



SKI TRACKS

Newsletter of the Bitterroot Cross Country Ski Club

Box 431 • Corvallis, Montana 59828

April, 2004



EDITOR'S NOTES FOR APRIL

If you have a contribution for the newsletter, it eventually has to get to me, and I must have it in to be printed BEFORE the last day of the month. This is especially so when our next meeting comes before the 10th of the month. Send all messages to be included to Dan Driscoll, driscold@in-tch.com or call me at 375-9967, or it can be delivered to me at 712 South 6th Street.

A MESSAGE TO THE SKI CLUB FROM PRESIDENT SONNY LASALLE

Our 2003-04 season is coming to a close and we have had an outstanding year. It has been a year of change and I communicated some of that to you in the February newsletter. We are still working with the Forest Service to determine the type of agreement we will have for the 2004-05 season.

A topic of interest to you that was discussed at the March meeting is the identification and removal of hazard trees on some of our trails.

Late last fall our groomers and Patty Johnston from the Wisdom Ranger District got together to do a job hazard analysis (JHA) for our operations at Chief Joe. We identified a number of potential hazards that present safety concerns for our groomers and trail users. One of the Hazards are the trees that are close to the edge of the groomed trails, especially the lodgepole pine with dwarf mistletoe. The mistletoe "brooms" collect snow, sometimes lots of snow, and those that overhang the trails present a safety hazard to the groomers and trail users. They are dangerous when falling and are a problem after they fall and also when they drip water on the trails.

Our proposal to the Forest Service is to identify these hazard trees this spring while the grooming marks are evident and to have them removed, hopefully this summer. These hazard trees are normally within three feet of the edges of the groomed trails and actually hang over the trails. The "corridor" would not have straight lines and would vary in width depending on the hang over from the trees. There are also some trees that are so close to the trails that they present an obstacle to the grooming equipment. These will be removed also but they are very few in number.

APRIL PROGRAM

Elk Calf Survival

by Jarod Raithel

7:00 p.m. • April 8, 2004

First Presbyterian Church

1220 Main Street, Hamilton

Have you ever wondered what type of dangers a newborn elk calf faces during the first few months of life? Find out at the ski club meeting on Thursday April 8 when Jarod Raithel gives a stimulating power point presentation about his research on elk calf survival. Jarod radio-marked 69 newborn elk calves in the Garnet Range to investigate declining recruitment of this elk population. Some of the factors Jarod has evaluated include nutrition, production, and predation of elk calves, with some surprising results. The meeting is free to the public. This will be the final meeting of the Bitterroot Cross country Ski Club for this winter season. For more information call Diane Boyd at 443-5227.

We have no intention of widening the grooming as our hard working grooming crew has all the work they can handle in one day as it is, and widening the grooming would defeat the purpose of removing the hazard trees.

Most of the hazard tree removal would occur on the following trails: Lost Trail Loop and the associated cut through trails, Moose Trail, Gold Medal Loop, Vista View and Sunny Meadow Loop. There are a few hazard trees on CD Trail between the parking lot and Picnic Meadow and very few on Broadway, Timber Trail and Technique.

Many of the hazard trees mentioned above could have commercial value and would be offered for sale. There are a few hazard trees on the three lower trails in very wet areas that if cut would not be removed commercially and most likely would remain in place.

These actions are being taken for the safety of everyone using Chief Joe. I recognize that many people like the area the way it is and do not want it to change. I have received one e-mail and there was one comment at the March meeting to that effect.

We, your groomers and your club officers, are trying to keep the narrow intimate nature of the trails and at the same time provide for a safe environment. Trees are much like people – they get old, sick, and then they die. The mature lodgepole on our area are around 160 years old and are in the last stages of their life.

President . . .Continued on page 1

We are also working with the Forest Service on the overall vegetation management needs for the entire Chief Joe area as I mentioned in the February newsletter.

I hope you will trust the people that are most familiar with Chief Joe, our groomers, to do what is needed for our ski area. Please send me your comments and suggestions.

CHANGE IN ANNUAL DUES

Because of increased financial obligations, the club membership authorized an increase in annual and life membership dues. New renewal and life dues forms will be available in the near future in time for the November 2004 to May 2005 dues year.

It will cause confusion if the forms printed with the prior dues schedule are used and submitted with a payment issued on the older forms. But if an older form is used, please erase the former amount and include the amount of the current dues. Current dues remain in effect until November 2004.

The new dues schedule is:

Individual	\$15
Family	\$25
Supporting Individual	\$30
Supporting Family	\$40
Life Member	\$500

March Meeting Highlights

March 13, 2003

By Kay Fulton

Vice President, Mel Mooers, called the meeting to order at 7:05 P.M. There were approximately 60 people in attendance. **The Treasurer's Report** for the month was: Income, \$1,711.38; Expenses, \$883.55; Net Income, \$827.83; Savings, \$4502.98.

Trails Report: Gordon Reese reported that now it is warming up. Last Friday there was 36 inches of new snow. The groomers groomed both Friday and Saturday but could not do all the trails or lay track. Some volunteers helped Mel snowshoe out a few of the trails Tuesday and Wednesday. They will groom on Friday. The crust skiing is reported to be very good. We currently have an 84-inch base. Hopefully there will be some more cold temperatures to maintain.

Upcoming Events: Darel Seibert, the new Outings Chairperson, will publish events on both the Web page and in the newsletter as they get scheduled. Katya Merrell announced that the Gash Creek Ski outing scheduled for

this Saturday, 3/15, has been cancelled due to the warm temperatures. The "Moonbeam and Snowflakes" Moon light sponsored by the Bitterroot National Forest is still on for Saturday, 3/15, at 6:30 and 7:00 P.M. There will be the "annual" St. Patrick's PotLuck at the Warming Hut on Sunday, March 16th at noon.

Items of Interest: Mel announced that Annie and Tony competed in the Annual West Yellowstone Rendezvous and Annie came in 9th out of the women and 71st out of 300 skiers. Tony came in 82nd. Because of all the help Annie and Tony have given to the Club, the Board decided to give them lifetime memberships. Thanks, Annie and Tony.

Program: The Program this evening was presented by Francesca Marucco, who is completing her Masters Degree at the University of Montana. Her program was on the study she and others have been conducting on wolves in Italy, specifically in the Italian Alps. The program was entitled "Skiing and Wolves in the Italian Alps" and, in addition to her slides on tracing the wolves, Francesca included a video clip of one of the most grueling ski races in the world, which takes place in the Alps in June. The entire program was fascinating.

Membership Renewals / DUES

Annual Memberships EXPIRE November 1!

Renew your membership now!

INDIVIDUAL - \$15 • FAMILY - \$25

SUPPORTING INDIVIDUAL - \$30

SUPPORTING FAMILY - \$40

LIFE MEMBER - \$500

Membership Dues

Nov. 1, 2003 - Oct. 31, 2004

MAIL TO: Bitterroot Cross-Country Ski Club

P.O. Box 431, Corvallis, MT 59828

Name(s) _____

Address: _____

City _____ ST _____ Zip _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Type of Membership: _____

(Listed above)

Amount enclosed:\$ _____

Newsletter preference: (Check all that apply)

Send by USPS _____; Send by e-mail _____

SPRING STRATEGIES

It happens every year, after a few warm days and some bits of green grass, everyone forgets all about skiing, at least it seems that way. There are actually some folks who are still looking forward to a month or two of good spring skiing. Skiing this time of year requires a little more planning, timing, and some special waxing techniques. Timing can be everything - ski too early in the day and it is icy, ski too late, and it is too slushy! The best "crust cruising" occurs fairly early in the day when just the top half inch of snow softens up. For skinning up and skiing down peaks, you'll be wise to ski while no more than a couple inches are soft. Much more than that and the chance for wet avalanches increases.

Spring snow presents challenges like being very sticky in the sun. This will occur no matter what type of ski you are using. The effects of this sticky snow can be minimized by using waxes that contain fluorocarbons, which have water repelling properties. Skis that are very dry and have never or rarely been hotwaxed (yes, this includes "waxless" skis!) will be very sticky and slow. Using a plain, hydrocarbon wax can help a little, but one containing fluorocarbons will make the biggest difference.

In addition to having the right wax is having the appropriate structure in your ski bases. Structure is the pattern that is cut into the ski base either with hand tools or a stonegrinder. A good spring structure is one that has a very coarse, deep pattern that serves to channel the water off your ski bases. If a ski base has a very fine or no structure, your skis will stick to the wet snow like suction cups! Imagine two sheets of glass - dry, they slide against each other easily. Put some water between them and it is pretty hard to slide them. Structure helps break up the suction created by all the moisture in the snowpack and allows your skis to slide easier, meaning you could be having more fun!

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