

McCall Mt (5670') – skiing

663566E 5308771N Zone 10

via Twin Lakes Trail at Napeequa Crossing, White River Road

April 9, 2011

CarlaS, & fwb

Weather – Sun, Mostly cloudy –blue breaks. Little to no wind... spring (temps 34 to 44F)

Celestial - Sunrise 6:27a, sunset 19:42, moonrise 9:50a, moonset 1:20a 6 days since new moon

Short of it

Stefan had a great idea to do McCall Mt off the White River (behind Dirtyface). Family obligations kept him away from the last dry day of the small weather window. A wanted a shakedown trek of new equipment and decided upon a deviation from his route. Only one taker. We went on step at a time, understanding that potential weather and snow conditions could mean a turn around. We had clouds, sunshine, dramatic and sullen views –a good trip. If you want the rambling details read on, or just enjoy the pictures...

What to do...

Another week of rain with a two day window of clear weather. I missed Friday's sunshine sitting on my fat butt in a boardroom. Very distracted sun streaming through the skylight of the atrium, my mind wandered. Prelim trip ideas took a wet turn with some having family obligations Saturday and planning for a Sunday trip. And others were silent. Stefan's had a good idea of ascending McCall Mt from Napeequa Crossing on the White River road. Considerable studying of the map and sat imagery I wanted to try a slightly different route up a wooded ridge close to the NW end of the larger lake. I'd not hiked in from that area and was keen on seeing the terrain. A 2 ½ hour drive from Seattle. Cloudy skies past Stevens Pass, small clearing patches as we turned off Highway 2. Passing Lake Wenatchee, a jog onto White river road and in 6ish miles Tall Timbers Ranch. We explored to the end of the road. The White river road is still covered with a couple feet of snow and not plowed past Tall Timber Ranch. We parked at the Twin Lakes TH across from the still buried Napeequa Crossing outhouses.

Where's the snow

At the TH a nice hand drawn map of trails not on the other maps and a step by step on how to hike on the trails safely. Well informed we were again ready and off footing it up the snow and dirt covered trail. Skis on the back and hiking at what now seemed a leisure hour of 8:20 (c1940'). I was wondered how far we'd be walking in with skis on our packs. At c2150 (.3m, 14m) a bump to the west signed as a "view point". From here the trail began descending and soon the snow covering was more consistent and allowed for skinning on skis. Past two avy debris fields that had stripped to the ground. And dropping elevation to c2000 (.8m, 50min) we regained the valley floor and nice snow.

Up the valley and boxed in

Past signs of beaver action and a slight rise to above a large swampy-pond area (1.2m, c2035, 1hr). On the left the dramatic cliffy SE walls of Grasshopper and ahead the dramatic vertical face and gulleys of Crook. Skirting to the right and still following signs of trail and up through maple trees along a creek. Past the old log crossing, to crossing to the north side of the creek at a newly fallen double tree (1.5m, c2165). The snow was slim pickings going up along the creek near. Then a giant wall of debris in front of us (1.7m, c2365, 1h3m). A recent (this week?) avy had come down the gulley stripping it clean. With a creek on our right we moved left up through the debris pile climbing up over and across it. The gulley this had come down was from Crook Mt and we turned SE (right) upward traverse til alongside Twin Lakes Creek. Easily entering a very windy box canyon at c2740 (2m, 1h56m). Following occasional signs of a trail staying on the east side of the creek traversing the steep canyon walls. The canyon was pretty and inviting to come back in the summer and see what it looks like. c2900 the canyon started to flatten and open and numerous rabbit tracks. Creek changing from a cold windy roar to a soft slow calm. As I was thinking what an ideal fishing spot... a sign magically popped up bursting that dream ("Closed waters to all fishing..."). I wondered why?

Lakes and what is this

Less than 2h20 min from the car the canyon opened and we were on the NW edge of the smaller Twin Lake. The lake was covered in snow and the edges thawing –a no go on short cutting across it. A view of the ridge we planned to ascend. We skinned left (CW) up and away from the lake to avoid a cliffy area. Traversing to the second lake ahead the roof of a nearly buried building (3.2m, c2940', 2h50m). Around the front it was well locked up. On the front, a large sign read "1949, State of WN Dept of Game, Twin Lks Spawning Station". That answered many of my questions. If I feel the need to spawn, I know where to go. At the NW end of the lake a good spot to sit for a break and take in the views. A weir across the opening between the lakes was a good distraction. Sun breaking through in places and pleasantly warm, we left the station at 11:36a

Over the gulleys and up the ridge...

Angling along (SE) and up-ish from the lake, across a small gully and then a large open gully, it was time to take a left and head up the ridge (3.9m, c3250, 12:00p). The trees were spaced wide enough for skiing down, maybe not spaced far enough for those timid of tree skiing. The snow was a nice spring corn texture not sinking in much. A pole probe showed boots or snowshoes would have gone much deeper. The pitch below 4000' increased to above 30degrees. The only discouraging thing was continually walking out of the ski binding. At 4000 the steepest pitch for 3-400 feet around 40+ degrees. At c4950 (4.5m, 1:30p, 5h10m) the trees thickened and the snow was mushier. Wandering left the trees opened and snow was better. In another 500' the pitch started rounding off. On our right were gulleys not safe for starting an early traverse. To our left the trees opened with views to the clouded top of Crook Mt. BTW, the maps have the wrong peak for the summit of Crook. I'd been plugging away not in my usual good spirits. Looking at the map, thinking, darn, Crook is close (.25m) and easy to get to. Looking at the map I could see the ridge kept rising for another half mile. Visually it also looked like the map. The true summit was not as marked and another 1300' vert along a heavily corniced ridge.

The cornice ridge of McCall

On the ridge crest now bathed in sunshine my spirits lifted. Up to a knob (pt5657, 4.9m, 6h7min) a break in the trees revealed the Minnow ridge, Old Gib, Chile, the tip of S Spectacle all sun bathed with a dark cloudy backdrop. Turning clockwise a view of the ridge to McCall, then the NE of Dirtyface, peak-a-boos of Whittier, Jonathan and the impressive north faces of Grasshopper. I'd no idea if we could attain McCall following the ridge, since ridge walking is a rough route. Elated with the uplifting views we set out south following tracks of a martin. Up and over bumps, down short hills, rising though a wooded section on the east side, then opening with a dramatic corniced ridge view to McCall and Catkin seeming so far away.

Could we pass the cornices safely? Progress started out well, skirting to the west (right). Up a ledge next to a tree and leaving the skis (5.3m, c5776, 6h44m). The steep ups and downs were not good skiing and a slip would not be good. Past a giant cornice staying on solid rock on the west (cornices hung east), down, up, down. The final stretch up a long shallow widening ridge was tougher by foot. Darn, skis would be nice now. Sinking in knee deep I worked carefully past trees, everything else was lower and down. I stood on an ambiguous feeling highpoint that must be the summit (5.6m, 5760, 3:25, 7h5m).

I'd hoped upon a 3:00 turn around. It was now 25 minutes past that and time to head back. My figuring was it could take up to 5 hours to get back, putting it a just getting dark finish. The going back along the ridge wasn't any better with the soft snow. Seeing the cornices from this side I gave them even greater leeway returning. Gathered my skis and skinned back catching up with Carla before Point 5657 (6.2m, c5648, 41min from summit). Some food and water and last look at the views. We guessed some of the peaks, this view was very different and a new "look".

Going down, down, down

A little more ridge and started descending. Assured no more up, we de-skinned (.8m, c5618, 46m from summit). The way up had been "hectic" my new rig had been very sub-par. The new "Speedskins" were speeding right off with the rubber end unhooking from the tips. Worse was the often walking out of the

binding toe at inopportune times. I checked for snow/ice under the toe springs. No way of increasing tension, points firmly in... One slight move and I was walking sans ski. Aaarrgghh! I'd never had this issue with my former setup and good doing a short trip shakedown trip. Is this the price I'd pay for lightening the load? Okay, I'll leave the rant. The scenery was great and Carla patient.

At c5165 a little to the north of our ascent route we crossed a very fresh deep (1-2') set of bear tracks, in the mush, heading downhill toward our up tracks. Hmmm, the tracks went left. Not wanting to catch up to the bear (s) we cut left and in another hundred feet to a shallow wide open gulley and nice smooth spring corn skiing (sinking in a few inches :). Narrowing to some brush dodging, escape from the partially covered debris field, hugged the trees for smooth snow and back onto the shallow (~20+25deg) field. We worked north, crossed over a gulley, another sweet snow field to a half-pipe looking trench at c3200 for a few hundred and then a skinned traversing through the woods back toward the smaller Twin Lake. The sun breaking through the semi open forest and brush buried under snow made for a peaceful trek. More tracks, this time of Bobcat. The glue of the new skins would not stick to even a dry ski. Heck, the glue wouldn't stick to itself... what the heck? Blah, Blah, Blah... At the NW end of smaller Twin Lake I de-skinned (3.3m, c2905, 6:11, 2h43m from the summit). Carla kept skins on not having the similar issues.

Boxed, logged and ponded

Back into the box canyon, peaceful and a breeze again. Memories of scrambling and bouldering in little canyons in the ONP as a teen and the feel of the glide had me forgetting about the skin issue. Exiting the box, dodging trees in nicely textured snow. We tried to go down the skiers left of the creek to be cliffed out. Climbed back toward the bottom of the giant avy debris field and walked across the creek (4m, c2390', 3h14m from summit). The gentle slope to the log had a few thin spots we dodged. An easy log crossing of the creek (c2140') and low angle pleasant glide to the pond (4.5m, c2068, 7:05p 3h37m from summit).

From here, going out would be an up and down. I tried to use the skins to great exasperation. After falling off every 100 feet I threw one over my shoulder. A challenge going up and even the down with one ski skin and one bare. Up from the c2000' valley past "private Property" signs and "← Trail" signs. The skin tracks from a few days earlier went down the valley, we went up following our track in. Skis off past the first avy field we'd passed in the morning and a high point next to the "view point" (5.3m, c2175, 4h25m from summit).

The occasional posthole and extra work of the snow walk was reminding me of the feeling of a long day. A few steps on firm dry ground brought a lightness to my pace. Hmmm, summer trips will be an ease, my mind wandered as it does on the walks out. Carla was silent; looking back it was hard to watch a she was obviously quietly suffering a painful boot issue. Forward and down the hill saw lights of Tall Timber Ranch and a car going down the road. And poof, the trailhead, the car and still some dusk light out (5.7m, c1926, 8:05p, 4h37m from summit).

A thinning slice of moon above, darkness fell as we made our way to the Headwaters for refreshments and burgers. I'd started the trip as a shakedown of the new equipment. Not thinking I'd go as far as the ridge with the amount of winter and snow mileage. Saw beautiful scenery in an area new to me. Good and some challenging skiing, great patient company and a light early season sunburn. Another outing to remember with a smile.

Happy Trails!
fwb

Stats:

In: 5.6m, 7h07min, 4212 ascent

Out: 5.7m, 4h37min, 385 ascent

Total: 11.3m, 11h44min, 4567' ascent