

Plummer Mt (7870')
North Star Mt (8096')
Cloudy Peak (7915')

Via Spider Gap and Cloudy Pass
Sept 10-12, 2010

Another weekend with iffy weather. Looked like dry for Saturday and rain pretty much a given for Sunday. PaulK and Dicey headed out Friday morning via Phelps Creek over Spider Gap with a goal of camping at Cloudy Pass. I worked Friday figuring I could catch up with them after work. Traffic backed up in Monroe, pretty cold at Stevens Pass, and clear sailing to the trailhead. Left the trailhead at 5:15pm (c3530'), with about 2 ½ hours of daylight. I've been to Phelps basin, not Spider Gap or Lyman Lakes. It'll be interesting...

Day 1 –an evening stroll in circles:

Easy to Spider Meadows (1h30m, 5.2 m, 4770). Fall looks to be here or very near with colors changing and leaves starting to degrade. The moisture heightening the intensity and smells awaking the senses and joy of being in the mountains. Back into the woods and up the switchbacks as darkness began passing Larch Knob (6.9m, c6195'). Hard snow down from Spider gap after following cairns the wrong way. Then again a circle below lower Lyman Lake. Time for a compass. On track I crossed the outlet of lower Lyman lake finding a piece of orange tape on the "camp" sign with my initials. Found the tent with a nice welcome from dicey and PaulK (5h45m, 11.8m, 4680vert ascent). Three diversions and slow from not being able to see where to go in the dark.

Day 2 – to bag a few peaks:

Morning was cold, we were up and out of camp by 7:45 heading up to Cloudy Pass (c6454') on the easy trail for Plummer and maybe Sitting Bull. 45 minutes over the pass and heading down. Shortcut to Suiattle Pass (1h5m, 2.5m, c5912') to the left. At Suiattle Pass (1h20m, 2.8m, c5925') we followed the ridge west finding a well defined trail through trees to open meadows. Old cabin remnants, up over a bump on the right. All very scenic, though Plummer still shrouded in clouds. Fall's red colors starting to appear A tarn then a saddle (2h15m, 4.2m, c6550'). We checked out a possible route up Sitting Bull to the NW. The heading due west traversing heather then up a steep talus slope. Around 7200' we traversed left around the ridge for a food break followed by a good view of the rest of the route. We traversed some snow then up the NE saddle from the true summit. The rock was class 4+. The route should be class two from what we'd read. We dropped down SW to an obvious dirt gully. Most obvious about the gully is don't take it. Well, we did. Instead keet heading SW over the ridge and up easy walkin' to the false summit. North on the east side of the false summit down a little and up to the true summit at noon (4h15m, 5.25m, 7870').

Clouds had lifted and a great views in all directions. Glacier surrounded by whisps of white and glimpses of blue. Ptarmigan Traverse area peaking out. All very stunning. Found a film canister with wet paper in it. Three names, Rob Curé in 03 (?) and MikeT and MattB in 05. We placed a new register and added their names (leaving the old paper in the film canister). Hung around for 45 minutes then headed down the easy ridge and NE over snowfields, the ridge and down the steep talus. From the saddle to view Sitting Bull we figured and easier route would be working further left on the way up to the lake east of the summit then up from there.

Looking at Sitting Bull we figured it'd fill the rest of the day. Other choice was to fill the day with North Star and Cloudy leaving Sitting Bull. Vote was North Star to finish the peaks from the Spider Gap approach. PaulK and I estimated the route and figured we get to camp just at dark (between 8 and 8:30). For now the sun was out and beautiful scenery. Cloudy Pass for a break leaving at 3:40 heading for North Star on via the east side of Cloudy. On our way an odd object in the wide open meadow above

Cloudy Pass camp. Dicey kept on track, while PaulK and I headed for the new distraction. Much contemplation. Later we found only one reference to it in trip reports. Research I found it to most likely be the Cloudy Pass AM Snowcourse measurement station (c6500', N48.2, W120.919). Used by aerial imagery to gauge snow depth.

Done with our distraction we caught up with dicey (she waited) and up over the ridge (c7400') east of Cloudy Peak. An hour traverse across large boulders and an easy up then summit block (5:30pm, 11.1m, 8096'). In your face view of Bonanza. So close and... More views southeast for Copper, Fernow, &FJ, Maude, Dumbell, Greenwood, Chiwawa... Interesting seeing them from a different angle. We found a register Fay left July 7th this year. After her summit only FritzK and MikeT had signed in last week. Checked out a rusty sardine can, but no other register paper around.

Followed our route back and took a ledge higher above where we crossed Cloudy's east ridge (c7640'). Up a gulley heading west then north along the east of the summit block. From the north not sure the route. Should be easy. PaulK went up a cl4 move. Dicey and I went back down and up a chimney on the eastside to the summit (1h10m from North Star, 7915'). Good lounging room and still great views. No register and we didn't leave one. Sun was getting low with a little over an hour of light left in the day. down the SWW ridge to Cloudy Pass (55min from peak) watching the sunset on the way. Down the trail it started getting dark and we arrived at camp just in time for headlamps at 8:15 (14.8m, 12h30m, 6623ascent). PaulK had chilled celebration refreshments, dinner, after a bit off to sleep. Tomorrow would probably rain, so our plan was to walk out.

Day 3 –heading out:

The eve was warmer and about 2:00 I heard the rain start. We tried sleeping in and made it to after 9:00a. rain didn't stop, darn, was hoping we could wait it out ;-). A leisure day we had camp packed and heading out at 10:20. Distracted by a group at the turn off we threw in some bonus distance heading to Holden and back to camp. Second time leaving at 10:45. Light rain, soft clouds and good wet alpine smells. A few blueberries, but sparse, past the lake, past were I'd made a big circle in the night. Nice scenery I'd missed on the way in and a real trail too! As we went up the soft snow from upper Lyman Lake to Spider Gap the wind picked up. An hour and a half we were at Spider Gap (3.25m). Slip and slide to wet Larch Knob, down the switchbacks past the junction to Phelps and a pre-arranged break under a boulder next to the stream (2h30m, 4.3m, c5065). PaulK disappeared to return with refreshments to share with our lunch. After lunch back on the wet trail. This trail always sees so long on the way out. Along the way the drizzle stopped. I lost track of how many groups heading into Spider Meadows. Maybe a clue to them would be they were going in with shorts dry shirts and we were hiking out with full wet rain gear... 3:15 was back at the car (4h55m, 11m). PaulK again magically had chilled refreshments. This trip had bonuses. Heading on the road the weather improved as we headed south. Food at the Headwaters and a stop at the 59er Diner for shakes to find Tazz and Brian getting food after a weekend cragging. Shakes devoured we hit the road. Nice having a short drive home. I wasn't chomping at the bits to get into Plummer, just curious. And with good partners it proved a great trip. The views and terrain were beautiful and nice to see the ranges from another viewpoint. Thanks for dragging me in :-)

Stats: 37.6m, 12705ascent

Day 1: 11.8m, 4680ascent

Day2: 14.8m, 6623ascent

Day3: 11m, 1402ascent

Happy Trails!

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