

## Sheep Mountain, 6166'

USGS Bedal

#1-Anyone who has ever been to Monte Cristo has seen Sheep Mt. On the road in it is the first peak on the left, about 1 mile east of Barlow Pass. If you are thinking about climbing it the best thing to do is to stop at the bridge over the South Fork of the Sauk and look at Sheep Mt from that vantage point. There is a prominent saddle between the true summit on the left (6166') and the lesser summit at 5995' on the right. It is to that saddle that you need to direct yourself to gain the ridge. Notice also the avalanche gully going to that saddle. On the map it will show itself as the southern stream on the mountain. Much of our route (from 4,000' to the 5,800' saddle) was in or next to that gully. We parked our mountain bikes right next to the bridge and proceeded east across low bottom land with skunk cabbage and salmonberry bushes. Once we hit the old growth forest we directed ourselves to the NE from about 2,600' to where we entered the gully at 4,000'. The heavy snows of the past winter allowed this gully to remain snow filled until now. So it was easy to kick steps on the up climb and glissade on the down climb. Later on when this snow melts another route will have to be taken as the rocks beneath would probably be slabby and covered with moss. The snow in the gully is thinning now and will soon have caves beneath making it unsafe. The gully branches further up and we took the right branch to reach the saddle. Once at the saddle stay right on the ridge venturing to the north side occasionally to avoid cliffs. I think a summer ascent of this mountain would be more difficult for route finding. From Barlow Pass to the summit took four hours. Descent took only 2 hrs 15 minutes. Del Campo, Lewis, and Big Four are prominent to the south. It is the best seat in the house for Gemini. Sloan is nearby to the north.--Mike Collins & Stefan Feller

Some notes to add:

Only attempt this route when there is snow cover in the center gully, and snow in the "boggy" area of the lowlands. It is key to angle and reach the center gully between 3400 and 3500 feet. You have no other options if you decide to do this route due to a rock wall above you and the gully turning to waterfalls below. After you cross the bridge and go straight across the "boggy" area head up and slightly left (NE) keeping a stream to your right--this will ensure you are in old growth forest for the entire route to the center gully.

Stefan Feller

#2-Stefan, Mike Collins,

I got up Sheep Mountain yesterday (Thursday, June 6) but did not see your names in the register. Actually it appeared that the person that climbed it on Tuesday put the register on the summit as there was only one name inside with the date 6-4-02. The register is a nice small piece of PVC tubing with a good tablet of waterproof paper and pencil inside. I wonder whether that person used Mike's write-up for directions. Yesterday's visibility was bad in the morning (so I couldn't scope out the route) with a brief rain shower but improved as the day wore on becoming mostly sunny in the afternoon. I went too far to the right at the beginning which threw me off. I climbed a wooded buttress instead of the gully and ended up on the far eastern end of the peak. At 4500 feet it started snowing. A couple hundred feet higher it snowed hard for a while with BIG flakes, very pretty for June 6. Any way with improving visibility I could see that I had the opportunity to climb both summits and several other highpoints which I did although it was not what I set out or necessarily wanted to do. I was a bit worried as I needed to be home at a reasonable time to pick up Anna from daycare and the actual summit looked a long ways from where I broke out above tree line. I had to lose a couple hundred feet in a couple places and was kicking all my own steps in the fresh snow. About 4 inches had fallen overnight and in the morning hours wiping out any evidence that anyone else had recently been up there. I was pushing it pretty hard and made the summit of the 6166 foot peak in 4 hours and 40 minutes after leaving Barlow pass. There was fresh snow and rhyme ice on everything causing a little extra thought on the final summit scramble. The final bit actually looks harder than it really is. I did write in the register that the two of you had summited two days before the placement of the register. I departed in quick order, after examining the local Monte Cristo Range, hoping to find the right snowfilled gully for the descent. Pretty sure I had the right one, I glissaded on down making good time exiting to the left at about 4000 feet. Continuing my descent I became cliffed out

at about 3400 feet. Back up I went a couple hundred feet eventually angling up a wet moss filled cleft. Further east I descended very steep wooded terrain for several hundred feet which took me to some very nice old growth cross county terrain, much better than the ascent. I even followed pink flagging for a while. You didn't put that up, did you? Anyway I was back to the Monte Cristo Road two hours after leaving the summit and back, via my mountain bike, (carrying it over the snow and landslides) to the car at Barlow Pass 20 min later. I still had plenty of time to pick up Anna at Daycare. By the way, the person who placed the register on the summit of Sheep Mountain was that Queen of the Cascades no other than Fay Pullen herself!  
Don Beavon

#3-With reports of three recent climbs of Sheep Mountain, I decided to head up here too, from Barlow Pass yesterday. There was snow on both sides of the road before one even reaches the Big Four ice caves trail and the road continuing to Darrington is still closed by snow and that's at around 2200 feet. The one-mile road walk to Twin Bridges is covered with snow perhaps 20 feet deep in places and as hard as a rock. Perhaps it'll melt in another month or so, but still there will be tons of avalanche debris left on the road. I had to laugh at the sign saying the government doesn't warrant the safety of Twin Bridges for vehicles. Vehicles won't get even close to it without major clearing work. And the second bridge is collapsed.

Besides skunk cabbage and salmonberry, there's some devil's club, too, but it's easy to negotiate around them and some pretty creeks. I headed directly to that southern stream and was able to follow it up and past a waterfall without difficulty. Unfortunately, I went left higher up heading directly to the peak instead to the right and heading to the saddle between Sheep and 5995'. The gully, with steep vertical walls on both sides of me, just kept getting narrower, steeper and icier the higher I got. Just below the ridge it got just too much for me but I was fortunate to be able to bail out on the right to some sparse trees. Of course I had an ice axe but even if I had crampons too, I don't think I would've been comfortable on it's steepness. My fingers were frozen from being in the snow and ice and took five minutes to warm back up after putting gloves on. The few trees stopped before the ridge but I managed to continue up hitting the ridge between the summit and the closed contour just south of it. This upper gully went quite slow.

The register was about 50 feet below the summit in some heather on the edge of a cliff. Strange, I thought, and carried it on up. It turned out to be the previous register placed in 1968 by Kenn Carpenter and Kandy Stratton. Inside was a plastic sandwich bag with some very soggy pieces of paper. I couldn't separate the paper without tearing so I carefully put them out to dry in the sun. Joe Vance & Steve Moore were here 7-3-70, Jim Price, solo, 4-30-78, 3 and 1/2 hours from the car, Kroeker, Bialos and Kegel on 9-22-85, John Roper, Bob Tillotson and Bette Felton on 11-2-86, and Mark DesVoigne, Howard Armstrong, Cec Thomas and Dallas Kloke on 10-29-89. On another worse sheet of paper, I was able to make out Mike Torok, others, Garth Warner and Mark Owen, and it appeared Warner from an earlier trip, too.

In the afternoon sun I thought I'd be comfortable going down that same steep gully. No way! Back up to the ridge I went, Ugh! and over to the proper saddle area where I saw my brother's tracks from a week ago. Wow! What a gorgeous bowl. Perfect for glissading. I angled back to the gully and tried following it down below the waterfall. Big mistake! Though it felt air conditioned all the way up, now the heat was too much so I angled back to the woods. Ah, ten degrees cooler here, but by now I was almost down to the flatlands. 4 and 1/2 hours up, 1 and 1/2 hours on the summit, 3 and 1/4 down. The view of Sloan peak was quite unique from the summit. It's not the distinctive view of it one usually has from other peaks. Pugh and White Chuck stood out, Whitehorse and Three Fingers were on the Skyline, N & S Gemini were impressive, Del Campo really stood out, with Morning Star, Sperry and Vesper beside it. Baker & Shuksan were clear, Rainier not so much. Lewis looked like a fun peak to do from right before the bridge.

Fred Beavon