

Pikes Peak River Runners

Double the Fun on the Selway Idaho June 2005



By Christina King

Photo Credits: Christina King & Irene Cooke

We have had a lucky year. Two Selway permit dates which allow us to run trips back-to-back (June 8, 2005 and June 13, 2005) thanks to Pat and Keith. All the rivers in the West had good flows this Spring and we have had the good fortune to enjoy many of them (Salt, Taos Box, Gates of Lodore). Five of us made up the first Selway trip and the rest of the group joined us in Hamilton for the second Selway trip to grow our group up to 13 fun loving boaters.

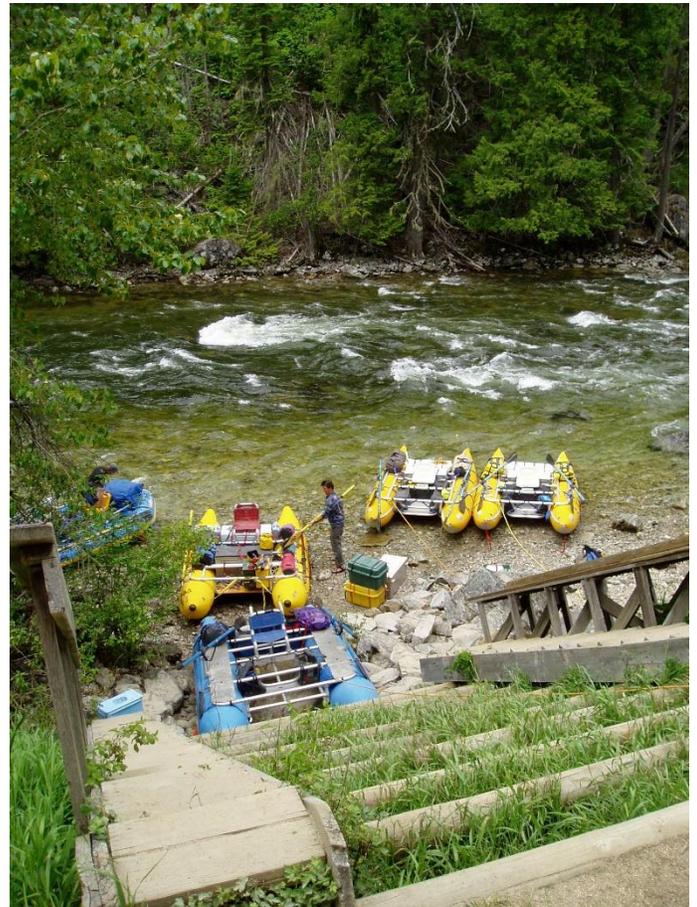
Selway Trip #1: Pete & Christina King, Keith Fuqua, Bill Cooke, and Pat Campanello

Day 1, Wed June 8, 2005, 2.9 feet, Goat Creek camp

What a day! Last night Karen Kidd (our shuttler) met us in Hamilton, MT and we completed the first part of our two-trip shuttle logistics paperwork. Karen was great and I would highly recommend her Selway shuttling company. They did a great job with both of our shuttles. It was a long and bouncy drive into the Paradise put-in from Hamilton (with just a few items bouncing out of Keith's trailer- which we scooped up), all of us were anxious and excited. It has been a long time since Pete, and I rowed the Selway... too long. The weather is looking surprisingly good.



It takes the few of us a long time to rig up because none of us have any helpers. Five boats, five boatmen. The flow is sitting at 2.9 on the gauge. Pete and I had rigged and stacked our cats in Hamilton, but it still took a lot of handling to load and run the boats down the ramp.



We lunched and launched by 2 pm. Not bad considering there were only five of us doing all the work. The Selway pack trail is well marked and follows us all the way down the river. We ran the first rapid Slalom Slide entering left and moving right. All of us read and ran Washer Woman rapid wrong (we entered right). Bill wedged for about 10 minutes on a rock (river right) until he slid off after some pulling on ropes and jiggling his boat. We could have all had trouble here. The better run looks far left at this water level. Ping Pong rapid is aptly named (shallow and rocky) and it looked like a better run far right (more about that on the second Selway trip log). We juiced around by entering in the center and moving right. Oh well, good thing we have light boats. We camped relatively early at Goat Creek (small eddy, fast landing, easily missed). Our five boats fill up the small eddy sitting side by side. It is an idyllic beach/tree camp next to Goat Creek. The eddy is probably too small for seven boats (our next trip) unless we swing boats out into the current. I can tell this camp is used a lot because there are lots of ants (including some in Bill's pants)! Just before dinner, a bald eagle swooped low just over the river in front of us and performed a dive bomber show. Keith fixed us a wonderful pasta dinner and we went to bed by 10 pm (just getting dark this far north). I noticed that I tended to over-row today (due to excess energy and nerves). I fell asleep to clear skies.





Day 2, Thurs June 9, 2005, 2.7 feet, Tony Point camp

I woke to clear skies but a dewy tent. We spread our tents out to dry in the sun. We decided to run conservatively and scouted Goat Creek rapid. It is a long boulder strewn rapid that rounds a few bends before ending. Top entry was right if I remember correctly. The day ranges from sunny to partly cloudy and cool. We dress warm and stay warm rowing. The Bear Creek tributary looks like a river (big from runoff). We scout Ham rapid on the left (just below Green Eggs rapid) and enter the rapid left and stay left of the big domer. Water looked fast on the scout but moved slower when we were running the rapid. Last time I ran this rapid there was a huge log we had to duck under while staying left but it has gone on this trip. I remember having only about 12 inches above my thole pins to get under that log; pop up and continue rowing after clearing the log. It is much easier this time. We spotted Roots camp on the left but decided to float down to Tony Point instead.

I still cannot figure out where we are supposed to scout the Tony Point camp (right at the bridge), but we took a chance that no one had laid over at the camp. Tony Point camp (across from Moose Creek-river left) was open so we pulled in for the night. We have a strong incentive to camp before the Moose Juice section because there are no camps downriver in that difficult section and we will have many difficult rapids to run tomorrow. Moose Creek itself is a large river with a lot of water coming down (almost a third of the size of the Selway itself). There are lots of bees in this camp and it looks heavily used. Pat provided a feast of Winter Park Ribs and we ate until we almost burst. I hope we do not see any bears stop by camp tonight to munch on the leftover bones. I enjoyed watching the river float by



and was not motivated to hike down several miles to see the big rapids. We plan on scouting tomorrow and I do not need to think about the rapids all night. I rowed much more efficiently today, not as much nervous energy. Pat spotted some snake skins by his tent, but they look strange to me. We do not see any snakes on this trip. No bears either. Glorious sunny evening.

Notes about the Moose Creek camps: Stop at the Tony Point bridge (on river right). I did not see a good eddy anywhere on the right near the bridge but did see lots of rocks and fast landings. I have heard some boaters even camp here. However, it is not recommended because of pack horse trains and the rangers and horse packers do not want you to camp here. The goal is to pull out at the bridge (river right), walk down the trail (river right) to see across river (scout) if the camp is open at Tony Point (across from Moose Creek- river left) or if the lower camp (further down the trail but on river left) is open. If they are unoccupied, great, take Tony Point as a first choice. If both are taken, walk across the bridge and ask if you can share with the group already there. If there is only one launch a day, there should not be anyone at either camp. BUT not everyone is running the same number of days your group might be running and it is a popular place to camp, layover, hike down the trail and scout some of the big rapids several miles downstream. Why do all this work and just find another camp downstream? There are not any more camps once you pass the second (marginal) camp past Tony Point. You would then be forced to run all the big rapids and have an EXCEPTIONALLY long day. I personally think that Tony Point is not a great camp due to all the airplane noise (quite a bit in this section). I liked staying up at Roots camp on the second trip better (rockier but quieter and not as stressful). If all else fails and you reach the bridge, and all the camps are filled up and will not share; stay put and make the most of the bridge camp (not a good camp plus the rangers and horse packers will not be pleased with your choice). After describing all of this – we did not do it and just winged it hoping Tony Point would be open. It was but it turns out the next day we caught the group (a day ahead of us) camped just below Tony Point so it had the potential for not working out well.

Day 3, Fri June 10, 2005, 2.6 feet, Tango Bar camp, Moose Juice day

The morning began with the pitter-patter of raindrops on our tent which grew into a full-fledged downpour. This is the Selway river that I am familiar with. The rain had us scurrying out of camp and packing up/launching by 8:30 am already thoroughly soaked. Bill managed to fix us a warm eggs benedict breakfast right before the rain really pelted down on us. We passed our first group today at the Lower Tony Point camp (looked like a marginal camp). They told us they wanted to camp at Pinchot, so we made a note of that as a reminder to look for a different camp tonight. It took us several false starts to remember/recognize the scout to Double Drop, but we finally found it. Last time I ran Double Drop I managed to flip in the bottom hole after it sucked me back in. My boat was just too light last time but this time I have a cat and feel it will break through and not get pulled back. Keith and Pat scramble up the slanted rock cliff and give Pete, Bill, and I a Vulcan-mind meld (i.e., they relayed what they saw) and we all ran the rapid. I could not even grab an eddy above Double Drop rapid and had to hold onto Bill's boat while he clung to a rock above it. We ended up running the Double Drop slot between the two top rocks (left to right) and then hugged the left side tongue once we cleared the top entry slot. Very uneventful runs for all of us but stressful because all I could envision was my last unsuccessful run. I have only flipped 6 times in the last 25 years, but I tend to visualize the worst rather than my best runs. I have got to work on that. Wa-Poots rapid was next, and I got a bit too fancy trying to pull away from the big waves/rock and hit the waves sideways (very stupid move). I had to high-side in my boat to stay upright. That shook me up after such a good run in Double Drop. Our next scout was Ladle rapid-what a messy looking rapid. Downright ugly. It is hard to believe that all those rocks do not make it unrunnable. Pete, Bill, and I stuck with our initial center run and ran it well (not pretty- but well). I think it is difficult to run this rapid without touching a rock. Keith and Pat went with a far right run but Pat got stuck too far right between the shore and a log/rock combination. Keith ran okay. We pulled out (and tied off our boats) after the rapid and walked back up to survey the situation. Keith, Bill, and I wound up attaching some ropes and pulling Pat's boat upriver and setting Pat and boat on its rightful course once again (after about 30

minutes or so of work). After re-grouping downriver, we ran Little Niagara (what a freight train roar from the hole in this rapid) without scouting (ran the left side). In fact, the only rapid we scout the rest of the trip is Wolf Creek on the last day. Keith and I misjudged Miranda Jane and we both ended up NOT making the pull to the far right and ran the hole in Miranda Jane (MJ). Big mistake with no consequences other than a very humbled rower. After my run in MJ (should be named Calamity Jane) I saw Keith headed for the same hole. I



even put my whistle in my mouth anticipating Keith flipping (which he did not). Pat ended up running left but got through okay also. Bill and Pete were the only ones who ran through MJ unscathed. It was really Keith and I who ran it the worst. Next time I am cheating this rapid far right with no attempt to get fancy.

We took a mental/physical break at a small beach below MJ and all of us babbled at once except for Pat who was quiet as could be. My hands were shaking from excitement. It was a tough day. They call it the Moose Juice section because in an approximately five-mile section of river below Moose Creek there are

three to four Class IV rapids and numerous Class III rapids close together with very few scouting opportunities.

I think that the ratings on the Selway are truer to how rapids should be rated Class III and Class IV. I have run the Middle Fork of the Salmon at extremely high water and the Selway is a notch harder at times. I have never run the Selway at high water, but 3 feet is plenty high for me. I am sure 4 feet and above would be very intimidating. We continued to run Meeker and Osprey rapids and enjoyed an early camp at Tango Bar. Tango Bar became my favorite Selway beach camp. It is located on river left, hidden on a bend below a rock beach on the left (above) and in the middle of some large rollers. If you enjoy the wave train approaching and passing the camp you will easily



miss the eddy. Everyone was tired (mostly mentally), but the sun was so hot we soaked in the heat and enjoyed a swim in the river (which is very cold). Hard to believe it is really the Selway river in Idaho. Pat fished while Pete sizzled up a grill full of steak, served with corn on the cob and salad. We retired to our tents early tonight when it started to cloud up and sprinkle. It was a long day full of adventure.

Day 4, Sat June 11, 2005, 2.6 feet, Takeout day

Pete and I woke up early to start our Eggs Idaho Dutch Oven breakfast for the group, but I went back to bed and let Pete continue without me. Not sure why we are up so early but I just cannot seem to get the group to slow down. I hope I am more successful on our next trip. Idaho is a great place to make a late start to the day to allow the day to warm up before we get on the river. It is opposite of desert rivers where you want to get up and going before the hot thermals push you back up the river. I think Idaho's daytime temps hit their highs around 4-5 pm on most days. Heck, when it is light until 10 pm it makes sense ignore your wristwatch and pattern your day to the natural part of the world. We even joke about launching on the Middle Fork at the crack of noon every day. We do not get to dry our tents on the last day and pack them soaking wet when it starts to rain during breakfast. Water seems up today or maybe it is the diurnal flows catching up with us. Right after we leave camp, I round a bend (half asleep), not paying attention and dump into domer hole. No one even turns around as I surf in the hole and only Pete enjoys my frantic attempts to move on down river. How ironic, to get in trouble on a no name domer. My adrenalin is revved up now. The cloudy skies end up clearing by 11 am. We stop to scout Wolf Creek where we all tried to enter left and stay left but all of us were pushed to the hole and big waves at the bottom. I slipped through Wolf Creek nicely with no extra excitement. While scouting Wolf Creek a pack train came plodding down the trail with cowboys who really wanted cigarettes. I spied the dead mule lying on some rocks by the river that Linda (West Fork Ranger station) had told us about on our launch day, but it was below the camp she had mentioned. I enjoyed a sunny warm float to the takeout and then the really hard work began.

We grunted all the equipment up the small hill to our vehicles for round two on Monday. The road out was terribly slow going with lots of potholes. Karen (our shuttler) had left us



a note telling us that our trailer cable had popped out resulting in locking up our trailer brakes on the way in, but all was well. I can understand how it popped out on that road because we went slowly, and it took us about 2 hours to drive those pot-hole roads. Selway Falls below are always impressive.





Selway Falls Photos- check out that driftwood.

It started to rain at the Fenn Ranger station and then turned into an Idaho downpour. The group vetoed camping at [Three Rivers Resort](#) (confluence of the Selway and Lochsa rivers that form the Clearwater) and we shot back to Hamilton to re-group in dry circumstances. We saw some miserably wet and cold boaters on the Lochsa on our drive back.

Selway Trip #2: Pete & Christina King, Keith Fuqua & Ava Marshall, Bill & Irene Cooke, Pat Campanello & Betsy Miller, Mike Holahan & Joan Wojick, Jim Wason, and Steve & Diana Reed

Day 1, Mon June 13, 2005, 2.6 feet, North Star Eddy

After drying out, doing laundry, cleaning up, re-supplying and meeting the rest of our additional group in Hamilton, we repeated our drive into Paradise. We could not seem to stop patronizing the Kmart, Bob Ward's Sporting Goods and Super IGA grocery stores in Hamilton but finally left town as a caravan to Paradise using Karen Kidd again as our shuttler. The water at Paradise appears to be lower and a check of the gauge says it is down 0.3 tenths of a foot to 2.6 feet. Getting all the gear down the ramp is not any easier the second time around but seems easier with more hands



to help. We launch by 2:30 and reach camp by 4:30 pm. We only went about 8 miles today. Slalom Slide rapid was the same left to right run. We tried a different approach to Washer Woman rapid with mixed results. I think this rapid is worthy of a scout next time because we did not have great results as a whole group. We all ran far left this time, but Pete and Bill had bad runs dumping over a domer sideways on the left with Pete popping both his spare oars out of their new buckle clips. Pete even slightly rearranged his cat tube with the force of his dump. Betsy slid out of Pat's front seating area and really bruised her legs between the frame floor and river. Betsy

ended up with some nice bruises by the end of the trip from her little adventure. In fact, from all the rock scrambling and scouting in difficult places we all end up with an ugly assortment of scrapes and bruises. I am sure our co-workers will look at us strangely when we get home if our bruises have not faded by then. Pete caught one of his spare oars himself below Washer Woman and Keith/Ava chased and caught the other soon after. Pete continues the testing on the new spare oar buckles and does not have any more problems the rest of the trip. I slid down the far left at Washer Woman rapid easily without too much of a hit, not sure about the rest of our group. We stopped for an early camp at North Star eddy (river right- not a formal camp) and enjoyed a quiet evening with a nice calm eddy for the boats. Sometime after dinner we discovered a sandpiper? nest with four eggs right between our tents. Mama Sandpiper kept a sharp eye on us and scooted onto the nest to keep the eggs warm once we avoided the area. She was back on her nest the next morning.

Day 2, Tues June 14, 2005, 2.5 feet, Roots camp

Diana saw some big "kitty cat" tracks (i.e., cougar) behind camp this morning and Betsy swore that she heard the stealthy crackling of dry twigs last night from her tent. I think we have had a cougar visitor last night, but nobody was bothered. We enjoyed a leisurely morning with a warm breakfast, some Yoga and pushed off at 10:30 am. My kind of morning in Idaho, even got our dewy tent dry before leaving camp. Ping Pong rapid is even shallower than last week and both Mike and Bill got stuck. I tried to help bump Mike off the rock he was stuck on but did not budge his boat. We scouted Goat Creek again and watched Mike and Bill do a "synchronized routine" in the middle of the long rapid. Olympic scoring would have been a 9.0 rating for their interlocking display of skill.



We stopped for lunch at the Selway Lodge bridge (heard it was a private residence now) and shared deli meat with the ½ Airedale and ½ Pointer dog. I will bet this dog loves boaters who stop at his place. Bear Creek looks



a lot smaller and the river in general looks noticeably lower. More eddies and rocks to dodge. We scouted Ham again (same run) entered left, stayed left. We camped at Roots where Pete forgets to tie up his boat and Betsy makes a valiant leap on board Pete's boat and brings it back to shore. It is a rocky and hard landing for boats. Okay camp. No planes bothering us.

Day 3, Wed June 15, 2005, 2.6 feet, Tango Bar camp, Moose Juice day again

It seems like the water came up a bit last night. We rowed down to Double Drop- scouted again- same run between the slots. I managed to slide into the river while getting back on my boat right before running Double Drop rapid. Pete got a chuckle at my "deer in the headlights look" towards him but managed to get the boat back to shore and clamber back in (soaking wet before the rapid). That was nerves for you. This time, Pat ran a bit too far left at Double Drop, popped an oar, could not get left of the monstrous hole. Pat hit the hole in the deepest part. From upriver, I saw his tube go up on end with Pat missing from his boat. Betsy ended up the hero again and pulled Pat out of the river back into the boat. Pat is lucky he did not flip at Double Drop. Everyone else ran okay. Wa-Poots is still big but this time I did not get fancy and hit it straight with no problems. No high siding needed this time.

We scouted Ladle again (while some of the photographers in our group concentrated on flowers by the trail) and ran the center again. Ladle is a hard rapid to read from above and in the rapid. I need all the concentration I can get and do not even remember to carry my camera up on the scout. I wish I would have gotten some photos of the rapid itself, but Irene and Ava (using Keith's camera) capture all the action. Mike, Jim, Keith, and Pat run Ladle on the right while Bill, Pete and I run our center run again.

Ladle Rapid Sequence











All of us ran Ladle well with no mishaps this time. Bill had a stellar center Ladle run without touching a rock. Pete would have given Bill an A but because Bill waved for our photographers before finishing the rapid, Pete downgraded him to a C. I skimmed one domer and got uncomfortably close to the left before pulling hard back to the center but otherwise it was a flawless run. I got a B for skimming a domer rock. I would hate to see this rapid at low water. It is a maze of numerous boulders and small channels.

We continued down to Little Niagara with Bill running the hole (I thought that was crazy). I did not see his run, but it sounds like his boat shuddered and stalled in the hole but eventually popped out. I snuck Little Niagara on the left along with everyone else. This time I did not even mess with Miranda Jane and snuck the whole mess on the far right (much better choice). I cannot believe I ran this hole just a few days ago. I do not want to do that again. We ran Meeker and Osprey (hugged the right side here) without problems.

We pulled into our favorite Selway camp (Tango Bar) again. We saw no other groups this whole trip. Everyone in the group loved the beach at Tango Bar and watched as a bald eagle showed off for us on the hillside.





Mike and Joanie prepared a delicious pork tenderloin dinner but said next time they will fix a much easier dinner. We wolfed down their dinner and enjoyed our last night on the Selway. After we went into our tent for the night (and it got dark) Pete and I heard growling noises (it was Mike) but it fooled us (along with Keith and Ava) for a few minutes.

Day 4, Thurs June 16, 2005, 2.7 feet, Takeout

Today is the last day of our back-to-back Selway trip adventures. The river seemed to come up overnight. We enjoy watching several eagle nests (with eaglets in them) on our float out. We could not have asked for better weather and company. We did not have Selway double troubles but absolutely double the fun on our adventures. I cannot believe our good fortune. Wolf Creek is our last big rapid of the trip and we scouted it again. Irene is focused on photographing flowers on the trail beside the scout while the rest of us are looking at the rapid intently. I chide her for turning her back to the big waves below to focus on honeysuckle flowers. Irene manages to spot our only snake of the trip (harmless). We ran the same runs (left tried to stay left) but went center with no problems.





Wolf Creek Rapid sequence

Our second trip only had about 30 minutes of rain (hard to believe it was Idaho). De-rigging involved a lot of sweaty heavy load carrying work. We ended up going home via McCall and Boise to enjoy a stop at Cascade Outfitters. Our special Selway trips allowed us a rare look at the Selway from a two-trip back-to-back perspective. We could not get any luckier with good weather and great flow. Thanks to Pat and Keith.

