

THE BLIZZARD

The Alpine Club of Canada/ Le Club Alpin du Canada
Rocky Mountain Section Newsletter Autumn 2011



Photo by Seana Strain

Turn to page 7 to learn more about Rock Program 2011....

<http://www.accrockymtn.ca/>

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Crumbs from the Chair

by Marg Rees (RMS Chair)

Why has safety become so complex? I guess the question really is: When did life become so complex?

It used to be easy to bring out your single-antenna beacon each winter, put in new batteries, and wear it skiing. It was a simple device, and the batteries would last all season! Now we have complex mini-computers to wear. Each manufacturer uses a different set of buttons and mathematical formulas to process information. Each type of beacon has its own nuances. And all that computing uses up battery power more quickly.

Shovelling used to be just moving snow; now we need to know the most efficient methods.

The bigger picture requires us to understand terrain choices, snow distribution patterns, group management, personal risk levels, weather patterns and the impact of weather changes and other confounding factors.

Well, that is life! We human beings are inquisitive and intelligent. We want to understand the complexities of anything

we are exposed to. We want to understand the snowpack and the snow science involved. We want to be more efficient at finding a buried skier. We want to be more efficient at route-finding. The result is that the teaching of guides and amateur leaders has evolved.

I personally find it exciting to see the learning opportunities now available. I encourage each person to remain open minded, to adapt to changes. I always wonder why we resist change. Yet, when it is forced upon us we adapt quite readily.



Photo by Bruce Hardardt

The RMS executive recently decided not to allow single antenna beacons on RMS trips and camps in the future, because there is solid evidence that multi-antenna beacons are much more efficient when searching for a buried companion. We've seen this on our transceiver practice days – people with multi-antenna transceivers are much faster than those using single-antenna ones. Additionally, problems with the transmitting abilities of these older beacons made the policy a choice to enhance safety.

This new policy is just one aspect of a very complex issue: safety in snow terrain. It in no way minimizes the importance of other aspects of safe travel.

I know people will adapt to this change; they will adapt and they will continue to have fun skiing or climbing.

THE ICE ARETE

**Report & Photos
by Doug Fulford**

The first ascent of the Ice Arete on Mt. Resplendent was made by the top-shelf mountain guide Walter Schauffelberger, when he led H.H. Prouty, John Watt and C.H. Mitchell up this fine route during the 1913 Alpine Club of Canada camp. Schauffelberger is lesser known than some of his esteemed colleagues of that era, but was no less competent. At that same 1913 ACC camp, he led Prouty and B.S. Darling to within a few hundred feet of the summit of Mt. Robson via the route now known as the Wishbone Arete. A complete ascent of the Wishbone would wait another 45 years.

In the summer of 2000, my wife Nancy Hansen was in the depths of an obsession to climb all of the 11,000 foot peaks in the Canadian Rockies. She had already climbed eight of them that summer, including a marathon 9,000 foot car-to-summit-in-a-day effort the previous weekend with Colin Jones. An extended period of warm, dry weather continued to bless the Rockies in late September, and Nancy begged me to join her on an attempt of Mt. Resplendent. Despite having lost interest in climbing the 11,000 foot peaks I was unable to say no and so we hastily packed for a three day adventure. After consulting the guidebooks we chose the Ice Arete as our route of ascent. It looked more interesting than the straightforward normal route, and its allure was increased by the fact that we knew no one who had done it.

Day one involved driving from Canmore to Mt. Robson, riding our mountain bikes to Kinney Lake, and a seemingly endless trudge to a bivouac at the Rearguard campground. On the early morning drive we narrowly escaped a very expensive speeding ticket on the Icefields Parkway. Perhaps Nancy spontaneously stammering out our objective to a certain very well known Public Safety Warden resulted in a show of leniency. The bond of the band is strong: "Good luck, and SLOW DOWN." "Yes, we will slow down. THANK YOU!"

On the long walk to the bivy site Nancy, normally stoic and tireless, was visibly fatigued from the previous weekend's excursion to Mt. Alexandra. I hoped that she would have the energy to move quickly the following day.

The next morning, sunrise found us approaching The Extinguisher and the day quickly warmed to mid-summer-like temperatures. The late September sky was that robin egg blue color that makes you want to laugh out loud, and there wasn't a breath of wind. We had the entire Robson-Resplendent cirque to ourselves. As we hiked up the glacier, the occasional helicopter provided a momentary distraction from absorbing our spectacular surroundings. It felt like one of those magical days where it seems like you will never forget how you feel. But of course we do forget. Maybe some day we will be able to record our feelings, like in the old Hollywood movie *Brainstorm*, and later simply press play to relive the experience just as clearly as on the day it happened. As we hiked up the glacier I considered the types of life experiences that would be worth replaying. I pursed my lips and whistled softly at the possibilities.

As we ascended toward the ridgeline, climber's left of Mt Resplendent, we studied our proposed route. It looked straightforward, and indeed started out that way. The rocky ridge between us and the short ice face appeared to be a straightforward scramble. But the ridge quickly turned into a challenging routefinding exercise up and around numerous rocky towers. The rock was initially loose and the ridge easy, but as the difficulty increased the rock became better, and the final tower was made of solid, prickly limestone with good holds. The exposure was terrific and downclimbing the final steep tower was pure joy.

The ridge had consumed a significant part of the allotted daylight for September 23rd, so we picked up the pace as we approached the final ice face. We simul-climbed this short face, keeping an ice screw between us, until we had to step up over an old avalanche fracture



line onto unprotectable snow. The tension finally melted away as we clambered over a small cornice onto the comparatively flat summit. It was late afternoon, and the long light of autumn cast long, shapely shadows across the glaciers. Mt. Robson held court over everything, and loomed over us like a giant white deity. We loitered less than a minute on the summit, and then hastened down the ridge to the col and onto the glacier, racing the setting sun in a bid to reach the toe of the glacier before dark. Nearly 15 hours after departing, we returned to our lonely bivy sacs and basked in the fatigue and solitude that only a fine alpine adventure can deliver. The Ice Arete of Mt. Resplendent deserves more ascents than it gets.



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2011 ROCK Program

– 3 Rockin' Perspectives

Report & Photos by Seana Strain

Patsy, Meagan and I all work for the Banff Mountain Film Festival, so get to watch some of the world's best climbers on stage and screen every November. The climbing films (and a small mid-life crisis) kept telling me I still had a few incomplete projects in the area. When Patsy and I first read the description for the ROCK Program, we weren't sure it was for us. We'd both climbed, but it was a very, very long time since we'd been on rock. Maybe we were overdue to re-learn the skills of being a good second. Meagan also came into the program with some trepidation, but for her it was based on an assumption that she'd be the least experienced climber in the group and would be unable to keep up. As it turns out, the program was geared as much to people new to climbing as it was to those who'd been climbing for years but wanting a refresher course. And the low participant to leader/instructor ratio on this program was amazing!

Our first day at Wasootch Slabs was also the first for many of our instructors after having just taken a rock rescue course, so our learning included the latest in tying knots, removing nuts, cams, and hexes, and how to safely rappel. We finished an incredible day on the rock only to discover that we had been watched by two cougars hiding in the cliff bands above us. (no reference to Patsy and me; these were actual cougars). On that note all three of us appreciated the wide age-range of both participants and instructors.





Wasootch was just the warm-up for some fantastic days of multi-pitch climbing on Kid-Goat Buttress, Mt. Yamnuska, and Tunnel Mountain, with all of us making new personal first ascents. Each climb was with a different experienced leader providing ample opportunity to practice efficient station management, plus learning through watching and absorbing their tricks and technique. We were all so impressed and grateful for the endless patience and encouragement!

The outcome of the program: meeting some great people, a feeling of accomplishment in learning and practicing the techniques needed to make a climb safe and efficient, experiencing some breathtaking scenery right in my own backyard. And from viewing the climbing photos taken from below my stance I learned that this camera angle makes everyone's butt look enormous. The ROCK program gave Meagan the confidence to second her more experienced climbing friends, and improve her skills outside of the gym. Not only that, but she gained the confidence to buy gear without fear of sales clerk snarkiness. Patsy and I also enjoyed a great excuse to update our climbing accessories with new shoes, helmet, belay devices, biners and slings.

A final bonus was the cost of the program – just enough money in your pocket for a beer at the end of the day.



Photo by Sachi Aida



*Photo
by Seana
Strain*

*Photo by
Michael Wilson*

Rock Program 2011

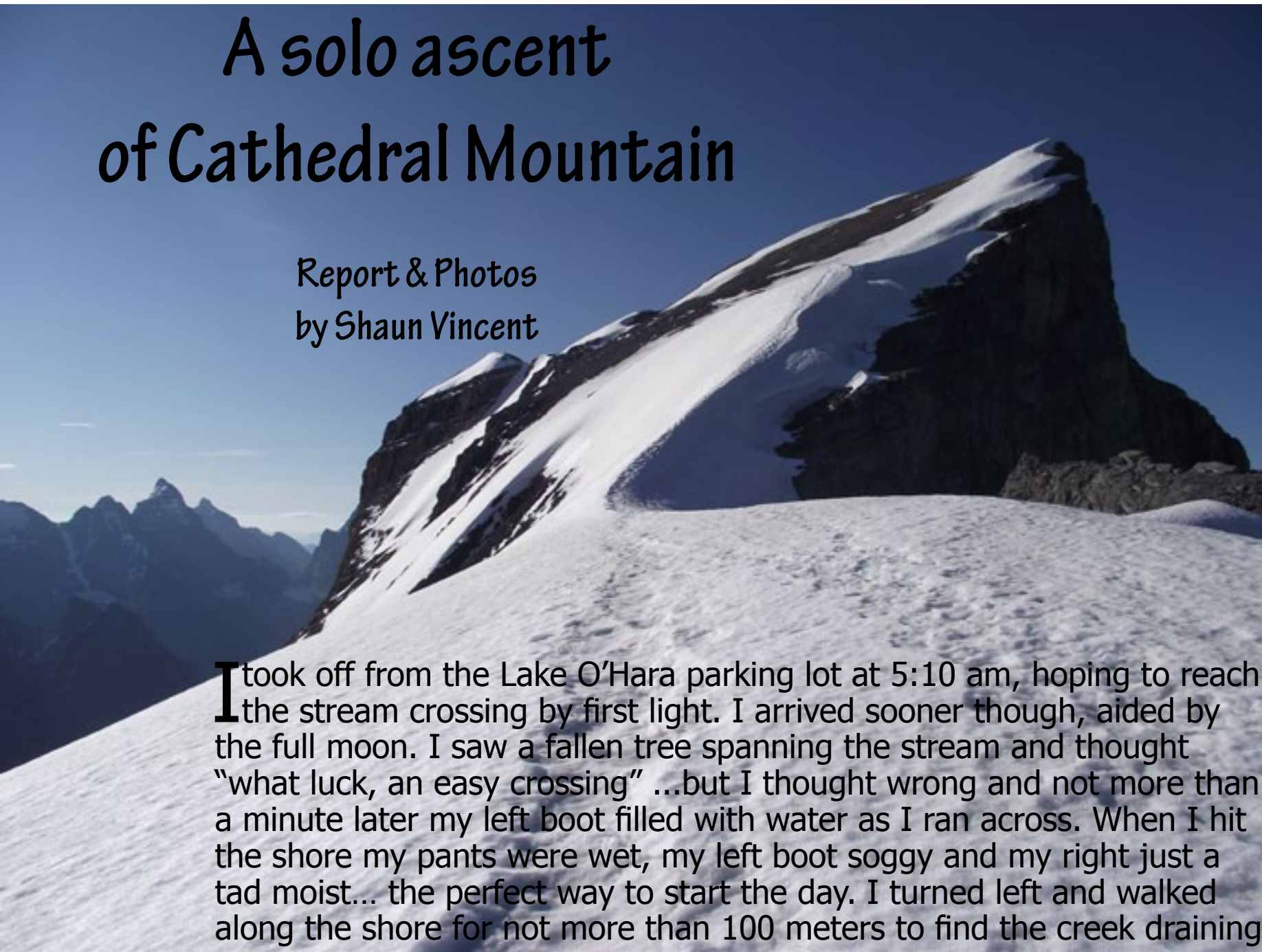


*Photo by
Sachi Aida*


See you again in 2012!

A solo ascent of Cathedral Mountain

Report & Photos
by Shaun Vincent



I took off from the Lake O'Hara parking lot at 5:10 am, hoping to reach the stream crossing by first light. I arrived sooner though, aided by the full moon. I saw a fallen tree spanning the stream and thought "what luck, an easy crossing" ...but I thought wrong and not more than a minute later my left boot filled with water as I ran across. When I hit the shore my pants were wet, my left boot soggy and my right just a tad moist... the perfect way to start the day. I turned left and walked along the shore for not more than 100 meters to find the creek draining

A photograph of a snowy mountain peak with a trail leading up to it. The snow is white and the sky is blue. The trail is a series of footprints leading up the side of the mountain.

the glacier on Cathedral Mountain. Right away I found traces of a trail and followed these up the hillside, and within a couple minutes the trail became more obvious and my progress more rapid.

After about two and a half hours I finally got out of the trees and started making my way towards the glacier. I lost the trail here and there, but picked it up whenever I really needed it and soon I found myself at the toe. On went the crampons and my abominable snow man toque and away I went. I encountered a couple small obvious crevasses on my way up the toe of the glacier and had to jump over one and sidetrack around another, but once I hit the flatter part I didn't see much to worry about and on I went with the ascent.

The rest of the climb was great and things never got tense. You have to walk along a snowy ridge to the top and off to your left is a terrible drop, but the climbing is never steep or hard. I made it to the top in four and a half hours and soaked up the wonderful views. While I was on top I used the time to rest, as well as dry my socks and boots as much as I could. It was pretty windy and cold so I jammed my exposed foot into my backpack to keep it warm.

After about an hour of summit time I started dragging my carcass back down the mountainside. The descent was tiring and painful as I had only about 2.5 hours of sleep and both my knees were acting up.

Part way down I stopped and collapsed onto a nice thick rug of moss and just lay there, watching the trees swaying in the breeze and thought of how wonderful it would be to fall asleep here.

Then off I went again...

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Rocky Mountain Section Policy on Avalanche Transceivers

By Félix Camiré and Clifton Potter

In March of 2011, the Executive of the RMS made a decision to officially ban single antenna transceiver use on all ACC-RMS trips and camps. This decision was made following many long discussions about the pros and cons of all the various avalanche transceivers. This basically means that all trip leaders and participants on every outing sanctioned by the Rocky Mountain Section of the ACC will need to be using a modern dual or triple antenna digital transceiver. See a list of “no longer acceptable” single antenna devices at the end of the article.

Why did the executive come up with such a ban? Let’s start with a bit of history.

The first transceivers were introduced in the early 1970s and were very basic single antenna analog transceivers operating on a 2.275kHz frequency. Analog simply means that they did not show a direction and distance of burial. Only a beep was heard. In the early 80s, the newer transceivers began using the 457kHz frequency because the higher frequency offered a better range. The transceivers were still in their basic single antenna and analog configuration. There are 457kHz single antenna analog transceivers that were first introduced in 1989 and still being sold today.

The first dual antenna digital transceivers were brought out in 1998. These used a micro-processor for the first time to calculate direction and distance of burial. The information is displayed on a screen using LEDs. The first 3-antenna digital transceiver was brought to market in 2003. The third antenna is used to help pinpoint (at close proximity – less than 5m) the location of a buried victim.

Today, all leading manufacturers offer 3-antenna avalanche transceivers. However, some

manufacturers are still offering a single antenna transceiver and a few are also offering a dual-antenna version. The only reason to still offer those older style transceivers is quite simple: offer a cheaper alternative to the 3-antenna version. But is it worth it?

A couple of years ago, single antenna transceivers were being declared “obsolete” by the Canadian Avalanche Center (CAC). Following are some of the reasons.

If you are wearing a single antenna transceiver and end up being buried in an avalanche, you could be in trouble because:

- Some of those transceivers can produce a very weak signal, and will not be picked up easily by a modern digital transceiver.
- Some develop a shift in frequency (called frequency drift) – not easily picked up by new digital transceivers.
- Some send fewer but longer signals, which mean less information being transmitted to the receiving transceiver – modern transceivers like lots of quick, short and crisp signals.
- Older transceivers can worsen the problem of signal overlap in a multi-burial scenario – again something that slows down digital transceivers searching for multiple victims.

All the above problems mean that if buried while wearing such a unit, your chance of being found quickly is diminished.

How about searching with an analog transceiver? These older transceivers are generally much less intuitive to use. You need many more hours of practice with them to be efficient. In recent research, people with no previous experience were significantly faster at finding two buried targets with any of the newer units compared to a single antenna transceiver¹. Most 3-antenna transceivers are also significantly easier to use in multiple burial scenarios. Another important feature of the new

transceivers has to do with the triple antenna configuration – it does not matter anymore which way the person is buried, the signal will be picked-up by the searching transceiver. You always get a strong signal even if the victim is buried vertically, horizontally, at 45deg or somewhat deep. Gone are the “false maximum”, “spikes” and “nulls”. All transceivers have some quirks and small issues that can be dealt with if you know your unit by practicing enough.

In summary the RMS Executive decided to ban single antenna transceivers because:

- Most digital 3-antenna transceivers are easier to use right out of the box than the old ones,
- They are faster in single and multiple burial, and
- They are most likely more reliable for the victim than the older models.

And it makes sense to switch from a 20-year old technology to the newer technology.

What about dual-antenna transceivers? Well, their use was certainly discussed and they are not banned since they are generally much easier to use, are faster than single-antenna transceivers and are quite compatible with the latest units (due to the fact that they are also digital). However the RMS does recommend a transition towards 3-antenna transceivers because of their efficiency for searches in close proximity (less than 5m).

We know that there are many 3-antenna digital transceivers out there. But this is not intended as a transceiver review. Just do a bit of research, ask around and find the transceiver that suits you best. There are few good independent reviews online (one of them is www.beaconreviews.com). Just be cautious since many reviews are quite old and obsolete. The Canadian Avalanche Center has a section on avalanche gear that is worth reviewing as well (www.avalanche.ca/cac/gear/overview).

Again, our goal with this ban is improved safety for all those that play in avalanche terrain. It's time for people to upgrade!

This is a short, but incomplete, list of most common single antenna transceivers still seen on the slopes: Ortovox F1, Barryvox VS, Pieps 1 or 2, Pieps 457, SOS F1-ND & SOS SB. The following two transceivers offer a digital display but are also single antenna beacons, therefore also banned: Ortovox M1/M2 & Pieps Freeride.

(Endnotes)

1 2009 Transceiver Test Assessing the New Three-Antenna Transceivers, Swangard, Sayer & Gunderson



Courses

Nov 17 7-10pm

Crevasse Rescue Review

This review seminar is offered to people who would like to review and practice crevasse rescue. You need to know your knots and have an idea of how to perform crevasse rescue. Designed for people who have done crevasse rescue in last 2-3 years.

Instructors: Robson Gmoser & friends

Open to 8 people

Contact Info: Felix Camire (camirefelix@yahoo.ca)

Free

Nov 15th & Nov 17th (evenings) and morning Nov 19th

Outdoor Navigation

Instructor: Rod Plasman

Open to all

Contact info: Rod Plasman (rod.plasman@shaw.ca)

\$35; Free for trip leaders

Nov 26th

Mountain Weather

Instructor: Rod Plasman

Open to all

Contact info: Rod Plasman (rod.plasman@shaw.ca)

\$35; Free for trip leaders

Dec 3rd

Transceiver Practice

Instructors: ACC volunteers

Open to all

Contact info: Rod Plasman (rod.plasman@shaw.ca)

Free

Dec 4th or Dec 11th (two independent sessions)

Companion Rescue Skills

This is a new Canadian Avalanche Center course for 2011-2012. Check www.elgato.ca/avycrs.html for more info on this new course. Prerequisite: AST 1 or equivalent

Instructor: Alison Cardinal, ACMG Assistant Ski Guide

Open to 8 RMS leaders (Dec 4th); Open to 8 people (Dec 11th)

Contact Info: Felix Camire (camirefelix@yahoo.ca)

\$60; \$40 for trip leaders

Dec 10th

Introduction to Crevasse Rescue

A one day course for people who are new to crevasse rescue or are a bit rusty (can't remember what a Prussik knot looks like?). First half day in classroom followed by half day in the field.

Instructor: Jeff Bullock, ACMG Mountain Guide

Open to 8 people

Contact Info: Felix Camire (camirefelix@yahoo.ca)

\$60; \$40 for trip leaders

Dec 11th

Ice Climbing clinic

A one day clinic in the field that will cover steep ice techniques and anything else that participants want to review/learn.

Instructor: Sean Isaac, ACMG Alpine Guide

Open to 6 people

Contact Info: Felix Camire (camirefelix@yahoo.ca)

\$70 for trip Leaders

Dec 21st -22nd

2-Day RMS Ski Leadership Training

This course will focus on terrain selection, safe travel techniques, group management (up and down). Not much time will be spent on companion rescue and snow science.

Instructor: Conrad Janzen, ACMG Mountain Guide

Photo by
Lynn Martel

Check on website for more course

<http://www.accrockymtn.ca/activities/courses/>

Open to 6 RMS leaders.
Contact info: Felix Camire (camirefelix@yahoo.ca)
\$90 for trip leaders

Jan 8th, 2012

Snow Science update

This course's main focus will be on all the latest snowpack tests (Shovel and Compression Tests, PST, ECT, Ruthsblock and layers analysis. It is a field day.

Instructor: Conrad Janzen, ACMG Mountain Guide

Open to 8 people

Contact info: Felix Camire (camirefelix@yahoo.ca)

\$60; \$40 for trip leaders

Feb 9th to 12th, 2012

AST 2

The classic Avalanche Skills Training course Level 2 over 4 days in February. You need the AST 1 (or equivalent) as a prerequisite.

Instructor: Felix Camire, ACMG Ski Guide

Open to 6 RMS leaders

Contact info: Felix Camire (camirefelix@yahoo.ca)

\$275 for trip leaders



Photo by Lynn Martel

Camps

RMS 2012 Ski Camps

Participants must have a current RMS membership, AST 1 and a three (preferred) or two antenna transceiver to participate in these ski camps. See link for RMS policy on transceivers: <http://www.accrockymtn.ca/about/news>

1) January 8-13, 2012 Sol Mountain Lodge.

Located in the Monashee Mountains south of Revelstoke. This is a 6 day / 5 night self guided /self catered trip. The area receives 20 meters annual snowfall, so fresh powder is a good bet. Check out the amazing lodge.

Cost: \$1000.00

Website: <http://www.solmountain.com>

Contact camp manager Jackie Clark for more details or an application form: clarkjl@shaw.ca

2) March 31- April 7, 2012 Sorcerer Lodge

A return to a favourite RMS lodge located in the Selkirk Mountains. The long days will allow plenty of time to explore the big mountain terrain including Mt Iconoclast, one of the highest peaks in the range. This trip is self guided and catered. Glacier experience is required.

Cost: \$1120.00

Website: <http://www.sorcererlodge.com>

Contact camp manager Marg Rees for more details or an application form: mtneergal@nucleus.com

Rocky Mountain Section Classified

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Photos by: Hugo Dagle and Masahiro Nakao



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Twice a month, we distribute an electronic newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Section, called The Spindrift. It includes current information about upcoming trips, camps and socials sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Section.

If you would like to receive this e-newsletter, simply write to our spindrift editor, Andrea Petzold at apetzold@shawcable.com and say "sign me up for the Spindrift"

You will receive the newsletter automatically to your email address on the 15th and 30th of each month.

Rocky Mountain Section Executive & Committees

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**For more RMS classified info, Blizzard back issue, section trip schedule,
visit section website**

<http://www.accrockymtn.ca>

Section Newsletter Writers Wanted!

Submit an article to the Blizzard newsletter and you'll be entered to win a
\$50 Gift Certificate for Vertical Addiction

Congratulation to Seana Strain, winner of this issue!
We hope you will be back on the rock next summer with the gear from the Vertical Addiction....

A photograph of a person in a black top and grey pants jumping joyfully on a snowy mountain slope. In the foreground, there is an orange tent with a green tarp on top. The background shows a clear blue sky and a rocky mountain peak.

We are looking for articles and photos for future editions of the Blizzard. Anything club or mountain related (ie: trip reports, new or favorite route descriptions, technical tips, etc.) would all make good Blizzard content. Please forward your ideas, articles, and/or photos to happywhale52@hotmail.com and be entered to win a \$50 gift certificate if your article makes it into the next edition!

Photo by Robb Schnell, Sachi Alda at Mt. Rainier