



# Kootenay Mountaineering Club

*The Newsletter for people with year-round pursuits.*

April - May 2011

Issue 3

Next Deadline: July 29th 2011

## *Find inside*

### Page

- 1 Evaluating terrain,  
New climbing  
Wall
- 2 Mt. Loki Ski
- 3 Range of Light
- 8 Trip Reports
- 13 Library
- 14 Climbing area
- 15 KMC info

### Polished Wall and Whirlwind Wall

These two crags face SW and lie on an upper tier above the normal Kinnaird climbing area. Access is via either a trail up the gully from Sunshine Wall, or a second trail (preferred) route up grassy ramps from Open Book Wall. Either way, the walk takes 10 to 15 minutes. There are currently 14 routes ranging from 5.5 to 5.10a/b. About half the routes are trad and half sport. All are equipped with rappel anchors.

Continued on  
page...14

## KMC Mountain School *tech* Tips

### Evaluating Terrain:

In winter, terrain evaluation is (or should be) at the forefront of most of our decisions when traveling in the backcountry. Things like slope aspect, slope shape, elevation (alpine, treeline, below treeline), exposure to overhead hazards (e.g. cornices or large avalanche slopes), or terrain traps (e.g. trees, gullies, abrupt changes in slope angle) all have a bearing on where we choose to skin up and ski down. In summer and spring, we might find ourselves no longer so carefully evaluating terrain with the mistaken idea that winter's hazards are long gone. But, terrain evaluation should figure prominently in all our trips into the mountain environment regardless of season.

**Avalanches don't end the day you hang up your skis, and, most snow hikers and climbers are not equipped with the normal avalanche equipment (probe, transceiver, shovel), so when hiking and climbing on snow in spring and summer, think carefully about the likelihood and consequences of an avalanche. Most spring and summer avalanches begin as wet point releases and move comparatively slowly. But don't be fooled, small wet point releases in spring and early summer can quickly entrain large amounts of wet, heavy snow, and even a small amount is enough to knock a hiker off their feet and into or over terrain traps (think trees, cliffs, lakes).**

Wet snow avalanches are more likely on solar (west and south) aspects, but when there is no overnight freeze they can occur on any aspect and, even with an overnight freeze, east aspects get the sun early in the day and may destabilize quickly. You can minimize your exposure by planning to be up and down your peak or hike before daytime temperatures warm and by carefully evaluating the terrain you are traveling through. Use caution any time you will be under cornices or large snow slopes or traveling through terrain where the consequences of even a small avalanche are severe - above cliffs, trees, abrupt changes in slope angle, tarns, lakes, creeks, crevasses and other terrain traps. Also, try to choose routes where the entire party will not be stacked up one above the other.

**Slips on snow account for a big chunk of all mountain accidents. Of course, the best thing you can do is avoid slipping - get your ice axe out and put your climbing helmet on before you commit to crossing any snow slope where there is any possibility of a slip. Give yourself a solid ice axe belay<sup>1</sup> when moving up, down and across snow slopes and wear a climbing helmet. When hiking and climbing on snow in addition to assessing the terrain with an eye to avalanches, assess the potential consequences of a slip on snow. If the consequences are high, that is, you are traveling above a cliff, trees or boulders, or traveling through trees and boulders do not go unless you are completely confident you will not slip (or can self-arrest immediately if you do slip). Consider using a rope to belay sections where the consequences of a slip are high.**

1 If you don't know what an ice axe belay is, come out to one the KMC snow workshops and learn this essential skill.

# Fun in the Sun – A Springtime Attempt on Mt. Loki

Edited by Foxit PDF Editor

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April 24, 2011

Climbing Loki in the summer a couple of years ago, I saw an entry in the summit register of a party who made the ascent and ski down in winter. This put the idea in my head, what an amazing winter objective it would be! Then, after checking out Google Earth, maps, bivouac.com, and talking to people (special thanks to Jeff Hammerich!), it started to look like it might be possible. It all came together late Saturday night, with an out-of-town visit from friends and former KMC members Megan Long and Luke Jansma, the loan of a snowmobile from Luke's dad, Leo, a good weather forecast, and good snow stability. We didn't bother changing our Saturday night party plans, though, and that made it a bit hard to get up for our early Easter Sunday start!

Feeling fast on our skis (inappropriately, as it turned out), we met at the Jansma compound in Queen's Bay at 7:00am to load the sled, gas it up, and get to the ferry for the 8:10 sailing. On the East Shore, we found the Portman Creek logging road clear up to km 8.5, where there was also a downed tree. We unloaded the snowmobile and towed 3 skiers behind in a clever quick-release system with bicycle inner tubes used as harnesses. Very comfortable! We had to walk across a few dirt patches, but the tow was easy, and we were at the approximate area of the trailhead and ready to ski at 10:45am. We were quite lucky there were no more downed trees, as we did not think to bring a chainsaw. The trail signs and blazes must have been under the snow, and we quickly dug more than 6 ft to ground by one tree. No worries, though, we all recalled the general summer route, and set out gently contouring up the slope on our skis, wrapping around to the right. There is quite a bit of flagging tape in that lower section of woods, but it doesn't seem to mean much to the hiker, it's likely cut block flagging. We came out into the bowl below the Portman notch on the left flank of the slope, higher than where the summer trail comes out. That was a great vantage point to assess the conditions in the bowl.

It was a very sunny, hot, spring day, and recent slides filled the bowl on the south facing side. The cliffs above likely had melted off chunks that became triggers, and nearly the entire south side was filled with debris. The north side still had huge hanging cornices, so, even though the snow was better over there, we decided to sprint across the debris field one at a time. Well, sprinting across debris is difficult, and there was much swearing, falling, bleeding, and slow-going. Then, we made our way zig-zagging up the steep section below the notch, careful not to ski above our buddies, to a welcome break at the notch and our first snowy view of our target! We realized we were going to be much slower on skis than we'd been on foot in the summer. One at a time skiing and struggling with tight trees and poor snow slowed us down. We were at the notch at 1:00pm. After a quick break we soldiered on, the usual way the summer trail goes, contouring around and down to the saddle. This section is south-facing, and literally every 5<sup>th</sup> step set off a short, slow, wet slide. This also slowed us down, as the skin track was collapsing beneath our feet. We did not feel at risk, though, as these slides were very predictable, very slow, and small, with low consequence. The top 15 cm was repeatedly sliding on a smooth, hard crust layer, likely evidence of a previous melt/ freeze cycle.

getting a good edge in was mandatory, and it was worth taking the time to de-skin. Once at the col at GR962410 (NAD27) all difficulties were over and we put our skins back on and cruised to peak 2163 metres for lunch.

Hikers will recall the summer route climbs up from the saddle, then wraps around to the right where a short slab is negotiated with hands, before coming out into a wide shale slope. We stuck to the ridge instead, and zig-zagged up to gain the ridge proper, thereby avoiding the steep exposed slope. Up on the ridge we climbed over wind waves of snow and avoided the huge cornices on the left (north) side. We boot packed and punched through the largest wind wave for about 10 feet, then continued skiing up the ridge to a nice flat break spot just below the first false summit by 3:30pm.

From there we could see our hopes of skiing the south side were not to be. The hot weather had caused numerous slides down that face, and we watched as one wet-cement, lava-like mass moved down to fill the lower bench with debris. Then another one across the valley to the north thundered down sounding like a plane passing overhead. We discussed our planned turn around time of 4:30, and decided to continue on a bit to gain experience and route-planning information for next time. We again skied one at a time up the 1<sup>st</sup> false summit's steep approach, then left our skis at a protected spot in the rocks, and continued up on foot with ice axes.

The shallowly-covered rocks proved a bit treacherous, as did the cornices on top, but we were able to see the route we would take next time around the second false summit and up to the top. We could see it would require some mandatory exposure, and thus more stable snow conditions, colder weather, and an earlier start (oh, and stronger legs, too!) (not you, Luke!). At 4:25pm we were all standing on the first false summit, and were a little disappointed but a little relieved to be turning around!

We plunge-stepped and slid back down to our skis, then a few of us embarrassed ourselves survival skiing the softening wind crust back down the ridge. When we got to the snow wave we had boot-packed up, we skirted around onto the exposed slope. Each one of us triggered a small slide as we skied quickly across one at a time. Again, they were small, slow, and predictable, without propagation, but we were reassured that we'd made the right decision by not exposing ourselves up higher. The south routes from the summit and from the ridge look like great runs, as do the north side routes from just under the 1<sup>st</sup> false summit. In stable snow conditions a party could have some fun on these runs, and make their way back to the saddle to come out the usual hiking route. We made our way back to the saddle then back up to the notch, amidst more small slides. At the notch at 5:30pm, it was very sunny and everything in the bowl was sliding, on both sides.

Continued on page ... 10

## Skiing Through the Range of Light

*"And from the eastern boundary of this vast golden flower-bed rose the mighty Sierra ... so gloriously coloured and so radiant, it seemed not clothed with light, but wholly composed of it .... Then it seemed to me that the Sierra should be called ... the Range of Light." John Muir, 1912*

As I looked across at Doug, hunkered down over his ski crampons trying to scratch some kind of hold from the frozen icy surface to resist being blown off this south (key point) facing slope above Onion Creek in California's Sierra mountains, I thought, "Range of Light, my arse, this is the Range of Wind." Soon after this, we gave up on our planned route, skied - can skating down ice be called skiing? - down and headed up a more sheltered less steep valley to 3400 metres above Bench Lake. This was merely a day trip to acclimatize to the high elevation Sierra's in preparation for a later multi-day traverse.

Ten days later, after a series of storms with wind, snow, wind, some sun, wind, and more wind, we parked our truck at North Lake Road, strapped our skis to our packs, and began, how ski traverses in May always begin regardless of mountain range, walking up the road, skirting minor patches of snow. Within a kilometre, we reached snow, put our skis on and continued up the road, passing some suicidal fisherman out in the middle of the barely frozen North Lake, through North Lake campground, and, by sheer happenstance, right by the sign indicating the trail junction with Lamarck Lake to the south, and Piute Pass to the west. We stopped for lunch on a large boulder - the Sierra's are littered with large, flat, handy boulders perfect for lunch breaks and dry camping spots - near treeline below the steepish headwall leading to Loch Leven.

Easy ramps actually lead up to Loch Leven and Piute Pass comes into view, a few kilometres to the west. At Piute Pass, near 11,500 feet, Humphreys Basin spreads out to the west with its myriad lakes and gentle alplands, flanked on the east by the hulking peaks of Emerson and Humphreys along the Sierra Crest. We clattered across frozen snow to Muriel Lake where we found some good boulders ideal for camping and happily discarded our six day packs.



*Doug at camp by Muriel Lake*

Leaving Doug at camp, and using ski crampons, I skied a further 500 feet up from camp to a small bump overlooking Lost Lakes and the route that leads to the Keyhole. Our route the next day lay over



either Alpine col or the Keyhole, both about 12,400 feet, and one on the west side of Muriel Peak, the other on the east side. Our guidebook described them as being of equivalent difficulty, but our reading of the map indicated that Alpine col was likely easier. I had a good view of the Keyhole, which was easy until the final steep 200 foot slope which would undoubtedly require cramponing up. I snapped a photo, stripped my skins, and then proceeded to strip the recent wax job from my skis as I descended frozen snow - a lot like skiing 10 grit sandpaper over glacier ice.

On Sierra trips, a key strategy to more enjoyable touring is not to leave camp too early - some softening of the snow surface makes skiing both more pleasant and safer. We left camp shortly after 9 am, and cruised across Muriel Lake, south to Goethe Lake, and, below the slopes leading to Alpine col, we put on safety straps and ski crampons. Skiing to Alpine col was relatively easy, although there was one traverse above a big run-out that felt somewhat tenuous, even with crampons, as the snow was - again - frozen so hard that I couldn't see the slightest indentation from Doug traveling before me. At Alpine col, big boulders were bare so we sat a while and sunned our feet giving the south slope below us a little more time to soften up.

Descending from Alpine col, we skied across three sizeable but unnamed alpine lakes and stopped below the big south side of Mount Goethe. Here we dumped our big packs, grabbed a couple of energy bars and some water, and skied to the top of Mount Goethe at 13,264 feet. The wind was calm and the Range of Light lay spread before our feet. We did have semi-corn snow for the decent, but the recent winds had sculptured the snow into a series of waves and undulations and I felt, how I felt for days skiing across the Sierras, as if I was in a kayak on the open ocean, rolling up and down the big waves.



*Doug approaching the summit of Mount Goethe*

Back on with the big packs, we had to use skins to cross Darwin Bench as the slight undulations defeated our waxless skis. I convinced Doug that picking up 2 litres of water each at an open stream was worth the extra weight to save melting snow, so we descended with heavy packs through slabs and pine trees to 10,700 feet, just below and north of Evolution Basin. We put our skins on for the last time that day and skinned up to a small tarn and a convenient boulder at the very north end of Evolution Basin. Wandering around camp that evening, I found an open stream draining off the slopes of Mount

Mendel and I climbed a small ridgeline to look down on Doug taking a photo of me, taking a photo of him.

In the morning, we filled up with two litres of water each and began the seemingly never ending ski up Evolution Basin. This long valley - one of the highlights of the Sierras - runs north south between 12,000 foot peaks, houses dozens of lakes and tarns, and gains just 1,200 feet over its 9 km length. We slogged up under a beating sun with our skins on thinking how ideal the terrain would be for some kick wax or fishscale skis. After an hour or two, Muir Pass comes into sight sandwiched between Mount Solomons to the south and Mount Warlow to the north. Eventually, the big round boulder at the pass coalesces into a quaint stone structure and you finally reach Muir Pass, just shy of 12,000 feet.



*Mount Warlow, Muir Pass and the Muir Hut at sunset (Doug Brown photo)*

Despite feeling kind of flogged, we couldn't pass up another ski peak, and with much pared down packs, we headed south and skied to the summit of Black Giant at 13,330 feet, feeling every bit of the elevation. I was dying to have a good rest on the way up, but forced myself to stop for only one minute each 500 feet of elevation gain, which meant I got to rest for about 2 minutes on the way up. Not very long, but long enough to keep me way behind Doug who was also dying to rest, but swore he would carry on until I caught up with him.

We had wonderful views from the summit of lake encrusted Ionian Basin ringed by the big peaks of Scylla, Charybdis, the Three Sirens and Goddard, and far down to the east, forested Le Conte canyon where the summer trail runs up to Muir Pass. Another rolling descent down the corned up waves of the west face, followed by a clever long traverse to maintain our elevation, but we still had to skin up for the final 200 feet back to Muir Pass.

The next morning, we both felt somewhat fatigued, but looked forward to a day trip into Ionian Basin. Ski crampons helped to reach the broad pass to the west of Black Giant, but the south slope down to unnamed lake 11,828 feet had softened up, and we cruised into another pass at 11,800 feet that led west into Ionian Basin. We stopped for a break here to give the snow time to soften, and, after emptying both our packs, discovered that Doug's lunch was not with us. I shared my lunch with Doug for the remainder of the day and was truly shocked at how much of my lunch - now seeming quite meager - he could devour although he was clearly restraining himself.

We skinned through Ionian Basin and climbed up a south facing slope to a small knoll at around 12,200 feet where we relaxed again for a while and I watched more of my lunch disappear. Continuing north, we crested the col to the west of Mount Solomons, briefly considered attempting to ski the west ridge, then strapped our skis to our packs and kicked steps up the steep west ridge until we could put our skis back on and ski easily to the top. Doug did not want to linger on top as his huge lunch, sitting uselessly back at camp had become a siren calling to him to return, so we stripped the skins and skied the steep southwest face down into Ionian Basin and Doug, putting on his skins and a burst of speed at the same time rapidly ascended back to the col. We wanted to avoid skinning up again, so we skied a big traverse across the north face of Mount Solomons and ended some 100 feet above camp. Doug was down long before me with his head in his lunch bag snuffling like a truffle dog.



*Doug in Ionian Basin, Charybdis behind*

On our penultimate day, we had the crux of the trip to contend with, the climb over Echo Col. Initially, we descended to Helen Lake, then followed a drainage down to another small alpine tarn at about 10,500 feet. We used ski crampons again for the 1,500 foot climb up to the col which is really a mere notch on the ridge between Clyde Spires and Mount Powell. It is difficult from below to tell exactly where the col is as the ridge line is a jagged line of small cliffs and bluffs. But, we had identified a likely spot to climbers left of a prominent black tooth, and, while we rested and ate below the final climb, a couple of skiers popped out from this location confirming our original theory. The final climb to the col is class 3, but probably the most difficult part was getting into and out of skis without losing them - or ourselves - on the steep, icy and narrow snow ramps that abutted the col on both north and south sides. I had to take my pack off for one short step in the col, and Doug kindly ferried our skis up from the south side. Descending the north side, I found vaguely terrifying, as the slope was steep, and the snow on this aspect had not yet corned up. Instead, it slid off in big heavy waves that threatened to engulf you and carry you away.

Below the initial steep section, the rest of the descent to Echo Lake is a cruise and we did manage to cruise a long distance - across Echo and Moonlight Lakes, past Topsy Turvey and Pee Wee Lakes and eventually down some short, but steep slopes to the tree ringed Emerald Lakes where we made our last camp.

The terrain in this middle fork of Bishop Creek is convoluted as we discovered the next day. Some up and down around minor ridgelines eventually led us to Blue Lake the next morning, where we eventually found the descent gully running north that houses the summer trail. We had some concerns that there would be little snow on the descent to Sabrina Lake and had initially thought of following the summer trail. But, the summer trail traverses steep bluffy terrain heading west and we soon abandoned it to ski gullies down to Sabrina Lake. Actually getting down onto Sabrina Lake was somewhat tricky as the lake level had dropped leaving big sheets of broken ice stranded above shoreline and we had to tentatively side step and butt slide down these. We lacked the confidence or perhaps the bravado to ski across Sabrina Lake, which had big patches of open water, and so followed a tedious course wacking around the eastern shore of the lake and booting up to gain the summer trail. The summer trail was intermittently snow covered, bare or icy and steep necessitating a combination of walking, step kicking with an ice axe and, if you were really lucky, actually skiing. Eventually, we reached a spot where we could ski down and out onto the lake shore where big piles of avalanche debris enabled us to put our skis on and cruise the final section along the snow covered trail and out to the road.

We had stashed a pair of sneakers at the beginning of the trip, and while I lazed by the packs, Doug walked the kilometre or so down the road to the truck. My siesta was interrupted by an old guy with an even older dog who came by to chat. He was a real backwoods character with a 12 year old dog whose longevity he ascribed to Noni juice - some kind of Polynesian plant extract of astronomical price that had apparently cured his dog's "huge heart". In between rantings about global warming (can't blame him for that) he told me all about the Star Trek movie filmed at Blue Lake. Eventually, both he and the dog staggered off with trembling legs, and I was hard pressed to discern the difference between the two of them. Soon, Doug returned and we drove down to the blinding heat of small town Bishop, stunned as usual, to come back to civilization after a week in the wilderness, where life always seems incredibly simple and free.



*Doug at Contact Pass near the Sierra Crest*



# Trips Report

## Syringa Park

April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011

It was a dark and stormy morning when ten hardy club members met at 8:30 AM at the Brilliant Bridge Park & Ride near Castlegar. They carpooled to Syringa Creek Park boat launch on the Lower Arrow Lake. They left the boat launch in light rain at 9:00 and picked up the east trailhead of the Yellow Pine Trail just across the road. After a steady climb and a couple of detours around windfalls they reached the upper viewpoint (710 m.) at 10:00 A. Yellow bells, glacier lilies and spring beauty flowers were spotted along the trail. The sun broke through at this point. Raingear stayed on for wind block and for the odd light shower. The group descended to the main trail and moved west to the second viewpoint arriving at 11:00 AM. A squirrel greeted the hikers as they crossed the fourth windfall. After the hikers once more descending to the main trail they spotted group of four mule deer. Numerous birds were seen and heard on the hike including juncos, nuthatches, towhees, robins, wrens, Canada geese, and grouse. The hikers descended to the west trailhead near the Syringa Creek Provincial Park picnic ground in bright sunshine. Lunch was eaten on the convenient picnic tables with a clear view of the Lower Arrow Lake. Hikers then proceeded east along the trail through the picnic and campgrounds. Columbia ground squirrels popped up at the Childrens' playground. The group arrived back at the vehicles at the

boat launch at 1:00 PM having hiked 8 k. with 373 m. (1224') of elevation change. The hikers carpooled back to the Brilliant Park & Ride where they took leave of each other.

Hikers included Ed & Hazel Beynon, Muriel Walton, Alex Nichol, Bert Ratcliffe, Ken Kirkland, Ted Ibrahim, Robin Lidstone, and coordinators Pat & Al Sheppard.

## Brilliant Overlook Hike

MAY 8, 2011

Fifteen KMC members met on the Dove Hill Trailhead road just inside the gates of the Castlegar Golf Course. The group hiked along the Dove Hill Trail starting at 9:15 A. After pausing at the viewpoint overlooking Castlegar Airport the hikers proceeded down to the junction with the Elk Cutoff Trail and then to the Skatebo Reach Trail past the Columbia Power switchyard, and on to the Brilliant Overlook Trail. Two young men employed by Friends of Parks and Trails were busy brushing the Trail. By 11:00 A. the hikers paused at the viewpoint overlooking Little McPhee Creek and Thrums. The lunch stop was at the Brilliant Overlook from 11:40 A. to 12:10 P. Views were excellent despite a rain squall. Red Mountain, Granite Mountain, Mt. Sentinel, the Kootenay/Columbia River confluence, Castlegar, the Golf Course, and the Lower Arrow Lake were all visible. The group visited "The Vise", a cave like fault in the mountain side, before heading past the communication towers, under the power line and on down the

mountain side on the east side of the Golf Course. Three shortcuts were used to avoid prolonged use of roadways. By 1:45 P. the KMCers were back at the vehicles. A brief shower had hikers dawning rain-gear for the last two kilometers. Several flowers were spotted along the route including trilliums, white and purple shooting stars, Oregon grape, glacier lilies, red stem saxifrage, ball head waterlilies and wild strawberries. Wild life spotted included a redtailed hawk and a frisky deer tick.

A special thanks to Lawrence Redfern and the trail stewards of Friends of Parks and Trails for keeping these trails in such good shape.

KMC hikers included Diana Benedek, Rob Blaisdell, Ross Bates, Sherry Watson, Robin Lidstone, Vicki Hart, P'nina Shames, Caroline Shimek, Eric Ackerman, Jenny Baillie, Jill Watson, Jim & Cindy Campbell, and coordinators Pat and Al Sheppard.

## Pend D'Oreille Loop

Friday May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011

8 of us met at the Waneta Mall Parking area, saddled up and away we wheeled under clear skies. Spring had sprung. After crossing Highway 3B we made our way through back streets then along the Columbia River, past the horse grounds and the Trail Airport. At the turnoff to the 7 mile dam, it was off with the warm clothes and



heads down for the grunt up hill. Not much chatter on that section!

The ride along the Pend d'Oreille River was very beautiful, green country side, fast moving water coming down, and the front riders saw a young bear. As we approached the dam we saw 3 flood gates open and white water roaring out of each of them. Only a week before, there was not a drop coming over the dam. We continued on to Buckleys campground for a well deserved lunch and break. There was not a soul around and we enjoyed the calm surroundings.

The ride back up to Nelway Waneta Road is very short and steep, but no trouble for us folks after a good lunch. So then we began the return journey along the old road, which is not paved and rather rough. Imagine how impressed we were when we happened upon a grader smoothing out the surface after the winter damage. Of course "someone" also wanted a street sweeper!

Along this section we spotted Balsam Root and Wendy identified the Woodland Star, which is a dainty white flower. The cows and horses were up to their knees in rich green grass, and a few fruit trees were blossoming. After the rough section it was back to smooth surface and through the Columbia Dairy area, with not a cow to be seen!

Of course the front riders couldn't get by the ice cream shop and it was an enjoyable stop just before we were back at the vehicles.

Thank you to, Bess, Diane, Pat, Pat, Wendy, Graham, Dave and self, Jill Watson, co-ordinator.

## Fry Creek

May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011

This hike was intended to be up Wolf Peak from the top of Kootenay Pass. Although this was

Photo: Ted Ibrahim – Fry Creek



expected to be a hike mostly on snow, the warm conditions forecast for the days before meant that the snow might be too soft. A trip to Kootenay Pass a few days before to see what the snow was like, was unsuccessful because the pass was closed for up to 4 hours for avalanche control. An alternative hike was therefore needed and Fry Creek was selected. We met at Nelson Safeway at 8am and reached the trailhead just before 10am. On the first section of the hike to the bridge over Fry Creek (just under 3km), Robin unfortunately had a fall on the trail and hurt his left arm and the side of his head. Jill offered to accompany Robin back to the trailhead while the rest of us carried on. We went as far as the boulder field just

before the end of the trail and decided that was far enough (about 9km from the trailhead). The creek was flowing impressively, but I do not think it had reached its maximum, and the weather was excellent with a maximum temperature of about 25°C and sun.

We were Bert Ratcliffe, Dave & Sandy St. Dennis, Dianne Paolini, Jill Watson, Caroline Shimek, Ester Brown, Sherolyn Haastad and co-ordinator Ted Ibrahim

## Loon Lake - Cedar Creek Loop

May 18, 2011

We met at the Old World Bakery, Kootenay Lake Ferry landing in Balfour just after 8am. After a quick review of maps and historical data, the group drove north to Ainsworth. One vehicle was placed at the north end of the loop at Cedar Creek and the hike commenced at the Hansen Road - Loon Lake Road junction about 9am. The road was clear of snow and the first stop was the Highlander silver/lead/zinc mine, which operated intermittently between 1889 and 1961. After pausing briefly at Loon Lake with a view to the north at Mount Willet and Mount Kaslo, we arrived at the lookout over Kootenay Lake. Cloudless sunny skies provided a panoramic view of the Osprey ferry on Kootenay Lake, the Pilot Peninsula and numerous peaks of the Purcells including Sphinx, Old Tom and Mount Crawford. Paintbrushes and larkspur were observed on the steep southeast facing slope.

After a quick break, we headed north to the Loon Lake - Cedar Creek trail connector, passing by an old cabin, a linear depression with abundant skunk cabbage, and a neon green swampy mung. At the

end of the connector was the Ainsworth Cemetery and historical signage.

A short distance to the west, we carefully crossed Cedar Creek on three logs and examined the bullwheel and ore bins at the Highland Mine. This was the terminus of an aerial tramway which was built in 1901 and transported lead - silver ore a distance of more than a kilometer and almost 300 meters vertically to Kootenay Lake. We returned to the Ainsworth Cemetery for lunch with a great view across Kootenay Lake at Bluebell Mountain and Mount Loki.

We hiked back down the Cedar Creek trail, across the creek on a log bridge and parallel to the aerial tramway where there are still signs of historical mining including tramway buckets, a collapsed tramway tower and clamps from a waterline. Several flowers adorned the trail including violets, glacier lillies, calypso orchids and columbine. Due to an absence of bird fanatics, the twittering sounds in the bush could not be related to a particular species.

The group of two T's and two J's covered the distance in about 5.5 hours and consensus was that the hike rated somewhere between B -1 and B -3. "We" included Jill Watson, Jennifer Kyler, Terry Simpson and Terry Turner.

## Mt. Sentinal

We parked our vehicles half-way up the road to Verrigans Tomb then sweated and grunted up the cliff via that 'well established' trail which it is.....then hiked up the ridge to THE ROAD. We had left early enough so it wasn't too hot. At this point it

became a collaborative effort although I noticed no one insisted that they take the lead! Anyway, it was pretty easy off-piste walking - bit of a bush whack here and there - we kept on the ridge and the rocky outcrops and had a hump/peak in sight that could or could not be, Mt Sentinel.

As we got closer it was decided that it was the highest point around so we headed toward it - at some



A hardy bunch of KMC'ers atop Sentinal Ridge.

point going down but not too far down, and then up and up and arrived at the exact same spot that we found 2 weeks ago. We had our lunch here at 12:30 - with the insects! Took us 4.25 hours to get there. Elevation read at 1573m. We decided this MUST be the Mt Sentinel Peak...even though on the previous trip it was determined as the Fire Lookout... I would have gone back the same way but was voted down and we returned via the road on which we had come up the earlier trip. The road was still snowy though not as much as before, but more spring-in-the-face branches. However, it was good to do a loop. Fairly warm on the walk down the ridge - we arrived back at the cars around 5 pm. So it was a good full day.....

Thanks to everyone in the group who kept their humour on this exploratory. They were: Diane Paolini, Sherilyn, Ken Kirkland, Al and Pat Sheppard, Suzanne Blewett, P ' nina Shames, Cindy and Jim Campbell, Lorraine and Jenny Baillie co-ordinator. ELEVATION GAIN: 1102 meters. Pretty respectable. (cars parked at 471m/"peak" reached 1573m)

## Loki continued...

We skied very fast through there one at a time, and up to a safe spot on the skier's right on a shoulder. Then we contoured around again back through the woods the

way we'd come, and eventually hit our up track.

We followed it generally out through the woods, thick at times, trying to grab and snag us, back down to the road, and our snowmobile, by 6:45pm. Luke drove the sled down, while the 3 of us skied 7km down the road, cutting off some of the switchbacks by skiing through the woods, until the snow turned into dirt, when we had to walk the last 0.5 km back to the truck. It was easy to get out with the truck, and we hit the 8:40pm ferry back. After dropping the sled off at the Jansma's we were back in Nelson for 10:30pm. A long, tiring, fun day!

Trip participants were Neil Baker, Megan Long, Luke Jansma, and me, Linda Johansson.



## Grizzly Bears

What better group to ask for help from than the Kootenay Mountaineering Club. I have been a member of the club for a number of years now but haven't been too active in participating, but I sure appreciate getting all the emails about trip plans and adventures and I have had the opportunity to take a couple of Sandra's amazing workshops and joined in on a couple ski tour trips. For you see, I've been obsessed with



Photo: Jenny Coleshill. Grizzly track.



climbing mountains for as long as I have been with studying grizzly bears. There is nothing more exciting to me than the thought of being on a mountain at the same time as a grizzly bear and my hopes to catch a glimpse. I am project coordinator for the Kettle Granby Grizzly Bear Conservation Project. I have support from the Granby Wilderness Society and the Friends of the Rossland Range. This population unit is one of nine threatened populations throughout BC and my hopes are this project will facilitate a recovery plan. This population unit is bounded by the Kettle River, Highway 6, the

Photo: Jenny Coleshill

and the Rossland Range. The project will determine its current population and distribution and build up a genetic database of individuals to profile the population and evaluate its isolation and connectivity to other populations. This first year will rely on sighting reports and targeting of potential areas that may be inhabited by a grizzly bear to validate areas of occupancy for help in determining study design. Please keep your ears and eyes open for grizzly bears this summer when hiking in this

area. The first reason is for your personal safety and the second is for providing me invaluable information.

Record the date, time and location; if possible and safety is ensured a picture of either a bear or sign of (track) is the hard evidence needed. At the earliest convenience possible please notify me and I can follow up and maybe be lucky enough to track and find some hair that contains the data! My cell phone is 442-7969 or email at [grizzly@granbywilderness.ca](mailto:grizzly@granbywilderness.ca) or [trax4tracks@rosslandrange.org](mailto:trax4tracks@rosslandrange.org)

build up a genetic database of individuals to profile the population and evaluate its isolation and

Photo: Jenny Coleshill. Grizzly Bear. Deep dished nose, the hump between the shoulders, and the longer claws are tell distinguishing features.





### Continued from Page 1... Tech Tips.

Other aspects of terrain you'll want to think about include the potential for rock-fall, either naturally occurring or caused by members of your own party. In general, avoid traveling in loose rock gullies if at all possible and choose instead ridge lines. If you must travel up loose rock gullies use strategies to minimize exposure to rock fall. Either spread your party out across the slope so that no-one is below anyone else, or, if that is not possible, travel closely together so that dislodged rocks don't have the chance to reach warp speed before they impact the next person down. And, of course, wear a helmet.

This is also the season when snow-bridges begin to melt out and crevasses and moats open up. If you are traveling on a snow covered glacier in spring and summer without adequate glacier travel equipment realize that you are playing a high stakes game of Russian Roulette. Although you might consider the risk of a crevasse fall to be minimal, this is the classic low probability high consequence event. Most unroped crevasse falls end with a fatality. At a minimum, take an avalanche probe and investigate snow depth and consistency, **and** be prepared to turn back if the snowpack is shallow or isothermal. Even better, go equipped with standard glacier travel equipment.

Of course, all the usual travel precautions you've been following all winter still apply. Don't linger, have lunch, group up or update your Facebook status under large snow slopes, gullies or cornices. Avoid putting everyone in your group in a hazardous location at one time - save someone for the rescue. Make sure everyone knows and agrees with the plan, and,



Descending recent avalanche debris in spring

above all, remember you are a team out there - watch out for each other.

## Evan's Creek

Saturday May 21, 2011

We had a great trip to Evan's Creek along the west shore of Slocan Lake on Saturday, May 21. The trail is now clear of deadfall, and the weather was sunny and warm. There were also many wild flowers, including Calypso Orchids, along the trail.

Our group of 9 consisted of me and 8 women. Several of our group decided that given the favourable weather, it was a good idea to go for a skinny dip in Slocan Lake. The trip also provided an interested insight into the outlook of the fairer sex on such things as internet dating, rape, homicide, and female lust.

In view of all this, I am going to make this an annual women only, except for myself, and clothing optional trip.

Leader: Bill McNally Participants: Vicki Hart, Mary Woodward, Marilyn Miller, Catherine Leighland, Caroline Shimek, Jenny Baillie, Jill Watson and Sherolyn Haalsted

## KMC Library News and Book Review

Two new avalanche books appeared in the KMC library this year:

- *Decision Making in Avalanche Terrain* by Haegali, Atkins and Klassen; and
- *Avalanche Accidents in Canada, Volume 5; 1996 to 2007* by Gauthier, Haegali and Jamieson.

Both books are excellent additions to the KMC's already comprehensive coverage of all things avalanche. *Decision Making in Avalanche Terrain* is actually a small field book meant to help people traveling in avalanche terrain structure their decision making process when planning and conducting trips in avalanche terrain. The field book guides the reader through the process of planning and executing a trip in avalanche terrain starting with generating a trip plan including deciding how big a party to travel with and continuing right through to making observations and decisions on the day of the tour. Personally, I think this is a great little field book for people to use when traveling in avalanche terrain as it gives clear focus to all the things that should be considered when wandering about in the backcountry. My only criticism of the book is that it uses a series of non-standard abbreviations when standard abbreviations exist.

*Avalanche Accidents in Canada, Volume 5, 1996 to 2007* is the long awaited successor to Volume 4 which covered 1984 to 1996 and has been expanded with more detailed reports of all the fatal avalanche accidents occurring in each season. Each chapter of the book covers one avalanche season and begins with a summary of the main snow-pack characteristics for that particular season and then has detailed information on each fatal avalanche accident occurring in the relevant season. Whether or not we can learn anything from reports of other people's avalanche accidents remains a much debated topic, but, in any event, the book makes an interesting and informative read. Again, I have few criticisms of the book other than a few occasions when the text did not match the information provided in tables and a sneaking suspicion that the fatalities occurring during guided trips were not dealt with as forthrightly as possible.

As usual, both books are available for loan from the KMC library, and you can view the KMC's entire catalog on the web at <http://www.kootenaymountaineering.bc.ca/library.html>

## Polished Wall

These two crags face SW and lie on an upper tier above the normal Kinnaird climbing area. Access is via either a trail up the gully from Sunshine Wall, or a second trail (preferred) route up grassy ramps from Open Book Wall. Either way, the walk takes 10 to 15 minutes. There are currently 14 routes ranging from 5.5 to 5.10a/b. About half the routes are trad and half sport. All are equipped with rappel anchors.

**Preferred Access:** Park at the usual location for Kinnaird climbing area and follow the trail up to Open Book Wall and continue walking uphill and north along the base of Open Book Wall until you reach the upper crag (Polished Wall). You will come out a metre or two to climbers left of Racing the Rain on Polished Wall. Whirlwind Wall is reached by following a trail around the south end of Polished Wall and comes out below Seams Fun on Whirlwind Wall.

**Alternate Access:** Park at the usual location for Kinnaird climbing area and follow the trail up to Sunshine Wall. Continue up the gully on a steep trail until you come out at a flat area. You will reach the crag below the Black Corner. To access Polished Wall from Whirlwind Wall take the trail (base of Seams Fun) that passes around the south end of the Polished Wall and comes out below Muglugs Goes Climbing.

### Polished Wall

**Routes:** Routes are described from left to right as you encounter them when approaching from Open Book Wall.

1. Racing the Rain. Sport (10 clips). 5.9. 28 m. This is currently the left most route on the wall. Follow a shallow right facing flake to steeper face climbing. Pull onto a small ledge on the right hand side and face climb on small edges up to a chain anchor on the left side of the small ledge of Shaun's Pawn Shop. The fourth clip benefits from a 20cm or longer draw.
2. Shaun's Pawn Shop. Sport (8 clips). 5.8. 26 m. About 3 metres right of Racing The Rain, climb black rock directly up to a shallow right facing corner. Follow the corner up to steep face climbing above and an anchor on the right side of a small ledge.
3. Reluctant Gardner. Trad. Gear to 1" plus a #4 Camalot. 5.7, 20 metres. So named because there was significant wood and piles of garden soil on this route before a major cleaning effort. The route climbs the obvious left-leaning crack near the right side of the wall that starts behind a small clump of birch trees. Step up and place your big cam, and then climb the thin crack/corner on polished rock (crux). Plug up the crack and tackle the bulge head-on, and then romp up the easy corner above. The anchor is on the wall to climber's right at the cave just below the top. You can continue easily to the top if you want to walk off, but be careful of loose blocks.
4. Muglugs Goes Climbing. Sport (5 clips). 5.7. 18 metres. Climb black stepped rock to the clean, smooth slab above using the right side as a rail. There is a large block on climber's left beside the anchor; it resisted all efforts to remove it, but rest assured, one day it will come off – use caution.

### Whirlwind Wall

**Routes:** Routes are described from climbers left to right.

1. It's A Breeze. Sport (5 clips). 5.6. 15 metres. Fun easy climbing up the featured slab to a shared anchor.
2. Get Shorty. Gear to ¾" including some very small chocks. 5.5. 15 metres. Climb the left facing corner crack to a right facing corner crack on the steeper wall above and a shared anchor to the left.
3. Seams Fun. Trad. Gear to 1" including #0 and #00 TCU (plus two bonus bolts). 5.8. 22 metres. Climb the small seam/crack then move up the white dyke to a steep juggy finish.
4. Birthday Boy. Sport (5 clips). 5.10a/b. 15 metres. We finished this route on Doug's birthday. Climb up the left-facing corner crack to steep face climbing above. Shared anchor with Hung Out To Dry.
5. Hung Out To Dry. Sport (5 clips). 15 metres. 10b. Climb the easy lower angled wall below a big curving roof. Pull the roof with balancy moves on the left side and continue up the left facing corner above. Shared anchor.
6. Gale Force. Trad. Cams to 3". 5.8. 15 metres. Climb the big, obvious left-leaning crack, finishing with a delicate traverse to the left. Protects beautifully.
7. Invisible Man. Sport (5 clips). 5.9. 15 metres. Climb the clean orange face to the left of Invisible Crack to a shared anchor.
8. Invisible Crack. Trad. Gear to 2". 5.7. 15 metres. Climb the gear eating left trending crack to an anchor on the left (shared with Invisible Man).
9. Black Corner. Trad. Gear 1". (plus a bonus bolt). 5.6, 18 metres. Climb the black corner with the crack in the back near a large dead tree. Continue up the steeper wall above (bolt) on big jugs to an anchor.
10. Wind Tunnel. Trad. Gear to 2" plus a #4 cam and pink tricam for the start. 5.7, 25 metres. So named because the Whirlwind Valley was funneling the very strong wind on the day this route was first climbed. Start near the far right of the crag, directly below a obvious flake at about half height. A thin start is followed by easy cracks to the steep flake; climb the flake cross the big ledge, and tackle the steep finishing headwall straight-on.



## **Important Club Information**

### ***Membership Annual Dues:***

Single (19 yrs and older) \$41

Family (including child under 19) 2 people \$52; 3 people \$58; add \$6 for each additional person

Junior (age under 19) \$31

Send complete membership/waiver form to KMC Membership:

S16a, C53, RR1,

Winlaw, BC

V0G 2J0

To receive membership information by e-mail or to give us your address/e-mail/phone changes please contact: [membership@kootenaymountaineering.bc.ca](mailto:membership@kootenaymountaineering.bc.ca)

***Want to include something in the  
email update?***

**members-  
owner@kootenaymountaineering.bc.ca**

***Sending an email to KMC  
members?***

**members@kootenaymountaineering.bc.ca**

***Want to get a hold of the KMC  
President?***

**president@kootenaymountaineering.bc.ca**

### ***Library***

### ***Newsletter***

*Newsletter Editorial Policy: We encourage all submissions of writings, cartoons, drawings, book & website reviews and trip reports. Suitability for publication is at editors' discretion. Articles and advertisements may be edited for clarity and length. Advertising must be thought to be of interest to members in regard to the outdoors, especially locally. Will use discretion for commercial endeavors.*



**Kootenay Mountaineering Club**

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2010 -2011 Executives

5289, Chair

**Visit us @**

[www.kootenaymountaineering.bc.ca](http://www.kootenaymountaineering.bc.ca)