

**Warm Lake Road just north of Cascade, Idaho
Memorial Day Weekend, 2006
By Glenn Dalton**

The forest road to Warm Lake is a rare treat when it comes to forest roads... It's paved! The entire 26 miles is paved to the doorsteps of Warm Lake. Opening day of fishing season was upon us once again, and, due to an unusually heavy snowfall in the mountains, the rivers were still raging from the spring runoff. Not safe for wading or drifting quite yet! I decided to explore some lakes north of Boise near the town of Cascade. To get there, take Hwy 55 north until you reach Cascade. Just north of town is a turn off to the right for Warm Lake. Drive down this approximately nine miles and you will see a paved apron on the right. This is the turn off to our first destination, Horsethief Reservoir. (Note: at the time of this writing there isn't a sign marking the turn off. if you get to Scott Meadows, you've gone too far. Turn around and



watch for the brown sign (Funny that it's marked in the opposite direction).

Horsethief reservoir is managed by the Idaho Fish and Game. It is primarily a put and take fishery; they stock 10 to 12 inch rainbows on a regular basis. While this encompasses the majority of the take out of the lake, there are quite a few holdovers from previous years that can reach 8 pounds or larger. Free campgrounds with outhouses and fire rings are located around the lake. There are also some primitive sites with no facilities. Along



the southwestern shore the campsites have boat ramps and piers. One of the piers is designed for handicap access and stretches for quite a distance into the lake.

The later part of May and early June is the time to catch the mountains in full bloom. I ran across several meadows in the area that were quite breathtaking with a multitude of colors.





My first destination was King Hill campground. The lake is within view from all the campsites, and the pier is only a 100 yard hike. The fishing can be excellent. The first day I hooked five trout with the largest being 18 inches (a holdover from the previous year).

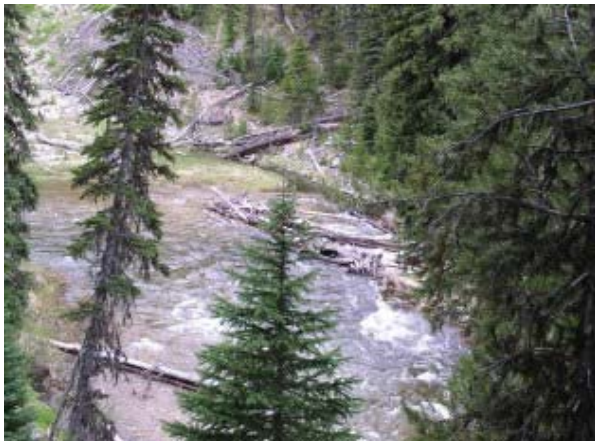
Several trout and several campfires later it was time to move further up the road. The next stop was the South Fork Campground on the south fork of the Salmon River. I was surprised to see this campground had only one other camper. The south fork of the Salmon River is a major spawning area for both steelhead and Chinook salmon. A lone male Steelhead, bright red in his spawning colors, swam past the campsite, a beautiful site to see. The cost at this campground is \$10, which may be why it was empty, as there are plenty of free locations nearby to camp. If you have a chance, take a trip to this campground during August, the salmon will be in the middle of their spawning ritual, and these fish can be quite a site. (a word of caution, it's best to be early to see this as towards the end of the spawn the smell of dying fish can be unpleasant to say the least).



From the south fork, numerous areas are close by. If you wish to soak a while and soothe



the body, take the road to Stolle Meadow. Anywhere you see cars parked alongside the road, there is usually a hot spring nearby. As you drive up the road, there will be a sharp turn to the left, and a parking area in the bend of the road. Below are Molly's hot tubs. These are a collection of several hot tubs and a hose attached to the hot spring. The method goes something like this: take the hose and fill the tub with hot water. Then find the bucket (should be one near the tubs) and add cool stream water to bring the temperature down to your comfort level.



Another hot spring on the way to Stolle Meadow is Molly's hot spring. This is several hundred yards away from the road. Look for an abandoned intersection (there are mounds of dirt blocking the crossroad). Go right towards the river. Look for a white hose hanging down the mountain just before you reach the footbridge. You will have to cross a footbridge to get to the hot spring.

Stolle meadow is loaded with brook trout and moose, take your pick. When I was there the spring runoff was in full force and I decided to pass on getting swept downstream into



the ocean. This is also an ATV Mecca, free camping and scores of ATV riders call this place home. You may have to drive a bit before you find a bend in the road for a campsite. Most people are respectful of quiet evenings, so get out and fish while the ATV's are ripping it up, then enjoy a beautiful evening watching the moose, deer, and elk come in to the meadow.

Further up the main road is Warm Lake. It is roughly a 3 mile drive from the South Fork Campground. This lake is loaded with kokanee, brook trout, and lake trout. In the spring,



the kokanee can be taken from shore. North shore lodge has a restaurant, full bar, karaoke, boat rentals, and cabins for rent. Check them out and say hello to the new owners, they've done quite a job updating the old lodge. This is a great place to hang if the rains fall upon you. The bar has a warm fireplace and a bay window overlooking the lake and boat docks. They also have pontoon rides occasionally for a peaceful way to end the evening.

All in all, this is a good area of Idaho to check out. You don't need a boat, a float tube will suffice at getting you out on the water. Enjoy!

Glenn

