

LAKE MEAD

JUNE 1 - 4, 2014

By Jud Hurd

I am always looking for a warm place for an early spring paddle. This year I thought I would give Lake Mead a try. The side benefit of going to Lake Mead is if the weather is nasty you can always go into Las Vegas to pass the time. Anyway, Brian Hunter and I tried to make the trip a couple of times but the spring snows made driving over the passes less than ideal so we kept putting it off.

We finally got it together and went May 31 through June 4. Putting it off this late into the summer had the added benefit that other paddlers joined us. Our group consisted of me, Tim Fletcher, Brian Hunter, David and Lou Ann Hustvedt, JJ Scervino, Clark Strickland and Anna Troth. We planned a day each way of driving with three days of paddling.

We all caravanned down except for Tim, who was smart and made it a two-day drive. Our trip took about 16 hours because we made a number of stops to adjust the kayak tie downs as we had a very strong head wind that kept moving some of them sideways in the racks. We finally made it to the Boulder Beach campground but had a hard time trying to find the entrance to the campground. It was after dark and it was hard to see everything clearly. Fortunately Tim had reserved three campsites for all of us and we called him on the phone for help in finding the entrance.



After a good night's sleep we had breakfast and then launched off Boulder Beach. We paddled east around a number of islands and got close to the Hoover Dam, although we didn't paddle right up to it. Although the water level was down about 30 feet or so there was still plenty of water to paddle. The water was just ideal—smooth and glassy—with a nice sunny day to enjoy it. We did get a little breeze to keep us comfortable. You couldn't have asked for a better day.

We headed back to Boulder Beach which had been transformed from a nice quiet beach when we launched to a major swimming area. We had to thread our way

through a lot of people to get to our launch site but we finally made it. Back at camp we did our usual thing—we sat around and visited, mostly talk about boats, gear and kayak trips. The campground temperature got up to 106° with one percent humidity but it was fairly comfortable in the shade. We did manage to go through a lot of ice and ice cream bars though.



The next day we drove to a nice, quiet ramp just north of our campground and launched under ideal conditions again. We paddled north toward Las Vegas Bay but didn't go all the way back into the bay. Tim had driven up there earlier and he said the water was so low that it didn't reach the Las Vegas Bay campground. So we paddled across the bay to Black Island. Just beyond there we stopped for lunch and a refreshing swim. While we were eating lunch the winds came up. Well that is to be expected when you

paddle with "Wind in His Face" Brian Hunter. We had a fairly strong head wind paddling back to our launch and some nice swells between one and two feet at times. Everybody made it back in good shape and then it was more relaxing for the rest of the day.

We decided to drive up to Callville Bay for our last paddle. We had been getting off the water fairly early in the afternoon so we agreed it didn't make any sense to come back to camp after our last paddle to just to sit around in the heat and leave for home the next day. We all agreed that we would pack up that morning and head out after our paddle, although JJ stayed on at Mead to visit some friends that were vacationing in the area. The rest of us would get a number of miles under our belt and stop somewhere to get a room. That would make the trip home easier.



When we got to Calville Bay I was ready to go and I thought it would be a good idea to take a quick dip. That way I would be wet and stay cooler throughout the morning. A sheer stroke of brilliance, right? So in I went and the water was wonderful. I got some water on my glasses and thought about my bandana to dry them off then realized I left my bandana in my hip pocket which is totally soaked now. Then I realized I left something else in the other back pocket and it was totally soaked now also—my billfold. So, I went back to the car and laid everything out on the floor board to dry out. Lesson learned: empty your pockets before you go into the water.

As we paddled around that morning we could clearly see the huge invasive species problem they have at Mead. The rocky shorelines are covered in them. A lot are out of the water and dead but a lot are still under the water and it is very sad to see so much damage. Anyway, we still had a good final day of paddling and then headed home.

This was a great trip and one I would like to do again. There is a lot to do and see in this area which we just didn't have time for this year. But I definitely will be back to explore Black Canyon and Lake Mojave. And I will definitely pick a cooler time of the year. Earlier in the spring or later in the fall would be ideal. Perhaps this would be a better October or even November trip. So, keep your eyes open for another invitation to head to Lake Mead.



EDITOR'S NOTE: Here's a frightening article about the mussel invasion in Lake Mead:

http://www.nbcnews.com/id/31980811/ns/us_news-environment/t/invasive-quagga-mussels-growing