



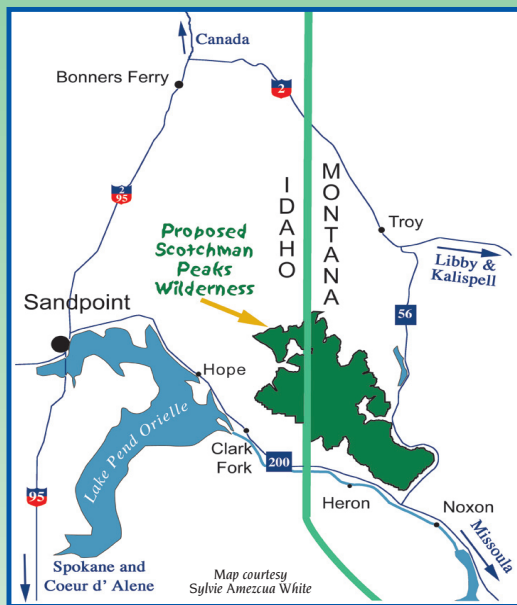
PEAK EXPERIENCE

The Newsletter for Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness, Inc.
Volume 4, Number 6 • November / December, 2008



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
Designer: Pama Bangeman

1st Annual Scotchman Peaks Plein Air Paint Out 2008

By Neil Wimberley

Twenty talented artists from North Idaho and from as far west as Whidby Island, WA, and as far east as Thompson Falls, MT, spread out around the Scotchmans Wilderness Oct 8-11th capturing visions of our favorite spots. Painting for four days, over eighty canvases were produced. On Friday morning, ten artists with professional photographer Chris Guibert to document the event went to the beachfront home of Carol and Irv Jenkins on Elliot Bay to capture the views of Scotchman Peaks across Lake Pend Oreille. The best paintings were framed and displayed for sale at Jim Quinn's Timber Stand Gallery in Sandpoint on Friday night. Over a hundred people including the artists enjoyed the spontaneous wilderness art, mingling, and wine from across the street at the Pend Oreille Winery. After the event, the art was moved to Kally Thurman's Outskirts Gallery at the Hope Market Café in Hope, ID, for a second showing and sale on Saturday in a casual atmosphere with much interaction between artists and buyers. During the afternoon one of the artists, Aaron Thompson, painted fellow artist Gregg Caudell's dog, Dixie, on the



Ross Creek Cedars by Jared Shear of Thompson Falls, MT
www.zupzup.com



Plein Air artists at work
Photo courtesy Neil Wimberley

porch of the Café. Sixteen pieces of art were sold at the events with a selection of the unsold canvases still on display at the galleries. Plans are being made to make digital images of the remaining art available for sale on our website.

Thanks to the many volunteers who made this event a success. Kally Thurman and Jim Quinn spent a large amount of time recruiting artists, and developing, promoting, and hosting the event. Vera Gadman, design artist, donated time

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Message from the Chair

This summer Deb and I hiked 1,000 miles south along the Continental Divide Trail, from the Canadian Border to Togwotee Pass (just north of the Wind River Mountains in Wyoming). Along the way, we passed through many wilderness areas and proposed wilderness areas, as well as public and private lands with lesser, or no, protection. Among the highlights were such iconic places as Glacier Park, the Bob Marshall and Scapegoat Wilderness areas and Yellowstone Park. And we were enthralled with other lesser know areas such as the Anaconda Pintlers, the Teton Wilderness and the Centennial Mountains.

But what made the hike such an amazing experience were areas proposed for wilderness along the lesser know parts of the divide, especially the section which forms the Idaho/Montana border between Lost Trail Pass and Monida Pass, areas such as Homer Youngs Peak, the grassland plateaus near Cottonwood Peak and the valleys and ridges around Mt. Garfield. These are gems worth every effort to protect and we felt privileged to have spent time getting to know them better. I am very glad that there are groups such as the Montana Wilderness Association working to bring protection to these special places.

Spending so much time in our wild lands always motivates me on many levels. But, despite hiking through all these exciting wild lands, perhaps my greatest thrill this summer was coming home and looking up at the Scotchmans and feeling reconnected with this very special place. Visiting Ross Creek Cedars this week, where the Devils Club has created a carpet of yellow, soothed my wilderness seeking soul. Having a wilderness retreat, so close to home, provides opportunities for wilderness rejuvenation for ourselves and future generations. Designating the Scotchmans as Wilderness assures our soul has a place to soar and explore our wildlands and our wild selves. My summer break has recharged me and my return to the Scotchmans has increased my enthusiasm for our campaign's future!

Phil Hough

The Future Looks Bright Monday December 1, 4-7pm:

Celebrate the holiday season with FSPW at our Sip and Shop at the Pend d'Oreille Winery and get some Christmas shopping done while you're there.

From the Top

I asked a smokejumper friend who grew up here for suggestions on authors for history or tales articles and learned of Larry Stone. I subsequently received a most beautiful article which I wish I could have printed as I received it. The envelope had a pen and ink pine bough drawing and a calligraphy address. When I opened it, the entire article was written in calligraphy and each page had the same pen and ink drawing. Shortly after that, I received an email article from Jim Boyer of Kansas who sent us the Tales column in the Nov/Dec 07 (also included in our Jan/Feb

Wild Creatures of the Scotchmans

The Fisher (*Martes Pennanti*)

Fishers are extremely quick and energetic predators, like other members of the weasel family. They are also quite elusive, and seeing one in the wild is a rare thrill.

Fishers have thick and luxurious dark brown fur, often with lighter tipped hairs on the head and shoulders, and sometimes with a lighter colored chest patch. They are much larger than their cousins the martens, and almost twice as large as the mink. Male fishers average 6 to 12 pounds and 20 – 25 inches in length, plus a tail over a foot long.



Fisher (*Martes Pennanti*)
Photo courtesy Pacific Biodiversity Institute, Winthrop, WA
www.pacificbio.org

Fishers eat mice, squirrels, rabbits and other small rodents as well as carrion, fish, crayfish, fruits and berries. They are one of the few predators that feed on porcupines, attacking first the face, and seeking to roll the porcupine over to expose its belly, which is undefended by quills. Fishers may be active day or night throughout the year. They are our largest predator which is active in the treetops, although they also spend much time on the ground. With their slim body shape, they are capable of chasing prey down a burrow.

Females raise the young in a nest, usually high in a hollow tree. An average of three young are born blind and naked in early spring. By the time they are four months old the young are able to hunt for themselves. They separate from their mother about a month later, and live mostly solitary lives, except for mating season in the fall, and except for the mothers who tend a new litter most every year.

In winter, they normally inhabit a ground burrow or snow den. Sometimes careful observation can reveal tracks leading to a den or burrow. The animals will quickly abandon a nest or burrow if they feel threatened or disturbed.

Fishers are found only in North America. They prefer coniferous forests, but also inhabit mixed and deciduous forests. Fishers prefer habitats with high canopy closure and with many hollow trees for warm weather dens, so they are quite dependent on mature forests and tend to avoid disturbed areas.

08 Commemorative Issue) on a trip up Scotchman with his son led by volunteer John Harbuck. Jim's article on his firefighting summers is a great companion piece to Larry's article. Look for it in our January issue. Our columnists are strong voices for the importance of wilderness designation to preserve this beautiful area.

Happy Holidays.

Ann Wimberley



Along the Trail

September 8-10: Carol Jenkins, Ann and Neil Wimberley, Don Clark and Doug Ferrell (also representing Montana Wilderness Association) met with senators and representatives from Idaho and Montana during Washington Wilderness Week. Travel scholarships were generously provided by Campaign for America's Wilderness and the Wilderness Society. The purpose of the meetings was to update our legislators on the progress of our campaign and the support of the communities. Our delegation was well received and came home with a clear vision of the final challenges toward our goal of wilderness designation for the Scotchmans.

October 4: The Friends of Scotchman Peaks' table at Wild Idaho North had many visitors and engaged conservationists from around the region in great conversations about wilderness.

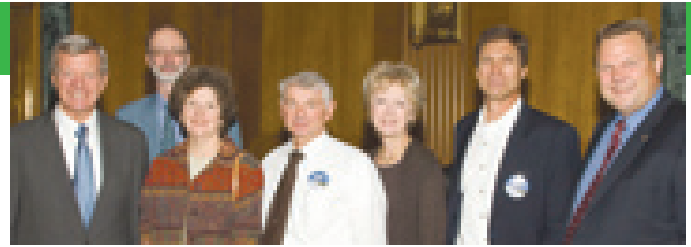
October 4-6: FSPW co-sponsored the Fall Mushroom Foray of the Western Montana Mushroom Association at the Bull River Campground. Neil and Ann Wimberley attended the opening pot luck where Neil made a brief presentation on proposed wilderness designation for the Scotchmans. All mushroomers attending signed up as new Friends.

October 8: The Plains/Paradise Chamber of Commerce responded very favorably to a Scotchmans presentation by Doug Ferrell. A show of hands at the end of the meeting indicated that 19 of the 20 who attended the meeting support our proposal.

The usual Scotchmans presentation includes a brief description of our proposal and a short power point show, followed by time for questions and discussion. This meeting was typical in that the most interesting part of the presentation was the questions and discussion at the end. Much of the discussion at this meeting centered on how protected wildlands do contribute to community prosperity, and how protecting wilderness makes sense as a complement to active management of other areas of the forest.

October 13: Phil Hough made a presentation on the Scotchman Peaks Wilderness Campaign to Jon Isacoff's "Ecology and Political Thought" class. Once again the class has chosen the campaign as a case study. In September the class participated in a weekend of trail maintenance activities.

October 25: FSPW co-sponsored with the Kinnikinnick chapter of



The Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness delegation to Washington Wilderness Week met with Senator Max Baucus and Senator John Tester at the Montana Constituents Breakfast. Pictured are Senator Baucus, Neil Wimberley, Ann Wimberley, Don Clark, Carol Jenkins, Doug Ferrell, both on the FSPW Board and the Montana Wilderness Association Board, and Senator Tester.

the Native Plant Society the presentation on Fall Mushrooms by Larry Evans of the Western Montana Mushroom Association, followed by a field trip mushroom foray into the proposed Scotchmans wilderness.

Scotchmans board members Bill Martin and Sarah Lundstrom have been participating for a couple of years in the Lincoln County Forest Stakeholders group. This group includes a diverse group of some 70 people who work together to review and recommend a variety of forest projects. The group's focus is on collaborating to help cut through the conflict and delays that have plagued many forest projects and decisions in recent years.

Martin and Lundstrom report that the group has made great progress in building trust and a sense of common purpose. The group has endorsed a number of fuel reduction and timber thinning and harvesting projects. The group has also acknowledged something that was initially difficult for some participants – that wilderness deserves consideration as one of a variety of land uses we value from our National Forests.

We appreciate the chance to work together with other community members to address forest management issues in a positive and respectful way.

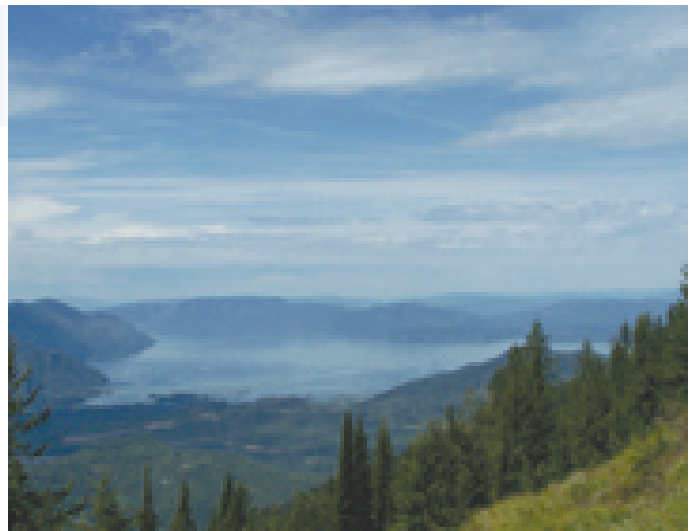
CINNABAR CHALLENGE MET! A huge thank you to everyone who stepped forward and made a donation toward the \$4,000 Cinnabar Challenge Grant. We reached our goal and now have a total of \$8,000 to help us with our outreach and education efforts.

2008 Scotchman Photo Contest Winners!

By Sarah Lundstrum

The 1st Annual FSPW Photo Contest was a great success! We had upwards of a hundred photo's entered and narrowing it down to just three finalists in each category was difficult, and almost impossible to come up with 1st, 2nd and 3rd places. Congratulations to our winners: Sandii Mellon, Scotchmans Scenery; Conor Branski, Scotchmans Spirit; Ben Steele, Wild Scotchmans; and Marcia Jimenez, Wilderness Water. There were many other fantastic photos taken and we thank everyone who entered! Beginning this issue, we will publish one of these photos in each upcoming issue of the newsletter until you get to see them all.

Wilderness Water Photo Winner
Photo courtesy Marcia Jimenez



What Grows There

Elderberry (*Sambucus*)

By Valle Novak

Elderberry (*Sambucus*) is a handsome fast growing and spreading shrub, which can literally turn into many-branched tree. Found at medium to lower elevations in our local mountain surroundings, it is a lovely thing to come upon on a hike.

A known and valued plant since prehistoric times, it has been part of Druidic history and native lore, cultivated in Europe and ultimately becoming a plant of legend.

While its mystical powers no longer lure us, its use for jelly, wine and as medicine certainly should. Add to that its true beauty, lavish and leafy, blooming with lovely white flower umbrels (which nurture bees, butterflies, hummingbirds and pollinating insects) and turn later into clusters of small dark blue berries which need the first frost to set the sugar in their juices.

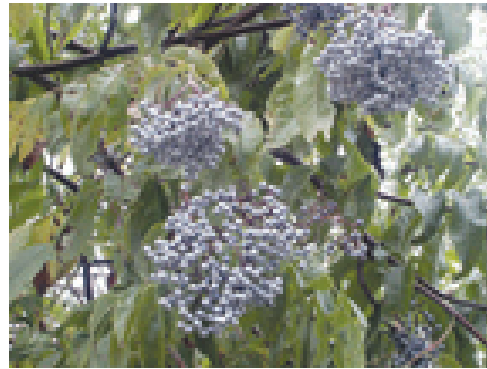
Our native *Sambucus cerula* (blue) is common, while *Sambucus racemosa* — the “red” elderberry — is more rarely seen. A stunning focal point for a landscape, Elderberry is hardy Zones 2-10, so is more than dependable in north Idaho. Accepting full sun to light shade, it prefers well drained soil and moderate water. The long pinnate leaves have a delicate, feathery look, and are a bright green. The plant as a whole is shapely, even when bushy and untended.

While we locals make syrups, wine and jelly from the berries, and occasionally deepfry the flower heads (first dipped in a sweetened tempura batter), that’s generally the extent of it. However, in England, Elderflower Water is still an official preparation of the British Pharmacopoeia for use in eye and skin lotions and inclusion in other medicines. The leaves have often been used as insect repellents, simply rubbed as-is on the skin by old-timers, but crushed and made into decoctions by more cultivated types.

Gardeners take note, the young leaves, like that of the rhubarb plant, can be laid under plants to keep off aphids and caterpillars. Some farmers have said using branches in grain storage units keeps mice away, and others claim it discourages moles when stuffed into their holes.

The entire plant is used by dyers: bark and/or roots make a black dye; the berries make a pretty purple-violet dye; and the leaves produce shades of green.

A note of caution: While the stems are stiff and pithy, easily hollowed for excellent rustic flute-playing, the pith, while apparently not deadly, can cause a violent intestinal reaction. The heavier-grained wood is harvested and used for butcher’s skewers and many other practical items, so it would seem that just the pithy stems should be avoided. Use them for insect repellent and forget the flutes.



Elderberry (*Sambucus*)

Photo courtesy Marilyn George

Peak Views

2008-09 Snowshoe Hike Leaders needed!

While it seems early, soon the snow will be falling and it will be time to enjoy the Scotchman Peaks on snowshoe and ski. We’d like to have hike leaders soon enough to coordinate with the Montana Wilderness Association and their winter hike series. So if you are interested, please contact Sarah by November 21st at slundstrum@wildmontana.org or 406-755-6304. Thanks to all who led summer hikes and here’s to another great winter! Don’t forget to check our website for hikes/snowshoes that may be listed before the January/February issue appears.

Perfect Holiday Gifts at New Low Prices

Prices have been lowered on our Scotchman tees and sweats just in time for holiday shopping. The price of our hoodie has been dropped from \$40 to \$35, of our crew sweatshirt from \$35 to \$30, and of our long sleeved tee from \$20 to \$15. Both our Scotchman blue and white goat tees as well as our hats and all our childrens’ shirts remain a bargain at \$10. Get the perfect gift at Sandpoint Sports, Outdoor Experience, Café Bodega, or Eichart’s in Sandpoint, The Hope Market Café in Hope, Mountain Meadows in Libby, Huckleberry Thicket in Trout Creek, or REI in Spokane. Out of the area, contact jmellen@imbris.net. Other Scotchman gifts are available in our online store run by Café Press at www.scotchmanpeaks.org/store/html.

1st Annual Scotchman Peaks Plein Air Paint Out 2008

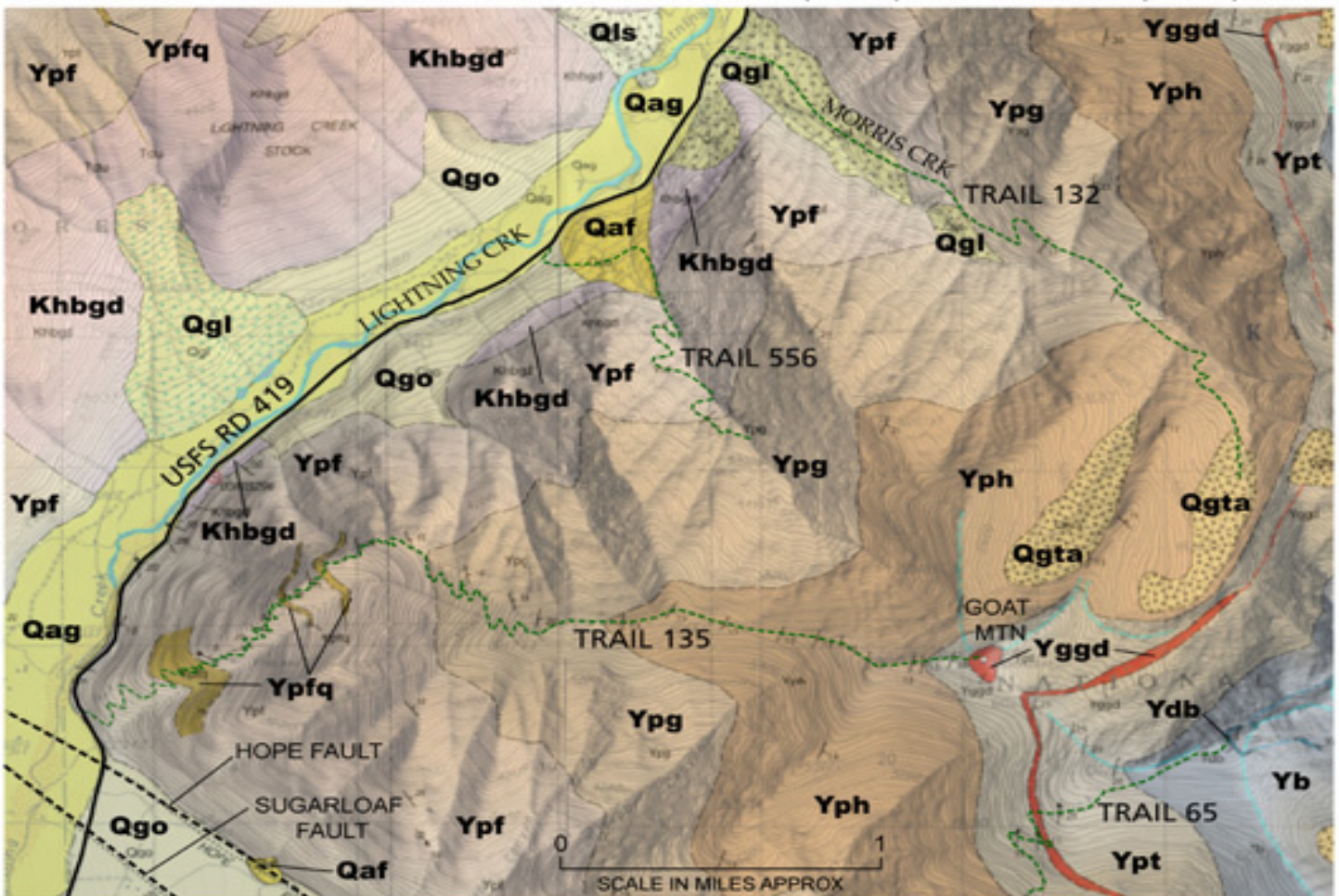
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producing invitations, fliers, and posters. Jim Quinn donated advertising spots on KPND radio for the week of the event. Steve and Julie Meyers of the PO Winery donated proceeds from the wine pouring at the opening Sale and Reception. Doug Ferrell and Sarah Lundstrum drove over from Montana to help with the initial set up. Carol and Irv Jenkins opened their home to the artists and public for the Friday AM paint out. Will & Marie Valentine assisted the Jenkins Friday AM, and then manned the FSPW table Friday evening at the Timber Stand Gallery. Joyce Pence, Konrad Dahlstrom, Jim & Cheryl Stearns manned the FSPW operations at the Hope event on Saturday. Special thanks go to the many artists who brought their unique skills and enthusiasm to the wilderness.



Scotchman Rocks

GENERALIZED GEOLOGIC MAP UNITS ALONG GOAT MOUNTAIN (TR 135) & MORRIS CREEK (TR 132) TRAILS



ALLUVIAL AND MASS MOVEMENT DEPOSITS

Holocene

- Qaf - Alluvial fan deposits
- Qag - Alluvial gravel deposits
- Holocene-Pleistocene*
- Qls - Landslide deposits

GLACIAL AND FLOOD-RELATED DEPOSITS

Pleistocene

- Qgta - Alpine till deposits
- Qgt - Till deposits
- Qgo - Outwash gravel
- Qgl - Glacio-lacustrine silts of Lake Missoula

INTRUSIVE ROCKS

- Kxbgd - Hornblende-biotite granodiorite - Cretaceous
- Ydb - Diabase - Middle Proterozoic
- Yggd - Granophyric granodiorite - Middle Proterozoic?

BELT-PURCELL SUPERGROUP

Metasedimentary - Middle Proterozoic

- Yb - Burke Formation
- Ypt - Prichard Formation, transition member
- Yph - Prichard Formation, member h
- Ypg - Prichard Formation, member g
- Ypf - Prichard Formation, member f
- Ypfq - Prichard Formation, member f quartzite

Adapted from *GEOLOGIC MAP OF THE CLARK FORK QUADRANGLE, BONNER COUNTY, IDAHO. DWM-25. Compiled and Mapped by Russell F. Burmester, Roy M. Breckenridge, Reed S. Lewis, and Mark D. McFadden. 2004.* and *GEOLOGIC MAP OF THE SCOTCHMAN PEAK QUADRANGLE, BONNER COUNTY, IDAHO. DWM-24. Compiled and Mapped by Russell F. Burmester, Roy M. Breckenridge, Reed S. Lewis, and Mark D. McFadden. 2004.* Available from the Idaho Geological Survey, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho 83844-3014 www.idahogeology.org

This geologic trail guide was created by Sylvie White of the Map Store / TerraPen Geographics by adding trail and road info and shaded relief to the Idaho Geological Survey digital web maps of the Scotchman Peak quadrangle (DWM-24) and the Clark Fork quadrangle (DWM-25).

DWM-24 and DWM-25 are available for downloading as PDFs from www.idahogeology.org

See the DWMs for complete Map Unit descriptions.

The Map Store / TerraPen Geographics

100A Church Street, Sandpoint, ID 83864
208-265-8883 www.GetGreatMaps.com

Moving to 109 Main St (Sandpoint) December 2008



Scotchman Past

Smokechasing in the Scotchmans

By Larry Stone

It was a late August evening when the phone rang. It was Joe Brashear reporting a fire up in the Scotchmans, high on the hill and near the head of Webb Canyon. Joe ran his own grocery store in Clark Fork, but in his heart, he was really a man of the woods; at every opportunity he was fishing, hiking or hunting. Joe spotted the smoke as he was coming down out of Lightning Creek. He said the smoke didn't show for long, but he was sure it was a fire. We had lightning through that area a few days earlier. That fact, plus I knew that Joe was a reliable woodsman, I knew we had a fire. A "sleeper fire" – one that hangs on for several days and then one afternoon when it spreads into some thicker fuel and the wind comes up, it can get up and run. Every fire starts small, even the mighty "Sundance Fire", burning more than 55,000 acres and making one of the fastest runs in history, started small. It was August and time to find this fire and keep it small.

I was living at the Clark Fork Ranger Station, so it didn't take long to grab my rig and drive quickly up to Cascade Creek. It was nearly dark when I arrived, and no smoke was showing. I scanned the hillside and looked hard with binoculars for a long time, trying desperately to spot something. Now it was completely dark, not a flicker or glow to guide on. Smokechasing at night on a wooded steep hillside with nothing showing is most often useless.

Back at the Ranger Station I recruited two smokechasers at the bunkhouse and alerted them of an early morning departure, Clint Rice and John Robinson. Clint was a marathon runner and John was a Forestry student at Missoula. Both were experienced smoke chasers in their early twenties and hard as nails.

The next morning, at first light, the three of us were at Cascade Creek and again nothing was showing. The Scotchmans were always designated as a Smokejumper area; the rugged terrain made ground travel difficult and slow. But ordering smoke jumpers out of Missoula, to a fire without a definite location, that wasn't showing, was not advisable. No, this was a job for smokechasers.

We decided to go high up the Goat Mountain trail and then contour across the head of Webb Canyon. The fire pack straps cut into our shoulders as we carried 50lbs. plus packs up the steep trail. Each smokechaser pack contains everything to sustain a firefighter for two full days: a shovel and Pulaski, a hand file and axe stone to keep the tools sharp, a one man first aid kit, a flashlight and 4 extra batteries, 6 1-meal rations, orange crepe paper (for ground to air signals) and a paper sleeping bag. One fire pack carried an additional cross-cut saw (bowed and tied around the outside of the pack) and 2 felling wedges. Water was the most precious item, as the lightning fires are usually high on the ridge tops and the creeks at the bottom of the hill. We carried two 1 qt. canteens on our belts and a 1 gal. canteen tied on the pack.

We made fairly good time going up the steep trail, stopping only occasionally for a breather. The sun was well up as we neared the top of Goat Mountain. Checking the map, it looked like time to take the sidehill into Webb Canyon. The timber was thick and a visual vantage point was hard to come by. Seeking out any

opening, we kept watching for any sign of smoke, yet being careful not to lose any elevation after the long hard climb up the mountain. On around the hillside, without an azimuth to work from, or a know landmark, this fire was becoming a needle in a haystack.

We had a radio with us and about 0900, we heard the Air-Patrol radio-in that he was entering the District. We quickly called and requested he deviate from his regular route and fly to Webb Canyon to help us pick-up this fire, Giving him our best guess at a legal location, we held our breath as he made 3 or 4 passes over the area. Then came the bad news - "Can't see any smoke in that area." Damn, another hope diminished. Continuing on, hoping for a vantage point, somewhere to scan the hillside... But such a place didn't seem to exist. Becoming more desperate to see out, we began finding trees we could climb to look out over the canopy, hoping for a puff of smoke.

We decided to drop down the hill a bit and make another pass back across the head of the canyon. We hadn't gone far when I got a faint whiff of smoke and then it was gone. I yelled at Clint and John, asking if they could smell anything. We stopped, stretching up almost on our tiptoes, chins up, sniffing the air. (We must have been a strange looking site.) The air seemed calm, but with the normal air movement of upslope during the day and downslope at night, we knew we had to be above the fire. Spreading out we worked our way down the hill, when one by one we started smelling smoke. It was wood smoke alright, and the heart rate quickened as we were finally on track to the fire. We had gone nearly a quarter mile downhill when suddenly there it was – a lightning seared whitebark pine snag, with fire in the top.

Burning embers had fallen from the snag and ignited ground fires that had been creeping around for several days. The ground fire had made several finger runs up the hill. Some seemed to have burned themselves out and others were becoming active.

The fire at the NW corner was spreading into a patch of wind thrown heavy timber. Caching our fire packs in a safe place, we grabbed our tools and stated hitting this area with dirt and punching a fireline. A fire in these heavy fuels would burn hot, throw pots, and make suppression much longer and difficult. After much smoke eating we got this area cut off with a fireline and the hot areas cooled down. Hotspotting continued around the fire, building short sections of fireline and cooling down the active burning. A time consuming but necessary cup trench had to be dug across the bottom of the fire, to catch rolling material and burning embers from igniting fire below us.

Now it was time to get that snag down. Sighting the snag's lean by using a shovel handle as a plumb bob, we decided to fell it into somewhat of an opening, quartering upslope. A broken limb at the top of the snag was hanging precariously, a real "widow maker". John was the lookout, ready to yell if the limb started to move, and Clint and I manned the cross-cut. With the undercut completed, we checked it closely to make sure the snag would go in the right direction. Hot embers were still falling from high up the snag and we hunched our backs, trying to keep the hot chunks from going down our necks.

The saw was sharp and soon the back cut was completed. Just as the

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Over the Top Volunteer

Ann Wimberley, High Hopes

By *Phil Hough*

Making a difference in people's lives has been a hallmark of Ann Wimberley's life, both professionally and personally. Going first to graduate school to study anatomy, Ann quickly gravitated to medical school where she would graduate with a medical degree, become a primary care internal medicine physician and be able to help people.

After retiring from their medical practices, Ann, and Neil moved from Alabama to North Idaho around 5 years ago, seeking out a place close to nature with a strong sense of community. They found Hope, settled high in the hills beyond it and love living there. They found a community and became an important part of it. Ann keeps finding ways to give back and make those community bonds even stronger.

An Idaho Master Gardener and hobby landscaper, Ann has been active in the Hope Garden Club and the Native Plant Society. We are fortunate that Ann honed her skills as a journalist by working on her high school and college newspapers and editing both her high school and college yearbooks. Bonner and Boundary Counties are fortunate to have Ann founding and leading NAMI Far North (National Alliance on Mental Illness). Immediately following Hurricane Katrina, Ann and Neil spent 5 weeks as



Ann Wimberley
Photo courtesy Phil Hough

volunteers in Long Beach Mississippi, using their skills and experience as physicians to assist in disaster relief. And making lifelong friends with others during the process.

That connection to people, getting to know the people who live near, visit and care about the Scotchmans and learning about their stories keeps Ann engaged as the editor of our newsletter.

From hiking to foraging for mushrooms, getting to know the Scotchmans keeps Ann returning time and again to our wilderness in waiting. Ann continues to work as a volunteer for Wilderness designation for the Scotchmans to give something back to her community, to give something special to her 6 year old grandchild in Mobile Alabama, to give her hope and a special place near Hope which will remain unchanged for all future generations.

Ann Wimberley, physician, healer, editor, community organizer and wilderness woman, our Over the Top Volunteer this month!

Smokechasing in the Scotchmans

Continues from previous page (6)

snag lifted up off the stump, the "widow maker" broke loose, John yelled out, and we ran away, just as it hit the ground! Now the top of the snag began burning quite aggressively. When they are standing, they burn like a candle, but when they hit the ground, they burn like firewood in a stove.

With the snag cooled down and the fireline completed around the perimeter, it was time to check for spot fires. Snags can throw fire brands quite a distance. We searched the area 100 feet or more around the fire. Thankfully, no spot fires were found.

By now the sun had slipped behind the horizon, and we were glad we had packed our jackets in with us, as the mountains get cold at night. The jackets were quite welcome as we stopped to eat a fire ration. Rations aren't a big meal, but they are something to keep the belly away from the backbone.

After stopping to eat, it was hard to get motivated to get up and move again. But with much work left, we worked late into the night, digging, chipping, and mixing dirt into the hot embers. We were above the thermal belt, that area in the middle third of the slope where temperatures can remain the highest and humidities the lowest and fires burn the most active, all through the night. We knew if we turned logs and burning chunks over and exposed them to the night's heavy damp air, many would go out by morning.

Sometime around midnight, with the fire looking pretty quiet, it was time to call it a day. Picking out the best near level spot, not far from the fire, and grubbing it out with a Pulaski and filling it with tree boughs, the paper sleeping bags were laid in place.

Boots off and hard hats covering the tops to keep the dampness out, coat for a pillow and the mental alarm clock set for 0500 hours, we climbed into the sleeping bags. We slept with one eye open and the bags crinkled with every movement.

The next morning the body was sore and stiff; with the nourishment of another ration and some instant coffee, brewed in a ration can over some hot coals, the kinks began to loosen-up. Mop-up was the order of the day, and we found our last smoke about noon, but a Fireman with any skookum knows you don't sign a fire out during the burning period (100-1600 Hrs).

The afternoon was spent cold-trailing (bare-hand checking every square foot of burned area), looking again for spot fires, and watching for a swarm of little black gnats that fly in a circle over a hot area, a sure sign that a hot spot is there.

1600 Hrs. Scatter unburned fuels inside the fireline, clean the fireline, fill out the Fireman's Report, and Sign this fire OUT.

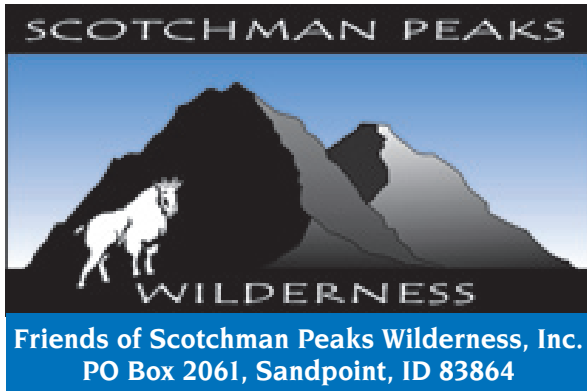
The fire packs are lighter now, it's all downhill from here and tonight we sleep in our own beds.

Fire tactics have changed over the decades, from grub hoes and pack strings, to chain saws and helicopters, but the smokechasers have always carried fire packs on their backs.

Because of men like Clint and John and all those before and after them the Scotchmans are as pristine today as they were in yester-year. It is because of wildland firefighters that future generations can enjoy what we leave behind.

Proudly submitted by a wildland firefighter.

Larry Stone, USFS Fire Management Officer, Ret.



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.

Name: _____

Address: _____

e-mail: _____

Phone: _____

- 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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