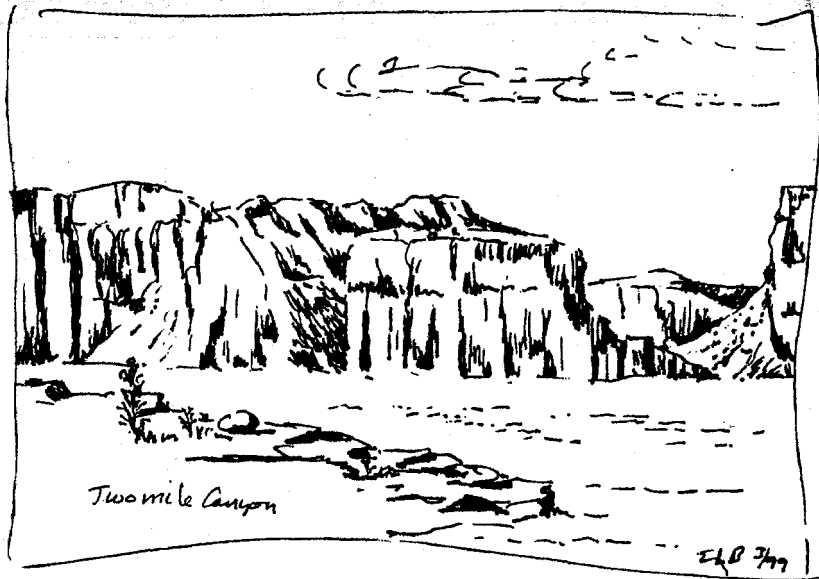


Lake Powell

693.40

in the Springtime



Article and Sketch
By Ed Berg

Six RMSKC members were on Lake Powell in tandem kayaks during the last week of March this year, but not all together. Harv and Susan put in at Bullfrog Bay and paddled south to the Escalante River, then up the river and back to Bullfrog Bay. Tom, Donna, Ed and Paula put in at Hite Marina, and paddled down to Bullfrog Bay, then ferried the kayaks back to Hite. Harv and Susan probably paddled about 120 miles, although the twisty lake makes it tough to measure. The Hite-to-Bullfrog distance was about 85 miles, including side trips up Trachyte, Forgotten and Moqui Canyons. (Hiking distances are not included: this is a PADDLING newsletter!)

I think we were all surprised at the distances covered in the tandems. These long boats can roll along at six to seven mph, and are much less affected by chop and wind than single boats. And the gorilla guys can never paddle more than six feet away from their beloved ladies! And the ladies can pass the guys' refreshments and advice whenever it's needed! None of you have to be convinced of the speed and seaworthiness of kayaks, but until I scaled the distances, I had no idea of the range these tandems provide. There is a lot to see in the Canyonland country, but the distances separating campsites and ruins and hiking trails can be long.

Lake Powell has two faces: Great natural desert beauty made available to water

travel, and great natural beauty ignored, abused and buried under the racket and trash of motorized recreation. The exposure to motor traffic can be minimized by visiting the Lake in the spring before June, and in the fall after mid-September. We camped at our first choice of campsites every night but the last, and the motor traffic was rare until we neared Bullfrog Bay marina. Although the weather can be windy and cold in the spring, we were treated to balmy days and cool nights. The water was too cold for more than a splash, but a sun-shower bag provided a warm shower one evening on Good Hope Bay. If your scheduling permits, try to visit the Lake when the water is high, as it covers a lot of silted-up rock (The Great Bathtub Ring) that can be pretty dusty, and is just ugly.

At the head of Forgotten Canyon, you can hike a short distance up to a rebuilt Anasazi ruin called Defiance House. It's a beautiful canyon, with hawks and ravens and canyon wrens all available for your viewing pleasure!

Tom introduced us to the sound of Lakota flutes a few years ago, courtesy of a gift from Donna, and now I can't imagine being along a canyonland waterway without having the sound of one echoing off the cliffs. Up Moqui and Warm Spring Canyons are box canyons that can return as many as five identifiable echoes! And I would swear that sometimes the birds are

responding to the sound of the flute. It sounds wonderful, but what they're probably saying is, "Get the heck out of my territory!"

One afternoon, we took off on a hike in the slickrock (Kayenta Formation, you wannabe geologists) west of the Tapestry Wall (Wingate Formation). The topography is something extraterrestrial, with vast crossbeds in the ancient Triassic sand dunes now exposed in wind-sculpted potholes and arches.

On our last morning, we discovered a new facet to the Lake: all during the trip, the water level had been slowly dropping. We were ready to load our kayaks, which were bow-grounded on the shore above a rock shelf about ten feet wide, sitting about a foot below the surface. On the Lake side of the shelf, the depth could have been a few hundred feet. The next thing we knew, Tom was wading out on the shelf, pulling the boats back. Seems the water had just risen a few inches, very quickly and quietly. Moral of the story: tie 'em off! Who says there aren't any tides in the Lake? Or was it Kokopelli, playing a little trick on the invaders?

At the end, even with all that paddling, we haven't begun to explore the almost 2000 miles of Lake Powell's shores. As the second-largest man-made reservoir in the world, it's the RMSKC's biggest paddling opportunity! Go do it.