



# Kootenay mountaineer

The KMC Newsletter

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Next deadline: March 21

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### January Mountain School Tech Tips: What's New With Avalanche Transceivers

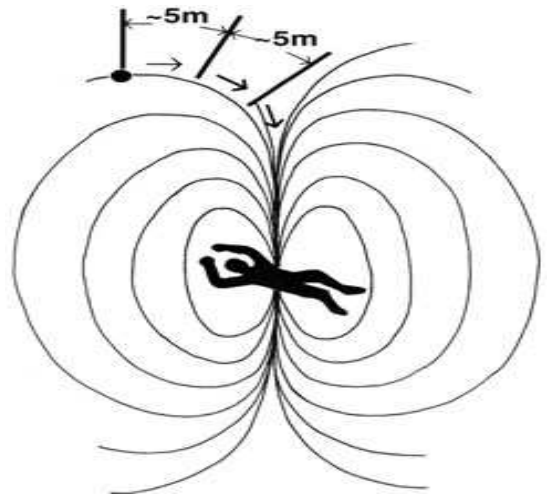
By Sandra McGuinness

I know there are a bunch of old timers out there who remember dragging a piece of cord behind them, that was (theoretically, at least) supposed to help their buddies recover them in the advent of an avalanche. There's also the not so old timers, like myself, who started out skiing with the old 257 kHz transceivers, complete with the ever so annoying ear-piece that never stayed in your ear, back in the day when we all used the grid method. Happily, technology has advanced since then, we're all on 457kHz and - most people anyway - have mastered the faster induction (or tangent) search technique. But, what else is new? Well, quite a lot.

Most importantly, you now have a choice between a digital transceiver and an analog transceiver. All avalanche transceivers transmit their pulse of electromagnetic energy (the "beep" you hear) using one antenna (usually aligned with the long axis of the transceiver), the difference between digital and analog transceivers is how the pulse signal is received and processed. Analog transceivers have

one antenna and this is used to transmit and receive. The user hears a real time "beep" and (in most cases) also has some type of LED to help align the receiving transceiver with the transmitting transceiver. The interpretation or processing of the signal (i.e. aligning the searching unit with the transmitting unit to get the strongest signal) is done by the person operating the transceiver. Digital transceivers have two or more (the most to date is three) antennae and use some kind of microprocessor to interpret the signal. The output from a digital transceiver is a direction arrow and distance indicator. In other words, the interpretation of the signal is done by the transceiver.

*Figure 1: Schematic representation of electromagnetic signals transmitted by an avalanche transceiver - aka the flux lines*



The advantages of digital technology have probably become apparent to anyone who has persevered (309 words and counting) thus far with this article: digital transceivers quickly put you on the "flux line" and keep you on it as you follow it in to the buried transceiver. No more stopping and starting to re-orient yourself with the flux line, just follow the arrow in. With one caveat: if the direction numbers are increasing you are walking the long way around the flux line to the buried transceiver and should turn and head 180 degrees in the opposite direction. The pinpoint search remains the same old grid that you use with an analog transceiver, the only difference being that you are looking for the smallest distance in metres, not the loudest sound.

Most digital transceivers also provide some kind of additional feature(s) that helps untangle multiple signals in the case of more than one avalanche victim. These vary from the simple enabling of the real-time pulse tones with the Barryvox Opto 3000 to the complex (and not always reliable) scanning and marking of the Pieps DSP. Some of the newest three antennae transceivers (notably the Barryvox Pulse and Ortovox D3) also have functions that help eliminate the plethora of false maximums and minimums that plague deep burials (although in practice, some of these features are not performing as advertised).

It might seem as if technology has made searching so easy there is no need to practice anymore, but that just isn't so. New features on the digital transceivers require practice to become familiar with - how many of you Tracker owners really know what that "special function" does? - and most people still move far too fast in the pinpoint phase of the search, thus overwhelming the speed of the transceiver's microprocessor and actually slowing down the overall time needed to pinpoint the buried transmitter.

This article is already far too long to include a review of the avalanche transceivers out there. Instead, I'll point you to a web-page where all the most popular (and some of the rarely seen) transceivers are fully reviewed:

<http://www.beaconreviews.com/transceivers/>



## Executive Notes

From January executive meeting:

### Conservation –

**Jumbo:** Grizzly Bear impacts are being considered. The Regional District of E. Kootenay will vote in May on the issue. -Glacier Creek Power has changed its power line proposal to run north of Jumbo. The assessment of whether there is adequate water for the project to run is an added issue.

**Hiking Camp-** The site of this year's camp is Kain Creek west of Brisco. CMH will be providing heli service. A recce will be done this spring. Information and application form are in this newsletter.

**Mountain School** - Good turnout for the 2 introductions to ski touring days and beacon practice.

**Website-** Five full years of the newsletter are archived on the website. There is lots of information on the site for our members. The winter schedule appears on the web sans names or ph. numbers.

**Winter trips-** We would like to see more entry level trips being offered, as there is considerable interest in this.

**Trails-** We would like to finish the Lemon Creek access to Kokanee but getting volunteers continues to be a problem.

**Huts** -Public interest in the cabins remains strong, those using them have yet to donate money to the KMC! New roof on Grassy Hut is working well.

**Summer trips-** start planning your dates for spring offerings.

**Treasurer-** All finances are in order.

**Membership-**There is a concern regarding the "constitutionally required" omission in family memberships of children 19 and over, attending full time school. There is a concern that confusion arises and 19 + children are being included in family membership applications. As it is now, these people require their own membership. On family memberships all ages of minor children must be put down on the form. Those not wanting their names and addresses published in the newsletter must circle "no" on the membership form, if left blank they will be published.

**Newsletter-** submissions are always welcome. Stores offering discounts to KMC members are noted in the newsletter. Looking for a new newsletter editor for the next year.

### Other business-

-Eligibility for Ski Week was discussed as there are waiting lists developing owing to the popularity. Local resident priority and "Pulling out" two years in a row were discussed.

-Tenure mapping - a committee - being established - is to note in general the club's special interest areas so that the club can be notified if a tenure is being proposed for the area.

-The Avalanche terrain Evaluation scale tool will be adopted by the KMC. Avalanche Exposure Scale ratings to be included with winter trips schedule, allowing members to choose safe trips for the current avalanche danger, see avalanche.ca website.

-A "disc" guidebook to the local ranges is

essentially being offered to the club. How to make the best of all involved will be considered, subject to more information. - A few questions were raised regarding insurance and clarification.

-The "family hikes" proposal was discussed and for now the club will post the contact for these, non-club trips. Due to insurance/liability concerns and possible misinterpretation of seeing in the newsletter, non-club "family hikes" and cycling outings, will only be posted on the email listserve as non club trips. The newsletter will carry the name of the contact person for these outings. The issue will be reviewed at the end of the year.

-Some ideas/questions regarding establishment and use of "common membership terminology, forms and waivers, trip outing registration forms" by clubs in the Federation of Mountain Clubs (FMC) will be communicated with the FMC. Interclub participation and associated issues including insurance will be also be forwarded.

-A very short discussion on an electronic copy of the newsletter was had. The paper copy plays a strong role in the club. The FMC has a dual policy allowing for both. Parity of fees would become an issue. An easier system for folding and stuffing envelopes with the newsletter was discussed.

-The KMC AGM will be advertised as "dinner attendance not mandatory".

-Leave-well-enough-alone= the smooth workings of club members offering club and non-club trips on the list-serve was noted.

## Rental of KMC Ice Axes

Ice Axes can be rented from the KMC for **\$2 per day**. These axes are at the following locations:

**Nelson:** Don Harasym **Castlegar:** Alan & Pat Sheppard

**Trail:** Eric Ackerman

## Cloudburst Online

At the last FMC AGM the issue of an electronic *Cloudburst* was raised again. It was decided we should canvass the membership to see if there is interest in receiving electronic versions of *Cloudburst* rather than the current paper version. Another option is just to post it on the website. Several members still like to receive a hard paper copy of the newsletter and in a way it may still be the best tool we have to connect and communicate with members. At this time we ask that clubs canvass members.

## Naming of mountains and peaks

The elevation (in meters) of many named mountains is displayed on Provincial Base maps, available on the internet <http://maps.gov.bc.ca/> Use "Find Location" utility to search by feature name, or zoom/pan. Text isn't displayed until you've zoomed in to 1:30,000 or larger.

If the name was approved within the last month, it might not be incorporated on the Provincial Base yet (cartographer is typically 6-8 weeks behind): Elevation of prominent peaks is also displayed on 1:50 000 federal maps, whether they're named or unnamed at the time the map is produced.

# What a difference a year makes

When 2006 began, there was every reason to feel that environmentalism had seen its day. "The environmental movement is dead," said the pundits, "People are tired of hearing all the doom and gloom about the world coming to an end." After all, Canada's economy was booming, unemployment was at record lows. The environment was the last thing on anyone's mind. And indeed, not once was it raised in any of the leadership debates in the last federal election campaign.

It was open season on the environment. Down south, US President George W. Bush continued his assault, opening up, for example, national wilderness areas to mining speculators. At home, the BC government's online mineral tenure registry created its own destructive gold rush, making almost all property – private or public – fair game for \$25, less than the cost of a hunting licence. Neither story generated more than a blip before disappearing from the public radar.

I had been at West Coast Environmental Law just a few months when a well-meaning, veteran fundraiser told me, "If you want to raise money, whatever you do, don't say the word 'environment.' It turns people off."

What a difference a year makes.

As the results of more studies on global warming have become available, the consequences more certain, people across the continent have begun to realize the enormity of what's at stake. There's a growing awareness that the environment is not just about trees and owls; it's about sustainability, the key to conserving our way of life, for ourselves and the generations to follow.

Almost overnight, sustainability has become the hot new buzzword, used by oil companies and detergent manufacturers alike. But the definition I like best is one used by Whistler's

mayor, Ken Melamed, at a recent conference. "Sustainability," he said, "is about living within our means." That means not taking resources out of the earth faster than the earth can replenish them. It means not producing substances that poison the ecosystem. It means not destroying the earth's engine – our trees and wetlands – that allow the earth to recuperate. And it means not taking so much that others cannot meet their needs. These lessons are resonating, even here, on the world's greediest continent. In September, 295 US municipalities proclaimed their defiance of their government's position on global warming by declaring their own adherence to the Kyoto Protocols. The Governor of California, to the cheers of its people, has gone even further in setting statewide goals for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The government of Quebec, responding to its citizens, has become the first province in Canada to unilaterally commit to meeting the Kyoto targets. Here in British Columbia, more and more local governments are looking into alternate energy sources, and they're questioning the need for unbridled development, more resource extraction, less agricultural land.

Perhaps the biggest indicator of the sea change in public awareness is the outcome of the Liberal Party federal leadership race. For the first time in Canadian history, the environment placed first: a former environment minister was elected, on the strength of his pledge to sustainable development.

2007 could be a turning point for British Columbia, and for Canada. The province and country could once again take their place in setting an example for a healthy, sane, sustainable future. It's all up to us.

*Patricia Chew, Executive Director; West Coast Environmental Law.*

## Green Hypocrites?

"Consumers remain depressingly ignorant about the environmental impact of what they do... They find no irony into getting into their SUVs to drive a few miles and buy recycled toilet paper." Americans are green hypocrites, according to Joel Makower, executive director of Greenbiz.com. In other words Americans haven't really begun to change their habits. *From TIME, Jan. 2007*

**Enviro-sportsman?** More than 50 million Americans fish, and 15 million hunt, yet environmentalists have made scant effort to forge any lasting alliance with them to protect the land and water that sustain wildlife. "Environmentalists don't reach out to sportsmen," says Chris Potholm, a professor of government and legal studies at Bowdoin College in Maine. "If they did, they'd be invincible. Whenever sportsmen combine with environmentalists, you have 60 to 70 percent of the population, an absolutely irresistible coalition." *From the Sierra article Natural Allies by Ted Williams, hunter, fisherman and environmentalist.*

*Ed. note: Many mountaineers are Hunters and Anglers, including several of our own KMCers.*

## E-mail Etiquette

Receiving unsolicited emails is something all of us don't appreciate. Long messages and having to search through these messages for the intended information shouldn't be necessary. To cut down on these troubles we can all use e-mail manners: provide links to large files rather than attaching them; recheck the link you are referring to; review address lists before clicking "reply all"; delete the other names on the "forward" list that have been sent in the text of the message; be specific in the subject line; and summarize long emails, especially those that we "forward"; and the occasional spelling/grammar check doesn't hurt (some even think it's fun, especially with practice). You'll find that the person on the receiving end will actually come to appreciate receiving correspondence from you.



## Book Reviews *By Trent West, Vancouver Sun, Jan.6, 2007. CanWest News Service*

### The Wall: A Thriller,

By Jeff Long. Long's novel grabs readers by the climbing harness from page one, relentlessly drawing them into the mind of an aging rock climber trying to out-climb a mysterious past. The story of two old friends who return to Yosemite's El Capitan to revisit old memories, Long's novel takes a supernatural turn before reaching its, um, cliffhanger finale.

*The Wall* won the grand prize at this year's Banff Mountain Book Festival.

### No Shortcuts to the Top: Climbing the World's 14 Highest Peaks

By Ed Viesturs with David Roberts. Viesturs brings readers along on his journey to become the first American to climb all 14 of the world's 8,000-metre peaks. Despite his legendary cautiousness, his book is filled with dramatic climbs and no-holds-barred accounts of dangerous accidents. *No Shortcuts To The Top* is a great introduction to the world of high-altitude mountaineering. Reading Viesturs's account of his climbing life is the next best thing to joining one of his expeditions (even better if you hate cold and heights).

### Strange and Dangerous Dreams: The Fine Line Between Adventure and Madness,

By Geoff Powter. Powter couldn't be better qualified to examine the hazy boundary between an adventurous soul and an unsound mind. In *Strange and Dangerous Dreams*, the Canmore, Alta.-based author, psychologist and alpinist delves into the audacious - or foolhardy - feats of 11 adventurers over the past few centuries. Powter chooses both celebrated - Robert Falcon Scott, Meriwether Lewis - and unknown People to profile. Thankfully, he avoids the pitfalls of hero worship or open condemnation of his characters. But he does offer intriguing possible psychiatric diagnoses for each person he profiles.

### My Mountain Album: Art and Photography of the Canadian Rockies and Columbia Mountains,

By Glen Boles. During 48 years of climbing, Glen Boles made dozens of first ascents and climbed nearly 600 peaks in the Canadian Rockies. But the Cochrane, Alta. man didn't just climb: He meticulously documented every trip by keeping a climbing journal and taking beautiful black and-white photographs from vantage points only a climber could reach. At 72, Boles is still adding to another legend- as a mountain landscape artist. His pen and pencil drawings have appeared in many publications, but this is the first book devoted to his black-and-white art. His photos and artwork are enough to raise anyone's spirits, and the accompanying text is a chapter in local climbing lore.

### On The Ridge Between Life and Death: A Climbing Life Re-examined,

By David Roberts. Roberts is a master of the introspective climbing book. In this autobiographical book, he examines his lifetime of climbing. His pointed thoughts about whether the rewards of climbing are worth the risks, will make many climbers squirm.

### World Climbing: Images From The Edge,

By Simon Carter. Carter traveled over the globe for the past decade, getting photos of the world's best climbers attempting spectacular climbs up some of the most stunning cliffs imaginable.

His coffee-table-book takes us on a climbing odyssey from his native Australia to Asia, North America and Europe. At each crag he captures both the athlete's stunning feat and the spectacular scenery- from climbers lunging for holds on Thailand's overhanging limestone bluffs, to Canmore's Will Gadd hanging off an icicle in the Canadian Rockies.

## KMC discounts at some local stores: A Reminder

These discounts are available at the following merchants upon presentation of your KMC membership card. Your membership card is your mailing address label on the envelope that your newsletter is mailed in. It shows the membership year as well.

Snowpack, Boomtown Emporium, Valhalla Pure, in Nelson offer 10% discount on regularly priced merchandise.

ROAM, Nelson - 10% discount on regularly priced merchandise (does not apply to big ticket items such as skis, boats, transceivers).

Powderhound and High Country Sports store in Rossland - 10% discount.

### ANOTHER KMC?

Some of you may have noticed another KMC. This local magazine has been operating for some time now and it's called Kootenay Mountain Culture. They refer to themselves as KMC

magazine. It is a glossy full size magazine published in Nelson (313 Innes St., Nelson, BC, V1L 5E6; their website <http://www.kmcmag.com/>

### Revelstoke Mountain

**Resort** Officials recently announced a multi-million dollar new gondola and chairlift in time for the 2007-08 ski season. The \$1 billion resort will boast the longest ski able vertical drop in North America at 1945m (6400 ft.). The resort is expected to have 25 chairlifts and 100 ski runs when fully operational.

# The Use of Intuition in the Outdoors

## Ron Watters, Idaho State University, 2005

Is it possible that intuition plays a role in outdoor decision making? Its use certainly runs counter to the approach accepted as gospel in the field of outdoor education. Outdoor educators are counseled to use a logical approach by looking at all the options, carefully weighing those options, and then making a decision. But is it really gospel? Do experienced outdoorsmen and women really make decisions that way? If you spend a good deal of time in the outdoors, and if you really think about how you make decisions in tight situations, you might question that orthodoxy.

A good many experienced outdoor folks that I know-- mountaineers, back-country skiers, whitewater boaters--speak of something called a sixth sense, an inner voice. Something that tells them: don't ski across that slope ... don't grab for that hold ... don't run that rapid. It's not something that can be easily explained in a rational manner. It's all based on, well, shall I dare say it, intuition.

But do people use analytical methods decision-making when risk is high and decisions have to be made quickly? Is decision making really that clear cut?

### Intuition and Intuitive Decision Making

Intuition. What exactly is it? David Meyers, a social psychologist, in his well-researched book, *Intuition: Its Powers and Perils*, defines intuition as an individual's "capacity for direct knowledge, for immediate insight without observation or reason." Thus, intuitive decision making is in direct contrast to the analytical approach whereby you look at all the options, carefully weigh the options and then make a decision.

But when I think about the truly important decisions I've made in tight situations in the outdoors, the analytical process simply doesn't wash. Decisions have to be made in seconds, sometimes in fractions of a second. You simply do not have the time to weigh options. Cognitive psychologist Gary Klein defines intuition as the way individuals translate experience into action--and Klein believes that intuition is the way most decisions are made, particularly those that are made when risk is high. What Klein has discovered is that often in the process of using intuition to make a decision, we are unaware of how we made it.

We just make them and we make it quickly without weighing options. It was simply the best thing to do at the time. Intuitive decision-making is critical to those involved in risky work. Interestingly enough, he also found that intuition is equally important in decision making across the board, no matter what the profession. There are times when classical analytical processes are useful, of course, but he has found that intuitive decision making is far more important and prevalent than anyone ever thought.

What Klein is talking about is not some kind of magical or clairvoyant power to make snap decisions, but rather an ability which is built on experience. Instead of analyzing and weighing options, which takes precious time, intuitive decision making

utilizes the mind's ability to quickly recognize patterns. For example, think of how you recognize someone's face. Do you go through a process whereby you analyze the size and arrangement of facial features or do you simply and immediately recognize the face?

We can find examples everywhere. This is the way the great outdoor photographer Ansel Adams described the connection between experience and intuition in his work: "In my mind's eye, I visualize how a particular . . . sight and feeling will appear on a print. If it excites me, there is a good chance it will make a good photograph. It is an intuitive sense, an ability that comes from a lot of practice."

In a similar manner, as we gain experience in the outdoors, we learn to recognize patterns and create compositions which are filed away in our mind. A climber might look at several possible routes across a glacier and be able to recognize the most hazardous by the pattern and placement of seracs. When the climber is experienced, there is often no comparison or weighting of the options. Once a pattern is recognized, the decision--which route to follow across the glacier --is obvious. This process takes place in areas of our brain (the amygdala is one area likely involved), which can process pattern recognition instantly, not the cortical areas of the brain associated with reason and which take far too much time. Experience, however, is essential in the process. The patterns must be learned first. It's something that comes with practice. Beginners and individuals new to an outdoor activity will need to use more analytical processes in arriving at decisions before they can use intuitive decision-making processes. But once an individual gains experience, intuitive decision-making is incredibly important and powerful.

### The Flip Side to Intuitive Decision Making

While I've come to believe that intuitive decision making is critical in the outdoors--and, life in general--there is a flip side to it. Intuition can't solve all problems and doesn't work in all situations. It doesn't, for example, work well when the situation is exceedingly complex with tens of thousands of variables. For example, even someone who has worked the stock business all their life will not be able to predict what the stock market will do. Nor does it work when an individual has little experience in an activity. Experience is vital. But, herein lies a caveat. Experience can aid intuition--and hinder.

As we gain more expertise from our experiences, we may become too inflexible in our thinking and be blinded to new approaches and patterns. If we're not open to new ideas and cues, we may miss important pieces of the puzzle or novel approaches to a problem. It's absolutely essential in the process of making good intuitive decisions that we keep an open mind and hunt for new cues and patterns.

That's why, whenever possible, it's exceedingly important to involve members of outdoor groups in the decision making process. For starters, it's good leadership. It helps everyone share ownership of the trip and become working, contributing members of the group. By involving the group, you make things safer and are able to tap resources that one person simply doesn't have. And secondly, from a decision-making perspective, it's extremely valuable, helping you evaluate and gain insights into your own use of intuition.

The thoughts and ideas of the group may point out something you've missed and aid you in revising a plan of action. Having reliable information is vital to making good intuitive decisions. A group can help sort out what is reliable and what is not. Once more, comparing your intuition to the intuition of other experienced members of the group provides a check to your own hunches. Intuition doesn't mean that you come up with one plan of action and stick to it. Good intuitive decisions are adapted and changed as more information becomes available.

### Analytical and Intuitive Processes

When Klein first started doing research into decision making, he hypothesized that an individual under time pressure would quickly compare a couple of options and then chose the best (sort of a mini analytical approach). What he found was that often experts never compared options, that, amazingly, there was only one course of action that came to them. It is revealing that there isn't much evidence to show that classic analytical decision actually produces good decisions. Certainly, it does have its uses: it's helpful while someone is gaining experience; it's particularly helpful for those decisions which lend themselves well to numerical calculations such as buying a house, for an example. While it can be utilized, "the reality," Klein tells us after years of study, "is that the classical model of decision making doesn't work very well in practice. It works tolerably well in the research labs which use undergraduate test subjects making trivial decisions, but it doesn't do so well in the real world where decisions are more challenging, situations are more confusing and complex, information is scarce or inconclusive, time is short, and stakes are high."

When it comes down it, most decisions--whether they are decisions of major importance -- or whether they are the little decisions that we all need to make to get through the day -- are made intuitively. Think about day to day decisions. For some important ones, no doubt, you do utilize a logical approach--researching the available options, weighing them, even applying some mathematical comparisons--but is it possible to use this approach for all decisions? Realistically, it would take too much time. Days are long enough without adding the

complexities of classical analytical decision-making. Moreover, are analytical methods always used for big decisions? More likely, such decisions are based on intuition -- what feels best. It's the same for outdoor decisions. There doesn't seem to be any conscious analysis, but rather an inner voice saying: this works and that won't.

### Consequences of Decisions

Nature likes to pull surprises. Decisions made in the mountains do have serious consequences. They can't be taken lightly. Because decisions in the outdoors have serious consequences, we need to look realistically at how they are made. By suggesting that decisions should be made strictly in an analytical manner--and to discount intuition--can result in inaction or a slow response when action is needed immediately, and it can result in bad decisions altogether. At the same time we need to understand the limitations of intuitive decision-making. Such decisions cannot be made reliably if you have no experience. And even those who are experienced can never sit still. To develop our intuition, we must keep gaining experience, continually keeping ourselves open to new ideas and methods, and continually assessing and reflecting upon past experiences. Moreover, it's vital to involve those who are with us and draw from their resources.

"The only real valuable thing is intuition," said Albert Einstein. Indeed, by cultivating it, using it, while at the same time recognizing its drawbacks, we can tap into its power, and make a difference in our decisions.

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# Club Trip Reports

## **Mt. Lepsoe, 2187m. (formerly known as Berry Mt., on the south side of the Nancy Greene Summit), December 17**

Our group of nine keen skiers left the parking lot in a staggered start, some anxious to get early runs in I think. All were using climbing skins on a variety of different ski types. Terry and Jill broke trail up past the Eagle's Nest and Sunspot cabins to the upper fields, rushing to get those first turns in. They amazed us by even having time to prepare a fire at the Sunspot cabin on their way past. Dave, Dave, Jenny, Marilyn and I wandered through the trees just trying to find Surprise cabin, the first and easiest of them all. We finally came across it after taking the less traveled "scenic" route, at which point we had our bearings and followed Terry and Jill's trail. Laura and Larry followed our group's "chaos hike theory" and chose yet another route, up the logging road. Fortunately most were familiar with the area and we all joined up at mid mountain. From here we headed for the start of the Seven Summit trail as it enters the woods. We left this trail just before it does the first steep climb up the ridge, and instead headed roughly east following below the ridge, still on the highway side of Mt. Lepsoe. This runs into a long and beautiful field to the upper bowl, just below the summit. While this area seldom sees travelers, we did run into one snowshoer, none other than Sara Golling, who exclaimed: "Wow, what a crowd!" Sara joined us for the trip down to the Sunspot cabin where we enjoyed a hot lunch and shared some good stories.

Our group consisted of: Jenny Baillie, Dave Grant, Marilyn Nelson, Laura Ranallo, Terry Simpson, Jill and Dave Watson, Larry Wunder, and coordinator Bob McQueen.

## **Mt Plewman, 2241m. Boxing Day Turkey Burner, December 26**

We skied three excellent runs in good snow on the north side of the east ridge of Mt Plewman into the Murphy Creek drainage. There are some beautiful old growth trees on that side. We then skied back down the south side to the road via the clear cut. (Not recommended, as it is very, very bushy at the bottom).

All in all an excellent trip (in spite of the bush at the end). We were Stephany Dean, Trevor Dinn, Andrew Holmes, Dave Jack, Mike Kent, Phillip Walters, and Ken Holmes (reporter).

## **Beep, Beep, Beep, Practicing Search Strategies for Avalanche Victims: January 6**

I had so many people sign up for this year's beacon practice session (a record 11) that I ended up roping in Howie Ridge (one time outdoor program educator and a familiar West Kootenay/KMC figure) to help manage the day. Bert Port, who was leading the introductory ski tour on the following day, also came along to help out.

A Saturday in January after 30 cms of snow in the last 24 hours is not a good day to be up at Whitewater Ski Hill, but I wanted to make use of the beacon basin, and also have a convenient location for doing a short tour in the afternoon. Somehow, despite the powder frenzy (and the crisis in parking) we all managed to meet up at the Whitewater ticket office around

about 9 am. We split into two groups, Howie took 6 people who had no previous searching experience, while Bert and I grouped up with the other five people who had been practicing already with their beacons.

Each group discussed search strategies, flux lines, checking the range, transmit and receive functions of all beacons in the group, and got a reasonable amount of time to practice. In my group, we practiced single burials, then everyone got a chance to practice a two burial scenario, but we ran out of time for a full-on group rescue practice. We also talked about "strategic shoveling" (i.e., the most efficient and safest way to extract a buried victim) and how to probe systematically.

After lunch, 11 of us, made our way down to the 7 kilometre parking area and geared up for a short tour. We skied up to the top of the cross-country runs, then did some trail breaking up the SW slopes below White Queen. Yesterday's cold smoke powder had turned into dense, slabby, wind-affected snow. Along the way, there were discussions on trail-setting (10 points off for every kick turn), route-finding, group management, and how to recognize unstable snow.

Skiing down from our high point was fairly challenging in variable, dense snow, but it seems most people managed a few turns.

Thanks to Howie and Bert for their assistance, and all the people who gave up a day of skiing to learn/practice companion rescue skills.

Participants: Glenn Cameron, Larry Hanlon, Dennis Hickson, Bobbie Maras, Jocelyn Martin, Hamish Mutch, Dominique Prena, Marilyn Robertson, Steve Robertson, Joanne Stinson, Annie Taiatini.

Coordinators: Bert Port, Howie Ridge and Sandra McGuinness.

## **Mt. Kirkup, 2054m., January 21**

Eleven of us squeezed our vehicles into the parking space at the Old Glory trailhead this morning, looking up to blue skies and recent powder in the trees. We quickly met, discussed the new Avaluator trip planner published by the Canadian Avalanche Centre. With a "considerable" avalanche risk forecast for the Kootenay/Boundary treeline, and the "challenging" rating for our Mt. Kirkup hike, we knew we were into the "yellow" or "extra caution" area of the guide before we had left the parking lot. With a quick discussion we decided we could dig a pit in the upper fields of Kirkup to help us assess the avalanche risk. I knew we had a keen group when they took an old up track through the trees, which could have passed for a double diamond run at Whitewater or Red Mt. After carrying out Compression and Rutschblock tests, we felt a bit better about the snow conditions. No serious sliding layers, and a 6 for the Rutschblock test. When we reached the top of the skiable fields, we were a typical KMC group with half wanting to continue up to bag a peak and the other half wanting more turns. So of course we split up. After sidestepping the last few hundred feet through a rock and ice garden to get to a wind blasted top, I think I'll stick with the "more turns group" next time. We made it down by early afternoon with lots of turns in variable powder, and yet smiles all around.

We were: the three Dave brothers (Grant, Jack and Watson), Glenn Cameron, Lorne Haas, Larry Hanlon, Graham Jamin, Maureen Kowalchuk, Jocelyne Martin, Bryan Reid, and Bob McQueen coordinator.

# Other Trip Reports

These reports are from club members, the dates and destinations are not on the club schedule.

## Balfour Knob, 2253m. 7,392' December 31

Gene Van Dyck broke trail for four days before skiing to this peak from his home - a vertical of over 5500 feet. This became the 103 rd peak he climbed or skied to in 2006. Along with climbing or skiing to peaks, he alpine skied over 1,450,000 vertical feet at Whitewater Ski Resort. Josephina, his wife, related this to me and I thought it remarkable and should be mentioned in the *Mountaineer* as incentive to us other K.M.C.ers. Anything less in 2007, will of course be a step backwards, Gene!  
Ray Neumar

## Only if You're Daft: Mount Ferguson on Skis

Mount Ferguson lies at the end of a long north-south running ridge that starts some 10 km south at Ymir Mountain and ends on the south side of the West Arm of Kootenay Lake. At 2085 metres and entirely tree covered Mount Ferguson attracts scant, if any attention. It sits squarely within the West Arm Provincial Park, a chunk of land that includes Five Mile and Lasca Creeks as well as the headwaters of Kutetl Creek, but is a Provincial Park entirely bereft of trails or other visitor amenities.

My original plan for ascending Mount Ferguson was a long ridge traverse from Larch Peak (4 km north of Ymir Mountain) sticking entirely to the ridge top, but closer examination of the map convinced me that such a trip would require two days. The water supply for the city of Nelson is Five Mile Creek and the city keeps a road plowed that runs up the south side of Five Mile Creek. The road is gated at 1000 metres (the boundary of the West Arm Park), but is plowed for about another 2.5 km, and a re-contoured road continues to 1400 metres.

On a foggy, warm and somewhat damp **February day**, Doug and I drove up to the gate, and, after some slipping and sliding back down the road, managed to turn the truck around and park beside the gate. We skied up the road to the water supply buildings on about 2 cm of snow over gravel. Beyond the water supply, there was no sign of the road continuing on, so we crossed Five Mile Creek on a snow bridge and bushwhacked up

the north bank of the creek, where, within 40 metres we found the road again, and, surprisingly ski tracks (who the hell skis up here?). The temperature was above zero, the snow wet and sloppy, trail breaking heavy, and, I had neglected to bring skin wax, so we continued up the road with an extra 10 pounds on each leg. We plodded on for another 2.5 tedious kilometres. Every time the road gained 50 metres of elevation, it quickly lost 30 metres, making the skiing akin to scree bashing in the Rockies.

Eventually, after crossing the second creek exiting the flanks of Mount Ferguson, we plunged into the thickly treed forest and started up. Unfortunately, tributary creeks of the main creek, kept pushing us south and when we stopped at noon for some food and checked our location with the GPS, we found ourselves almost 3 km south of Mount Ferguson. At least the forest was thinning, and we were able to ski in a rising traverse north and west to just over 1700 metres where we crossed the creek and began plodding up the last 400 metres to the top. The final 100 metres of elevation gain was actually pleasant, through open burned forest with a tinge of blue sky overhead and, when we got to the top five hours after leaving the truck, we had really nice views down to the lake, and north to the Kokanee Range and the Valhallas.

But, not much time to enjoy them. Just enough time for a cup of tea, a bit of food, and a look at the map to find a less circuitous route down. We decided to use one of the tributary creeks draining west into Five Mile Creek as a handrail. This worked pretty well, and we were able to ski down the creek bed to about 1600 metres, before the drainage became too steep. A short burst of uphill to get out of the drainage to the north, was followed by about 200 metres of reasonable travel, and 200 metres of wretched travel on a rapidly thinning and isothermal snowpack. Some time around 4.00 pm, we happily popped out onto the road, but were forced to skin up, as the wretched road went up 30 metres for every 50 metres down. Nevertheless, we were quickly back to the water supply buildings where we took our skins off and cleaned the pitex off our ski bases skiing down the road. This is possibly the first ski ascent of Mount Ferguson, and definitely, a trip only for the daft.

Sandra McGuinness

The KMC 2007 Executive:		Contacts:
Chair	Steven Miros	▶▶ Membership Annual Dues ◀◀ Individual (19 yrs & up) \$41 Couple/Family \$40+\$6/person Send complete membership/waiver form to KMC Membership 2711 Granite Rd Nelson BC V1L6V3 To receive information by e-mail or to give us your address/e-mail/phone changes please contact membership@kootenaymountaineering.bc.ca  ▶▶ Library ◀◀ Sandra McGuinness ▶▶ E-mail update ◀◀ Contact members-owner@kootenaymountaineering.bc.ca ▶▶ KMC President ◀◀ president@kootenaymountaineering.bc.ca ▶▶ KMC (Correspondence) ◀◀ Box 3195 Castlegar BC V1N 3H5 ▶▶ KMC website ◀◀ www.kootenaymountaineering.bc.ca ▶▶ Newsletter submissions ◀◀ newsletter@kootenaymountaineering.bc.ca  ▶▶ Newsletter Editorial Policy ◀◀ We encourage all submissions of writings, cartoons, drawings, book & website reviews and trip reports. Suitability for publication is at editor's discretion. Articles and advertisements may be edited for clarity and length. Advertising must be thought to be of interest to members in regard to the outdoors, especially locally. Will use discretion for commercial endeavors.
Vice	Doug Brown	
Treasurer	Norman Truant	
Secretary	Leah Zoobkoff	
Conservation	Kim Kratky	
Winter Trips	Dave Jack	
Summer Trips	Vicki Hart	
Cabins & Trails	Ted Ibrahim	
Mtnrg. School	Sandra McGuinness	
Hiking Camp	Don Harasym and/Or Kay Medland	
Climbing Camp	Doug Brown	
Website	Doug Brown	
Entertainment	Bryan Reid	
Newsletter	Eliane Miros	



# How to Use the Avalanche Terrain Rating Scale on the KMC Winter Trips Schedule

The KMC Winter Trips Schedule now includes the Avalanche Terrain Rating Exposure Scale (ATES) for all trips on the schedule. This three category scale measures how serious a particular trip is in regard to the avalanche hazard encountered on the trip and the skill level your group should have to go on this trip. The ATES is based on the terrain encountered on the trip (things like slope angles, forest density, presence of terrain traps and route options) and unlike avalanche danger (available from the Public Avalanche Bulletin - PAB) does not change over time. The three ATES categories along with the required skill level to tackle each type of terrain are:

- *Simple* - Exposure to low angle or primarily forested terrain, some forest openings. May involve the run-out zones of infrequent avalanches. Many options to reduce or eliminate exposure. No glacier travel. To travel in this type of terrain, common sense, the discipline to respect avalanche warnings, proper equipment, and first aid skills are necessary.
- *Challenging* - Exposure to well defined avalanche paths, starting zones or terrain traps; options exist to reduce or eliminate exposure with careful route-finding. Glacier travel is straightforward but crevasse hazards may exist. Your group should have the ability to recognize and avoid avalanche prone terrain, an understanding of the PAB, the ability to perform self rescue and first aid, and have good route-finding skills.
- *Complex* - Exposure to multiple overlapping avalanche paths with terrain traps below, large expanses of steep, open terrain, with minimal options to reduce exposure. Complicated glacier travel with extensive crevasse bands or icefalls. There may be no safe options on these trips so you need a strong group with years of critical decision-making experience in avalanche terrain, as well as the ability to perform first aid and self-rescue.

The ATES should be used in conjunction with the PAB, and the Avaluator. If you don't own the Avaluator you can buy one from the Canadian Avalanche Centre or use the Avaluator on-line at:

<http://www.avalanche.ca/avaluator/> On the day of your trip, the rated avalanche danger (from the PAB) is read off the Y axis of the Avaluator, and the ATES is read off the X axis of the Avaluator. The intersection of the two defines the recommended course of action (normal caution, extra caution or not recommended).

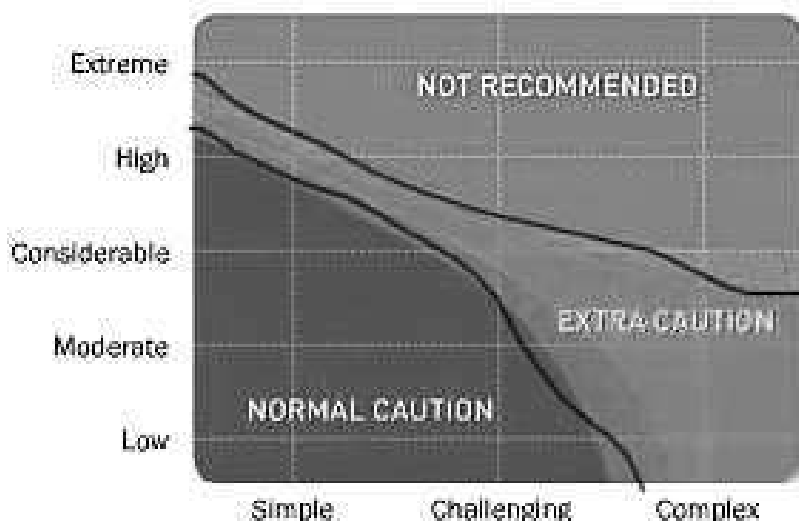


Figure 1: The Avaluator: Avalanche Hazard on Y Axis, ATES on X Axis

For more information on the ATES and the Avaluator, go to <http://www.avalanche.ca/default.aspx?DN=428,4,558,3,Documents>

Trip coordinators with questions about what the ATES means for them can contact the winter trips coordinator, Dave Jack or Sandra McGuinness.