

November 17, 2007

Seven Swan Rangers hiked up into the clouds and mist along the Switchback Trail on Saturday, finding snow line a little below Alpine Trail #7.

With two newcomers and two who hadn't come along for quite a while, there was a welcome extra portion of chat with breakfast and on the trail.

It was a perfectly wet and breezy day for hypothermia, but we stayed warm and happy. One car load turned around short of the 79th and final switchback, while the second car load continued on to Malfunction Junction at Alpine Trail #7 - with the eldest sprinting ahead to the Bresnan Communications shack on the ridge above Picnic Lakes on the north shoulder of Mount Aeneas! He reported feather-shaped rime on the shack about six inches long, in visibility of about two feet!

As winter is trying to set into Jewel Basin and the Swan Crest high country, hiking without snow shoes continues at the lower elevations - and next weekend will mark the end of the big game hunting season and the last Saturday to wear hunter orange.

The Swan Rangers meet every Saturday at the Echo Lake Cafe for breakfast at 8:30, leaving at 9:30 for a partial day outing in the northern Swan Mountains and foothills.

Everyone is Welcome!

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

Hope to see you soon,

Keith

Keith Hammer photos:



Cloud level was reached about half way up the Switchback Trail's 79 switchbacks, which conversely create a trail of modest incline.



The clouds and fog offered novel views of the valley floor, as in this view of Echo Lake and the layer of brighter sky below the cloud ceiling.



The Switchback Trail winds through a south slope carefully burned by the Forest Service in 2002 in order to help reestablish whitebark pine, whose large pine cones and protein-rich seeds are sought after by Clark's nutcracker birds and grizzly bear. The more open slope now offers great views of the distance as well as close-up encounters with fire-sculpted snags.