

Jud Hurd organized this trip to Wyoming and Sandy Carlsen provided additional research. She learned that specific campsites at Weiss Campground couldn't be reserved, and suggested that we arrive on Wednesday to beat the weekend rush.

Pathfinder Reservoir

July 6 to July 11, 2022

By Sue Hughes and George Ottenhoff



One of the nicer campsites

It was a great idea! Along the shore there were only a few sites with shelters that could hold two tents; getting there midweek meant we were all set up before the weekenders arrived late Thursday night and parked their RVs all over.

Everyone in the group had paddled together many times, and the outing became a super example of a participant-lead trip; people were comfortable to make suggestions, add new components to the plan, and join in or not, as worked best for them.

The mountain bikers (Sandy, Harold and Tim) opted for land-based plans for Saturday: hiking and looking at biking routes for another time. Marsha, Jen and George drove off scouting other put-ins with Jud's Wyoming gazetteer.



Harold, Jud, Tim and Marsha in one of the shelters



Trip leader Jud Hurd

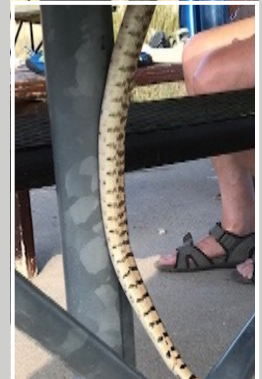


A group of Willets

THURSDAY, JULY 7: Participants Jud Hurd, Marsha Dougherty, Sue Hughes, Tim Fletcher, and Sandy Carlsen and Harold Christopher paddled the bay and coves south of the campground, about nine miles total, before Jen and George Ottenhoff arrived that evening.

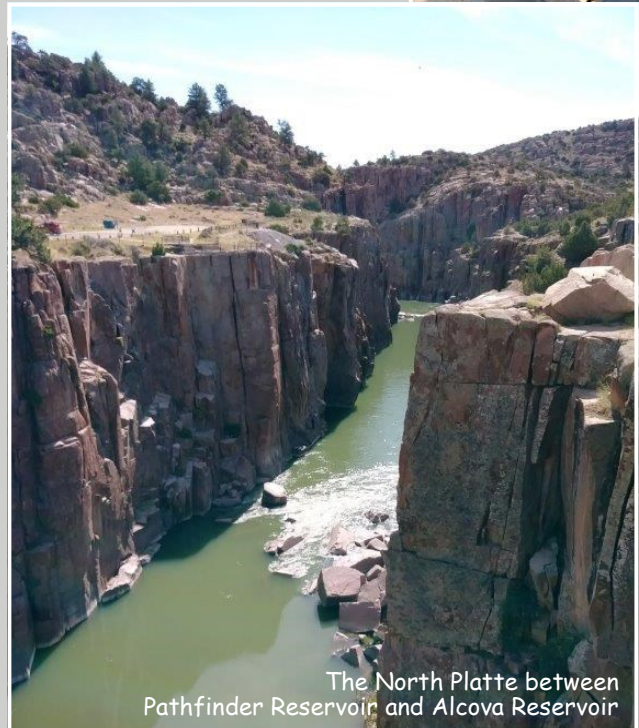
FRIDAY, JULY 8: Everyone except Sue and Jen paddled from the marina out to Sand Creek Point, for a total of eleven miles. Those two enjoyed the shade of a shelter, the view and the breeze off the water, happy to be catching up on books and family, sad times and darling new grandchildren.

That evening they had an unexpected dinner guest. He was probably looking for mice that had been attracted by crumbs left under the picnic table.



SATURDAY, JULY 9: Sandy, Harold and Tim took these photos. They said they'd be back with bikes sometime, for sure.

George's account of what he and the others did that Saturday, and the river paddle on Sunday is on the next page.



The North Platte between Pathfinder Reservoir and Alcova Reservoir

None of us felt like paddling again on Saturday, so while Harold, Sandy and Tim went hiking, we went exploring. We planned to head south to try to find a passable road onto the southern end of Pathfinder Reservoir, but Road 409 was closed for repairs.

Instead we decided to check out the North Platte river east of Alcova. We drove along the river stopping at boat ramps and access areas, and talked to some boating people along the way. We learned that there are no dams on the river between the Gray Reef Dam (just below Alcova) and Casper. We found that there are several boat launch/parking/access areas spaced along the river, three of them being at Gray Reef Dam, at Government Bridge (also called Miles Landing) where Road 220 crosses the river 12.9 river miles below Gray Reef, and at Sechrist 23.9 river miles below Gray Reef Dam.

We saw that since this section of the North Platte is a blue-ribbon trout fishery, there are a lot of people fishing from the bank and wading, numerous guide-outfitter businesses along the river, and many guides leading fishing groups in river dories.

The river was begging us to wet our kayaks there, and that evening we all discussed what a good addition that river trip would be to a future return to Pathfinder. Tim made the comment that he would be reluctant to do that without first having actually made the trip, and I suggested that we extend our stay another day so we could. After we looked at each other for a minute, we said, "Yeah, why not?"

SUNDAY, JULY 10: In the morning we consulted a few locals, including a Game and Fish officer, to be sure that the river did not have any rapids or other conditions that we would not be able to handle. When we were reassured that there were none, it was a go.

We launched from Gray Reef at about 11:00 after Jen served as shuttle driver to leave Tim's car at Sechrist. There is a turbulent area in the middle of the river at the launch site, but it was easy to stay closer to shore and avoid it.

It was a beautiful day with clear, blue skies, cooler temperatures, and calm winds. The current was running at 4-5 mph, so we moved right along. Along the way we saw deer, antelope, pelicans, geese, raptors and large numbers of song birds. We paddled through farmland, watching center pivot sprinklers in operation, around sandstone bluffs with unique formations eroded in them, and through dry areas with mountains in the distance.

It was fun paddling through smaller channels around a significant number of small islands, and through quite a few minor (probably Class I) rapids, none of which had rocks protruding above the surface. The greatest obstacles we encountered were the large number of fishing dories with people fly fishing. We tried to stay well away from them, but at times it was like running a slalom course around them.

We stopped for lunch and a rest at Government Bridge, and then continued to Sechrist. There seemed to be more and longer rapids and a faster current during the second half of the trip, but fewer fishing boats. Each segment of the trip is about the same length, and each took 1.5 to 2 hours.

We agreed that the trip is not difficult, and in fact is a lot of fun, if one has had experience paddling in moving water, and is comfortable in it. It is probably not a good trip for someone's first experience in moving water.

Marsha recorded the data on their adventure.

Tim added, "Jen made it easier for us by helping with the shuttle. It was a nice easy paddle with some small wave trains for a little more excitement.

"The stop at Government Bridge was a nice break, with shaded tables and restrooms.

"The three of us paddled pretty steady most of the way. I think with a larger group it would probably take a little longer.

"We all enjoyed it; it was great find! The ice cream at Alcova after the trip was a nice bonus."

**Paddling the North Platte
from
Grey Reef Dam to Sechrist**

Date: July 10, 2022

Distance: 23.5 miles

Moving average: 5.5 mph

Moving time: 4.2 hours

Max speed: 10.4 mph



Photos by Jen, Marsha, Sandy and Sue