

June 28, 2008

Ten Swan Rangers again hiked the Switchback Trail to the ridge overlooking the Jewel Basin parking lot, with only two having hiked the trail before.

The Switchback Trail leaves the Jewel Basin Road just after the 3 mile-marker and climbs through a controlled burn set by the Forest Service in 2002 to help whitebark pine get reestablished after decades of blister rust disease and fire suppression caused their rapid decline. The nuts found in whitebark pine cones are important food for Clark's nutcracker birds and grizzly bears, among others.

To learn more about the relationship between whitebark pine, Clark's nutcrackers, grizzly bears, and Bob Marshall, go to www.swanrange.org/Journal/journal.htm and click on "Up the Switchback Trail with Bob Marshall."

The open areas created by the burn also provide outstanding views of the Flathead Valley and mountains as far away as the Cabinet Range in far northwest Montana.

The group saw a half-dozen mountain goats above them on the side of Mount Aeneas, encountered snow only upon reaching the ridge, and could see below them cars are now able to drive into Camp Misery, almost to the Jewel Basin parking lot.

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 on following pages:



The burned areas along the Switchback Trail provide awesome views of the Flathead Vally, Flathead Lake, and beyond!



Arnica blooms among charred trees and dried blooms of last season's fireweed.



Dog and human make snow angels while others take in the view from the ridge above the Jewel Basin parking lot.