



# Fort Collins Chapter Newsletter

October  
2011

*Your local resource for outdoor adventure*

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The aspens were showing their fall colors throughout much of the Colorado high country on September 23rd.

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## Fall Wildlife, State Website Changes and Fort Collins Group Classes and Schools

Howdy,

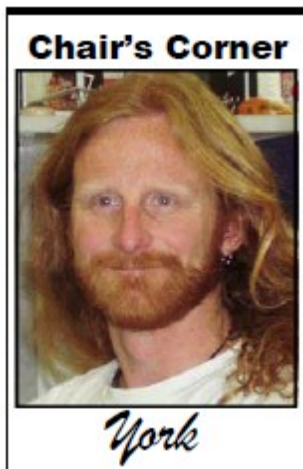
Hopefully you have spent some quality time in the outdoors this summer. As the fall begins the animals are moving to lower elevations adding a new dimension to excursions in the back country.

Lately, the neighborhood fox has napped in my yard, deer have been along the bike trails, and a mother black bear with two cubs came down the Eden Valley trail in Bobcat Ridge natural area while I was hiking up, demonstrating that we share the world with wildlife. To see photos of the animals in the Bobcat Ridge natural area check out their wildlife camera online at URL:

<http://www.fcgov.com/naturalareas/wildlife-camera.php>

Submit your wildlife photos to John Wullschleger to share them with the rest of the group here in the newsletter.

As you sign up for trips, you may notice some changes to the



CMC State Web Pages. The state web has needed some upgrades for quite a while and some of these are now taking place. You should see some changes in the next four weeks.

If you have any questions on the state website (pages that start with [www.cmc.org](http://www.cmc.org) in the URL/ Address Bar) please call membership services at 800.633.4417 to get help. They are trying to test all of the changes to make sure it is a smooth transition but something always gets overlooked.

At the Fort Collins Group level we are working on how all of the classes and schools we offer are organized. The senior instructors have been meeting to figure out who will take on what roles and how that will move forward. If you have been interested in helping with any of the schools, now is the time to step forward to volunteer. A lot of times it is tough to know who is having more fun and learning the most during the schools: the students or the instructors. Volunteers should contact Gordon Thibedeau for the Basic Mountaineering Course and York for other schools and classes. Learn more about our schools via the links on the [FortCMC.org](http://FortCMC.org) web-pages.

Now that the first high country snowfall for the season has happened, the aspen will start to change color and the elk will start to bugle. It is a great time to explore our mountains. See you on the trail.

York  
The Red Lion

## 2011 Hunting Seasons Have Begun

Hunting season has already begun for some types of hunting:\*

**Archery:** August 15 – December 31

**Muzzle-loader:** September 10 – October 29

**Rifle:** September 2 - January 31, 2012

Before hitting the trail, take time to suit up with brightly colored protective outerwear. please be sure to wear safety clothing such as an orange vest and/or orange ball cap as well as tie an orange kerchief on the back of your pack. When leading a group in areas where hunting is allowed, it is a good idea to have both the front and rear leader wearing orange or having orange on a backpack and keep the group more closely together.

\*Date ranges include various areas and species; for specific information go to:  
[www.wildlife.state.co.us/Hunting/SeasonDatesAndFees/](http://www.wildlife.state.co.us/Hunting/SeasonDatesAndFees/)

# October Program

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## Hiking on the Colorado Trail

**Presented by Bill Manning, Managing Director of the Colorado Trail Foundation**

The 486-mile Colorado Trail is one of the premier long distance trails and practically in our backyards. Bill Manning will show photos and make suggestions for adventures you might plan. He'll discuss different approaches from thru-hiking to day trips and talk about gear and some of the resources enthusiasts use to plan their excursions. He'll even brief us on the history including how the Colorado Trail effort began under the Colorado Mountain Club.

**DATE:** Wednesday, October 26, 2011

**TIME:** Social time starts at 7 pm and Bill starts at 7:30 pm

**LOCATION:** Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Drive, room 3

**MORE PARTNER INFO:** The Colorado Trail Foundation [www.ColoradoTrail.org](http://www.ColoradoTrail.org)

**SPONSORING GROUP:** Fort Collins Colorado Mountain Club

# Trip Report: Eagles Beak

*Editors note: The following trip report from Steve Martin is provided in slightly revised form in the hope of inspiring Fort Collins trip leaders to plan outings to some of the state's lesser known and more interesting peaks.*

**Elevation:** 12,200+'

**Starting Point:** Rocky Mountain National Park, Wild Basin Trailhead at 8,500'

**Roundtrip distance:** ~17.6 Miles

**Elevation gain:**

4,660' (cumulative)

**Route:** Wild Basin Trailhead following Thunder Lake Trail to Thunder Lake; off trail to Box and Eagle Lakes; ascend headwalls/slabs to Frigid Lake/Moomaw Glacier area and take Southwest Face Route (Grade II, Class 3+) to summit. Return via ascent route.

**Participants:** Vern Bass, Mary Gilbert, Steve Martin, Carolyn Randall

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Carolyn, Paul Metz, and I had planned the outing for Saturday, and later in the planning stages Mary and Vern joined the team. But on Friday afternoon a revised weather report for the Park's higher alpine areas forecasted wind gusts on Saturday to 85 mph. Twice earlier in the past week-and-a-half we'd been turned back by wind-driven snow and wind blasts at about 11,000 feet on climbs into the western portions of Wild Basin, and we didn't want a third consecutive turn-

around! So we postponed by a day; and, as a consequence, Paul could not be with us. On our Sunday climb date we were blessed with windless conditions and moderate temperatures, but dense fog throughout the daylight hours took much of the pleasure away from our successful summit. This portion of Wild Basin is noted for its ruggedness and precipitous terrain, and here we were, headed into a magnificent area in conditions where we could barely see 50 feet in any direction. We proceeded upward expecting the clouds to lift. They never did. Photos? We took none. It made no sense because of the flat lighting and restricted visibility!

We met up at the Wild Basin Trailhead, three of us coming from the Fort Collins' area, and Vern from Denver. We were underway shortly after 6 AM, making our way up the trail we knew so well from past trips, under the lighting of our headlamps. The trek from the 8,500-foot TH to Thunder Lake (at about 10,600 feet) went uneventfully. Much of the total distance is in this stretch.

We took a short rest/eating break at the Thunder Lake Ranger Cabin and then began the off-trail work, making our way to the southeast around the eastern ridge and headwalls of Tanima Peak before turning back toward the southwest and Box Lake. This section requires careful attention to the cliffy ar-

eas at the eastern edge of Tanima's terrain, to avoid moving too high and being forced to turn back and descend to get around numerous headwalls. We got too high and were forced back down. Even on the optimal route, the amount of elevation that must be lost and regained to reach the lake is discouraging. Box Lake is about 0.8 mile from Thunder, but only about 100 feet higher. At this point, we were still fresh and ambitious, and it seemed to go fast. Once we got to the correct traversing elevation we found a reasonably distinct trail (when we followed it back late in the day, we discovered that it "disappears" before reaching the meadow below Thunder Lake).

Beyond Box Lake and treeline, we dealt continuously with limited visibility, which led to several routing errors. We followed the south shoreline, quickly finding a large gully that took up upward and slightly southeast to a small unnamed lake. Here we made a mistake and followed west along a ridge above the pond's north shoreline. Cutting south from the west end of this water body, we bushwhacked over to Eagle Lake, arriving at the lake about halfway along its north shoreline. Lisa Foster's book indicates that this lake should be traversed along its south shore. Fog precluded our making a field judgment, so we followed her advice and did some awful bushwhacking to go back



eastward to reach the eastern end of Eagle Lake; there, we crossed a marshy area to gain the south shoreline and follow it back west. This took lots of time, and caused all of us to wonder if a north shoreline route might be feasible. Based on map contours, it should be, and might have saved lots of time and distance.

Near the western end of Eagle Lake (the lake is about 1/3-mile long) we breached the cliffy terrain by following a cascading stream that tumbled down to the lake. From this point on, all the way to the summit of Eagles Beak, the grade was unrelentingly steep and involved lots of large talus fields and finding ways through broken rock faces. Of course we had no distant or even mid-range views, so were unable to choose an overall route. Compass work kept us generally oriented in the direction we needed to ascend. A key terrain feature for this route is Frigid Lake and the significant Moomaw Glacier that rises steeply above it to the Continental Divide. The lake is where we were to make a sharp turn to gain the saddle west of the summit. Although it is substantial in size, we were unable to locate it in the fog. Eventually the altimeter indicated that we must be above the lake. Map and compass checks showed that we had reached the saddle, just 400 feet (horizontal distance) from the summit.

Beyond this point, the route goes up a steep, Class 3+ gully.

We started up a gully that we quickly realized was incorrect based on Lisa Foster's description—the easternmost gully that has a huge chock rock in it (sort of like the “car-sized chock” on the standard route on Dallas Peak). We turned back and in with limited visibility found a gully to the left that paralleled the first one. Climbing was quite easy, with only three moves requiring greater attention to maintain footing on the slippery, wet rocks. Under dry conditions the gully should be quite straightforward.

We reached the summit of Eagles Beak at 2:15 PM, more than 8 hours after leaving the trailhead.

Views? Absolutely none. It didn't even make sense to get a camera out to take a group photo in the foggy conditions! A register had been placed under the summit cairn a year ago, by Jennifer Roach. The last person to sign had done so 2 months earlier. Not much activity on this remote peak! We stayed on top for about 15 minutes before starting down, expecting to reach the trail at Thunder Lake before dark. The trip down was difficult in the fog, and we relied heavily on a compass and on hopes that we would be able to find our way through all the steep cliff bands. Until we were fairly close to Eagle Lake, we recognized little or none of the route we used for the descent—it was generally quite different from the way we had come up. And luckily, we always

found a path through the steep slabby head walls.

Fog was so thick at Eagle Lake that I almost walked off the steep shoreline rocks directly into the water! We again followed the south shore to the east end of the lake. There, we found a semblance of a trail that brought us much more directly down to the unnamed lake, where we bashed our way through thick krummholtz along its east side and descended the gully to Box Lake. At Box we searched for the indistinct trail we had followed up to the lake, but could not relocate it. So we had another round of bushwhacking.

Take special care when you come up the “trail” from Thunder to Box that you locate and remember some unique landmark to redirect you to the trail (and try to do it in clear conditions, so you have a reasonable chance to relocate the landmark!!). That will make this portion of the descent much easier than the way we did it! We arrived at the Thunder Lake Ranger Station at 5:45 PM, about 50 minutes before dark. After a brief stop for some food and water and to get headlamps out, we started down the final 7 miles a little after 6 PM, arriving at the cars just before 9 PM—15 hours, car-to-car.

We all were really tired from the distance, elevation, really rough terrain and perhaps most from the mental drain of all those hours in the alpine with no visual cues of where we were and

where we were heading!

We had reached the summit and returned without ever actually seeing the peak, going up or coming down! We still don't know what it looks like. We never found the large alpine tarn named Frigid Lake, nor the impressive Moomaw Glacier that apparently calves ice chunks into the lake and is situ-

ated a short distance southwest of the precipitous summit.

In fact, over the entire day we had seen nothing but close-in fog above timberline. We were enveloped in this tight fog and light mist during the climb, and we ascended and descended on slippery rocks with extremely limited visibility. But we made the summit and got down

safely. That's what really counts, isn't it?

I took the next day "off" from my normal gym routine, opting for a leisurely steam bath followed by a massage. I strongly recommend that recovery regime!

-Steve Martin

## Steve Clark Completes His Leader-In-Training Trip

On Saturday September 17, Steve Clark led 7 strong and experienced mountaineers on a trip into the upper Glacier Gorge of Rocky Mountain National Park. The goal was to climb Pagoda Mountain, rated as a Class 3 climb, involving about 13 miles

and an elevation gain of over 4,300 feet.

Originally, this climb was to be officially led by Steve Martin, who would give the reins to Steve Clark and serve as his "Leader-In-Training" (LIT) mentor. Unfortun-

nately, a week or so before the Pagoda trip, Steve Martin was descending difficult terrain near the summit of Navajo Peak when he injured his shoulder, which had been weakened already by a bicycle accident in Poudre Canyon, several years ago. As a



A group of seven experienced mountaineers participated in Steve Clark's Leader in Training trip to Pagoda Peak in Rocky Mountain National Park.

result of this re-injury, Steve Martin asked if I could fill in for him on this climb and serve as Steve Clark's LIT mentor. Having known Steve since 2008, when we were both students in the Fort Collins Group Basic Mountaineering Course, and having hiked with him from Milner Pass to Bear Lake a year ago, I was confident of his abilities and very pleased to assist with his LIT trip.

Becoming a trip leader for the Fort Collins CMC Group involves study of various materials, attending a seminar-lecture by the Leadership & Safety Director, taking appropriate first aid/CPR training, and successfully completing a LIT trip with an experienced trip leader serving as a critical mentor for this final qualification phase.

Leading CMC trips involves conceiving of an outing, preparing a detailed description, getting this published in the activities calendar on the CMC website, handling correspondence with prospective participants, evaluating everyone's abilities for the trip, organizing trip logistics, actually leading the trip, and submitting an activity report to CMC. A leader-in-training needs to demonstrate the ability to perform each of these phases for the LIT trip. All this requires considerable time and effort. Furthermore, a leader inherently assumes substantial responsibility on a trip. These responsibilities include route-finding, setting a pace compatible with the group, maintaining group cohesion, resolving any conflicts, and making any number of important decisions that may be necessitated by weather, accident, health problems, etc.

Steve's group left the Glacier Gorge trailhead about 5 am with

headlamps on. We could see a few stars, but soon a light mist was evident. We were near Mills Lake as daylight began to appear in the East, but it soon became evident that the higher terrain was immersed in clouds. Conditions remained heavily overcast to Black Lake and the trail and all vegetation glistened with wetness.

Many of us, myself included, had never hiked beyond Black Lake, so as the trail steepened near treeline, I was caught up mentally in the new experience of entering the upper part of Glacier Gorge. Despite the poor light and ominous cloud cover, I could easily appreciate this area as one of the "crown jewels" of the Park. Huge granite slabs, rounded off by ancient glaciers, formed the floor of the basin, while imposing rock cliffs, talus slopes, gullies and couloirs served as the walls of this enormous cirque. The large, dramatic spire called the Spearhead alternately appeared then disappeared in cloud. Very occasionally, we could see vague outlines of Keyboard of the Winds, the line of several sharp spires along the ridge between Longs Peak and Pagoda Mountain.

As we got above treeline, the wind became stronger and a mix of rain, sleet and graupel came at us from varied angles. As we neared Green Lake at about 8 am, Steve called a huddle. It was time to decide whether or not to proceed up the gully to the Keyboard-Pagoda Col. There were a couple of inches of snow higher up in the gully and of course the rock was wet and pretty slick. The wind was likely to be very strong once we reached the Col. Nearly all voted to not take the increased risk of proceeding. Both Steve and I would have been willing to try it

had the entire party been keen to do so, and had the weather looked more promising. I am reasonably sure we could have made the summit, but the conditions would have made the effort a miserable ordeal, and the slippery talus combined with strong wind would have made the risk of an injury fairly high, especially descending. In the end, it was Steve's decision as leader-in-training to make. He decided to put group safety ahead of personal ambition, so we did not make the summit attempt. I would have made the same decision, despite our collective disappointment for terminating the climb.

There being no good alternative summit to attempt from our position at the base of Pagoda Mtn., we decided to do a tour of the high lakes in Glacier Gorge, which itself required a fair amount of effort over lots of wet talus, granite slabs and through dense krumholz and willow thickets.

So, we visited Green, Frozen, and Blue Lakes, any one of which would normally be considered a worthwhile destination. The bad weather continued, and in fact worsened through day. Not once could we see the high peaks. But, we had a wonderful tour of the upper end of the Gorge, and gained the knowledge of how to efficiently access places like the Keyboard-Pagoda Col, Stone Man Pass, Spearhead, and of course the lakes. So, for me personally, and for most of the group I think, this was a very fine outing, and I know we all increased our knowledge about the area. And most importantly, we all returned safely with no injuries to report. Pagoda Mountain can wait for better conditions!



As to Steve's performance, I was extremely pleased with how he handled both himself and the group. His competence as a young mountaineer is obvious, as was his skill in handling the dynamics of a very strong and experienced group. He remained calm and relaxed, despite a couple of instances of people going off on their own, trying to scout a different route. We discussed this openly, and I think the take-home lesson is to set strong ground rules at the beginning, and then expect them to be followed. Independent scouting is OK in my view, but only with the leader's permission and with a plan known to all. I am very confident, as is Steve Martin, that Steve Clark will be a fine and reliable leader, one who can be trusted to make good, conservative decisions. Look for some exciting and challenging trips in the future under Steve Clark's name.

- Ward Whicker



Ward Whicker and Steve Clark, during Steve's successful Leader in Training trip.



**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](mailto:jgw311@hotmail.com) to be included in the next month's edition. Please call the CMC State Membership office at 800.633.4417 to notify them of address changes.

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