



# The Kootenay Mountaineer

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

June 30th, 2013

## Message from the Editor

It has been a wonderful spring. The Chic Scott evening was a lot of work for P'nina and others, but they delivered the goods to entertain and excite a lot of us that evening. Chic is a marvelous speaker, casual but very connected to his subject.

The seminar about what a trip leader needs to be and do given by David Lussier of Summit Mountain Guides at the Resker Hall was educational and well received.

Keeping me awake into the late evening as those two evenings did requires a good program. Well done, club!

A month or so ago, I was expecting that this might be a thinner issue than normal. However, members have come through again. I have 12 trip reports for you this issue, and we have lots of pictures. Following the trip reports is a great description of what one should actually expect from Environment Canada's seven day weather forecasts.

Finally, I'm putting in print a story I've been holding because there was not enough room in the last issue. It might get many of you planning a trip down to the California coast.

## Kootenay Karabiner

*A final status report on the Kootenay Karabiner digitalisation project.*

Of the two complete sets of the Karabiner that were in the club library, one is now sitting on a shelf (I assume. Doug?) with each issue bound in a binder, each page mounted in acid free plastic sleeves. Each issue has been scanned to PDF format and all issues are available on DVD. We plan to upload them to one of the many "cloud" storage spaces and make them available for downloading. More later on about why you might want to read a few of those Kootenay Karabiners.

Every story from the issues has been optically character recognized and edited to correct the odd "recognition" that can happen when trying to read text typed on old typewriters with some of their keys

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## Article submission guidelines:

Plain text is great. No need for PDF or Microsoft Word files. Simply cut and paste your text into an email to [newsletter@kootenaymountaineering.bc.ca](mailto:newsletter@kootenaymountaineering.bc.ca). Attach your full resolution photos to the email. Lots of photos, please.

Submission deadline for the next issue is September 16, 2013

showing their age. These text files are easily searchable for mountain names, mountain range names and club member names.

The second club set is also mounted in acid free sleeves and donated to the TouchStones Museum in Nelson. Laura Fortier, their archivist, was extremely pleased to receive them, and they will store them in their own containers in their climate controlled room. They will be available to any of the public who may wish to research historical aspects of mountaineering in the Kootenay.

The club and Touchstones are also in possession of the entire digital project on special DVDs that are claimed to be durable for 1000 years. I'm sure no one has been able to fully test that claim, and I won't be around then to check it out, even if DVD readers survive that time too. But they should certainly be in safe keeping for the foreseeable future.

One other set of the 1000 year DVDs has been donated to the library of the Alpine Club of Canada.

Now, about why you might want to read a few of the Karabiners... If you are a member who has joined in the last 13 years, there is a wealth of stories about the mountains and the people of the region dating back to 1964 in each issue. They were certainly an eye opener for me as I sat there and scanned them. That kind of history shouldn't be forgotten and should be shared, even while we try to make new adventures that may become history in another 50 years. Perhaps those who are cliff climbing on Mars in 50 to 100 years will enjoy reading about those good old days

I will attempt to make them all available on a network cloud storage provider since the club's web server doesn't have the space needed and there are several free providers out there. I'll announce it on the email list and give the download link when that happens.

I tried to tempt people to request a DVD from me in the last newsletter. There was no one interested.

Perhaps I am the only one interested? However, if you are and your download speeds from the internet aren't up to multi-megabyte downloads, I still have 12 DVDs available, going cheap. The PDFs make great bedtime reading once transferred to a tablet eReader. Please contact me.

## Trip Reports

### **Brilliant Overlook Hike Trip Report April 28**

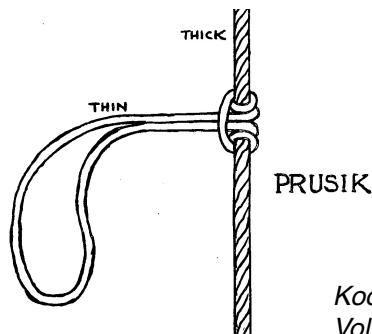
It was a bright and sunny morning when 21 KMC Members left the Dove Hill parking area at 9:45 AM. The Dove Hill Trail and viewpoint provides good views of Castlegar, Robson, Ootischenia, Selkirk College, and the Castlegar Golf Club House.

The hikers reached the Brilliant Overlook Trail head at 10:40 AM. By 11:29 AM, hikers reached the bench overlooking Thrums where they had a hydration break. There was a short detour around a large windfall near the Vice turnoff. At Noon hikers settled for lunch at the Brilliant Overlook. The views on this bright and clear day were exceptional. Clear views of the Kootenay and Columbia Rivers, Red Mountain, Mt. Sentinel, the Lower Arrow Lake, and Ootischenia were appreciated by the hikers.

A group picture was taken by Cindy Campbell with the rivers confluence in the background. After lunch and a quick tick check the group got underway past the communications towers along a series of trail and road segments until reaching the tee for the 3rd hole of the golf course. Hikers continued along the north side of Tower Ridge subdivision and back to the Dove Hill Parking area arriving at 2:20 PM. Total time was 4 hours and 30 minutes.

The wildlife spotted included turkey vultures, a pileated woodpecker, an osprey, and numerous ticks. Flowers gracing the trail included trillium, spring beauty, glacier lilies, desert parsley, syringa, wild cherry, shooting stars, and fairy bells.

*Hikers included Chris Cowan, Don Harasym, Eric Ackerman, Alexander Shvetsov, Connie Parisotto, Pat Bruce, Ester Brown, Andrea Gardner, Ken Kirkland, Betty Brousse, Kathleen Nichol, Kathie Robertson, Helen Hatch, Chris Hatch, Caroline Shimek, Don Paul, Rob Lidstone, Cindy Kozak-Campbel, and coordinators Pat & Alan Sheppard.*



Kootenay Karabiner  
Vol. 1, 1964

## **Deer Point trail bike ride - May 5, 2013-05-20**



*Photo taken in the cedar grove at the North end of Christina lake*



*Mark Kingsbury hut in International Basin.*

**Day 2.** We were up before dawn and out of the hut by six a.m. It was another ‘bluebird day’ as we ascended to the lower Carbonate glacier and then kicked steps up an icy snow and scree slope to the upper Carbonate glacier which we ascended to the NW ridge of International Mountain. We left our skis and kicked steps up the straight-forward ridge to the summit, except for Andrew who carried his skis to the top. We were there before 11 a.m.; nevertheless the snow was quickly turning to ‘mush’ as we retraced our route down the upper glacier, the scree slope and the lower glacier, and through a ‘half-pipe’ to the bottom of the valley (Bobby Burns creek) below the hut ... an 1100 metre descent. It was a great day!

## **International Basin - Ski Mountaineering**

*May 5th – 12th 2013*

We had such a good time ski mountaineering in International Basin in the Purcell Mountains last year that we decided to go again this year. We were the same group... Paul Allen, Bert Port, Andrew Port, Fred Thiessen and myself, Ken Holmes.

**Day 1.** We flew from Golden on a warm, sunny, clear morning into the Mark Kingsbury hut in International Basin. After settling in to the hut, we went for a short tour up the slopes behind the hut but even though it was before lunch time, the snow was already soft and sloppy due to the unseasonably high temperatures. The weather forecast was great for the next few days so we decided to go for the “plum” of the area the following day...an ascent of International Mountain (3099 metres, 10164 feet).



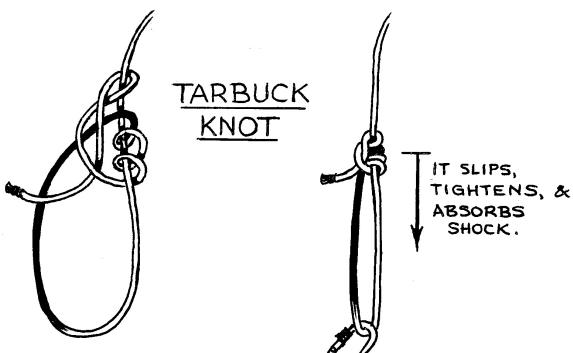
*Skiing down from International Mountain*

**Day 3.** Once again another clear day so Paul, Fred, Bert and Andrew left the hut to climb Mount Cony via the Spillamacheen glacier whilst I elected to go and search for my camera which I had lost on the lower part of our descent from International Mountain. Both objectives were successful. I found my camera and the others climbed Mt Cony and skied off the top to the Cony – David col followed by a long descent on the south slopes back to the hut.



*Ascending Mount Cony*

**Day 4.** Today's objective was to ski via the lakes at the head of the valley where two previous KMC hiking camps had been located and the climb to the unnamed peak 2698 m. NE of the upper lake. The SE ridge appeared to be the most feasible route consisting of a mix of snow and rock. As it turned out it was a mixture of both rotten rock and rotten snow. After watching Paul sinking up to his waist making steps on the upper slope, I descended back to the col and basked in the sun while the others persevered and made it to the summit by a route made more challenging by the condition of the rock and snow. The snow on our descent quickly changed from a soft surface to mush as we made our way back to the hut for lunch.



*Kootenay Karabiner  
Vol. 2, 1965*



*Unnamed peak 2698 m climbed via upper part of the facing ridge.*

**Day 5.** Fred, Andrew and I decided to go for a circuit of Mt Sibbald (2699 metres, 8852 feet) by a route crossing the north ridge then following a nice snow ramp leading to the SW ridge which is followed to the upper SW slopes and the summit. We were on the summit by just after 9 am. and were amazed at the large grizzly bear tracks near the summit. We had perfect ski conditions down a snow rib on the N face down the glacier and back into the basin and to the hut for 'elevenses'.



*Skiing off the East Ridge of Mount Sibbald*

**Day 6.** After much discussion, ideas for climbing Mt Richards were abandoned because of the short time available between the hard surface found at first light and the snow turning to mush by about 10am. Instead we opted to go up the lower Carbonate glacier to the col between International Mountain and Battlement Mountain. On the way up we crossed the biggest grizzly bear tracks in the snow that I have ever seen. We lounged at the col looking at the spectacular views until we judged the snow conditions to be just right for skiing. We hit it 'right-on' and had a great ski run of about 800 metres (2700 feet) over a couple of kilometers back to the valley below the hut.



*Col between International Mountain and Battlement Mountain*

We flew out on the morning of Day 7 after an almost unheard of 6 days of unbroken blue skies and sunshine and unusually warm temperatures. We had been lucky in our choice of week!

### **Deer Point - May 11, 2013**

May 11, with sunny skies promising a pleasant hike, seven souls shouldered their packs and headed north from the Texas Creek campground on the Deer Point trail. This trail follows the east shore of Christina lake from about the mid-point of the lake to the north end. All but one had been here before, and had returned because it is an enjoyable hike early in the hiking season.

Conversation was lively as hikers got to know one another and/or catch up on old friends. As leader, I was anxious to identify the person who seems to attract tics ... yes, the winner made herself known even before we left the parking lot. All-in-all, no more than expected this day.

After stopping for lunch at the made-for-lunch deer point view, the group was motivated to reach the north end of the lake. I think we were all a bit awed by the high water of Sandner Creek (Seventy percent of the stream-spawning Kokanee from Christina Lake use this creek), but with a little bush-whacking we made it to the beach ... which, of course, was under water. But, that didn't stop a few hardy souls, as they ditched most of their clothing and waded and/or swam the beach.

The return to our vehicles brought a pleasant surprise, as Jennie led us to the Sandner family memorial graveyard where we stopped to reflect upon the early settlers of the area. With the coolness of the morning and the water behind us, we braved the heat of the trail for an uneventful return.

Total trip, 23 km, 7 hours.



*Photo: l-r Peter Oostlander, Jennie Baillie, Don Paul, Glenn Keto, Connie Parisotto, Pat Bruce, Chris Cowen (behind the camera) stopping at the Sandner family memorial graveyard*

### **Slocan lake Kayaking Trip, May 18-20, 2013**

We started at the south end of the lake at about 11:30 am on Saturday after leaving a couple of vehicles at the boat launch near Hills on the far end of the lake.

The wind came up on Saturday afternoon with waves about 3 ft. high. This sped us along to our destination at Cove Creek, where we pulled out and camped for the night.

Sunday, the weather was perfect and we stopped at Nemo Falls for a brief hike and then again at Sandy

Point for lunch. We planned on stopping at Wee Sandy Beach, but it was occupied by several families, so we pushed on to Wragge Beach against a strong head wind. We had Wragge basically to ourselves.

Next morning we paddled for about one hour and we arrived at the end of the lake. Stopped in New Denver for May Days and had a burger by the lake. Then tried a bonus adventure floating down from Slocan Lake to Perry's Bridge but were dissuaded by a local kayak expert who thought a couple of our kayaks wouldn't be suitable, and questioned our level of skill.

So there you have it. Good times, good company and great weather!

*Participants: Garry Beaudry, Elena Cigala-Fulgosi, Joanne Segur and Bill McNally (organizer and reporter)*

### **Gilpin Grasslands Provincial Park hike - May 19**



*Gilpin Grasslands Provincial Park hike - view towards Grand Forks*



*Wild Asparagus*



*This is a photo I took of six deer on the Gilpin Grasslands hike. \*Editor's Note: I think they are elk.*



### **Wards Ferry - June 1<sup>st</sup>**

*Hi Peter. Here are some pics for the Ward Ferry hike that Cindy Kozak Campbell took.*

*Diane*





## Mt Abercrombie hike.

For the newsletter my trip report for today's (Sunday June 9th) hike.

Dan Derby



Twenty, yes *twenty* KMC members hiked Mt. Abercrombie Sunday, June 9, 2013. The border crossing was uneventful for most of us with only one vehicle in our group being requested to pull to the side for a more thorough check. Our next roadblock on route to the trailhead was a log jam across the road. With a little luck and some good planning we had a chainsaw on board Glenn Keto's truck and he made short work of clearing the road, so we could drive the last couple hundred meters to the trailhead.



We split into two groups and pushed off for the summit. The first couple of miles of the trail were dogged with lots of windfall to climb under and over to make the trail just that much more interesting. The trail itself is wide and has gentle grade all the way up. At the summit we enjoyed a great lunch with views of Red Mountain, Old Glory, the Valhallas, Kokanee Glacier, the Salmo Creston and the Boundary dam to name a few of the local landmarks we were able to pick out.



Our GPS confirmed we traveled 7.4 miles total, Elevation at parking area was 4982' to 7305' at the summit with a travel time of 4 hrs. 36 minutes.

Once back at our vehicles we started back down the road to find the road was not going to be passable for the last vehicle in our group due to runoff and some very deep mud. So with a little more chainsaw work we were able to clear the road and head for the border with only minutes to spare as the Waneta crossing closes at 5:00 pm.

We had fantastic weather, a great group of KMC members and shared some great conversation.

### **Smallwood/Bigwood Hike - June 16**

18 hikers spent a lovely warm and sunny Fathers Day hiking the Smallwood/Bigwood loop and enjoying the expansive view at the bluff edge. An easy 8.3 km hike with 356 m vertical gain in 2 hr and 15 min. of hiking in all.

*See photos below thanks to Cindy C.*



### **Gray's Peak - June 7th and 15th**

*This is a trip report and info on conditions at Kokanee Glacier.*

On Friday June 7, we arrived 2 kms. before the parking lot to discover the road blocked by avalanche debris. The walk to the parking lot took barely half an hour and then we were on a well flagged undefined trail. Snow was soft and rotten in rock fields but we made the ridge in 3½ hours. But the wind was up and conditions worsened as we approached the base of the summit. After waiting for a front to clear and thunder sounds to abate, we judged it safe to make an attack of the summit. A lightning strike set us back on our heals and we retreated only to see a clear spot over the summit. This is of course common on Gray's.

We headed back to try a second time but weather was moving so fast that we turned and headed for the exit. We arrived at the parking lot in less than 2 hours and walked the short ways to the car.

But, after only a km. we discovered a 18" log across the road so we started the long walk to the highway. Thankfully, a forestry crew saved us after only a 6 km hike down. We counted ourselves healthy and lucky the tree hadn't fallen on the car.

Next week's trip is still on at this point. I have three club members at this date but if daytime heating is still intense through the next week we may find the snow too pulpy. Hopefully the road is cleared this week but no guarantee and a chainsaw in the back of someone's truck could come in handy. We would have given a lot to have one yesterday.

*Dave St. Denis and Nadine Ebner*

Here is a link to pictures of our day:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/nadinee/sets/72157633997285215/>

*Editor's Note: I stole three pictures from Nadine's Flickr site.*



### Trip report for Gray's Peak hike June 15.

We were six club members heading out from Nelson at 6 am, arriving at the trailhead, 2 kms before the Gibson's parking lot at 7 pm. The road was still blocked by snow and trees. This was partially cleared

later in the day by other hikers. Road is now cleared to the parking lot, while the parking lot still inaccessible. This is changing daily with snow quickly melting. We headed up the trail by 7:30 and arrived at the summit by 11:30 to find high cumulus clouds with sunny patches, as you can see by Nadine's pictures. We could see for miles. It was a lovely picnic lunch at 9000' and a leisurely trip down. A great day was had by all with a big thanks for one of the great views in the Kootenay.

*Dave St. Denis, Nadine Ebner, Rainer Muenter, Vicki Hart, Dustin Rippengale, Alexander Yamishkin.*

### Sphynx Skyline - Sunday June 23, 2013

*5 merry members met at the crack of dawn to a western blue sky.*

*We scurried off all keen for the scene.*

*Across the ferry and up Gray Creek to the 7 minerals mine road,*

*where we took our loads and began the trudge upwards,*

*upwards,*

*upwards.*

*Trudge pass was gained; then up the skyline to west sphynx.*

*Fine views and a blue bird; the crux and sphynx's finger.*

*We staggered back down to an ice cream cone and home.*

Thanks to all for a great east shore day. We now know why we came.

*We were Deli Roberts, Vicki Hart, Alex Yamashkin, Dustin Rippendale and Curt Nixon (trip leader)*



## **Siwash Mountain, June 26th**

*Ted Ibrahim*

Originally, 22 people signed up for this hike. However, the weather forecast looked dubious and 8 people changed their mind the day before. Two more dropped out on the morning of the hike. Twelve of us met at 8 am. at the west end of Blewett Road, where it meets highway 6/3A. We then drove up Blewett Road to Rover Creek FSR for 8.7 km where there is a fork in the road.

We took the left fork that was clearly used more. However it proved to be the wrong way & was heavily used because of active logging up there. We drove back to the fork, probably wasting about 30 minutes, then drove up the right fork before taking the road up to Snowwater Lodge. We drove past the lodge entrance up a very rough, narrow road and parked where there is a road junction. We walked along the road, then up to the col.

We came across snow much earlier than I expected. We then went from the col along the ridge to the first peak of Siwash (2270 m). Because the weather looked bad towards the higher peaks and we did not have ice axes, we decided to walk to the peak overlooking the Slocan Valley. This proved to be a more challenging walk than I remembered.



We lunched at the peak overlooking the Slocan Valley before returning by the same route. The weather was mostly overcast, about 15°C, & dry except for a couple of light sprinkles. Total hiking time was a little under 4 hours for 9.1 km distance and an accumulated elevation gain of 720 m. We were back at the vehicles by about 3:15 pm.

*We were Cecelia Hobson, Zuzana Zach, Mary Woodward, Eliane Miros, Leon Arishenkov, Robin Lidstone, Doug Clark, Cindy Shlakoff, Jake Lindfield, Colin McCuaig, Elaine Ibrahim and coordinator, Ted Ibrahim.*

## **Making the best use of weather forecasts.**

*Chris Cowan*

Herein reference is made to forecasts issued by Environment Canada (EC).

I've noticed from time to time a tendency of trip coordinators to cancel outings at the prospect of inclement weather. As we all know, the forebodings of doom and gloom sometimes don't materialize, but obviously forecasts are correct a good portion of the time; otherwise people wouldn't have any faith in them and wouldn't much care what the forecast said. As was the case years ago, you'd just bring a raincoat and keep an eye on the sky.



*"We'd love to come, but the weathermongers have paralyzed us with fear."*

*From Pinpointweather.com*

Jack Williams, founder of the famous USA today weather page, believes there should be a rating system for how good the forecast is, some indication of forecaster confidence. Like the system in some hiking guidebooks where a "must do" hike gets 4 boots and the one boot hike is in the "don't bother" category. I must say I agree with Jack, and with others, lament the loss of Environment Canada's synopsis, wherein the forecaster gave a bit more information than what's in the sparsely worded regional forecasts, along with some indication of confidence, such as "the front may move slower than expected, delaying the expected showers till later on this evening".

In the absence of such a system, what are we to do?

A few words here on how much reliability we can have in EC's standard forecasts, which now go out to a week.

Weather is a "chaotic system", meaning not disorderly but inherently unpredictable after a time, due to it

being impossible to pin down exactly the initial state. All forecasts eventually break down, but on average, day 1 will generally have the greatest chance of being correct, and reliability will gradually deteriorate in the following days. However even this “rule of thumb” will to a large extent depend on what type of weather pattern we’re experiencing.

I’ll speak about summer patterns mostly here, since that’s the season. We can divide our summer weather into 2 broad regimes. We have a settled regime, when we have fairly persistent sunny weather under a ridge of high pressure, and the unsettled type of regime, when low pressure tends to bring in varying amounts of cloud, showers and thundershowers or even prolonged periods of rain, along with cooler temperatures.

The easiest forecast is persistence, since weather often gets “stuck” in a particular pattern, which then persists for some time, from a few days to a few weeks. The longer it has been dry, the more likely it is that the next day will be dry. The same applies in wet patterns; the longer it’s been cool wet and unsettled, the more likely tomorrow is going to be more of the same. It seldom stays wet all the time, so the cool wet regime may have some breaks.

I’ll deal with the fair weather situation first. Sunny and warm summer weather is typically associated with an upper ridge of high pressure, when the pacific storm track is pushed far to the north. If you see a weather forecast of 6 dry days with steady or steadily increasing daytime highs, and no mention of showers, you can have quite good confidence in the first 3 days.

Probably even 4 or 5 in the latter part of the summer. This forecast indicates a building upper ridge of high pressure, meaning the atmosphere will be warming at high elevations, suppressing shower activity. And this type of pattern once established, tends to remain for a while.

The “unsettled” kind of pattern is much more problematic, since low pressure systems, commonly referred to as “disturbances”, come in many shapes, sizes and flavours. You could see just a chance of showers, torrential downpours with thunder, or prolonged periods of rain depending on how intense the system is and where the track is in relation to your location. So a forecast in an “unsettled” situation is less reliable than in the “good” weather pattern, especially beyond day one or two. In the “high pressure” scenario, Wednesday’s forecast for Saturday of hot and dry, is

probably about 90 percent chance of being correct, especially if the warm dry conditions are forecast to continue beyond Saturday. Conversely if we have an unsettled regime, and the forecast calls for 60 percent chance for showers Thursday and Friday, with periods of rain on Saturday, I wouldn’t be so quick to write off Saturday. The computer models might not have such a good handle on the track and intensity of the low pressure system that far in advance. Exactly where it ends up going can make a lot of difference. A track 50 km farther south could leave us rain free in some cases. Saturday may end up just having a good chance of showers, and be quite a useable day. I wouldn’t be inclined to cancel several days ahead. Perhaps with 36 or 24 hours notice, and successive forecasts confirming the previous estimates, I might be more inclined to call it off. The “hit and miss” nature of summer precipitation is another problem, since showery precipitation is spotty by nature, and one place may get soaked for an hour, while a location a few km up the road may escape with a dry day. You’ll just see the black cloud in the distance.

It’s also important to mention, in our context, that EC’s forecasts are essentially geared to populated centres in the region. If Castlegar’s forecast (West Kootenay region) calls for a 40 percent chance of showers, and you’re headed for Kokanee Glacier or the Valhallas, you may well find that the probability of precipitation is considerably higher. I used to joke that it might not rain all day, just about 40 percent of the time! ... a little tongue in cheek. The higher probability would also apply if lightning is mentioned, so in any case it’s always good to keep an eye on the sky and watch out for those growing towering cumulus clouds, with the big cauliflower tops and dark bases. If the day looks thundery, perhaps a lower elevation destination might be a prudent choice, but as mentioned, thunder is difficult to predict several days in advance.

If the forecast is worded more strongly, in the case where warnings are issued, it would mean that there is high forecaster confidence in inclement weather. A “severe thunderstorm watch” means that the atmosphere is expected to be “primed” for the development of severe thunderstorms. They aren’t there yet, but likely at least some kind of thunderstorms will be soon. You might not want to summit on that day, or at least keep a very careful eye out.

A heavy rainfall warning is obviously another red flag. Usually this means a long duration rain event associated with a “cold low”, and if a couple of days of soggy weather are indicated by one of these, you might want to reconsider that backpack trip. Another thing to notice: when warnings are issued, they will be accompanied by some explanation and discussion about the event, which may give additional useful info, such as dropping freezing levels and possibility of heavy snow at high elevations.

To summarize, you might want to take a forecast for day 3 and beyond with a grain or two of salt, especially in an “unsettled”, i.e. cool and wet, pattern. However if the crying wolf persists after several forecasts you might want to take some heed. Forecasts in a dry pattern for the first couple of days are probably pretty reliable. The very best thing you can do is become more knowledgeable yourself. USA Today has some great accessible reference material on its site. Some here: <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/weather/wstorm0.htm>

A nice book for around here is the lavishly illustrated “Weather of British Columbia” by Robin Pigott and Bill Hume (Lone Pine Publications) which gives a general introduction to weather along with local patterns and issues.

For the outdoor enthusiast, there are many useful resources on the web, which could possibly be a subject for another article.

## Central California Coast Winter Hiking – Feb 10-21, 2013

Is hiking coastal California in the winter possible and more importantly, enjoyable? At the conclusion of our January hiking trip to the USA southwest desert we decided to find out first hand. From Sedona Arizona we drove west to Ventura California and then northward on California Coastal Highway #1. As we approached the coast, slightly north of Los Angeles, we were not surprisingly a bit overwhelmed with all the suburbia. But after all, the past few weeks had had us planted happily and warmly amongst the desert(ed) landscapes of Arizona. Fortunately, and by total fluke, our first campsite in the relatively secluded mountain landscape of Lake Piru helped alleviate this mood. Grapefruit, lemon and orange trees loaded with their ripe fruits had us thinking things just might turn out, and it did!

We found the central California coast, The Big Sur (pais grande del sur translated to the Big South Country) very different than what we had expected. Towns were surprisingly few and far between, and the twisting precipitous 200 km long “Big Sur” highway was non-stop beautiful rugged oceanfront scenery. Ancient Redwoods were very much a part of this landscape. And cows, yes cows, were everywhere to be seen on the seaside mountain grasslands. Somewhat pre-Alkish to say the least!

One of our original goals was to first handily inquire, and possibly visit the Channel Islands National Park off the coast of Ventura. Time or lack thereof, plus the logistics of a visit, essentially did not allow us to visit the islands. On our return home we were pleasantly surprised to learn that one of our close Castlegar friends had visited the islands some 50 years ago! The five islands are from 10 to 60km offshore. The isolation of the islands has created an environment somewhat different than the mainland as some 145 species of the native plants and animals are unique. Areas of the islands are off-limits. Few people actually see this park because it is only accessible by park concessionaire boats and planes or private boat. The park is most easily accessible at Anacapa Island which has a Ranger Station, a campground and several easy trails across the island. Numerous hiking opportunities exist on several of the other islands. Some visitors tour the archipelago with kayaks and canoes.

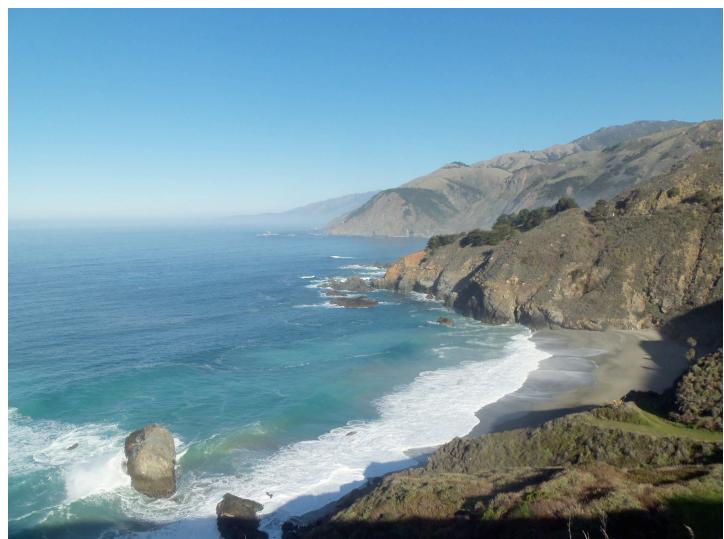




**Valencia Peak Trail**, Montana de Oro State Park, Los Osos, Hikeable year round, 6.6 km return, 1250ft elevation gain, easy 2hrs. The Valencia Peak Trail was our first hike on the coast. Valencia Peak is located in the heart of Montana de Oro State Park, located just south of Morro Bay and northwest of San Luis Obispo. This 1350 foot peak was just off the shore and had great views of the Central Coast and backcountry. It also gave us a good up-close experience of the coastal grass/sage scrub habitat. Grasses characteristically dominate the southern slopes and the scrub is mostly on the northern sides. Lupines, poppies, and Indian paintbrush were also along the trail. Poison oak was frequent and there were woodticks!

Montana De Oro State Park stretches for 9 miles along the coast and offers several other trails and a nice campground. The Valencia Peak trailhead is well marked. From Highway 1 in Morro Bay take the S. Bay Boulevard Exit. Turn south towards the ocean and follow the signs for Montana De Oro State Park. Stay on S. Bay Blvd for 4 miles. Turn right onto Los Osos

Valley Road (which becomes Pecho Valley Road after 1.5 miles) and follow it for 5.3 miles to the turnout for the Valencia Peak Trail. It is the first stop on the left after the campground.



**Cone Peak**, Ventana Wilderness, 1571m, 26km, about 800m elevation gain. We immediately noticed it's dramatically sculpted slopes upon rounding one of the highway's corners. It loomed high over that night's campsite drawing us like a magnet. Being able to secure a campsite at the spectacularly located Kirk Creek cliffside campsite located right across the highway from the Cone Peak access road confirmed we would be a way up there, one way or another!

Cone Peak is the highest coastal mountain in the contiguous U.S. It is located south of San Francisco between Monterey and San Luis Obispo. It is the second highest mountain of the Santa Lucia Range of the Pacific Coast Ranges. Cone Peak's rock, characteristic of the Santa Lucias - as well as the Sierra Nevada Mountains and of the Peninsular Ranges of Baja California - was broken off the North

American Plate and transported north by the action of the San Andreas Fault.



The mountain itself was characterized on its ocean facing slope by very steep windswept grassy ridges dissected by deep redwood canyons flowing from summit to the shore. The backcountry we experienced on this hike was numerous very steep mountains covered with heavy brush and trees including pine, eucalyptus and California Oak. From the Cone Peak summit we could see east across the entirety of the range to the rolling hills and the occasional farm of the interior. The Sierra Nevadas were far off but discernible on the eastern horizon. En route we chanced upon a bobcat close by.

Cone Peak has an unmanned fire lookout on top but is apparently not frequently climbed because of the 9km walk along a closed FSR to its trailhead and then another 4km of hiking. The actual trail head off the FSR is well marked. Trailhead elevation is 3800 feet. A mountain bike would be excellent on this FSR as the grade is very easy.

Directions from north to the FSR route: drive California Highway 1 southward from Monterey/ Carmel for about 100 kms. Soon after Limekiln State Park and at the Kirk Creek oceanfront campground there is a paved road on the left that goes all the way up the winding, car worthy, Nacimiento-Fergusson Road. This road has spectacular ocean views for all of its 11 kms to the saddle (where it crosses the dirt Coast Ridge Road). The trailhead parking area is on the left at the saddle and at the gate is the Cone Peak trail sign.

Mt Carmel, near funky Carmel, was also recommended in the area. It had a trailhead campsite too.

#### **Mt Tamalpais, 2571ft, Mt Tamalpais State Park.**

Mt Tamalpais is located in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area immediately north of the Golden Gate Bridge, and yes, we drove to the top. This 6300 acre state park, a park within the much larger Golden Gate National Recreation Area, has spectacular views via a ½ km loop around the 2571ft summit lookout tower. San Francisco and its bay area are in easy view. The routes up to the summit -including the scenic paved road- traverse wetlands, chaparral and manzanita covered slopes, grasslands, coniferous and oak woodlands. The Muir Woods National Monument is in one of the valleys on the mountain's western slope. Several campgrounds exist in the park including the Rocky Point/Steep Ravine Environmental campground/ cabins on the seashore, reservations recommended. We easily found a campsite. If you are in San Francisco, it's definitely worth the visit.

Mt Tamalpais is home to the scenic 12 km, approximate 671 m elevation gain/loss, Dipsea Race. This cross country race was started in 1904 and is one of the oldest foot races of any kind in the United States. The Dipsea Race allows for competitors to choose from any of several alternate routes on diverging and converging trails. Furthermore the Dipsea has a handicapping system producing younger or older winners. The current defending champion is a 72 years young. It is a popular race and thousands of people apply for the 1500 positions every June.

We were surprised to learn that Mount Tamalpais is also a birthplace of mountain biking. In the mid-to-late 1970s bikers modified heavy cruiser bicycles, old 1930s and '40s Schwinn bicycles, with better brakes and fat tires, for freewheeling down the mountains. These were called "Repack Races" and triggered the first innovations in mountain bike technology as well

as the initial interest of the public. At the time, the bicycle industry was not impressed with the mountain bike, which many regarded as a short-term fad.



**San Francisco**, as much as we could see, in one day! Suffice to note that we actually found that the very densely populated San Francisco has a lot to offer. Victorian and Edwardian architecture added to the charm. And, like Vancouver, but unlike most North American cities, the people actually live “downtown”. The result is a mix of businesses and venues that seem to work for both the needs of local residents and the city’s numerous tourists. There were numerous “trinket” shops and restaurants to be had. Few Starbucks, McDonalds, box stores and children were to be seen. Lombard Street, Nob Hill, Chinatown, Cow Hollow, the modern business centre of the city, the Embarcadero and the Barbary Coast waterfront were easy to navigate through even without using the famous cable cars. Alcatraz was very much a sight to see so close from Fisherman’s Wharf. The San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park consisting

of a small fleet of historic ships including an 1886 built square rigged sailing ship added to our day.

We had a great long walk on that sunny warm day but the concrete “Streets of San Francisco” definitely left their “impression” on our legs and feet. Probably the most demanding hike of the trip! We found the day strangely crowded with lots of couples until we realized that it was the Valentine’s Day thing and a school day!

We would have liked to hike the area’s “classic” Mt Diablo, but no time. Another nearby apparently great hike would have been the 14km High Peaks Loop in the Pinnacles National Monument.

**Tomales Point Trail, Point Reyes National Seashore.** Point Reyes National Seashore, 15km return, Total elevation change on the up and down trail is about 1300 feet. Hike-able year round.

It had “National Seashore” designation for a good reason. “Squeezed on three sides by water, the only sounds were wind, thunderous surf, and bird cries. Steep sea cliffs added to the experience. On this wind swept peninsula the vegetation huddles close to the ground.” That’s what the parks brochure said. The open, ridge-like Tomales Point Trail and its access road provided a unique experience of land and sea on the California Coast. Numerous, actually hundreds of Tule Elk were grazing in the park’s characteristic sparse mix of coyote brush, wild radish, bush lupine and grasses. We did see a coyote a few hundred feet away from one of the elk herd. Small white orchids called Hooded Lady’s Tresses could be seen about. We even saw a large cauliflower. We started the hike in the early morning with only 3 other cars already in the parking lot. We couldn’t believe the solitude especially since these hikers were only going part way. A great place for lunch was at the peninsula’s northernmost tip, Tomales Bluff. We had the point all to ourselves. Needless to say that on this U.S holiday weekend there were probably 100 cars in the parking lot when we returned. Many of them did the entire distance!

Point Reyes National seashore, encompassing the Point Reyes Peninsula, is located 40 km north of San Francisco. Tomales Bay, a 25 km long and 1.5km wide inlet which separates the northern portion of the peninsula from the mainland is formed along a submerged portion of the San Andreas Fault. The entire peninsula is moving northwestward at the rate of about 2 inches a year!

The trailhead for the hike is located on the historic 1850's Pierce Point Ranch at the end of the peninsula's northernmost Pierce Point Road.



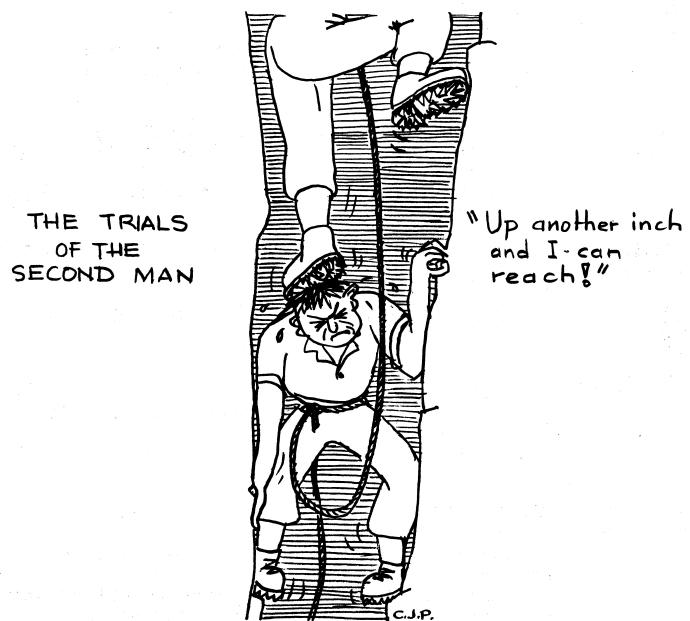
The peninsula has a long Native American history as well as Francis Drake's probable landing nearby. Several very large, award winning, dairy ranches that started in the mid-1800s operate in a cooperative management relationship on land leased from Point Reyes National Seashore. Be sure to visit the uniquely perched Point Reyes Lighthouse nearby which unfortunately had masses of long-weekend crowds overwhelming us. Tour buses at 15 minute intervals, were actually shuttling visitors! Sea lions are common on the peninsula's southern shores.

Summary, Our final day of the Coastal Trip was spent enjoying a long beach walk in Lincoln City on the southern Oregon post. We returned via the always intriguing Columbia Gorge amidst the legacy of Lewis and Clark, and the Oregon Trail.

Our quick trip home along the central and northern California coast took 10 days. We were rushed, leaving

behind numerous opportunities for beach walks and forays into the backcountry. The San Luis Obispo area in particular seemed to have a lot of niceties to explore. The visitor centres – including city, BLM (Bureau of Land Management which is a federal version of our Ministry of Lands, Parks etc.) and the National Parks – very often had excellent books by local authors describing these jaunts. About one third of the material that we find on the internet "works out" for our particular touristic and hiking "peculiarities." The ripe citrus fruits in the southern area were great. The camping in California was expensive at usually \$30+ a night for tent sites and no showers. This was apparently due to the fact that they have serious state money issues. We always found a campsite but they can fill up on weekends. Private campgrounds catering to both humungous RVs and pup tents were fairly good. And finally/unfortunately, we were surprised to be told that the waters of the ocean here are fairly cold for swimming, even in the summer. Surfers however seemed to be having a good time. Next trip, hopefully the Sierra Nevada... in the fall!

*Enjoy, Eliane & Steven Miro*



*Kootenay Karabiner  
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