

Eightmile Mt (7996')

June 5, 2010

dicey, iron, hotpantz and fwb2

The Short Story:

Used the Saturday weather window to catch Eightmile Mt. Great group happy that hotpantz and iron joined. Comando chipmunks at the lake, no bugs, postholing along the creek, then dry walk and scramble up to c6600' doing a SE gully. Summit and watch JohnP ski the NE colour. Friends on summit one ridge away chatting on radio. 1800' glissade, slide alder fun, name that burnt tree, VW 4 wheeling, many familiar faces around a campfire... Ok, now you can browse the pictures...

The Long story:

Interesting weekend forecast showed a good weather window for Saturday and possible one for Sunday (40% precip.). Plans of higher summits on hold due to high freezing level and increased avy potential. Digging through a pile of "peaks to do" several in the Enchantments came up. Eightmile, Jack Ridge, Axis, Dudley Spire, Mountaineer Ridge topped the list. Some I've done some other had done. Cringing at another trip up Stuart lake trail -too often on the same trail bugs me and you don't want to hear someone else's opinion around young kids -lol. Topping the list were Eightmile and Jack Ridge with a Sunday of Mountaineers Ridge and Axis if the weather held. Matt had interest for Mountaineers and had a small hoard in the making. We decided to keep our plan of Eightmile area and let them scout it (and put in kick steps for us ;-).

Friday on the wet side was wet, very wet. Would the weather really break? Early Am fired up the Westie and picked up dicey, iron and hotpantz in Monroe. Clouds dissipated as we headed east. At the pass new construction for a foot bridge over the highway. Passing Snowcreek parking a large group meeting (both EvLOR & 5.9 in the Alpine). We waved and motored on. At Eightmile TH only seven cars.

Loaded up and on the trail at 8:30 (3320'). By the intersection with the old fire road it was feeling like a summer morning -time to strip down. In the burn with a few reprises of some un-burned green areas. 9:25 passed Little Eightmile (2.4m, 55min, 1102ascent). We'd seen a hiker with skis ahead, but they disappeared. More burn then live trees again. 9:40 (3m, 1h10m, 4690', 1307ascent) we reached the east end of Eightmile lake. We settled onto some rocks the large boulder field for a break -food, and enjoying the views. A few groups were camped along the north shore. Dicey was defending her food from cute chipmunks -I laughed. Time passed and we heard a struggle. Turning I almost fell in hysterical laughter. What the heck? A troop of commando chipmunks had descended on unsuspecting dicey. Not sure if they were trying to drag her off or what. Soon apparent there was a tug-a-war going on and those commandos weren't playing nice. That prized grey food bag was becoming an inter-species incident. Dicey was losing ground looking like they meant to take her too. Was a good show, wait, we might need her for kickstepping! Up and joining in defense the battle ensued. It was a close and tough match. Sides turned when hotpantz showed up. Snorting and a jerk I woke up. A dream or did it happen? Only dicey knows ;-)

After our 25 minute leasure break we headed west along the north side of the lake. Past the extreme sled gang heading up to Caroline lakes for extreme sledding, and another group fishing. The trail had been good til a little over half way around the lake. Now it was covered with windfall. A little creativity and we made the west end of the lake (25min from east end, 4.3m tt). A short break for zipping legs on and gators. The water was flowing vigorously from the inlet and there were patterns of washed down pollen in the water. Just out of that camp area we crossed a creek from the north on logs and began sustained snow walking with an occasional surprise of some deep leg eating postholes. Over another creek with a bright green moss bottom and dodging among the trees. Each step a little slower than normal feeling for support, then WHAM! Up to the leg again. This continued as we followed the creek (on our left) leaving the trees at a little over .3m from the lake. To our right a long rising field of the dreaded slide alder. At .5 miles (11:00,

30min from lake, 4.3m, 4830') it looked like we were in the heart of the slide alders. Back were we had left the woods looked better so we made a bee line for them. Oh... no bugs :-)
Not sure why we picked right over left, just looked better. Just looking at the slide alder had us shying to the deep woods. Once there we headed literally straight up on snow free tread –and into more windfall. Dodging and swerving we ascended close to the edge of the woods (alder field on left). c6000' I think iron was bored, he led us up some fun c13 rock then into a dry gulley (leftish). The gulley appeared to go all the way, but all the way to where? We were significantly east of the route we got from TRs. Contemplation on traversing left or going up. Not sure what was around the buttress we headed up with the plan to work left. The Gulley was getting us up without touching snow. c6500' we started getting snow patches. I looked up and iron was gone kick-stepping deep steps straight up. Staring blindly (didn't have glasses) the map made it look like we could make a route work up from where we were, so we kept going. The route had many anchors and postholing traps. Maybe better than going up a wide open basin. Rising the views were getting better and better.

1:10 (5.2m, 4h40m, 7198', 4661ascent (2370' from the bottom of the alder patch)) we landed on the eastern false summit. The radio beeped, it was Matt. They were near the top of the gulley on Mountaineers and heading to the top. We took a break to take in the views and eat some munchies. Iron pulled out what felt like a 5lb bag of ErinB!'s veggie brownies to try powering us up the final 1/3 mile and 800'.

Leaving the false summit heading west was some rock scrambling, follow a ridge (firmer snow than dropping more), more rock then below the eastern ridge (cliff on the east side of it). At 1:50 Matt called again that they had summited with only one more to get on top. We had 200' to go. Amazing how close the summit times would be.

The slope started leveling and we were atop the very large summit. Far NE end was a skier. We'd seen tracks following the creek, but none coming up. Randy was right, you could park a 777 here (2:25, 5.5m, 7996', 4661ascent, ~3200' from creek). Middle of the landing field was a summit cairn. Like a boy at recess I began digging it out with my hands and ax. Went down a few feet, cleared and rebuilt... no reg. Dicey talked with the skier (JohnP), he was waiting for buddies to downclimb the NE col to follow on skis. Sandwiches, name that peak, radio talk with Matt (on Mountaineers Ridge). Summit photos... we watched John work his way into the col (darn –icy) and work some careful turns down around a buttress and out of sight. Seemed like a long time, but after 40 minutes some of our toes were getting cold from being wet. Time to head out (3:06p). Lassoed dicey for a quick group shot and she led us SW to the "regular" basin route. Snow was soft and many obstacles. I plopped to a glissade. Feeling like a pachinko game dodging trees and rock islands. A few resets, swerve left (SSE), slowly puttering down the skiers left of the broad basin. I'd push and stop on occasion to clear the loose snow then set a butt path. A smaller gulley had a never filling hole that was beckoning. We waited for all to pass without answering its call. At c6600' we traversed east to avoid a flat basin and down setting another fun glissade, winding around trees and rock islands. We worked the patches for what we could down to c6200' –my knees appreciated not walking that 1800'. With only one peak on the list for the day we had plenty of time to stop and take breaks. Time for another relaxing 20min break. Off with the rain pants, in with some food and take in the view.

Dicey checked out the route. Could go down along a buttress then right into tall trees, traverse left to tall trees or down the center of the throat of the slide alder.
We started out going down to go right (4:10p, c6150'). Traversing left would need agent orange... Looked to bugged up so we followed a weakness in the slide alder down small dry creeks. Weaving in and out, walking on and under still making surprisingly good time. At one point seeing fairly fresh down boot tracks (less than a week). 35 minutes we were through ready to traverse the creek (c4970, 6.8m, 4:45p).

Walking out we followed our tracks winding through the forest still getting an occasional leg eating posthole. West end of lake (5:08, 7.2m, c4715') removed gators and worked back along an improving trail. The fisherman had happy success today, the extreme sledders and their sleds not back yet. Checked out the old dam on the east outflow (5:40, 8.1m), a few last pictures of the lake and headed out. Past a quiet Little Eightmile lake with its giant tree (5:55, 8.6m, c4440), through the burns trying our hand at name that burnt tree. An enjoyable attribute of this trail is its change from raging creek, green areas, burns and magnificent large trees (and variety). Not too many places I remember seeing cedar this far east of the crest.

A last pitch down seeing the van. Would the other group be out already? Hit the TH at 6:53 (11miles, 10h20min, ~4730ascent) . Radio was back, the other group (Matt, DaveC, JeffH, Martin and Cartman) had finished. Time for refreshments and chips (and clean clothes:).

Several diversions on the way to dinner. Found a nice camp spot, and a not so nice spot. Passing Bridge Creek CG we saw a sign for EV LOR4 at 8m GCamp. Hmm... free camping? Pulling in to the group camp many familiar faces. And a friendly invite to join. We managed to pull free (easier than the commando chipmunks earlier) and grabbed burgers and beer in town. What a great day. Good trip, great views, sunshine, campfire with so many buddies... AH... mountain life... life is good :-)

Post note... 6 am wake up for a 7:30 TH. Took it easy and at 6:05 the first droplets fell. Scurried around picking up the drying clothes and socks. Within 45 minutes it was dumping. We all sat in the Westie having breakfast and lacked the energy to hike in the downpour. The LOR group packed and ditched for breakfast and calling it a day. We were soon to follow. Hard to leave, but the mountain will still be there. And we were saved from hiking Stuart lake trail another day –lol.

Stats:

11m, 4730ascent, 10h23min

Gear:

Sunscreen, gators, ice axe, crampons (didn't use), rain pants for glissading

Happy trails!

fwb2