



# ELEVEN MILE RESERVOIR

AUGUST, 2022

By Anne Fiore

In 2021 when RMSKC went to Eleven Mile in June we faced harsh weather. The paddling was OK, but on Saturday, later in the day, two people had their tents blow over and ended up aborting the trip. On Sunday, people paddled up-lake, but a strong wind was blowing by 10AM, sending everyone scurrying back to the put-in and heading for home. This year we went later in the season and had a much better trip.

**AUGUST 12:** Gary Cage and I exited C-470 at US 285, a scenic drive that runs along the north fork of the South Platte River, and headed southwest, up and over Kenosha Pass and down into South Park. Just past Fairplay, we turned onto CO 9, south to Hartsel; then east on US 24 for 12 miles, then south on CR 23, which has more potholes than any other road I know of. It was bad in 2021 but, as Jay Gingrich said, "The potholes have now grown to world-class Mexico status."

We parked at the Coyote Ridge lot, loaded the boats and set out. The boat-in campsites are less than a mile toward the southeast end of the lake, which is more protected so if the wind did come up we could hug the shore.



Trip leader Anne Fiore

We turned the corner, passed the outside edge of a cove, and paddled among rock cliffs, outcroppings, and islands.

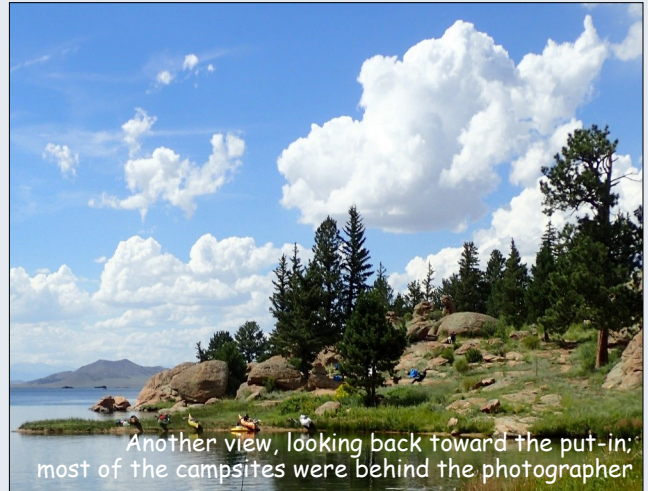
Off to the right an island was covered with birds. It is these rock outcroppings scattered along the south end of the lake that make Eleven Mile such an attractive destination.

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 13:** Moving food from our campsite to the bear boxes took time but we were paddling away by 9:30, heading toward the dam, checking out all the rock formations along the way.





Our cove; most of the campsites are hidden in the trees to the left



Another view, looking back toward the put-in; most of the campsites were behind the photographer

From our cove there were a series of rock outcroppings jutting into the water, in many instances creating micro-coves. We came to a larger cove where the last of the campsites are and where the hiking trail loops around before meandering back to the trailhead. Then there were more formations which again disappeared before the next cove that had a "private boat launch" sign.

We continued around another point and were greeted by a line of buoys marking the closure area for the dam. We crossed in front of the buoys and started looking for a place to stop. The land just beyond the buoys is closed to public access so we continued on. Within minutes, we were out of the closed area and found a nice beach with enough space for our nine kayaks to pull out.

After the break, we paddled on, staying close to shore. The lake widened, and we sneaked into another cove, then another and then we were at Witcher Cove, which we followed along on the inside.

Once back at the cove's entrance, we gathered up and discussed our next destination: we looked across at an island and decided to go for the left-hand point. It was one of the 'bird' islands and as we circled its perimeter a pelican took off and I was astonished to see a pelican in flight on my camera screen! We continued past another set of outcroppings sticking out of the water. People were going in all directions, yet we met up and headed back to camp.



That afternoon a storm moved in. People hustled over to the bear boxes for food and cooking supplies before it started to rain, which it did off and on all night.



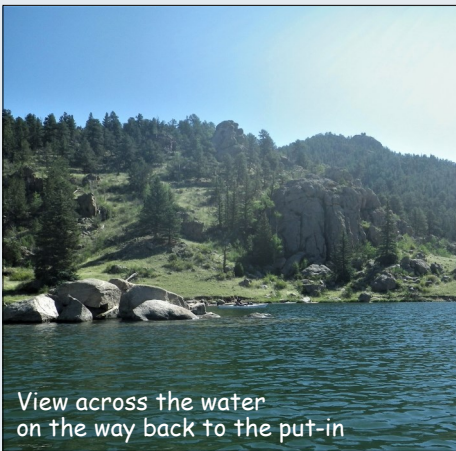


New member Ryan Stowe



New member Renée Howbert

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 14:** Jay Gingrich and Jane Lewis joined us, but Dick Dieckman decided to paddle out, due to a knee issue that developed yesterday; Karen, Renee and Ryan had already planned to leave today due to work obligations.



View across the water  
on the way back to the put-in

We were paddling away at about 9:30, heading up-lake. First stop was the put-in, where Dick bid us adieu. We continued past more coves and more rock outcroppings. Finally, we are beyond the coves, beyond the rocks, and in the open area of the reservoir.

Gary and Tim Fletcher disappeared. But, looking in my binoculars I could see them way ahead. The rest of us gathered up. Karen Amundsen and Renée Howbert were at their appointed turn-around time. I had said at the start that I would only commit to two hours total paddling time, so I am ready to return as well. Marsha Dougherty and Sue Hughes were lukewarm about the open water of this section so we all turned around.

We dropped Karen and Renee at the put-in and Marsha, Sue, and I paddled back to camp. I paddled some more, in and out around the islands, coves and outcroppings for another hour or so, then returned to camp. Jane took off to find Jay, and Gary and Tim returned later.

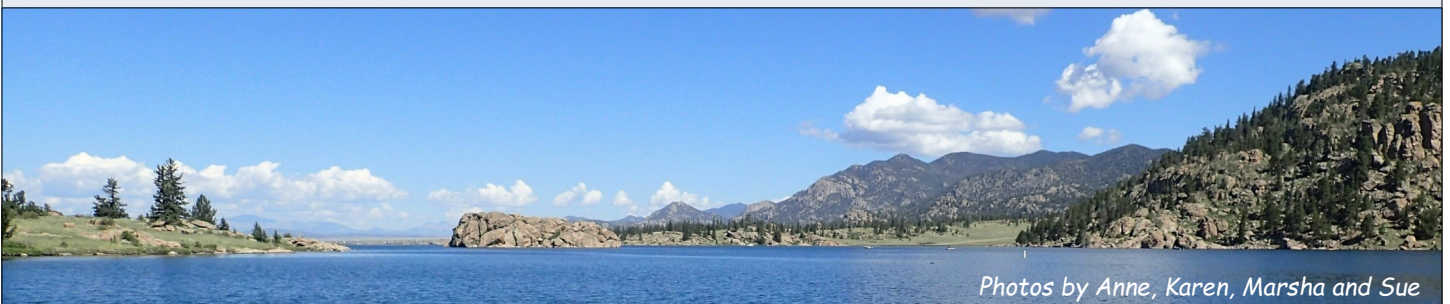
**MONDAY, AUGUST 15:** Sue had travel plans for the next day and left for the put-in early. As Gary and I waited for Tim and Marsha, I got to look at birds. There was a Mountain Blue Bird, a delight since I do not see these very often on the Front Range except during spring migrations.

We left at 11AM, hauled out boats out of the water and began carrying our gear up. It started to rain so Gary and I sat in the truck to wait it out, but I could see there was a huge system, so after about an hour braved the elements, loaded the boats and gear, and got on the road. We stopped at Dorothy's Tamales in Fairplay, which will definitely be in our plans for next year.

It was a good trip in an absolutely stunning place, and we were so glad we did not have a repeat of 2021's weather. The participants on this trip were Karen Amundson, Anne Fiore and Gary Cage, Dick Dieckman, Marsha Dougherty, Tim Fletcher, Sue Hughes, Renée Howbert and Ryan Stowe.



Dorothy's Tamales



Photos by Anne, Karen, Marsha and Sue

## GENERAL ELEVEN MILE CAMPING INFORMATION:

- Anne's notes on car camping sites are in the Eleven Mile 2021 article, in the *Mountain Paddle* 29-2021.
- Campsites are limited to two tents per site, two cars per site, six people per site. Check-in time is 1PM, check out time is noon.
- If someone makes reservations for the whole group the members need to know the exact numbers of the reservations in the multi-site reservation.
- It costs \$9.00 a day per vehicle to park if you don't have an annual State Parks Pass. There is a self-serve kiosk with envelopes, one for each day; exact change only.
- An Annual Pass can be purchased at the Park Office with your driver's license and your car registration during office hours, but they are understaffed and there might be a wait. Annual Passes can also be bought on-line. Print out your receipt and put it on your dash.
- Back country campers should park at the Coyote Ridge Parking Lot. The put-in for the boat-in camp sites is at the Coyote Ridge Fishing Access.

**SPECIFIC CAMPSITE SUMMARY:** Overall, all the sites were marginal in terms of flat spots for two tents, although they all seemed to have adequate flat space for one tent. People should not plan to share a campsite unless they are prepared for sleeping spaces that are close together, without much privacy, and maybe not perfectly level. In addition, bring lots of spare guy lines so a tent can be staked out using rocks as the soil is pretty rocky without places to drive in tent stakes. The outhouse and bear boxes are uphill from 917, not too far from 915 but a haul along a rough trail from 914 and 923. Specifics:

- 914 (Dick and Sue): Nice site since it is on the water near where we took the boats out; open, so no protection from wind. Tent spots are on hard ground so guy lines needed to stake out tents using rocks. A long trek on a rough trail to the bathroom and bear boxes.
- 915 (Karen and Renée): A pretty spot with trees so it's private and protected. At the bottom of a ravine so I would think about flash-flooding in a heavy rain. Short distance to the outhouse and bear boxes over an easier trail.
- 916: Not one that we had, but this seemed like the primo site, had trees, a short walk to both the water and the outhouse and bear boxes.
- 917 (Tim and Marsha): Marsha's tent was on a slope. Close to boats; close to outhouse and bear boxes on a good trail.
- 919: Looked like a nice site; tent was in a spot above the picnic table; close to outhouse and bear boxes on a good trail. Not as close to the boats.
- 921: Similar to 919, tent in a spot above the picnic table; close to outhouse and bear boxes on a good trail. Not as close to the boats.
- 920: Closer to the water, close to outhouse and bear boxes on a good trail. Occupants said that it was hard to find a flat spot that you could pound tent stakes into.
- 923 (Anne, Gary, Ryan): Up the hill from 914; a pretty site with trees, private and protected but a long haul over a rough trail to the bathroom and bear boxes. Not close to the water and boats.



Sunset view from above our cove at Eleven Mile Reservoir