

New Mexico Cross Country Ski Club

March 2008



www.naturediscovery.org/nmccskiclub

**Next Meeting: Thursday March 13, 7pm
Garden Center -- 10120 Lomas NE**

**Program: Francie's Hut &
Cheesecake!!!**



Don't forget: March is cheesecake-for-refreshments month! We will also have some "left-overs" from last month (more smoked salmon and rice crackers), so come and enjoy!

We wish to extend a big **THANK YOU** to all the club members who have pitched in this year to help set up and put away tables and chairs, and to those of you who have helped fill in when needed getting the refreshments together!

It has been a pleasure coming up with culinary treats for you this year.
Angela and Sara

From the President

As we enter the final stages of what I consider to be a very successful ski year, I am taking this opportunity to publicize recent action taken by the Club's Board of Directors to: 1) eliminate the need for prior approval for tour leaders to post day tour announcements, and 2) eliminate the need to have a moderator approve all messages posted on the Club's e-group.

Henceforth, Club members wishing to lead day tours may post notice of their proposed day tour without getting advance approval from the Day Tour Chair (Bill Heitz) or the Overnight Tour Chair (Guy Miller) so long as they post the tour classification and the other data described on the inside back cover of this Newsletter. Overnight tours will still require prior

approval. Members are requested to use the Club's e-group to advertise only official Club day tours having a designated leader who is committed to following the Club's **GUIDELINES FOR TOUR LEADERS**, which will be posted shortly of the Club website. Members wishing to organize informal private ski tour groups should use private e-mails or phone calls to arrange their events.

Also, members may now post ski-related messages on the Club e-groups without the prior approval of a Club-designated moderator. The underlying understanding is that members will not use the Club e-group in order to sell products (other than used cross country ski equipment owned by family members) or services for personal gain, or to set up a chat room on topics unrelated to Club activities.

The primary basis of these changes is the Board understands that the New Mexico Mountain Club (which is about four times as large as our Club) has operated successfully for several years without a moderator or pre-approval on day trips. The Board reserves the right to take remedial action in cases where these privileges are abused.

In closing, I wish to extend special thanks to Club members (and other volunteers) who have participated in winter trail maintenance, primarily in removing the many trees which have obstructed ski trails in the Sandia and Jemez areas. It takes a special sense of devotion to perform trail maintenance in sub-freezing temperatures.
Wayne

Summer Picnic

June 14 at Alan Burn's in the E Mnts

Check your spam!!! No kidding!!!

eGroups is going to shorten the header on its messages so that we can see the subject of the message. But some of your spam/junk mail filters may not recognize the new sender. So, put a note on your calendar for March 30 to make sure you have received one test email message with an abbreviation for XCSC.

Vice-President Needed!

The club is looking for a member to serve as VP for the next year; elections are at the March general meeting. Duties include distributing fliers to local ski businesses and quality assurance sampling of appetizers at club executive board meetings. THE BIG PERK: you are guaranteed seats on the bus trips, contact Mike Martin at 286-8762 for details.

Francie's Backcountry Cabana January 24-28, 2008

Story by Carolyn Johnson

The cabin trailhead begins *at the ski area*. Our convoy pulls into the skier drop-off zone where we heave everything onto the curb – packs, skis, poles, sleds. There are busloads of downhill skiers who are also throwing gear into the same area. It is snowing lightly. We portage the gear—most of it ours—to a covered patio, the outdoor dining area for the ski resort snack bar. The establishment has thoughtfully piped metallic musical smashing into the patio speakers. It's so awful and relentless; we laugh harshly and light cigarettes. OK, not really, but oh do we wish we hadn't quit.

Gazing at the backcountry gear of 19 people, the downhill skiers look first confused then frightened at the thought of *what might be going on here*. They scuttle off to the lifts, leaving us to pack and rearrange our bags, divide up communal food, and wait for the parking lot shuttles to disgorge our drivers, back from parking the vehicles in the next county. We escape Breckinridge at last, dodging skiers and snowboarders, and disappear into the Arapaho National Forest. Hut trips are a great mix of mutuality and meditation, and we've reached the meditation part.

The Burro Trail to Francie's Cabin, is quite civilized really – a 1700 foot elevation gain over four and a half miles on single track... except for that place where crampons could come in handy. It's at about mile 3.5, a fork, where we have to decide either to do a straight shot up a steep trail, or add a half a mile and take the switchback route. This is a great place to pull out lunch and ponder the

options. And, as luck would have it, there's a little strip show to watch as we ponder – clothes are stripped off, climbing skins are pasted on, and speeches are made by our fearless leader with many, *many* threats which will be repeated over the weekend:

"If you miss the turn into the woods on the way back, you will end up marooned in a hideous subdivision from which you will not be able to escape."

Then we are back on the trail for whichever final leg we have chosen.

As we emerge from the woods into the upslope clearing that leads to the cabin, we see gorgeous peaks off to the west.



Angela with Mt Helen Photo by Phyllis Prior

The very deluxe Francie's Cabin sleeps 20. It has a roomy kitchen, two dining areas, cozy pillow-bedecked bay windows, a nice sunny southerly porch and, of course, the sauna. After getting settled, some folks are happy to read, make tea and chat; others drop their packs and are on their skis again for round two.



Marlene Arriving at Francie's Photo by Carl Smith

On this trip, dinners were communal. Everything else—breakfasts, brunches, lunches, snacks, high afternoon tea, happy hour—are a free-for-all. The dinners are all delicious—having been planned out by three crack teams of chefs, sous chefs and various galley slaves. The menus include soups, macaroni and cheese, sausage chili, veggies, cornbread baked in the woodstove, a CHEESE CAKE (freshly made one evening, we are still reeling from that), chocolates, and cookies.

After dinner, the dishwashing committee assembles itself into a well-oiled machine, without a lot of discussion—it's the kind of process you wish the United Nations could get right. Someone grabs a spatula, someone else stacks the dishes, boiling water appears from snow, and within minutes, fresh dishes are being stacked on shelves. Everyone knows that if you don't do the dishes you get stuck hauling out the garbage, so there's a lot of cooperation. As is true of most facts, this was made up on the spot, but it's a good rumor to have handy.



Next Year's Hut Scouted by Eric and Diane Photo by Carl Smith



Day Tripping Photo by Phyllis Pryor



Rich Besser in His Best Form Photo by Carl Smith

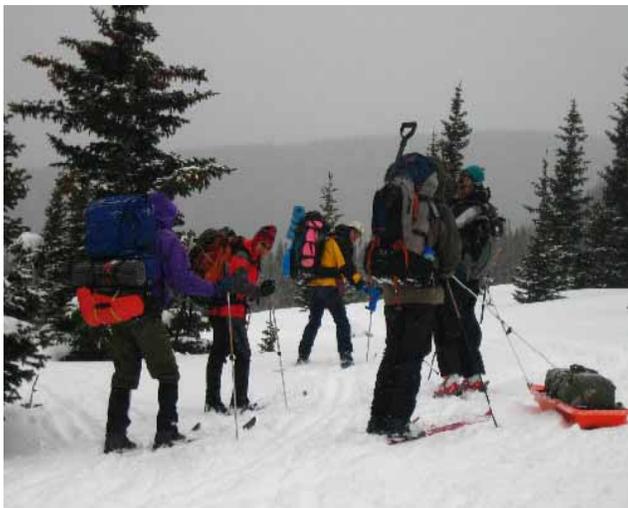
On Saturday morning the group goes en masse up to the bowl at the base of Crystal Peak. There's something for everyone, especially if you like a nice bracing Arctic wind. Not surprisingly, the views are fabulous. Some skiers are carving up a hillside, others are enjoying the sun where the wind is blocked by the mountain's contours. We can hear the ski patrol miles off, blasting away at potential avalanches – a pop followed by a spooky "whoomp." There's a ruin to visit—a wreck of a cabin—and a gully to fly down with lots of fluffy snow and no wind. Because of the wind, we go back to the cabin for lunch, then back out again.

Sunday is freeform tourism day. Several groups go down to Crystal Creek and the lower lake. I am with the group who bushwacks to the nameless lake to the northwest. We decide to have lunch on the far shore, moving across the lake quickly, as if we could beat whatever it is we are hoping to outrun. During lunch, there is desultory talk about skiing up the side of the cliffs to the ski lifts, and then a quick telly trip down, an elevation gain of at least 8,000 feet. One of us laughs callously at the idea.

Back at the hut, the Creek group seems to have had a more rigorous day, judging from the afternoon cabin chat. They crank up the sauna and spend the next five hours in various states of undress and applications of snow to favored body parts. Red and sweaty saun-ees run in and out of the living area, some modeling bathing suits for the camera. The chefs du jour serve up a luscious late afternoon aperitif—hot buttered rum. It is so good that several of us go the end of the line for seconds. A couple of gray jays on the porch swipe unguarded snacks. The dinner crew goes into high gear, the

golden afternoon sun fades. Suddenly, it's our last night at the cabin.

This communal time of the day sparks conversations among groups randomly forming in the common areas — discussions of the Canadian health care system, solar energy, Frances Lockwood Bailey (the cabin's namesake, who died in a 1989 plane crash) avalanches, politics, the book *Touching the Void*, horses, DWI, the United States justice system, and landscaping. Even though some of us are planning to hit the trail early, the conversation goes on well after the last dish is finished.



Fully Loaded & Heading Out from Francies Photo by Phyllis

Monday morning arrives without permission. We hear the first group leave about 6:30 am. Some of us roll over in bed, waiting for dawn and pancakes to appear. If anyone were looking for a relaxing morning of tea and crumpets, conversation and leisurely packing up, their hopes are dashed by the beehive of activity that overtakes the place -- manic breakfasting, equipment assembly, cleaning, sweeping.

The peaks have disappeared into the clouds. It's cold and gray but not too windy. The snow is almost a fog. We leave in waves, glancing at the glowering sky. Perhaps it is not really glowering, but we feel a certain uncertainty because the wind has picked up. The sun is nowhere to be seen.

But, the snow, the snow is perfect, ice cream snow. We fly down the trail for awhile and then pull over to listen to the woods. We pass some of our troupe and are passed by others. Packs? What packs? Nobody misses the turn into the woods, nobody ends up in the Subdivision of Doom. Breckinridge greets us like a carnival. We are pleasantly tired and exhilarated from our four days of overdoing it at treeline. The ride home will be great.

HUT TRIP OUTLOOK FOR 2009

by Guy Miller, Overnight Trip Chair

The ski season may be winding down for some folks (the late spring-like weather isn't helping matters any), but I've already started planning hut trips for next year (and a little bit for 2010!), and we have some unusually exciting prospects. The 10th Mtn Div Hut Assoc lottery will be held on March 3, and I hope to have word by the time of the March Club meeting as to whether or not we scored. I entered over 100 possible date combinations for a 5 night hut-to-hut trip to 10th Mountain Hut and Uncle Bud's Hut, located near Leadville. The possible dates range from late January through late March. Let's hope we grab something somewhere in the middle. Hut veterans should start thinking now about how to find a way to swing such a venture, which will entail a total of a week away from home, counting travel time. If we get selected, booking will begin immediately. This is one of the most adventurous, and certainly the most ambitious, project we have yet undertaken.

Starting April 1 (no fooling), I can submit two more entries. I already know that I'm going to put in for Section House, which is one of the Summit Huts located astride Boreas Pass, just outside of Breckenridge. This is a Colorado Historic Site, restored from the late 1800's. We're told it has ghosts. Together with the restored miner's cabin, called Ken's, which is right next door, we can comfortably accommodate about 12 people.

I'd like to do a third hut trip, possibly another beginner trip similar to the one set for early March (that one will be over by the time this hits the presses). Whether or not I do another beginner trip will depend largely on how much interest is expressed. If we have a good response from our first beginner trip, and word gets around, and more folks want to give it a try, it could happen. Otherwise, we may shoot for Jackal, Margy's, or Polar Star, the only three 10th Mountain Huts that we've not yet done as Club trips.

Contact Guy Miller if you're interested in a beginner hut trip, to discuss other possibilities, or if you just want to get information about our hut trips. And be sure to check out the March meeting. The program will be about...you guessed it: hut trips !

Crosscut Saw on the Survey Trail

Story & Photo by Carl Smith



There was a big blowdown of trees on Survey Trail last month and crews led by Sam Beard and John Thomas cut enough to make the trail passable. But there will be a lot of work to restore the trail. Why?? Because it's in the wilderness and we can't use chainsaws. So, if you want

Survey Trail to be ski-able next season, come out on the late spring/early summer workdays and help on this club-adopted trail.

REPORTS ON CRESTED BUTTE

February 1 – 4



Thea Taking Charge Photo by Louise B

Brush Creek Rd – Saturday

By Carla Chirigos

Upon arrival at the trailhead, we divided into Class I, II and III skiers. The Class III skiers took off first, but soon the Class IIs were on their heels. The trail was fairly flat for about the first two miles and then gradually began to climb. Only a few other skiers, not belonging to the



Club, were seen on the trail. At about 11:00 a.m. the Class I and II groups stopped on a hillside for lunch.

Soon after, some of the Class III skiers arrived at the lunch break area. They had returned due to the increased avalanche danger ahead of them. Everyone took their time on the return ski to the bus, enjoying the great

ski conditions and scenery. Club members discovered a fox seeking shelter on the porch of an abandoned house situated on a ranch. Everyone returned safely to the bus by mid afternoon and we headed back into town for a soak in the hot tub, a bit of shopping, some sightseeing, and to enjoy each others company at one of the many fine restaurants in Crested Butte.

Gothic Road Skiing at Crested Butte

Story and Photos by Ray Berg

About 18 of us took off on a ski along Gothic Road towards the ghost town of Gothic, 4 miles distant from the trailhead at the edge of the Crested Butte



Ski Village. We started out looking for the trail, since the enormous snowfall they had been getting in the Crested Butte area all but obscured many of the trails. Fortunately, there were a couple of locals there who took off along the trail (one pulling a baby in a covered sled), so we not only had help finding the trail, but the trail was broken for us. There had been around a foot of new snow in the area since it had been traversed before.

Gothic Road is one of those back country roads that are unimproved in the summer and unmaintained in the winter. While we should have seen the open vistas, it snowed continuously on our outbound trek, creating a silent, winter wonderland limited to close in views we traversed as if we were in a cocoon.

We had hoped to get to Gothic, but we were eventually turned back by the danger of potential avalanches along the section where the road skirts some of the higher, steeper hills on the west side.

In previous years, we saw a route that revealed a wide, open valley that lead to the town of Gothic. But in this year of the "big snow" it was all but impossible to find any views of the wide open vistas it traverses. The trail has relatively little elevation change, although you can notice the uphill as you come back the last mile into the Ski Village.



Slate Creek Ski, Class II, Lester Byington, leader
Story and Photos by Carol Haller

The bus dropped us off at the end of a plowed Slate Creek Road, 2 miles from the main road to Crested Butte. It was snowing lightly with grey, overcast skies and cold. The trail head was barely discernible because

of all the snow. We started out in the direction of where it seemed the trail should be. We followed what we thought was a road and climbed higher on the hill. Then we would stop and retreat and try another way.

Eventually we dropped lower toward the stream and



encountered the real trail. We were breaking trail in 12-14 inches of soft snow. We came to the old narrow gauge railroad trestle over Slate Creek and then the remains of the anthracite breaker of the old mine there

Lunch was a stand-up affair. We returned via the real trail which was near the creek. At times the sun would try to break through the clouds, but it never made it.

We arrived at the trail head early. Most of the group went back to ski for awhile longer, but three of us, Sherry, Carla and I decided to ski out to the highway. The bus was not coming back to the trail head (insufficient place to turn around) so we first took pictures of the Marmot



Crossing road sign and then skied out.

The road was icy but there was deeper snow on the

sides. The bus arrived as we reached the highway and the others were not far behind us. *Almost* too much snow.



Crested Butte "Alley Race" with NMXCSC Represented by Rich Besser -- See Arrow

Yellowstone NP in the Winter

by Carol Mochel-Deal and Jim Deal

In 2006 and 2007 club members put together skiing trips to Yellowstone NP with the help of the Yellowstone Association which has Lodging and Learning programs. Both trips were quickly booked with 20 people each year. We were on the 2007 trip program of Yellowstone on Skis and it was a fabulous experience. It made us want to go back -- which you can do through the Yellowstone Association programs. We had Julianne Baker and MacNeil Lyons as our naturalists/guides both years. MacNeil was such a good salesman of the Winter in Wonderland program that we went again February 3-10, 2008 with MacNeil as our naturalist/guide. This program includes physical activity each day -- xc skiing two days, snowshoeing one, walking in geyser basins and along the rim of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone and always wildlife viewing where ever possible. There is a maximum of 10 people on each program trip. We met four other couples the first night at orientation. We had a fantastic time with two days of sunshine and lots of snowy days and saw more of the park with snow coaches than previously. Yellowstone has more snow than it has had in 10 years so the landscapes were so beautiful.

You can find out more about the Yellowstone Association Institute programs by checking out www.YellowstoneAssociation.org and clicking on programs. If you become a member of the association, there is a discount on your room stay and 15% discount on purchases at the Association store or on line. And anyone who wants to put together a trip for the ski club which isn't exactly as one of the programs can contact them. Julianne would love to have our

ski club do a more vigorous Yellowstone on Skis than the current four day program listed for this winter.

LEADING A TOUR

- Leaders should publicize tours to the club via the newsletter or eGroups.
- Overnight tours must be approved by the Overnight Chair.
- Day tours may be posted without pre-approval.
- All tour postings must include:
 - Trip level of difficulty as defined below;
 - Any expected variation to the rating below;
 - Any special equipment or other requirements.
- All tours posted via eGroups or the newsletter require the leader to obtain properly completed and signed release of liability forms from all participants and forward them to the Day Tour Chair.
- All leaders and participants are responsible to adhere to the Leadership and Participant Guidelines posted on the Web Site.

SKI TOUR RATINGS

CLASS I: Tour with less than 1,000 feet of elevation gain and less than 5 miles in total length. Skiers should be able to execute stops and turns. *Some, but not all, CLASS I:* Tours are appropriate for novice skiers with minimal cross country experience. The pace will be slow (*1 to 1.5 miles per hour*). Persons with no cross country skiing experience **MUST** take the beginning lessons or must obtain the leader's permission **PRIOR** to joining a CLASS I tour.

CLASS II: Tour with less than 2,000 feet of elevation gain and is less than 10 miles in total length. A CLASS II tour requires intermediate skills and ability to maintain control on moderate slopes with techniques such as snowplowing, turning and traversing. On a CLASS II TOUR a skier should have enough stamina for sustained kick and glide touring on near level ground at a pace of 2 miles per hour for several miles and should also be experienced at using climbing skins to climb trails with moderate slopes.

CLASS III: Tour with greater than 3,000 feet of elevation gain and greater than 10 miles in total length. A CLASS III tour usually requires advanced skills and ability to competently and confidently climb and descend steep, narrow trails. A skier with advanced skills should be able to do telemark, parallel, or comparable turns on moderate slopes. That skier should also be very experienced with using climbing skins for both climbing and safely descending steep slopes. On a CLASS III TOUR a skier should have the endurance for skiing ten miles or more *within the time constraints of the tour.*

Trail slopes are categorized as follows:

- 1) Gentle slopes have less than 5% grades.
- 2) Moderate slopes have grades greater than 5 % but less than 15 %.
- 3) Steep slopes have grades greater than 15 %.

Exploratory designation. In addition to a CLASS rating, a tour may be designated exploratory (Exp). This means the leader has not skied on this route recently (*or ever*) or is unsure about some aspect of the proposed route. Participants should be experienced in backcountry skiing. They should be prepared for any possible situation and should have emergency gear with them.

2007/08 Officers and Board

President	Wayne Kirkby	898-1654	ski1071607@aol.com
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