

Pikes Peak River Runners

**Dinosaurlicious
May 2009
Yampa River**



By Christina King

Photo Credits: Christina King, Keith Fuqua & Nick/Anne Olsen

Trip Participants: Jeff & Karen Hodge (permit holder), Pete and Christina King, Keith & Ava Fuqua, Ed Tucker (Christina's Dad), Margery Lazarus, Beth Roren, Becky Weiss, Eric & Suzanne Denlinger and Nick & Anne Olsen



Thanks to Jeff & Karen Hodge (permit holders) we are back on the Yampa River (Dinosaur National Monument) this spring at peak flows. Our group consists of 14 friends with 6 boats. Most of us are from Colorado, some coming from as far as Indiana & California to join the fun. Nick & Anne stopped at a tasty restaurant in Craig called Golden Cavy. We arrived at Deerlodge Park in the afternoon after a road trip filled with intermittent rainstorms. We quickly slid the rigged boats off the trailer, load the boats up with the loose gear then duck into our tents/trucks early to seek shelter from a wind/rainstorm. It was a quiet put-in but

thankfully all of us arrived and rigged before the storm. It proves to be a typical Colorado Memorial weekend- rain, storms and cold.

**Day 1- Memorial Day Monday, May 25, 2009 (~ 4 miles)
Anderson Hole camp (12,800 cfs):**



Our trip began with a pelting rainstorm right after the shuttle was done and before we launched. Dad (Ed Tucker) transformed himself into a human rain/wind shelter.

Local rivers appear to be peaking approximately two weeks earlier than usual. This proves to be the case on our Yampa as we later find out that the river

peaked on our Warm Springs rapid day. Salt river, Taos Box and Arkansas rivers have followed this similar pattern this Spring.

Fortunately, we had a short day with our first camp only a handful of miles downriver at Anderson Hole. We ate lunch at camp and enjoyed a sunny afternoon hunting for fossils up the ledge-drop draw at our camp. Hodges furnished us with our first ration of pork (loin) along with warm dutch oven potatoes and homemade cheesecake for dinner. We were stuffed but were able to enjoy a nice clear evening before the rain returned later that night (after we were safely in our tents). My father's (Ed Tucker) quote of the day concerning the weather was "does it get any worse than this?" I reply, "yes, sometimes it hails and has snowed". That quieted him up a bit.

Day 2- Tuesday, May 26, 2009 (~ 22 miles) Harding Hole #1 camp (14,000 cfs):

Today we awoke to lots of clouds and some blue sky occasionally teasing us through the clouds. Throughout this 70-mile trip, we find ourselves obsessively scrutinizing the sky (for promising weather). The weather gradually improves, and we take advantage of the peak flows to cruise downriver. First order of the day is "made from scratch" Belgian waffles with pork sausage compliments of Keith and Ava. We eventually eat pork at least once or twice a day this entire trip- porkalicious. It becomes a running group joke that we might experience pork "withdrawl shakes" if we do not get our daily ration. This group is not influenced in the least by internet myths that swine flu is spread by eating pork... we latch onto the phrase "the other white meat". We stop to scout Teepee rapid (did not need to) and ate lunch at Big Joe. We saw a ranger group doing tamarisk weed control and surveying for a new camp. We later confirmed (with another river ranger at Jones Hole) that Dinosaur National Monument staff are considering developing two new camps: one on the Yampa below Big Joe and one between Echo Park and Jones Hole. Lots of waves today which easily glides us into camp early.

Sun is out, so we swim a bit in the river (freezing). Afterwards we hike up to the cliff overhang (down by Harding #4) and some of us go up to the side canyon trail also. There is an ongoing cicada insect hatch and at every stop/camp we hear the continuous buzzing of cicada wings. At first, I thought they were Mormon Crickets, but I looked them up and they were not the same. Not sure what kind of cicada these represent but they have very distinctive wings and bodies. Karen Hodge challenged our group into teams and squared us off in a game of Colorado Trivia. My team won, thank goodness we had Keith on our



side. Geography was our strong suit and we all won semi-valuable prizes at the end of the game. River rangers pull in late and camp at Harding Hole #4 tonight, but they do not come up for a visit. Harding Hole #1 and #2 are nice camps (#3 & #4 not top choices). It is a cold, clear night filled with millions of stars. Yampa river flows rose today. Lots of driftwood floating in the river.





Day 3- Wednesday, May 27, 2009 (~ 18 miles) Box Elder #2 camp (16,400 cfs): Peak flow at Warm Springs

We awoke to a cool shady camp, impatiently waiting for the sun to creep down the canyon wall and warm us up! The river is up even higher this morning. All boats were out in the current tugging at their bowlines. We continue to see large driftwood logs floating down river. Egg (& ham) McMuffins for breakfast and then more pork for lunch! We rowed across river to hike up to Signature cave (full of river runner graffiti) and enjoyed nice canyon views.

Our second stop was a visit to Mantle Cave where we observed ancient Indian ruins. We spied a small bird nest stuck to the wall filled with baby birds (hearts fluttering madly) and what looked like bear prints meandering amid the ruins. Thankfully, the weather has improved every day. Our last stop of the day is the ankle twisting boulder scout at Warm Springs Rapid. Everyone had excellent runs down the right side of Warm Springs rapid with Nick's run the most exciting. I think he ran the Maytag hole sideways. I was downriver by that point, but it looks like Nick never got right (like the rest of us) and hit the hole sideways. I did see an enormous amount of grey floor high up in the air, but he landed right side up afterwards. Pete and I hugged the right side and missed the Maytag hole completely. Pete said that as he was rowing halfway through the rapid, he noticed two people in the commercial group behind us desperately scrambling down the riverbank to watch his run. In their haste, they both took full frontal face plants among the boulders which distracted him while he was rowing.

We had requested Box Elder #3 camp but got #2 which required a steep trudge up to camp/kitchen area where we were attacked by a thick swarm of bugs. I think it is going to be a very buggy season on both the Yampa and Gates of Lodore considering that the mosquitoes have begun bothering us so early in the year. Wet dew drenched everything tonight after we feasted on our fajita dinner. I had trouble counting but think there were up to six people helping cook tonight, quite chaotic but entertaining, nonetheless. The water is going down tonight, and the river has become even more silt-filled than normal.











Day 4- Thursday, May 28, 2009 (~ 8 miles) Jones Hole #4 camp (12,500 + 2,700 [Green] = 15,200 cfs):

Pete, Ed, and I cooked Eggs Benedict this morning (more bacon = pork)! It is a short day, so we take our time leaving camp where the sun is out in full force. We float down to Echo Park (yes, Steamboat Rock echoed) and stopped to hike up to view the petroglyphs and Whispering Cave (Air-Conditioned Cave). Leftovers for lunch and then onto camp at Jones Hole #4. Another ranger came down to visit and checked our permit since we did not have a check-in at Deerlodge park. He liked seeing our firepan blanket in use. The ranger confirmed the tamarisk (weed) eradication and camp work we saw upriver but noted that new camps are rare, and it might take a couple of years to add a new camp into the mix of existing assigned camps. Just a few in our group hiked up to the waterfall and pictographs at Jones Hole while I baked Pete and Ava's chocolate birthday cake in the dutch oven (supervised by Nick).

Our dinner had absolutely no pork but did fulfill appetites for salmon filet, potatoes, and chocolate birthday cake. The food on this trip has been delicious and abundant. We will have to work it off somehow! The girls played dominoes while the boys lounged on the boats talking “rivers”. The river flow dropped again today, and we had to work hard to push boats back into the river the next morning.

We see surprisingly few flowers and animals this trip. A couple of bighorn sheep just before Jones hole, a beaver, deer, coyote, and a few geese/ducks. Maybe the animals did not enjoy the rain either.



Day 5- Friday, May 29, 2009 (~ 20 miles) Split Mountain Takeout (11,000 + 2,700 [Green] = 12,700 cfs):

One last breakfast on the river, you guessed it, Canadian bacon, and eggs. Of course, we had to have ham for lunch also. The mosquitoes sucked us dry at Rainbow Park and we cruised through the remaining Green river Rapids with ease. Moonshine rapid was an easy run and most of the other rapids were washed out by the high water. Ava enjoyed the last of her birthday cake. Nick's stomach at our last lunch appears painfully bloated- I am sure full of PORK! The Split Mountain ramp takeout was empty, so we unloaded quickly and were on our way home before any other group arrived. Another great trip on the Yampa and an easy ride home.

