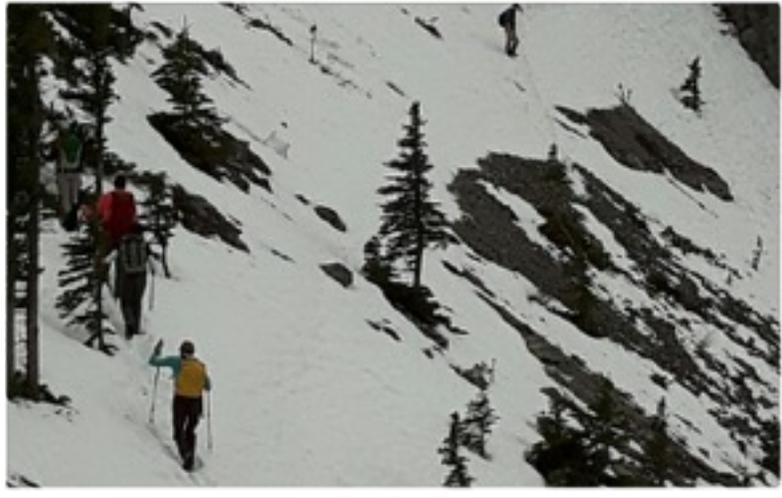

CENTRAL ALBERTA MOUNTAIN CLUB

Mount Yamnuska Hike Report

The Day Begins

Other than 3 moose crossing the highway near Cremona which forced some moderate braking, the car pooling down from our place near Caroline with club members Pat and Dayna was a pleasant drive. Heading west via Highway 1A for 45 minutes we found ourselves at the provincial day use area at the foot of the towering cliffs of Mount Yamnuska. It turned out, most of our complement of 16 hikers were already there with some keeners having already hit the trail at a leisurely pace. The rest of us quickly donned hiking boots, gathered backpacks and headed on after them, the idea being to rendezvous at the first fork in the trail which divides hikers (head right) from those who seek to climb up and dangle off the rocks (head left).

At the forks, there was a round of introductions since there were a number of newbies to the club. The hike coordinator and 'trail boss', Steve Irwin, also ran through the main protocols that pertain to all club hikes



Onward and Upward

The hiking trail passes through open spruce and poplar forest gradually increasing in pitch as it approaches the treeline. Other than some muddy sections this lower trail was in good condition and in about an hour we were in the stunted spruce characteristic of the sub-alpine. At this point the trail, patches of ice and remnant snow were becoming more frequent making footing a bit more challenging. According to club members familiar with Yamnuska trail conditions, this was a notable departure from previous years and indicative of the cooler than normal weather experienced in April. The trail heading towards the 'Crack', a fissure in the rock hikers squeeze through to access the NW facing slopes of the back of Mount Yamnuska, was a mixture of ice, slush and bare rock. The last pitch to the Crack was deep, mushy snow and the Crack itself still had a fair bit of snow with some wet rock thrown in making for somewhat tricky footing. All hikers made it through, however, and proceeded on across a talus slope (partly snow covered) that leads to a small rock shoulder where we broke out lunch.



Because of the increasingly challenging trail conditions that would be encountered as we worked our way up the backside of Mount Yamnuska, and the median ability of the group, Steve made the call to abort the hike. We certainly didn't hear any complaints. Due to the warming conditions in the afternoon the trail down was slushier and muddier. We also encountered large numbers of hikers heading up. It almost looked like it might've been the Calgary Under-25's Hiking Club. There was some interesting garb (or lack of) and footwear choice had a decidedly 'hip' appearance. Many were accompanied by dogs of various shapes and and at one point I almost crushed a chihuahua under my boot.

Since we still had some time before we would've been heading back after completing the entire hike Steve suggested we spend an hour hiking up Jura Creek, an 8 minute drive from the Yamnuska parking lot.

The initial quarter mile or so of the Jura Creek hike follows a wide gravel outwash before it hits a narrow, impassable gorge. We clambered up the west side of the gorge, not knowing that the main trail heads up through the forest paralleling the gorge. Our route took us along the very lip of the gorge....the view straight down was fairly impressive. No slips here please. After a couple of hundred yards we hit the main trail which then drops back down to the creek at the top end of the gorge. The next half mile or so is boulder hopping along the creek with frequent crossings required. The creek is small enough, however, that feet generally remain dry. We went as far as the first widening of the valley into a bit of a meadow. Apparently, there is another gorge upstream before the valley really opens up into true sub-alpine meadows. The hike back was quick and all told we were gone for two hours.

And so ended the first hike of the season and a pleasant day in the front range of the Rockies. As newcomers we were really impressed by the comraderie and inclusiveness of the club, with due attention to safety and comfort. Thanks to Steve (and Sandy) for their guiding and leadership on the trail.

Paul and Rebecca Latour

