

Pikes Peak River Runners

Moonshine Mayhem

May 2006

Yampa River



By Christina King

Photo Credits: Christina King, Anne Pierce, Rosalyn Sample, Patti Meyer

Trip participants: Pete & Christina King, Jeff & Karen Hodge, Anne Pierce, Dave & Rosalyn Sample, Patti Meyer, Keith Fuqua and Ava Marshall, Bill & Irene Cooke, Glen Roberts and Jay Stout

Day 1, Thursday, May 25, 2006 Anderson Hole (14,100 cfs):

Deer Lodge park is warm, quiet, and restful when we arrive. The first thing we see getting out of our vehicle is a "dinosaur" floating down river. All along the Yampa from Steamboat Springs to Deer Lodge Park the river is out of its banks. The Yampa is flowing nicely at 14,100 cfs. Irene regales us with an Internet story about a large Alaskan man-eater Grizzly. Ava, I and the NPS ranger (biologist) are highly skeptical. You can read about this urban myth at [Snopes](#). Irene had the first part of the myth and Snopes tells us the "rest of the story". Lesson learned- do not believe most of what you read on



the internet as truth (especially if it sounds outlandish). After completing the shuttle, we float quickly to our first camp at Anderson Hole. No rapids today. This is really a nice camp, sandy beach with several side canyons full of fossils, polished limestone? nice rock formations and beautiful river/canyon views. There is also a cabin and old corral. The only drawback is that we only float 5 miles today.



We enjoy a late game of Dominoes after a delicious dinner of pork loin, potato casserole and devil's food chocolate cake prepared by Jeff and Karen Hodge.

Day 2, Friday, May 26, 2006 Mathers Hole (11,100 cfs):

We woke early after a clear night and launched after a wonderful breakfast prepared by Patti and Anne. We ran Little Joe where Irene flipped her little cat. Irene swam the entire rapid. We picked her up but had to chase her little catraft a long time before shoving it to shore. Irene was cold and tired from her swim. Sleeping bags got wet in their "waterproof" box. Fortunately, we had a long warm lunch stop at Big Joe and



were able to dry almost all the wet stuff while others hiked up Starvation Canyon. I spotted an eagle nest at the Grand Overhang area.

We stop at Harding to check out the trail up to the rim overlook (do not have time to make that hike) and walk down to the overhang area at Harding #4. The view from the Harding #4 camp overlook/cave area is beautiful. The path is behind the camp. We bypass all the good camps and squeeze into our assigned camp at Mather's Hole. Okay but not great. Nice shade though. Anne and Patti make a stop at Signature cave across the river from Harding before coming down to camp and enjoy the view and signatures of early river runners (Bus Hatch, others).



We eat Middle Park meat company ribs supplied by Bill and Irene until we bust. Keith eats a record 12 ribs! We are



stuffed. High winds made rowing hard today and will continue the rest of our trip. We find out after we get off the river that during this same time all of Colorado and eastern Utah had high winds with gusts in Craig recorded at 52 mph. Thank goodness we have good flows!

NPS only assigned us one of our five camps we requested originally. It is a very strange trip, with long and short mile days. We tried to shift camps several times with NPS (several weeks before we left home, at the put-in) but failed. We make do.



Wind beaten Glen Roberts



Notes about camps: Teepee (small) and Big Joe (small and carry up to kitchen area), Harding #3 (fast current and rocky) are not great camps. Good camps in this section include Harding #1, #2, #4 (the best). Ponderosa is a good camp but has steep path up to the camp.





Day 3, Saturday, May 27, 2006 Laddie #1 (11,000 cfs):

We have a short 6 mile day. Yesterday we rowed 24 miles. See what I mean about a goofy camp assignment? Lots of outfitters and private boaters on the river. Very few good camps are open. Dave and Rosalyn stuffed us with a huge breakfast. We decided to spend a chunk of time at Mantle Ranch and hike up to the Anasazi ruins.

The resident Mantle cave owl has scattered rabbit legs on the overhang floor. Karen brought a new book about Mantle Ranch by Queeda Mantle-Walker ISBN # 0871083507. I have not found the book anywhere but our local Woodland Park library. Usually, you can request it at your local library, and they will buy books like this based on requests. This book is a wonderful read if you enjoy historical autobiographies about families that lived along the Yampa. Karen gave us a daily summary of the book every night and we thoroughly enjoyed it. Interesting tidbit: many Yampa areas were named after the original Mantle Ranch owner's wild horses (ex. Laddie Park).





We end up at stopping at Laddie #1 since a group was stopped (eating a late lunch) at our assigned camp Laddie #2. The wind howled and snapped the 1-foot-thick Box Elder branches at our camp while we huddled against a huge cliff/boulder wall protected from the worst of the gusts. I think today is the 52-mph gust day. We unpack nothing from the rafts, waiting to see if anyone shows up at Laddie #1 hoping we can stay here. Laddie #2 offers no wind protection, and the boats have no eddy (strong current at the high

riverbank camp). Nobody can put up tents until after dinner because of the high winds. We enjoy Karen's summary of her Mantle book this afternoon.

We find a beautiful horse in camp (later find out his name is Waddie) who nuzzles anyone who will pay attention to him. This is the second time Waddie has escaped from Mantle Ranch to spend the summer at Laddie camp. Anne, our resident club vet, certifies that Waddie is healthy with trimmed hooves and seems perfectly content to hang out here all summer again. Finally, the wind dies down a bit (slow roar) and Keith/Ava fix us a wonderful spicy chicken dinner with birthday cakes for Pete and Ava who both had birthday is this past



week. Our camp squirrel really wants a bite of the birthday cake!

Day 4, Sunday, May 28, 2006 Cove (11,000+4,700 cfs= 15,700):



Today is our big Warm Springs Rapid day. We run it in two groups. Bill straps on Irene's little cat but I forget to take a photo of it. Thank goodness Patti remembered to take the photo. Quite un-wieldy but he runs the rapid fine.











Pete and Keith decide to run right, then cut far left. Both do fine but Keith's run goes through some big waves but slices through perfectly left of the big Warm Springs hole. The rest of us run right, some bouncing off the right shore. Our assigned camp (Cove) makes it unrealistic to stop at Jones Holes and hike.





We have had a 22-mile day with stops at Echo Park for a hike up to Whispering Cave and the petroglyphs along the road/stream. We were assigned to Cove and wish we could have gotten our Jones #4 requested camp. The wind continues and the temperature dips quite a bit. We put more fleece on before eating dinner.





The setting sun changes the lighting in camp to a glowing golden then blue/pink/purple color.



Note about camps: Box Elder #1 (un-campable in my opinion), Box #2 okay, Box #3 (the best!). Warm Springs- better run the rapid successfully or on the right side-otherwise you will miss the eddy and camp completely. Jones #4 looks great, again we are assigned to Cove. Cove is okay, no bug problem on Memorial weekend. Compromise would have been good too but did not get that one either. Island Park and Big Island could be okay but are far down river.



Day 5, Monday- Memorial Day, May 29, 2006 Takeout (14,520 cfs):



Awoke to a nice morning with a no-wind float to Rainbow Park. Lots of groups converging and taking out today. We stop at Rainbow to re-group and set up to run Moonshine rapid. I run lead with Dave, Keith, and Anne behind me. I look once and see Dave is through fine. My next over-the-shoulder glance reveals that Keith is upside down. It happened so quickly that no one saw the flip. I snuck away from the bigger waves on the far right (which everyone else ran). I think Keith flipped in a surging wave on the right side, but I am not sure. Keith scrambled up on the bottom of his boat almost instantly. Moonshine rapid has changed to whitewater mayhem. Ava was actively swimming but the waves kept

taking her out of Keith's extended reach every time they tried to connect. Keith finally got her in and transferred her quickly to Dave's boat. Dave and I got Keith's boat to shore after a few minutes. Ava was shivering! We got the wet clothes off and flipped Keith's boat back upright. Keith only lost a hat and a loose camera. All this took time, but we continued down river and got to the takeout around 1 pm. It turns out all the groups staggered in at intervals, so we did not get in each other's way. We loaded up quickly and just as we were finishing up, Glen accidentally cut his finger severely while pushing his frame around in the bed of his truck. Keith and Irene bandaged it quickly and we took him to the Vernal hospital (quite a nice and modern facility). They numbed, cleaned, and stitched it up, recommending that he get home quickly before the numbness wore off. It hurt a lot that next day and continues to mend. It is amazing how quickly an accident can happen with even the simplest of actions. Every time we load/unload our frames, I pinch a knuckle. Makes you think hard about how quickly an accident can happen. Overall, it was a good trip (despite the wind, flips and cut finger) because we were with such good river people.