway, but we started off on our trek in hopes of improving weather. We spent the next three days travelling through high alpine lakes and plateau areas with intermittent subalpine and tundra-like regions. At one lake a mountain goat attempted to nest in my tent's vestibule. We made our way off trail and talus-hopped our way to Rough Lake, near Glacier Peak and Mt. Villard, both over 12,000 feet high. The next day we talus-danced our way to Sky Top Lakes in hopes of great views of the south side of Granite Peak - alas, the top 1/3 remained obscured by clouds. We then had a party of seven goats, including one kid, who decided to investigate us to distances of ten feet or less at times. They followed us down off the drainage divide for over a mile - obviously intent of procuring salty fluids. We finally lost them and dropped into the East Rosebud River drainage for a beautiful stay at Dewey Lake. In the morning we headed down to where Granite Creek joins the drainage. A beautiful side trip up this canyon gave us our coveted views of Granite peak from its eastern flank. The following day (our seventh), we made our way out to the East Rosebud Lake trailhead. All totaled, we saw 45 named lakes, numerous potholes and tarns, and traversed close to fifty miles. We saw goats, pikas, packrats, deer, goshawks and lots of fish. The Beartooth Range is truly a Montana treasure and is an awesome backpacking experience. Please follow "No Trace" principles should you go there or to any of our wild lands. - Tony Sabol.

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#### OFFICERS

Matt Grandy, President - 728-0647  
Tony Sabol, Vice President - 728-7221  
Steve Schombel, Vice President - 721-4686

Julie Warner, Secretary-Treasurer - 543-6508  
Gerald Olbu, Newsletter Editor - 549-4769

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#### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

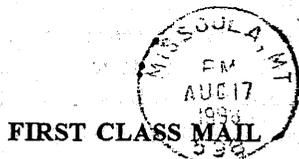
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Check one: Individual (\$9.00/year) \_\_\_\_\_ Family (\$12.00/year) \_\_\_\_\_

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