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General Meeting

Date January 10, 2012
Time 7:30 – 9:30 pm
Where PCC
3921 E. Bayshore Road
Palo Alto, CA
Program The Long Way to Mera Peak: Trekking and Peak Bagging in Nepal
Presenter Kelly Maas

In October 2009 Kelly Maas joined Warren Storkman for one of his infamous Nepal trips. They planned to climb Mera Peak, a popular trekking peak, but approached it from an unusual direction. From the sweltering lowlands where they started, to the frigid windswept Himalayan skyline where they were forced to turn back, they had a great time walking through beautiful countryside and experiencing warm Nepalese hospitality.

Kelly also had some unexpected adventures.



Directions from 101

Exit at San Antonio Road, go east to the first traffic light, turn left and follow Bayshore Rd to the PCC on the corner of Corporation Way. A sign marking the PCC is out front. Park and enter in the back of the building.

Google <http://tinyurl.com/28ngaw>

Editor's Notes

Happy New Year! We had a great Festivus party to celebrate last year's accomplishments, and hopefully everyone is fired up about reaching new heights in 2012! This month's Scree is slimmer than usual, so let's get out there and have some adventures! And let's pray for snow!
Judy

Chair Column

Welcome to 2012 with the PCS! As most of you know, we have a monthly meeting on the 2nd Tuesday, about 7:30 in the evening, usually in the Peninsula Conservation Center's building on E. Bayshore near San Antonio Rd. in Palo Alto. All who have an interest in the mountains of the world, and especially our Sierra Nevada, are welcome to attend -- from the active climbers and trip leaders, to those who simply want to see a great program about an exploration of the mountains (that's why I first came to a meeting, 12 years ago!). At the start of each meeting, short reports of your recent peak climbs, as well as descriptions of upcoming trips, are welcome; this is followed by a refreshment break for personal contacts, and then the SHOW!

For Jan. 10, we are thankful to Kelly Maas for putting together a program (on short notice) about a trip to the Himalayas, as described elsewhere in this Scree. At present there are only a couple more shows in the works, so we'll need some help from all of you great climbers/photographers (or your friends from outside the Section). If you have even a possible show (recent or ancient), let me know about it -- call at (650) 493-2378, or e-mail at rodmccalley@sbcglobal.net.

It may seem a bit early, but the planning process for summer trips will soon be underway. There will be a trip-planning

meeting in February, time and place to be announced later by our new Vice-Chair and Trip-Scheduler, Terry Cline. Climbers who aren't official leaders are still very welcome at the meeting -- you can let us know what trip types and destinations are desired, and even offer to co-lead a trip! You are welcome to submit trips to Terry before the meeting.

Rod McCalley

PCS Trip Calendar

These are required statements.

Note: CST 2087766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.

Note: All Sierra Club trips require you to sign a Liability Waiver.

<http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/signinwaiver.pdf>

January 7 - Junipero Serra
Leader: Jesper Schou

January 14, 15 - Backcountry Ski Jakes, Bliss
Leader: Louise Wholey

February 11, 12 - Donner Summit Dayhikes
On Snowshoes
Leader: Joe Baker

February 18, 19 - Backcountry Ski Mount
Rose
Leader: Louise Wholey

March 17, 18 - Backcountry Ski Sierra Buttes
Leader: Louise Wholey

March 24, 25 - Cone Peak
Leader: Joe Baker

April 14 - 15 - Backcountry Ski Bridgeport
Leader: Louise Wholey

May 12, 13 - Backcountry Ski Sierra
Leader: Louise Wholey

PCS Trip Details

Junipero Serra

Goal: Junipero Serra (5862')
Location: Ventana Wilderness
Dates: January 7
Leader: Jesper Schou

This hike is co-listed with the PCS and DHS. Named after Friar Junipero Serra, the founder of the Missions, this peak is the highest in the Santa Lucia range. The walk up is mildly strenuous with an altitude gain of 3900+ feet and six miles ONE way on trail, but the view is well worth the effort.

Pouring rain cancels.

Carpool: Cottle & H/A 85 Park & Ride at 7:00 am or call leader for trailhead information.

Leaders: Jesper Schou
schou@sun.stanford.edu; Ron Karpel,
ronny@karpel.org

Backcountry Ski Jakes, Bliss

Goal: Jakes Peak (9186'), Bliss Peak (8658')
Location: Near Lake Tahoe
Dates: January 14, 15
Leader: Louise Wholey

Come join us for our third of the Tahoe Backcountry Skiing Series. Ski above Lake Tahoe on steep powder runs. Requires advanced skiing skills (resort black diamond+), avalanche training. Randonee or Telemark skis, climbing skis, avalanche beacon, shovel, and probe.

Leader: Louise Wholey (louisewholey at yahoo.com)

To sign up send \$8 for leader training to Louise Wholey, 21020 Canyon View Drive, Saratoga, CA 95070.

Donner Summit Dayhikes On Snowshoes

Goal: Mt. Judah (8245'), Boreal Ridge
Location: Donner Summit, near Truckee
Dates: February 11, 12
Leader: Joe Baker

We will stay at the Southbay Ski Club lodge at

Donner Summit, and do day trips. One day, we will climb Mt. Judah, and the other day we will do a loop from Highway 80 to Highway 40, following the PCT on the way there and coming over Boreal Ridge on the way back. Destinations may change based on snow conditions. Contact Judy Molland at judy@judymolland.com.

Backcountry Ski Mount Rose

Goal: Tamarack Peak (9897'), Mt. Houghton (10,490'), Mt. Rose (10,776')
Location: Near Lake Tahoe
Dates: February 18, 19
Leader: Louise Wholey

Come join us for our fourth of the Tahoe Backcountry Skiing Series. This tour is long and strenuous, definitely not designed as a first tour of the season! Requires advanced skiing skills (resort black diamond), avalanche training. Randonee or Telemark skis, climbing skis, avalanche beacon, shovel, and probe.

Leader: Louise Wholey (louisewholey at yahoo.com)

To sign up send \$8 for leader training to Louise Wholey, 21020 Canyon View Drive, Saratoga, CA 95070.

Backcountry Ski Sierra Buttes

Goal: Sierra Buttes (8591')
Location: North of Lake Tahoe
Dates: March 17, 18
Leader: Louise Wholey

Come join us for our fifth of the Backcountry Skiing Series, this one slightly north of the Tahoe area. Depending on conditions this may be an overnight ski trip or a long one-day outing. Requires advanced skiing skills (resort black diamond), avalanche training.

Randonee or Telemark skis, climbing skis, avalanche beacon, shovel, and probe.

Leader: Louise Wholey (louisewholey at yahoo.com)

To sign up send \$8 for leader training to Louise Wholey, 21020 Canyon View Drive, Saratoga, CA 95070.

Cone Peak

Goal: Cone Peak (5155')

Location: Ventana Wilderness, Limekiln Campground

Dates: March 24, 25

Leader: Joe Baker

We will climb Cone Peak from Highway 1. Cone Peak is the most spectacular mountain on the Big Sur coast of California. It is the second highest mountain (Junipero Serra Peak is higher) in the Santa Lucia Range. The trip is on-trail but somewhat strenuous. On Saturday, we'll take a leisurely hike up to our camp spot at Vicente Flat, where we'll spend the night. Then we'll climb our peak on Sunday morning, about 14 miles round-trip, before hiking out. This should be an excellent time to see lots of wildflowers.

Contact Judy Molland: judy@judymolland.com for more information.

Backcountry Ski Bridgeport

Goal: TBD

Location: Bridgeport, Eastside of the Sierras

Dates: April 14, 15

Leader: Louise Wholey

Come join us for our sixth of the Backcountry Skiing Series, this one in the wonderful Bridgeport area. Expect multiple one-day outings, such as Crater Crest. Requires advanced skiing skills (resort black diamond), avalanche training. Randonee or Telemark skis, climbing skis, avalanche beacon, shovel, and probe.

Leader: Louise Wholey (louisewholey at yahoo.com)

To sign up send \$8 for leader training to Louise Wholey, 21020 Canyon View Drive, Saratoga, CA 95070.

Backcountry Ski Sierra

Goal: Mt. Tom, Elderberry Canyon

Location: Mt. Tom, Eastside of the Sierras

Dates: May 12, 13

Leader: Louise Wholey

Come join us for our grand finale of the Backcountry Skiing Series, skiing a classic route in the high Sierra. Requires advanced skiing skills (resort black diamond+), avalanche training. Randonee or Telemark skis, climbing skis, avalanche beacon, shovel, and probe.

Leader: Louise Wholey (louisewholey at yahoo.com)

To sign up send \$8 for leader training to Louise Wholey, 21020 Canyon View Drive, Saratoga, CA 95070.

Private Trip Calendar

Important: Private trips are not insured, sponsored, or supervised by the Sierra Club. They are listed here because they may be of interest to PCS members. Private trips may be submitted directly to the Scree editor.

October, 2012 - Nepal

Leader: Warren Storkman

January, 2013 - Argentina

Leader: Warren Storkman

Private Trip Details

Nepal

Goal: Rara Lake

Dates: October, 2012

Leader: Warren Storkman

If you are interested in Nepal, October 2012, and going to Rara Lake in the remote Mugu District, contact Warren Storkman:

dstorkman@aol.com.

No obligation, but I need your email address.

Argentina

Goal: Aconcagua (22,841')

Location: Argentina

Dates: January 2013

Leader: Warren Storkman

If you are interested in visiting Argentina and climbing Aconcagua in 2013, contact Warren at dstorkman@aol.com and he will send you an informational letter.

Trip Report

Castle Peak (9,103'), Sierra Buttes (8,591')

September 10 - 11

By Dana Chaney

Mountaineering doesn't have to be so hard if you pick the right mountains. Instead of the five or six hour drive to the killer 12,000 to 14,000 foot monsters over on the Sierra east side, I decided to take a different approach. Three hours and fifteen minutes up Highway 80 through Sacramento and just short of the Sierra crest at Donner Pass brought me to the trailhead of Castle Peak. I had planned on leaving at 6:30 AM but between one thing and another I left at 9:00 AM and had plenty of time anyway. Now that's what I call an "alpine start!"

Castle Peak is about 3 ½ miles from the trailhead and a reasonable 1,730 feet altitude gain. There is a dirt road most of the way to the peak. The Sierra Club has a backcountry hut down the valley over the shoulder of the peak ridge and that trail gets a lot of use. After a couple of miles you leave the trail and take a good use trail up the ridge to the summit area. Most people, judging from the several other people I saw on the climb, scale the first rocky summit they come to and call it a day. The actual high point is a side hill scramble past several such rocky towers down to the last one.



Castle Peak: the trail comes up the left ridge and the peak is in the center

The peak is significant enough to make it on the Sierra Club list at least partly because you can see it from the freeway up on the left as you drive between the Soda Springs ski area exit to the Boreal ski area and it is a dramatic ridge with the rocky towers scattered along it. The other interesting part is the steep Class 3 climb at the very end to get to the top of the last such tower. It is about 50 feet high and close to vertical. It might be called Class 4 because of the exposure but the rock is full of ledges and big handholds.



The peak; the route is behind, on the right side

The thunderclouds were growing off to the west and sort of blowing in the direction of the peak as I got closer. At the pass and the start of the half mile of exposed ridge the thunder started. It was off to the west and moving to the south of me so I forged ahead. It got louder and then started to thunder both west and south and maybe a little east too. No visible lightening yet so I kept going. As I got to the top of the summit ridge I met one couple turning around to head down ahead of the weather. A couple of other people were scrambling up the first tower in a hurry to get out of there. I proceeded down the ridge line.

I have been around lightening before and I have been a lot closer to it than it was at this point in the climb so I just couldn't see bailing yet. Still, I was trying to hurry as much as possible. As I got closer to the final peak, a bolt off to south lit up the sky. It looked like it was a thousand yards from top to bottom. The time delay was about five seconds and I judged the clouds were not headed my way so

on I went. The final Class 3 climb had the added excitement of climbing right up to the high point of the ridge and the high point for many miles around, high on the lightening hit list too. I got to the top and took a quick look around for the register. I was happy not to find it and immediately headed over the side and worked my way down the steep part and off the peak.

I felt better not being the highest thing around and started scurrying back along the summit ridge. I was not happy to be headed for the half mile long exposed ridge but I was getting lower all the time. If the electrons are searching about for the path of least resistance they have got to like a six foot column composed largely of electrolytic water be it hurrying ever so fast down an exposed ridge. About half way down another lightning bolt made me jump because it seemed so close but the timing to the thunder was seven seconds so I didn't run off the side of the ridge just yet.

I finally got to the end of the ridge just as the rains came and the thunder stopped. It was a wet but short two miles downhill to the car.

I then drove up over the Sierra summit to Truckee and turned north headed for the vicinity of Sierra Buttes about 40 miles away up into the far northern Sierras where the 10,000 foot peaks are gone and 8,591 foot Sierra Buttes is about as high as it gets until you hit Lassen volcano a long way north. The Buttes is a dramatic ridge of craggy rocks strung out for a half a mile.



Sierra Buttes looking west, high point to right of center tree

The little mountain town of Sierra City lies at the foot of the northern edge of the mountain about 4,000 feet below the peak. I had dinner in a funky restaurant in town that night after setting up camp at a popular campground near Sardine Lake.

The next morning I was up at the trailhead and on my way before 8:30 AM. I wanted to climb the peak and get back to San Jose in good time by mid-afternoon.

The interest in Sierra Buttes is not only the dramatic towering ridge line but it is also the highest mountain for many miles affording great views and it has a neat fire lookout perched on the highest point.



The fire lookout on Sierra Buttes

The climb was very civilized, about 3 miles with a gain of 1,600 feet. I was on top in 75 minutes. I met six or eight groups hiking up as I was climbing down but I had the summit to myself. The sign at the bottom of the four steep stairways to the lookout says that it is constantly manned but that is long out of date. The metal stairways and lookout tower seem in good enough shape with a little rust here and there but the insides look abandoned long ago.

The views were not so great due to a strong haze cutting visibility to a few miles but there was nothing higher as far as the eye could see and the mountain felt a lot bigger than it was.

There was much graffiti scratched into the rocks near the summit, some of it etched long before the lookout was constructed. Mr. E. H. Yothers carefully scratched his name in Times New Roman type in 1880 and was so impressed with his climb that he did it again in 1882. M. M. Sharp used the same careful and painstaking typeface in 1885 as did W. Dawes in 1889. I have seen 19th century graffiti elsewhere and it was done in the same way as though the climbers were conscious of creating an historical record rather than merely scratching their names in the rocks. From all appearances, by 1909 the craftsmanship in such graffiti had been lost.



After climbing around on the walkways and taking a few photos I was off and down and on my way home by 11 AM.

I felt a little guilty getting my peak numbers 27 and 28 from the Sierra Club list without the usual monumental effort but, hey, I'll take them where I can get them.



Elected Officials

Chair

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650-493-2378

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Our official website is

<http://www.peakclimbing.org>. Joining the PCS

is easy. Go to

<http://www.peakclimbing.org/join>

PCS Announcement Listserv

If you join the PCS Announcement Listserv you will receive announcements and updates of trips and meetings. Use the

<http://lists.sierraclub.org/SCRIPTS/WA.EXE?A0=LOMAP-PCS-ANNOUNCE&X=&Y=> web page.

Climbing Classifications

The following trip classifications are to assist you in choosing trips for which you are qualified. No simple rating system can anticipate all possible conditions.

Class 1: Walking on a trail.

Class 2: Climbing using hands for balance.

Class 3: Climbing requires the use of hands, maybe a rope.

Class 4: Requires rope belays.

Class 5: Technical rock climbing.

Trips may also be rated by level of exertion: easy, moderate, strenuous, or extreme

Deadline for submissions to the next Scree is Wednesday , January 25. Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month.