

August 21, 2010

Eleven Swan Rangers took a rare break from hiking in the Swan Range this Saturday, instead hiking the Bear Dance and Phillips Trails from Highway 35 along Flathead Lake to the top of Crane Mountain. This trail climbs in fits and spurts through some wonderful ponderosa pine, offering outstanding views of Flathead Lake and, after 3.5 miles, connecting with the Crane Mountain Road along the spine of the Mission Range.

Huckleberries were scarce, but there were lots of Service Berries, Thimble Berries and Oregon Grape. Rangers also spotted several clumps of Indian Pipe, a non-chlorophyll plant that instead gets its food by tying its roots into mycorrhizal fungi, which in turn share nutrients with tree roots. Because the Indian Pipe contributes no nutrients to the fungi or trees via its roots, it is considered a parasite of both.

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

Photos on following pages by Keith Hammer:



All smiles before all the uphill!



But the ponderosa pine and . . .



. . . views of Flathead Lake make the climb worthwhile!



Mauzy Creek is one of several along the trail.



Indian Pipe beginning to turn black around the edges with age.



Oregon Grape ripen as sun hits the forest floor!