

June 25, 2011

Eleven Swan Rangers hiked the Strawberry Lake Trail Saturday, with half returning from the top of the switchbacks and half continuing on to the lake. It was a mostly sunny day but with a bit of a "bitey" wind at higher elevation.

The trail to the top of the switchbacks is almost entirely clear of snow, but the side-hill portion from there to the lake has many patches of deep snow - several with considerable steep exposure in the event of a slip. It's a really good idea to know how to self-arrest with your hiking poles and/or an ice axe in case of a slip. The Rangers in fact detoured over the ridge the last several hundred yards rather than risk the crossing of the deep, steep drift just before the lake and above the cliffy waterfall area.

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.

When hiking in bear country, remember to carry bear spray and avoid the 3-D's: dawn, dusk, and darkness.

Everyone is welcome!



Keith

Photos on following pages by Keith Hammer:



Snow is abundant immediately after the switchbacks, providing for plenty . .



. . . steep snowfield crossings and requiring kicked-in steps.



A scramble up a snow-free hillside avoids the last and steepest snow crossing . . .



. . . and provides a nice lunch spot overlooking Strawberry Lake.





Strawberry Lake remains mostly iced-over with just a few leads of open water.



A nice view of Flathead Lake on the return hike!