



Fort Collins Chapter Newsletter

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Your local resource for outdoor adventure

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Participants on a February 11 CMC snowshoe trip to Odessa Lake (photo by Gene Culbertson).

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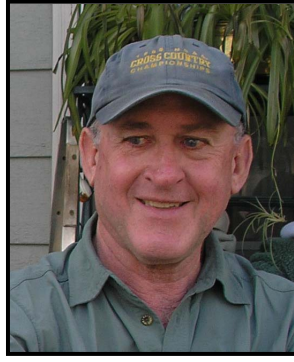
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Centennial Celebration

This year, Colorado Mountain Club's 100th anniversary, will be marked by special hikes and climbs. Great opportunities for trip leaders and members throughout the year include ascents to the tops of the 100 highest peaks in Colorado. On September 8th leaders will conduct ascents of all 54 fourteeners. To see a list and to sign up for these celebratory hikes go to CMC.org.

Renowned Colorado landscape photographer, John Fielder will be on hand to record the kick off celebration at CMC headquarters in Golden on April 28th. We encourage everyone to participate in these trips.

Chair's Corner



We are always looking for volunteers for Club activities. Plan to be part of our trail maintenance crew for work on the heavily used Grey Rock Trail near Fort Collins.

In the past we have 'adopted' this trail under a program organized by the US Forest Service, and we are looking for a volunteer to coordinate this activity.

Look for another exciting opportunity to further your hiking skills, somewhere around the Ides of March. That is the scheduled startup for our Mountain Hiking School under the leadership of David Wasson. Look for more information at fortcmc.org.

I'll see you on the trail!

Don Carpenter
Chair, Fort Collins Group, CMC

Fort Collins CMC Leadership Column

Mountain leadership why it is different and worth examining

I would like to start by expressing my admiration for the efficient and effective ways that my predecessor, Eileen Edelman, dealt with safety and leadership issues impacting our club over the last few years. Thank you, Eileen!

As the Fort Collins CMC board member focusing on leadership and safety issues, I am starting a monthly newsletter column on leadership issues. Outdoor leadership has fascinated me ever since I took a National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) course at age 16. More recently, I helped rewrite the CMC Trip Leader Manual for the State Safety and Leadership Committee. In the coming months, I will present some thoughts on everything from leadership styles to

local examples of great leadership. I welcome other perspectives as I know leadership styles are diverse – please send me your comments!

I maintain that mountain leadership differs in important ways from other leadership opportunities in our society. In particular, triage, sacrificing a few for the benefit of the many, is not a commonly-used option in the mountains. Industry leaders and athletic coaches usually find that success requires terminating or benching unproductive team members regardless of the reasons impacting an individual. In fact, competitive athletic contests are typically set up so that most team members would like to play more than is possible due to the

size of the teams and the duration of the games. This creates a competitive situation in which there are winners and losers, both between the teams and the individuals on the teams.

The mountains make this win-lose leadership model a risky thing indeed. For me, the beauty of our mountain activities is that no trip is a success unless everyone has a good time. Every trip has to be a win-win proposition. For this to happen, great flexibility and intelligence is required from both the leaders, who need to accommodate the diverse abilities of trip participants, and the participants, who might need to cheerfully accept that they do not have the conditioning to join the summit team or that they need to

turn around due to the limitations of other people on the trip.

This makes mountain leadership and participation a great challenge for all, but that is precisely why our mountain activities bring inspiration and growth – I know I learn far more from my challenges than my easy times. The mountains stretch the societal safety net and allow us to find our strength, a strength that helps us through future tough times. Paul Petzoldt, a great mountaineer

and founder of NOLS, wrote the following in his 1974 The Wilderness Handbook.

“After a few days away from civilization, everyone starts to change. Values change. The veneer, the bluffing, artificiality, and crutch of family wealth or prestige are no longer valid in the natural environment of camping. Suddenly, people must make their place in a new society

based upon what they can actually do and what they really are.”

It is the role of the trip leader(s), in collaboration with the trip participants, to set the tone for that new society. As such, outdoor trip leadership can be seen as a revolutionary activity!

Eric Erslev, Fort Collins CMC Leadership and Safety Coordinator

Fort Collins Web Pages

The FortCMC.org webpages contain a variety of information about the Fort Collins Group and our activities. Besides listing our current Group Council members along with how to contact them, you can find information on the 10 essentials, read current announcements, locate previous newsletters, find flyers or information on the next monthly program, learn about trip classifications, etc.

Recently a couple of members have started submitting photo-

graphs of trips to be shared on the photos page at:

<http://fortcmc.org/photos.html>

The Activity Schedule for the group is located at:

<http://fortcmc.org/activitySchedule.html>

This page is updated every morning with the latest information from the State CMC Database.

These webpages are just one of

the ways we get to communicate with each other. If you have information to share on the webpage, please contact York at redyork@gmail.com.

Together the website, newsletters, and weekly emails provide a breath of information about our club and activities.

Check them out.

*York
The Red Lion*

Powder Ski Tour: First of the Series

The alpine backcountry ski tour series got off to a slow start this winter because of the general lack of snow. Originally scheduled to start December 17, the series was basically rescheduled to begin January 8 and 10. Two dates were needed in order to accommodate the unexpectedly large number of skiers who expressed interest. These tours, led by John Raich and Ward Whicker, are designed to provide experience with alpine ski touring in the backcountry. The level of skiing was expected to be moderate in terms of distance, elevation



gain, and difficulty of the terrain for the early tours. Subsequent tours will likely be more difficult and require more advanced skills. Of course, snow and weather conditions can dictate where we can ski safely and comfortably, so occasional deviations from the general plan can be expected.

Most people engaged in this type of backcountry skiing use alpine touring (AT) equipment. This equipment is usually similar to downhill ski equipment, except it is important that skis, boots and

bindings are lightweight, because most of the time, perhaps 80%, is spent climbing, and only 15 or 20% is spent actually skiing. The climbing phase can be quite demanding physically, especially in steeper terrain and when it is necessary to break trail in soft, deep snow. Special bindings that hinge at the boot toe to allow climbing or walking and lock the entire boot down to the ski for descending, are necessary. Also essential, are climbing skins which stick to the ski bottoms and allow one to climb the snow at relatively steep angles while preventing back-sliding.

Another difference between skiing in the backcountry and lift-served areas is avalanche danger. While ski areas go to great lengths to monitor and mitigate avalanche risks, the backcountry skier is on his or her own in terms

of deciding where to travel. So, it is very important for the backcountry skier to be aware of avalanche terrain, be trained in avalanche avoidance, and in case of someone getting buried in a slide, having the tools to find and hopefully rescue the unfortunate victim. In addition to getting specific avalanche training, the backcountry skier needs to carry as a minimum, a beacon, probe, and shovel. This means a significant commitment of time and money to become sufficiently aware and prepared to reduce the risk of dying in an avalanche. This is a particularly serious matter in Colorado, which usually leads the nation in avalanche fatalities each year.

Skiing un-groomed snow in the backcountry is very different from skiing groomed runs at lift-served areas. While many can ski with

relative ease on groomed terrain, far fewer people can easily handle the extremely variable snow conditions in the back country. These conditions can range from powder of varied depths and densities to rough, rock-hard wind-packed snow, to breakable crust. Also, the backcountry offers the added challenges of unmarked obstacles like rocks, stumps, downed trees, sudden terrain changes, steep gullies, icy patches and dense timber. So, newcomers to this sport often find these challenges to be intimidating.

But, once properly equipped and adequately experienced, backcountry skiers can find exhilarating adventure without having to contend with Denver area traffic, high priced lift tickets, lift lines, and reckless snow riders.



John Raich gains the ridge between South and North Diamond Peaks during one of the first two trips of the 2012 backcountry alpine ski tour series on January 10th.

On January 10, John Raich and I led a group of skiers up to North Diamond Peak near Cameron Pass. The group included Wendy Phillips, Steve & Shiela Dielman, Dave Grohusky, Eric Erslev, Mark Sickles and John Wullschleger. After over an hour of steep climbing up a gully connecting the Cameron Pass parking lot to the alpine bench below South Diamond Peak, we came to the base of the ridge extending south from North Diamond Peak. We found a safe route from there up to the ridgetop, but this required some strenuous kick-stepping in ski boots on the last section. The snow was very hard in most places, due to the relentless winds above treeline. On the ridge, we either walked on bare, windswept tundra or skied on the long but safe ridge cornice formation toward the summit. Because the snow cover directly below the summit was inadequate to ski safely, with rocks showing over a large area, we stopped just below it.

After a quick lunch in the lee of the ridge, we skied back down along the ridge cornice until John Raich identified a feasible ski line down the 25-30 degree slope. The first few turns revealed a few inches of soft snow over a hard base in most places, but hard, bare snow in small patches. Once I learned to spot the best places to turn, the run down off the ridge was pure fun & exhilaration. From there, the skiers worked their way down to treeline, finding mostly pleasant soft snow in which to carve linked turns.

Once well down into the forest, the snow became very soft, as the fresh snow was underlain by a couple of feet of unconsolidated granular (sugar) snow. This snow, technically called fac-



Eric Erslev and Ward Whicker prepare to descend by taking the skins off of their skis on the ridge below North Diamond Peak.

eted snow, forms from a strong temperature/water vapor gradient. This sort of base develops in a shallow snowpack when cold, clear nights cause the temperature/vapor gradient. When overlain by wind-slab snowdrifts in steep terrain, the faceted snow is weak and allows slabs to break loose and slide downhill as a slab avalanche. As the skiers descended, the soft snow and dense trees required a good

strong effort to negotiate, but all made it back safely to the parking lot.

With a total effort of about 4-5 hours, what did we accomplish? Not much if you consider that we only made one downhill run of approximately 1,400 vertical feet. But, the weather, the views, and the companionship were superb. We had an excellent physical workout, and successfully over-



Ward Whicker carves a turn on the slopes of North Diamond Peak.

came the challenges of extremely variable snow conditions. Judging by all the smiles back at the parking lot, I had the strong sense that it was a fulfilling experience for the whole group. I think it is safe to say that backcountry AT (or telemark) skiing is more about quality than quantity. Just a few sweet arcing turns linked down through a field of unbroken powder snow makes it all worthwhile for a growing number of skiers.

Ward Whicker

The Satellite Peaks of Greyrock

Continuing the series about lonely, rarely visited mountain peaks in our region, the more prominent peaks in the vicinity of our very familiar Greyrock Mountain in lower Poudre Canyon deserve notice. Probably 90% of the hikers in the Fort Collins Group have been up the well-established trails to Greyrock, and most of those have likely done this hike numerous times. Greyrock is a very impressive monolithic feature, and the views from it are spectacular in all directions. However, few take interest in several other peaks in the near vicinity that are available to off-trail hikers, and one, "North Greyrock" is even higher than Greyrock itself.

On January 21, the Fort Collins CMC group that had been planning to snowshoe to Signal Mountain had a very special tour of these peaks, thanks to Steve Martin, who led the way. For some time, Steve and I had planned for this day a strenuous snowshoe to Signal Mountain via

the Bulwark Ridge trail which begins in Dunraven Glade near Glen Haven. Having scouted this route in December, we found that not only was the snow deep and very unconsolidated, making travel a considerable effort, but also that there was an unusually large amount of new tree-fall along the ridge, necessitating even more effort and bushwhacking. But, with a large, strong group signed up for the trip, we thought these obstacles could be readily surmounted. However, a last minute check of the National Weather Service forecast for that area indicated the likelihood of winds to 60 mph and possibly higher, with blowing snow. We were not overly concerned about the winds as such, but when forest areas are thinned by blow-downs, nearby trees become ever more susceptible to the same fate. As falling trees can be deadly, we decided not to subject the group to this risk. Steve and I had both experienced the effects of micro-bursts of wind on large trees before, a

terrifying experience neither of us wants to repeat.

So, a last-minute change of plans was called for. Having climbed each of the 255 ranked (prominence >300 vertical feet) peaks in Larimer County (second only to Gunnison County in Colorado in the numbers of ranked peaks) Steve suggested we climb four of the satellite peaks of Greyrock Mountain. The weather forecast looked much better for this lower altitude, and we would be able to design a route that would offer some very interesting and rugged off-trail terrain, two short Class 3 scrambles, and an exciting 4th Class scramble up the "Aiguille du Greyrock" an impressive tower lying due west of Greyrock itself. These peaks were all new to me, and to our group, so it seemed a fine venue for the day. Also, it meant a departure time of 6:30 am instead of 4:30 am, a very popular change!

After a chilly start in the icy park-



Group on the summit of the “Aiguille du Greyrock”, a rock tower involving a challenging Class 4 climb. Left to right, JoAnn Herkenhoff, Steve Dean, Steve Martin, Gordon Thibideau, Ward Whicker, Joan Avens, Scott Farquhar, Kevin McCartney, and Kevin Willey. Photo by Jim Larkey (not in photo).

ing lot, we departed from the regular Greyrock Mountain trail-head and took the Greyrock Meadow trail where it splits off from the regular trail. We soon warmed up as we came to the sunlit south-facing slope. The winds were light, the sky blue, and the day looked to be very pleasant—a relief from the thought of high winds and blowing snow on Bulwark Ridge. As we approached Peak 7180', near the crest of that trail section before it descends to the Greyrock Meadow, we went off trail to the west and climbed toward the highest of three outcroppings. The short Class 3 pitch to the top over large boulders was easy

and fun scrambling. Soon, on the highpoint, unofficially called “Southwest Greyrock Mountain”, we marveled at the 360 degree panorama before us. Hewlett Gulch dropped off very steeply to our west, peaks of the Mummy and Rawah Ranges showed white in the distance, and Greyrock Mountain looked unusually dramatic from this unique perspective.

Next, we dropped down through old snow to the icy trail and proceeded to Greyrock Meadow, then again went off trail, proceeding north along the west edge of the meadow. We gradually climbed toward a prominent sad-

dle in the undulating ridge separating us from Hewlett Gulch. After reaching the saddle, we continued north, but now we were on the west-facing slope. We angled upward toward “North Greyrock Mountain” at 7,681', and took a small gully heading upward and northeast. As we continued on, the terrain features became very complex, and we had to cross from the east back to the west side of the ridge, and from there, we found a fairly straight-forward, easy 3rd Class scramble over large boulders to the summit. Here, we had a perspective of the heavily dissected Cache la Poudre Canyon drainage and mountain ranges to the



Jim Larkey descending the Aiguille du Greyrock (photo by Steve Dean).

west that were similar to the previous high point, but we also had sweeping views of the eroded plains extending north into Wyoming. The Rawhide Power Plant northeast of Fort Collins was clearly visible, as were the plains to the east. Again, we had yet another perspective of Greyrock Mountain that few people have seen, and we were actually 68 feet higher than it.

We descended back toward the previously mentioned saddle and found a sunny, sheltered spot for lunch. After this well-earned rest, we proceeded directly south

along a ridge riddled with large rock outcroppings that were quite challenging at times to navigate around or over. Ski poles, kick steps, branches, and even Kevin's ice axe were all exercised in the steep, snow-covered terrain. After a significant effort we came to the base of the "Aiguille du Greyrock" topping out at 7,456'. This tower of granite has sheer, near-vertical walls on the east, south and west sides. The north facing side, however, offers a steep, challenging, non-technical route to the top. Here, the scrambling transitioned from obvious, "automatic" hold-finding

to thoughtful study of the rock and deliberate care. Two moves in particular involved the need for strength, balance, and coordinated movements. While the exposure was not extreme, a fall could have had very serious consequences. We had a rope along in case anyone wanted a belay, but we all opted to free climb the Aiguille. There was room on top for the entire party of ten, and we sat for awhile, savoring the accomplishment, as well as the scenery, which was slightly different but no less amazing than it was from the other summits.

The descent off the Aiguille was well-accomplished by all. We next dropped straight down a steep slope through old snow patches, again using whatever tools and natural features were presented to remain in control of our rate of descent. Finally, we reached Greyrock Meadow for the second time. After crossing the meadow and climbing to the Greyrock saddle, we stopped for a moment at the trail junction and discussed our remaining options. Still more peaks were available; there is no shortage of peaks in this area! Steve proposed that since all of the party had climbed Greyrock itself in the past, that we forgo that and complete our summit quest on "South Greyrock Mountain". This peak at 7,309' feet is about one mile, almost due south from Greyrock Mountain. The approach to this peak involved angling east off trail from the main Greyrock trail to reach a ridge that extends northeast from the summit. From there, a straightforward hike up the gentle ridge soon welcomed us to the rocky high point. Again, fabulous views were revealed in all directions, but this summit provided a special look at the depths of Poudre Canyon, only 0.6 miles



The Aiguille du Greyrock, just west of Greyrock Meadow. Photo by Steve Dean.

and nearly 1,800' below us.

Once back at the parking lot, our day, our accomplishments, and the exceptional comradeship began to sink in. I felt good and almost managed to keep up with my younger, stronger friends all day, thanks to JoAnn's chocolate

-peanut butter cookies she so selflessly shared! At day's end, I didn't sense any regret about the change in venue. Signal Mountain isn't going anywhere soon. Finally, a hearty thanks from the group to Steve Martin for sharing his endless knowledge of our mountains. Back home, I

downloaded our GPS track, and the TOPO software gave our distance as 10 miles and an elevation gain of about 3,700 feet, a very good effort for the day.

Ward Whicker

2012 Trip Leader Training

The Fort Collins Chapter will be conducting a 3 hour trip leader training in April. In addition to participating in this classroom session, new trip leaders will need to complete a first-aid course, and a leader-in-training trip under the supervision of an experienced leader. Contact Eric Erslev at erslev@warnercnr.colostate.edu noting available evenings (Monday-Thursday) if you are interested. We will go from 6:30 to 9:30 pm unless there is a time conflict.

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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