

# LEWIS AND SHOSHONE LAKES, YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

AUGUST, 2018

Originally there were a dozen participants for this trip, but over the months many dropped out. Then, within days of the departure, the trip leader was hospitalized for cardiac surgery!

*SHOSHONE 2018*: There were changes before they left and expectations that didn't match the realities they encountered, but people learned a lot, and have some great photos and good memories.

The following account was written by Richard Ferguson for his travel blog; Sue Hughes added details of special interest to RMSKC's kayaking readers.

Photo by Brian Hunter

We drove up Friday morning with some members overnighiting in Lander and others in Riverton. The drive was very smoky from fires; we felt sad for the tourists who could hardly see the Tetons, but the Wind River range was beautiful.

The group (Chris Duval, Rich Ferguson, Tim Fletcher, Von Fransen, Sue Hughes, and trip leader Brian Hunter) met Saturday morning and headed to the backcountry office.



Group members visited during the lengthy boat inspection

Two rangers came out to inspect our boats in great detail, including vacuuming out the insides: none of us had seen such a persnickety inspection before.

Later, after confusing directions, we finally found the Lake House for dinner; most of the group put up tents that night at the Grant Campground.

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 26:** We launched on Lewis Lake [A] perhaps later than we should have, because the winds quickly developed into a problem during that two or three mile crossing. Several people struggled with the gusts and waves on the lake. One was blown off course and got a short tow over to the meet-up point on the west side of the mouth of the Lewis River [B].

The river was deep enough for a mile or more of paddling upstream in gradually increasing current, and then shallowed out for another mile of walking against the current and pulling the boats to Shoshone Lake.

Towing the floating boats wasn't hard, but walking in knee-deep water was strenuous. A couple of members guided two boats each up the river so another could accompany a tired paddler taking the trail beside the bank.



At the mouth of the Lewis River



Regrouping paddler

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 26, CONTINUED:** After the slog upstream we regrouped in the grass on the banks of Shoshone Lake and then headed for the closest campsite [809]. It was not the one we'd reserved but the weather was getting bad, some people were dead tired and there didn't seem to be anyone else around; the decision was made to just take our chances that the campsite would be empty. Luckily it was.

It rained off and on all night. Some of the rain was actually sleet; actually, a lot of the rain was actually sleet.



August in Yellowstone

**MONDAY, AUGUST 27:** Given the cold and the steady drizzle, we decided to stay in camp for the day, rather than pack up in the rain and snow. We measured the midday air temperature as 44°. We hunkered down, told stories, napped and read.

It wasn't what we'd planned but we weren't soaked and life could have been worse. Several parties went past us going out, in canoes and kayaks, looking really, really miserable.



Soggy tents in Campsite 809, which was small for our group of six



We should have cooked on the beach, but even that wouldn't have gotten us far enough from the tents for bear country regulations



Happy campers Tim and Chris



Less happy campers

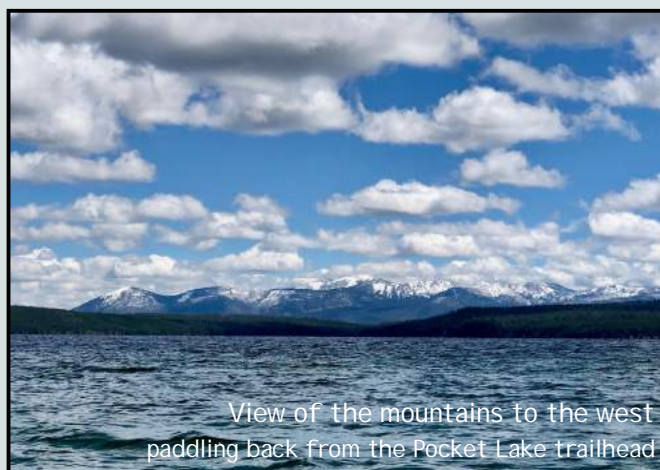
**TUESDAY, AUGUST 28:** It was cool and overcast; we were up at 6:30 and on the water by 9:30. We had light winds in the morning and clouds, but the sun came out later.

We paddled to Windy Point camp [8R1], an easy three miles. This was reserved as ours for the last two nights; we again decided to be casual about the reservations and commandeered it a day early.



Trip leader Brian Hunter  
on the way to the Pocket Lake trailhead

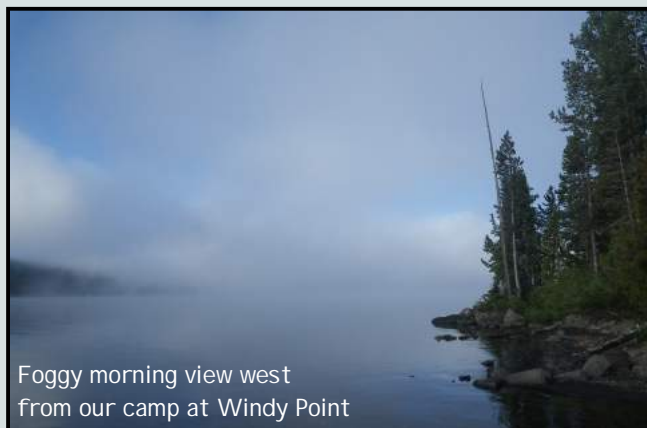
To pass the time before unloading at 8R1, in case the site's rightful owners would appear, some of us paddled to the cove below Pocket Lake [D], going east and then north, to see if we could find the trailhead.



View of the mountains to the west  
paddling back from the Pocket Lake trailhead

On the way home there were beautiful views of peaks that were now covered with snow. It was easy out, but those afternoon headwinds made it hard work coming back.

**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 29:** It was 33° when we woke up, with fog on the lake. After a leisurely breakfast we paddled as a group west to the Shoshone geyser basin, and as we did it turned sunny and pleasant.



Foggy morning view west  
from our camp at Windy Point



Richard paddling toward the Geyser Basin



**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 29, CONTINUED:** We watched several geysers go off repeatedly. What a wonderful experience to see a wild thermal area! We talked with a group of four backpackers who'd hiked in, but saw no one else all day. [We did not see any occupied campsites on this trip, no other hikers and very few paddlers.]



Chris, Rich, Sue, Tim and Von



We ate lunch and got back on the water before 1:00 PM. The afternoon winds were up again, with perhaps two-foot quartering waves.



Von in the following seas on the way back to camp



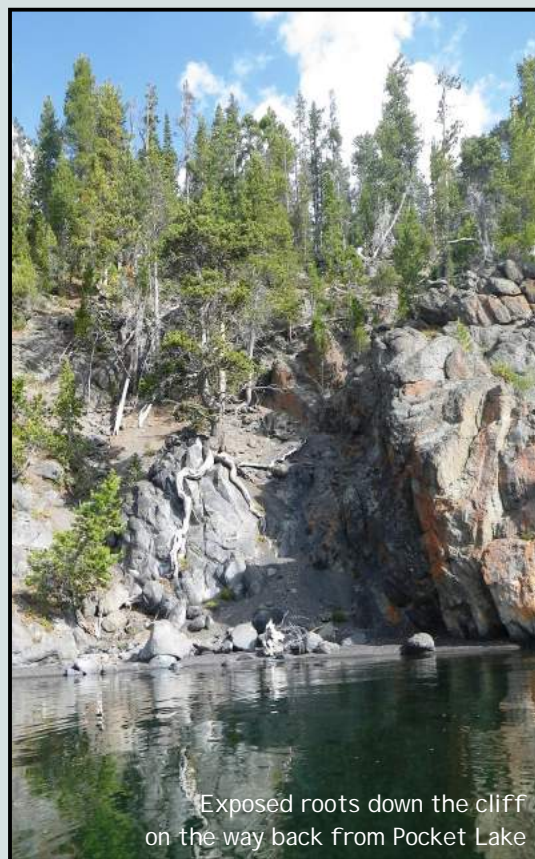
Shoshone Lake surf landing

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 30:** Two of the group remained in camp and four others decided to paddle back to the trail to Pocket Lake. It was a lovely walk through pine woods, but one of the four hadn't felt good in the morning, was slow on the paddle and really started dragging on the hike, so the group turned around before they got to the lake, and before they'd taken any photos of the trail through the sunny forest.

Back at the boats the ailing kayaker revived, but since they would be paddling against the same wicked wind they'd experienced every afternoon it was decided a tow on the return to camp was a prudent plan. Thankfully almost everyone on the trip had both regular tow belts and contact tows (which, thankfully again, were never needed).

**FRIDAY, AUGUST 31:** We got up at 6:00 and got on the water by 8:00, which was a record we were pleased with. We were blessed with a morning that was overcast and almost windless.

The paddle across Shoshone Lake was straightforward. The trip down the Lewis river was a blast: not any work at all except some stern rudders for steering. No wonder walking up the river was hard; there was quite a current to it. We only scraped a little.



Exposed roots down the cliff on the way back from Pocket Lake



Looking back toward the mouth of the Lewis River

We had worried about crossing Lewis Lake, since that had caused issues on the way in, but the wind was minimal. We got to the boat ramp about noon, with everyone paddling under their own power.

The week hadn't been "a walk in the park" but it was a learning experience for us all, and we'd had fun.



Is this photo from 2013 why people were expecting summer temperatures and a stroll up a shallow stream?

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Many thanks to Richard, who wrote the bones of this article, and to everyone on the trip who sent photos.

Richard's wife, Sandi Cardillo, drove up with him and had plans to spend the week exploring the park with *Yellowstone Forever*, a local group they support. Her account of what she did because she prefers not to camp is good reading. It starts on page 30.

There are also suggestions for inexpensive and easy camp meals developed by Rich on page 35.