

Brewster Creek

Montana Back Roads 4x4 club met at Bonner Truck Stop, I-90 and Highway 200, 8:30 Sunday morn, June 30.

Willie and Jeanne Worthy, Jeremy Hitchcock, Steve and Deirdre Slagle, Steve Gehring, James Riggs and Rob, plus guests Richard and Mary Owen, and Wade Rall.

Headed out I-90 to Rock Creek exit, and up just past Brewster Creek to look and talk about the remains of the grade for a water flume that was to provide water to the electric generators at the town of Quigley. Forest Service has a sign mis-identifying this as the RR grade. The actual RR grade goes up Brewster Creek.

Then up Brewster Creek, incredibly green this spring, including big patches of bright magenta sticky geranium and mock orange shrubs covered in white blossoms.

Stopped at Tree Slide Road where FS road 4308 makes a sharp left turn, and walked over to the slide area....which had sloughed off and was quite narrow. Decided that it was repairable and would be our way out.

Drove on up to plateau and made a right to the top of where Tree Slide Road begins. There were quite a few yellow arrowleaf balsamroot still in bloom along with tall blue lupine. It's a hard turn off to spot, be sure to follow the GPS figures in the book *4x4 Routes of Western Montana*. If you continue on the road, it leads to a logged area where you can easily turn around.

Everyone stopped and looked at the steep drop off before committing to it. Willie and Jeanne went down first, stayed a little to the far left and hit a stump causing a bit of excitement. James was next, not real happy about it because you cannot see where you're going at all....you just have to drop front end of vehicle over the edge and come down slowly and follow the spotter's directions. Every one made it down successfully (without having to change underwear).

The rock area mid trail wasn't bad, had to cut a tree to get through, and move a few rocks. On coming out onto the rest of Tree Slide Road, we made a left turn and headed to where the mine was. James and Rob hiked all the way down into the canyon, but found nothing but remains of foundations for mounting equipment. At times, we have found vugs here....rocks with crystal interiors. This was our lunch spot, shady and not too warm on a 94 degree day.

Trip continued on out to where the main tree slide area is, which took quite a bit of shovel and pick work to make passable. Again, Willie was first, and started to slip off the trail a bit and had to get on the gas hard to make it across, Steve S. says he was trying to run over him! More repair work was deemed

necessary. James was second, kept wanting to look at the hillside rather than his spotter, and very wary of slipping off the edge. Just gotta remember....if it starts to slip, give it gas! Steve Gehring made it look extremely easy in his very narrow, small Suzuki Samurai.

Said goodbye to Rich, Mary and Wade, while the rest of us made a sharp right and headed up towards the Gold Bug Mine. Woweee....talk about overgrown now! All this rain has caused the native amur maple to go absolutely nutso....like driving through a green tunnel. Thank goodness for air conditioning and roll up windows! This trail is maybe a 2 1/2, mostly due to its steepness....always forget how steep it is until coming back down it. Continued on up past the mill site to the end of exploration road, and there it is another 1/4 mile or so hike to the mine. Several people started off and then "wussed out" because the springs made it extremely wet. If you take several vehicles on this route, it's probably best to park at the sharp right turn where a long wheel base vehicle will have to back to make the turn. That adds another 1/4 mile or so to the hike, but otherwise you have to back out or try to turn around in a very tight area.

Once back to Rock Creek Road did a club mandated quick safety check of vehicles and headed home.