



# MOUNTAIN EAR

Monthly Newsletter of the Rocky Mountaineers  
December, 2004 Missoula, Montana

The Rocky Mountaineers is a non-profit club organized to promote all types of recreational use of mountainous areas.



**Monthly Meeting: Wednesday, December 8th,  
7:00 PM at Pipestone Mountaineering,  
129 West Front Street, Missoula, MT.**

## Caving in Montana !

Joe and Tina Oliphant will be giving a digital slide show on recent caving expeditions in the Absaroka-Beartooth, Bob Marshall, and Scapegoat Wilderness areas of Montana. The three areas featured in this presentation will offer a diverse surface and underground geological setting and thus the cave exploration will differ in techniques, equipment, and styles. Featured in this talk will be a horizontal river cave, a vertical river cave, and a dynamic cave that travels through the mountain.

**From the President:** Our website is up and running ([www.rockymountaineers.com](http://www.rockymountaineers.com)). There is a page with a membership application, club contact information, and the last few newsletters. One useful page is for trip updates. Trip leaders can send in updates as the day approaches, and they will be posted. There is also room for proposed activities that didn't get in the last newsletter. And there is a page for photos. Please don't bury us with lots of photos. If you have a few special ones from a trip, they can be considered for posting. You can send these to: [ssbell@montana.com](mailto:ssbell@montana.com), [seniday@yahoo.com](mailto:seniday@yahoo.com) or web master, [alden@wrightmontana.net](mailto:alden@wrightmontana.net).

Another useful website is the Missoula Nordic Ski Club, at [missoulanordic.org](http://missoulanordic.org). They have photos, a list of events, and a page for reports where you can get recent updates on snow conditions from several nearby x-c ski areas. Steve Schombel

**From the editor:** When I took over the position of newsletter editor, I had no intention of soliciting trips for the newsletter. I felt, and still do, that asking people if they want to lead a trip is not only burdensome on me, but should not be necessary, and can actually be annoying to some. Well, as of November 29, the newsletter, which I try to get out a few days before the monthly meeting, has no new trips submitted by anyone. While leading a trip does not require much effort, it is not fair to those who are the perennial leaders to rely on them every month. Not only is it unfair, it is not healthy for the club. I believe we need a selection of trips every month, or at least most months, that will appeal to a wide range of participants. Without that, how can we hope to be a vital club, one of which we can all be proud to be a part. I e-mailed everyone asking for trips for this newsletter. Hopefully, next month that will not be necessary. For those who are interested in leading a trip, but don't quite know what is required, it can be really simple. At a minimum, you need only pick a location and mode of travel, no need to have been there before, in fact exploration of new areas is encouraged. You will also be the contact for arranging a meeting time and place, and make sure everyone who starts out on the trip returns. It is also important to have a map of the area, especially if it is new to everyone on the trip. The best thing about leading a trip is you get to go where you want to go, and are not limited by other peoples choices. It's also fun to share your favorite places with others.

**Follow up:** within two days of sending out the request for trip leaders, I am happy to say I received several trips. I know December can be very busy, so thanks for the trips. Steve Niday

## Trip Reports

### **November 14, Sunday: Rattlesnake Recreation**

**Area-** Fred & Eileen Schwanemann, Roger & Linda Holtom, Linda Dale, Steve Schombel, and Bret Doucett took Trail 99 in the Rattlesnake Recreation Area to the Three Mile Marker. We then took a side trail down to the Rattlesnake Creek by a camping spot for lunch. We took Trail 99, part of the Walman trail, and the Fishing Trails on the way back. We confirmed the beaver are still in residence at the Beaver Pond as they have greatly enlarged their lodge. There were no other signs of wildlife. Jack Frost had painted the evergreens above 4,500 feet making for some beautiful sights. Fred Schwanemann

### **November 14, Sunday: Mount Calowahcan AKA Mount Harding-**

Although I had 4 calls, only one person actually showed up. Kevin Flynn from Whitefish met me at the Ninepipe Lodge. By consulting an aerial photo I accessed using *Expert GPS* software, and downloading coordinates of key junctions in the roads to my GPS receiver, we were able to find great access to the northwest ridge.

This is a very direct route to the top, unfortunately the last 40 feet were too scary for us without a rope. Without snow, I think this would be a good class 4 route. The elevation gain is about 5000' in just a bit over 2-1/2 horizontal miles. It's all off trail, but the brush is not bad by Mission Mountains standards. We surprised a mountain goat at close range high on the ridge, and had a good outing. This trip took place during some strong inversions, and with the heavy overcast, we found ourselves in a relatively clear layer between the two opaque layers. Steve Niday

### **November 21, Sunday: McLeod Peak,**

**Rattlesnake Wilderness-** Steve Niday and myself began this hike on a crisp, very cool but clear Sunday morning. Arrived at "trailhead" about 8:30- Steve had received directions that turned out to be very accurate from Peter Dayton- contact any of us if interested. We started on a very good but unofficial trail heading east toward Finley Lakes above the East Fork of Finley Creek. At approximately the 1.25 mile mark we left the trail and scrambled up some talus and into partially forested areas in an obvious drainage coming in

from the northeast. We followed this drainage to the NE then E/SE to the upper part of this drainage, sticking mostly to the north side of the drainage (we discovered on the way out that heading down the middle portions of this drainage is much easier travel). The weather had by now deteriorated so that we couldn't see anything. We ascended steeply to a narrow saddle then followed this ridge to a point on the Wilderness/Reservation divide. From here we descended along this ridge then ascended again to another high point (8260') south of McLeod. Yet another descent and ascent along this ridge and we reached the top of McLeod Peak (8620'). Some of the snow along this ridge was 2-3 feet deep where it had drifted. As with most summits I have attained this year the visibility was next to nothing (i.e. not a good picture taking day), and the wind was really blowing. We returned the way we came with the exception of following the ridge a bit farther south rather than descending that steep saddle we had ascended. Returned to the vehicle at about 4:45 just before dark. *Forest Dean*

**November 21, Sunday: Garnet Ghost Town-** We looked for ghost tracks in the 2-3 inches of snow at Garnet but didn't find any, just elk and dog and a few miscellaneous birds and people. The road in from the Hwy 200 side was wide with a slight covering of snow, it is closed from January 1 through March 30th. Garnet now has an overlook platform as you come down the hill behind the caretaker's cabin from the parking lot. The visitor's center was closed. They also have a self tour with numbers, but no brochures available this time of year. The interpretive signs are the type they can take down in winter so we had no info, but I remembered some from former trips to fill in trip participants: Mike Bowles (12), Hannah Warner (7) Gharrett Warner (9) and Gharrett's friend Reily Stevens (9). Former club member Jim Schultz joined Steve Schombel, Kathy Burleson-Schombel and Julie Kahl-Warner for the snowy hike. Some of Garnet's treasures were still available, like wondering how families lived in those tiny houses you could stand inside of, a hand cranked drill press and the inevitable photos in outhouses. On the way out Steve and his family went back out to

Hwy 200, while Julie with the three kids and Jim decided to go out the Bearmouth-I-90 way. The road from that side isn't much improved over the past and on a junction up there we got on the wrong road and drove around forever not getting out. Finally we asked some hunters and they assured us the road we were on would take us out in about 18 miles. It did and we got back on the road we were supposed to be on with about an hour or so of extra travel and some great views of

the surrounding mountain ranges. Julie Kahl

## Upcoming Trips

**December 4, Saturday: Lolo Pass-** This will be a short and easy tour to get muscles un-kinked and gear tested. Lolo Pass up the Lee Creek road to the State Line is a good option. This trip can be as long as participants want. If the snow is poor, a hike in the area will be substituted. Call Steve Schombel at 721-4686 for more info.

**December 11, Saturday: Lolo Pass-** A ski trip to Lolo Pass. Meet at Diamond Jim's at Reserve Street and Brooks (Hwy 93 S) @ 9:00 and plan to spend the day. I don't know what we will ski yet, depends on conditions. Lois Crepeau

**December 17, Friday: Sweeney Peak, Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness-** My plan is to make this a ski trip, but I will let conditions and/or interest dictate. Also, snow conditions or seasonal gate closures on the forest service road may entail a lengthy approach- I may change to a different destination if I don't think a day trip is realistic. Contact: Forest Dean @ 721-6384 or fdean@midlandimplement.com

**December 19, Sunday: Runt Mountain-** Snow conditions permitting, Jim Goss will lead skiers to Lookout Pass Ski Area for a cross country ski trip down the backside of Runt Mountain. A single-lift ski ticket can be purchased for only \$3 dollars (last year's price). At the top there is a trail separate from the downhill skiers that can be somewhat adventurous if the snow is crusty, but almost all downhill. Depending on the ability of participants and local avalanche conditions, we could choose to ski up to the St. Regis Lakes

## Upcoming Trips

under our own steam. Otherwise, an old railroad grade can be followed, slightly uphill for a couple miles to return to the recently expanded lodge. Although this is a two hour drive for Missoula folks, it is all highway. Meet at Durango's Restaurant in Superior at 9:00 AM, but make sure you call me at 822-5000 for a final check on conditions. Jim Goss

**December 30, Thursday: Gash Point, Selway-Bitterroot-** The southeast side offers some very good ski terrain. Meet at the K-Mart lot on Brooks @ 8:00 AM. Call Steve Niday, 721-3790.

**January 5-9, Wed-Sun: Mt. Stimson, Glacier Park-** One-way distance is about 12 miles, with 6500' of elevation gain. The trip will start off with a ford of the Middle Fork of the Flathead River and follow the Pinchot drainage to it's head, then ascend the southeast ridge of Stimson. You will need good skiing and winter camping skills, and should be prepared for extreme cold. I will be monitoring the snow and weather conditions and would not go if conditions are very poor. Steve Niday, 721-3790 or seniday@yahoo.com

**January 9, Sunday: A snowshoe trip-** I hope there will be enough snow to snowshoe in the Blue and Black Mountain areas. If not then the trip will be in the Lee Creek drainage near Lolo Hot Springs, or up near the pass. Call Steve Schombel at 721-4686, and check the website after New Year's for updates.

**January 29-30, Saturday-Sunday: Mt. Powell, Flint Creek Range-** (overnighter) This Flint Creek Range highpoint looks to be a fairly gradual climb on its south side. Would like to ski/snowshoe in on Saturday afternoon set up camp somewhere, then summit Sunday morning and ski/snowshoe out again. Contact: Forest Dean @ 721-6384 or fdean@midlandimplement.com

**February, Full Moon multi-day trip to Yellowstone Park-** Years ago I took a 5 day ski trip through the Park. It was a lot of fun and the geyser basins are fantastic in the winter. More details later. Steve Niday, seniday@yahoo.com

## Miscellaneous

One of our members, John Wolverton, has just left for Kuwait and Iraq. He will be scoping out some good trails for future trips. We hope to stay in contact and maybe be able to help out by sending some things they need. Stay tuned for more.

Thanks to Chad, Paul, Dave, Josh, & Deb for the cabin donation. Apparently they used the cabin and sent a cash donation, no last names given.

### Backcountry Weather and Avalanche Info.

Check out the National Weather Service website for some very good snow conditions information.

<http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/mso/avalanche.php>

<http://www.nohrsc.nws.gov/>

### Newsletter CD's for sale:

All back issues of the Rocky Mountain Ear are available on CD for the low price of \$20.00. All proceeds to go directly into the club's treasury.

### Digital Newsletters

Digital copies of the newsletters are available on the website. Let me know if you do not want me to e-mail you a newsletter.

### Club Contacts

Website: [www.rockymountaineers.com](http://www.rockymountaineers.com)  
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Newsletter editor: Steve Niday 721-3790  
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Note the change in membership fees, which was passed at the October 13, 2004 meeting.

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND LIABILITY WAIVER

Family Yearly Membership:  \$20.00 - paper newsletter

Family Yearly Membership:  \$10.00 - electronic newsletter

Make checks payable to: "Rocky Mountaineers" and send to:

Rocky Mountaineers, P.O. Box 4262, Missoula, MT 59806

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

I have read this release and indemnity agreement and have fully informed myself of its contents before I have signed it.

Print Name

Signature Date

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian if Participant is Under 18 Years of Age

I, (print name) \_\_\_\_\_ hereby state that I wish to participate in courses and/or activities offered by The Rocky Mountaineers, a non-profit organization. I recognize any outdoors activity may involve certain dangers, including but not limited to the hazards of traveling in mountainous terrain, accidents or illness in remote places, forces of nature, and the actions of participants and other persons. I further understand and agree that without some program providing protection of its assets and its leaders, the Rocky Mountaineers would not be able to offer its courses and activities. In consideration of and as part payment for the right to participate in the activities offered by The Rocky Mountaineers, I agree to RELEASE, HOLD HARMLESS, AND INDEMNIFY The Rocky Mountaineers and its members from any and all liability, claims and causes of action arising out of or in any way connected with my participation, or the participation of any minor that I am signing on behalf of, in any activities offered by The Rocky Mountaineers. I personally assume all risks in connection with these activities. If I am signing on behalf of a minor, I further agree to RELEASE, HOLD HARMLESS, AND INDEMNIFY The Rocky Mountaineers and its members from any liability, claims and cause of action, which the minor may have arising from the minor's participation in activities. The terms of this agreement shall serve as a release and indemnity agreement for my heirs, personal representative, and for all members of my family, including any minors. (Parents or Legal Guardians must sign for all persons under eighteen (18) years of age).



**Rocky Mountaineers**  
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