



The Prairie Pitch



Alpine Club of Canada Saskatchewan Section

Events/Miscellaneous

Friday, November 16, 7 pm – Shelley & Andrew McKinlay will be showing slides of their spring Himalayan expedition to Mt. Shishapangma in Tibet.

Saturday, December 1, 6 p.m. – Potluck supper and annual Christmas party at the McCormick residence, 3310 Dieppe Street. Ho, ho, ho!!!

Saturday, December 15 – Avalanche beacon and snow self-arrest clinic at Blackstrap. Meet in the parking lot at Vic's Vertical Walls at 12 noon.

Hopefully there's more snow than when we tried this last year!!

Anyone interested in a CPR or First Aid Course, or need their certification updated??? If so, contact Ivan Hitchings at 329-4484 or hitchings.ink@sk.sympatico.ca. If there is enough interest, Ivan will make the arrangements.

Similarly, if anyone is interested in a Hiking/Scrambling or Level I Climbing Leadership course, contact Shelley McKinlay.

January 15th, 2002, 7 pm –

INSIDE

- 1 Events/Miscellaneous
- 2 The Brazeau Loop
- 3 Gravity Strikes Again
- 4 Gneiss is Nicer
- 5 Executive Nominations

Best of the Banff Mountain Film Festival at the Broadway Theatre. Members who attended this year's event in Banff report an excellent selection of films so make plans to attend!

Our Section is working on plans to e-mail the newsletter to members. This will save postage and paper.

Our Section's web site is gradually holding more and more material of interest to our members. Newsletters, back issues, library holdings, photos, and other items are already there. We will be referring to it more often in the coming months.

The Brazeau Loop

by Jessamy Foulds

On Friday June 28th, James, myself and six other friends set out for the Columbia Ice Fields area to do the Brazeau Loop over 6 days and 5 nights. It's a backcountry hiking/camping trip that covers 80 km, winding through and over three mountain passes and along river valleys and alpine meadows.

It was sunny and beautiful, we

had Tim Horton's goodies for the road, and we were all ready to begin our much anticipated hike. We pulled into the parking lot at around 10am after the stunning two and a half hour drive through the mountains. We got our packs out, filled up our water, made all the last minute decisions about what to bring and what not to bring (sadly James had to leave his beer behind!) and hit the trail.

The day couldn't have been better. We began hiking through an alpine forest and came out to cross a number of alpine meadows and streams. The meadows were in full bloom, there were at least ten different kinds of flowers that I counted; yellows, purple, pinks, blood red and white to name a few of their colours. Every few kilometers we discovered some new type of flower/foliage to fascinate us. We hiked at a nice leisurely pace and stopped for snack breaks and a nice long lunch break by the river, after having just crossed one of the three mountains passes of the trip.

James and I got our snazzy new stove out, fired it up and made black bean soup and chili.

We also feasted on bagels and cream cheese, sesame honey squares and chocolate bars. We were eating like there was no tomorrow (but there were still several tomorrows that required food as we later learned).

After lunch we hiked down the pass which over looks Brazeau Mountain, the river and a beautiful alpine valley. We passed huge waterfalls and continued along the river in the valley for another couple of hours before we came to Four Points campground, our stop for the night.

We had a wash in the river, set up our tents and made supper. Again we feasted, African peanut & chicken stew, chocolate bars, hot chocolate, dried fruit... Getting ready for bed I brushed my teeth looking at the sun set behind a pink mountain range and the silver water of the river rolling by. We went to bed to the sound of the river, looking forward to what we'd see the next day.

We slept in till 11 a.m. and got up to have a nice relaxing breakfast. We took down camp and packed up for the short 7 km

hike for the day. With each step we took the scenery became more impressive. We saw many bear tracks on our path, both black bear and grizzly. Lots of other tracks too and various interesting piles of poo, some hairy, some not, some full of berries and nutty things, but all required careful prodding (using our walking sticks!) and examination (in the name of science...).

In the middle of the following night we were awoken by the crack of thunder and the flash of lightening. A lovely little alpine thunder storm made us feel extra cozy in our tent! It lasted about an hour and by the time we got up in the morning, all was dry again.

The third campground was right on Brazeau Lake, which is one of the largest lakes in the Rockies. It was a smoky turquoise blue and ice cold. But we were hot, sweaty and smelly, so we all stripped down to our undies and jumped in! Phew, ccccold! But o-so-refreshing! James, Brendan and I had a picnic lunch on the shore and then all laid back for a little siesta. Our little siesta turned into 2 ½

hours of sleeping in the hot sun. We all woke up to find ourselves a little crispy and over done.

Around this time, James and I discovered that we were shortly going to run out of food for the remaining 3 breakfasts and lunches, and had no snacks left either. Apparently one of us miscalculated how many meals we needed and the other one might have eaten all the snacks. The "R" word was now going to have to be employed... Rations.

Blisters on my feet were becoming an unpleasant reminder that I well and truly need new boots. With every step a new piece of my skin rubbed off leaving a raw exposed patch that dangerously threatened the enjoyment of my day.

The valley we walked through was like nothing I've ever seen before, and relatively few people have seen it. There were mountains on all sides of us, but we were walking through a wide valley full of flowers, streams, little water falls and a huge number of hyper little rodent-like creatures (picas perhaps?). One would see us and all of a sudden about 7 of them would be

zooming around various little hills, popping up and down into little holes. Looks like a fast, fun and short life they lead. Like a humming bird trapped in the body of a gopher.

Just as I was finished filling up my water, James spotted a grizzly bear in the distant field. We had been talking about seeing a bear (especially a grizzly) for the past 3 days, but when faced with REALLY seeing a bear, I felt a surge of both excitement and FEAR. Suddenly all the head lines I've ever see about bear attacks flooded into my head: "Young Man Killed In Bear Attack, Girlfriend Survives" tragic story continued on A3, or "Hiker Loses Arm In Scuffle With Bear, Girlfriend Miraculously Unscathed". My nerves thus on edge, I decided to see this bear, so I crawled up the hill a little bit and looked towards the field. I did not see a grizzly, but two caribou instead. Not so exciting, but still worth seeing. They were the same colour as a grizzly, and so far away, hard to tell... I was just a little bit relieved that it wasn't really a bear.

On we went. With food being rationed, our bodies were starting to feel the 3.5 days of hiking with 40 lb packs. We were almost too tired to be relieved when we lurched into camp. African peanut & chicken stew... again... mmm... can't wait, and rice too.

Later as we laid in our tent, we looked out our skylight at the sky filled with stars and the tops of mountains. Another great day, with perfect weather. Almost made us wish we hadn't brought all our Gore Tex with us.

Sore and stiff in the morning, I didn't even want to look at my heels, so I just put new band-aids and tape over the once white, now grey and red ones glued to my feet. A bad smell is about them... I'm starting to crave a shower.

We ascended the second mountain pass, Jonas Pass, the most spectacular part of the trip. We hiked for about 2 hours up a slow incline, through a meadow and eventually into rocks and scree slopes and then snow patches. The rest of our group was waiting at the top for us and encouraged us the last few hundred feet. James towed me up

the last 40 feet or so with his walking pole and at the top I melted down to the ground in a sweaty little puddle of awe. The most incredible view surrounded us every way we looked.

For the rest of the day we hiked down through the valley which looked like a prehistoric scene out of *Clan of the Cave Bear*. I kept expecting to see Ayla come running over the hill chasing a mammoth. I keep saying this, but it was more beautiful than anything we'd yet seen. At one point we came up over a little hill and James spotted a woodland caribou about 100 feet away, grazing peacefully. There are less than a 1000 of this type of caribou left in the world, and only about 300 of them in Banff/Jasper, so we were extremely lucky to see such a rare creature. We took our packs off and watched him for about 1/2 an hour. James crept up closer to him, took pictures and counted a nine point rack. As we finally left

“But the bravest are surely those who have the clearest vision of what is before them, glory and danger alike, and yet notwithstanding go out and meet it.”

— Thucydides

QUOTE

The morning of the last day was beautiful and sunny, as all the rest had been. We were up and ready early, anxious to be out and finished. 14 kms to go, back over the first pass and then out. By this point I was walking like Frankenstein, my legs were so tight their mobility was compromised, due to my attempts to save my heels by not bending my ankles. But on I wobbled, grumpy and hot (it was about 31 degrees). I kept reminding myself to try to enjoy the last day of scenery, but I was really ready to be finished and, for the most part, just hiked with my head down, concentrating on just remaining in motion. Everyone was pretty much of the same mind set (but maybe not grumpy), so there was very little conversation.

After what seemed like forever, we finally came to the last river to cross before the parking lot that held the wonderful trucks! The river was delicious; we all stripped off our grimy, smelly and hot clothes and had a cool bathe in the refreshingly icy water. Feeling

renewed and wonderful all of a sudden, I savored the last few hundred feet to the vehicles.

A practically perfect trip, ended in the perfect way: a huge gooey, cheesy chicken burger, salty and delicious fries, crisp and cool salad and a luxurious pint of ale, enjoyed in the relative sterility of a Canmore restaurant. Ahh, life is grand!

Gravity Strikes Again

by Nikki Hipkin

July 9, 2001... I'll always remember the date. Okay, okay, I forgot the date already, I looked it up. But I still remember the day. I was still a woman of leisure, having finished my degree, but not yet working. And I had big plans - a week of climbing with Shelley McKinlay. Life was good. Sunday I drove to the mountains and met up with Shelley. Monday would be our warm-up day. You know, the "Oh yeah, I remember how to climb..." day. So, Heart Creek it was. We got up early, well not that early, but we were still the first ones there... by a few hours. We did a few climbs and life was

good. By noon, I was tired and ready to go, but Shelley informed me that she was just getting started.

I was feeling extremely weak. I had discovered that the muscles you develop writing and keyboard clicking are actually quite different from climbing muscles. It had been too long. About 1:30, I started another route - I had just watched Shelley lead it and she breezed right through it. I started off all right. Three clips and I was at the crux. I hadn't even noticed it when Shelley ran by it. Basically it's a bulging flake. Well, I couldn't seem to get my feet up high enough. As I was around this bulge, I couldn't see my feet anymore. I tried again to move them up, but slid off. I was holding myself with both hands all this time. The hanger was about four feet to my right. I hadn't been able to clip it yet.

I started to become concerned. I rearranged my grip on my left hand and let go with my right to get a draw. About ten inches away, I realized that my left arm couldn't hold me. I grabbed on again with my right hand. Again

I tried to move my feet up... no luck. I tried to grab a draw from my harness again... I just couldn't do it. Hmm... Well, maybe I could wedge my arm behind the flake... that didn't work either. I tried to reach over to grab the hanger - yes, I know, a very bad idea, but I had visions of it saving me. I didn't even reach over that far. Right hand back to the flake. I was starting to panic. What would I do? I certainly wasn't going to fall. I really needed to clip that hanger and then I could rest. I tried again to hold myself with my left. All this effort only made me more tired. It was pretty clear to me that I wasn't going to make the clip. I decided to let go. This is a pretty big decision for a leader - especially one who had never fallen before. So I let Shelley know, but only as I was letting go. I didn't even give her time to get ready. I just let go. As I started to fall, Shelley offered her warning - she saw that my leg was over the rope. I hit the end of the rope about 12 feet below, with my leg hanging over the rope - and a bit of pain behind my knee... Rope burn... I tried the move again but it wasn't

going to happen for me. Today. So I fell again. Caught my arm a bit and cut my hand.

That was it. Shelley lowered me down and she led up to clean the gear. She suggested I should top rope the route so I felt better about things. Yeah right. So I let her lead it and when she was at the top, I told her that I wasn't coming up. I was worried too. I didn't want to be too scared to lead, but I knew I was too weak to deal with it then. After all, I had a whole week to deal with my new issue. And I did. And now my nice scar reminds me:

- Watch where your rope is;
- Listen to your body, but don't be afraid to push yourself;
- Let your belayer know what you're doing;
- Margaritas heal everything; and
- ?Suck it up princess, you're climbing again tomorrow!?

Gneiss is Nicer!

by Victoria Klassen

Tired of the chossy, dirty, unstable rock and unpredictable weather of the Rockies? Willing to drive 4 extra

hours? Head to Penticton, BC and climb the Skaha bluffs just south of town. Gneiss is more stable than limestone, less slippery than the quartzite, and it has made Skaha my new favourite climbing area.

Pete and I picked the right weekend to do it, since most of Alberta had been closed because of fire risk. We headed out at noon on Wednesday, slept by the side of the road at a rest area near Revelstoke, and looked at four days of climbing once we arrived on Thursday.

Access to Skaha is via a private parking lot - \$6 per day - complete with fruit stand and port-a-johnny. About 150 steps have been built into the approach, complete with a sign warning: "These steps conform to no known building standards."

There are over 400 climbs in the valley. Four days was not enough time, especially since I have never climbed for four days in a row before. The guidebook is excellent, containing such vital information as where to find the climber's bar in Penticton, and where to find free camping (the one in town is \$22 per night during high season). We met up with its author, Howie, a couple of times while there.

Thursday's climbing was in the shade of Red Tail wall, as it was a blistering 34 degrees. I was eager to lead trad, coming off Pete's Learn to Trad weekend three weeks' previous. I was still apprehensive though, so I led two 5.6 climbs on Pete's gear placements, then did a 5.8 bolted route.

Pete, still recovering from his ankle injury, gingerly led a 5.8 crack on the same wall. So far so good!

Friday, we headed in a little further

and climbed one of Skaha's classics: Double Exposure (5.8 trad). With Pete still favouring that ankle a bit, it was a thrill! Those of you accustomed to seconding Pete will not be surprised to learn that I had trouble dislodging his gear. He is in need of a new #1 nut -- I worked at it but only succeeded in sticking it in further.

Then we were off to a crag containing Steve's route (5.5), an excellent beginner's climb. I felt so good at the top! -- until Pete said "Bear - over there!" Sure enough, a mama and two cubs, right on the trail not 200 m away. I let out a Xena-like warrior whoop, prompting mama to gather her cubs and amble off.

I finished off the previous days' two 5.6 climbs on my own placements, completing my initiation into the realm of Real Trad Climbing.

After arriving at the crags on a somewhat blustery Saturday, and groaning up a 5.7 bolted route (Mother Superior) in the spitting rain, I declared it a good rest day.

Sunday: warm not hot, a great day for progressing to a 5.7 trad lead. We hiked to Chatsworth Edge wall, about an hour in. Just the hike itself is fabulous: through Fern Gully, short scrambles to bluffs overlooking Penticton and Lake Okanagan.

I started with a two-star 5.6: "Gem Quality", Pete climbed a 5.7 which had a tricky start, so for mine I picked what we thought was "Rough Cut", a two-star 5.7. It was only after we got back home we realized I was flailing on "Centre Crack", a 5.8. Pete finished it, and another 5.8, I followed, still shaking off the adrenalin. Then our

extended long weekend was over way too soon.

Executive Nominations

It is once again election time! Well, actually, it's a bit later than usual but, better late than never! The first step in the election process is to publish the initial nominations. The deadline for additional nominations will be December 1 and should be directed to Shelley McKinlay. If there are any positions with more than one nomination, we will send out ballots. Here are the initial nominations:

Chair – Peter Burgess

Secretary – Clarissa Snyder

Treasurer – Nikki Hipkin

Memberships – Andrew
McKinlay

National Rep – Dave
McCormick

Newsletter – Victoria Klassen

Archivist – Catherine
McCormick

Public Relations – Deanna
Miller

Activities Coordinator – Shelley
McKinlay

Members At Large:

- Martha Guy
- Dan Kallstrom
- Allan Janzen
- Gary Kolar
- Ivan Hitchings

Note the new position of public relations. We want to get known to a wider audience. If you have ideas please forward them!!

**DEADLINE for articles for the next issue
of the newsletter — December 15, 2001**



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