



# The Kootenay Mountaineer

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

Winter Solstice 2017

## Message from the President

## Message from the Editor

Just a bit of nagging, repeating what is said down at the bottom right of the page.

I crop and adjust all images that are submitted along with stories. If you have a 10 megabyte pixel camera, that size might be a bit over the top. But 2 to 4 mb per image give me more room to play with compared to 200 kb. Please check that your photos are full camera size when attaching them to email and are not being reduced by software that feels a need to be frugal about bandwidth and email storage.

Thanks

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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@kootenaymountaineeringclub.ca](mailto:newsletter@kootenaymountaineeringclub.ca). Attach your full resolution photos to the email. Lots of photos, please.

The newsletter is published four times a year at the times of the solar calendar.

## Trip Reports

### Mount Crawford and Plaid Lake

September 24

Abby Wilson

This was my first time leading a KMC hike, and I wisely(?) selected a trip that involved the Kootenay Lake Ferry with multiple hiking options. The wait list was growing when P'Nina made an offer: take her on the hike and she would co-lead! This seemed like a great strategy to manage the growing complexity and blame any mishaps on someone else. I accepted.

So a group of twenty hikers boarded that 8:10am ferry and made the trek up to the Plaid Lake Trailhead. We slowly made our way up the remaining access road, up the switchbacking trail, and along the ridge to the saddle beneath Mt. Crawford. We were too early for golden larches - they were just starting to shift colours - but we were just on time for huckleberries! It was a cool, but sunny day, and just a few small patches of snow were tucked in the shade.

At the saddle, we split our group into 3 and went for different options:

- The A Team went straight for Mount Crawford's summit. It was a 200m elevation gain, but we all agreed it looked harder than it was. We had great views at the top!
- The B Team headed down to Plaid Lake. They reported back that the biggest and best huckleberries were found along the lower trail.
- The C Team, lead by P'nina, went to investigate a ridge in the distance that was topped with some strange monument/radio repeater/weather station/rocket. They never figured out quite what it was, but reported excellent views from the ridge.



After summing, some of the A and C Team headed down towards Plaid Lake. Kathryn, half running, was the only one who made it to both the summit and the lake! The rest of us wandered the trail, picked berries, or settled down for a nap in the meadows.

Miraculously, we all reconvened on the saddle at the designated time. Two black bears were spotted, but no hikers went missing!



We were: Abby Wilson, Andrew Woodward, Mary Prothro, Brenda Haley, Kathryn Kimberly, Sess Sakamoto, Nanci Suubau, Dave Yole, Peter Martyn, P'Nina Shames, Olivia Stille, Andre Schwartz, Robin Sheppard, Jan Osborne, Ron Osborne, Shelley Richards, Goody Niosi, Leah Methuen, Geoff Methuen, Jordan Methuen

### Lost Mountain Snowshoe

November 16

Goody Niosi

I had no choice: I had to sign up for Chris Cowan's snowshoe trip up Lost Mountain November 16. You see, the trail has been Chris' pet project for some time and I hadn't been up since the trail was put in.

Oh yes – I had been up Lost a couple of times previously – the most recent in early summer, a trip Chris had warned was going to involve a wee bit of flagging and maybe a tiny bit of brushing out.

Ha!

I'm not sure, but I do believe that he actually called it a "trail" at the time. And if you count bushwhacking through scratchy bushes and bracken, and climbing over masses of deadfall a trail – well, it was a trail.



But since then he'd mentioned quite a few times what a lovely job the trail-builder had done. Time to find out.



The weather cooperated (it's awfully useful to hike with a weatherman) and it was warm – so warm we peeled off layers pretty quickly into the hike. The snow was wet and fairly sparse near the bottom but deepened quickly, so much that breaking trail – and we did have to break the entire way – was quite a slow slog.

But kudos to Chris and his dedication to this route. It may have been steep in a few spots but generally it was countered in good switchbacks and led up a solid route to the lookout, not that there was much to look out on this rather typical cloudy, grey November day.



We could have admired the bench but there was enough snow up there that we had to take Chris' word for it that there was indeed a bench – a nice place to sit, admire the view and maybe indulge in a snack.

As it was, we kept going, Chris and Doug Clark doing major portions of the tougher trail breaking through the really deep stuff.

At about noon, three hours into the trip and 750 elevation gain, we decided to do lunch and turn back. In lighter snow or with a previously broken trail, I suspect we would have made it to the top in under an hour. But did I mention the snow was wet and heavy?

We zoomed down pretty quickly with a minimum number of face plants and bum slides, making the entire return trip in just under five hours.

Thanks to Chris for being so persistent with this trail. We now have another good winter snowshoe venue, easily accessible off a paved road. I suspect it's going to be perfect later in the season with longer days and deeper snow. I also suspect, we'll be back to see if that's true.



*Participants: Doug Clark, Chris Cowan, Sandra Fuller, Glen Wallace, Goody Niosi*

### **Mt Crowe and View Point Cabin**

*November 25*

*Bob McQueen*

Our trip to the popular Mt. Crowe area was shaping up to be an early, light powder trip, to visit several cabins, check out new trails, and have lunch at View Point Cabin.

Just before our hike day, we were visited with warm weather. A pineapple express showed up on Sunday November 26, warm, windy with softening snow. Ten of us set out on light touring gear to our first cabin, Chimo. This had been built by the local Trail based military team and had more work done this Fall. The stairs to the front door are now attached, the cabin now insulated, and plywood walls installed. More is still to be done to finish, but it's in good shape. It has one of the best views, especially of Mt. Lepsoe and Old Glory. We also took a short new trail to get to this cabin, which ends beside the outhouse. The trail hasn't been named yet, but we were speculating if the outhouse may inspire the new name??



*The still under construction Chimo Cabin. Ross sorting gear. (3 Photos Doug Clark)*



*Suited up for the rain, spirits weren't dampened! Sorry Chris, caught you with your pants down. (Photo Bob McQueen)*

Hunkering down in Mosquito Cabin, with driving rain and wind outside, we had a nice social place to spend an hour. Fire on, stories told, a few laughs, foil sandwiches heated and eaten. All was good.

When we left, the rain had pretty well stopped for our trip back past Red Dog, and near the end of our trip, past the old Cookie Jar. The Jar needs a good cleanup before it can be visited inside. The rodents have left their litter on the floor, so we didn't go in. We arrived back at the parking lot, not very wet, and having had a good ski overall. The snow was wet, so our glide a little slow for much of our return trip.



*Snack break Chimo.*

As we left for our intended lunch spot at View Pt. Cabin, the rain and wind came up. Out came our extra layers of clothing. So although we were warm, we decided on a plan "B". Head past Red Dog Cabin, which isn't far away, and if not too wet, continue to Mosquito Cabin for an early lunch. Even with the wind and rain, there were a number of groups, families, dogs out on the trails that we passed. The new trails and cabins are attracting a lot more people this year. Red Dog had people in it, so we kept going to Mosquito Cabin, our new lunch cabin.

*One of the many new trail signs put up during the summer. These are a great addition by*

*FORRS (Friends of the Rossland Ranges Society) who look after the [Rossland Range Recreation Site](#)*

*Our group: Gail Curry, Doug Clark, Ken Holmes, Ross Bates, Terry Simpson, Cindy Kozak-Campbell, Jane Power, Birgit Vierheilig-Chart, Chris Cowan and Bob McQueen (coordinator).*



## **Mt. Beattie Snowshoe**

*December 1*

*Sandra Fuller*

We rendezvoused at the hitching post at 8:30am and loaded our gear and ourselves into 4 vehicles and headed to our starting point 3/4 of the way up the Whitewater road. We geared up and just after 9:00am the sixteen of us headed up Mt. Beattie.

For many it was their first day on snowshoes for this winter season and for some the first time ever. It was nice to catch up with old friends I hadn't seen for a while and to get acquainted with new members.

Johannes Au, working and travelling in Canada for a year from Germany joined us as a guest.

Beattie offers some great vistas, but with the low cloud we weren't afforded a view. As per usual it was a bit breezy at the top so we tucked in the trees just off the summit for lunch. Temperatures didn't allow for a long break, after a quick bite and a hot cup of tea we headed down arriving back at our cars a little after 2:00pm.

Thanks to all who joined the trip, you made it a very enjoyable day.

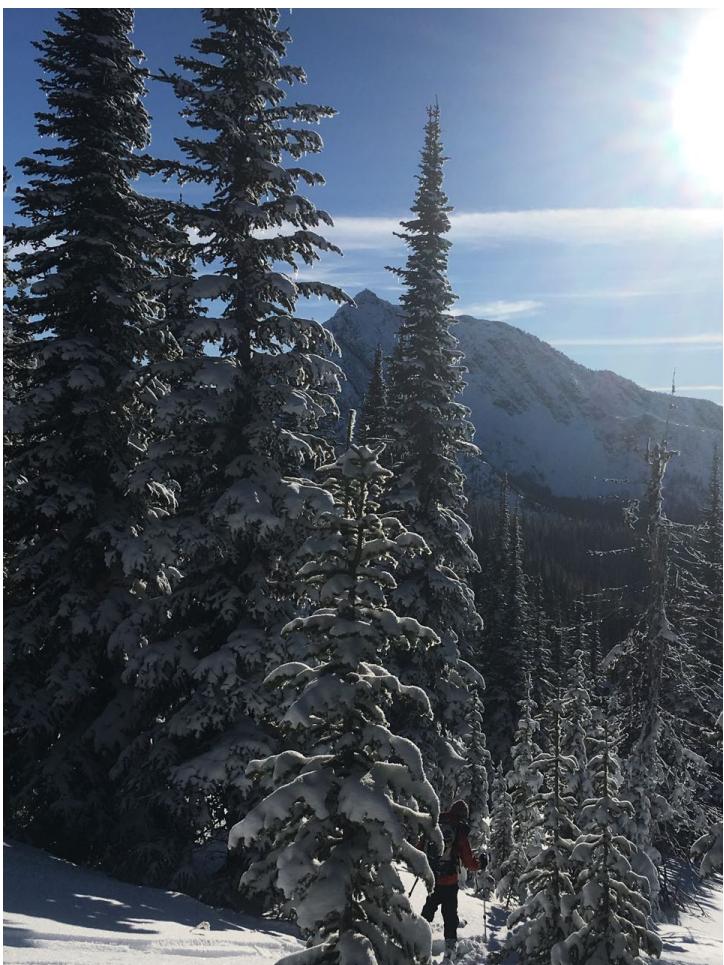


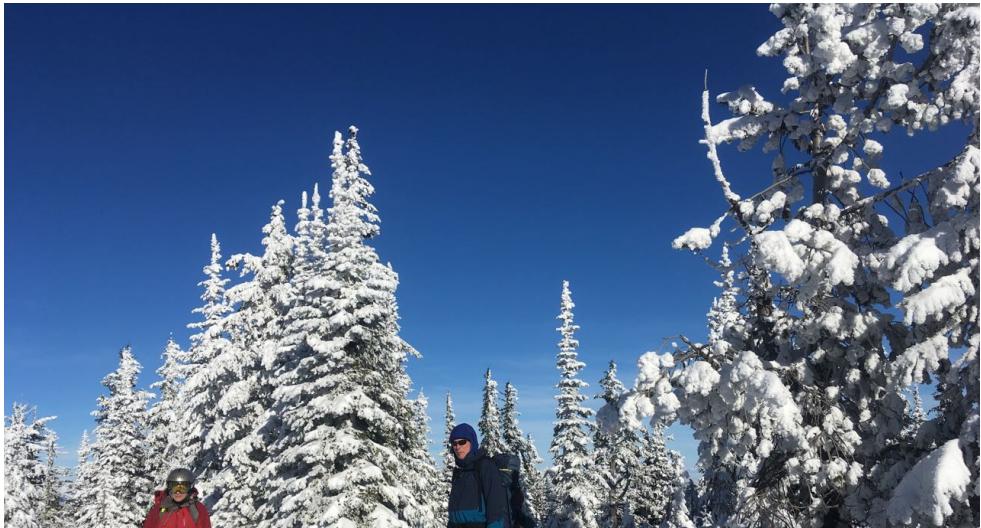
*We were Sandra Fuller (trip leader), Andrea Vowell, Max Karpinski, P'nina Shames, Gail Curry, Linda Monea, Cath-Ann Glockman, Kelly Toole, Cameron Carter, Marlyn Miller, Bruce Reader, David Cunningham, Sandra England, Kurt and Trudy Backenhol, Johannes Au*

## **Mt. Lepsoe Ski**

*December 6*

*Photos by Bob McQueen*







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## Mount Robson

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*By Goody Niosi*

If an alien were to land in the back yard tomorrow (in this neck of the woods – I expect it's a likely occurrence) and asked me to recommend just one hike – just one in all of North America – I would say, “Go to Mount Robson and hike to Snowbird Pass.”

And I’m saying this with more than 40 years of hiking under my belt.

Simon and I headed up to Berg Lake the morning of July 24, having made reservations for two nights months before – in fact, the very hour the reservations system opened. This is important!

The day was a bit misty. There may even have been a slight drizzle. But we heaved on our big packs and headed up – 22 kilometres through a beautiful rainforest valley (Mount Robson, at almost 4,000 metres and 1,000 metres taller than its neighbours makes its own weather) and up past a series of spectacular waterfalls. After the glorious Emperor Falls we levelled out, stopped to talk to a friendly marmot, and arrived at Berg Lake. We countered around the lake, taking in the massive bulk of Mount Robson. The clouds had cleared and we were in a perfect position to be in awe of her majesty with her glaciers spilling ice into the aquamarine waters.





We set up camp, ate dinner in the enclosed (warm) camp cookhouse, and went to bed early. The next morning dawned with a brilliant blue sky – not a cloud in sight. We were off early, hiking across the flats and passing by a park sign telling us that here – right in this alluvial flat – was where the glacier used to reach – and that it was retreating at the alarming rate of more than four feet per year.

We hiked on, rising up to the scree that once marked the boundary of the glacier's tongue. Up and up and around to the rear of Robson to marvel at the largest of her glaciers yet. Every step was a moment of “wow!”

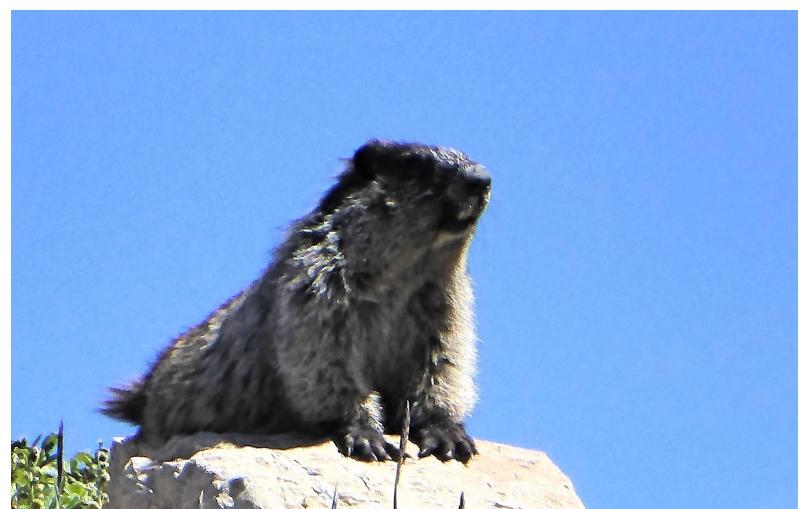


After what was likely about three hours (we lost track of time in this amazing world) we topped a waterfall, rounded a corner and were gobsmacked by the sight of an alpine meadow that could have been the backdrop for the Sound of Music – only much more beautiful. Who would have thought we'd come upon this after spending a morning hiking through scree above a glacier?



I was reduced to babbling gibberish. There were marmots sunning on rocks, a crystal stream running through the verdant grasses and an entire new range of snow-capped peaks guarding the scree.

Wow after wow.





And there, in front of us, the high wall of Snowbird Pass. We hiked through the flower-filled meadow and then up through more rock and scree, at last topping out at the pass. And there in front of us: the Coleman Icefield, stretching as far as we could see. And beyond the Icefield – the peaks of the Rocky Mountains stretching toward Jasper. Wow!



How many wows could we possibly pack into one day?

I've had lunch in some amazing places – this spot was epic.

But the day wasn't quite done yet! The top of the hike is always only halfway. On this hike, coming back was stunning – with Mount Robson in our sights the entire way.





We hiked back down to the trailhead the next morning under sunny skies with views all the way. However, nothing, but nothing, compared to Snowbird Pass. If you haven't been – go. We'll be back and next time we'll book for at least four nights.

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### The Skyline Trail

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*By Goody Niosi*

Good friends had assured us that the best time to hike the Skyline Trail in Jasper was at the end of August, otherwise known as “the bugs will no longer eat you alive” season.

We duly complied and dropped our car off at the end of the trail the morning of August 30 and caught the shuttle to the trailhead along with about a dozen other excited hikers.

Oh boy! I'd been wanting to do this hike for years!

The skies were a bit smoky but then there was really no escaping the smoke this summer. Still, the weather was fine and we were prepared. We were on the trail at about 10.30 a.m. and it was a fine start through a sun-dappled forest with nice, easy switchbacks until we rose into the alpine. Almost everything about this trail surprised us. Who knew that the skyline was a mass of rolling meadows stretching so far in all directions that we could easily have believed we were walking through Alberta grasslands with foothills on the horizon?



It was only mid-afternoon when we arrived at our first campground: Snowbowl. Local water sources had dried up and we walked a bit farther to replenish our bottles – the spot we found was in one of those immense alpine meadows, filled with the last of the summer wildflowers. Simon dutifully pumped water. I lay down in the sun and closed my eyes. Bliss!



We set off again early the next morning, full of trepidation. We'd heard dire warnings about "The Notch." This was, apparently, a long steep climb through scree and possibly snow to the high point of the Skyline. It was, we heard, arduous and tricky – not for the faint of heart.

After passing over Little Shovel and Big Shovel passes (aptly named), we had The Notch in our sights. Yup – it looked pretty darn steep. And yes, that trail looked a tad sketchy. But heck – everyone else did it, right?

So we plodded on. And before we knew it, we topped out! Well heck – that was no big deal! Try getting to the top of Mount Brennan – now that's a biggish deal!



At the top we began our hike across the quintessential Skyline: a moonscape of rock and scree with views in all directions (stopped only by smoky skies) and wind that howls relentlessly up and down the valleys on either side. How strong was the wind? Well, I'm a bit of a lightweight and Simon had to hang onto my pack a few times to make sure I wasn't about to be blown off my feet.



But it was so very beautiful up there – an otherworldly sort of beauty that couldn't be compared to anything we'd ever seen.

Later in the afternoon, we descended down and down until we were in a green valley, heading to Tekarra campground under the towering bulk of Mount Tekarra.

The next morning we headed out – a quick hike through meadows and then 8.5K down an old road. Beautiful trip – a four-booter all the way. And surprisingly do-able from the Kootenays. We were back home sleeping in our own beds that same night.