

December 10, 2011

For two Swan Rangers, the morning started with good views of the full eclipse of the moon from Foothill Road before it got buried in a foggy inversion!. Then it was off to join the others at Echo Lake Cafe!

Nine Rangers then hiked up Crater Notch Trail to get above the fog. As they climbed in elevation so too did the temperature rise! Sweat, warming snow and sunburns were soon to be had!

Four Rangers turned around well beyond the first lunch spot, where snow depth finally proved too much for lack of snowshoes. The remaining four continued on snowshoes to almost even with Crater Notch on the mountain just to its north.

It was a day of wildlife tracks galore in the snow, including grizzly bear, pine marten, coyote, lynx or mountain lion (too old to tell for sure), snowshoe hare . . . To top it off, the Rangers watched an eagle rise on a thermal from far below, soar through Crater Notch, then circle back over the Swan Crest as if to show it was now higher than the Rangers! It was not a bad day!

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.

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. Some bears are still not denned yet!

Everyone is welcome!



Keith

Photos on following pages by Keith Hammer:



An icy rivulet in Birch Creek, near the start of the trail.



Why steep trails are worth the effort!



Looking past Crane Mountain, left, over Flathead Lake and beyond!



Hanging an uphill left before Crater Notch.



Far enough; it's well past lunch time!



A somewhat reluctant descent into "the foggy crud!"