



Fort Collins Chapter Newsletter

August
2012

Your local resource for outdoor adventure

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The north end of the Mummy Range from the Pennock Pass road after a summer thunderstorm:
Sugarloaf Mountain, Fall Mountain and Comanche Peak, August 2012. (Wulschleger)

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CMC and Social Media

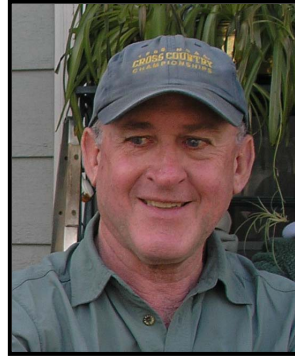
CMC has recently ventured into the amazing world of social media via Facebook. As a person who has avoided this area of the internet I now am eager to become more savvy about this form of communication. The state CMC has a Facebook page as do several of the local chapters, including your own Fort Collins Group. Visit the state CMC Facebook page at

www.facebook.com/ColoradoMountainClub

and access our Fort Collins Group site at

www.facebook.com/groups/fortcollinscmcgroup.

Chair's Corner



The Fort Collins Group page is an interactive site with beautiful photos and comments of recent trips including our Third Saturday Scrambles, Bicycling to Art in Public Places as well as a link to

how you can help with local issues such as the High Park Fire. Upcoming events at the state level such as the Centennial Celebration Fest on July 21 in Buena Vista. While Facebook nonmembers may only view the page, Facebook members can share their photos and information on hiking, climbing, skiing, snowshoeing, mountain biking, backpacking, trail work and conservation efforts. See for your self. You are invite to be a friend of the Fort Collins CMC Facebook group. Thanks to Scott Farquhar for getting this up and running and to York and others for their assistance.

- Don Campbell, Chair, Fort Collins Group

The Fort Collins Group Welcomes New Members:

June

Linda Formas

Debbi Miskulin

David Roller and Connie Salts

Peter Kos

Lingling Gallacher

Hilje Kuiper

July

Albert, Christopher and Dominic Snyder

Madeleine Ortega

August

Craig Foard

Andrea Zanchuk

Bill Saust

See you on the trail!

Dragons Egg Rock

Dragons Egg Rock is another nearby destination you may have never heard of, but I think it makes for one of the more unique and unusual destinations in Rocky Mountain National Park. It is perched at 12,200' elevation on the huge south face of Mount Meeker, and requires a substantial effort to reach (11 miles round trip with some rugged off-trail travel and about 3,900' elevation gain). From a distance, and even as one approaches the formation, it hardly looks like a dragon's egg. But from certain angles, the egg-like shape is evident. So, Ranger Jack Moomaw who named this feature, was probably not drunk when he did so, as suggested otherwise by Lisa Fos-

ter in her popular hiking guide for RMNP.

On June 28, Steve Martin led a group of eight very seasoned hikers, including at least three in their 70s, up the Sandbeach Lake trail to Hunters Creek, a bit over 3 miles from the trailhead. We then proceeded through a maze of downed trees along the east side of the creek, using a faint climbers trail when possible. Gradually, the going got a little easier once we got through the worst of the blowdown and the timber thinned out some. As we kept going, the true beauty of this seldom-visited area became evident. Hunters Creek drains the south sides of Chiefs Head Peak,

Pagoda Mountain, Longs Peak and Mount Meeker, and the drainage holds Keplinger Lake in the upper cirque. This drainage area is spectacular in its own right, but the massive, steep, south-facing rock faces of these big peaks so dominate the scene that it is hard to focus for long on the pristine stream and meadows at their base.

The route to Dragons Egg Rock becomes relatively obvious when the first sizeable meadow along Hunter Creek appears, along with a small drainage, entering from the northeast from the central part of Meeker's south face. The Rock is visible at this point as a rectangular cliff of darker rock



Dragons Egg Rock on the south face of Mount Meeker at 12,200' (Photo by Ward Whicker)

well up on the face. We headed more or less directly toward the cliff, trying to find the path of least resistance through a jumble of rocks. Here, it was best to stay on alpine grasses and the more stable talus where possible, avoiding the larger talus and dense willows along the drainage. This part of the hike was steep enough for me to make good use of the mountaineers' "rest step" and "pressure breathing". As our destination became more evident, I suggested a brief stop for a group photo, mainly for me at least to rest a bit and to gather the group together to discuss the final approach.

We decided to approach the Rock from a talus gully immediately on the west side of it, which turned out to be a "go". After a short, fun scramble, we were all on the top of the "Egg", where we enjoyed an unhurried lunch, astounding views of Wild Basin, and the usual satisfied chatter among companions. More than once, I found my eyes being drawn toward the upper part of Meeker, thinking this would be a remarkable, if not a bit intimidating, route to the summit. We finally started down, taking a route to the east for variety and crossing over to the east side of the small stream, which provided a mostly grassy descent until we approached a large willow thicket, at which point we crossed

back to the west side of the drainage, closer to our ascent route.

The trip back to the Sandbeach Lake trail was no easier than the ascent, but we got there with only myself suffering a few scratches from a minor footing slip on steep gravel beneath a downed tree. Once back to the trail, it was the usual "slog" out to the trailhead. Thinking back on the trip, this one to me at least, was as satisfying as many of the dramatic summits I have stood upon. It had all the basic elements of hard & sustained effort, route-finding challenge, outstanding scenery, and fine companionship. On top of that, we saw no other hikers during the off-trail portion,



The group with Dragons Egg Rock in the background. From left to right, Terri Gerard, Rudy Schmiedt, Steve Martin, Phil Straffin, Ron Tuttle, Paul Metz and Dave Grohusky. (Photo by Ward Whicker)

so one can also find the rewards of solitude on a hike such as this one. For a satisfying and very

feasible adventure, try Dragons Egg Rock sometime.

--Ward Whicker

August Fort Collins CMC Leadership Column: Keeping Groups Together – The “Buddy Back” System

One of the most common challenges for a leader on outdoor trips is keeping the group together. Denver CMC trips used to be famous for scattering people for miles along a trail – and we don’t want to be like Denver, right? In the meet-up world, many organizers (meet-ups typically do not pretend to have leaders) do not even try to keep people together. Even worse, in my opinion at least, many cyclists in bike club rides seem to revel in dropping people off the back of a group ride.

CMC trips are supposed to have a sweep (AKA rear leader) who ensures that no one gets dropped in this fashion, but sometimes this is not enough. I was the sweep on one winter climb up an exposed ridge. Some of group got summit fever and this drew away the other leaders, leaving me alone with a very strong yet light-weight participant. She kept getting blown over by the gusting wind on to jagged, ice-rimmed rocks. As I ran through scenarios in my head, I realized that we would need help if one of us got hurt as the situation called for at least 3 people, with one person to attend to the hurt person and one person to get help. And in these extreme conditions, it would be best to send two people for help – that is why CMC has a minimum trip size of 4. While I’ve seen some leaders supply the sweep with a walkie-talkie to remedy this issue, I have seen too many instances where electronic devices do not work,

often due to the battery-draining effect of cold.

It recently occurred to me that the “buddy back” system that I had devised for geology field trip convoys could be applied here. Having up to 10 student vehicles chasing a field trip leader can cause incredible confusion – just imagine an old VW bus trying to follow a souped-up Mustang over a pass. So I instructed everyone (except the last vehicle) to keep the vehicle behind them – their “buddy” – in their rear view mirror. If their buddy disappeared, they were to slow down dramatically, and if they didn’t reappear soon, they were to pull to the side of the road. Eventually, this inverted inchworm motion propagates to the front, and the leader can circle back and address any problems.

On outings, I first applied this to bike trips, using the rearview mirror affixed to my bike helmet. It is a great tool for keeping bike groups together. In a pace line, I can see the person behind me so I can slow should they drop off the pace. Yes, I am a strange cyclist to some - my NOLS Expedition Behavior (see the earlier column on EB) training says not to drop people. I used the buddy back system coming down from Crater Lake when the last person in the pace line fell asleep. He awoke rather rapidly during his nicely cushioned, yet painful deceleration into a blackberry bush. But he was happy that the rest of the group noticed, and helped

him de-thorn himself.

More recently, I have applied the buddy back system to CMC outings, and it seems to work well. If people just check over their shoulder every once in a while, they can make sure their “buddy” is in view. If they aren’t, they can just stop and wait, perhaps voicing their intentions up the line. This has worked particularly well on our third Saturday scrambles, like last month’s climb of the Little Matterhorn, as you really want people to stay close together on steep terrain to keep dislodged rocks from gaining deadly momentum.

The buddy back system has the additional benefit of involving everyone in group leadership, which can bond the group more effectively, making for a better overall experience. It also helps inexperienced front leaders set a pace suitable for everyone in the group as a too rapid pace will soon have them hiking alone. And should the rear leader have a problem, as I did on a trip with the Denver group, it provides an extra margin of safety. In my case, as I turned a steep corner on a snow field, my boot plunged into a hidden crack between the rocks, wedging my boot securely. I found myself laughing as I hung head down on the steep snow face and used my ice ax to climb up and free my boot. I wondered how long it would have taken the group to notice if I had really been stuck, or had broken my leg.

There are exceptions, of course. If, as the sweep, I need to irrigate a tree, I'll usually tell the person ahead of me that I'll catch up within 3-5 minutes, depending on the group pace. And sometimes on the last leg of the return, when there are no questions about safety and navigation, it can be a blessing to allow people travel at

their own pace back to the vehicles, allowing faster folks to stretch their legs.

This brings up the next topic of the series – how do you deal with all of the different natural paces on a hike?

P.S. A question for those who have read this far – what do you

think is the most dangerous thing in the mountains? Send me your ideas

(erslev@warnercnr.colostate.edu) and I'll compile your answers in a coming column.

- Eric Erslev, Fort Collins CMC Leadership and Safety Coordinator

Ouzel and Ogalalla Peaks

This is another in our series of articles and trip reports on Colorado's lesser-known and less frequently visited summits. Because our CMC trip leaders this year have focused on peaks in Wild Basin of Rocky Mountain National Park, this report complements our current orientation.

Ouzel Peak: 12,716'

Ogalalla Peak: 13,138'

Trailhead: Rocky Mountain National Park

Wild Basin Ranger Station at 8,500'

Route: Northeastern Ridge on Ouzel, tundra (snow!) walk over

to and back from Ogalalla, descent off Ouzel via North Face Route

Roundtrip distance: 19.5 Miles

Cumulative Elevation Gain: 5,585'

Participants: Carolyn Randall, Steve Martin



Ouzel Peak's East Ridge from below Pipit Lake. (Photo by Steve Martin)

By any account, this was a long, tiring day—the unconsolidated fresh snow at higher elevations added to the almost 20-mile RT and the significant elevation gain, to smoke us. But we were blessed with nice weather and fairly moderate winds for most of the day, and despite being tired by the time we reached the trailhead 14 ½ hours after our start, it was the “pleasant” type of tiredness associated with having had a great outing that involved continuous, purposeful effort. And we had Wild Basin all to ourselves—we never saw another person the entire day.

Ogalalla Peak is one of the most distant summits to access in RMNP. From Wild Basin Ranger Station, it requires a 9 ¾ mile approach and summit climb. Hence, even though it's one of the Park's 19 coveted thirteeners, it isn't climbed with regularity. We saw that the summit register had been placed on Ogalalla by 14erWorld Member D'Arcy Straub in August, 1998. It was only one-third filled,



Carolyn Randall Sunbathing on the Continental Divide with Ogalalla Peak in Background. (Photo by Steve Martin)

and the last entry before ours was on October 1, 18 days earlier. The nearby summit of Ouzel Peak, often climbed in conjunction with Ogalalla, no longer has a summit register—the old glass jar at the summit cairn had been broken, and there was no evi-

dence of any paper log. Although several 14erWorlders had logged their names in the register on Ogalalla, only one trip report existed in the 14erWorld Trip Reports section for either of these mountains, written by Ken Nolan in August, 2004 about his marvelous day-climb of five remote peaks at the southern/western edges of Wild Basin. Not a lot of traffic; not much in writing to chew on, for those hoping for trip reports. I hope this report provides a bit of additional useful information, particularly for the transitional season when snow is present in sufficient depth to create more challenging and interesting climbing of these mountains.



Ridge Connecting Ogalalla Peak and Elk Tooth, with St. Vrain and Meadows Mountains in Center Distance. Cony and Upper Hutcheson Lakes lie between Elk Tooth and the Southern Slopes of Copeland Mountain. (Photo by Steve Martin)

We met up in SW Fort Collins at 4 AM and headed directly to Estes Park and Wild Basin. We were away from the trailhead at 5:40, a few minutes later than we'd hoped for. In spite of recent snow, we found the trail up to Bluebird Lake to be mainly free of snow and ice except for occa-

sional stretches of ice/snow where the trail crossed northern exposures, and on the final 3/4 mile of trail to the lake. But we didn't need snow shoes, and we cached ours near the outlet of Bluebird. Even though above 11,000 feet we were dealing almost continuously with snow, the 'shoes would not have been beneficial at these higher elevations, due to slope angle and the interspersed projecting rocks. Further, snow was fairly loose, so crampons were of no function.

After crossing the outlet stream at the lake, we climbed easy third-class rock for about 30 feet before heading west across moderate ground to the basin that contains Lark Pond and Pipit Lake. From the basin we ascended up troublesome snow/rock to Ouzel Peak's Northeast Ridge. "Troublesome" doesn't suggest route difficulty—it refers to the snow conditions we encountered, that resulted in a lot of postholing and occasional fall—"troughs", where gaps between talus were superficially covered by snow that collapsed under our weight. So going up this long slope to reach the ridge was slow. Once on the ridge we were able to keep the most difficult climbing to Class 3, going to the north side of the ridge crest as necessary to avoid more difficult situations—the snow cover made the ridge route more challenging than it would be when bare; due to extreme exposure on the left, we were especially careful with the snow-covered ridge.

It was because of the presence of snow that we decided on this route to the top of Ouzel and over to Ogalalla rather than our preferred route of ascending to Coney Pass and going from there—perhaps quite risky under condi-

tions of loose snow. The ridge line ascent of Ouzel takes time, at least when snow's present, so don't assume that you can run up this structure. Along the way, spectacular drops can be appreciated off the ridge's south side, down to Junco Lake. And of course the views of the western end of Mount Copeland and its ridge connection to the divide via Coney Pass are stunning. Ogalalla peeks up over all of this, so as you ascend Ouzel, your second objective beckons to you. And, on this day, it was all snow-covered!

We reached the top of Ouzel at 12:25 PM, a little later than we'd expected, but not surprising in view of the slow pace caused by snow. While we ate a portion of our lunch, we admired the surrounding mountains, all decked out in white. The sheer eastern face of Mt. Alice showed its stuff, and all the tricky terrain between us and Alice was fairly easy to sort out from this great vantage. Bright sun aided in picking out some of the subtleties to the

north and south—the southern views commanded by peaks of the Indian Peaks, all lined up in a special configuration that can't be appreciated anywhere as fully as this line up can be from Ouzel or, especially, Ogalalla.

We broke away from Ouzel about 12:45 PM, finding the going across the flat and up onto Ogalalla to be easy. Nonetheless, the pesky snow conditions, required much postholing and retarded the overall speed. After fighting our way through this snow we reached the false summit of Ogalalla and became a bit discouraged—the true summit seemed distant and so much higher than we stood. In reality, the real top was close, and only about 100 feet above us, so we made short work of getting there, reaching the summit at 2:05 PM. Here's where I was able to enjoy reading through the summit log, recognizing names of 14er-Worlders and of friends I've climbed with in the past. The ridge to Elk Tooth from Ogalalla is an impressive stint of land-



Bluebird Lake and Northern Cliffs of Copeland Mountain Catching Late-afternoon October Sun. (Photo by Steve Martin)

scape (as is Elk Tooth itself!); this is viewed nicely from the summit, and especially from the false summit we came over.

After a quick stay on Ogalalla we began the traverse back toward Ouzel at 2:15. We skirted Ouzel on its western slopes, avoiding extraneous elevation. Once to the northern side of the mountain we descended steep snow to the western edge of Pipit Lake.

About half way down, we came on a slope that screamed “glissade” to us, and off we went on the first serious glissade for us of the 2005/06 winter climbing season! We were really tired by the time we descended to Pipit Lake—so much distance over tough snow had been covered since we had ascended out of this cirque hours earlier. We sat. We rested for awhile. We ate. We hydrated. And we

thought about the marvelous experience we had just shared of climbing these two remote mountains under early snow conditions, and having them all to ourselves—and, of course, we thought about the 7 ½ miles facing us as we descended to our car at the trailhead. We arrived there at 8:05 PM, feeling just great about our long day together!

Pagoda Mountain

This trip report is not about an isolated and all but forgotten peak; rather it is about one of the predominant neighbors of Longs Peak at the head of Glacier Gorge, one of the most popular and scenic areas in Rocky Mountain National Park. Topping out at 13,497 feet above sea level (the 7th highest peak in the Park), Pagoda sits between Keyboard of the Winds and Chiefs Head Peak and sports a stupendous north face of smooth granite that is highly visible from most locations in Glacier Gorge. While not as famous as some of its neighbors, it offers a substantial physical challenge to ascend to its triangular summit. The challenge is not so much it's level of difficulty, as it is the long (6-mile) approach to Green Lake at it's base, and the arduous (almost 1,600 vertical feet) gulley of loose scree, gravel and talus that leads to the saddle between it and Keyboard of the Winds, which in turn sets roughly 400 vertical feet below it's summit.

I had heard about Pagoda for years, before having the first chance to try it in September 2011. Steve Martin was scheduled to mentor Steve Clark for his “Leader-in-Training” (LIT) hike on



Left to right view of Keyboard of the Winds, the col (saddle), and the north face of Pagoda Mountain from Green Lake. (Photo by Scott Farquhar)

September 17, but due to a shoulder injury suffered the week before, Steve Martin was unable to be there. He asked me to fill in for him in this role, which I was happy to do, although I had not done this climb before. It turned out that the LIT hike only went as far as Green Lake when we decided that the weather (high winds, low clouds, rain, snow and ice) would not be conducive to a

safe climb. Then this summer, Steve Martin and I decided to offer this magnificent mountain as a regular CMC hike for July 7. Due to an ominous weather forecast, we re-scheduled the trip for August 12, which finally happened, quite successfully, under fine weather conditions.

Our group of eight seasoned hikers/mountaineers left the Glacier

Gorge Trailhead just as it was getting light enough to dispense with head lamps. We reached Black Lake about 8 am and took a short break near the edge of the mirrored surface of the lake and marveled at the sunshine creeping down the walls of the surrounding mountains.

The trail beyond Black Lake is obvious for a short way but gradually becomes less and less distinct in the upper plateau of the Gorge. In this section, there are dense willows and small ponds to negotiate, requiring a somewhat meandering route. But the increasing awe of the trek more than makes up for the tedium of route finding. Passing by the Spearhead, we finally came to Green Lake, where the real climbing begins. At this point, we again refueled and rested a bit, only to realize that although we had completed about 88% of the one-way distance to the summit, we had only accomplished about half of the required elevation gain. Now, we pondered the fact that we needed to gain almost



Climbers approaching the summit block on Pagoda Mountain. (Photo by Scott Farquhar)

2,000 feet in only 0.8 of a horizontal mile.

The route from Green Lake to the Keyboard-Pagoda saddle was somewhat unclear and subjective, with many possible paths

into the more defined gully above, so it was fortunate that Steve and Kevin Willey, both of whom had summited Pagoda before, were available to lead this section. It was obvious that a cliffy section of rock early on could be circumvented to the east, and then we could angle more to the southwest to get into the defined gully leading to the saddle, or col. The going was only class 2, yet the loose rock and scree made upward progress tiring and tedious. One step up, one half step down; another step up, another half step down, and so on. Even many of the larger rocks would move down when stepped on or nearby. After what seemed like a very long time, we finally reached the gully proper and from there, it was just a matter of looking for the path of least resistance to the saddle.

After another short break at the saddle, we started up the final leg to the summit via the northeast ridge. Here, we encountered a jumbled field of large blocks of



On the summit of Pagoda Mountain with Longs Peak in the background. From left to right are Mark Sickles, Wendy Phillips (sitting), Terri Gerard (standing), Kevin Willey, Steve Martin, Scott Farquhar and Péter Bodig. (Photo by Ward Whicker)

rock which, especially along the ridgetop near the huge north face, provided some wonderful class 3 scrambling that was relatively easy, fun, and exhilarating. By staying more left or south of the ridgetop, the scrambling was easier, mostly class 2.

Interestingly, Gerry Roach's and Lisa Foster's climbing guides differ from one another on these classifications for Pagoda.

Clearly, near the boundaries between classes, individual subjectivity comes into play. Also, the true level of difficulty can change substantially, depending on the actual routes chosen, even when the routes are quite close to one another. At any rate, the group was soon together on the summit, where we took photos, ex-

changed congratulations, ate lunch and marveled at the 360 degree panorama of mountains.

The descent back to the saddle went quickly, about a half-hour, and then the downhill slog (or "slide" if you prefer) was next. I thought going down this part was easier than the ascent because on average, a step often covered twice the ground due to the loose scree and larger rocks. Often the scree was up around the ankles or higher, and everything around the feet was moving. But, once it was evident that the slope was just gentle enough and had sufficient texture to prevent rocks from gaining much gravitational momentum, I found the descent to be fun, almost.

Once back at Green Lake, we took a good break, removed helmets, and realized that the more difficult part of the climb was over. Some 12 ½ hours after we left the trailhead, we were back at our cars. The next big challenge for me was getting out of the car and walking after returning to Pringles in Ft. Collins, where the car pool started. This part was rather hilarious, with some of us moving like 90+ year olds, whose bodies had coagulated to varied degrees on the drive back. I think I was the worst off, but after a day or two I was back to normal, mostly.

- *Ward Whicker*

Fort Collins CMC wishes to thank businesses that have previously supported us with paid advertising in our newsletter. However, due to a policy change, we will no longer be including paid commercial advertising.

This newsletter is published by the Fort Collins Group of the Colorado Mountain Club. Please send submissions to jgw311@hotmail.com by the 10th of the month to include in the next month's edition. Please call the CMC State Membership office at 800.633.4417 to notify them of address changes.

Editors note: the following list identifies officers for the 2012 calendar year.

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Rock Leading Course	Vacant – need volunteer		



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