

New Mexico Cross Country Ski Club

NEWS

Photo: Carl Smith

March 2015

Roughing it at Continental Divide Hut

January 14-18, 2015

By Dave Williams ☺ Photos By Mary Kaye Gallagher



Dave Williams on the trail

Seven of us set out from Guy's house about 9 am on January 14 in three vehicles: Guy Miller, Terri Elisberg, Rita Wormwood, Catherine Waters, Dave Williams, Mary Kaye Gallagher, and Rebecca Helianthus. Our eighth skier, Roger Grimshaw, was already scouting conditions in the Leadville CO area.

We got to the Leadville Hostel by late afternoon after driving through stunning winter scenery of northern New Mexico and Colorado mountains. Roger brought us the latest reports of snow and road conditions, all of which were favorable. Guy led a planning session with pizza that evening in the large common living and dining area of the Hostel. We could not have

Highlights of the trip included sharing a meadow of deep snow with two moose, and a broken fibula. These were unrelated events.

pulled serious sleds aka "pulks"; Dave Williams had gone the economy route with a K-Mart Blue Light Special plastic toboggan. Others backpacked their gear and share of the supplies.

The Continental Divide Hut does not require one to rough it. Electric lights are powered by solar photovoltaic system, water from a cistern is available from hand pump in the kitchen next to the double sinks, the propane stove supports several burners. In the middle of the living area a wood burning stove provides plenty of heat throughout the night. A full season of wood is stacked with kindling and conveniently located along the covered, elevated short walk way to the outhouse. The Forest Service and National Park Service need to take lessons! Everyone had a mattress on their bunk. This is how we *roughed it* Guy and Roger,

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Backcountry Explained?

What (or where?) is the Backcountry? Is it a ski technique?

A type of gear? A place to explore? Or perhaps all three?

By Rob Suminsby



Backcountry deluxe: the top of the Vallee Blanche in Chamonix, France (Photo by Rob Suminsby)

To most cross country (XC) skiers, a backcountry trip implies venturing beyond well-established and marked trails, perhaps an overnight trip to a remote location like a 10th Mountain Division hut, and very likely in an area that is inaccessible by motorized vehicles. It might mean travelling over variable terrain where you'll need skins to ascend steeper slopes, or moving through deep snow where you might want a wider ski to help you stay on top of the snow. And most important, it might mean travelling through avalanche-prone terrain where a beacon, shovel and probe are mandatory equipment for all members of the party.

To an alpine skier, the backcountry might be what lies beyond those scary-looking gates near the top of the lift, with signs warning "UNPATROLLED TERRAIN—SKI AT YOUR OWN RISK." Lift-accessible, non-patrolled terrain just outside the established boundaries of a resort is often referred to as

"Sidecountry" or "Slackcountry" in the US. In Europe, where attitudes toward resort boundaries are decidedly more casual, it's simply called "off-piste." Whatever you call it, one thing is certain: if you are seeking exciting ski terrain outside a patrolled area, you almost certainly need avalanche gear, and need to know how to evaluate the avalanche hazard on a given slope.

While there are often some exciting powder stashes to be found just outside a resort, true backcountry skiing implies an effort to get further

away from the crowds in search of virgin snow. (The subtitle on the cover of Backcountry Magazine reads "The Untracked Experience.") This crosses the rubicon to what is usually called ski touring or alpine touring (AT). The term "ski touring" is commonly used in Europe to describe human-powered uphill skiing, but since XC skiers would rightly describe a long Class II or III trip as a ski tour, we founder once again on the rocks of linguistic confusion. AT is a more specific term, since the "alpine" modifier implies a desire to ascend mountains, presumably with the intent to ski back down them. (Skinning up and getting helicoptered off the summit hasn't quite caught on as much as the inverse alternative.) Although the AT skier may be tackling anything from gentle slopes to steep couloirs, AT does not mean "all-terrain." (Unless it's stamped on the sidewall of your tires.)

So who is this new breed of AT skier? For starters, he or she is serious about preparing for backcountry travel. He's the guy in the parking lot with a gear explosion in the back of his car, sorting through a pile of jackets to find the one with exactly the right mix of wind proofness and breathability for the day's outing. She has several carabineers attached to her pack, and may accessorize with an ice axe, even though headed up a gentle slope below treeline. You just never know what you might encounter out there.

So can we settle on AT skiing and backcountry skiing as synonymous?

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If you follow skiing or outdoor activity in general, the term "Backcountry" seems to be everywhere today. It's a magazine, a gear website, an exploding category of ski equipment, and most important, a magical, mystical spot beyond the trailhead where powder dreams come true. Unfortunately, the term can mean different things to different people, and confusion ensues. (Even the repository of all human knowledge, Wikipedia, doesn't offer much definitive help.)



Photo by Catherine Waters

*On the
(backcountry?)
trail to
Continental
Divide Hut 2015
with Pulks (sleds)*

Backcountry continued from page 2

Not quite. While AT is an activity, it's also the term used to describe a specific type of ski binding, which allows the skier to skin up with a free heel, and then lock down the heel for the descent. AT bindings are usually one of two distinct types. Frame-style AT bindings, from manufacturers like Marker and Salomon, are big, burly looking things very similar to alpine ski bindings, except that the heelpiece is attached to a frame that allows the whole assembly to pivot at the toe for skinning. These are much favored by the younger AT skier, frequently heard regaling his friends about "hucking cliffs," "catching big air" and "stomping landings." This sort of skier turned to the backcountry after spending his formative years being chased out of closed areas of his local resort, frequently by a grizzled old ski patroller overheard muttering: "You looking for big air, kid? Here, pull my finger."

At the other end of the AT spectrum is the Euro-weenie, who favors ultra lightweight bindings from companies like Dynafit. These improbable contraptions require boots with special fittings in the heel and toe, to accommodate pins that hold the boot in place for downhill, but allow a free heel for uphill movement. Long a favorite for ski tours in the Alps, these are increasingly common in the backcountry here in America.

AT bindings (and lightweight boots with a walk mode) are frequently marketed as "backcountry ski gear", and it's one of the hottest areas of growth

for ski equipment manufacturers. So if everybody out there in the backcountry is using this cool new AT stuff to ascend mountains and ski them, we should be able to use the terms "backcountry" and "AT" interchangeably, right?

Not really. Ever since the first snowboarder who got tired of post-holing through two feet of powder pulled out a hacksaw and sawed his board in half down the middle, there's been another breed of powder hound in them thar' hills: the Splitboarder. Using a board that breaks into two pieces lengthwise, he or she is able to apply skins and get up the hill on two fat but slightly stubby-looking skis, then reassemble the board to ride down. Pure genius! But snowboarders are largely drawn from a young, counter-culture demographic that would never dream of being carelessly lumped together with "skiers." They have baggier pants, for starters, and their hats are on backwards. And they speak a unique language, peppered with phrases like "shredding the Gnar." Clearly, they are a different breed.

But wait! Who's that guy right behind the Splitboarder up ahead on the skin track? The one with the dreadlocks and the hemp garments? Isn't he on Telemark gear? Of course he is. (And that was his vintage Subaru in the parking lot at the trailhead, too. The one with the faded bumper sticker proclaiming "Telly Til You're Smelly") He's too old to take up snow boarding, and he hasn't caved in to this whole AT craze, because he thinks it's all a corporate marketing ploy. Free the

heel, free the mind. Power to the people. Never trust the Man. He was out here ripping these slopes on Tele gear long before those AT guys showed up. (And don't even get him started on those 1%ers getting dropped off by the heli.) Telemark is the true, soulful backcountry experience, he'll tell you.

Of course, what he's loath to admit is that he bought his newest Tele sticks off the same rack at REI as the AT skier. They are about 100mm underfoot, lightweight for the uphill and wonderfully responsive and surfy when he's dropping a knee in 14" of fresh. He just put a different kind of binding on them, that's all.

But wait a minute, you say. Besides being a town in Norway, isn't Telemark really just a technique you use on XC skis? Well...yes. Modern Telemark boots are made of plastic and the skis have metal edges, but yeah, it all started with some Scandinavian shuffling across the frozen landscape in search of his dinner.

So now we've come full circle back to XC skiing, and we're no closer to a clear definition of what (or who) is "Backcountry." Maybe it's better to think of it as a place, after all....a place far from the crowds, where you don't need a lift ticket. A place populated by adventurers of all stripes, in search of a human-powered ski experience, whether it's sliding across a remote meadow or standing atop a windswept peak and sizing up the best line down.

How you get there is up to you. The backcountry is big enough for everyone.

Please, no foundering on the rocks of linguistic confusion.

Where to Buy New: XC— BC —Tele and AT Gear Albuquerque and Northern NM Area

By Gordon Eatman



In the Albuquerque area cross country touring gear can be obtained from retailers REI and Sportz Systems. They both carry some BC gear on the lighter side as well as some snowshoes. Sportz Systems also carry some limited AT gear (some boots, binding and skis) . Most of the AT and telemark skis are interchangeable. Neither store sells telemark boots/bindings. REI has AT boots and skis on line that can be shipped to the ABQ store (free) or to your home. Both stores sell clothing and accessories.

Also in the Albuquerque area we have a relatively new store that sells some new as well as a lot of used gear: OutdoorREGear at 4201 Yale NE, Suite D. (They are in the building complex where the Stone Age Rock Gym use to be.) I spoke with John , the owner, and they get new as well used X-C , BC, some AT, tele, split-boards, skating skis , snowshoes as well as boots for the above. They also have packs and clothing. Since this covers so much of what we do I have included them.. Phone # 344-1336;

web site : gearhead@outdoorREgear.com . They are not a dealer for gear but a consignment shop with a lot of new or as new gear.

I would be amiss if I did not mention the Sandia Area Ski Patrol's annual ski swap where a lot of new as well as used gear and clothing are exchanged usually in the fall.

In Santa Fe REI does carry some AT gear (some boots, bindings and skis) and stocks BC gear as well. Touring gear is not stocked in the Santa Fe



Corkie's Tips:

Don't forget pooch packs and paw protectors! And maybe a snack or two...

Store; it has to be ordered on line.

Alpine Sports, in S.F. has some AT gear (boots, binding, skis) as well as split boards , snowshoes and clothing / packs.

The BootDoctor is famous in Taos Ski Valley . As well as several shops in Taos and Taos Ski Valley for gear. If you know of something that rings a bell shoot me an email at Gordon Eatman <geatman12@gmail.com>

There are a bunch of ski shops in Durango, CO that carry gear from skating to AT. I have found the Backcountry Experience has good gear and cheap shipping.

Getting stuff locally, hands on before buying is preferable. That said, ordering over the internet has several possibilities. REI online will deliver to the local store for free, full "no question asked for 1 year" return policy. Several folks have mentioned shops which they have ordered from with good results. Ors Cross Country Skis Direct (good customer service) and occasionally Sierra Trading Post will have some good deals. Lot of exchanges happen on Ebay as well as Craig's List. Know you are taking a chance if you have not seen / tried on the gear; especially boots. A good rule of thumb is know exactly what you are looking for, if bought w/o personally seeing it, and make sure there is a "no questions asked return policy" if in doubt.

Just about everywhere mentioned has outdoor apparel, packs, and other accessories depending on your price point and needs. Trying on (especially packs) can be important, again locally if possible first. Good luck.

Kelly Kellstedt in Santa Fe has a shop and carries some new as well as used gear. Here is his January 2015 business summary:

"I have the largest XC/BC shop in New Mexico. I don't do AT or Tele (alpine) as they are both too trendy & overpriced. I do sell and mount release Tele bindings (Voile) on older alpine skis and Backcountry skis. I have a huge selection of new and used touring and recreational boots & skis specializing in three pin and NNNBC. I usually mount bindings for free on the same day as purchase & allow trade-ins & exchanges of used gear. I have lots of new aluminum XC poles for only \$23. I have a large selection of waxable BC skis under \$50 and free over 200cm and I'm the only source of grip wax in the State."

Kelly comes to Albuquerque about once a week to deliver.

Contact:

Kelly Kellstedt, 1101 Harrison, Santa Fe,
505-471-7077;cell 505 603-7982



President's Message New Club Website is Up and Running

By Ray Berg

Early in the season I discussed the programs the club has to support your interest in skiing: trips, instruction, training, and more. The site design is intended to facilitate our winter ski activities and provide the information we all need to have more outings, make them more fun, and keep them safe.

First and foremost, the site has detailed descriptions of these programs. There are Outings pages, Instruction pages, and information on

change your password to something of your choice, 2) authorize your information for the roster, and 3) indicate the kinds of interests you have in skiing. If you lost the message that was sent a while back, look in your junk, spam, or similar folder for it. If you still don't find it, send me a note and I will generate another message for you.

We are interested in having ski club members provide feedback.

You can upload your pictures to Photo Gallery, write a blog article, input information that includes maps, GPS tracks, ski tour altitude profiles, and more.

scholarships and travel conditions to help you. Second, there are several pages of things that are restricted to club members, including the Membership Roster, Photo Gallery, Trails & Maps, feedback comments at the ends of articles (or blogs), and more. These are restricted to members because these represent one of the benefits of membership in the ski club. To access these pages you will need to login to your account on the website (see the link at the right side of the menu bar).

Most of the information that is restricted to members involves some kind of interaction or input from members. For example, you need to specify in your profile if you want to list your address, email and phone in the Membership Roster. However, since it is restricted to members, there is some security that prevents outsiders from getting your information and using it for purposes you don't want. I encourage you to go to your profile to 1)

You can upload your pictures to Photo Gallery, write a blog article about the kinds of skiing you have done, where you skied, the conditions you encountered, etc. If you are a little more tech savvy you can input information that includes maps, GPS tracks, ski tour altitude profiles, and more. To protect the site from vandalism, these activities will require authorization, but that only involves asking. If you want to find out what is involved in putting things on the website, there are several articles with a tag "Website Help" You will need to login to access these, but they are readily available on the Blog page under "Newsletter & Blog".

If you have questions, comments, or concerns about the site, feel free to send a note on the [Contact Us](#) link in the footer of all pages.

See you on the trails.

Hut trip continued from p. 1

in the Rocky Mountain wilderness.

January 16 was a serious day of skiing. We split into two groups, each of which was out for the whole day. One of the groups, Dave, Mary Kaye, Rita, and Terri, got to see the moose in the meadow, but we kept a safe distance. It was during this day's adventures that one of our group took a fall and seemingly twisted an ankle. With three medical professionals in the group, our injured skier had excellent care, and declined offers for transport to a nearby clinic for X rays and treatment. Not until we were back home in Albuquerque did our skier with "true grit" go to a clinic and discover the injury was a broken fibula. By the time you read this story, the cast should be off and the member walking normally again.

Did I mention the food? Two chefs, Roger and Rita, with helpers cooked group dinners both nights in the hut. They had planned the menus and purchased the ingredients in advance of the trip, some of which probably could only have been found at Whole Foods. The dinners were so good that some of us, author included, had the left overs for breakfast too.

The second night at the cabin 2-3 inches of fresh snow fell, and as if on cue, the sky cleared by morning. On January 17th we packed up and skied back to the parking lot, loaded our gear, and then set out for a day ski with lighter packs. Guy took our injured member to the nearby ski resort where they both relaxed and read in the lodge. By midafternoon, we met at the parking lot and headed south as far as a comfortable motel in Salida, CO. Guy knew just where to eat- the restaurant meals were even good enough to compete with Roger and Rita's home cooked dinners from the prior two nights in the hut. On the 18th, we completed our journey back to Albuquerque.

We all would like to express our utmost appreciation to Guy for putting the trip together and leading us on such a great adventure.

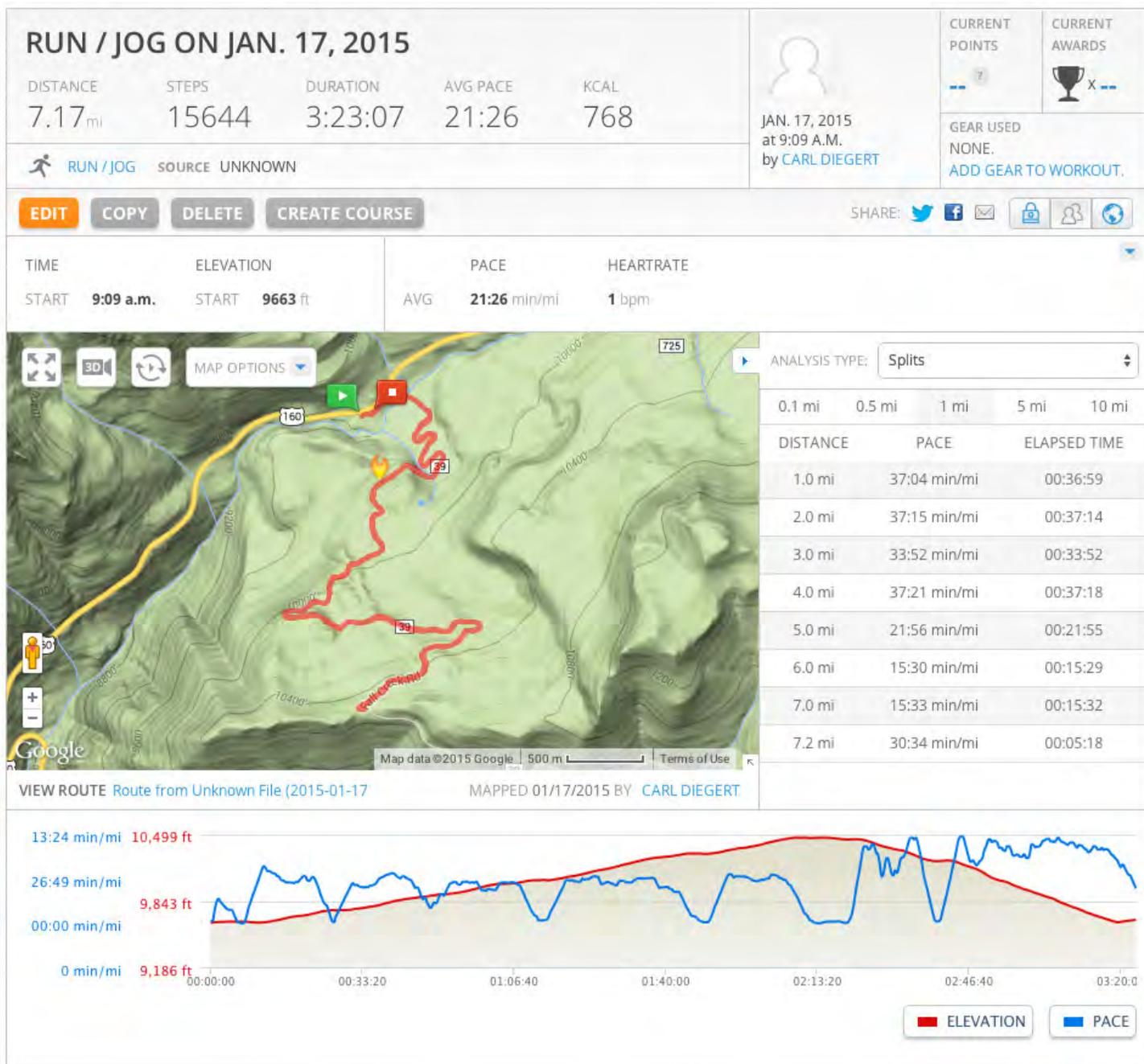
Trails Report

Pagosa Springs Fall Creek Trail Out-and-Back

January, 2015 Pagosa Bus Trip

By Carl Diegert

Randy lead the non-stop ski back on nearly perfect snow. 15 minute miles and spectacular views.

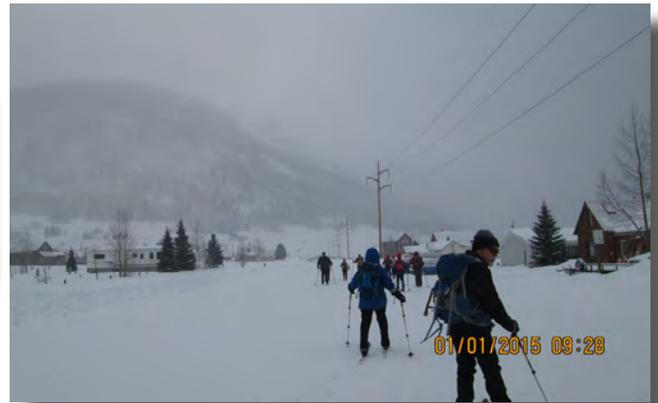




Sandia Crest Overlook, 2015



The Fun Report



Above: Skiing to Howardsville, Silverton Trip, New Years' 2015
(Photo by Marilyn Szydowski)



Ella Joan Fenoglio and John Thomas, NMCCSC ski lesson held on Jan 17, 2015 in the Sandias.



Ski and climb



Photo Rob Suminsby

NM Ski Event Calendar At a Glance

March	
Thurs. 12	<p>Club Meeting 7-9pm</p> <p>As Carl Smith will be giving us pointers at the February meeting on shooting better photos in snow conditions, the March meeting will be your chance to show off what you've learned! Please email your photos you'd like to share (please limit to 6-12) to saradell@comcast.net.</p>
17-22	<p>Sangree Froelicher Hut Trip: The trip is full, but check the website for cancellations if you are interested.</p> <p>Intermediate trip to Sangree M. Froelicher (formerly known as Belvedere): This gorgeous hut, located at 11,630 feet, features terrain for Nordic touring as well as tele skiing. Check out the hut at: http://www.huts.org/The_Huts/sangrees.php . We have been to this hut twice before, and it remains one of our favorites.</p>

Proposed Change to Club Bylaws:
The following change to club bylaws will be voted on at the March Club meeting. It is intended to streamline the paying of authorized expenses.

*By-law Change: Section 6.3 is amended as follows:
"All club checks require two signatures of the members of the Executive Committee. However, Club expenses and authorized expenditures may also be paid using the Bill Payer service of the bank or credit union in which the club has its account. An authorized expenditure is one that has been approved by one of the other account signatories in writing or by email."*

2014-15 Officers and Board

President	Ray Berg	366-8104	rsberg01@comcast.net
Vice President	Wayne Kirkby	898-1654	ski1071607@aol.com
Secretary	Marcia Congdon	265-4199	mecongdon@juno.com
Treasurer	Max Shepherd	270-5258	max_shepherd@comcast.net
Day Tours	Guy Miller	306-2628	xcskiboy@aol.com
Long Bus Trips	Celeste Taylor-Ryman Bill White	366-4959 306-3120	celestet96@gmail.com whitebillygoat@gmail.com
Hut Trips	Guy Miller	306-2628	xcskiboy@aol.com
Overnight Trips	Rob Suminsby	366-7513	robert.suminsby@gmail.com
Newsletter	Carolyn Johnson	345-0734	carolynejohnson@gmail.com
Instruction	Susan Corban Russo	286-0989	tele4fun@gmail.com
Membership	Bet Gendron	228-8025	bettygendron@gmail.com
Meetup & Social Media	Dave Gabel	401-5723	pecos_hiker@yahoo.com
Programs	Sara Friederich	266-2651	saradell@comcast.net
Mailing/Egroup	Bob Potter	831-9779	hvac87108356@yahoo.com
Refreshments	Marilynn Szydowski	332-8018	mjmazgaj52@aol.com
Trails	Sam Beard	828-0673	samgbeard@msn.com
Web Site	Bill Savage	353-1089	BSavagen5fld@me.com

Membership in Brief:

The Club has 296 members, 81 of whom are new this year.

—Bet Gendron, Membership Coordinator



February in Chama:

The group took a day ski out to Spruce Hole Yurt for photos, then back to trailhead

Trip organizer Dave Gabel with trail prize at right

Photos by Carl Smith



Mailing list: NMCCSCEgroup@mailman.swcp.com **Website:** www.nmccskiclub.org

FaceBook: <https://www.facebook.com/nmccskiclub>

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/New-Mexico-Cross-Country-Ski-Meetup-Group/>



New Mexico Cross Country Ski Club

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