

New Mexico Cross Country Ski Club

March 2009



www.naturediscovery.org/nmccskiclub



Ski Club members Frances Robertson, Ray and Thea Berg, Chet and Karen Leach, and others on top of Mount Kilimanjaro.

Ski Club Summer Picnic

Our annual Ski Club BBQ and pot luck will be held in mid-June at one of the local Forest Service picnic areas. Please watch your e-groups messages and your mail for the flyer, which will be sent in May. Plan to join us!



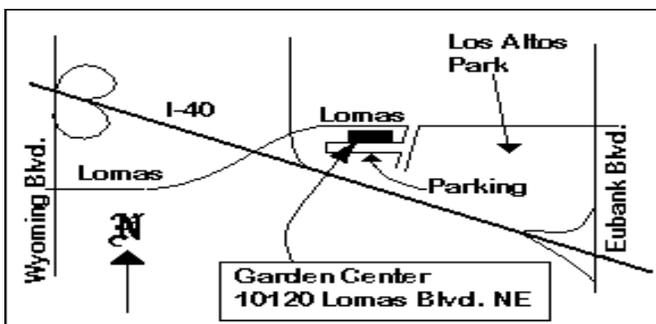
Thanks to Ray & Thea Berg our bus trips were fantastic!!

March's Program – Mount Kilimanjaro

Presenter: Ray & Thea Berg

When: Thursday, March 12th, 7 p.m.

Last fall five NMCCSC members, along with three other hikers and three guides climbed to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa – the world's highest free standing mountain at 19,340 feet. Come to our last Ski Club meeting of the season and hear about their adventure. ■



Angela Welford, Rich Besser and Ruth Bargman-Romero at Uncle Bud's Hut.

Photo by Bill Heitz

From the President

I can't ever recall being part of a serious discussion about where the ideal size of our ski club lies. This suggests that nearly everyone is happy with the status quo. However, perhaps that is assuming too much, since 3 out of 4 club bus trips did not fill this year. This is probably partially due to the serious downturn in the economy, but I would like to throw open for discussion whether the club should be making additional efforts to grow its membership.



I recall our year-end membership as being nearly constant over the last three years, with the number of new members being close to equaling the number of members who dropped out. We want to reach out to all levels of skiers. Recently our Board concluded that past

members who now find it more comfortable to snowshoe should be allowed to participate in a full range of Club activities.

This next year I would like to challenge the Club to commence more activities designed to increase its membership by at least 10% on a sustained basis. I encourage Club members to express their opinions on this issue, and to offer specific suggestions for new methods of recruiting members.

*As the ski season winds down I hope that you will attend our last general Club meeting on **Thursday, March 12th at 7 p.m.** (see page 1 for details). Be sure to mark your calendar now and plan to attend our summer picnic, which is always a fun way to stay connected and to see your ski friends during the summer.*

Wayne Kirkby

Avalanche School By Louise Broadbent

Tom and I felt it was time to get some training before continuing to lead ski tours in avalanche country. So in January we attended the **Level I Avalanche School** in Silverton Colorado. Thanks to the NMCCSC a good portion of our tuition will be reimbursed.

I recommend this course to anyone who skis in Colorado. Colorado has the highest rate of avalanche fatalities than any other state in the country.

The textbook provided with the course is called "*Staying Alive in Avalanche Terrain*" by Bruce Tremper. The book is around 300 pages and thoroughly covers all the most current research and information regarding avalanches. You need to take the course, not just read the book. Reading the book without taking the course may just scare you out of ever skiing in Colorado again.



Louise Broadbent, far right, and others get ready to jump on the rutschblock they dug to test the snow conditions for avalanche danger.

The class covered rescue techniques, but more importantly it covered snowpack, stability, how to read terrain, weather conditions, avalanche hazard ratings, and the most important component - the human factor.

Avalanche ratings are low, moderate, considerable, high and extreme. So guess when most avalanche fatalities occur? If you guessed "considerable" you would be correct. Somehow it doesn't seem that bad since it is in the middle of the scale. One of our instructors put this question to us, "Would you go into a bar where there was a "considerable" chance of being shot?" Well, if you put it that way, I may have to reconsider.

In the class we were taught to perform several snow stability tests (*see picture above*) that can easily be done in the field. In addition you should always check the avalanche danger ratings and watch the weather before and during a trip. There can be safer areas to ski when the avalanche danger is "considerable" or higher, if you study the aspect and terrain where you intend to ski.

We still intend to continue to ski in Colorado and hopefully we will be better tour leaders having completed the class. ■

Uncle Bud's to 10th Mountain Hut

By Eric Russell

This year, 16 intrepid skiers completed the Uncle Bud's to 10th Mountain hut trip on February 1-6. The term "hut" is a real misnomer. Despite the lack of running water the huts are very warm and spacious inside. More like a ski lodge.

The planning for the huts trips begin a year in advance. Guy Miller, our local hut-meister, submits over a hundred different hut combinations for the lottery for next year's trips. Guy also deals with all the logistics of getting cooks for evening meals, motels, group meetings, drivers, maps and lots of other logistics. Whatta . . . guy!

After convoying to Leadville and staying the first night at the Alps Motel, we were finally off for the 6 mile ski to Uncle Bud's hut, skiing around Turquoise Lake. It was a perfect day with close-up views of Mount Massive and Elbert. About half way the trail departed from the road and we skied the last steep 2 miles to the hut for a mid afternoon arrival.



Skiers go through Long's Gulch.

Photo by Bill Heitz

After soaking up the grand view of the Sawatch Range chores began. Each night we had different cooks and kitchen slaves so they began getting

supper ready. Other chores included chopping wood, starting the fire, bringing in snow to melt water, and so on. Bill Heitz was the master chef the first night. After a great supper the group cleaned-up and scattered to talk, read or doze.

The next day despite clouds and winds, some of the ambitious skiers went up towards Galena Peak or went looking for powder. Others went exploring the slopes north of the hut or tracking down GPS waypoints. Ruth Bargman-Romero spent the day getting supper ready and making bread on a wood stove. What a treat and another great meal!

The next morning was another beautiful day. Most of us were out looking for the traverse trail to our next hut because we knew it was going to be tough. Since we were in a wilderness area we did not have the usual well marked trail. That night Angela Welford was our master cook.



Eric Russell straps on his pack for the ski over to the 10th Mountain hut.

Photo by Dave Saylor

On the fourth day we got an early start to ski the 7.5 miles to the 10th Mountain Hut. We had a hard descent into Porcupine Gulch and then up into Long's Gulch with some bushwacking. After a couple of hours we found the well marked trail. We kept going up and over Tennessee Creek and then up some steep hills to the 10th Mountain Hut. It was a hard day and the hut was a beautiful sight.

Rich Besser was the master cook. Thanks Rich for the hot butter rum! Lots of mentions of food, huh? Dave Saylor regaled the group with stories of climbing Mount McKinley and Aconcagua.

The next day the group split into those skiing to Slide lake and others climbing the ridge to the south. We had good powder in the shade. The final supper was a great meal by Pam Reynolds. Throughout the trip the night stars were stunning.

On the 6th day after cleaning-up the hut we reluctantly started the ski out to the trailhead. Despite some new snow the trail was icy and tested our downhill skills. It was a terrific trip. The skiing, food and evening socializing were great! I'm looking forward to the next trip. ■

Our Hut Adventure By Pamela Crane

At Uncle Bud's Hut outside of Leadville Colorado, snow conditions were icy tracks with breakable crust due to solar melting and wind. Yet, the next day, several skiers



were able to find decent snow to yo-yo in glades northeast of the Hut. Others toured several lakes to the southwest of the hut and Guy Miller led a mission to scout the route for the traverse day to the 10th Mountain hut. The directions to the next hut were so confusing that the scouting mission continued the next day. Finally, by a process of elimination, we settled on the route for the traverse.

The traverse day had very nice weather and no wind. So even though it was a long ski (7.5 miles up and over several mountain passes), everyone arrived at the 10th Mountain Hut in daylight with big smiles of accomplishment. Our early start and the good scouting by Guy and crew really helped!



Pamela Crane telemarks down the slope with her heavy pack.
Photo by Rich Besser

The traverse showed us beautiful views of peaks above Long's Gulch and possible lynx tracks.

The 10th Mountain Hut is situated in very tempting broad slopes, but the yucky breakable crust limited our taking true

advantage of them. Many toured to Slide Lake and found a beautiful cirque on the way. Another group slogged up Homestake Peak most of the way where there were actually a few nice patches of snow for some telemark turns.

The ski out to waiting cars at Crane Park started out with reasonable snow conditions due to a dusting that morning. However, the snow deteriorated to the infamous breakable crust as we descended in elevation. Then the track became ice due to heavy use by skiers and snowshoers. It was a test of skill and knee strength to navigate those treacherous icy paths with heavy packs. A successful conclusion to a wonderful trip! ■

Mount Taylor Ski

By John Thomas

Gentle reader, I am about to tell you about the ski tour to the top of Mount Taylor on February 8th. Before you jump to the conclusion that I will rave about how great the snow was and what a marvelous time we had, read on.

Six of us met in Albuquerque to begin our quest. Hearty skiers all, we were: Diane and Darrell

Simmons, Dana Price and son Liam, Katie Avery and myself as the leader. Dana and Katie will participate in the 2009 Mount Taylor Quadrathlon and they wanted to check out the route.

We had heard about harsh weather conditions in the Grants area, but when we arrived, Grants was bone dry and sunny. Don't believe everything you read on the Internet. We *boggied* up the hill and made it to the parking lot on the Quad route, grabbed our gear and headed out onto the mountain. The snow was packed by snowmobiles and was hard or icy. We used skins all the way to the top. Heartbreak Hill was a challenge with hard snow and high winds, but we made great time.

As we neared the point where you turn left onto the exposed summit route, the wind became gale force and hard snow pellets were flying horizontally. We stopped briefly for a snack and water and then headed up. I had remembered to bring my ski goggles, which helped protect my eyes from the icy shrapnel.

We were a harmonious and talented group as we summited the peak. We had two groups taking different routes to the top. Liam, aged 11, was an outstanding skier. After a few pictures we headed down, skiing the powdered, forested route to the north. After gathering up some skis we had cached (Dana and Liam



John Thomas and 11-year old Liam Price near the top of Mount Taylor.
Photo by Darrell Simmons

carried snowshoes to do the last bit to the top), we skied the gentle trail around the head of La Mosca Canyon. We had picked up 1-2" of new snow in the brief snow squall that made the skiing pleasurable.

We took our skins off and enjoyed the downward cruise. We probably had more fun than *Captain Sully* when he cruised into the Hudson! There was enough snow that we could do little turns. The two steep switchbacks on the road were tolerable and then when we reached the bottom of La Mosca, it was real fine cruising back to the cars. We reached the cars about 3 p.m. and headed back to Grants. ■

Rambouillet Ridge and Run-Out Lake City Bus Trip 2/13-16 by Randy Simons

There are times in life when you ask yourself, “*What am I doing here?*” This time, I was at 12,000 feet with a thirty mile-an-hour wind freezing my face as I struggled to keep at least one ski edge biting into the sloping wind slab.



We had come to Lake City, Colorado to ski the high country, and this day’s route began at Slumgullion Pass. We started with a steep climb through the trees in a foot of fairly fresh powder. At times it seemed we were on trail, based on openings through the trees and an almost imperceptible depression in the snow; but other times while breaking off branches and climbing over logs, we had clearly lost it. But we knew generally where we were headed, and were eventually rewarded with a view of Slumgullion Summit and the grey clouds beyond as we topped the ridge.



Ray Berg braves the wind along Rambouillet ridge.

Photo by I-Ching Boman

As we continued a more gentle climb around the next peak on the ridge, the trees began to thin and the wind increased. Soon we had to stop in the lee of some of the few

remaining trees to pull out scarves, face masks and goggles. The clouds lifted and the sun came out, giving us great views of Rambouillet Park and the Continental Divide to the south. The next few miles along the ridge consisted of looking for that perfect line, a compromise between the shortest path, the least elevation change, and the most trees to block the wind.

Near the end of the ridge, the traverse was more difficult as the slope became steeper. We needed to head down anyway, and took advantage of a protected open slope between the trees where the snow was soft and deep. Apprehensive at first, I started going across the hill, but soon found the deep

snow slowed me enough that I could just point the skis downhill and go for it.

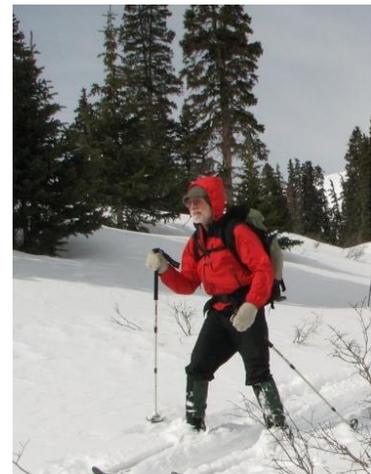
Down in the treeless park, the wind was still blowing. We found snowmobile tracks and a sign that read “Rambouillet Yurt, ½ mile”, which was our intended lunch stop. We had two GPS receivers that gave two different waypoints for the yurt, which didn’t help at all, so we just followed what seemed like the obvious snowmobile track. After another a mile, a vision of a yurt appeared to one of our group (*probably hunger-induced*), but dissipated like a mirage as we got closer. We gave up on the yurt, and ate lunch sitting on our skis.

Having a bus to pick us up meant we didn’t have to end where we started. So instead of returning the six miles we had come, we followed a snowmobile-packed road that drops 1,600 feet in three miles down to the highway. Steep enough to require me to use a wide snowplow and dragging poles to control speed, it was a wild ride. A couple of us got back into the trees and soft snow wherever terrain guaranteed we’d end up on the road further down. At the bottom waiting for the bus, we all agreed it had been a hard but successful day.

So to answer the initial question, “What am I doing here?” - Having an awesome time! ■

West Fork of Cebolla Creek Drainages By Tom Broadbent

It was the last day of the Lake City trip with required willingness to end the tour at the bus and immediately begin the long ride home. We had a small group (*Mike Martin our leader, Alan Burns, Karen Leach and myself*). We had skied together many times before and this seemed like an ideal day for the back country.



Tom Broadbent

Photo by I-Ching Boman

We had been in the area the day before, had our bearings, and were familiar with the conditions. Today we wanted to explore a different drainage. No commitment to an absolute destination or distance goal. Just a tour. It was wonderful.

Once we got off yesterday's tracks and started breaking a fresh trail uphill into a beautiful, untouched canyon somebody said, "now this is back country skiing".

We took turns breaking trail and finding routes up the canyon occasionally changing direction based on group consensus. There were streams to cross, brush to negotiate, trees to dodge, and snow drifts to wrestle.

At the top the terrain opened up to the Rambouillet Park - expansive, windy and hardpacked. And totally serene. Nobody but us. The group decided to drop back down out of the wind for a lunch break.

On the way down just before we intersected the main creek another canyon beckoned and we made a push up some more exquisite terrain until time and fatigue made it necessary to head back.

Nothing monumental was accomplished but it was a day to appreciate the pleasures and challenges of our hobby, our passion. ■

Exploring the Enchanted Forest By the group of skiers

The Red River odyssey began with Lucy Miller's lucid dream for a fun Class I New Mexico ski weekend. Lucy with the able assistance of co-leader Karen Kvam, designed the Red River Enchanted Forest trip for an intrepid 10 cross country skiers.

It became evident that the police force had been forewarned of our foray for our way was dotted with flashing beacons every few miles. But escaping their radar we all met at a hot shot restaurant in Red River before retiring to our quaint overnight accommodations.



Ann Marie Caffrey and Bill Whiley
enjoy the Enchanted Forest
Photo by Lucy Miller

Saturday morning found us eager to conquer the wooded slopes and trails with skis and snowshoes.

The day went well. The weather was fine and the hard packed snow made for a great day for all . . . until . . . the head count found 2 missing (*more about that later*).

Included in our dandy 10 were car trip newbies Bill Wiley, Ann Marie Caffrey, Lori Hillis and Marilyn Szydlowski, who all proved to be excellent cooks for our delicious potluck on Saturday night. The others were I-Ching Boman, Anne Hickman, Joanne Kimmey and Mike Walti. Fun and games concluded that evening.

Now back to Lucy's lament. As mentioned before, in tallying . . . there was a glitch. It seems Anne and Joanne were so busy enjoying the scenery, they missed the curfew. Calls had been coming in to one of the phones which had no service. Happily Anne's phone worked and since darkness was closing in she called the office for help. It seems the maps of the area were not to scale and the two were a long way from the trailhead. But within a short time two rescue volunteers arrived on their mighty chargers to whisk the malingers back to the trailhead.

Sunday dawned, the slopes again beckoned and fun was had by all thanks to the planning and dedication to detail of Lucy and Karen. ■

Proposed 2009-10 Slate of Officers & Board

Executive Board

President	Wayne Kirkby
Vice President	Chris Kramar
Secretary	Angela Welford
Treasurer	Open

Board Chairs

Day Tours	Bill Heitz
Long Bus Trips	Ray & Thea Berg
Overnight & Hut Trips	Guy Miller
Newsletter	Karen Leach
Instruction	Guy Miller
Membership	Gene Lisotto
Programs	Sherry Fitzmaurice
Mailing	Dawn Brummel
Refreshments	Terri Elisberg & Phyllis Pryor
Trails	Sam Beard
Website	Lester Byington
E-groups	David Wegner

Club members will be asked to vote on the above slate of officers and board chairs at the **March 12th** meeting.



= Monthly deadline for newsletter inclusion

March 2009						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Section House Hut				Pagosa Spr		
8	9	10	11	12 Club Meets	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

On April 1 (*seriously*), I can call to reserve up to two more hut trips. I will try for another hut-to-hut adventure, but failing that, I will attempt to get one of the four above-listed huts. I will also shoot for a beginner hut, either the Continental Divide Hut (*my personal favorite*) or Vance's Cabin. I will use the e-group to notify the Club of what selections I am able to grab, and, again, will want to start filling slots immediately. You snooze, you lose, so qualified hut skiers should contact me without delay.

We just recently finished a fantastic five-nighter, to Uncle Bud's and 10t Mountain Hut, and, a few days from press time, we will be shoving off for our Section House trip. I guess you'll hear about that one next season if I don't see you at the final general meeting.

I am always interested in talking with people who are interested in joining us for hut trips, so anyone wishing to find out more about our program, please feel free to contact me at 294-7940 or xcskiboy@aol.com. ■

Hut Trip Outlook 2010

By Guy Miller

In mid-February I submitted our Club's lottery entry for 10th Mountain and Summit Huts Associations. I put in 37 date combinations for each of four huts in this order: Jackal, Sangree M. Froelicher (*formerly known as Belvedere*), Janet's, and Polar Star. So 148 total date possibilities ought to net us something. I recently had occasion to speak with at 10th



Ruth Bargman-Romero and Guy Miller arrive at Uncle Bud's hut.

Photo by Bill Heitz

Mountain staffer, and was told that it could be mid-March before notifications are sent out. I hope it won't be quite that long, and that I have some notification in time for our March general meeting (*the last meeting of the season*). Otherwise, watch for e-group notification. If we score a hut, I will begin filling slots immediately.



I-Ching Bowman skis along Slumgullion Pass in Lake City.

Photo by Eric Bowman

Thanks

A special thank you to all of our story tellers and photographers this year - you all did a great job in creating fun and exciting newsletters.

Thank you so much to Angela Welford, and Sharon and Lester Byington for hours of proofing the newsletters, and to Dawn Brummel for handling the mailings so efficiently.

Karen Leach, Newsletter Editor

New Mexico Cross Country Ski Club

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Bill Davey and Sherry Fitzmaurice at Uncle Bud's hut.

Photo by Bill Heitz

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