

May 31, 2008

Nine Swan Rangers hiked up the Crater Notch Trail Saturday then headed straight uphill after encountering snow, having lunch on the peak between Birch Lake and Crater Notch.

The snow pack is firm where it is deep but very rotten where shallow, so watch your step! Cornices are breaking off and causing sizeable avalanches on the lee side of the Swan Crest, so stay well back from the edge when hiking corniced ridgelines as well!

It was a gorgeous sunny day with bees working the huckleberry blossoms along the trail! We also saw our first Indian paintbrush in bloom. We somehow ended up back at the cars at 2:30 and some of us were greeted later in the day by the first calls of the returning Swainson's thrush!

The Swan Rangers meet every Saturday at the Echo Lake Cafe for breakfast at 7:30, leaving at 8:30 for a partial day outing in the northern Swan Mountains and foothills.

They carpool from the Swan River School parking lot next to the Cafe.

Everyone is welcome! Hope to see you soon,

Keith

Keith Hammer photos:



Lunch was eaten on the peak between Birch Lake and Crater Notch, well back from crumbling cornices.



Looking south across Crater Notch at avalanches spawned by blocks of tumbling cornice.



Looking north at the western shoulder of Mount Aeneas with an open Martha Lake below. Birch and Squaw Lakes remain frozen except for a sliver of glacial blue water around the shoreline.



A lunchtime 180-degree panorama of Flathead Lake and the Flathead Valley.