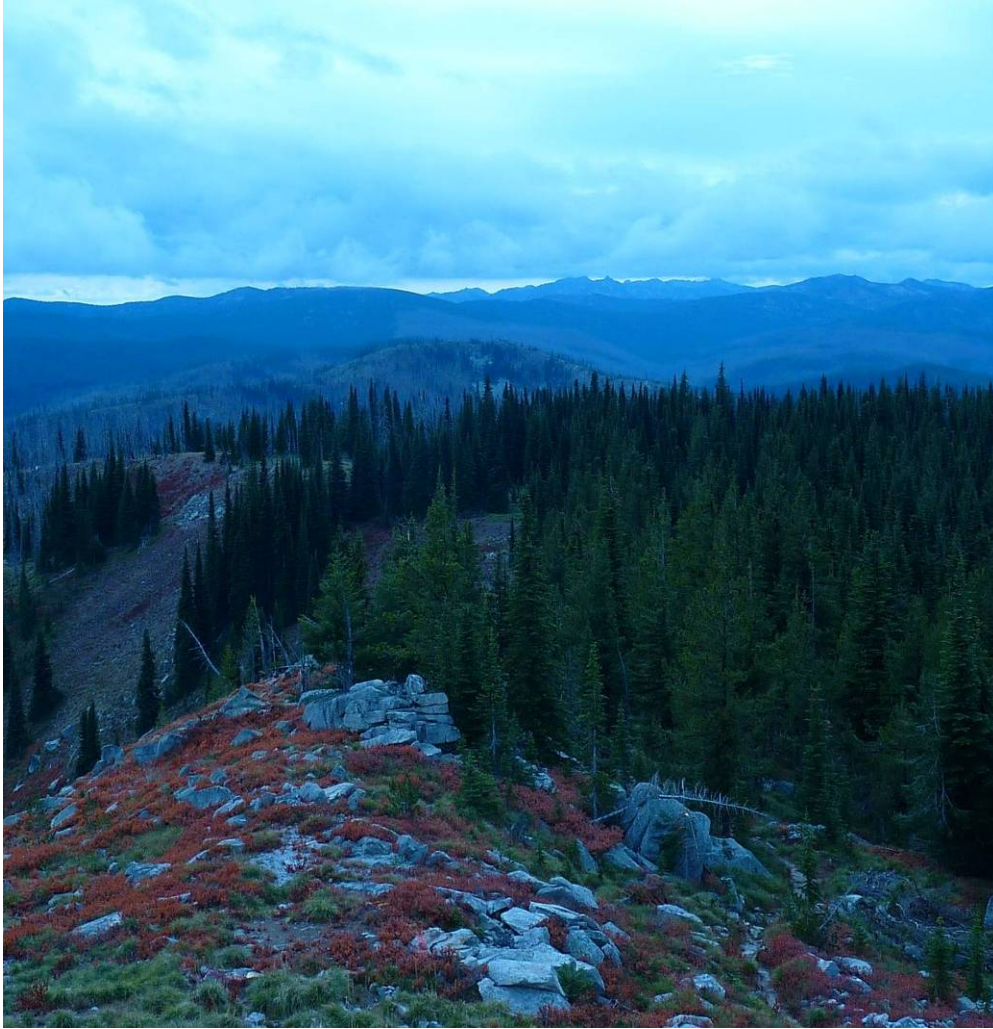


Bear Mountain Lookout, Bitterroot Wilderness, October 2009



Looking Southeast, back into Montana, from Bear Mountain Lookout, Idaho

In late October, my good friend, and fellow math geek, Al Parker came into town and stayed a few nights. He came in on Saturday night and we took off Sunday morning for a combined hike/hot springs trip in the Bitterroot Range. We walked the Jerry Johnson Hot Springs trail past the springs to Bear Mountain Lookout, 7 miles in from the trailhead, and were treated to a great view of the surroundings, in all directions. The larch trees were in full color, and it was a cloudy day, but the cool temps were perfect for a long hike.

There's something haunting about a remote lookout tower. Living alone in one would be tough; they're so far from everything. But it would be a completely unique experience. I must admit to finding the thought of it attractive. I climbed the stairs, trying to get up into the tower, but it was locked, but coming down on the slightly rickety stairs was thrill enough.

We pounded out the hike back down to the springs and had ourselves a soak in Jerry Johnson Hot Springs' upper-most pool. This was my second soak at Jerry Johnson in as many weekends, and this year I've found the springs to be particularly heavily-used, but we had a good soak anyway, and with a good view to boot. Hiking and soaking is like chocolate and peanut butter, it's hard to go wrong with the combination.



Al pondering (the view?).



Bear Mountain Lookout (left, check out those stairs), and a larch tree's fall color (right).



All getting ready for a soak near our hike's end.