

Rae Lakes '84

End of the Season Report
Laurie Cameron, ranger

The season of '84 was generally milder than the two preceding seasons, but was frequented with numerous rainstorms. Progress on some projects and long-distance travel, was a bit impeded by the wet weather, but overall the rainy weather did not prove to be a major obstacle. Visitor use appeared to be down compared to the last two years, which did not seem in particular, to be due to the weather. The cause of this dip in visitation appears a mystery; perhaps it was a product of the more extreme conditions over the past two summers.

Total miles hiked this summer were 437. Over 630 visitors were encountered. A total of 66 fire rings were removed (mostly due to area closure), and four campsites were closed for restoration. A small amount of trail work was accomplished. Several station projects were completed during the rainy weather. Assistance was provided on the ~~p~~ bear pole project at Kearsarge Lakes. And the Baxter drift fence was repaired. One "mini-search" was conducted for a lost boyscout. And one medivac occurred in the area (involving 2 attempts to evacuate a lady with an injured ankle).

A couple of areas which have traditionally had heavy use are the isthmus between the upper 2 lakes and the area surrounding Dollar Lake. Signs were posted beyond each of these areas explaining

the overuse pattern and requesting people to camp elsewhere. This produced some noticeable diminishment of camping use in these areas, as well as favorable comments concerning the nature of the sign's message. A few individual campsites within both of these areas showed some obvious abuse, and were also either too close to the trail, or to water. These were closed down with buried rocks and signs posting the closure, (total of 4 sites). People have not been verbally responsive to these closures, but have at least abided by the requests.

Baxter Lake is an area which has seen some abuse in the way of fire use and trash deposits. It appears to have been encroached upon during past hunting seasons (a deer skull beside a campfire ring appeared to me as obvious evidence). Perhaps this would be a good area to patrol during the hunting

season, if anyone is still in the area.

Wood's Creek gets the typical trashing which invariably accompanies fire use. The fire rings there seem to grow at a Malthusian rate. I've found that by continual, regular maintenance of the rings & ashes, trash can be kept at a more minimal level.

Past fire use was evident along the isthmus at the beginning of the season. But with an early, thorough cleaning of the area, further fire use became extremely infrequent.

There are a number of trail sections in the area which are badly eroded and in need of repair. The most notable sections are: 1) the lower section of the J. Muir trail between the Baxter drift fence and Wood's Creek, (it is very rocky & needs H₂O bar maintenance), 2) the

Wood's Lake trail, (which is very eroded, & has a lot of exposed sections of slab granite), 3) the J. Muir trail between Rae Hks. & Glen Pass, (which needs a few good, sturdy H2O bars installed to bypass snowfield drainage ... the trail is a virtual river all summer long ... the trail could also use some rock removal up higher on toward the pass), & 4) the 60-laker basin trail, esp. on the east side of Fen Dome. (I have noticed that the trail has been excluded from the maintenance list & if further maintenance is never planned to occur, I recommend eliminating the signing which directs visitors into the area. The trail is getting badly gullied & seems to be creating an erosion problem.)

There was not a lot of stock use in the area this season, but what use did occur was problematic in general. One stock group was allowed to camp 2 nights

in the 60-lakes basin. The evidence of their having been there remained all summer long. Deep tracks were left in moist meadows. Also, although I can't verify it, I believe this party made a campfire while they were there. A fire was reported to me later in the area in which they camped, and I was able to find fire remains in the center of all the horse manure & tracks. Given this example, I would object to further concessions being given to stock users in the 60-lakes basin. The one-night rule, as it stands, is a good one.

Dealings with the Rainbow Packers, out of Onion Valley (who create most of the stock use in the area) have also been problematic. One packer claimed he was unaware that camping with stock was not allowed in the immediate Rae Fls. area. A second, rather large party (15 animals) either stayed 2 nights in one spot (above or below Dollar Fl.) or else camped along

the Rae Lakes and below them the next night, judging from reports I received. Either way, it was against the rules.

One further complaint I had this summer with the packers, was that they agreed to come up and put lime on the body of a horse that died during an attempted evacuation, and never did. Mark Berry made an agreement with me which he completely failed to keep.

I have followed a couple of stock parties down below the Baxter drift fence, and each time I've noticed numerous rocks kicked loose. Granted, the trail is in bad need of repair. However, I question the wisdom of allowing for a park-wide increase in stock use at the same time that trail maintenance funding is at an all-time low. The Rae Lakes patrol area is an especially susceptible area to stock caused trail damage, in particular, due to the generally poor state of trail maintenance.

A few food drops have occurred at the station this summer. Although none of these have created any special problems, if the practice at all increases in future years, some problems of responsibility and access are likely to occur. There is little storage space available at this station.

So, I would recommend the acquisition of an extra metal storage chest for this purpose. The box could be labeled with an explanation of its provision being for the convenience of the packer & camper, but not holding the ranger to any obligation.

Some of the station projects accomplished this season were: the installment of a marmot-proof, heavy mesh screening below the cabin floor, a shower stand, a message box, side-wall screening, a rolling screen door, more shelves, and a loft were installed. The grounds, previously filled with lumber & junk, were cleaned up.

A list of station requests for next year
~~are~~ follows:

- more screening for tent walls
- storage chest for food drops
- sealant (for metal box that leaks)
- 2nd foam pad (for sleeping on)
- mop wringer
- (2) $\frac{1}{2}$ " size plywood boards 4' x 8'
 (for toilet seat platform and loft)
- large crescent wrench
- 1- $1\frac{1}{2}$ " joint brush
- short handled fire shovel (or "spade")
- .pulaski
- rock pry bar
- different size bits for hand drill (have only (1) $\frac{1}{2}$ " bit)
- 2 left-handed rubber gloves (to match the right-
 handed ones I got)
- 1 gallon exterior brown paint
- 1 gallon exterior white paint
- sandpaper (mixed coarseness)

bread pan

4 saucers

cheese grater

peeler

wire whip or egg beater

soup ladle

water glasses (2 or 3)

boot patch or shoe glue

aspirin

1 foot & ankle inflatable splint

Mt Pinchot guidebook

Some projects I was unable to complete this season & plan to work on in the future are: a thorough clean-up of the Baxter Lakes area, a clean-up & regular maintenance of the Castle Domes camping area, more patrols & campfire removal in Gardiner Basin, trail repair in the immediate Rae Lakes area, rock removal & repair of the 60-lakes trail (if this is OK'd) and just generally, a few longer patrols & exploration of adjacent areas.

The areas which I thoroughly cleaned and removed fire rings from are: the area directly surrounding all of the Rae Lakes, Dragon Lk., 60-lks Basin, Twin Lks. & Wood's Creek. Wood's Creek was by far, the most challenging area.

Overall, it was a very enjoyable & memorable season, and I hope to spend another up here.

I would also like to mention that my friend, Raúl Oliva, spent 1½ months this season assisting me in every project that I did.

Wildlife Sightings

RAE LKS. '84

one weasel early in the season very close to the cabin

3 coyotes, separate sightings; White Fork, Gould Peak & upper Dragon Lakes

bighorn sheep; several sightings (of the larger groups ↓)

band of 15 males on 60 lks. trail, east of Fin Dome (they were ramming horns)

band of 7 ewes & young east & north of Fin Dome

band of 15 ewes & young crossing trail below the 3rd Rae Sk.

* in addition I found recent sheep tracks while crossing over Dragon Pass

over a pass separating the Pyramid Peak drainage from the White Fork

in a drainage just north of Gardiner Basin & the furthest one west of Clarence King, before hitting the King's River

The last week of the season, have heard numerous echoes of rams crashing horns in the evenings, just back behind the cabin.