

Pikes Peak River Runners

Bug n Bear

July 2008

Gates of Lodore (Green River)



By Christina King

Photo Credits: Christina King, Keith Fuqua, Jeff & Karen Hodge & Anne Pierce

Trip Participants: Jack Schneider, Wendy Rombold, Beth & Eric Roren, Jeff & Karen Hodge, Anne Pierce & brother, Keith & Ava Fuqua Pete & Christina King, Leslie Tyson & Mike Bishop, Pat Campanello, Ralph Hoffman & Cousin Bill, Mike & Adler Langello, and the motley Schneider family crew.



It has been a bug-biting season on western rivers this spring/summer season. We arrived at the Gates of Lodore Green River launch around 7 pm on July 2, 2008 to a swarm of the bloodsucking mosquitoes. In hindsight, next time we might arrive just a bit later (~ 8pm) and that should lessen their available biting time. It was nice to push our one rigged raft and my little ducky directly into the river and relax as the sun went down. Jack Schneider had organized the annual family & friends trip down the Green River (Gates of Lodore) again this year and we had a great time. Flows on the Green stayed at 1,500-1,700 cfs during our entire trip which made for a nice

run. The Yampa was flowing 5,000-6,000 during our trip to help us along below the confluence at Echo Park. Most nights it cooled down nicely which helped the mosquitoes back off a bit. Beth and Eric left their future duckier twins (Hunter & Katie) at home, but they still got to play in their ducky before they left.



Day 1, July 3, 2008, Pot Creek 1- THE BEAR

River Runners Transport handled our shuttle so we had minimal work to do before launching. Our group size was 25 people, 12 rafts/cats, 6 duckies and 1 hard-shell kayak which created quite a sight to behold. A string of colorful boats bobbing down the river. We stopped below Winnies Rapid for lunch when suddenly, a bear popped out from behind a sand dune to scout our lunch fixings.



All of us stared stupidly towards the bear as he rose on his hind legs. The bear wiggled and swayed as he sniffed our tasty chicken salad and goodies. After the bear spent more than 20 minutes scouting our lunch situation, we believe that he decided 25 people were a few too many for him to scare off. Check out Pat's casual glance our way as we shot a photo of him with our bear in the background. The bear swam across the river

and shuffled upriver while continuing to watch us. It was quite intimidating to see a bear so unafraid of our group. I have never seen a bear on this section of desert river, and I thought it very unusual. During this bear visit, another private group ran Winnies Rapid and flipped a cat boat. It seemed rather anticlimactic when compared to our bear visit but we helped the flipped boat (& people) get sorted out afterwards. They swam into the big eddy on river right but unfortunately were unable to retrieve an oar left pinned up on the Winnies Rapid rock.

After lunch we ran Upper and Lower Disaster Falls rapids. I chose a poor ducky line through Upper Disaster Falls but recovered by slicing diagonally through the big holes on the right. Next time, I will go left in a ducky and sneak that poorly chosen "adventure" line. Eric Roren swam the rapid after dumping out of his ducky in Lower Disaster Falls but was fine after getting rescue help from the rafters in our group. Leslie Tyson advised Adler Langello (12-year-old duckier) to follow me through Lower Disaster Falls and I promptly broached a rock at the top. Leslie then told Adler to "NOT follow Christina" and Adler did his best to bump me off the rock resulting in him getting perched on the same rock. Note for young paddlers- older paddlers do not always run a rapid perfectly. I managed to continue the rest of the run side-by-side with Beth Roren and her raft. Ugly but okay. No more swims from the duckiers the rest of the trip. We camped at Pot Creek 1 tonight and enjoyed the shady trees and nice beach. Keith & Ava Fuqua fixed us a much-appreciated cool salmon salad dinner after a hot day on the river. Today was Adler Langello's 12th birthday so we celebrated with a delicious cold apple torte made by our pastry chef (Keith Fuqua). The mosquitoes were out at dusk but manageable tonight. Everyone on the trip has multiple cans of bug spray and uses it. I wish we had brought the 40% DEET OFF on this trip.





Day 2, July 4, 2008, Wild Mountain- Independence Day

Happy 4th of July! Today is our "big" rapids day and we have lots of excitement on the river. Harp rapid was insignificant at this level, but I remember it much bigger at higher water trips. This Gates of Lodore trip is the lowest flow that I have personally ever run the river. Most of our Green/Yampa trips are on Memorial weekend when they release more flow from the Flaming Gorge Dam.

We did not scout Triplet Rapid and passed the other private group that had camped above the rapid. We later found out that they reported being "eaten alive by mosquitoes" at all their assigned camps.



We stopped to scout Hell's Half Mile and watched as a commercial boat got stuck for a long time in the lower part of the rapid. The commercial boatman finally got off the rock after adjusting her exit strategy (with a little signaling help from our group).

All of us took different and successful approaches to the rapid. I had a great run on the left entry (right side of Lucifer rock) and eddied out below to watch the rest of our group come through.

Hell's Half Mile Rapid You Tube Video Runs:

- [Beth Roren's Run](#)
- [Marty's Run](#)
- [Bill's Run](#)
- [Chuck's Run](#)
- [Christina King's Run](#)
- [Eric Roren's Run](#)
- [Jack Schneider & family Run](#)
- [Wendy Schneider's Run](#)
- [Pete King's Run](#)
- [Keith & Ava Fuqua's Run](#)
- [Jeff & Karen Hodge's Run](#)
- [Ralph Hoffman & Jed's Run](#)
- [Leslie Tyson's Run](#)
- [Mike Bishop & Kelly's Run](#)
- [Pat Campanello's Run](#)
- [Mike & Adler Langelo's Run](#)

Leslie Tyson inch-wormed her way along the overhanging log to trade photography duties with Anne Pierce (our Video-Photographer extraordinaire). Eric Roren and Bill had the most exciting runs through the rapid. Bill “boofed” his ducky off a rock on the top, then shot over a pour-over at the bottom right. Eric appeared to broach Lucifer rock with his ducky but managed to safely slide off the pour-over hole. We enjoyed a long lunch and hike stop at Rippling Brook 1. I watched as Adler “stalked” a catfish in the eddy. He fished for hours trying to catch that fish! He finally caught it.



Our camp tonight is Wild Mountain, where we enjoyed Middle Park Meat Company ribs, a rib eating contest and watching a deer swim the river into our camp. Keith Fuqua is the uncontested winner whenever we have this contest, I think he ate 15 ribs tonight. His rib necklace remains a prized possession (made and gifted by Joanne of the Schneider clan). I doubt anyone can dethrone Keith's dominance in this competition.



Day 3, July 5, 2008, Jones 1- Big Horn Lambs Cavort

We have always seen a lot of big horn sheep on this trip, but this year we have seen a lot more than usual and many lambs. We made a VERY quick stop at Echo Park but left ASAP due to the aggressive mosquitoes. I got at least 20 instant bites as soon as my ducky landed at this special place. We lunched on a small sandbar downstream with a steady breeze that kept the bugs at bay. A NPS wildlife researcher came down to join us for lunch as his peers searched for big horn sheep data collars. These collars were programmed to drop after more than a year. The collars collect locational data to study the big horn



sheep's habitat wanderings. The researchers are forced to search for the data collars until they find the difficult locations where they land along the river corridor cliffs. It sounds like a fun summer research job to me. After Echo Park, I was worried that Jones Hole might be a bug-biting "jungle" but was pleasantly surprised that the bugs were manageable- with a lot of bug spray - as evening dusk approached. Some of our group hiked up to the hatchery, waterfall, and pictographs while the rest of us enjoyed watching the "tame" sheep wander through camp. The lambs kicked and hopped with pure joy and were so adorable to watch, especially when nursing. The researchers stopped in to enjoy observing the big horn sheep antics as well. Adler returned home without catching a single fish. There are a lot of groups bunched up in this section and we plan an early start tomorrow morning to avoid the anticipated takeout congestion.

Day 4, July 6, 2008, Split Mountain Takeout

We left early (7:30 am) for a couple of reasons. One, to float through Island Park before the typical afternoon strong upstream winds kick in and two, to avoid the boat

ramp congestion that was sure to occur with so many large groups (at least six that we count) taking out today. Island Park was a delightful float with no wind at all and minimal bugs- some biting flies, made even easier with the higher water cutoff available (thanks to the higher Yampa River flows). We attempted a stop at Rainbow Park boat ramp but quickly left due to the biting bugs. I ran Moonshine rapid far left- sneaking the

big waves and holes. Keith decided to run right, and Ava was washed out when Keith ran the big hole. Keith insisted that Ava was not holding on tight enough, however he has a history with this rapid and I think Ava was holding on exactly right. Keith got Ava right back in his raft and we continued downriver. Anne captured photos of the exciting Moonshine rapid runs of the rest of our group.



We saw many other groups enjoying the river along the way. The two biggest rapids for me were the waves I had to run in my ducky at SOB and Schoolboy rapids. My ducky stood straight up in the big waves, I got soaked but stayed upright. We arrived at the takeout and derigged with a wide-open ramp. Thanks once again to the Schneider family for hosting a fun Gates of Lodore trip.

My favorite Green River camps:

1. Pot Creek 1
2. Rippling Brook 2
3. Jones Hole 4 or Compromise (Jones 1 as a third choice)

Note: Just as we were finishing at the takeout, a park ranger truck with emergency lights flashing arrived. It turns out that a group behind us had called in a medical emergency with minimal details. An ambulance arrived and eventually a boat pulled up with someone laying on the raft. Speculation was rampant and someone said that the person had died (he was not moving). The ambulance stayed quite a while and left slowly with no lights. We had waved a friendly hello to this group earlier in the day and all was fine when we passed them (we did not know them). It turns out that the person had in fact stopped breathing after diving from shore into the river. He had been revived with CPR but suffered a broken neck. When we left the takeout, the group appeared understandably upset and in shock. There were lots of emergency personnel that responded. The published facts are in the link below: <http://www.nps.gov/dino/parknews/visitor-injured-on-day-trip-to-dinosaur-national-monument.htm> . Considering that we thought there was a fatality, we felt that this was good news but am sure this tragedy will have long term repercussions. Lesson learned- horseplay can turn deadly in a moment. Do not dive in any river headfirst.