



Fort Collins Chapter Newsletter

June
2011

Your local resource for outdoor adventure

Vol. 2011
No. 6



Late spring: Blue Lake and Mt. Toll in the Indian Peaks Wilderness on June 19, 2011 (Wulschleger)

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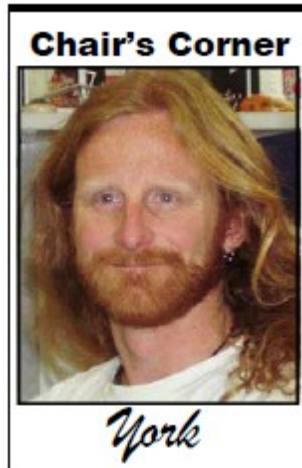
An Ascent of Fall Mountain

It's Summer!

Howdy and welcome to the June issue of the CMC Fort Collins Group's newsletter.

It is tough to believe that half of 2011 is almost over. But it is prime season to get out and explore the mountains and the rest of Colorado. So far this summer we have traditional hikes, mountain biking clinics, bike tours, and even a glacier climbing trip in the schedule. While participating in these outings, take a minute to ask the trip leader how they selected the activity and prepared. Once you are comfortable with the idea, sign up to take the trip leader training so you can add to the diversity of trips we offer.

You'll notice a new perk with your membership during June



and July. Every member should receive a complimentary copy of the "Rock and Ice" magazine during these two months. A coupon good for 25% off a subscription/renewal to "Rock and Ice" and "Trailrunner" maga-

zines will be mailed out also.

This is a great time of year to see young animals when out hiking. Please remember that while they maybe cute and photogenic, their parents may not have a career in modeling in mind for their children. But do get out and look for families of the creatures that live in the wild and semi-wild areas of Colorado.

If you get some great photographs, please share them with John Wullschlegler to put in the next newsletter.

It's summer time – get outside!

Play and Think Hard!

York, The Red Lion
Chair, Fort Collins Group, CMC

Lonely, Unsung Peaks #1: Fall Mountain (12, 258')

[Editor's Note: This is what we hope will be the first in a running series of trip reports on ascents for some of Colorado's lesser known and less frequently climbed peaks. If you have scaled, or will be scaling, one of the state's more obscure summits, consider submitting a write-up and photos of the trip to the Fort Collins Chapter Newsletter.]

Colorado is famous for its 14ers, and a few other special peaks. However, there are literally thousands of lower peaks throughout our mountains, and I personally find many of them just as rewarding to climb, and sometimes even more so. Our 14ers certainly

require considerable stamina and skill, and people clearly deserve "bragging rights" for climbing them. But, many of the 14ers are so easily accessible by well-marked and obvious routes, and so heavily trafficked, that they can seem much less than a real wilderness adventure.

In contrast, I have found joy in seeking some of the lesser-known, lower-elevation peaks between, say, 7,000 and 14,000 feet. Climbing such peaks frequently requires creative route finding off-trail, and sometimes a wider set of outdoor skills. One often encounters unexpected obstacles that don't show on

maps or guidebooks, such as cliffs, loose rock, steep snowfields, snow in unexpected places, timber blow-downs, dense brush, and rushing stream crossings. Also, more self-reliance may be needed in case of an accident or other problem. To me, such unknowns and surprises help define the concept of "adventure".

Another set of challenges comes from choosing to climb these lesser known peaks during the seasonal transitional periods when one is confronted by changing and somewhat unpredictable snow, stream and weather conditions. For exam-



Fall Mountain from the northeast, exhibiting from left to right, the head, neck, and breast/folded arms of the "mummy" (photo by Neil Purrett).

ple, snow can cover trails, adding to the need for good navigation skills. As winter transitions to summer, snow depth and consistency changes dramatically over time and space. Elevation, slope aspect, tree cover, and day-to-day vagaries of weather all conspire to cause uncertainty in the difficulty of travel.

A recent example of climbing a "lonely, unsung peak", during the winter to summer transitional period, was Fall Mountain (12,258') on June 11. We had a strong group of five participants that day (Terri Gerard, Joan Avens, Steve Soich, Neil Purrett, and Carolyn Hammond) for an effort estimated to involve about 13 miles and 3,400' of elevation gain.

With an exceptional snowpack in the area for this time of year, it was clear that snowshoes would be needed for a good part of the route. We met in Fort Collins at 5

am, thinking an early start would aid our ascent with firmer snow, and give us a better chance of avoiding thunderstorms.

We parked at the Emmaline Lake trailhead near Pingree Park and were on the trail by 7:15 am. The day started cool and cloud-free and the first 2 miles were on dry trail, so we each carried snowshoes attached to our packs. Shortly after the Mummy Pass trail junction, we encountered snow mounds up to 4 feet or so in height, and very soft on the edges. For a half mile or so we were able to walk around or over the snow mounds. But as the snow-cover became more extensive, we would often "post-hole" to our knees near the edges of the mounds. This became tedious and tiring. Once the snow became almost continuous at about 9,800', we donned snowshoes even though a few dry patches occurred along the

trail. At about 10,000', the snow became continuous.

However, the challenge then became one of trying to stay on trail, which was only evident from occasional blazes on older trees and sawed off branches here and there. Fortunately, I had done a hike on this same trail over Mummy Pass the previous summer and had recorded the track on my GPS. With this information loaded back on to my GPS, we were able to navigate reasonably well through the remaining timber.

Once above treeline, it was almost continuous snow cover with few bare areas, but the snow was mostly firm and we made good time for the first mile. We got to the steep access point for the east ridge of Fall Mountain at about 11,550', where we decided to stash the snowshoes. The obvious snow slope directly

ahead looked appealing, but it was steep enough to require at least an ice axe for self-arrest in case of a slip. Since we didn't expect to travel on steep snow, we did not carry ice axes. This forced us to look for a mostly snow-free route to the ridgetop, which we found on the north side. This area was mostly steep talus, but it was stable and we were able to scramble up the rocks to the ridgetop with no difficulty.

Fall Mountain, as seen from points east, forms a silhouette that resembles a mummy. From the ridgetop, we quickly gained the mummy's "head", which is actually just a false summit, to find sheer cliffs ahead. Here, we had to down-climb on the south-facing slope a few hundred feet,

then traverse west to the mummy's "neck", where we could walk up a gentle snowfield and grass slope leading up to the "breast/folded arms", which are the actual summit of Fall Mountain.

Being unfamiliar with this climb, it was a little more challenging than I had expected, but that made it all the more rewarding. There was almost no wind, lots of blue sky, and astounding views in all directions. We could see numerous 13,000' peaks in the Mummy Range to the south, the Never Summer Range to the west, and the Rawahs to the northwest. Directly north was Comanche Peak and the basin below it where Emmaline and Cirque Lakes reside. With all the snow, I

hardly recognized the area from the previous year.

On the descent, Carolyn Hammond, having an Irish heritage and musical talent, beautifully sang Irish and Gaelic folk songs during some of the more relaxing periods. What a unique and special treat!

We were likely the first party up the Mummy Pass trail this year, and saw only two other people as we descended that section of the route. We reached the car after about 9.5 hours, and all felt that wonderful sense of a wilderness adventure well-fulfilled.

- Ward Whicker



Group on the summit of Fall Mountain June 11, 2011. From left to right are Neil Purrett, Carolyn Hammond, Joan Avens, Terri Gerard, and Steve Soich (photo by Ward Whicker, hike leader.)

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 to by the 10th of the month to include in the next month's edition. Members send address changes to *** . Also, please notify the state CMC office if your address has changed.

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