

High Uinta Wilderness

July 5-7, 2010

Elevation: 10,000 – 11,000'

Grayling, Brook, Cutthroat

It was that time of year again to do my annual backpacking/fly fishing trip with my brothers. This year my brothers Rick and Justin joined me for a trip to Four Lakes Basin about 9 miles from the Highline Trailhead. We decided to combine this trip in connection with my grandparent's 60th wedding anniversary in central Utah where I grew up. This was the shortest and most relaxing trip that we have been on. I actually kept a few fish and took time to cook them up for dinner. We were above 10,000' the entire trip.

The High Uinta Wilderness is a spectacular wilderness in the northeast corner of Utah near the Wyoming border. This sixty mile east-west range contains the highest peaks in Utah, Kings Peak being the tallest - 13,528'. This range harbors many lakes with Brook, Cutthroat, Rainbow, Grayling and a few rare Golden Trout. Large Grayling in Allen Lake drew us to this area.



Looking east into the Rock Creek drainage from Rocky Sea Pass

Itinerary:

Monday: Backpack 9 miles, fish Carolyn Lake and fish Four Lakes Basin.

Carolyn Lake-Elevation-10,460: 13 miles RT: Acres-5: Depth-17: Fish-Grayling

Jean Lake-Elevation-10,100: 18 miles RT: Acres-3: Depth-25: Fish-Cutthroat, Brook

Dean Lake-Elevation-10,755: 18.4 miles RT: Acres-24: Depth-44: Fish-Brook & Cutthroat (camp)

Dale Lake-Elevation-10,700: 18 miles RT: Acres-12.9: Depth-25: Fish-Brook

Daynes Lake-Elevation-10,670: 19 miles RT: Acres-23.2: Depth-21: Fish-Brook & few Grayling

Tuesday: Hike to Rocky Sea Pass for the views, Fish Allen Lake for big Grayling.

Allen Lake- Elevation-10,390: Fish-large Grayling, few large Brook

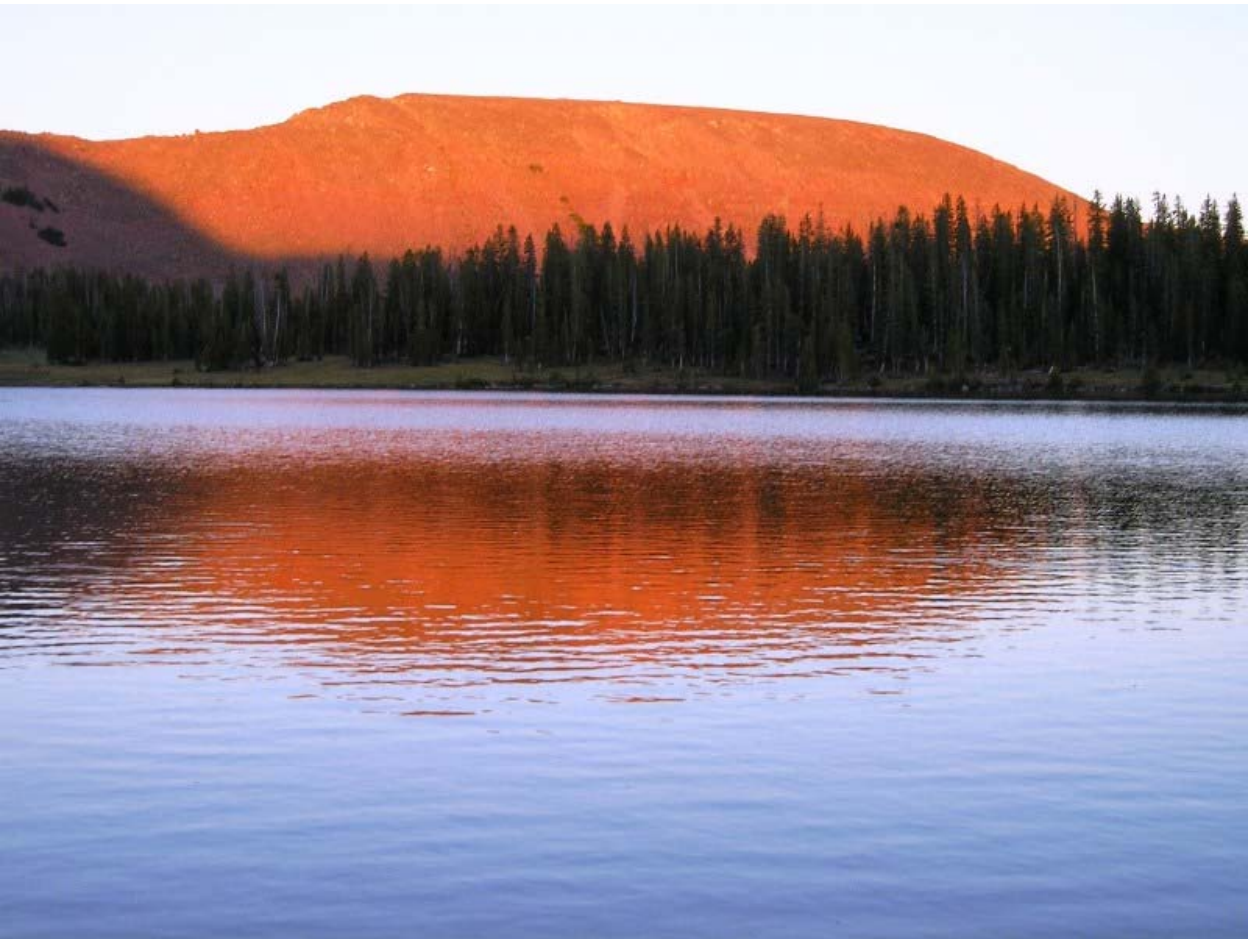
Wednesday: Backpack 9 miles to the trailhead. Drive six miles up Murdock Basin Road to fish Echo & Joan Lakes for a rare Uinta Golden Trout.



Justin and I entering the wilderness

The next two pages are pictures from Four Lakes Basin which include the following four lakes: Daynes, Dale, Jean and Dean.





Monday

Monday's hike had a few ups and downs and a consistent climb toward the end but it was relatively simple by most standards. The trail was signed and the trail was being cleared by Forest Rangers when we arrived. We stopped at Carolyn Lake on the trail in and caught 8-10" Grayling on nearly every cast. It was a nice introduction to the Uinta Wilderness.

After setting up camp, we hiked over to Dean Lake which is the most isolated of the four lakes. I heard you could look off the ledges at cruising Trout. That was true except for the wind that made that idea a little more difficult. We caught a few Cutthroat and Brook Trout by sight fishing but it was mostly watching for the rise.

We were camped in a beautiful grove of trees between Daynes Lake and Dale Lake. Nutcrackers, Gray Jays, Warblers and Chipping Sparrows provided the sounds of nature while we ate 14" Brook Trout from Daynes Lake. Daynes Lake can produce some nice Brook as well as a few nice Grayling. Dale Lake provided fast action for slightly smaller Brook Trout.



Rick's 14" Brook Trout from Daynes Lake

Tuesday

Justin caught some nice fish near camp while Rick and I decided to go for a hike up to Rocky Sea Pass. I was originally going to fish the upper Rock Creek drainage lakes but was told I would be going alone due to the hiking required. I instead talked Rick into getting some views above tree line on the high ridges near Rocky Sea Pass.



Looking southeast from Rocky Sea Pass

The views were inspiring as we looked into Naturalist Basin and the Rock Creek drainage. The next pictures were taken from an 11,500' peak just north of Rocky Sea Pass.







After a nice lunch back at camp we all hiked cross-country to less visited Allen Lake for the chance at a large Grayling. As seen on the last page, 12 inches was the largest we hooked into. I caught my first Grayling by stripping a leach on the bottom. I continued stripping leaches until Justin found a place on the lake where the Grayling were rising. I rushed over and caught a few more 12" Grayling on some small dries.

That evening, we caught more Brooks from Daynes and Dale Lake for supper!

Wednesday

We were originally going to stay in the basin longer but we decided to hike out a day early. After getting back to the trailhead we drove along the Scenic Mirror Lake highway and stopped at the overlooks. There are some beautiful views along the route along with several campgrounds and fishable lakes. We saw a few moose as well.



About ten years ago my wife and I camped at Mirror Lake and I climbed nearby Mt Baldy. The views from on top left a deep impression. I must have counted 20-30 visible lakes and several basins and peaks. It was a short easy hike for such a great reward.

Before leaving we wanted to try our luck at a rare Utah Golden. We drove six miles to Echo Lake on Murdock Basin Road which was a very rocky four wheel drive road. The lake contained mostly Brook Trout with the occasional Golden. I climbed to Joan Lake while my brothers fished Echo Lake but all I found were Brook as well. No Golden's this time! We didn't fish very long due to a thunderstorm that produced a lot of lightning. Those storms are an awesome experience in the mountains.



Searching for Golden Trout at Joan Lake

The High Uinta Wilderness produced a very memorable trip. I would love to return and hike the Highline Trail and climb Kings Peak. There are a lot of great places in this wilderness. Choosing a location was not an easy decision.