

Three on site

Yesterday, Tony, Will, and I drove from Boulder and traveled into the site. Due to snow across Colorado, we were rather late getting to the trailhead – we had to clean off snow from the NCAR pickup before leaving, and Monarch Pass in particular was quite slow, with almost no visibility at times. We also took a few minutes to check in at the RMBL office in Crested Butte. With another half hour to unload and repark the cars (Tony drove seperately), we started out about 3:30pm.

We took our time, Tony was on regular cross-country skis, Will on backcountry skis with skins, and I used snowshoes. We also had the sled, which started out lightly loaded. We had a few gear issues, the buckle for my backpack chest strap broke and Will's bindings sometimes didn't want to snap in, and Nalgene water bottle lids froze. Unlike last year, the trail only had the ski 2-track from Danny and Eli's resupply trip into town the day before. (All the recreational users seemed to be going up Snodgrass.) The snowpack was pretty loose, with a bit of a crust. Thus, my snowshoes were too wide for the track and I was always breaking trail on the side and sliding off the "hump" of packed snow in the middle of the trail. For the first half of the trip, I had the sled, since I thought it would be easier to manage with the snowshoes, which generally was true. Oh, and each of us had fairly heavily loaded packs. I, at least, started getting really tired with this, Tony did well on his skis, and Will was in the middle.

Full dark found us still about a mile out. Will had brought 2 headlamps, but neither Tony or I had them (I always assumed that we'd only be out in daylight). The batteries in one of the headlamps eventually died, so we were navigating by Will's headlamp and starlight. Not <too> bad, since we had a clear track. However, at one point there was a fork, where we took the newer track. This ended up being a mistake, so we had to backtrack, involving turning around with skis and sled in the soft snow, which ultimately delayed us about 20 minutes. I was so tired by then that we tried dumping my pack in the sled which Tony pulled except for times going uphill when his skis couldn't grab enough. Just beyond the bridge near Gothic, we were exhausted enough that we abandoned the sled and pack, finally getting to Maroon cabin about 8:20. Tony still had a bit of energy and graciously dumped his pack and went back for mine. Finally everyone was back in the cabin by about 8:45. We left the sled by the trail and will pick it up this morning.

We worked together to balance the load, had good communication, and took the time we needed, knowing that we had a warm cabin waiting for us. Once there, Danny and Eli were great hosts.

We did have a wonderful view of the stars/Milky Way, and even saw the ISS (not Bill's facility!) pass overhead.

After a break, Eli and I went up to the RMBL lab to recover wstar and two food bags. With some help from Will, I installed the R-eol packages. I also copied the netcdf files to date from our FTP site to wstar. I couldn't get Firefox to access these files and didn't know how to scp them through gate, so I just installed ftp onto wstar, which worked fine. (Sorry, security folks.)

