



Mission Statement

“We believe that the 88,000 acre Scotchman Peaks roadless area, spanning the Idaho/Montana border, deserves **permanent protection** as wilderness. Faced with growth and change, we want to make sure this special place stays the same.”



Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness, Inc. (FSPW) is a non-profit organization. The proceeds from all events and sales benefit our wilderness preservation efforts. Donations are tax deductible.

If you are receiving this newsletter by mail and have an email address please help us save postage by sending us your email address.

Editor: Ann Wimberley
Layout and design: Sandy Compton

Friends first contribution to the Festival of Trees in Libby goes to a good cause

Molly Kieran photo



The Festival of Trees in Libby is the beginning of the largest fundraiser put on for and by St. John's Lutheran Hospital. Twenty-five Christmas Trees were decorated by local businesses, including FSPW Lincoln County Coordinator, Molly Kieran, with the help of Kathy Sullivan and Bill Martin.

Local school children arrived at 3:00 p.m. on Friday afternoon to view the beautiful trees, do Christmas crafts and decorate cookies. Their visits with Santa were photographed by Kathy Sullivan, who has been volunteering her time for the photos for the past three years.

After Santa left, the doors were opened to the public for tree viewing at 5:00 p.m. The big party, referred to as the “Gala Event,” took place the following night and included both a silent and live auction. Once again the trees were viewed by the hospital benefactors, supporters and guests.

This was FSPW's first time at the event and will without doubt not be the last. Some of the trees were auctioned off with expensive gifts. Our tree was donated to a lovely family in need, consisting of a single mom who has recently recovered from a bout with cancer and her three children.

It was fun doing this and a real pleasure to see the joy in the children's faces when they were told that the tree and all the trimmings along with the stuffed animals under the tree were theirs.

— Molly Kieran
Lincoln County Coordinator



Over the Top Volunteers

Brian Baxter: Mr. Mustelid

By Sandy Compton

Look at Brian Baxter and try to guess where he was born. He's chased wolverines and the rest of the mustelid family all over the northern Rockies, including British Columbia, getting intimately acquainted with weasels, marten, fishers and badgers. In fact, he has held a live wolverine in his arms. He's tracked lynx in the Yaak in the deep of winter. He has a degree in forestry and another in wildlife. He is a winter fixture in the Glacier Institute education series, where he teaches a class in tracking, similar to the one he will teach for Friends of Scotchman Peaks in late winter this year.



FSPW volunteer Brian Baxter holds a fisher live-trapped for research.

Photo courtesy Brian Baxter

though he would be the last to say it, and he was born in Manhattan. Not Montana, or even Kansas, but Manhattan, New York. He graduated from high school in Pearl River on the west bank of the Hudson, 12 miles upstream of "the city," as he calls it.

After attending forestry school in Pennsylvania and wildlife school in Western North Carolina, he went a'touring, including some time in Ireland, the Caribbean, and the Great American West. A friend, who had a brother in Missoula, advised him, "Take your time going through Montana."

And so, he did. "I went fishing in the Flathead," he says, "some of the greatest fishing I've ever had. After that, I went home. Sold my car. Bought an old beat-up 1967 pickup, and with that and \$100 in my pocket, I moved West."

His first stop was in Moscow, Idaho, doing land surveying, where his foreman, Mike Weldon, was always talking about Libby, Montana. As soon as he could, he applied for a job with Kootenai National Forest and went to work on a timber stand inventory. That was about 28 years ago, and he has since lived in and around Noxon, Trout Creek and up the Yaak River before settling in Libby.

Brian's love affair with following critters through the woods got started in 1993-94, when he fell into mid-sized carnivore

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Tales of the Scotchmans

The Day My Camera Drowned

By Jim Mellen

Sandii screamed as I lost my footing and the powerful current quickly swept me downstream. I somehow regained my footing after 10 feet but not before my camera got a good dunking. We were on a backpacking trip to Little Spar Lake in early June of 2003. The day was hot and our late start meant that by the time we got to the Spar Creek crossing, the flow was at full force. We removed our shoes and tossed



Coya the husky enjoys Spar Creek on a day other than the one during which the camera drowned.

Photo by Jim Mellen's new camera

them to the opposite bank, and since I did not want our dogs to be hindered by their packs, I put them around my neck. I am a super tenderfoot; the water was swift, deep and cold. The slick rocks made it especially challenging. Our faithful dogs, still on the opposite bank, were not convinced that crossing the creek was a good idea. Our Husky made an attempt and was swept over a small waterfall. We had to hike upstream a good ways before they were able to cross.

Closer to Little Spar Lake, we encountered the results of a massive avalanche. It looked like 100 acres of really bad logging and crossing it was super challenging. The logs were still imbedded in snow, but very unstable when disturbed. I have always felt safe in the protection of 100-year-old trees when avalanche danger was high, but this event proves that there are no absolutes. Anyone who has done this hike in recent years has undoubtedly noticed the remnants of the avalanche, but I had no camera to record this event!

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Message From the Chair

Building a Legacy

January 2011 – another year begins and we celebrate this month the Friends of Scotchman Peaks sixth anniversary. With some remarkable accomplishments, we have a lot to celebrate! At over 3,200 supporters and growing each month, the sense that our communities are in this together is as strong as ever! Yet there is uneasiness, a sense of incompleteness; and there will be for as long as the Scotchmans remain proposed, and not designated, Wilderness. Winter is always a good time to consider the “long view” and look ahead. New Year’s is a good time to reflect and refine what we are doing. Let’s take a lesson from other Wilderness supporters and remember it takes time to build a legacy, especially one that will last. But that time and effort is worth it!

Wilderness bills for Idaho and Montana had key senate hearings in this last session of congress. All four of Idaho’s congressmen, at some point, supported the Boulder White Clouds bill. Both Montana Senators supported the Forest Jobs and Recreation Act which would designate over 600,000 acres of Wilderness, creating Montana’s first new wilderness since 1983. A modified version with language approved by the senate’s committee staff and the forest service came close to passing, but at the end of the session both these wilderness bills languish without passage. Their progress, though, shows strong support for Wilderness values in our states and in Congress.

It takes time and energy, personal effort and commitment from many people to build a legacy – but, wilderness is a legacy worth investing time and energy. Do not grow restless that we are 6 years into this project; be proud we are making progress, and help us continue onward.

We are building a legacy, one supporter at a time; one hike at a time, one presentation at a time. With each one our foundation becomes stronger, our literal support increases. While it sometimes seems like an endless process, we know that we will get there, even if we do not know when.

Now more than ever, we need your help. And your help can be as simple and pleasurable as showing up for one of our events! Or come on a hike. Better yet, lead a hike, volunteer for a trail project, or help us out with a presentation or information table. In 2011, we hope you will join us and resolve to help build the legacy that the Scotchman Peaks will become for our families and our future. Help leverage your own investment of time, energy and passion by encouraging your friends and neighbors to participate, also. If you do, then I am sure that one day, in far less than 3 decades, we will have a wilderness to call our own, or to at least to call the “Scotchmans”. Yes sir, right here in *our own* backyard. What better a legacy can our communities build for themselves?!

— Phil Hough

From the Top

The New Year is off to a busy start for FSPW. You can join us outside on our hikes and snowshoes or inside at films, photo exhibits or our Plein Air art exhibits in multiple locations. We also welcome our new Lincoln County Coordinator, Molly Kieran, aka Molly Montana, and this issue features a new geology columnist, Dr Mark McFaddan of North Idaho College.

With the rush of the holiday season behind us, it’s time to savor the quiet majesty of the wilderness in winter and then relax by the fire. Please send me reports of your favorite experiences in the Scotchman Peaks area as I am always looking for new “Tales.” Help us keep the Scotchman Peaks wild for future generations to enjoy.

Happy New Year!

Ann Wimberley

Along the Trail

November 2: Sandy Compton participated in a panel on global warming at a Faith and Environment meeting in Spokane.

November 6-8: Phil Hough traveled to Boise for the Idaho Trails Association meeting.

November 10: Sandy Compton made a presentation to the Heron Wednesday Women.

November 10: The Lincoln County FSPW Friends Appreciation event, which welcomed Molly Kieran as the new Lincoln County coordinator, was held in Libby at the Venture Inn.

November 13: A reception was held celebrating the Scotchman Peaks Plein Air art showing at Foster’s Crossing

November 29: The Annual Friends of Scotchman Peaks Pend Oreille Winery “Sip-n-Shop” event was held.

December 10: Winter Wildlands Film Festival, cosponsored by FSPW and Idaho Conservation League drew an appreciative crowd to the Panida Theater in Sandpoint. Longtime Friend of Scotchman Peaks Eric Ridgeway won the grand prize drawing for a Schweitzer Season Pass.

December 10: Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness participated in the Festival of Trees in Libby to benefit St. John’s Lutheran Hospital (see article on page 1).

December 11: FSPW and Idaho Conservation League co-sponsored a well-attended winter workshop at Sandpoint Community Hall featuring USFS avalanche expert Kevin Davis and Selkirk Outdoor Leadership and Education teachers Dennison Webb and Erik Yost.

December 11: A portion of the Scotchman Peaks Plein Air Paintout art was featured at Evans Brothers’ Coffee Neighborhood Open House in Sandpoint



Scotchman Past

Editor's note: This article, lightly edited, is from the archives of Ed Butler of Hope, Idaho. Ed says that the guide for this trip was Jim Campbell. The initial section of the article, which was deleted because of space limitations, described a breakfast cooked for the group by Mrs. Campbell in the Campbell home, which still stands in Hope. The author was well-read with references to the work of his contemporary, poet Robert W. Service, who wrote "The Cremation of Sam McGee;" and that of Izaak Walton (1593-1683) who wrote The Compleat Angler, one of the three most-published books in English literature. It is interesting that the wives accompanied their husband on the fishing and camping trip.

Fishing Trip Up Lightning Creek

North Idaho News

Tuesday, April 11, 1922

(by B. W. Pugh)

About the 15th of July, 1921, a party was arranged consisting of a local good friend, his wife, my wife and myself for a fishing and camping trip on Big Lightning Creek in Bonner County, Idaho. Taking the old Auxer trail, we wound upon our way through the forest, paralleling Strong Creek at frequent intervals.

The trail is splendid and its numerous switch-backs offer ever changing scenery. Beautiful Lake Pend d' Oreille can be seen from these advantageous places, white mists struggling up from the lake, orange sunbeams beating their way into the shadows, the whole a touch of untamed beauty which belongs to no man and no civilization. Frequent ice cold springs are encountered, garnished with ferns which are truly beautiful.

Now we are on the top, 6500 feet elevation. Continuing our trip northward on the open divide of shale and slide rock we came in full view of the Cabinet range, where we could look west into the Trestle Creek basin and down the rocky precipices many hundred feet below. The picturesque view lies to the east in the Cabinet range and compares favorably with the view seen from Swift Current Pass, the highest point in the Rockies, in Glacier National Park. The snow-capped contour of the range in the distance silhouetted against the blue sky is more gorgeous than I have space

to describe, Ibex, Billard Top and Scotchman Peaks looming high above the crest of the range. In the middle foreground are amazingly hued ravines leading the eye to the pearly thread-like Lightning Creek below, the immediate foreground studded with various colored wild flowers.

We unpacked the horses, ate lunch, rested for an hour in preparation for our descent to our final goal, Lightning Creek, 4000 feet below. Here the trail became almost obliterated, compelling us to stop at the Trestle Creek Lookout to inquire what course to pursue and our real trail grief began. No human being could ride a horse down such a trail and it would take trained activity to prevent being riddled by the horse. After much sliding and gliding and crossing several of the most beautiful and natural mountain streams God ever Created we at last sighted the much coveted stream, Big Lightning.

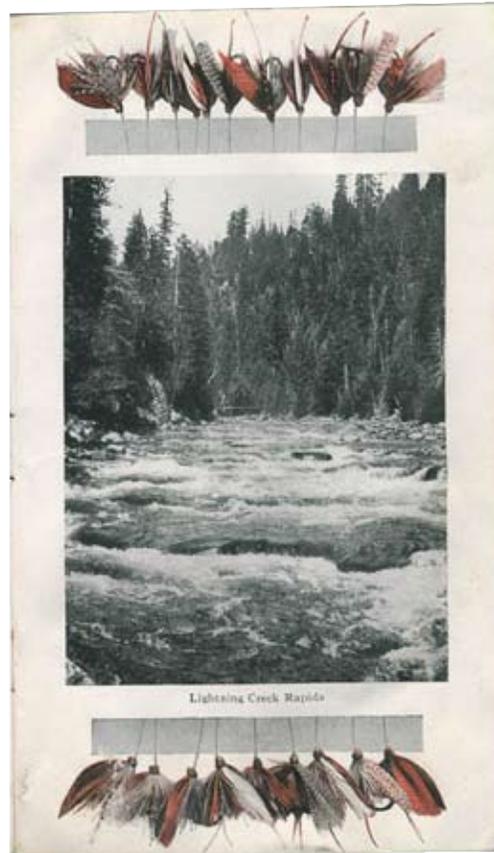
I assembled my rod, a flash of scarlet appeared on the surface and the fight was on. We landed a sufficient number of the speckled beauties for the evening feed. Going a little farther to the Rattle Creek Ranger Station, we made our permanent camp. The fish were prepared and we had a feed of our lives. Beds were made of boughs and everyone was ready to retire early.

Early the next morning a light shower prompted my friend to rise early and slip up the creek. He returned with 22 fine specimens of cut throats. We soon had a breakfast fit for a king. Our first day up the creek was more one of exploration than fishing yet, the further up the stream we went the more alluring it became and we could not resist casting a fly in the many likely places. The day developed into a surprisingly large catch. One day's fishing did not differ greatly from another, as we could catch all we needed at any time. Around the camp fire one evening, (for a camp without a fire is no camp at all), my friend recited poems from Robert W. Service, inspiring us to further reconnoiter the high country up the creek.

The next mornin' after sufficient reinforcements, consisting of sour dough hot cakes, bacon and coffee, we packed our lunch and started out for an all-day's hike, our sights

being set for Char Falls. Crossing Rattle Creek a short distance from camp we continued upward and soon crossed Lightning Creek, doing acrobatic stunts from boulder to boulder to keep

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Fishing and Hunting on the Headwaters of the Columbia in Northern Idaho by L.H. Whitcomb, published in 1915, may illustrate the lures used by B.W. Pugh and party in 1921.

Courtesy Bonner County Historical Museum



Scotchman Rocks

Reading the Rocks

Mark D. McFaddan, Ph.D.

Editor's note: Mark McFaddan teaches geology at North Idaho College in CdA and also at the Bonners Ferry campus in the fall and the Sandpoint campus in the spring. He works for the Idaho State Geological Survey on geologic mapping in the summer.

When we last saw our local bedrock outcrops, they were teeming with information about the geologic history of this part of the Pacific Northwest. Stories of vanished landscapes, climate change, mountain building and magma chambers were all visible in the pages of the rock record, waiting for those interested enough to learn to interpret the clues in the outcrops. Now that snow mantles the landscape and the library is temporarily closed, it is a good time to brush up on our rock reading skills in anticipation of the spring thaw.

Many readers are aware that the bulk of the Idaho Cabinet Range (including the Scotchman Peak area), most of the northern third of Idaho and most of western Montana are composed of metasedimentary rocks of the Belt-Purcell Supergroup. Informally known as the Belt rocks, they were named in the late 1800's for exposures in the Little Belt Mountains east of Helena, Montana. (Belt Butte, from which the mountains were named, wears a resistant dark rock layer around its middle resembling a belt). We now know that the Belt rocks range in age from approximately 1.5 to 1.4 billion years old, and are an incredible 10 to 12 miles in total thickness. Layer upon layer of sand, silt, clay and minor amounts of limestone were deposited in a huge, shallow inland lake basin as water levels fluctuated on a nearly flat landscape. Vast, featureless mudflats dried in the sun when water levels were low, and extensive layers of deeper water sediment blanketed the lake floor when water levels were higher.

The Earth's crust gradually subsided under the massive load of countless layers, where the heat and pressure at greater depth slowly changed sediment into sedimentary rock and then altered the sedimentary rock into low-grade metamorphic rock. (Slightly metamorphosed sediment is known as metasedimentary rock, because most original features formed during deposition of sediment are still well-preserved). Layers are the most prominent feature in local outcrops of the Belt rocks in our area, and indeed in all rocks of sedimentary origin. They are the best place to start in learning to read the rocks.

Why is the layering so obvious in outcrops of sedimentary origin? The answer lies in the manner in which the sediment was originally deposited. Most sediment on Earth is clastic, composed of particles formed when older rocks weather and decompose. Clastic sediment is very familiar to us, as we see it in our



Metasedimentary rocks along old Highway 200 between Hope and Clark Fork

Photo by Mark McFaddan

river beds in sizes ranging from large boulders and gravel down to sand, dust-sized silt and tiny clay particles. Clastic sediment carried by water, as in flood events, settles out as the energy of the current wanes. Coarser-grained sediment like sand settles out at the bottom of the layer (or bed), and sediment size gradually decreases upward within the bed as the current slows. The result is a graded bed representing one flood event, with coarser grains at the base and a finer, mud-capped top. After the sediment is lithified (turned into solid rock), the graded beds naturally part between events, where the fine-grained sediment at the

top of one bed meets the coarse sediment of the next overlying bed. Layers from millimeters to meters in thickness all part at the grain size jump between events.

Outcrops of the Belt-Purcell Supergroup along the north shore of Lake Pend Oreille and the Clark Fork River exhibit apparent layering for miles. The beds are tilted to the east (a separate story of mountain-building), and split apart at the grain size changes between depositional events. Weather and climate accentuate the layers further, forming the obvious pages in the book of Earth history throughout the Idaho Cabinet range and from the base to the summit of Scotchman Peak.

Next up: more clues from the rock record!

2010 Summer photo contest.

First Place, Flora, Fauna and Water Category



Star Peak Pika by Jim Mellen (Second place: Noel Phillips, Third place: Sandii Mellen)



The Future Looks Bright

January 5: Sandy Compton will make a presentation to the Sandpoint Rotary.

January 14: An opening reception for an art exhibit featuring paintings and sculpture inspired by the 2009 and 2010 Extreme Plein Air hikes will be held at Lewis and Clark State College in Lewiston, Idaho.

January 15: The first hike of the winter walk series. (See page 7.)

January 16: The StoryTelling Company, sponsored by Friends of Scotchman Peaks. Ivano's, First and Pine in Sandpoint. 5 p.m.

January 27, 28 and 29: FSPW will have a table at the Banff Mountain Film Festival at the Panida Theater in Sandpoint.

January 30: FSPW will have a table at the Banff Mountain Film Festival in Coeur d' Alene.

February 1: Doug Ferrell will make a presentation to the Plains Grange meeting

February 4: An opening reception for a photo display from the 2010 Secret Scotchmans Photo tour will be held at the new Laughing Dog Brewery beginning at 6pm (See article below).

February 11: A Wildlife Film Festival, sponsored by FSPW, will be held at the Little Theater in Libby beginning at 7 p.m.

February 13: The StoryTelling Company, sponsored by Friends of Scotchman Peaks, Di Luna's 207 Cedar in Sandpoint. 5 p.m.

February TBA: The Winter Wildlands Film Festival, cosponsored by FSPW and Idaho Conservation League, will be shown at Gonzaga University in Spokane.

March 4: Phil Hough will make a presentation to the National Association of Active and Retired Federal Employees at the Elks Club in Ponderay.

March 17, 18 and 19: Doug Chadwick, author of *The Wolverine Way*, will do presentations on his favorite mustelid in Sandpoint, Trout Creek and Troy.

Take your camera for a winter walk!

Once again, Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness, with the remarkable assistance of our hardy and resolute volunteer hike leaders, have put together a stellar winter hike series, the schedule for which you will find just across the fold on Page 7. We have 12 volunteer-led winter walks this year, (and possibly another couple standing in the wings at press time) From a pastoral snowshoe stroll up Lightning Creek to an extreme assault on Mount Vernon, we have something for just about anybody who wants to have a winter adventure, whether it be on skis or snowshoes. To learn more, visit <http://www.scotchmanpeaks.org/hiking/current-hiking-schedule>



In conjunction with our Winter Walk series, we also urge you to get your camera out for the **first annual FSPW winter photography contest**. We have a simplified format from the summer contest, with two basic categories: Winter Critters (including people and pets) and Winter Wonders (including scenic shots, macros and other creative compositions.)

All participants will receive a Scotchman Peaks map bandana, and the best three photos from each category will receive Scotchman Peaks swag. Best overall winter picture will be professionally framed for the photographer. For further information on format and submission, visit <http://www.scotchmanpeaks.org/hiking/put-your-cameras-in-your-packs>

Secret Scotchmans Photo Exhibit: Feb. 4 at Laughing Dog Brewery

By **Jim Mellen**

Last August, eight hikers participated in a three day backpacking trip across the Scotchmans. This trip was also a photography workshop with volunteer professional photographer Al Lemire giving instruction. On Feb 4th, an exhibition of the photographs will take place at the new Laughing Dog Brewing tap room (next door to Papa Murphy's) from 6 to 8 pm. Some of the framed photos will be sold in a silent auction. A slide show composed of the best of the "Secret Scotchmans" will also be displayed. The proceeds



Participants in the Secret Scotchmans photo workshop somewhere in the Secret Scotchmans.

Photo by Jim Mellen

of sales will benefit Team Laughing Dog and the Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness.

Team Laughing Dog is a **bicycle racing team** raising money for autism research. The **Race Across America (RAAM)** starts in Oceanside CA and ends 3,000 miles later in Annapolis, MD. The riders ride 24/7 and hope to finish in about 7 days. Those families dealing with autism live with it for 24/7, but it doesn't end after 7 days. Friends of Scotchman Peaks Treasurer Jacob Styer is one of the riders, so wish him luck next June!



The Winter 2011 Hike Series: Beginning January 15!

Hike date	Exertion Rating	Destination/ Hike Name	Leader(s)	Description and contact info
1/15/11	E/M	East Fork Creek	Sandii Mellen and Jim Mellen	Contact info: 208-265-5261 or sandiiellen@gmail.com This is an easy ski, depending on weather, on snowmobile trail to East Fork Cr. From there we will follow the Cr. back through the woods which will make having skins or snowshoes a must. We will be looking for avalanches that may or may not have happened in the Bee Top drainage. Always a chance of seeing moose along the way. Elevation gain: 300 ft ± Round trip: 12 miles ±
1/29/11	M/S	Blue Creek Ramble	Sandy Compton	Contact info: 208-290-1281 or sandy@scotchmanpeaks.org This introduction to the southern boundary of the Scotchman Peaks will climb closed forest roads on the south face of Clayton Peak or on Fatman Mountain. Depending on snow conditions, this will be a moderate or strenuous hike. Snowshoes or cross-country skis will be needed. Round trip, 7 to 9 miles. Elevation gain 1500 feet.
2/5/11	E/M	East Fork Creek Redux	Phil Hough and Deb Hunsicker	Contact info: 208-946-9127 or phil@scotchmanpeaks.org We'll follow the perimeter of the proposed Scotchman Peaks Wilderness along Lightning Creek Road. Depending on how far we can drive we may cross the East Fork Creek and then follow its flood plain past the new trailhead, exploring a jumble of trees and boulders, looking at how floods altered native plant habitats and animal browse patterns. The route will be out and back, total distance dependent upon how far we go before turning around.
2/12/10	E/M	Fatman Roundabout	Judy Hutchins	Contact info: 406-847-2717 or JHutch7494@aol.com Skirt the southern edge of the proposed Wilderness under the Star Peak ridge on the snow-closed Fatman Road. Spur roads offer options including a out-and-back to the saddle between Fatman and Billiard Table for a breathtaking view of the East Fork of Blue Creek drainage and Sawtooth. Distance, 6 – 9 miles. Elevation gain, 800 – 1000 feet.
2/18/11	E/M	Ross Creek Cedars Ladies Only	Sandii Mellen and Holly Clements	Contact info: sandiiellen@gmail.com or hclements26@gmail.com A lady's day in the great outdoors led by two great ladies. Hike to and through Ross Creek Cedars in the quiet of winter. This is an opportunity for first-timers or many-timers. Snowshoes or skis necessary. FSPW has snowshoes to lend. Round trip: 8 + miles. Elevation gain, 1200 feet.
2/27/11	E/M	Ross Creek Cedars	Neil and Ann Wimberley	Contact info: 208-264-5379 or neil@scotchmanpeaks.org, We will hike up the Ross Creek Cedars road 3.5 miles into the Ross Creek Cedars. An overlook on the way provides stunning views. We will wander along a one mile loop amongst the cedars before returning. Beginner level skill, but the overall length makes this suitable only for those with good conditioning. Round trip: 8 + miles. Elevation gain, 1200 feet.
3/5/10	S+	Troy Mine Vent/ Mount Vernon	Sandii Mellen	Contact info: 208-265-5261 or jimnsandii@gmail.com This is a great XC ski, with wonderful views of Bull Lake and the Cabinet Mountains. It climbs steadily up on an old gated road past a mine vent from the Troy mine. Skis are required, (Skins/ snowshoes will be needed in some places). This will be an all day trip and everyone should be prepared for it with layered clothing, food and water. We will go as far as everyone is willing to go. Everyone should be prepared for any weather conditions, with adequate clothing, food, water, headlamps, skins for skis or snowshoes to change in to. Level of difficulty, "Very difficult." Round trip, 12 miles. Elevation gain 2,000 to 3,000 feet.
3/19/11	S	Star Peak	Jacob Styer	Contact info: jacob@scotchmanpeaks.org This snowshoe is quite strenuous and we will probably need every bit of winter sunlight to gain the summit and return to our cars before dark. We will be sticking to the main summer trail for the first 2/3 of the hike, but will probably need to use our off trail route finding skills to reach the summit of Star Peak. Round trip: 10 miles ±. Elevation gain 4140 feet.
3/26/11	S	Goat Mountain Hop	Jim Mellen	Contact info: 208-265-5261 or jimnsandii@gmail.com This will be the 5th annual Goat Mountain Hop. Gaining 4,000 feet vertical, this is one of the steepest trails in the region. Although you don't have to be crazy to sign up, it does help. Round trip: 7 miles; Elevation gain: 4,000 ±
4/2/11	E/M	Tracking Hike near Ross Creek	Brian Baxter	Contact info: 406-291-2154 or b_baxter53@yahoo.com Join us for a day of studying winter trailcraft along one of the major wildlife corridors of the border of the proposed Scotchman Peaks Wilderness. Strap on your snowshoes and head out to observe tracks, trails and sign of some of the diverse species of wildlife with local wildlife researcher Brian P. Baxter. Please dress in appropriate layers for this lower elevation riparian area hike, and bring lunch, water, cameras and curiosity. Generally a less than moderately difficult hike, keep in mind if weather dictates showshoe travel, this can take a bit of energy. This is an all-day outing. Size is limited
4/9/11	S	Goat Mountain Redux	John Harbuck	Contact info: 208-263-9894 or harbuck@norlight.org This mountain is so good, we have to climb it twice. Gaining 4,000 feet vertical, this is one of the steepest trails in the region. Although you don't have to be crazy to sign up, it does help. Dare you to do it twice. Round trip: 7 miles; Elevation gain: 4,000 ±
4/30/11	S	Scotchman Peak	Jim and Sandii Mellen	Contact info: 208-265-5261 or jimnsandii@gmail.com Climb the tallest peak in the Scotchmans and Bonner County in the snow! Snowshoes, skis or snowboards are all great options for this extremely strenuous but rewarding trip. This will be the 7th annual April climb and several hikers have done this trip multiple times. Round trip, 12 miles. Elevation gain, 3700 feet.



Trail Talk: Star Peak Trail #998 by snowshoe

By **Sandy Compton**

Put a little snow on the ground — or a lot — and hiking in any mountain range begins gathering dimensions (and dementedness) unfound in warmer and drier times. Mountain trekking on snowshoes, skis or a split board brings factors — and muscles — into play that otherwise go unused. But, we shouldn't let that stop us.

I'm not a prolific winter hiker, but last winter, I got a dandy pair of snowshoes, and so went with a group to climb Star Peak, my first snowshoe hike in a long time.

Trail #998 is a pretty straightforward hike in the other seasons, nary a way to get really lost unless you're clueless about tread and blazes. And, "straightforward" doesn't mean "easy." It's still 3,900 vertical in less than 5 miles of trail. In the winter, though, the rules change somewhat; the climb can get significantly shorter, but only in one dimension. It's still 3,900 feet vertical one way, but you can cut some significant horizontal distance off the trip — if you're careful about where you do it.

The first part of the hike is much the same as the summer version. From Montana Highway 200 at about MP 6.5, just east of Fatman Road, the trail begins as a steep old logging and mining exploration road that is open to motorized use. After 2.5 miles, ±, a standard Forest Service tread begins at a classic old routed FS sign that reads "Squaw Peak L.O. — 2 1/2 miles." Now politically incorrect, it was put in place several decades ago, and marks the edge of the IRA in which Star Peak, is ensconced, the Scotchman Peaks.

On foot or snowshoes, the trip up the road becomes a slog for me after about 10 minutes, as I have done this hike numerous times. A newbie will be distracted, though, by the spectacular views of the Clark Fork valley that only get better for the first mile as more altitude is achieved. I *can* stave off boredom if I remember to look *out* — instead of *up* the road.

After that first mile, the road turns back into the Big Eddy Creek gulch and forest, continuing to climb steeply to where the tread begins. From the sign, the tread sidehills on a gentler, steady grade through Douglas fir and larch forest. Even in winter, it's relatively easy to find the trail, for it's well-marked with the traditional one-short, one-long blaze on trees along the way.



Cabel Hodges and Brad Smith pause at the old sign on the way to Star Peak.

Photo by Sandy Compton

Switchbacks are harder to see in winter, but the first one is relatively easy to find. Just before the grade intersects a steep face, the trail turns back left and climbs to the top of a ridge, where it switches back right and ascends the ridge. Again, the steeper slope is encountered and the trail goes left along the base of that, and then enters a lodgepole pine forest heavily damaged by pine beetles. This is where horizontal distance can be shortened. Snowshoe or skinned-up ski hikers can go straight up the fall line (the line a basketball will take if allowed to roll down hill), cutting at least three-quarters of a mile off the distance to the lookout. The downside, of course, is that route's a lot steeper than the trail.

There are distinct ridges east and west of the fall line on that slope. Winter hikers will likely encounter the ridge to the east. Once gained, follow this ridge (it will angle to the left). When the forest begins to thicken (it changes to subalpine fir), watch for the trail, a distinct opening through the trees marked with blazes.

If you miss the trail and get too far west, you will find yourself in a spot where there is no distinct ridge. Take to the fall line again. If you get too far to the east, you will encounter open areas that could be dangerous in deep snow. Stay in the timber and watch for the distinct opening of the trail and blazes. The last leg of the trail, ascending to the east, will lead directly to the lookout cabin

on top of the mountain.

Though there are two structures on top of Star, shelter is still hard to come by in the winter. The lookout is closed up for winter and the old stacked rock building will probably be buried in snow — the door of which, the last time I checked, opens out.

Unless it starts to storm, getting home will be easy. Follow your tracks. And, if you chose to skin up on AT or Telemark gear, you are going to have some big fun skiing about 700 vertical feet through the trees once you get back into the lodgepole grove

If it does storm, or running out of daylight becomes a possibility, start for home. Conditions in winter change very quickly, and risking life and limb to achieve the top when conditions become adverse is reckless at best, trending toward foolish. In any case, take a topo map, compass and be able to use them. A headlamp, sufficient layers, dry socks, waterproof outerware, high-energy food, a good supply of water and means and sufficient knowledge to light a fire are even more critical in winter than in the other seasons.



Birds of the Scotchmans

Frozen Chirps

By **Jonathan Isacoff, Ph.D.**

It is winter. One thing about a bird column on winter birds in the Scotchmans is that it's not apt to change much from year to year! It is cold. It is dark. There is snow. But there are still birds about. This time of year, birds in the Scotchmans region fall into two categories: (1) local diehards that tough out the harsh winter; (2) "Northern visitors" that come South to the Inland Northwest to enjoy our "mild winter climate!"

Let's look at the locals. One nice thing about winter is that many non-migrating forest birds that normally don't leave the forests are forced out as their food sources are buried under deep snow or frozen so solid that even the toughest beaks can't get anything from them (except maybe a proverbial trip to the "bird dentist")! So, some of these birds will come to yard feeders at farms and in towns like Clark Fork, Noxon, Troy, and Libby. What to look for: Finches, Finches, and Finches. This is the time of year that Evening Grosbeaks, Cassin's Finches, Red Crossbills, and if one is really lucky, Pine Grosbeaks will come join the usual House Finches and Goldfinches at your feeders.

With the movement of these Finches out of the forest come their predators: the three Accipiter species: Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks and Northern Goshawk, and the diminutive but fierce Northern Pygmy Owl, which will often hunt in daylight during the short winter days. These birds are known to "bomb feeders," sometimes incredibly aggressively. I once



Evening Grosbeak

Photo by **Randy Beacham**,
www.randybeacham.photoshelter.com

had a Cooper's hawk literally slam-dunk my feeder and nearly flip it 360! Goshawks, by far the rarest of these 4 feeder bombers, have been known to chase their prey into thickets and then pursue them on foot!

OK, what about those Northern visitors? One traditional way to divide them is by where they come from, which is two different places: (1) tundra breeders come down from the frozen tundra and tend to prefer fields and prairies that are similar to their native breeding grounds; (2) Northern Boreal Forest breeders come down to forests that remind them of home. In the Scotchmans, Tundra-breeding visitors are very rare, but some, such as the Rough-legged Hawk and Horned Lark can be found. Much rarer but occasionally seen are the mystical Snowy Owl and Gyrfalcon.

But you might have better luck with the Northern visitors from the Boreal Forests, including White-winged Crossbills, Common Redpolls – the latter of which will often join flocks at feeders with their close cousins, the American Goldfinch – and berry-lovers including Bohemian Waxwings and Robins. You might be asking: Robins? Yes, but these are not the Robins of Spring (how would they get worms out of the frozen ground)? These are Robins from extreme Northern Canada that have come down in search of delicious Mountain Ash and Hawthorne berries. It's not uncommon to see local non-migrating Cedar Waxwings, Bohemian Waxwings, Robins, and Starlings (yes those) sharing a nice fat Mountain Ash tree and devouring the red berries. So keep an eye out on those feeders and berry trees; there may be a surprise there.

Creatures of the Scotchmans

Chipmunk — *Neo Tamias*

By **Doug Ferrell**

For people who enjoy observing wildlife, chipmunks can be very appealing. Though they may not induce the same thrill as the sight of a large predator, chipmunks are easy to find, energetic, quick, and inquisitive. There are many species of chipmunks, though most are so similar they are hard to tell apart. Most all share the same striped black and white pattern on the back and face.

All chipmunk species are quite small and fill an important niche, as one of the smallest widely distributed mammals. Adults weigh only a few ounces, and birth weight is typically around a tenth of an ounce. Babies are not fully furred until about 40 days after birth.



Chipmunk — *Neo Tamias*

Photo by **Randy Beacham**, www.randybeacham.photoshelter.com

Continued on page 10



Scotchman Natives

Western Larch (Tamarack)

By *Valle Novak*

As a child, I called the Western Larch (*Larix occidentalis*) the "Sunshine Tree." And in the late fall and early winter, when short, overcast days combine with the somber black/green of the pines, spruces and fir to darken the mountains, the golden clusters of the larch look like welcome patches of sunlight giving life to the gloom.

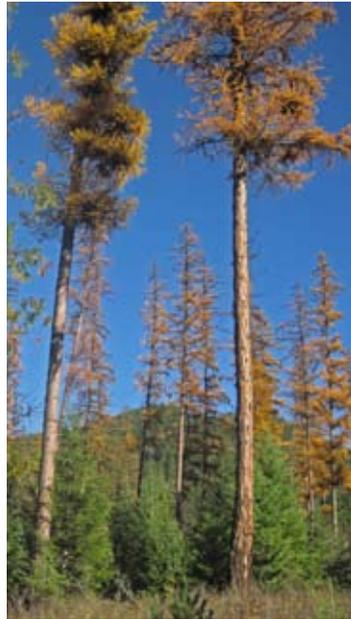
The only cone-bearing tree to lose its needles in the winter, the larch nonetheless does provide its "sunshine" till needlefall. In fact, when this happens, the tree looks hopelessly dead, and many unschooled woodcutters think they've found a bonanza of firewood. It behooves all of us familiar with this valuable tree to pass on the knowledge of its natural idiosyncrasy.

Western larch is a large forest tree, growing from 100 to 200 feet in height. It prefers upper elevations with cool temperatures, withstanding whatever Idaho/Montana winters toss at it, be it winter rain or deep snow. Though it has this going for it, it has one unique nemesis - intolerance of shade.

Thus, it is most always found in open groves of its own kind, or in small groups - or even singly in forest openings.

Its strong, durable tight-grained wood, contained in a straight trunk with high branches and open crown, is coveted by builders who use it for plywood, flooring, and outdoor trim, all of which demand strength and hardiness.

The short, soft needles grow in clusters of varied number - 15 to 30 - and emerge in the spring from the seemingly "dead" tree in pale green tufts that turn darker green in the summer and finally their trademark yellow to brighten the autumn woods.



Western Larch is a deciduous conifer. Needles turn bright yellow before falling in autumn.

Photo by *Sandy Compton*

Small cones of 1 to 1 1/2 inches long, grow among the needle tufts and range in color from red-purple to reddish-brown, with many small, thin stiff scales which protect the quarter-inch long seeds and their longer, fragile "wings."

While young larch has thin, dark and scaly bark, after becoming 4-6 inches thick it breaks up into "plates." As they grow to huge size, their bark toughens and becomes thicker and red-brown to cinnamon-brown. At some point in this development, loggers provided the nickname "buckskin" tamarack.

There is another rather rare species, Subalpine Larch (*Larix lyallii*) which grows only at very high elevations west of the Continental divide. Small, just 25-50 feet tall at maturity, it is not considered important as a commercial tree (thank goodness!), but might be an exciting discovery for hikers. It, too, sheds its needles, but they grow in clusters of 30 or more and are pale blue-green before turning yellow in the fall. Cones are egg-shaped and reddish-purple, with scales

(broad rather than long) with purple bracts sticking out from them. The bark is thin, ash-gray on young trees, purplish or red-brown with loose scales on older trees.

By the way, a standing dead tamarack is indeed a woodcutter's bonanza. Its branches will be downbent rather than strongly upright, and easily broken off. To establish death beyond the shadow of a doubt, make a shallow axe slice into the trunk. You cannot help but recognize live, moist and healthy growing tissue. Apologize to the tree and leave it to grow in peace and provide autumn sunshine for its long life.

From page 9: Chipmunks

Chipmunks eat a variety of foods like nuts, berries, fruits, seeds, fungi, snails and various insects, including beetles, grasshoppers and caterpillars. Chipmunks are busy during the warm months filling their cheeks with food and whisking off to store it for winter. They are normally solitary except for females with young, and can be fiercely territorial. Females come into estrous only one day per year - a day that packs in a lot of excitement, as a female may be chased by several males and eventually breed with all of them.

The scientific literature is full of glowing descriptions of chipmunk homes, which are reported as immaculate, often extensive burrows with areas for food storage, waste storage and grass lined nests for sleeping. Because chipmunks are not well equipped for extensive digging, their burrows often take

advantage of small cracks and cavities in rocks, and under stumps and logs. Their small size makes it hard for digging predators to invest the energy needed to dig through their tiny tunnels. Chipmunks mostly sleep through the winter, though they awake from time to time to feast on their larder of stored food.

Thus I was a little surprised to find coyotes seldom listed as a significant predator of chipmunks. Predators do include owls, hawks, domestic cats, and most of the weasels, such as ermine, mink, and marten.

Chipmunks are famous for being easy to tame, enough so they will come eat out of some human's hand. I have never tried this, though it seems fun and interesting in a way. However, there are a lot of good reasons to leave wild animals wild, and enjoy them in their natural state.



From page 4: Fishing in Lightning Creek

from getting wet. Soon larger pines appeared and in damp places ferns grew shoulder high. Following along the noisy creek we soon reached Quartz Creek which was spanned by a rustic bridge. Here we lingered for some time admiring the beauties of nature and the thundering and foaming water below. We were reluctant to leave this beautiful spot but had to hurry on up the creek. We soon heard the distant rumble of the falls we had started out to see. It was a distance of several hundred yards almost perpendicular down to the creek. We lowered ourselves in the descent by clinging to branches and sliding down over the fallen trees. Arriving at the creek we found we



must make human flies of ourselves to reach the falls, so we proceeded to climb upward over the slippery rocks, slow but continually higher. This is a fascinating game and one forgets everything else.

The falls view was a beautiful sight to behold. I have viewed all the famous canyons and waterfalls of southern California of which the natives boast, but none can even compare with this.

The pool below the falls abounds in fish. Here the girls caught trout with the ease of Isaac Walton, the patron saint of the road. I feel like rambling on and on, but space allotted me compels me to end my story. Nature after all is our greatest, best and most effective teacher. It teaches us the lesson of the fuller, broader, healthier, happier life: Get into the open.

From page 2: Over the top Volunteer

study in British Columbia. He worked winters putting collars on wolverines up in B.C.

In 1996, John Weaver of Northern Rockies Conservation Cooperative contacted him, and for the following three winters, he worked on a Lynx survey in the Yaak Valley, and then again worked intermittently with the Canadians.

With that experience, he opened his own business. "After the wolverine and lynx work," he says, "I formed Silver Cloud Associates, doing government contract wildlife research: wolverines, lynx, fisher, marten and badger."

"I started doing tracking classes about 2000 for local conservation groups like Cabinet Resource Group, and wrote an article in Montana Magazine: *On Silent Feet; Following the Lynx Pathways*. After that, Jamie Belt from the Glacier Institute called and asked if I would teach a class in the wintertime.

The Glacier Institute has some of the world's best teachers, and Brian found himself a bit intimidated. "But, Jamie coached me on my teaching skills, and now I do about 20 classes a year, including some on botany and 'hunters of the night skies.'

Brian says that teaching with the Institute has allowed him to grow and learn himself. "When I first started, I was focusing on the mustelids and lynx, and the folks who came to the classes wouldn't let me focus. It's been good for me. Every time I go out there, I learn something."

Though he spends a lot of time in the "main" Rockies, he has a special place in his heart for the Scotchman Peaks.

"I've been a Friend since you guys got rolling," he says. "The uniqueness of the Scotchmans — and much of northwest Montana — is the diversity of flora and fauna. As a forester, I believe certain areas in northwest Montana could benefit from logging, but I think the Scotchmans should be well left alone."

Silver Cloud Associates continues to do forestry and stream assessment work, and Brian still does land surveying, but he

would prefer to teach. "I'd love to have a small nature center around here where we can do our thing, like the East Fork of Bull River."

"Sometimes," he continues, "you have some pretty amazing stuff going on during a class, and even though I thought I'd never be good at it, with a coach like Jamie, you can get better at it. Now, in the morning, the folks taking the classes are looking at me like I'm crazy, but by afternoon, they are making the calls on what kind of tracks are what, and looking at me with a spark in their eye. It's a very satisfying thing to do."

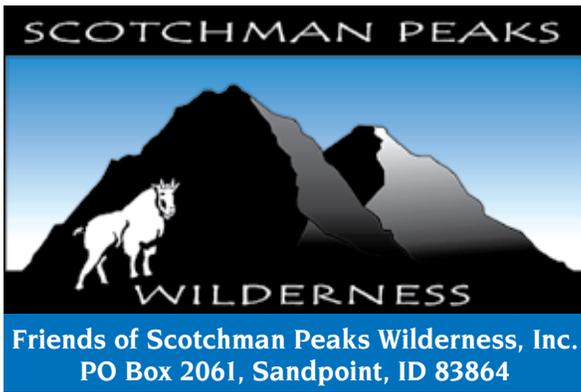
Brian Baxter earned his B.S. in Wildlife Biology from Western Carolina University. He is a wildlife researcher and project coordinator for Silver Cloud Associates, a natural resource information company based in Libby, Montana. He has been involved in forest carnivore research in North America for the past fifteen years and is a member of the Western Forest Carnivore Committee.

From page 2: The drowned camera

camera (Nikon Coolpix 950) met its end (soon a superior successor was recording our adventures).

We set up our tent at one of the campsites and enjoyed a pleasant evening. Our favorite place at Little Spar is the big split boulder on the north shoreline. The evening was so warm and pleasant that instead of retiring to our tent, we got our sleeping bags and pads and spent the night on the rock. Sometime in the middle of this gorgeous moonlit night, a black bear came down to the lakeshore for a drink. Our Husky chased it off while our old Golden Retriever, Elwood stayed with us. After once being swatted by an irate momma bear, Elwood gained considerable respect for bears.

If you hike with us, you may notice that we now always have zip-lock bags in our camera bags and use them when things get a little dicey.



How You Can Help

Support Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness

As concerned citizens, we support protecting and preserving the Scotchman Peaks area for ourselves and future generations. Highway 56, Highway 200, Lightning Creek Road, and Rattle Creek/Keeler Road surround this 88,000 acre scenic area which straddles the Idaho and Montana border. Wilderness Designation for the Scotchmans will protect plants and wildlife, including the endangered grizzly bears, mountain goat, and bull trout; it will protect water quality; and it will preserve a special place for future generations. In addition, local communities will benefit from the unparalleled recreational and economic opportunities such wilderness provides.

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Donation enclosed (optional). Donations are tax deductible. Please make checks payable to the Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness, Inc. Detach & Mail to the address above.

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