

## **Backpacking trip to Devil's Punchbowl and Raspberry Lake, 1-4 September 2020**

Five of us (Tony Davis, Kim McAlear, and three others who aren't BIG members – Rik, Egon, and Bart) went on a four-day, three-night trip to this area in northern California's Siskiyou Wilderness at the beginning of September.

### **Day 1: Ashland to Trout Camp**

We left Ashland a bit after 8am for the 2.5 hour drive to the trailhead. It's not that far in terms of mileage – just past Cave Junction we turned off Highway 199 onto Rockydale Rd., and then onto Waldo Rd. The last 17 miles, however are on gravel and dirt Forest Service roads. Most of this was in good condition, but a few spots had deep transverse ruts where high clearance is a must. Also the signage was practically nonexistent, but we followed what seemed like the right road and were rewarded a mile from the trailhead with a sign indicating the way to Young's Peak trailhead.

We had lunch before setting out on an 8.5 mile, mostly downhill trek to Trout Camp, along Clear Creek. The first three miles or so of the trail are quite wide; then, just after the junction where you can head up to Raspberry Lake, the trail narrows and becomes a bit rocky. Most of the remaining five miles follows Clear Creek through wooded areas, including one stretch that has burned recently. There's one stream crossing about six miles in and another just as you arrive at Trout Camp. The trip was a bit more tiring than we'd expected, but Trout Camp is very pleasant and we had the area to ourselves.

### **Day 2: Trout Camp to Devil's Punchbowl, and return**

The night was not cold, and we set out around 8:30 on the trail to Devil's Punchbowl, which branches off the Clear Creek Trail just across from Trout Camp. Most of this is a fairly steep climb, beginning with about a mile on the Doe Flat Trail, and then turning off to the left for another mile or so on the trail to Devil's Punchbowl. As you ascend a ridge, there are some excellent views on both sides.





The trail then levels off somewhat and around a bend is a small lake, not Devil's Punchbowl. Another 15 minutes did get us there, and it's a beautiful lake, though perhaps not as amazing as some reports claim. The roughly two miles up there felt like more, and by the time we returned to our camp, it was about 2pm.





Only Kim and Bart had the energy to continue down the Clear Creek trail another 2.5 miles to Wilderness Falls. This is reputed to be a nice swimming spot, and they agreed that it was, though not spectacular.

It was another surprisingly warm night at Trout Camp.

### **Day 3: Trout Camp to Raspberry Lake**

We packed up and headed back up the trail we came in on, leaving a bit after 8:30 am. Here are Bart, Tony, Egon, and Kim on the Clear Creek Trail that morning.



The plan was to go back up about five miles to the turnoff for Raspberry Lake, and then about 3.5 miles up that trail to a campsite by that lake. Tony was feeling pretty worn out and moving slowly, and after a couple of hours felt he wasn't likely to make it that far. Fortunately, we'd noticed campsites at the junction, so he camped there and rested all afternoon while the other continued up to Raspberry Lake. The lake was OK, but not amazing, and it was hard to get to the shore because there were lots of logs and vegetation along it. The campsite was pleasant and there was plenty of room.

Both in Young's Valley, where Tony camped, and up at Raspberry Lake, some smoke began to creep in during the afternoon.

#### **Day 4: Raspberry Lake to Ashland**

The four up at Raspberry Lake set out early, around 7:30 am, and arrived at Tony's campsite a bit before 9 am. Tony was still not feeling great, but we all managed to backpack out the remaining three miles to the trailhead, arriving a little after 11 am. The smoke was noticeably worse, but fortunately no fires were nearby. The drive back to Ashland was uneventful.

#### **Afterword**

After testing negative for covid-19, Tony was diagnosed with dehydration. Conditions were hotter and dryer than we'd expected, and even though he'd been drinking moderate amounts of water, it wasn't enough. Besides feeling weak, and occasionally lightheaded, he didn't have much appetite, and didn't even feel that thirsty. But he lost about six pounds on the trip, and it took a few days for him to feel completely better. Lesson: make sure you're drinking plenty of water, even if it doesn't feel necessary.

The consensus regarding this trip is that it was interesting to explore the area, but given the fairly long distances, it's not something we'd rush back to do again. If the roads to access the Doe Flat trailhead reopen (a ranger told us that may happen next year), then Devil's Punchbowl at least would be a considerably shorter trip via that trail. However, camping at Trout Camp is probably still the more sensible option than trying to camp right at Devil's Punchbowl, which is rocky and doesn't offer much in the way of level campsites.

We saw a few people at Devil's Punchbowl, but otherwise encountered very few people. That could change if the Doe Flat access is restored. On the other hand, a couple of weeks after our trip, the Slater Fire devastated much of the surrounding area, so checking on the state of the trails would be a good idea.