

# B.C. Mountaineering Club Newsletter



Exploring the Himalayas in Ladakh, India.  
Photo: Ed Fischer

**March 2011. Vol. 89, No. 3**

## **EVENING SOCIAL MEETINGS**

Evening socials are held in the ANZA club, upstairs room (corner of 8th Ave. and Ontario St., Vancouver) from 7:30 pm. Cookies, tea and coffee are provided.

**Tues. 08 Mar.** - Join Helen Habgood and Ed Fischer in recounting their most recent trip to Ladakh to continue Ed's multi-year search for the elusive snow leopard. Did they finally see one?

**Tues. 12 Apr.** - Chris Cooper presents on his canoe journey around Britain.



Photo: Ed Fischer

## British Columbia Mountaineering Club

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### HONOURARY PRESIDENTS

*Esther and Martin Kafer*

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND OFFICERS

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### CLUB EQUIPMENT FOR HIRE

**Avalanche transceivers** - First day - \$5 per day for members, \$7 for non-members then \$3 per subsequent day .

**Snow shovels** - \$3 per day.

**Avalanche probes** - \$3 per day.

**VHF radios** - \$8 per day, \$40 per week

**Satellite phone** - \$60 per week or \$10 per day plus \$300 refundable deposit, all payable in advance, then \$2 per minute use.

If the phone is returned damaged, the renter will be responsible for repair costs. If the phone is lost or damaged beyond repair, the renter will be responsible for reimbursing the club the \$2000 cost of the phone. Trip organizers should request a deposit from trip participants to cover this cost.

First priority for equipment rental is club camps and trips. For rentals, email [info@bcmc.ca](mailto:info@bcmc.ca) or contact Kit Griffin (604-313-7282) or Peter Gumpfinger (604-733-8264). At least 2 days notice should be given prior to the day the equipment is wanted, except for the satellite phone, which should be arranged at least 2 weeks in advance.

The **BC MOUNTAINEERING CLUB NEWSLETTER** is an official publication of the B.C. Mountaineering Club and is published 10 times per year (every month except July and August). All material within this newsletter is copyright © British Columbia Mountaineering Club.

**Submissions** - of any written, drawn, or photographic material relevant to the B.C. Mountaineering Club are welcome. If possible, submissions should be sent to the editor by email. Please note that images should be at least 60 pixels/cm (150 pixels/inch) for successful printing. Images with a lesser resolution will probably not be printed. Deadline for submissions is the first Tuesday of the month preceding the publication month.

Send submissions to: [editor@bcmc.ca](mailto:editor@bcmc.ca)

Members may upload articles, photos etc. for the editor at: <http://bcmc.ca/members/EditorUpload.asp>

**Editorial policy** - All submitted written material relevant to the B.C. Mountaineering Club will be published unless the club executive decides otherwise. Submitted material may be edited for clarity or brevity, or for consistency with club policies.

**Opinions and comments expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the B.C. Mountaineering Club.**

### Scheduled trips

Participation on club trips is open to any person with adequate skills and experience, subject to the approval of the trip organizer. All non-member participants must sign a disclosure and waiver form relieving the club and all other participants on the trip from any liability. A trip organizer is not a certified guide. The function of the organizer is to organize the trip, ensure that it gets underway, know the access to the area, and know a route or routes on the climb. It is expected that each person on a club trip has the necessary skills, experience, fitness, and equipment. The organizer may specify certain equipment mandatory for participation in a trip. Any person who attempts to participate in a club trip without such mandatory equipment may be requested to withdraw. Each person on a club trip is responsible for his or her own safety and for checking the equipment used. Please be considerate and call the trip organizer more than 1 day prior to the trip.

If you are given a ride, please remember to pay the driver your portion of the car costs. If you decide not to go on a trip for which you have previously registered, please be courteous and inform the trip organizer.

## TRIP SCHEDULE ~ Check for updates and details at [www.bcmc.ca](http://www.bcmc.ca)

### March 2011 ~ Trips are skiing unless otherwise noted.

3-6	Mini Ski Camp - North Joffre Creek Horseshoe traverse: B3	David Scanlon	604-531-5025
4-6	Rainier winter ascent: D5	Justin Bennett	604-813-4666
5-6	Mt. Moe: C3	Greg Stoltmann	604-926-6496
8	Ice Climbing: The Rambles	Adrian Lazar	
11-13	Garibaldi Neve: C3	Dan Carey	
12	James Peak (ski / snowshoe): B3	Peter Gumphlinger	604-773-8264
19	Mt. Frosty (west summit): C3	Peter Gumphlinger	
19-27	North Creek Cabin Ski Week (tentative): B3	David Scanlon	604 531-5025
20	Thar Peak: B2	Peter Gumphlinger	
25-27	Mamquam Mountain: C3/4	Stanislav Liarsky	604-983-4476
26	Martin Peak (snoeshoeing): D2	Alastair Ferries	604-329-1637
26-27	Channel Creek: C3	Greg Stoltmann	604-926-6496
26-27	Birkenhead Peak: C3	Darlene Anderson	604-789-8020

### April

2	Nak Peak: B3	Ed Zenger	
2-3	Mt. Rahm: C3/4	Peter Gumphlinger	
2-3	Neve Traverse: C3	Justin Bennett	604-813-4666
2-3	Spearhead Traverse: C3	Michael Lim	
8-10	Spearhead Traverse: C3	David Hughes	604-980-6484
9-10	The Sphinx: C3	Philip Kubik	604-266-5873
9-10	Caspar Creek area: B2	Evelyn Feller	
9-17	McBride Range Traverse: C3	Dan Carey	604-731-4048

### SKILLS, COURSES AND CAMPS

#### March

19	Systems for Mountaineering - Rescue - Haul System Basics: A5	Justin Bennett	604-813-4666
20	Systems for Mountaineering – Glacier Travel: A1	Justin Bennett	604-813-4666

#### April

9-10	Winter Leadership course	Camps and Programs	778-846-7735
16-17	Systems for Mountaineering – Anchoring Intermediate: A1	Justin Bennett	604-813-4666

## **NEWS AND NOTICES**

### **New Members**

The club welcomes the following new members: Soren Andersen, Peter Atkinson, Mark Bertoia, Jennifer D'Aoust, Valerie De Pauw, Matt Delany, Timothy Driewer, Daniel Georges, Theresa Lawrence, Ray Moon, Edwin Rowan, Carmen Salaberry, Naja Smidt, Sarah Zaetsoff, and Kevin Zwar.

### **Help Wanted To Form A Friends Of Garibaldi Park Group**

Many of you probably know that concerned citizens sometimes form a group to help manage their local park, eg. Friends of Cypress Provincial Park, Friends of Strathcona Park etc. There is no such group to help manage our most famous and spectacular local park, Garibaldi Provincial Park. The BCMC was instrumental in having the Garibaldi area made into a park, and the area still needs our help, because as history has shown, parks are not inviolate.

In this province funding for our parks have been declining for over 10 years, and the infrastructure, e.g. trails, bridges, toilets, access roads, etc. is consequently deteriorating. The government has liability concerns about volunteers maintaining trails etc, but this problem is being addressed and hopefully will be resolved. Remember that 2011 is the Centennial year for BC Parks, and we hope that the expected publicity will represent a turn-around in current government policy.

Of all our provincial parks, some of us feel that Garibaldi Provincial Park is particularly vulnerable to encroachment that could affect its integrity. This vulnerability is largely due to the park's proximity to areas of urban development and established recreation corridors, and there are a number of different stakeholder groups with interests in and around the Park. These groups include the proposed Garibaldi at Squamish Resort which has a proposed border immediately adjacent to the western border of the Park, the proposed snowmobile route along the Garibaldi Neve Traverse, potential further expansion of Whistler Blackcomb Resort and heli-skiing in the Spearhead Range. In addition, the Park Master Plan is very likely to be opened for review in the near future which can present many opportunities as well as problems. At present, there is no official group set up to protect the Park from these potential encroachments and we feel this must be rectified.

In the meantime, a retired park area supervisor is looking for volunteers to contribute to at least one specific local on-the-ground project, i.e. the Black Tusk Meadows Trail, where there is an urgent need to control erosion.

If you are interested in helping in any manner whatsoever with this project, e.g. fundraising, physical trail work in the park, publicising the problem, etc, please contact Jodi Appleton at [admin.manager@mountainclubs.org](mailto:admin.manager@mountainclubs.org) or 604-873-6096.

### **BCMC Book and Gear Sale** - *Brian Wood*

The total revenue from the sale was \$910, which results in donations to both the BCMC and the FMCBC of \$455 each. Some real antiques which were not sold will be displayed eventually at the North Vancouver Museum and Archives. Thanks to all those who donated and to all those who bought the items to support this worthwhile re-using/recycling program.

### **2010 Survey Results** - *Monika Bittel*

The 2010 BCMC Survey Results are now available under the members' section on the BCMC website. The survey ran from September 25 to November 30, 2010. We received 162 responses over that time. All paper survey responses were converted into electronic format and are included in the survey results.

Thank you to all members, who took the time to respond to the survey. Over the next couple of weeks and months, the executive will consider how best to address members' needs, preferences, comments and feedback as reflected in the survey results. Some changes can readily be made and implemented. Others will take more time. The membership will be kept informed of developments as we move forward. If you do not have access to a computer and wish to receive the paper version of the survey results, please contact any member of the Executive.

## **Basic Outdoor Top-roping & Essential Rock: A Combined Program**

To express your interest please send e-mail to [climbingprograms@gmail.com](mailto:climbingprograms@gmail.com). Further details will be on the club site. You will need to complete an on-line application and mail in a waiver. Payment may be completed on-line or by cheque mailed in with the waiver. If you are not a BCMC member yet, please complete the membership details on-line. Application closes April 6th, 2011. The program will be limited to 8 participants, cost \$190. Call Paul Miller (604) 657-7285 or Kit Griffin (604) 313-7282 for further details.

### ***Part 1: Basic Outdoor Top-roping***

Wednesday, April 13 7PM Intro Session plus one day Saturday, April 16 OR Sun April 17 (weather dependent)

The program will cover safety, basic equipment, basic climbing skills and techniques, the elements of top-roping (tying in, belaying, lowering, ground anchors, rope management, climber's knots and so on).

By the end of the day, you will be able to:

- Tie-in to a climbing harness & belay without prompting.
- Understand basic rope management, how to coil a rope and the climber's knots
- Be able to explain "SERENE or ERNEST Anchors" and ABCD's of checking the belayer
- Understand climber's communication (ready to climb, on-belay, off-belay, climbing, ready to lower, lowering, watch me, etc.)

To participate, you need to bring:

- Climber's harness & rock shoes and a helmet (climber's preferred, cycling helmet will suffice)
- Four locking (Ds or ovals) carabiners, plus one large pear/Münter-biner, a belay device (no figure 8s please)
- Three lengths of cord (7mm static cord): Two "guide slings" 5 metres long and one 150cm long

Program mentors and the BCMC will provide other needed equipment. On the training day you will need to bring lunch, water, suitable clothing and sunscreen. A sense of humor would be an advantage.

### ***Part 2: Essential Rockclimbing***

Wednesday, April 27 7PM Intro Session plus two days: Saturday, April 30 and Sunday, 1 May

Consists of one evening lecture/practice, and two days in Squamish. At the end of the program, you should be able to set up and use a simple top-rope, rappel, set basic anchors, belay and follow a lead climber. To participate, please bring the items listed in the basic program and your sense of adventure.

## **Best Wishes For A Speedy Recovery** - *Dave Hughes*

While out skiing with Martin in Whistler, our own Esther Kafer, honorary co-president of the BCMC, suffered an accident that has left her with back injuries. As of February 21, she is recovering in Lionsgate Hospital. Our thoughts are with her and Martin as she heals.

## **February Newsletter Printing Trouble**

Some copies of the paper February newsletter were later found to have a double of page 9 and missing page 10. If yours is one of these, and you would like a corrected version, please contact: [editor@bcmc.ca](mailto:editor@bcmc.ca) or contact Brittany Zenger at 778-228-2392. It is unlikely that these misprinted copies will become valuable collectors' items, but you never know! The editor apologizes for this problem which originated with the printer and we will rectify it.

## **Where Oh Where Does The Money Go?** - *Dave Scanlon*

At times I am asked why my BCMC membership dues are so high. The next question that inevitably follows is: "Where does my money go?". As a general question, it is a good one as many club members don't know where their dues go. So I will try to give a general answer. Please take note: The following figures are only approximate!

This question always comes up for me at the club's monthly social, of which there are 10 each year. The annual rental of the Anza club itself is \$1120 and the snacks and refreshments cost on average \$60 a month,

leading to an annual cost of \$600. So the monthly socials cost about \$1720 every year. As a side bar to this, the recent BCMC club survey indicates that the club's monthly socials are very important to the framework of the club.

The Newsletter and Mountaineer costs are approximately \$5800 per year. Postage and stationary are about \$2100 every year.

Right off of the top of your dues are the BC Federation of Mountain Club dues of \$15 per BCMC member. Next are the BCMC's club insurance costs of \$8 per member. Those two costs total \$23, leaving the club \$22 left to pay for the above BCMC club benefits out of the original \$45 membership fee.

The sat phone renewal costs the club just over \$300 every year. That has to be paid for up front, mind you some of these costs do come back through the rental of said phone.

If at any time that a club member wants to know where their dues go in detail they may at any time ask for a copy of the financial statement, just ask any executive member.

This is my personal thought. I joined the club in 1994 and thought the fees were low then. I feel that the BCMC membership fees today are still low for what I as a member get. I get the same as all members: ten socials, presentations, snacks, membership in the FMCBC to represent me at the federal and provincial levels of government, free cabin use, free newsletter, free Mountaineer, 10% off at climbing gyms and so on. If an annual pass is \$549, with your 10% BCMC discount you already save more than you have just paid for your BCMC membership. What a deal that is! If you volunteer at the Vancouver International Mountain Film Festival as a BCMC volunteer you get free admission (saving the \$20 admission cost). For club camps and trips for members only you get first refusal.

As a club member you get to take any number of the BCMC courses as they are for club members only. And remember, aside from the professionals, the BCMC is the only local club teaching courses. Last year, the club had 37(!) weekends of courses, refreshers, classes, wilderness first aid courses and AST courses.

### **2010 Annual Report - Programs and Camps** - Alena Dzukov

During the 2009-2010 season, the club organized its always popular courses such as Backcountry Skiing and Summer Mountaineering but also worked with external contractors to provide a greater variety of courses to members. Most of the credit for a successful year should be given to Sabine Decamp who stepped up to fill in for the Camps Chair who was taking a sabbatical leave of absence between May and December 2010.

The following is a brief summary of programs and camps held between November 2009 and October 2010:

#### *Avalanche Safety Training Level 1 (AST-1) – Jan 9-10, 2010*

- Held through Canada West Mountain School
- Lots of interest, many people had to be turned away because there was room only for eight.

#### *Avalanche Safety Training Level 2 (AST-2) – Jan 16-17 / Jan 23-24, 2010*

- Instructed by Bruce Wilson through CWMS
- This course is steadily gaining in popularity and for the second year in row, we were full with 8 participants.

#### *Introduction to Backcountry Skiing – Jan 30-31 / Feb 6-7, 2010*

- 12 participants, only 10 completed the course (one opted out, one did not have the required skiing ability)
- First weekend held at Great Bear Mountain, and second weekend at Mt Rohr, which turned out to be a great location for this type of course – it's an attractive area, the approach to the summit is straightforward, many options for moderate ski terrain, and it has a great camping spot
- Feedback from participants indicated that an advanced ski course in glacier travel and winter mountaineering would be appreciated.

#### *Summer Mountaineering Course – Jun 12-13 / Jun 26-27 / July 3-4, 2010*

- Course filled up with 12 participants within a week despite the fact that the price went up, compared to last year, from \$285 to \$325 (compared to ~\$1,000 for a course provided by a commercial school)
- The model from previous year of having different instructors for each of the three course weekends worked

out very well this year too, as it is always a challenge to match instructors' available time with the course preferred dates.

- All participants had very positive feedback about the course but Marcus Dell's name stood out the most. (From the participants: "They [Marcus Dell and Michael Lim] brought ice tools and were prepared to go beyond the scope of the course.")

#### *Wilderness First Aid, 20hrs (WFA) – Oct 9-10, 2010*

- Organized through Canada West Wilderness Medical Consultants at a discounted rate for BCMC members.
- Good feedback received, it was noted, however, that the Wilderness Consultants did not cover carry systems. (carrying an injured person using ropes, skis, etc.)
- Four people expressed interest in the advanced, 40-hr wilderness first aid course which we will look into organizing for 2011.

#### *Summer and Winter Clinics and Practice Sessions*

- Many, many one day practice sessions were organized by members for their fellow members
- To name just a few: anchor and rappelling practice, transceiver practice, tele-clinic at Cypress Mountain Resort, organized avalanche response, plenty of ice climbing, crevasse rescue practice, winter terrain evaluation, building anchors (rock and snow), and a general mountaineering refresher.
- The skill refresher sessions enjoy huge popularity with the members and are usually full
- Special thanks to the most prolific organizers of these practice sessions: Justin Bennett, Isabel Budke, Dan Carey, and Stanislav Liarsky

#### *Winter Camp in Garibaldi Park, Apr 10-18, 2010*

- Organized by Dave Scanlon
- Base camp established on Nivalis Glacier with 8 participants

#### **Rewards for Trip and Clinic Organizers**

The club executive has agreed that trip and clinic organizers deserve to be rewarded for their efforts and decided to 'sponsor' trip organizers with a club subsidy offered to those who have led two trips in the past 12 months and have one trip on the current schedule. This subsidy can be applied against a full price of a course (external or internal) offered through the BCMC. Two people have applied and been granted the subsidy in 2010. The club also offers a \$25 MEC gift card to a member who organizes and leads a 2- or multi-day course.

#### **How To Kill Yourself Snowshoeing - Michael Coyle, NSR (Abridged from <http://blog.oplopanax.ca>)**

In 2009 my SAR team did a rescue on Eagle Ridge which made me realize something that all snowshoers need to know. The most common backcountry incident for a snowshoer or hiker is a slip and fall. I use snowshoers as the exemplars, but this also occurs with skiers and mountaineers as well, as demonstrated by the fatal slip-and-fall accident on Mount Seymour on February 5th that involved an ascending backcountry skier.

#### **The Setup: Weather and Terrain**

Typical coast weather patterns involve fluctuating freezing levels bringing frequent heavy wet snowfalls. Even in extremely cold weather, a cold front can bring snow followed by rising temperatures. Sometimes this brings rain all the way to the top of our local maritime mountains. As a result we usually enjoy very deep, dense and well-consolidated snowpack. As a result there are long spells where the snow is so dense that snowshoes are not only unnecessary, but actually hazardous to use. The snowshoe, while appropriate for travel over soft snow, is not the most appropriate tool for travel on hard or steep snow.

The Coast Mountains are known for their "U" shaped valleys. Glaciation flattens the valley and makes the sides steeper. Erosion has cut gullies into the sides. We drive to the top of the local ski hills, and a few hundred metres in any direction leads to steepening terrain, gullies, and dangerous cliffs. In many cases ski runs and snowshoe trails run perilously close to the terrain traps.

#### **The Gear: Snowshoes**

Modern snowshoes, such as the MSR Denali series, are large platforms with a hinged binding and an optional

tooth-like cleat just under the binding. The cleat, just under the ball and toe of your foot, is intended to handle “hard snow” conditions. This works on level snow, or even going uphill. The accidents happen going downhill, or even worse, on a side-hill that causes snowshoers to lose their footing, slide, and fall.

The hinged binding allows the foot to flex forward while going uphill, however going downhill the heel of your boot is against the platform, and your foot is forced to point downhill parallel to the surface of the snow. As the terrain gets steeper, the foot points further down. The teeth on some snowshoes are slightly angled preventing you from digging in your heels, interfering with gripping, and leading to a loss in traction going downhill.

On the side-hill, the snowshoe platform causes the boot to twist sideways, since the binding hinge is a forward and backward pivot and can't handle the sideways orientation. The user is forced to twist his or her ankles further as the slope gets steeper. The snowshoer leans into the slope forcing the ankle to twist even further. This can force the platform to “bite” into the snow on the uphill side while the downhill side levers out of the snow. This puts the hiker in a very unstable situation.

In as both downhill and sidehills progress, each step is a risk. Lifting the snowshoe to step they have to stand on one twisted ankle. They cannot “dig in” with their heels, and their entire weight is on the poorly-designed binding teeth. A lifted leg can strike the standing leg, and making the situation worse. The snowshoe can swinging out and forward, moving the platform perpendicular with the snow. When this happens the step “spikes” the snowshoe tail first into the snow and is forced forward. An out of control tumble, forward head over heels, can occur.

### **The Human Factor: Behaviour**

Snowshoeing has become increasingly popular the past 10 years. The equipment is cheap relative to ski gear, requires no training, and there are no additional fees for Parks and crown land trails. So where is the problem?

Some assume snowshoes can be used to turn hiking into a year round pursuit. An experienced hiker may know trails that are entirely within their abilities in summer, but these may be inappropriate in winter. The ease of walking on snowshoes lulls the hiker into thinking that summer and winter objectives are pretty much equal.

Secondly, in periods of cold clear weather with rain or sun crusts, or in the spring with melt-freeze crusts, travelling cross-country can be quite easy. It may be tempting to leave the marked trail where hundreds of others have pounded the snow. Without a trail to guide them, and the false security of snowshoe cleats, it is easy to venture extremely dangerous terrain.

The attitude that winter recreation; is just an extension of summer recreation, except on snow, seems problematic. The death rate from winter slip-and fall accidents show it is much more dangerous that summer hiking in the same areas.

### **The Solution: Proper Travel Techniques**

Snowshoes are designed for travel on flat terrain. Do not let the cleats and teeth fool you. In icy conditions, as soon as the slope you are on reaches 20 degrees, you are in danger. Without specific training and tools, a slip on hard snow results in an uncontrolled fall.

The solution is twofold. First, ask yourself if the slope looks steep enough for a toboggan, or if you could ski it. If the answer is yes, the slope is likely steep enough that a slip could turn into a fall that cannot be stopped. Secondly, use the proper training and gear. The self-belay technique is best for preventing a fall. The climber uses a tool such as an ice axe, ski pole, or other tool to penetrate the snow, and create a third point of contact. This will act as an anchor. The secondary technique is known as self arrest, using an ice axe or other tool to rapidly stop a fall.

### **Conclusion**

The perception that winter travel is just as safe as summer travel is wrong. Snowshoes are simple and easy to use, but safe summer hiking trails, can be extremely dangerous in the winter and spring. Snow increases hazards on steep terrain. Use of proper techniques for the season and the terrain can avoid accidents and deaths.

Tools such as crampons and ice axes are designed to keep you from falling, and to stop a fall once it happens. Training and experience are required to know how to use these tools properly, and assess terrain and conditions. Self belay on steep snow, rescue techniques such as crevasse rescue, and requisite training in avalanche awareness and avoidance are necessary for safe winter travel.