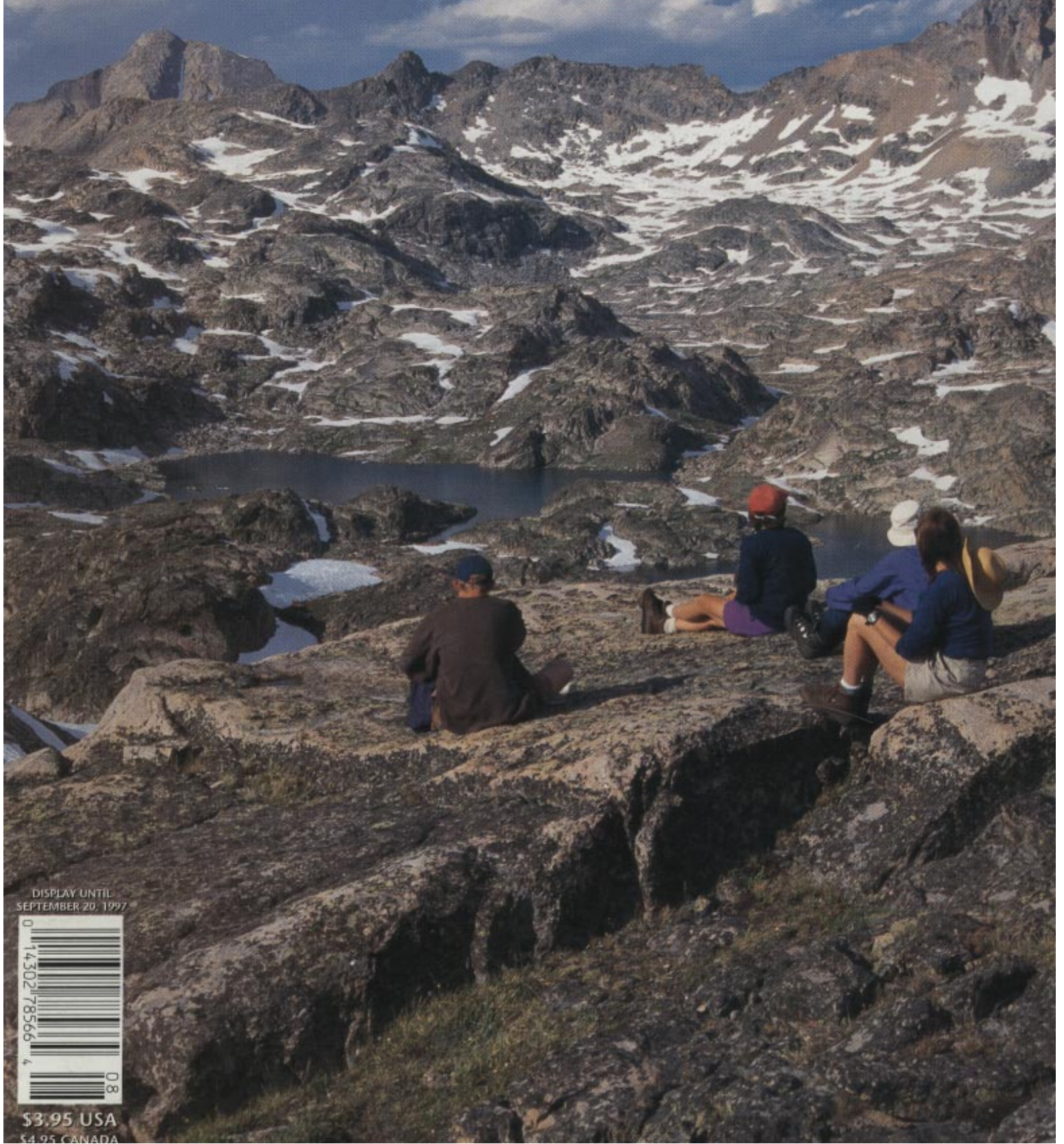


INSIDE: WHEAT PHOTO FEATURE • BEARTOOTH HIGHWAY

MONTANA

M A G A Z I N E



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REMEMBER, WHEN WE SEE THEM THE WORD IS
"DISORIENTED," NOT "LOST"

splashing through the creek I finally wore myself down enough to let my body do some talking to my brain. I put all my clothes on and hoisted myself into an old solitary tree in a pile of talus. I rigged webbing, branches, and my backpack into a pocket in the branches of the tree. There I sat and hung and slouched nervously until I fell asleep, not knowing or wanting to know what could possibly happen next.

I woke at dawn with a chill, lowered myself and my gear to the ground, packed, and sat in the sun with my back against the old tree, enthused and warmed by the yellow rays. Five hours later I emerged on the road and walked to the Condon Ranger Station where I found that a search was to be mounted for me in the morning. Derek had come out the very first day, reported me lost but not stupid, and then driven back to Bozeman. I said my thanks and goodbyes and hitchhiked to the Bozone, thankful to be alive.

R. LAZINSKI
Bozeman

WHEN LOVE IS BLIND

"REMEMBER, WHEN WE SEE RONDA AND Jack, the word is 'disoriented,'" my fiance Mark said as we walked into a restaurant in Cooke City. "Not 'lost'."

Mark spread a map out on the table and continued, "I just don't understand how it happened."

"Which part?" I asked, looking up from the napkin I was shredding. "We did just about everything wrong."

OUR BACKPACKS HAD RESEMBLED TWO pieces of movable art. Mark's contained food and clothes, plus spinning reels, fly reels, flies and lures, with a few backups in case something broke. Tied to the outside of his pack was a yellow-orange Sevlor raft. My backpack included a

large eight-pound lump that was our his-and-hers, zip-together sleeping bags. Thus overloaded, we had started down the trail. Twenty minutes later we stopped to talk to a fellow who said he was coming back from Kearnsey Lake. After inspecting the map a bit closer, Mark and I returned to the parking lot. One hour and a different parking lot later, we started off on the right trail...Somewhere around 9,700 feet, we figure now, we were at a sort of crossroads: a river was on our right and before us was a vast meadow that dissolved into a sharp, steep bowl if we went one way, and a nearly vertical rock face if we went another way. There was no indication that anybody had been in the area for quite some time.

Not wanting to climb the vertical rock face, "we" chose the meadow-from-hell. Four hundred vertical feet later, where we expected to see Lone Elk Lake, was more meadow with scraggly shrubs. "The map," Mark puffed, "sucks." As thunder echoed over the mountains, we set up camp for the night. The next day we found a lake that should have been Lone Elk Lake, yet it had two islands and didn't look like the outline of Lone Elk Lake on our map. "The map really sucks," Mark said.

After we'd hiked one third of the way around What-Wasn't-Lone-Elk-Lake, we turned away from the lake toward a pond that should have connected to the lake. Instead, the pond was too small to even make it onto our topo map. We set up camp for the night, put on our Orvis fly vests for the very first time, and, with rods in hand, hiked over a small ridge. We knew for sure we'd see the lake there. And Ronda and Jack.

The nearest lake was at least a mile away. A deep chasm of rock lay far below us. "Are we lost yet?"

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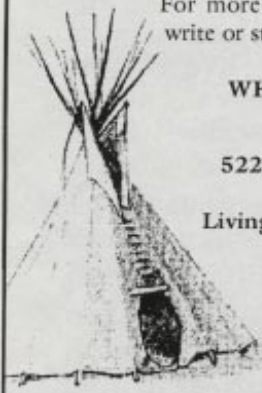
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RICK & SUSIE GRAETZ PHOTO

Another lost lake in the Beartooths

I asked. "No, we're just disoriented," Mark huffed.

The next day we hiked to another lake that also didn't seem to fit the shape of the lake on our map. In late afternoon we pumped up the rubber raft and fished the lake without a nibble. "It's a fishless lake," Mark said, pointing to the fish species map. A storm blew us off "Fishless Lake." That night, a rodent chewed on my boot and two of our fishing poles, and a mountain goat woke us while searching for a midnight snack.

On our fourth day, we hiked back to What-Wasn't-Lone-Elk-

Lake and spent most of the day waiting out a storm. As we hiked down from What-Wasn't-Lone-Elk-Lake we met up with two gentlemen in their sixties going up the mountain. Mark told them where we had come from and they explained they'd been hiking these parts for

forty years: "You're coming down from Lower Aero Lake. The lake you want is over that way about a half-mile..."

"OH NO," MARK WHISPERED AS HE reached across the table to squeeze my hand. "Here comes the final insult."

I looked up and nodded. Here was Jack, stomping across the restaurant, his booming voice rising above the restaurant chatter for all the world to hear: "Did you get lost?"

AMY PETERSON
Haslett, Michigan

READERS!

Remember... to send us your Montana-related personal story or photo for this series called "**MONTANA: YOU BET!**" We'll pay \$25 for each story or photo that is published.

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