

Beartooth Back Country Horsemen Trail Tales

PRESIDENT'S PEN

Last week starting August 31 three of our BBCH group packed in 6 Fish Biologists equipment into the Buffalo fork Guard station. Some biologists were



Montana FWP and a couple were YP Biologists. BBCH guys Dan Kellogg and Sean Chepulis were with me. They did most of the work nice friends I have... Marilyn took my horse trailer home, and Dan left his at the trail head for his return.

We made about 14 miles up from the Slough Creek T.H. on the Buffalo Fork trail we were in the park 9 miles then on to the wilderness Ranger station, 7700 Feet elevation. That trail was very good in most places, and well used. But It had some Ugly Rock sections where streams washed it deep. All in all, it, was a great ride.

At the Buffalo fork Guard Station, we stayed overnight, sleeping in the tack room. The cabin was filled with the Biologists. Dan backtracked to the YP Park, Slough Creek TH the next day. On his way out in the park Dan saw a 6-point Bull elk, we had seen some elk cast horns and a skull with horns on the way in, of course the buffalo were a usual sight.

Sean and I that next day riding horse and mule also taking one pack horse traveled north on up trail 99 and just over the Boulder Pass divide at 9600 elevation. That general trail was mostly good, and the fallen trees had just been cut out, but the stream crossing areas are so

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ugly. We traversed several wash outs and rocks basketball size to struggle through. We made about 6 miles then we camped. It had been 45 years since I had been through the Buffalo area, here to the south. The trees and willows and underbrush had grown a bunch; you need one of those riding elephants from India to see over the top to view much of the land I had visited and seen back in the 70's.

On the north side of the divide, the Boulder River area had not changed much since my last visit in 2007, except the historic rock monument that sat at the top beside the trail had been vandalized and the Brass Placard that was implanted into its face was stolen by some short sighted visitor; how does someone show off an historic sign to friends and neighbors when it is obvious that it has to be Stolen property?

Sean and I left this third day on Trail 32 to travel north to Box Canyon Trail head and meet up with John and Bonnie Chepulis for our ride home. We traveled about 9 miles. That trail was also cut out recently. it appeared it had been a difficult pathway for horse traffic for at least a couple of years when you see the detours are as well-worn as the main trail.

We were about 1 ½ half mile before we exited the Wilderness near the old mining area of Independence when we encountered a 5-foot-deep wash out, near the end of the lower meadows. The main river had moved over and washed out about 30 feet of the trail. There were down trees across the riverbed, that had just been cut out. That area would have stopped most folks coming or going. It was so timbered on both sides. All of a sudden, we were upon that washout, just a few horsemen had been through and my horses just went on over the bank and in the bottom, and lunging out the other side, Sean's mule did the same, grabbing leather we made it through. That area is probably where the Gallatin BCH had heard that the trail was closed, also many of the trees beyond would have stopped a lot of people. Dave Heinle had been told that trail was closed. Dave was looking for some lost horses in that area. It turns out they were just north on Haystack Mountain. We still had a 2-hour ride to reach the Box Canyon trailhead where John and Bonnie Chepulis waited to pick us up at about 7:30 for the ride home.

Arrival at home was near midnight.

Don't holler Whoa in a bog hole or a creek crossing. That's why I didn't get any pictures of the wash.

John Simmons

P.S. Our Chapter (BBCH) donated \$1,000 to the State BBCH youth education fund in June.

**General Meeting ~ September 21st ~ John & Marilyn Simmons
backyard. Meeting at 7 p.m.**

2805 Hwy 78 two miles south of the Rockin J gas station south of Absarokee. The Simmons have a fire pit and will have a warming fire to sit around, bring a Lawn chair, a coat, and a facemask would probably be good.

BBCH September 2020 Agenda. Board and General together.

Call the meeting to order, 7:00 pm, pledge allegiance; Roll call to determine a quorum.

Secretary Report: Reading of the minutes from the last Board meeting

President's Report: I sent a letter National, Region one, C/G answered.

Vice President's Report: BLM Meeteetse Spires corral; emergency locater purchase

Treasurer's Report: John Jenkins

Activities Report:

1. July 23, West Fork Stillwater. John C, John J, and Randy packing for AB Wilderness
2. Line Creek Trail Clearing. Dale and John J

Education:

Advertising: Dale Olson

Issues: Lodge Pole Road, John S. visited with Barb Beck & Ken Coffin

Unfinished Business:

New Business:

1. Discuss Jess Peterson visit our General meeting
2. BBCH FACE BOOK Page
3. BCHA operating fund needs money, 12% State, best to give to each chapter one month at a time.
4. PLWA donate?
5. ABW has been on our gift list in the past
6. Discuss our Dues payments
7. State Newsletter
8. Membership List

John S. Pres.

BUFFALO FORK PACK IN

John Simmons, Sean Chepulis and Dan Kellogg



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WEST FORK STILLWATER TRAIL CREW PACK PROJECT

On Thursday, July 23 we packed in a 9-member trail crew to Breakneck Meadows on the West Fork of the Stillwater. Most of us met at Initial Creek Campground the night before. The crew included Matt Anderson, Melissa Codner, Mary Sybrant, John Simmons, Dan Kellogg and yours truly. This was a fairly easy pack in as we had 8 pack stock. I brought 3 pack stock Dan 2, and Melissa, John and Mary 1 each. This was fairly easy packing as we had plenty of stock and only a couple of top loads. It does make for a long day, however, leaving from the campground about 1 mile from the trailhead. 18-mile total round trip. Fortunately, there was virtually no trail work to be done.

The trail crew headed by Ben Daily, the new project director for the Absarokee Beartooth Wilderness foundation, met in Nye at 8 AM and headed up to the Initial Creek Campground. John Simmons gave the crew a short history of the BBCH and its mission before they headed up the trail. After arriving at the meadows with the gear, we had a late lunch with the crew and headed back. They worked on trail maintenance from the meadows up the West Fork trail for about 2 miles.

The pack in was not without incident. A flat tire at the Initial Creek campground on a horse trailer in the morning was quickly changed. Three pack stock unfamiliar with one another were led by Matt. They took half a day and 5 or 6 breakaways before they got used to one another, and we got the order and pace right. But Matt mastered in the end. One riding animal just about had enough on the way back and needed a rest, so a couple of riders walked a mile or so on the way back. I actually drove up a mile up to the W Fork Trailhead from the Initial Creek campground with my horse trailer to pick up a couple of stock. I wouldn't recommend it. I almost couldn't turn around. But I eventually did, with 8 cars parked in that small parking lot. Then Matt, Melissa, John and I are sitting around about to leave at 7 PM, and we noticed another flat tire that had to be changed. I think I left Billings at 630 Wednesday and made it home at 1030 Thursday night. A very long but good day.

HORSE RACE/RODEO

Submitted by: John Simmons

Initial Creek Montana, August 2020 the events were on. No Covid delay here in the rough and tumble Backcountry of Montana. I had a front row seat albeit it was 125 yards away. But still a good view. The day August 8.

Saturday a good day for a scenic horseback ride in our magnetic backcountry; also, as the day ended it turned into a horse race/and rodeo. The events were a race to get horses and riders back to the trailhead and the security of their trailers this included four young women reluctantly joining the back woods rodeo circuit. A rodeo fraught with danger.

I had visited just a moment with this family early in the day at the Trailhead parking lot. There were two men in the 40 years range and two women similar age and then four young women high school / collage age. All eight folks rode a horse as they left their trailers at the parking lot. On up the river trail one can ride several miles and several hours with no problems if you have a reasonably trained equine. It was several hours later they were returning to the horse trailers. First the two fathers came hurriedly past my grandstand, (a wooden picnic table seat) those two had a good handle on their horses, and showed no concern for the parade behind. It included first one of the mother figures traveling 125 yards back, she also had a decent handle on her mount, although the horse was unruly being so far behind the front runners, then second mother coming she was having trouble riding her prancing steed and keeping it from bolting on ahead, she was another 60 yards on back. All four of these folks made it to the finish line at the trailer, still in their saddles.

The indifferent fathers had started to unsaddle when the older women made it in. but the four young women were still coming down the roadway, trail, at least four more football field lengths behind; in the midst of an a very active rodeo. The four girls had dismounted their raring and spinning mounts. Each girl still had a hold on a pair of reins and /or a lead rope. The number five horse, the first horse of the four girls behind was not done prancing and was angry about being so far behind. That horse put on a bucking display that would rival the Las Vegas finales any day. The dismounted rider had kept hold of the reins and lead rope, twice I saw her feet leave the ground when the horse reared up in his performance. This girl was determined to not lose him. She was quite athletic, she just hung on until they made it to the trailer. I don't believe this was the first time this had happened to her. The last three horse and riders another 100 yards behind stayed in a close-knit group, and the hoses took turns traveling sideways and walking on the feet of the girls. The girls were not happy, but their difficulty didn't seem unexpected. The two men

won the race but if they had looked around and seen what I did, surly they would change their ways. They finished in first place, the position to win the roses, but the roses could have easily been the flowers you get when you are in the hospital or a funeral.

Is this really the kind of training we would like to see? The rough and tumble, Cowboy Up. You are on your own, get tough or die?

This troubling event was probably nothing new in some circles. It seems when you break up a group of equine animals that live together most of their life you as caretaker need to be knowledgeable, strong, and determined enough to handle the animal's stressful condition.

It seems to work best for horses and mules to stay near the group they are comfortable and used to.



September 11, 2020: Beaten Path

East Rosebud

I was joined by six friends from across the country for three days of serious riding. Five were riding mules – that really made me smile. After riding the Stillwater to the Overlook on Wednesday, then Lake Fork to September Morn on Thursday, we settled on the Beaten Path for Friday. There was snow and ice, especially between the boulders and on several of the switchbacks. It was a little dicey in places, but we managed and the gals loved the trail. We rode to Rimrock Lake’s “beach” and enjoyed lunch in the sun. On the way out, we bumped into Wanda and Tini Starkweather at Elk Lake. It’s always nice to see other’s enjoying the trail and they had a nice size crew a well. The elevation rises from 6,258’ to 7,651’ – our total ascent for the day was 1,647’.

Please send any submissions for the Newsletter to Robin Morris, junkerette@msn.com, by the 5th of each month. Thanks!

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