

Kelly Canyon Nordic Area

The Kelly Canyon Nordic Area (KCNA), maintained by the Idaho Falls Ski Club (IFSC), is located on 6 square miles of the Caribou-Targhee National Forest adjacent to the Kelly Canyon Ski Resort. This wooded area has been set aside for non-motorized winter recreation. The snow quality is generally high, and the terrain varies from steep to gently rolling, with many spectacular vistas to add to your enjoyment. Moose and other wildlife are frequently seen on the trails.

The area includes 20 miles of cross-country ski trails, about 11 miles of snowshoe trails and unlimited areas for backcountry travel. There is also a north facing, powder-snow ski slope (Norm's Hill) where you can sample backcountry skiing with minimum effort. The IFSC Kelly Mountain Warming Hut can be found at the base of Norm's Hill and is available for day and overnight use. The IFSC Morgan Summit Warming Hut is located just east of Morgan Summit and is for day use only. Both huts are free for public use. Donation boxes are located in both tents and your support would be appreciated.

The KCNA is the result of the combined efforts of the IFSC, the US Forest Service, Bonneville County and other volunteers. The IFSC provides grooming equipment and financial support. The Forest Service provides guidance, some materials and oversight. Bonneville County has provided the snowmobiles and some equipment for trail grooming. Volunteers do all trail grooming in the winter and all trail maintenance and development in the summer. Parking is available in the Kelly Canyon Resort parking lots (the lower lot should be used on busy days).

A trail registration box is located on Forest Road (FR) 218. Please sign in to help us track area and trail use for purposes of maintenance planning, to quantify public use and help ensure continued public support. All trails described below can be found on the accompanying topographic map.

CROSS-COUNTRY SKI TRAILS (see map)

Skiing past the Kelly Canyon Ski Lodge on FR 218 to the Y-Junction conveniently accesses almost all cross-country ski trails. This 1.2-mile track is usually groomed and is rated more difficult because it is uphill. A pit toilet and bench are located at the Y-Junction. Distances of all trails segments are found on the KCNA map.

Tyro Loop Easiest, partly groomed. Loop is 0.6 miles long from the Y-Junction. This loop trail branches off FR 218 a short distance uphill (north) from the Y-Junction and contours back to the Y-Junction.

Tyro Vista More Difficult, ungroomed. This vista trail branches off the east end of Tyro Loop, contours in and out of wooded ravines below Hidden Vista, traverses two open slopes, and terminates with a scenic view of Hawley Gulch and the Snake River Canyon.

Morgan Summit More Difficult, groomed. Morgan Summit is 1.6 miles uphill on FR 218 from the Y-Junction. Many of the area's scenic trails are accessed from Morgan Summit: namely, Hawley Gulch Overlook Loop, Hidden Vista, Buckskin Morgan Ridge Loop and Pine Loop. An alternate route to Morgan Summit is Glen's Grunt, a more difficult trail off of Tyro.

There is a warming hut just east of Morgan Summit (follow the Hawley Gulch trail for about 140 yards), a canvas tent over a wooden floor. It is equipped with a table, chairs, wood-burning stove, and outdoor bench for picnicking in nice weather. It is for day use only.

Glen's Grunt Most Difficult, ungroomed.

Named for Glen Hayes who laid out the 0.6-mile this ski/snowshoe trail, it is an alternate to the FR 218 route to Morgan Summit. It is a more scenic route up a draw from Tyro Vista to the Summit. Skis are usually not needed to ascend the trail unless the route is icy or has deep fresh snow. Descending this route on skis is not recommended unless there is deep fresh snow to slow you down.

Hawley Gulch Overlook Loop Easiest, groomed. The loop is 0.7 miles long from Morgan Summit. From Morgan Summit, this wooded trail heads southeast, through a gate, and shortly thereafter, the trail splits to form the loop. The trail offers a scenic view of Hawley Gulch.

Hidden Vista Easiest, groomed.

This trail branches off the southern side of the Hawley Gulch Overlook Loop and provides a view of Kelly Mountain, Antelope Flats, and the Snake River Plain...a pleasant place to have lunch.

Buckskin Morgan Ridge Loop More Difficult, ungroomed. The loop distance from Morgan Summit varies from 3.2 to 5 miles depending on the route.

This wooded trail offers nice views of Kelly Canyon and Kelly Mountain. The trail begins at a sign pointing to Buckskin Morgan Ridge on the west side of FR 218 at Morgan Summit. The ridge can be accessed directly by heading west from Morgan Summit, where the trail splits. Alan's Bypass (named for Alan Crockett), to the right, is the easier route to the ridge. The portion of the trail along the ridge is rated easy. For a spectacular view, check out Paul's Vista (named for Paul McCarthy) as you ski along the ridge. The full Buckskin Morgan Ridge Loop involves skiing west past Garney's Junction (named for Garney Hardy), until the trail intersects the Big Hole Snowmobile Trail (FR 887) where you turn right (east) and ski on the groomed snowmobile trail to FR 218. At FR 218, turn right (south), ski around a closed gate and uphill to Morgan Summit. This loop can be shortened by turning right (north) at Garney's Junction and heading east (right) on the snowmobile trail.

Pine Loop More Difficult, seldom groomed. The loop is 2.5 miles long from Morgan Summit.

This interesting, heavily wooded and rolling trail consists of 2 small loops that branch off of the Hawley Gulch Loop about 0.6 miles northeast of Morgan Summit. It is easier to ski the first loop counter clockwise and the second smaller loop clockwise due to a steep section (see map). The long sections of the first loop are through beautiful wooded areas. The second loop provides a nice view of Hawley Gulch.

Hawley Gulch Loop Most Difficult, mostly ungroomed. Loop is 4.5 miles long from the Y-Junction.

This trail takes you into the remote Hawley Gulch. It is easier to ski this loop in a counter-clockwise direction (as described below) due to narrow, steep wooded sections of the trail that are difficult to negotiate in the downhill direction. From the Y-Junction, ski downhill on FR 217 towards Table Rock Campground. After 0.7 miles, turn left (east) at a sign marking the entrance to the trail. Follow the trail across a bridge and up a switchback to an old logging road. About 0.8 miles from the switchback, the trail takes a 90-degree turn to the left (west) and proceeds over another bridge with vertical posts to impede ATVs and snowmobiles. After about 0.2 miles the trail veers left along the edge of a clearcut to a switchback. After a second switchback the trail continues uphill, meets Pine Loop and continues to Morgan Summit. Skiing down FR 218 to the Y-Junction completes the loop. This trail should be avoided when avalanche danger is high. Snow slides into Hawley Gulch from either side have been observed. Total elevation differential is 600 feet.

An alternate route to skiing the road east of Hawley Gulch is to follow a summer hiking/biking trail that lies in the bottom of the gulch. After crossing the lower bridge, proceed up the gulch, cross the creek and remain on the west side of the creek most of the time until connecting with Hawley Gulch Loop a little west of the upper bridge. This trail is prettier, much more challenging and more exposed to avalanches than the road route described above.

Kelly Mountain Logging Road Easiest, groomed.

From the Y-Junction, head south and follow the road (FR 881) east through a metal gate to a sign that points uphill to the Kelly Mountain Warming Hut.

The Kelly Mountain Warming Hut is a large wood floored tent. It has a wood-burning stove, bunks, propane stove and lantern, table, chairs and an outside bench. There is a pit toilet nearby. The hut is open for day-use until 6 pm. Overnight reservations can be made by contacting Glen Hayes at 523-6839. While use of the hut is free, donations are requested to help recover costs.

Upper Hut More Difficult, mostly ungroomed.

This wooded trail branches off the Kelly Mountain Logging Road a few yards west of the metal gate and ends at the Kelly Mountain hut.

Side Step Most Difficult, ungroomed.

The primary purpose of this trail is to access Norm's Hill for a little backcountry skiing fun. This trail heads uphill off the Upper Hut trail at a sign near its midpoint--ribbon markers help point the way. This narrow wooded trail climbs at an average grade of 11%. Traversing, a progressive sidestep, will occasionally be required if you don't want to put on your climbing skins.

Norm's Hill More Difficult, ungroomed.

This is an unmarked, north-facing, lightly wooded ski slope, 0.4 miles long that rises about 450 feet above the Kelly Mountain Warming Hut. The trees are sufficiently spaced and most brush has been cleared (some hazards still exist) to allow for wide telemark turns. Trail skiers can also enjoy this slope. There is sufficient space to traverse and kick turn. Norm's Hill (named for Norm Kramer) can be accessed in 3 ways: by climbing uphill from the warming hut; by climbing the Side Step trail; or by traversing the top of Kelly Mountain via the Kelly Mountain Ridge trail (see below). With fresh powder, this slope can offer quality backcountry powder skiing with little effort and minimum avalanche hazard.

Kelly Mountain Ridge More Difficult, ungroomed.

This trail offers spectacular panoramic views of the South Fork Canyon and the Snake River Plain. While this trail is not particularly difficult to ski, the descent from the top of Norm's Hill (see above) can be challenging. This trail can be the easiest route to the top of Norm's Hill for those that ride the chairlift. Single ride lift passes have not been available for several years. There are three marked entrances to the top of the Norm's Hill from the eastern end of the Kelly Mountain Ridge trail. From west to east are Glen's Lane (More Difficult), Dana's Drop (Most Difficult), and Paul's Lane (Easiest). The drops are named for volunteers Glen Hayes, Dana Wood and Paul McCarthy.

River View More Difficult, ungroomed.

This out and back trail starts at the Kelly Mountain Warming Hut and contours around the eastern flank of Kelly Mountain where it crosses a sagebrush-covered hillside. It then contours through a wooded ravine to another open hillside where it terminates with a view of the South Fork of the Snake River and Antelope Flats. Deer and moose are a common sight on the hills below.

SNOWSHOE TRAILS (see map)

Three snowshoe trails start from FR 218 climbing and connect with Shoers Delight or FR 887. These trails are steep, narrow, less completely cleared than the ski trails and generally not suitable for skiing. Glen's Grunt is a skier/snowshoer shared trail (see ski trails above for a description). It offers snowshoers a much-preferred route between the Y-Junction and Morgan Summit.

Cole's Climbs Most Difficult

Lower - The steep marked start of the trail (named for Mike Cole) is about 100 yards east of the cattle guard near Kelly Resort Lift number 4 on the north side of the road. After a short climb, the trail enters a coniferous forest and 0.1 miles from the start, the lower trail branches to the right, continues for 1/4 of a mile through trees and splits. The right fork (Connector) connects with Big Slot, Corkscrew and Glen's Grunt and the left fork continues to a meadow. From there the trail takes a 90-degree left turn, climbs straight up the hill, meets the upper trail, and continues on to Shoers Delight.

Upper - The upper trail continues past the lower trail branch on what appears to have been an old road, and enters a gully. At about 0.2 miles from the start, the Boundary trail branches steeply left into a meadow and the upper trail continues to follow the gully. After about 0.1 miles, the upper trail then climbs very steeply northeast, enters a meadow and follows a cornice towards the ridge. Eventually it connects with the lower trail and Shoers Delight. Both trails were greatly improved in the fall of 2004 and are better marked on trees and with poles in the meadows.

Boundary Most Difficult

A steep snowshoe trail departs Coles Climb (upper) about 0.2 miles from the start and climbs steeply uphill towards Buckskin Morgan Ridge. After crossing the first meadow, it generally parallels a fence line marking the forest boundary until it hits FR 887, a snowmobile trail. Turn right on the snowmobile trail to intersect the Buckskin Morgan Ridge Loop.

Big Slot More Difficult

The Big Slot trail starts uphill (north) through the forest about 0.6 miles up FR 218 from the Resort Lodge and connects with Shoers Delight. It is the easiest of the trails connecting to Shoers Delight.

Corkscrew Most Difficult

Corkscrew trail heads north from FR 218 shortly before the Y-Junction and connects with Shoers Delight. It starts out in forest and emerges onto a steep, south facing, meadow.

Shoers Delight Easiest

This trail connects Big Slot and Corkscrew trails, crosses Alan's Bypass and ends at the Morgan Summit Warming Hut. The trail parallels the Buckskin Morgan Ridge ski trail, offers better views and is more challenging than the ski trail.

Connector Trail Easiest

The Connector parallels road 218 and connects the Lower Cole's Climb trail to Big Slot, Corkscrew and Glen's Grunt. These trails offer a more interesting route between the trailhead and the Y-Junction.

Repeater More Difficult

This trail takes off to the south of road 218 opposite the intersection with Corkscrew. After 0.3 miles, the Hut trail branches left and Repeater starts climbing and intersects an old road leading to the tower. From the tower, snowshoers can head southeast and connect with the Kelly Mt trail or continue on the Kelly Ridge trail, drop down Norm's Hill and return via the Hut trail.

Hut Easiest

The hut trail was build so that snowshoers have a more interesting way of reaching the Kelly Mt Ski Hut and to avoid conflicts with skiers. As with Repeater, it starts at road 218 near Corkscrew and after 0.3 miles, branches left and continues through the trees, over hill and dale and after 0.8 miles ends at the Hut.

Moose More Difficult

This trail leaves the west side of the Nordic parking lot (same start as the Kelly Mtn trail), climbs steeply, links to a road, descends to the Moose alpine ski run and follows it uphill for 0.7 miles. Watch out for snowboarders and skiers! The trail continues straight into the woods where the groomed alpine run takes a hard left turn. The trail continues on an old road to the BLM/Forest Service boundary fence. There it takes a 90 degree left turn and follows the fence line until reaching the Kelly Mt Ridge Rd, an unmarked intersection. Turning left takes you to the tower and the Repeater trail, while turning right takes you to Norm's Hill and the Kelly Mt Hut.

TRAIL ETIQUETTE and SAFETY

- Be considerate of other traffic on all trails.
- Yield to skiers on a downhill run.
- Make every effort to clear the trail if you stop or fall.
- Do not walk or snowshoe on either skier or machine set ski tracks (except Glen's Grunt).
- Ski under control always; avoid trails that are beyond your ability.
- Register your trip at the trail sign-in locations; use trail maps and signs to plan your trip.
- Make it a habit to carry extra gear, water, snacks, flashlight, a compass or a GPS, trail or area maps, a cell phone (very poor reception except for Edge Wireless), and fire starting tools, even on short trips.
- Be aware that trail conditions can change greatly with changing snow, trail and weather conditions.
- Ski with a partner, especially on the ungroomed trails and backcountry ski runs.
- Watch for and yield to trail grooming equipment.
- Keep your dogs under control and off the groomed track, and clean their refuse from the trail.

EMERGENCIES

In case of emergency, call **911** and report the nature and location of the emergency. Be aware that the KCNA is wild country, searching is difficult and the area is not regularly patrolled.

The latest copy of the KCNA brochure and map can be downloaded from the IFSC web site, www.ifskiclub.com. Contact Alan Crockett (abcrock.fu73573@msn.com) with corrections or suggestions regarding this guide and map.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteers are needed to maintain and operate the KCNA. If you would like to help maintain this non-motorized winter recreation area for everyone's enjoyment, contact Norm Kramer, phone 522-8677, e-mail: nak@srv.net.

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