

# SQUAW BUTTE BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN

PO Box 293, Emmett, ID 83617

September, 2006

## WHERE WE RIDE

### THE SAWTOOTHS

### THE SELWAY

## AND OUR OWN WEST MOUNTAIN

*Squaw Butte Back Country Horsemen*

*Meet the 1st Thursday of every month at La Costa Restaurant in Emmett, ID*

*For information about joining contact Bob Howard, 208.278.5011 or robertnchristy@msn.com*





Ellen, Warrior and Chet at Ingeborg Lake

**In August SBCH members made two rides into the Sawtooth Wilderness. One ride was by Charles Lox and Ellen Knapp. The other was Doug and Terri Argo and Bill and Marybeth Conger. Each ride has a tale to tell. The first is By Ellen Knapp**

**W**e rode 6 days and camped 5 nights in the Sawtooth Wilderness. We rode about 70 miles, I'm sure Bindi Sue (our dog) ran even more. We had about 38 hours of 'in the saddle' time. Excellent weather, minimal bugs, dry conditions. Perfect time for a pack trip. We saw some of the most spectacular scenery available, and it's right in our backyard. On Sunday we rode in from Pettit Lake Tin Cup trail head at 6996' via Yellow Belly Lake and Edith Lake. We then went over Sand Mountain Pass at 9400'. We rode past Edna, Veron, and Summit Lakes and dropped down to Ardeth Lake at 8228'.

About 15 miles. We spent 4 nights at Ardeth Lake and had the entire lake to ourselves. Good campsite and good grazing. We figure that most backpackers can only make it to Edna Lake in one day, then they pass up Ardeth Lake on their way to their next camp spot. Monday we rode about 12 miles to Hidden Lake and the Cramer Divide at 9480'. Fantastic views. Didn't meet anyone! In true BCH fashion, we cut 3 downfall from the Hidden Lake Trail. We crossed the South Fork of the Payette River a few times - it's narrow near its headwaters. Tuesday we had a spectacular 12 mile ride with completely fantastic scenery. We rode over the Ardeth Lake/Spangle Lake divide at 8952'. We dropped down to Spangle Lake at 8585' and met a group of 6 horse folks camped there. We then rode up to Ingeborg Lake at 8890'. What a beautiful high mountain,

rugged lake. We lunched at Rock Slide Lake - another beautiful lake. We rode further down to Benedict Lake at 8240'. We also took a little used trail to the tucked away and scenic Three Island Lake at 8598'. We cut 3 downfall on the trail between Rock Slide Lake and Benedict Lake. Coming back, we were able to see the Red Mountain fire smoke plume from Ingeborg Lake.



**Ellen on the trail from Alice Lake**  
 Wednesday we had another 12 mile ride. We again rode over the Ardeth Lake/Spangle Lake divide at 8952'. On the way we cut out a downfall. We had negotiated it the previous day and had decided that it was too



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dangerous for horse crossing.



Alice Lake

On this ride we turned SE down the Middle Fork of the Boise River. Our goal was the Flytrip Creek trail and Camp and Heart Lakes. The views of the canyon and peaks were stunning. We cut 2 more deadfall that were treacherous for horses to cross. The Flytrip Creek Trail was very rugged, steep, and rocky. We lunched at Camp Lake at

8520', a long narrow lake tucked away below the peaks. We then went cross country to Heart Lake, another stunning high mountain lake. We stumbled across a hiker at that lake - the only person we met all day. On the return ride we could see how the Red Mountain fire had exploded and could now see the new explosion of the 'contained' Trail head fire. The Sawtooth peaks were beginning to be shrouded in smoke.

Thursday, we packed up. The smoke was rolling in and we wanted to take a longer route out to the trailhead and did not want a marathon ride. We rode 12 miles that day. We retraced our route from Ardeth Lake to

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Summit, Vernon, and Edna Lakes. We went over Sand Mountain Pass at 9280' to Toxaway Lake. We then climbed Snowyside Pass at 9280' and dropped down to Twin Lakes at 8868' where we set up camp and spent the night. We had a bit of rain that night and woke to a grey day. We decided it was the right time to be heading out of the wilderness. Friday we had an easy 7 mile ride from Twin Lakes at 8868', past Alice Lake and back to Pettit Lake at 6996'. The view of the Stanley valley was hidden by smoke. It was a wonderful trip and just the right length.



By Terri Argo

**SURFING THE SAWTOOTHS**

The week of August 13 through 19 found Bill and Marybeth Conger leading a

couple of fledgling packers (namely Teri and Doug Argo) into the Sawtooth Wilderness. This trip had been several months in the planning.

However, we were "planning" to go up to the west side of Chamberlain Basin in the Frank Church Wilderness. Plans changed because of fires near

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the Big Creek trailhead and Yellow Pine. So, we decided we would go into the Frank Church just east of Sea Foam, that is until the fires closed that area, too. In the process of calling various Forest Service offices to find out what was NOT burning, we found out that the fire which had been raging near Grand Jean had finally gone out and this trailhead was now open. It is nice to live in a state where there are lots of options for places to ride!



Ardeth Lake

We left from the trailhead on Monday morning and rode into Elk Lake, which is about 11 miles along the South Fork of the Payette River. There was a lot of feed at the upstream end of this lake, and we spent a relaxing evening in camp watching the horses eat. The next morning, we continued up to Ardeth Lake and over to Spangle Lakes where we made camp. Our intent had been to go down to Atlanta and back up the Queens River; however, we did not have our stock in as good of shape as that trip would have required, so we opted for spending a couple days at Spangle Lakes and another at Ardeth Lake before heading back out to the trailhead. We

did a couple day rides, and did some fishing, and a lot of relaxing. For those of you who watch NASCAR for the crashes (why else?), I'm sorry, the worst disaster to befall our party was that the Argo's self-inflating mattresses became self-deflating. We stayed warm, but the ground did get a bit hard. The weather was beautiful, and we enjoyed wonderful scenery each day. We only covered about 40 miles with the pack stock, which just might qualify as a record for shortest distance the Congers have covered during a 5 day trip. Had we pushed our animals harder, we would have covered more ground, and we might have had more exciting things to report (NASCAR style). But alas, all we got was a very relaxing vacation.

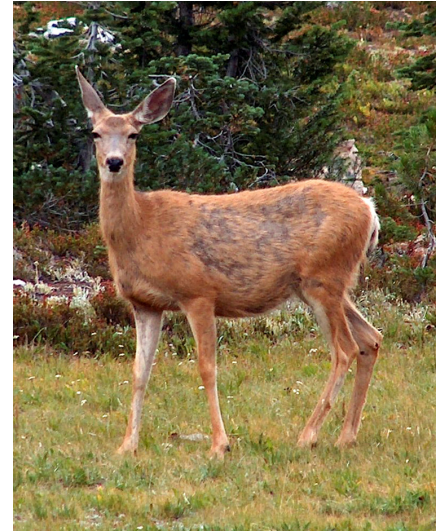


Bill, MB & Terri log surfing

Trail Summary:

The trail up the South Fork of the Payette River from Grand Jean trailhead to Ardeth Lake, and then over the ridge to Spangle Lakes and Ingeborg Lake is wide and firm. It is laid out very well for pack animals. Be prepared to deal with dead fall as there was a fair amount

of it. Also beware some of the bridges as they were in disrepair. (Maybe this could be a trail maintenance project for us next year?) We took a day ride up from Ardeth Lake over the ridge toward Vernon Lake. This trail is steep and not well-suited to pack stock. It could be done, but I would choose an alternate route.



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## ***PRESIDENT'S LETTER***

*Dear SBBCH Members,*

Well the Schindele's and I had a nice trip to the Selway Lodge, except for Sally's rib of course. It was kind of like old home week for me.

And I hear the Sawtooth Wilderness was full of our members in August as well. We kind of covered the state from one end to the other.

I'm looking forward to our Treasure Hunt with the 4H on the 16<sup>th</sup> and want to thank Ellen for all her hard work on this. It's important to get young people involved in our organization and this is sure a good way to do it.

Congratulations on their birthday in September go to Bill Conger, Diane Dann,

Tracy Dineen, Gary Farnese and Kay Ryan.

One other thing, we reviewed, voted on and approved the August meeting minutes at the September meeting so they won't appear in this month's newsletter.

See you in camp

Bob



The Red Mountain Fire taken from Bruce Meadows.

**BE CAREFUL OUT THERE!**



By Moosely Adams

I was sleeping with my herd mates when I noticed a Cyclops opening the gate to our pasture. It had a bright eye in the middle of its forehead that hurt my eyes to look at it. When it got closer I could see it was Rob the human that feeds us and takes us on weekend trips to the mountains, but it was still dark so what did he want. It was soon apparent that we were going someplace because he always gives us some grain before putting our halters on. We like to play a game, pretending we don't want to go, but the grain is so tasty so we all file into the paddock and have breakfast. For this trip he only selects Willow and me (Moosely). In a few minutes we are loaded in the trailer and heading towards Ola. We can see where the fire burned, some places it came right to the road. After about 90 minutes on a

very smooth road, we are at the Squaw Creek trail head / campground. No one else is here yet, so we unload and he gives us some apples and brushes the road dust off us. He then applies bug spray, something I really don't care for. After a few minutes, John Erickson of the Emmett ranger district arrives with some signs that he would like us to put up. Rob and John talk for a while about the local fires. John was been at the Red Mountain fire and was getting a break before going back to a fire line. Because of his fire duties, he couldn't go riding with us. After John left, Rob saddled us up, loading his trail tools on me, and some of the signs. When Willow was ready we started up West Mountain trail North [TR-131]. We only went a short distance before we saw the first of many downed trees blocking the trail. Rob unloaded some equipment and soon the sound

of a chain saw was heard. This continued for the next six hours. We spent most of the day standing in the shade, as Rob worked on the trail. At 15:30, we turned around. I heard Rob say something about running out of chain oil, having forgotten it back at the trailer. By 17:00 we were back in camp, had been fed and were taking naps.

Willow and I expected the next morning to leave from this trail head, and work on another trail, but instead we loaded in the trailer and moved to Wilson Corral. We got decked out in our equipment and for the next five hours worked on that trail. All of our work was done on the lower section of trail, as the upper section had been already cleared. Rob thinks it may have been done by some cowboys running cattle on the mountain so that they could haul in salt. By 17:00 we were back in our



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pasture after a fun weekend in the mountains.

On Saturday August 26 I noticed a horse trailer coming up our lane. The trailer contained my new buddy Nova. Nova and his human Kelley, spent the night and again in the dark we were surprised by the Cyclops. After a quick breakfast, the three of us loaded in the trailer and headed back to West Mountain. This was Nova's first trip there and he was asking all sorts of questions during the ride.



**Kelley on Nova**

Willow was sort of grumpy so I filled him in. We went back to the trail that we didn't finish the Saturday before. It was a quick ride up to where we had stopped. We then spent the next three hours doing the

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move, stop, wait, move again routine common to trail work. Most of our stops were in very shady spots. After we broke out into the upper meadow, we trotted for a while up the trail to the junction of trail [TR-131] and trail [TR-135] to place one of the signs that John had given us the week before. After that we headed back down the trail to the trailer. It was a nice trip to the mountains and I know that Nova had a great time.



by Robbin Schindele

This year again Sally and I and Bob Howard traveled across the state to ride in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. Were last year we camped at the Moose Creek trailhead, this year went through Elk City and up onto Green Mountain and down to

Warm Springs Bar and pack in from there.

Bob grew up in that country and was our guide. Our objective was to get to the Selway Lodge. Bob's dad had owned the lodge in the 1950s and he wanted to get back in and see what it was like today. It's a long drive up there so the first night we camped at

Mountain Meadows campground. There was water and plenty of feed for the horses. The next morning was leisurely spent. We headed off about 10:30 and drove to the road down to the Bar and were met with a sign saying Warm Springs Bar 10 miles, trailers not recommended. Bob had an alternative plan but it was

longer so we unhitched his trailer and drove down the road to check if the sign was correct. It was.

The alternate was to go to Windy Saddle and go in from there so we checked out that road too. The roads had been pretty bad getting this far so we were being cautious. It wasn't "too bad" so we went back hitched up and drove up there to camp and ride out in the morning. Again a nice spot water and forage for the animals and a nice camp.

But as we got to looking around we came upon a FS notice board declaring every trail out of there restricted from travel. The declarations stated it was an offense to "be on the trail." Well there was an alternative to the alternative, we could travel back down the road and take the Lynx Creek trail down to Running Creek and get back on track. The Running Creek trail is the trail we were going to take from Warm Springs Bar anyway.

So we camped the night and set out in the morning. We were loaded and headed down the trail by about noon. It was nine miles to Running Creek from the Lynx Creek trailhead and most of it was downhill. The trail was steep and washed out in many spots. The animals were walking in a trench 2-3 feet deep in many places. There was a lot of brush but the whole trail was navigable with only one work around spot. We got to running creek about the time

the sun went behind the mountains, found a meadow with an old camp a couple hundred yards from the creek and set up camp.

The next morning we were on the trail by ten with another 10 miles ahead of us. Bob had talked to the Elk City FS and they said they had contracted trail clearing to the edge of their district. They didn't know how it was beyond that. They did say the trail hadn't been cut out for ten years prior to this year's contract. SO we know we had good going for at least half the distance.

The trail was in pretty good shape, lots of brush but passable and pretty once we got down to creek level after crossing a couple ridges. We did encounter one downed tree in an old burn. There was no workaround so we hacked it out.

Going up one of the ridges the saddle started to slip on one of my mules. Sally riding drag let me know. We stopped as the saddle slipped around to his side, I jumped off and was trying to hold the saddle up and Sally was holding the two hooked up mules steady. But in my haste I had not tied my horse to anything so he wandered off to greener grass and the lead mule seeing this took off hastily to follow. In fact they bolted and hit Sally with a hard pannier, knocking her to the ground and breaking a rib in the process. Then the saddle slipped farther and we had a bit of a run around scared kind of

wreck. But it was soon over and soon put to rights and Sally said she was doing OK so we headed down the trail.

We got to the confluence of Running Creek and the Selway River without further incident. That is the location of the Running Creek Ranch, an in-holding in the wilderness. It was strange to come the owner's house, even though it was made of logs, the manicured lawn, sprinklers and general tidiness made it look as though we were in a Boise suburb rather than the wilderness.

We passed through a fenced in pasture and made camp on a bar next to the river. That evening we saw the caretakers coming into camp with a couple dudes in tow. They told us even though our camp was in the wilderness in was part of the ranch but we were welcome to stay. Our plan was we were going to ride to Selway Lodge and back (14 miles total) tomorrow then head for home the following day.

The next morning I looked at Pancho and saw his back was sore where the saddle ends so I said I would stay in camp and let Bob and Sally ride to the lodge. A day off wasn't going to heal the sore but it wouldn't make it worse. They wouldn't have to tow any animals if I was staying back, so off they went while I lounged around camp and looked after the pack stock and Pancho.





**Bob & the owners of the Selway Lodge**

When they got to the lodge the owners daughter, her two children and the caretaker were there. When they heard Bob knew a lot of the history of the place he and Sally were welcomed with lemonade and cookies and a tour of all the improvements. The owners are from Connecticut and have restored and improved the place considerably, rebuilding some of the buildings, expanding others, flying in a state of the art kitchen with a *walk in refrigerator*. Your everyday kind of stuff.

After the tour Sally and Bob headed back. By the time they got to camp Sally's rib was hurting pretty bad. I had made pork chops and potatoes for supper and we settled into our bunks under the stars as the evening began to chill. And then started to rain, then it quit and then it rained some more. By morning we were all soaking wet as were our bedrolls but

thanks to modern gear we weren't cold anyway.

Over coffee we talked about the ride out and did we have any alternatives. Sally was hurting and it was a steep rough trip back the way we came. Bob then said it was only seven miles to Paradise (a campground east of us on the river) if we could get someone to meet us there we could get back to our rigs on the McGruder road. *If we could get someone to meet us there!* Well I guess that would be Bob's wife and son. It was Friday, we could stay where we were and dry out today, then ride to Paradise in the morning. Young Bob wouldn't have to miss any work and we could have our rigs back to pick up the stock in a day.

So we trudged up to the Running Creek Ranch caretaker's cabin and asked if they could and would call out for us. They were welcoming and accommodating with their sat phone. But we couldn't get a solid connection from their cabin so one of them went up to the main house to use the other phone. He got through, talked to Donna and came back to tell us so. What we forgot to tell him was to come tomorrow so they, and we, would be on our way shortly. They also told us

the trail to Paradise was in good shape.

It was and it was the prettiest part of the trip. The trail follows the river, meandering up and down the slopes on the East side. Sometimes you're on the flood plain and sometimes you're far above it with a straight drop down to its absolutely clear depths.

The ride was accomplished by mid-afternoon, I unpacked our sleeping bags and dried them in the sunny meadow. Our rescuers arrived about 10:00 that evening. The Bobs, Donna and Sally went off to Hamilton, Montana for the night and I stayed with the stock.

The next day the bobs and I drove the McGruder road back to our rigs. That road is someplace I've always wanted to do so it was kind of a bonus for me. It took us 3 hours to travel it in Sally's jeep and it took 4 hours for Bob to negotiate with his trailer. I opted to go around as I wanted to take a look at the Bitterroot valley again. I like that country. It took me ten hours. I got back to camp about midnight, the Howard's had left for home about 7:00. Sally and I retired got up Sunday and came home, an interesting trip.

## **SEPTEMBER EVENTS**

**September 16, 2<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL TREASURE HUNT TRAIL RIDE**

**September 23, DRY BUCK LOOP FUN RIDE**

**For details & directions to these events please go to <http://www.sbbchidaho.org/html/activities.html>**





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